

## THE NECESSITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER

In the present status of sacred theology we are badly in need of a work of integration in the study of the dogma that the Catholic Church is, by Gods own institution, definitely necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation. It would seem that the Holy Office letter, the *Suprema haec sacra*, addressed on Aug. 8, 1949, to His Excellency the Most Reverend Archbishop of Boston,<sup>1</sup> offers us the way to a most fruitful work of theological integration. There is every reason to take advantage of that opportunity.

The work of theological integration is the procedure which the Vatican Council described as characteristic of the sacred science. According to the Council, "When reason, enlightened by faith, carefully, religiously, and soberly seeks, by God's help, some understanding of the mysteries, it achieves a most fruitful understanding both by way of analog}' with what is known in a natural way, and from the connection of the mysteries among themselves and with man's last end."<sup>2</sup> Thus, when we compare a mystery of the faith with other divinely revealed truths, especially with those most intimately connected with the dogma we are studying, we may, if we institute and carry on that process of comparison rightly and prayerfully, arrive at an exceedingly valuable intellectual insight into that mystery.

Most intimately connected with the dogma of the necessity of the Church for the attainment of eternal salvation are the dogmas on the nature of the Church, on the meaning of salvation, on the redemptive work through which salvation is achieved, and on the status of sin which is the *terminus a quo* in the process of salvation. Likewise connected with this dogma, and most closely associated with it, are the divinely revealed teachings about the other realities which, like the Church itself, are presented to us in the divine message as factors apart from which salvation is

<sup>1</sup> The complete Latin text and the authorized English translation of the *Suprema haec sacra* are in *AER*, CXXVII, 4 (Oct., 1952), 307-15.

<sup>2</sup> *Demi.*, 1796.

not to be attained. Among these we must mention faith, charity, baptism, the Eucharist, and prayer.

The *Suprema haec sacra* lets us look at the dogma of the Church's necessity for salvation in the perspective of the necessity of faith, charity, and prayer. It is especially on this last point, the explanation of the dogma of the Church's necessity for salvation in the light of the Catholic teaching on the necessity and the efficacy of prayer, that the Holy Office letter has opened the way for a more effective explanation of this portion of ecclesiology.

The fact that a man can be saved if he is sincerely desirous of entering the true Church, even when this desire is *only* implicit, has long been a part of Catholic teaching about the true Kingdom of God on earth. Up until the time of the issuance of the *Suprema haec sacra*, however, this Catholic teaching had been set forth explicitly only in manuals of sacred theology and in books of Christian doctrine. The *Suprema haec sacra* was the first authoritative document of the ecclesiastical *-magisterium* to bring out this teaching in an explicit form.<sup>3</sup> This is what has made the letter a document of primary importance.

The *Suprema haec sacra* contains these statements :

That one may obtain eternal salvation, it is not always required that he be incorporated into the Church *actually* as a member, but it is necessary that at least he be united to her by *desire* and *longing*.

However, this desire need not always be explicit, as it is in catechumens; but when a person is involved *in* invincible ignorance, God accepts also an implicit desire (*implicitum vatum*), so called because it is included in that good disposition of soul whereby a person wishes his will to be conformed to the will of God.<sup>4</sup>

With reference to this *vatum* or *desiderium* the Holy Office letter adds this essentially important teaching.

But it must not be thought that any kind of desire or entering the Church suffices that one may be saved. It is necessary that the desire by which one is related to the Church be animated by perfect charity. Nor can an implicit desire produce its effect unless a person has supernatural faith. . . .<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Fenton, "The Holy Office Letter on the Necessity of the Catholic Church," *AER*, CXXVII/6 (Dec., 1952), 450A1.

<sup>4</sup> *MEÆ*, CXXVII, 4 (Oct., 1952), 313. <sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 314.

Furthermore, the *Suprema haec sacra* calls our attention to the fact that there are other realities of the supernatural order which can be called truly necessary for salvation with the necessity of means and which, like the Church, can, under certain circumstances, produce their effect when a man who cannot actually use them desires sincerely to employ them. These realities are necessary means for salvation because God has so instituted them, and not because they are requisite for salvation with intrinsic necessity. Here is the teaching of the Holy Office letter on this subject.

In His infinite mercy God has willed that the effects, necessary for one to be saved, of those helps to salvation which are directed toward man's final end, not by intrinsic necessity, but only by divine institution, can also be obtained in certain circumstances when those helps are used only in *desire* and *longing*. This we see clearly stated in the Sacred Council of Trent, both in reference to the Sacrament of Regeneration and in reference to the Sacrament of Penance.<sup>6</sup>

The "certain circumstances" of which the *Suprema haec sacra* speaks are present when an individual is really unable to be baptized or to go to confession before his death. A man placed in such a position can attain to the Beatific Vision through the sincere desire or will to receive these sacraments. This is possible even when that desire or will is implicit rather than explicit, that is, when the individual does not possess a clear understanding of the revealed doctrine about the Sacraments of Baptism and of Penance, and only desires them in an obscure or confused manner as things which God wills that he should receive. When a man who has true supernatural faith and genuine charity desires, in his love of friendship for God, to do all God demands of him for his eternal salvation, he implicitly desires baptism, entrance into the Church, or the Sacrament of Penance, even though he should have no exact knowledge of the Church or of the sacraments. If he should die before he can actually be baptized, actually be received into the Church, or actually go to confession, his desire is rewarded by God's mercy, and he will be saved, through the Church and through the sacraments.

Likewise, and even more obviously, a catechumen who desires to be baptized, a non-Catholic who desires to be received into the Catholic Church, or one of the faithful who has been guilty of mortal sin committed after Baptism and unforgiven by sacramental absolution can be saved if, with genuine faith and charity, they die before they have the opportunity to avail themselves of these divine gifts. In all of these cases the motion or the *desiderium* of the individual is accomplished by God's own mercy. All of these individuals can be saved, not independently of the Church and of the sacraments, but precisely in and through the Church and the sacraments, possessed in a sincere will or desire.

Now it is precisely at this point that the *Suprema haec sacra* has opened the way to an important advance in the field of scholastic theology. In stressing the fact that there are certain gifts which God has instituted as necessary for salvation with the necessity of means, gifts which, under certain circumstances, can be effective for a man who sincerely desires them but is unable actually to obtain them, the Holy Office letter has invited theologians to bring their thesis on the necessity of the Church for salvation into contact with that portion of sacred doctrine that deals with the efficacy of prayer.

The theology of prayer tells us of the way in which a petition made to God, an expression of man's sincere desire, can, in the merciful designs of God's providence, actually be the cause of the benefit man begs from God. And, in all the extent of sacred theology, there is no mention of any agency other than prayer which can make a man's desire or intention unfailingly efficacious in obtaining from God a benefit which He alone can grant.

The *Suprema haec sacra* reiterates the Catholic dogma that there is no salvation whatsoever outside of the true Church of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup> According to this teaching, then, a man who dies "outside 'S' the Catholic Church simply will not obtain the Beatific Vision. At the same time, however, this letter assures us that salvation is possible, under certain circumstances, for a man who has a *visus* or a *desiderium* of entering the Church and remaining within it. It insists furthermore that this can be true even when the *Motus* or *desiderium* is merely implicit.

Hence it follows that an act of the human will which is a desire to be within the Catholic Church can, when certain conditions have been fulfilled, be infallibly efficacious. A non-Catholic who wishes to be within the Church is granted his wish even though he dies before he has the opportunity to be baptized or to be received publicly into the Church. If he is saved, he is actually one who has passed from this life "within" the true Church of God. To use the terminology<sup>7</sup> of the Council of Florence, he is one of those who have been "incorporated (*aggregati*)" into the true Church before their death? His own desire or intention must be considered as in a certain way a true efficient cause of this incorporation or aggregation into the Catholic Church.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the object of the *votum* or *desiderium* of which the Holy Office letter speaks is "to be within the Church in such a way as to obtain eternal salvation." This is precisely the benefit obtained by the person who desires or wills it, even though he passes from this life before he has had the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Baptism or canonical reconciliation with the Church. It is obviously a benefit quite beyond the limits of man's natural competence. As a reality of the intrinsically supernatural order, it is a favor which only God can grant.

The Church is the assembly of those called, of the *vocati*. According to St. Robert Bellarmine: "The people of God is designated as the assembly of the called (*coetus vocatorum*) because no one joins this people by his own efforts (*per se*) or of his own accord, but all who come do so by reason of a previous invitation from God."<sup>8</sup> To be "within" the Church is thus a gift from God, something which a man obtains only with the help of divine grace. The *votum* or the *desiderium* of entering the Church and of remaining within it is an act of the will moved by God's grace. And, if that *votum* or *desiderium* is in any way efficacious of itself, it is only because it is expressed to God in an act of prayer, the *petitio decentium a Deo*.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *a Dene.*, 714.

<sup>8</sup> *De ecclesia militante*, cap. 1.

<sup>10</sup> The classical theological definition of prayer is that formulated by St. John Damascene in his work *On the Orthodox Faith*, Book III, cap. 24: "Prayer is the raising of the mind to God, or the petition of fitting things from God." Cf. Fenton, *The Theology of Prayer* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1939), pp. 1-15.

This aspect of the teaching on the necessity of the Church for salvation is brought out quite clearly in what has always been regarded as the classical patristic text on the subject. The traditional Catholic explanation of the truth that a man who sincerely desires to be baptized and to enter the true Church can be saved even though he dies before he has the opportunity of receiving the Sacrament of Baptism has employed the terms used by St Ambrose in his sermon *De obitu Valentianiani*. Here we find the notions of *votum* and *desiderium* used along with the idea of *petitio*. The following is a translation of the pertinent paragraph in St. Ambrose's sermon.

But I hear that you are sorrowing, because he [the Emperor Valentinian II] did not receive the rites of Baptism. Tell me, what else is there in us but will, but petition? Now quite recently it was his intention to be baptized before he came into Italy. He let it be known that he wanted me to baptize him very soon, and it was for that reason above all others that he decided to have me summoned. Does he not, then, have the grace he desired? Does he not have what he prayed for? Surely, because he prayed for it, he has received it. Hence it is that "the soul of the just man will be at rest, whatever kind of death may overtake him."<sup>11</sup>

What St. Ambrose taught in this passage was and is the traditional doctrine of the Catholic Church. Hence it is most interesting and enlightening to learn that here he equates the desire of baptism, the desire to be within the true Church, and prayer for this favor. The key to all of his teaching on this point is his assertion that "Surely, *because he prayed for it*, he has received it." The emperor's intention to receive baptism and to dwell within the true Church was effective precisely because that intention or desire had been expressed to God in the form of prayer.

There is absolutely no reason to suppose that the teaching contained in the *Suprema haec sacra* is to be interpreted otherwise. Now, as in the time of St. Ambrose, a man's will or desire to enter the Church can be effective, even when he dies before he is able to be received into this society sacramentally or canonically, when this will or desire is presented to God in the petition of true Christian prayer. This remains true when the desire and

<sup>11</sup> St. Ambrose, *De obitu Valentianiani*, 51.

the prayer to enter the true Church is implicit within the intention and the petition for the glory of God and for the attainment of our own eternal salvation.

The *Suprema haec sacra* has reminded us that the desire or will to enter the Church can suffice for the attainment of salvation only when it is enlightened by supernatural faith and motivated by perfect charity. This teaching also implies that such an effective will or desire must be something presented to God in prayer, the petition of fitting things from God. It seems quite obvious that a man who is guided by the light of divine faith and animated by the love of charity for God will realize that his own natural powers will not suffice to bring him into the supernatural kingdom of Christ in such a way as to obtain eternal salvation. Such an individual would be quite aware of the fact that eternal salvation and all of the supernatural aids requisite for its attainment are favors which he can obtain only from God, and, ultimately, only as favors which he must beg or petition from God. He will, as a matter of fact, ask God for such favors in the act of prayer.

Thus, by the very nature of the case, the will or desire to enter the true Church, spoken of in the *Sitprema haec sacra*, tends to be and actually becomes a petition made to God, an act of Christian prayer. Any man who, as a result of his will or desire to enter the Church, is brought "within" this society in such a way as to attain salvation in it receives this favor, as St. Ambrose has said, "because he prayed for it."

There are two highly important lessons to be drawn from this connection between the *votum* or the *desiderium* of entering the true Church and the petition of Christian prayer. The first is the fact that the will or desire achieves its effectiveness precisely from the unfailing efficacy and the real necessity of prayer itself. The second is the truth that the characteristics by which prayer itself becomes unfailingly efficacious must belong to the will or desire of entering the Church which can, under certain circumstances, suffice for the attainment of eternal salvation. First we should consider the Catholic doctrine on the efficacy and the necessity of prayer.

The efficacy of prayer is something which Our Lord Himself has guaranteed. This teaching is summed up in Our Lord's declaration: "Therefore I say unto you, all things whatsoever you

ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive: and they shall come unto you.”<sup>12</sup> There is also this teaching from Our Divine Master :

Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and you shall find : knock, and it shall be opened to you.

For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, there is this unqualified assertion made by Our Blessed Lord. “And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer believing, you shall receive.”<sup>14</sup> The things which can be obtained with infallible efficacy through the act of prayer are objects which it is fitting to ask of God. They are realities of which we are aware and which we recognize as desirable in the light of true Christian faith. It is quite clear that inclusion within the true Church of God, being within His supernatural kingdom in the way that leads to eternal salvation, is one of these objects.

Another aspect of the teaching on the necessity of the Catholic Church for the attainment of eternal salvation is brought out by considering this doctrine in the light of the Catholic teaching about the necessity of prayer itself. Our Lord Himself told us that “We ought always to pray, and not to faint.”<sup>15</sup> St. Paul insisted that we should “pray without ceasing.”<sup>16</sup> The Second Council of Orange brought out this scriptural teaching very clearly in its statement that “Even people who are baptized and in the state of grace must always implore God’s help so that they may come to a good end or so that they may persevere in good conduct”<sup>17</sup> Obviously, according to the teaching of the Council and according to Catholic doctrine itself, prayer is no less necessary for people who are not baptized and for those who have not as yet entered into the true Church. In other words, it is Catholic doctrine that no adult can obtain the Beatific Vision apart from prayer, the *petitio decentium a Deo*. For one who has reached the use of reason, prayer is necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation.

It is important to note that this prayer, apart from which the attainment of man’s eternal salvation is impossible, is precisely an act in which a creature, moved by God’s grace, begs Him for

<sup>12</sup>11:24.  
<sup>13</sup>1SLuhc, 18:1.

<sup>14</sup>3Maith., 7:7-8.  
<sup>15</sup>1J Thea., 5:17.

<sup>16</sup>TMaith., 21:22.  
<sup>17</sup>17Dfflx, 183.



the gift of salvation and for those things which are or which he believes to be necessary for or conducive to the possession of man's ultimate end. The model or the chart of all true prayer to God is to be found in the *Pater noster*, the formula Our Lord taught to His disciples after they had asked Him how they were to pray.<sup>ES</sup> When this petition is made properly—in other words, when the petition is truly an act of prayer—it is unfailingly effective for the attainment of salvation itself and the factors which are, either by intrinsic necessity or by divine institution, requisite for the possession of the Beatific Vision. Entrance into the true Church before the moment of death, the condition in which a man is "within" rather than "outside of" the true Church at the instant he passes from this life, is something which is by divine institution requisite for the attainment of eternal salvation. Hence it is something with reference to which the true act of prayer is unfailingly effective.

Furthermore, it must be distinctly understood that an act would not be a prayer in the true and proper sense of the term if it should exclude a petition that the one praying might dwell within the supernatural kingdom of God. If such an intention or desire were not included at least implicitly in a petition made to God, that act would not be a petition of fitting things from God, and it would certainly not be in accord with the model Our Lord gave to us in the *Pater noster*. Thus, if a man who is not a member of the Catholic Church actually prays to God, he thereby begs God for the grace to enter the true Church of Jesus Christ in such a way as thereby to achieve eternal salvation. The prayer of a member of the Church necessarily includes, at least implicitly, the petition that God may give us the grace of keeping us within the company of Our Lord's disciples.

So it is that, in the light of the theological truths which are seen most clearly when we bring together and compare the dogma of the necessity of the Catholic Church for salvation and the Catholic doctrine about the act of prayer, it becomes apparent that a man who achieves eternal salvation by a *votum* or a *desiderium* of entering the true Church is actually one who has prayed for this inclusion in the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.

«Cf. *Luke*, 11:1-2; *Matth.* 6:9.

He must pray if he is to be saved. This petition is necessarily a part of his prayer. Valid his prayer, his petition of fitting things from God, is, by God's own guarantee, infallibly efficacious.

It would likewise appear that this comparison between the dogma of the necessity of the Church for the attainment of eternal salvation and the Catholic doctrine on prayer can be the source of a genuine and important contribution to sacred theology by reason of the light that it throws on the nature of the *coiturn* or *desiderium* spoken of in the *Suprema haec sacra*. The theology of prayer instructs us on the subject of the conditions which must be verified in a petition made to God in order that this petition may be unfailingly effective for the attainment of its objective—in other words, in order that this petition may be most truly and properly a prayer in the Christian sense of the term. Prayer is infallibly efficacious (1) when it is offered for oneself; (2) when it is offered for the gift of salvation or for something requisite for the attainment of salvation; (3) when it is offered properly or piously; and (4) when it is persevering.<sup>19</sup> If the intention or desire of entering the Church and of remaining within it in such a way as to obtain salvation is to be effective, this intention must be contained in a petition to God and must be endowed with the above properties.

Obviously when we are dealing with the *votum ecclesiam ingrediendi* the first two of these conditions are automatically fulfilled. The man who desires and prays to be within the Church is manifestly praying for himself and the Church is certainly necessary for the attainment of salvation. In order that this intention or desire be infallibly effective, however, the prayer into which it is incorporated must also conform to the other two conditions.

The prayer and the desire expressed in the prayer must be formulated piously or properly. This means that the intention be enlightened by divine faith, that it be the expression of Christian hope, that it be motivated by the love of God, and that it be humble.<sup>20</sup> The *Suprema haec sacra* has explicitly called our attention to the fact that a desire to enter the Church can bring men to salvation only when it is animated by perfect charity **and**

<sup>19</sup> *Ci*, *The Theology of Prayer*, pp. 209-15. <sup>20</sup> *Cf. ibid.*, pp. 212 &

when it is based on supernatural faith. As St. Thomas' *Compendium theologiae* shows us so clearly, prayer itself is the expression of Christian hope.<sup>21</sup> The will to enter the Church in such a way as to obtain eternal salvation is a difficult good which can only be procured through the aid and grace of God. It is thus something within the object of hope, and something for which men should and must pray. The humility which is requisite for successful prayer is that of which St. Peter wrote: "And do you all insinuate humility one to another: for God resisteth the proud, but to the humble he giveth grace. Be you humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in the time of visitation."<sup>22</sup> Where that humility is absent, a man's conduct cannot be pleasing to God.

The perseverance which must be present if prayer is to be infallibly effective in attaining its object is the characteristic that distinguishes a genuine intention from a mere velleity. The Holy Office letter to the Most Reverend Archbishop of Boston says that, under certain circumstances, a *votum* or *desiderium* of entering the true Church will suffice for salvation when it is impossible actually to become a member of the society of Our Lord's disciples. The important point is that this act must be a genuine desire or intention rather than what is called a velleity.<sup>23</sup>

Now velleity' is an act of the will which we would express in words by the statement that we would like to do something or other. On the other hand, an intention is an act of the will which we manifest when we state that we really mean to do it and are setting out to do it. An intention is automatically and by its very nature effective, not immediately of the object with which it is concerned, but of a complex of attitudes and tendencies with reference to that object. A genuine intention automatically cancels out any project for another act which is seen as incompatible with the object of the intention. The velleity very definitely does not.

Thus, if I really intend to say Mass in a certain church tomorrow morning, I automatically renounce any other project which I recognize as inconsistent or incompatible with the saying of Mass at that time and in that place. Thus, if I have this

*A* Ci St Thomas, *Compendium theologiae*, II, cap. 2.

—*I* Pet., 5; 5-6,    *23* Cf. *The Theology of Prayer*, pp. 23 £

intention, I necessarily put away any project of taking a trip which would make it impossible for me to say this Mass. And, on the other hand, if I go about making preparations for a trip of this kind, and if I actually set out on the trip, it is an indication that I had a velleity rather than an intention of saying the Mass in the church *I* had originally planned.

Now it is obvious that the *votum* or the *desiderium* of entering and remaining within the true Church must be something in the line of an intention if it is to be effective in the way of eternal salvation. The very use of the terms "*votum*" and "*desiderium*" would have sufficed to make this clear. But further light is cast on this truth by the fact that the *votum* or *desiderium* is something meant to be expressed in an act of prayer, the petition of fitting things from God.

The perseverance and the sincerity of an intention that goes into a *petitio decentium a Deo* is unquestionable. Prayer is an act of the virtue of religion, that virtue which disposes us to give to God the tribute of acknowledgment and praise which is His due. The humility of prayer is one way of paying that debt. When we ask God for the favors we need from Him we are thereby acknowledging His supreme dominion and excellence.

If, however, a man were to presume to beg God for something which he did not really desire or will to have, the act would objectively constitute an act of mockery of God, rather than an act in which the tribute of reverence is paid to Him. Such an act obviously would not be a prayer at all in the proper sense of the term. It would certainly not be effective of its object in any way. On the contrary, a *votum* or *desiderium* which is effective of its object in the context of Christian prayer is definitely in the class of an intention.

**Finally, there is, in this comparison between the doctrines on prayer and on the necessity of the Catholic Church for salvation, a tremendously important insight into the way in which the individual who desires and prays with the true prayer of Christian charity to be within the Church is actually contained in this society. The first description we have of the Catholic Church, gathered together after Our Lord's ascension into heaven, is contained in this passage from the *Acts of the Apostles*.**

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount that is called Olivet, which is nigh Jerusalem, within a sabbath day's journey.

1 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James of Alpheus and Simon Zelotes and Jude the brother of James.

All these were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.<sup>24</sup>

Thus from the very outset the Church appears as a society united in prayer. The Eucharistic Sacrifice, which is properly the act of the Mystical Body, the central work to which the Church is devoted, is integrated into the process of prayer. Essentially that petition is and always must be modelled upon the great exemplar, the formula Our Lord taught His disciples when they asked Him to teach them how to pray, the *Pater noster*.

Whatever new members were joined to the original company of the disciples entered, by that very fact, into this basic work of prayer. This is made abundantly clear by the report in the *Acts of the Apostles* on the converts who came into the Church on the first Christian Pentecost.

And with many other words did he testify and exhort them, saying: Save yourselves from this perverse generation.

They therefore that received his word were baptized: and there were added in that day about three thousands souls.

And they were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles and in the communication of the breaking of bread and in prayers.<sup>25</sup>

The man who, enlightened by divine faith and motivated by perfect charity, prays to obtain from God the grace of entering the Church in such a way as to attain eternal salvation is actually taking part in this basic activity of the Church itself. All true prayer is modelled on the exemplar of the *Pater noster*. It seeks the glory of God in our own eternal salvation, and begs also for those benefits which are necessary for or at least conducive to the attainment of this ultimate purpose. When, moved by God's grace, a man who is not a member of the Church truly prays that God's will be done, he thereby takes part in a work of

religion which is the function of the society of Our Lord's disciples. To that extent he is brought "within" the Church.

*It* is only through the possession of the sacramental character of Baptism that a man is rendered capable of taking part in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and of receiving the Blessed Sacrament. The desire or will to enter the Church, even when informed by perfect charity, does not give that capacity, and does not confer actual membership in the Church. But the union by and in the act of Christian prayer can transfer a person from the condition of being "outside the Church," to a dwelling "within" it in such a way as to obtain, in it, the gift of eternal life.

What has been said here about the place of prayer in the teaching on the necessity of the Church for the attainment of eternal salvation is, after all, one of the lessons brought out by Pope Pius IX in one of his explanations of this dogma. In his allocution *Singulari quadam*, delivered to the members of the hierarchy gathered in Rome for the pronouncement of the dogma of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, the great Sovereign Pontiff ended his statements about the possibility of salvation for those who are not members of the true Church with the reminder that "the hand of the Lord is not shortened and the gifts of heavenly grace will never be lacking to those who sincerely wish *and pray* to be comforted in this light."<sup>20</sup>

In issuing this reminder, Pope Pius IX took cognizance of the fact that the will, desire, or intention of entering the true Church so as to attain salvation within it is, in the order of God's own providence, meant to be effective by having this act of the will expressed in the process of Christian prayer.

**Joseph Cufford Fenton**

*The Catholic University of America*  
*Washington, D. C.*