

Automatic Transcription

In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Ghost, amen, now there are diversities of graces, but the same spirit and there are diversities of ministries of the same Lord, and there are diversities of operations, but the same God, who worketh all in all, and the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto prophet. Friends, you know, one of the more fascinating discoveries that converts to the Catholic religion make is the myriad ways in which the virtue of religion manifests itself within the one only church founded by Jesus Christ. The convert discovers that there are numberless ways by which they can express their love and devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ. The convert discovers that Catholicism is anything but a cookie cut of religion. Our old prophets are all apostles, are old prophets, are all doctors, are all workers of miracles, have all the grace of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Now, friends, although the church is a stipler when it comes to the offering of the Holy sacrifice of the m, she has also been passionate about encouraging and preserving a diversity of ways in which the faithful, outside of the mass, whether alone or in groups, can pray without ceasing, making their petitions known to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just think of it, when a convert to the Catholic religion enters the church, he encounters a plethethora of methods of prayer and approaches to the life of prayer. Chief, among the methods of prayer, which is itself a specific devotional practice, is the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin.arian. Through this masshod of prayer, the convert is invited as it were into the foyer of contemplation, and while ere he is led to pray through the life of his Savior, as it was seen through the eyes of his immaculate mother, the blessed Virgin. Through this devotional practice, the convert's mind is exposed to the joys, the sorrows, and the glories, which attended the life of the Savior, and which made an eternal impression upon the undistracted mind of his beloved mother, a mind that has never known the intellectual darkness caused by sin, which impedes every other human mind. First, he is invited to consider the enunciation of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, made to the everlorious Blessed Virgin Mary by the Archangel, St. Gabriel. The visitation of the Elorious Blessed Virgin Mary comes next to her cousin, St. Elizabeth, and is the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ and the purification of the blessed Virgin Mary in the temple, and the finding of our Lord Jesus Christ Christ by the evergrious, blessed Virgin Mary, and her most chaste spouse, saint Joseph, in the temple, as he confounded the teachers of the law at the age of 12. And after that our lord's agony in the garden, through which the convert is invited to ask for deeper contrition for his sins, our Lord scourging at the pillar, through which the convert begs for the grace to mortify the flesh and its desires, Our Lord's crowning with thorns through which the convert begs for the grace to align his thoughts on the affections of his heart with those of the Saviour, our Lord's caring of the cross on the Via de L Rosa, with its petition for an increase in the virtue of patience, which is so necessary to endure the difficulties of life, and the hardships which come to us because of our div devotion to Christ. And then there is our Lord's crucifixion on the wood of the cross for the redemption of the world, through the contemplation of which the convert asks for a spiriting for sacrifice, like unto that which animated the Lord. then, finally, through this singular method of prayer, the convert is beckoned to set his mind upon the things which are above. the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, his glorious ascension into heaven, the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the blessed Virgin and the holy apostles of Pentecost, a divine act which stirred deep within them a zeal for the salvation of souls. And after all that, the convert is asked to consider the assumption into the heaven of the blessed Virgin, and finally the most holy Trinity's coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary as Queen of heaven and earth. But friends, as the convert to our holy religion is being schooled at the feet of the mother of God or through the holy Rosary, he is often being made aware of numerous other specific devotional practices, methods of prayer, and approaches to the life of prayer. and as he is taking up the daily recitation of the Holy Rosary, in obedience to our lady of Fatima, and at the encouragement of innumerable Roman pontiffs, the convert is also being introduced, sometimes systematically, at alta times willy nilly, to the Angelus, to the adoration and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, to countless

novenas and litanies, and during land, especially to to the stations of the cross. And as the convert is trying to drink from this fire hose of devotional richness, he overhears his fellow Catholics talking about debreary, silent retreats, lecture Divina and Ignatian retreats, mental prayer and contemplation, pilgrimage to holy sights and shrines, and so, so, so, very much more.. When a convert to the Catholic religion enters the church, at least in its healthier parts, he is almost inevitably equipped, and that almost without asking to take up a life enriched by the prayer of Holy Mother Church, and the wise among the converts heed that call, and are transformed because of it. But thou, when thou fastest anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou would appear not to men to fast, but to thy father who is in secret, and thy father who seeth in secret will repay thee. Now, friends, what the convert cannot even hope to imagine, cradle Catholics already know, that the church's countless methods and approaches to prayer are to some degree mirrored by the opportunities for the practice of lasting that she makes available to her children. As the convert is frolicking through the fields of Catholic prayer, the cradle Catholic, at least the devout ones, are almost busting with excitement at the prospect of being able to introduce their new companion to the disciplined joys of fasting. to the wonder that his Catholic prayer, these maturer Catholics wish the convert to add the life altering demands of the Catholic fast. Confident that the neophyte has had been instructed in the practice of the Friday fast and abstinence, you know, fasting, that is, one full meal with two smaller collations, an abstinence, no flesh meat on Fridays, major feast days accepted, of course, on both counts. Confident that the novice Catholic was observing the basic fast, his mature brethren longed to challenge him or long to challenge him, to take up a more vigorous approach to the fast, by freely choosing to observe some of the more ancient practices once required, but now only encouraged. Among these are the Lenten fast, the amis fast, vigil fast, and the advent fast; and because of the parallel between it and the Friday fast with which the convent is already acquainted, many a mature Catholic might encourage their new Catholic brother to adopt, as a starting point, the church's ancient Lenten fast, that is, to treat every day in Lent Sundaysed, as they are obliged to treat every Friday in Lent, that is, to limit themselves to one full meal per day throughout Lent, with two smaller ones, two smaller meals, that is,, that gather do not equal a full meal, and to abstain from fleshme. And once again, the wise among the converts would heed the call of their elder brothers in religion, and would be transformed because of it. But when thou dost alms, let not my left hand know what thy right hand doth, that by that thy arms may be in secret, and thy father who seeth in secret will repay thee. But, dear friends, I would like to suggest to you that, as varied as are the legitimate forms of prayer and fasting, many a convert is struck by the variety of ways that the church specifically calls Catholics, both cradle born and converts alike to the practice of almsgiving. to the two forms of almsgiving commonly encourage in practice among constant evangelicals, namely, direct giving to the congregation with which they worship, and donations to charities, both religious and non religious, the confert discovers that the Catholic church explicitly adds three other forms of almsgiving,, firstly, direct giving to the poor. Secondly, works of mercy through confraternities and legalities, and thirdly, almsgiving as penance or votive offerings. Now, friends, I am not suggesting that Protestant evangelicals do not practice their almsgiving in these ways. I am only noting that the typical from Protestant evangelicalism is likely to be surprised by the fact that the Catholic Church specifically identifies directly giving money, food, clothing, or shelter to those in need, as one of the expectations that she has of her sons and daughters. And although I might be mistaken, I believe that this holds true regarding joining lay associations, such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society, organize alms givingving efforts like visiting the sick, providing for widows and orphans or distributing food and clothing. Once again, the point I am making is not that Protestant evelicals do not do these things, but rather that their traditions do not explicitly call upon their members in a systematic way to practice almsgiving in these ways. One more thing, although the theology which undergoes Protestant evangelicalism would resoundly reject the practice of almsgiving as penance, I suspect that many Protestant evangelicals do the deed via their wills and final Testaments. Why do I say this? Because Because for the man with a conscience, it is near impossible not to make an effort via wills and final testaments, to make amends for wrongs done, to atone for the deeds done in the flesh over a lifetime. But, friends, here is the sad part.

Numerous studies demonstrate that despite the Catholic Church's clear teaching regarding almsgiving, Protestant evangelicals are consistently more generous both to their congregations and to religious and non religious charities than we are. So what are we to make of this? Perhaps that many of our elder brothers in religion have simply chosen not to embrace these precepts of the religion of Jesus Christ. And as a result, it seems that even the wise among the converts have been left to their own devices as they tried to put it to practice the almsgiving called for by our Lord Jesus Christ and his holy Church. And it came to pass, as he was sitting at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. By now, dearest friends, you might be asking yourself, How does any of this sermon relate to the lesson and gospel appointed to be read on this feast of St. Martin, the apostle in Evangelist? Or why is Father going on about prayer and fasting and almsgiving when the gospel for today has said nothing about these matters? Well, if you loved me enough to be that direct, to be direct as all that, in your interrogation of me about the central point of my sermon, I would perhaps respond in this way. Holy Mother Church proclaimed a doctrine that is most demanding, a doctrine which touches upon and makes possible the salvation of your soul and mind. and I'd likely continue saying that. the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, in obedience to her Lord, her head and her lord, teaches the necessity of our active participation in the work of our salvation. She teaches that faith without works is dead, and that the man with such dead faith is perishing in his sins, despite the fact that he might intellectually agree with the doctrine and dogmas of Jesus Christ. And then at the end, in an effort to echo the words of the Savior, I might quote the words of St. Paul's hymn to charity, and say, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal, and if I should have prophecy and should know all miss mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith so that I could remove mountains and hath not charity, I am nothing, and if I should distribute distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. But then again, I might simply quote our Lord in my defense and say, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, for I am not come to call the just, but sinners. Friends, let us not deceive ourselves, our acts of piety, our prayers, our fasting, and our almsgiving, even those encouraged or commanded by our Lord himself, are powerless to assist us in our journey to heaven, if they do not proceed from that charity which is merciful to the penitent. The man whose piety allows him to recuse himself from the engagement with sinners in order to call them to repentance and the salvation of their souls, is a man whose religion is displeasing to Jesus Christ. And Jesus answering said to them, " They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. So on this feast of St. Matthew, as we come to receive upon our tongues, and in our persons, the body, blood, soul, and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us earnestly beseech our heavenly Father to grant us the grace to live the virtue which mercy reveals, the grace to have hearts full of charity toward the wayward, hearts quick to lavish upon the penitent, the same mercy we have received from God, saying, May we be helped, O Lord, by the prayers of the blessed apostle and evangelist Matthew, that what we cannot obtain by our own efforts may be given to us by his intercession. Let thy continual pity, O Lord, cleanse and defend thy church, and because it cannot continue in safety without thee, may it ever be governed by thy goodness, through Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord, who with thee liveth and reigneth in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, whirl without end. Amen. Friends, let us put away childish things, and let us live as men who know that now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity. St. Matthew, pray for us, our Lady help of Christians pray for us.. Most sacred heart of Jesus, have mercy on us. In the name of the Father of the Son of the Holy Ghost, Amen.