

These meditations sunk deep into his soul, and so changed him that the humility of the cross appeared to him more amiable than all the glories of the world. During that retreat, which he finished with a general confession made with the most profound sentiments of compunction, he formed a resolution to employ his whole life for the salvation of souls. From that moment his life was one continual scene of heroic virtue and wonderful deeds until that December day of 1552, when God called him from the coast of Siam to Heaven, there to enjoy the fruits of his labours forever.

This passage in the life of St. Francis is interesting and instructive. It shows the great change the grace of God brings about in the soul of him who uses it well; and shows, too, how in fact that grace is obtained. The means used by St. Francis was prayer and meditation. My friends, that is the means we all must employ if we would be saved. It is the simple truth to say that, according to the disposition of Divine Providence, grace can be obtained by those who have attained the use of reason only by prayer and the sacraments. Without the sacraments, prayer is not sufficient, and, without prayer, we cannot worthily receive the sacraments.

You will observe that I take prayer in a general sense, that is, as a pious elevation of the soul to God. Taking prayer in that sense, we may easily see the meaning of St. Thomas where he tells us that whatever we do to the honour of God is true prayer, for without raising our minds to God, we can do nothing to His honour. Hence, then, if we strive to have the right intention and do all things for the glory of God, our life is one continual prayer, and we fulfil the command of God, always to pray. Thus we may change all our actions, capable of being so changed, into so many prayers, and our life becomes a life of constant prayer.

Prayer, then, with the sacraments, is the way to grace. True, we receive some graces from God independently of our prayers; but, as St. Augustine teaches, these graces consist in the inspiration to pray; or they are graces pertaining to faith which must precede all salutary prayer. Moreover, we cannot pray aright without divine aid. This aid or impulse