

Matthew: 6:1-18

From Catena Aurea:

6:1

1. Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven.

GLOSS. (non occ.) Christ having now fulfilled the Law in respect of commandments, begins to fulfil it in respect of promises, that we may do God's commandments for heavenly wages, not for the earthly which the Law held out. All earthly things are reduced to two main heads, viz. human glory, and abundance of earthly goods, both of which seem to be promised in the Law. Concerning the first is that spoken in Deuteronomy, The Lord shall make thee higher than all the nations who dwell on the face of the earth. (c. 28:1.) And in the same place it is added of earthly wealth, The Lord shall make thee abound in all good things. Therefore the Lord now forbids these two things, glory and wealth, to the attention of believers.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xix.) Yet be it known that the desire of fame is near a kin to virtue.

AUGUSTINE. (Prosper. Lib. Sentent. 318.) How great strength the love of human glory has, none feels, but he who has proclaimed war against it. For though it is easy for any not to wish for praise when it is denied him, it is difficult not to be pleased with it when it is offered.

CHRYSOSTOM. Observe how He has begun as it were describing some beast hard to be discerned, and ready to steal upon him who is not greatly on his guard against it; it enters in secretly, and carries off insensibly all those things that are within.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 1.) In saying only, That ye be seen of men, without any addition, He seems to have forbidden that we should make that the end of our actions. For the Apostle who declared, If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ; (Gal. 1:10.) says in another place, I please all men in all things. (1 Cor. 10:33.) This he did not that he might please men, but God, to the love of whom he desires to turn the hearts of men by pleasing them. As we should not think that he spoke absurdly, who should say. In this my pains in seeking a ship, it is not the ship I seek, but my country.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. 54. 2.) He says this, that ye be seen of men, because there are some who so do their righteousness before men that themselves may not be seen, but that the works themselves may be seen, and their Father who is in heaven may be glorified; for they reckon not their own righteousness, but His, in the faith of whom they live.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 1.) That He adds, Otherwise ye shall not have your reward before your Father who is in heaven, signifies no more than that we ought to take heed that we seek not praise of men in reward of our works.

6:2–4

2. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

3. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

4. That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 2.) Above the Lord had spoken of righteousness in general. He now pursues it through its different parts.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Thus what He says, Do not sound a trumpet before thee, refers to what He had said above, Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men.

JEROME. He who sounds a trumpet before him when he does alms is a hypocrite. Whence he adds, as the hypocrites do.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) As then the hypocrites, (a word meaning ‘one who feigns,’) as personating the characters of other men, act parts which are not naturally their own—for he who personates Agamemnon, is not really Agamemnon, but feigns to be so—so likewise in the Churches, whosoever in his whole conduct desires to seem what he is not, is a hypocrite; he feigns himself righteous and is not really so, seeing his only motive is praise of men.

GLOSS. (non occ.) In the words, in the streets and villages, he marks the public places which they selected; and in those, that they may receive honour of men, he marks their motive.

GREGORY. (Mor. xxxi. 13.) It should be known, that there are some who wear the dress of sanctity, and are not able to work out the merit of perfection, yet who must in no wise be numbered among the hypocrites, because it is one thing to sin from weakness, another from crafty affectation.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 2.) And such sinners receive from God the Searcher of hearts none other reward than punishment of their deceitfulness; Verily I say unto you, they have their reward,

JEROME. A reward not of God, but of themselves, for they receive praise of men, for the sake of which it was that they practised their virtues.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) This refers to what He had said above, Otherwise ye shall have no reward of your Father which is in heaven; and He goes on to shew them that they should not do their alms as the hypocrites, but teaches them how they should do them.

CHRYSOSTOM. Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, is said as an extreme expression, as much as to say, If it were possible, that you should not know yourself, and that your very hands should be hid from your sight, that is what you should most strive after.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) But according to this interpretation, it will be no fault to have a respect to pleasing the faithful; and yet we are forbidden to propose as the end of any good work the pleasing of any kind of men. Yet if you would have men to imitate your actions which may be pleasing to them, they must be done before unbelievers as well as believers. If again, according to another interpretation, we take the left hand to mean our enemy, and that our enemy should not know when we do our alms, why did the Lord Himself mercifully heal men when the Jews were standing round Him? And how too must we deal with our enemy himself according to that precept, If thy enemy hunger, feed him. (Prov. 25:21.) A third interpretation is ridiculous; that the left hand signifies the wife, and that because women are wont to be more close in the matter of expense out of the family purse, therefore the charities of the husband should be secret from the wife, for the avoiding of domestic strife. But this command is addressed to women as well as to men, what then is the left hand, from which women are bid to conceal their alms? Is the husband also the left hand of the wife? And when it is commanded such that they enrich each other with good works, it is clear that they ought not to hide their good deeds; nor is a theft to be committed to do God

service. But if in any case something must needs be done covertly, from respect to the weakness of the other, though it is not unlawful, yet that we cannot suppose the wife to be intended by the left hand here is clear from the purport of the whole paragraph; no, not even such an one as he might well call left. But that which is blamed in hypocrites, namely, that they seek praise of men, this you are forbid to do; the left hand therefore seems to signify the delight in men's praise; the right hand denotes the purpose of fulfilling the divine commands. Whenever then a desire to gain honour from men mingles itself with the conscience of him that does alms, it is then the left hand knowing what the right hand, the right conscience, does. Let not the left hand know, therefore, what the right hand doeth, means, let not the desire of men's praise mingle with your conscience. But our Lord does yet more strongly forbid the left hand alone to work in us, than its mingling in the works of the right hand. The intent with which He said all this is shewn in that He adds, that your alms may be in secret; that is, in that your good conscience only, which human eye cannot see, nor words discover, though many things are said falsely of many. But your good conscience itself is enough for you towards deserving your reward, if you look for your reward from Him who alone can see your conscience. This is that He adds, And your Father which seeth in secret shall reward you. Many Latin copies have, openly.

AUGUSTINE. But in the Greek copies, which are earlier, we have not the word openly.

CHRYSOSTOM. If therefore you desire spectators of your good deeds, behold you have not merely Angels and Archangels, but the God of the universe.

6:5–6

5. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 3.) He does not now bid us pray, but instructs us how we should pray; as above He did not command us to do alms, but shewed the manner of doing them.

CHRYSOSTOM. He calls them hypocrites, because feigning that they are praying to God, they are looking round to men; and, He adds, they love to pray in the synagogues.

GLOSS. (ord.) Or, the corners of the streets, are the places where one way crosses another, and makes four cross-ways.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Not that the mere being seen of men is an impiety, but the doing this, in order to be seen of men.

CHRYSOSTOM. It is a good thing to be drawn away from the thought of empty glory, but especially in prayer. For our thoughts are apt to stray of themselves; if then we address ourselves to prayer with this disease upon us, how shall we understand those things that are said by us?

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) The privity of other men is to be so far shunned by us, as it leads us to do any thing with this mind that we look for the fruit of their applause.

CHRYSOSTOM. He says, have received, because God was ready to give them that reward which comes from Himself, but they prefer rather that which comes from men. He then goes on to teach how we should pray.

JEROME. This if taken in its plain sense teaches the hearer to shun all desire of vain honour in praying.

CYPRIAN. (Tr. vii. 2.) The Lord has bid us in His instructions to pray secretly in remote and withdrawn places, as best suited to faith; that we may be assured that God who is present every where hears and sees all, and in the fulness of His Majesty penetrates even hidden places.

CASSIAN. (Collat. ix. 35.) Also we should observe close silence in our prayers, that our enemies, who are ever most watchful to ensnare us at that time, may not know the purport of our petition.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Or, by our chambers are to be understood our hearts, of which it is spoken in the fourth Psalm; (Ps 4:4.) What things ye utter in your hearts, and wherewith ye are pricked in your chambers. The door is the bodily senses; without are all worldly things, which, enter into our thoughts through the senses, and that crowd of vain imaginings which beset us in prayer.

CYPRIAN. (Tr. vii. 20.) What insensibility is it to be snatched wandering off by light and profane imaginings, when you are presenting your entreaty to the Lord, as if there were aught else you ought rather to consider than that your converse is with God! How can you claim of God to attend to you, when you do not attend to yourself? This is altogether to make no provision against the enemy; this is when praying to God, to offend God's Majesty by the neglectfulness of your prayer.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) The door then must be shut, that is, we must resist the bodily sense, that we may address our Father in such spiritual prayer as is made in the inmost spirit, where we pray to Him truly in secret.

CHRYSOSTOM. He said not 'shall freely give thee,' but, shall reward thee; thus He constitutes Himself your debtor.

6:7–8

7. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8. Be ye not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) As the hypocrites use to set themselves so as to be seen in their prayers, whose reward is to be acceptable to men; so the Ethnici (that is, the Gentiles) use to think that they shall be heard for their much speaking; therefore He adds, When ye pray, do not ye use many words.

CASSIAN. (Collat. ix. 36.) We should indeed pray often, but in short form, lest if we be long in our prayers, the enemy that lies in wait for us, might suggest something for our thoughts.

AUGUSTINE. (Epist. 130, 10.) Yet to continue long in prayer is not, as some think, what is here meant, by using many words. For much speaking is one thing, and an enduring fervency another. For of the Lord Himself it is written, that He continued a whole night in prayer, and prayed at great length, setting an example to us. The brethren in Egypt are said to use frequent prayers, but those very short, and as it were hasty ejaculations, lest that fervency of spirit, which is most behoveful for us in prayer, should by longer continuance be violently broken off. Herein themselves sufficiently shew, that this fervency of spirit, as it

is not to be forced if it cannot last, so if it has lasted is not to be violently broken off. Let prayer then be without much speaking, but not without much entreaty, if this fervent spirit can be supported; for much speaking in prayer is to use in a necessary matter more words than necessary. But to entreat much, is to importune with enduring warmth of heart Him to whom our entreaty is made; for often is this business effected more by groans than words, by weeping more than speech.

CHRYSOSTOM. Hereby He dissuades from empty speaking in prayer; as, for example, when we ask of God things improper, as dominions, fame, overcoming of our enemies, or abundance of wealth. He commands then that our prayers should not be long; long, that is, not in time, but in multitude of words. For it is right that those who ask should persevere in their asking; being instant in prayer, as the Apostle instructs; but does not thereby enjoin us to compose a prayer of ten thousand verses, and speak it all; which He secretly hints at, when He says, Do not ye use many words.

GLOSS. (ord.) What He condemns is many words in praying that come of want of faith; as the Gentiles do. For a multitude of words were needful for the Gentiles, seeing the dæmons could not know for what they petitioned, until instructed by them; they think they shall be heard for their much speaking.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) And truly all superfluity of discourse has come from the Gentiles, who labour rather to practise their tongues than to cleanse their hearts, and introduce this art of rhetoric into that wherein they need to persuade God.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) For we use many words then when we have to instruct one who is in ignorance, what need of them to Him who is Creator of all things; Your heavenly Father knoweth what ye have need of before you ask Him.

JEROME. On this there starts up a heresy of certain Philosophers who taught the mistaken dogma, that If God knows for what we shall pray, and, before we ask, knows what we need, our prayer is needlessly made to one who has such knowledge. (Epicureans.) To such we shortly reply, That in our prayers we do not instruct, but entreat; it is one thing to inform the ignorant, another to beg of the understanding: the first were to teach; the latter is to perform a service of duty.

CHRYSOSTOM. You do not then pray in order to teach God your wants, but to move Him, that you may become His friend by the importunity of your applications to Him, that you may be humbled, that you may be reminded of your sins.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Nor ought we to use words in seeking to obtain of God what we would, but to seek with intense and fervent application of mind, with pure love, and suppliant spirit.

AUGUSTINE. (Epist. 130, 9.) But even with words we ought at certain periods to make prayer to God, that by these signs of things we may keep ourselves in mind, and may know what progress we have made in such desire, and may stir up ourselves more actively to increase this desire, that after it have begun to wax warm, it may not be chilled and utterly frozen up by divers cares, without our continual care to keep it alive. Words therefore are needful for us that we should be moved by them, that we should understand clearly what it is we ask, not that we should think that by them the Lord is either instructed or persuaded.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 3.) Still it may be asked, what is the use of prayer at all, whether made in words or in meditation of things, if God knows already what is necessary for us. The mental posture of prayer calms and purifies the soul, and makes it of more capacity to receive the divine gifts which are poured into it. For God does not hear us for the prevailing force of our pleadings; He is at all times ready to give us His light, but we are not ready to receive it, but prone to other things. There is then in prayer a turning of the body to God, and a purging of the inward eye, whilst those worldly things which we desired are shut out, that the eye of the mind made single might be able to bear the single light, and in it abide with that joy with which a happy life is perfected.

6:9

9. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

GLOSS. (e. Cypr.) Amongst His other saving instructions and divine lessons, wherewith He counsels believers, He has set forth for us a form of prayer in few words; thus giving us confidence that that will be quickly granted, for which He would have us pray so shortly.

CYPRIAN. (Tr. vii. 1.) He who gave to us to live, taught us also to pray, to the end, that speaking to the Father in the prayer which the Son hath taught, we may receive a readier hearing. It is praying like friends and familiars to offer up to God of His own. Let the Father recognize the Son's words when we offer up our prayer; and seeing we have Him when we sin for an Advocate with the Father, let us put forward the words of our Advocate, when as sinners we make petition for our offences.

GLOSS. (ord.) Yet we do not confine ourselves wholly to these words, but use others also conceived in the same sense, with which our heart is kindled.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 4.) Since in every entreaty we have first to propitiate the good favour of Him whom we entreat, and after that mention what we entreat for; and this we commonly do by saying something in praise of Him whom we entreat, and place it in the front of our petition; in this the Lord bids us say no more than only, Our Father which art in Heaven. Many things were said of them to the praise of God, yet do we never find it taught to the children of Israel to address God as 'Our Father;' He is rather set before them as a Lord over slaves. But of Christ's people the Apostle says, We have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father, (Rom. 8:15.) and that not of our deservings, but of grace. This then we express in the prayer when we say, Father; which name also stirs up love. For what can be dearer than sons are to a father? And a suppliant spirit, in that men should say to God Our Father. And a certain presumption that we shall obtain; for what will He not give to His sons when they ask of Him, who has given them that first that they should be sons? Lastly, how great anxiety possesses his mind, that having called God his Father, he should not be unworthy of such a Father. By this the rich and the noble are admonished when they have become Christians not to be haughty towards the poor or truly born, who like themselves may address God as Our Father; and they therefore cannot truly or piously say this unless they acknowledge such for brethren.

CHRYSOSTOM. For what hurt does such kindred with those beneath us, when we are all alike kin to One above us? For who calls God Father, in that one title confesses at once the forgiveness of sins, the adoption, the heirship, the brotherhood, which he has with the Only-begotten, and the gift of the Spirit. For none can call God Father, but he who has obtained all these blessings. In a two-fold manner, therefore, he moves the feeling of them that pray, both by the dignity of Him who is prayed to, and the greatness of those benefits which we gain by prayer.

CYPRIAN. (Tr. vii. 4.) We say not My Father, but Our Father, for the teacher of peace and master of unity would not have men pray singly and severally, since when any prays, he is not to pray for himself only. Our prayer is general and for all, and when we pray, we pray not for one person but for us all, because we all are one. So also He willed that one should pray for all, according as Himself in one did bear us all.

GLOSS. (ord.) Also because He is a common Father of all, we say, Our Father; not My Father which is appropriate to Christ alone, who is His Son by nature.

CASSIAN. (Collat. ix. 18.) And that we should speed with strong desire thitherward where our Father dwells.

CHRYSOSTOM. In heaven, not confining God's presence to that, but withdrawing the thoughts of the petitioner from earth and fixing them on things above.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 5.) Or; in heaven is among the saints and the righteous men; for God is not contained in space. For the heavens literally are the upper parts of the universe, and if God be thought to be in them, then are the birds of more desert than men, seeing they must have their habitation nearer to God. But, God is nigh, (Ps. 34:18.) it is not said to the men of lofty stature, or to the inhabitants of the mountain tops; but, to the broken in heart. But as the sinner is called 'earth,' as earth thou art, and unto earth thou must return, (Gen. 3:19.) so might the righteous on the other hand be called 'the heaven.' Thus then it would be rightly said Who art in heaven, for there would seem to be as much difference spiritually between the righteous and sinners, as locally, between heaven and earth. With the intent of signifying which thing it is, that we turn our faces in prayer to the east, not as though God was there only, deserting all other parts of the earth; but that the mind may be reminded to turn itself to that nature which is more excellent, that is to God, when his body, which is of earth, is turned to the more excellent body which is of heaven. For it is desirable that all, both small and great, should have right conceptions of God, and therefore for such as cannot fix their thoughts on spiritual natures, it is better that they should think of God as being in heaven than in earth.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Having named Him to whom prayer is made and where He dwells, let us now see what things they are for which we ought to pray. But the first of all the things that are prayed for is, Hallowed be thy name, not implying that the name of God is not holy, but that it may be held sacred of men; that is, that God may be so known that nothing may be esteemed more holy.

CHRYSOSTOM. Or; He bids us in praying beg that God may be glorified in our life; as if we were to say, Make us to live so that all things may glorify Thee through us. For hallowed signifies the same as glorified. It is a petition worthy to be made by man to God, to ask nothing before the glory of the Father, but to postpone all things to His praise.

CYPRIAN. (Tr. vii. 7.) Otherwise, we say this not as wishing for God to be made holy by our prayers, but asking of Him for His name to be kept holy in us. For seeing He Himself has said, Be ye holy, for I also am

holy, (Lev. 20:7.) it is this that we ask and request that we who have been sanctified in Baptism, may persevere such as we have begun.

AUGUSTINE. (De Don. Pers. 2.) But why is this perseverance asked of God, if, as the Pelagians say, it is not given by God? Is it not a mocking petition to ask of God what we know is not given by Him, but is in the power of man himself to attain?

CYPRIAN. (ubi sup.) For this we daily make petition, since we need a daily sanctification, in order that we who sin day by day, may cleanse afresh our offences by a continual sanctification.

6:10

10. Thy kingdom come.

GLOSS. (ord.) It follows suitably, that after our adoption as sons, we should ask a kingdom which is due to sons.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 6.) This is not so said as though God did not now reign on earth, or had not reigned over it always. Come, must therefore be taken for be manifested to men. For none shall then be ignorant of His kingdom, when His Only-begotten not in understanding only, but in visible shape shall come to judge the quick and dead. This day of judgment the Lord teaches shall then come, when the Gospel shall have been preached to all nations; which thing pertains to the hallowing of God's name.

JEROME. Either it is a general prayer for the kingdom of the whole world that the reign of the Devil may cease; or for the kingdom in each of us that God may reign there, and that sin may not reign in our mortal body.

CYPRIAN. (Tr. vii. 8.) Or; it is that kingdom which was promised to us by God, and bought with Christ's blood; that we who before in the world have been servants, may afterwards reign under the dominion of Christ.

AUGUSTINE. (Epist. 130, 11.) For the kingdom of God will come whether we desire it or not. But herein we kindle our desires towards that kingdom, that it may come to us, and that we may reign in it.

CASSIAN. (Collat. ix. 19.) Or; because the Saint knows by the witness of his conscience, that when the kingdom of God shall appear, he shall be partaker therein.

JEROME. But be it noted, that it comes of high confidence, and of an unblemished conscience only, to pray for the kingdom of God, and not to fear the judgment.

CYPRIAN. (ubi sup.) The kingdom of God may stand for Christ Himself, whom we day by day wish to come, and for whose advent we pray that it may be quickly manifested to us. As He is our resurrection, because in Him we rise again, so may He be called the kingdom of God, because we are to reign in Him. Rightly we ask for God's kingdom, that is, for the heavenly, because there is a kingdom of this earth beside. He, however, who has renounced the world, is superior to its honours and to its kingdom; and hence he who dedicates himself to God and to Christ, longs not for the kingdom of earth, but for the kingdom of Heaven.

AUGUSTINE. (De Don. Pers. 2.) When they pray, Let thy kingdom come, what else do they pray for who are already holy, but that they may persevere in that holiness they now have given unto them? For no otherwise will the kingdom of God come, than as it is certain it will come to those that persevere unto the end.

Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 6.) In that kingdom of blessedness the happy life will be made perfect in the Saints as it now is in the heavenly Angels; and therefore after the petition, Thy kingdom come, follows, Thy will be done as in heaven, so in earth. That is, as by the Angels who are in Heaven Thy will is done so as that they have fruition of Thee, no error clouding their knowledge, no pain marring their blessedness; so may it be done by Thy Saints who are on earth, and who, as to their bodies, are made of earth. So that, Thy will be done, is rightly understood as, 'Thy commands be obeyed;' as in heaven, so in earth, that is, as by Angels, so by men; not that they do what God would have them do, but they do because He would have them do it; that is, they do after His will.

CHRYSOSTOM. See how excellently this follows; having taught us to desire heavenly things by that which He said, Thy kingdom come, before we come to Heaven He bids us make this earth into Heaven, in that saying, Thy will be done as in heaven, so in earth.

JEROME. Let them be put to shame by this text who falsely affirm that there are daily falls (ruinas) in Heavenb.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Or; as by the righteous, so by sinners; as if He had said, As the righteous do Thy will, so also may sinners; either by turning to Thee, or in receiving every man his just reward, which shall be in the last judgment. Or, by the heaven and the earth we may understand the spirit and the flesh. As the Apostle says, In my mind I obey the law of God, (Rom. 7:25.) we see the will of God done in the spirit, But in that change which is promised to the righteous there, Let thy will be done as in heaven, so in earth; that is, as the spirit does not resist God, so let the body not resist the spirit. Or; as in heaven, so in earth, as in Christ Jesus Himself, so in His Church; as in the Man who did His Father's will, so in the woman who is espoused of Him. And heaven and earth may be suitably understood as husband and wife, seeing it is of the heaven that the earth brings forth her fruits.

CYPRIAN. (ubi sup.) We ask not that God may do His own will, but that we may be enabled to do what He wills should be done by us; and that it may be done in us we stand in need of that will, that is, of God's aid and protection; for no man is strong by his own strength, but is safe in the indulgence and pity of God.

CHRYSOSTOM. For virtue is not of our own efforts, but of grace from above. Here again is enjoined on each one of us prayer for the whole world, inasmuch as we are not to say, Thy will be done in me, or in us; but throughout the earth, that error may cease, truth be planted, malice be banished, and virtue return, and thus the earth not differ from heaven.

AUGUSTINE. (De Don. Pers. 3.) From this passage is clearly shewn against the Pelagians that the beginning of faith is God's gift, when Holy Church prays for unbelievers that they may begin to have faith. Moreover, seeing it is done already in the Saints, why do they yet pray that it may be done, but that they pray that they may persevere in that they have begun to be?

6:11

11. Give us this day our daily bread.

AUGUSTINE. (Enchir. 115.) These three things therefore which have been asked in the foregoing petitions, are begun here on earth, and according to our proficiency are increased in us; but in another life, as we hope, they shall be everlastingly possessed in perfection. In the four remaining petitions we ask for

temporal blessings which are necessary to obtaining the eternal; the bread, which is accordingly the next petition in order, is a necessary.

JEROME. The Greek word here which we render 'supersubstantialis,' is ἐπιούσιος. The LXX often make use of the word περιούσιος, by which we find, on reference to the Hebrew, they always render the word sogolac. Symmachus translates it ἐξάίρετος, that is, 'chief,' or 'excellent,' though in one place he has interpreted 'peculiar.' When then we pray God to give us our 'peculiar' or 'chief' bread, we mean Him who says in the Gospel, I am the living bread which came down from heaven. (John 6:51.)

CYPRIAN. (ubi sup.) For Christ is the bread of life, and this bread belongs not to all men, but to us. This bread we pray that it be given day by day, lest we who are in Christ, and who daily receive the Eucharist for food of salvation, should by the admission of any grievous crime, and our being therefore forbidden the heavenly bread, be separated from the body of Christ. Hence then we pray, that we who abide in Christ, may not draw back from His sanctification and His body.

AUGUSTINE. (De Don. Pers. 4.) Here then the saints ask for perseverance of God, when they pray that they may not be separated from the body of Christ, but may abide in that holiness, committing no crime.

CASSIAN. (Coll. ix. 21.) In that He says, this day, He shews that it is to be daily taken, and that this prayer should be offered at all seasons, seeing there is no day on which we have not need, by the receiving of this bread, to confirm the heart of the inward man.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 7.) There is here a difficulty created by the circumstance of there being many in the East, who do not daily communicate in the Lord's Supper. And they defend their practice on the ground of ecclesiastical authority, that they do this without offence, and are not forbidden by those who preside over the Churches. But not to pronounce any thing concerning them in either way, this ought certainly to occur to our thoughts, that we have here received of the Lord a rule for prayer which we ought not to transgress. Who then will dare to affirm that we ought to use this prayer only once? Or if twice or thrice, yet only up to that hour at which we communicate on the Lord's body? For after that we cannot say, Give us this day that which we have already received. Or will any one on this account be able to compel us to celebrate this sacrament at the close of the day?

CASSIAN. (ubi sup.) Though the expression to-day may be understood of this present life; thus, Give us this bread while we abide in this world.

JEROME. We may also interpret the word 'supersubstantialis' otherwise, as that which is above all other substances, and more excellent than all creatures, to wit, the body of the Lord.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Or by daily we may understand spiritual, namely, the divine precepts which we ought to meditate and work.

JEROME. Others understand it literally according to that saying of the Apostle, Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content, that the saints should have care only of present food; as it follows, Take no thought for the morrow.

AUGUSTINE. (Epist. 130. 11.) So that herein we ask for a sufficiency of all things necessary under the one name of bread.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 7.) Some one may perhaps find a difficulty in our here praying that we may obtain necessaries of this life, such as food and raiment, when the Lord has instructed us, Be not ye careful what ye shall eat, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed. But it is impossible not to be careful about that for the obtaining which we pray.

AUGUSTINE. (Epist. 130. 6.) But to wish for the necessaries of life and no more, is not improper; for such sufficiency is not sought for its own sake, but for the health of the body, and for such garb and appliances of the person, as may make us to be not disagreeable to those with whom we have to live in all good reputation. For these things we may pray that they may be had when we are in want of them, that they may be kept when we have them.

CHRYSOSTOM. It should be thought upon how when He had delivered to us this petition, Thy will be done as in heaven so in earth, then because He spake to men in the flesh, and not like angelic natures without passion or appetite, He now descends to the needs of our bodies. And He teaches us to pray not for money or the gratification of lust, but for daily bread; and as yet further restriction, He adds, this day, that we should not trouble ourselves with thought for the coming day.

CYPRIAN. (Tr. vii. 14.) Justly therefore does the disciple of Christ make petition for to-day's provision, without indulging excessive longings in his prayer. It were a self-contradicting and incompatible thing for us who pray that the kingdom of God may quickly come, to be looking unto long life in the world below.

JEROME. In the Gospel, entitled The Gospel according to the Hebrews, 'supersubstantialis' is rendered 'mohar,' that is 'to-morrow's;' so that the sense would be, Give us today to-morrow's bread; i. e. for the time to come.

6:12

12. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

CYPRIAN. (Tr. vii. 15.) After supply of food, next pardon of sin is asked for, that he who is fed of God may live in God, and not only the present and passing life be provided for, but the eternal also; whereunto we may come, if we receive the pardon of our sins, to which the Lord gives the name of debts, as he speaks further on, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me. (Mat. 18:32.) How well is it for our need, how provident and saving a thing, to be reminded that we are sinners compelled to make petition for our offences, so that in claiming God's indulgence, the mind is recalled to a recollection of its guilt. That no man may plume himself with the pretence of innocency, and perish more wretchedly through self-exaltation, he is instructed that he commits sin every day by being commanded to pray for his sins.

AUGUSTINE. (De Don. Pers. 5.) With this weapon the Pelagian heretics received their deathblow, who dare to say that a righteous man is free altogether from sin in this life, and that of such is at this present time composed a Church, having neither spot nor wrinkle.

CHRYSOSTOM. That this prayer is meant for the faithful, both the laws of the Church teach, and the beginning of the prayer which instructs us to call God Father. In thus bidding the faithful pray for forgiveness of sin, He shews that even after baptism sin can be remitted (against the Novatians.)

CYPRIAN. (ubi sup.) He then who taught us to pray for our sins, has promised us that His fatherly mercy and pardon shall ensue. But He has added a rule besides, binding us under the fixed condition and responsibility, that we are to ask for our sins to be forgiven in such sort as we forgive them that are in debt to us.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 8.) This is not said of debts of money only, but of all things in which any sins against us, and among these also of money, because that he sins against you, who does not return money due to you, when he has whence he can return it. Unless you forgive this sin you cannot say, Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

AUGUSTINE. (Enchir. 73.) Forasmuch as this so great goodness, namely, to forgive debts, and to love our enemies, cannot be possessed by so great a number as we suppose to be heard in the use of this prayer; without doubt the terms of this stipulation are fulfilled, though one have not attained to such proficiency as to love his enemy; yet if when he is requested by one, who has trespassed against him, that he would forgive him, he do forgive him from his heart; for he himself desires to be forgiven then at least when he asks forgiveness. And if one have been moved by a sense of his sin to ask forgiveness of him against whom he has sinned, he is no more to be thought on as an enemy, that there should be any thing hard in loving him, as there was when he was in active enmity.

6:13

13. And lead us not into temptation.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 9.) Some copies read, Carry us not¹, an equivalent word, both being a translation of one Greek word, εἰσενέγκης. Many in interpreting say, 'Suffer us not to be led into temptation,' as being what is implied in the word lead. For God does not of Himself lead a man, but suffer him to be led from whom He has withdrawn His aid.

CYPRIAN. (Tr. vii. 17.) Herein it is shewn that the adversary can nothing avail against us, unless God first permit him; so that all our fear and devotion ought to be addressed to God.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) But it is one thing to be led into temptation, another to be tempted; for without temptation none can be approved, either to himself or to another; but every man is fully known to God before all trial. Therefore we do not here pray that we may not be tempted, but that we may not be led into temptation. As if one who was to be burnt alive should pray not that he should not be touched by fire, but that he should not be burnt. For we are then led into temptation when such temptations befall us as we are not able to resist.

AUGUSTINE. (Epist. 130, 11.) When then we say, Lead us not into temptation, what we ask is, that we may not, deserted by His aid, either consent through the subtle snares, or yield to the forcible might, of any temptation.

CYPRIAN. (ubi sup.) And in so praying we are cautioned of our own infirmity and weakness, lest any presumptuously exalt himself; that while a humble and submissive confession comes first, and all is referred to God, whatever we suppliantly apply for may by His gracious favour be supplied.

AUGUSTINE. (De Don. Pers. 5.) When the Saints pray, Lead us not into temptation, what else do they pray for than that they may persevere in their sanctity. This once granted—and that it is God’s gift this, that of Him we ask it, shews-none of the Saints but holds to the end his abiding holiness; for none ceases to hold on his Christian profession, till he be first overtaken of temptation. Therefore we seek not to be led into temptation that this may not happen to us; and if it does not happen, it is God that does not permit it to happen; for there is nothing done, but what He either does, or suffers to be done. He is therefore able to turn our wills from evil to good, to raise the fallen and to direct him into the way that is pleasing to Himself, to whom not in vain we plead, Lead us not into temptation. For whoso is not led into temptation of his own evil will, is free of all temptation; for, each man is tempted of his own lust. (James 1:14.) God would have us pray to Him that we may not be led into temptation, though He could have granted it without our prayer, that we might be kept in mind who it is from whom we receive all benefits. Let the Church therefore observe her daily prayers; she prays that the unbelieving may believe, therefore it is God that turns men to the faith; she prays that the believers may persevere; God gives them perseverance even unto the end.

But deliver us from evil. Amen.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) We ought to pray not only that we may not be led into evil from which we are at present free; but further that we may be set free from that into which we have already been led. Therefore it follows, Deliver us from evil.

CYPRIAN. (Tr. vii. 18.) After all these preceding petitions at the conclusion of the prayer comes a sentence, comprising shortly and collectively the whole of our petitions and desires. For there remains nothing beyond for us to ask for, after petition made for God’s protection from evil; for that gained, we stand secure and safe against all things that the Devil and the world work against us. What fear hath he from this life, who has God through life for his guardian?

AUGUSTINE. (Epist. 130, 11.) This petition with which the Lord’s Prayer concludes is of such extent, that a Christian man in whatever tribulation cast, will in this petition utter groans, in this shed tears, here begin

and here end his prayer. And therefore follows Amen, by which is expressed the strong desire of him that prays.

JEROME. Amen, which appears here at the close, is the seal of the Lord's Prayer. Aquila rendered 'faithfully'—we may perhaps 'truly.'

CYPRIAN. (ubi sup.) We need not wonder, dearest brethren, that this is God's prayer, seeing how His instruction comprises all our petitioning, in one saving sentence. This had already been prophesied by Isaiah the Prophet, A short word will God make in the whole earth. (Is. 10:22.) For when our Lord Jesus Christ came unto all, and gathering together the learned alike and the unlearned, did to every sex and age set forth the precepts of salvation, He made a full compendium of His instructions, that the memory of the scholars might not labour in the heavenly discipline, but accept with readiness whatsoever was necessary into a simple faith.

AUGUSTINE. (Epist. 130, 12.) And whatever other words we may use, either introductory to quicken the affections, or in conclusion to add to them, we say nothing more than is contained in the Lord's Prayer if we pray rightly and connectedly. For he who says, Glorify thyself in all nations, as thou art glorified among us, (Ecclus. 36:4.) what else does he say than, Hallowed be thy name? (Ps. 80:3.) He who prays, Shew thy face and we shall be safe, what is it but to say, Let thy kingdom come? (Ps. 119:133.) To say, Direct my steps according to thy word, what is it more than, Thy will be done? (Prov. 30:8.) To say, Give me neither poverty nor riches, what else is it than, Give us this day our daily bread? Lord, remember David and all his mercifulness! (Ps. 131:1.) and, If I have returned evil for evil, (Ps. 7:4.) what else but, Forgive us our debts even as we forgive our debtors? He who says, Remove far from me all greediness of belly, what else does he say, but Lead us not into temptation? (Ps. 59:1.) He who says, Save me, O my God, from my enemies, what else does he say but Deliver us from evil? And if you thus go through all the words of the holy prayers, you will find nothing that is not contained in the Lord's Prayer. Whoever then speaks such words as have no relation to this evangelic prayer, prays carnally; and such prayer I know not why we should not pronounce unlawful, seeing the Lord instructs those who are born again only to pray spiritually. But whoso in prayer says, Lord, increase my riches, add to my honours; and that from desire of such things, not with a view to doing men service after God's will by such things; I think that he finds nothing in the Lord's Prayer on which he may build such petitions. Let such an one then be withheld by shame from praying for, if not from desiring, such things. But if he have shame at the desire, yet desire overcomes, he will do better to pray for deliverance from the evil of desire to Him to whom we say, Deliver us from evil.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 11.) This number of petitions seems to answer to the seven-fold number of the beatitudes. If it is the fear of God by which are made blessed the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, let us ask that the name of God be hallowed among men, a reverent fear abiding for ever and ever. If it be piety by which the meek are blessed, let us pray that His kingdom may come, that we may become meek, and not resist Him. If it be knowledge by which they that mourn are blessed, let us pray that His will may be done as in heaven so in earth; for if the body consent with the spirit as does earth with heaven, we shall not mourn. If fortitude be that by which they that hunger are blessed, let us pray that our daily bread be this day given us, by which we may come to full saturity. If it is counsel by which blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy, let us forgive debts, that our debts may be forgiven us. If it be understanding by which they of pure heart are blessed, let us pray that we be not led into temptation, lest we have a double heart in the pursuit of temporal and earthly things which are for our probation. If it be wisdom by which blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God, let us pray to be delivered from evil; for that very deliverance will make us free as sons of God.

CHRYSOSTOM. Having made us anxious by the mention of our enemy, in this that He has said Deliver us from evil, He again restores confidence by that which is added in some copies, For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, since if His be the kingdom, none need fear, since even he who fights against us, must be His subject. But since His power and glory are infinite, He can not only deliver from evil, but also make glorious.

6:14–15

14. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 11.) Here we should not overlook that of all the petitions enjoined by the Lord, He judged that most worthy of further enforcement, which relates to forgiveness of sins, in which He would have us merciful; which is the only means of escaping misery.

AUGUSTINE. (Enchir. 74.) Whoever does not forgive him that in true sorrow seeks forgiveness, let him not suppose that his sins are by any means forgiven of the Lord.

CYPRIAN. (Tr. vii. 16.) For no excuse will abide you in the day of judgment, when you will be judged by your own sentence, and as you have dealt towards others, will be dealt with yourself.

JEROME. But if that which is written, I said, Ye are gods, but ye shall die like men, (Ps. 83:6, 7.) is said to those who for their sins deserve to become men instead of gods, then they to whom sins are forgiven are rightly called men.

CHRYSOSTOM. He mentions heaven and the Father to claim our attention, for nothing so likens you to God, as to forgive him who has injured you. And it were indeed unmeet should the son of such a Father become a slave, and should one who has a heavenly vocation live as of this earth, and of this life only.

6:16

16. Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

JEROME. The word exterminare, so often used in the ecclesiastical Scriptures through a blunder of the translators, has a quite different meaning from that in which it is commonly understood. It is properly said of exiles who are sent beyond the boundary of their country. Instead of this word, it would seem better to use the word demoliri, 'to destroy,' in translating the Greek ἀφανίζειν. The hypocrite destroys his face, in order that he may feign sorrow, and with a heart full of joy wears sorrow in his countenance.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 12.) On this paragraph it is to be specially noted, that not only in outward splendor and pomp, but even in the dress of sorrow and mourning, is there room for display, and that the more dangerous, inasmuch as it deceives under the name of God's services. For he who by inordinate pains taken with his person, or his apparel, or by the glitter of his other equipage, is distinguished, is easily proved by these very circumstances to be a follower of the pomps of this world, and no man is deceived by any semblance of a feigned sanctity in him. But when any one in the profession of Christianity draws men's eyes upon him by unwonted beggary and slovenliness in dress, if this be voluntary and not compulsory, then by his other conduct may be seen whether he does this to be seen of men, or from contempt of the refinements of dress.

6:17-18

17. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

18. That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

GLOSS. (ap. Anselm.) The Lord having taught us what we ought not to do, now proceeds to teach us what we ought to do, saying, When thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) A question is here wont to be raised; for none surely would literally enjoin, that, as we wash our faces from daily habit, so we should have our heads anointed when we fast; a thing which all allow to be most disgraceful.

JEROME. But He speaks in accordance with the manners of the province of Palestine, where it is the custom on festival days to anoint the head. What He enjoins then is, that when we are fasting we should wear the appearance of joy and gladness.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xx.) In almsgiving indeed, He did not say simply, 'Do not your alms before men,' but added, 'to be seen of them.' But in fasting and prayer He added nothing of this sort; because alms cannot be so done as to be altogether hid, fasting and prayer can be so done. The contempt of men's praise is no small fruit, for thereby we are freed from the heavy slavery of human opinion, and become properly workers of virtue, loving it for itself and not for others. For as we esteem it an affront if we are loved not for ourselves but for others' sake, so ought we not to follow virtue on the account of these men, nor to obey God for men's sake but for His own. Therefore it follows here, But to thy Father which seeth in secret.

GLOSS. (ord.) That is, to thy heavenly Father, who is unseen, or who dwells in the heart through faith. He fasts to God who afflicts himself for the love of God, and bestows on others what he denies himself.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Or; by the head we rightly understand the reason, because it is preeminent in the soul, and rules the other members of the man. Now anointing the head has some reference to rejoicing. Let him therefore joy within himself because of his fasting, who in fasting turns himself from doing the will of the world, that he may be subject to Christ.

GLOSS. (ord.) Behold how every thing in the New Testament is not to be taken literally. It were ridiculous to be smeared with oil when fasting; but it is behoveful for the mind to be anointed with the spirit of His love, in whose sufferings we ought to partake by afflicting ourselves.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

6:1 Beware of Public Piety

As Fire to Water, So Is Egotism to Virtue.

Origen: Just as water always conflicts with fire and fire with water and such things can never dwell together simultaneously, so likewise egotism and virtue are opposed to each other and can never easily coexist in one and the same soul. Therefore egotism is to be expelled from our souls, and we must abide in Christ's commandments. Fragment 114.

The False Piety That Attempts to Be Seen.

Chrysostom: When Jesus warned, "Beware of practicing your piety before men," he then added pointedly, "to be seen by them." On first glance it seems as if the same thing were being repeated, but if you were carefully to pay attention, you will note a careful distinction. Alms may be given in the presence of others primarily to be seen by them, or they may be given in the presence of others but not to be seen, or they may be openly given in order to be seen but still not be seen, or they may be given quietly and still be seen. He is not focusing simply on the outward act done but the inward intent. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.2.

Removing Care for the Present.

Hilary: He removes all concern for things of the present and bids those thunderstruck by the hope of the future to pursue neither the favor of others by parading their virtue nor religious boasting through an outpouring of public prayer. Rather, the fruit of good works is to be contained within the knowledge of faith, because the pursuit of human praise will receive only that reward which it looks for from people, while to yearn for God's approval is to pursue a reward longed for patiently. On Matthew 4.28.

6:2 Sounding No Trumpet

Against Broadcasting Good Acts.

Chromatius: Earlier Jesus taught that the work of justice is to be done not for the sake of humans but for the sake of God. Now we are also instructed that we should not blow the trumpet when we perform acts of charity. That is, we should not broadcast what we do, because it is not the mark of a devout mind to do any of the works of God in order to anticipate the glory of human praise. Many people, you see, make a donation for the use of the poor in order to reap from the gesture the human praise and the renown of their contemporaries. The Lord shows that they have received the reward of their work in this age. For as long as they seek the glory of this age, they lose the reward of the future promise. Tractate on Matthew 26.4.2.

6:3 Right and Left Hands

Not Literal Hands.

Chrysostom: Jesus is not talking about literal left and right hands. Rather, he speaks spiritually with intentional exaggeration. “If it is possible,” he says, “for you to remain unaware, let this be your goal. The result, if it be possible, is that your giving be concealed from the very hands that serve.” It is not, as some say, that we should hide it from wrong-headed people, for he has commanded here that it should be concealed from all. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.2.

Alms Not for Boasting.

Chromatius: Here the Lord is not speaking literally of the hands of the human body. Hands as such cannot know, having the senses neither of seeing nor of language. Rather, “on the right hand” means righteous deeds and “on the left” signifies sinful deeds or persons. Thus we read it written in the book of Kings that “hand” means people when it says, “Do I not have ten hands in Israel?”—that is, ten tribes of Israel. Therefore, there is no doubt that “on the right hand” means “the just” and “on the left” means “sinners,” according to what Solomon related: “The Lord acknowledges the divisions on the right; the perverse are those who are on the left.” The Lord makes very plain the meaning of this “right” and “left” in the Gospel when he declares that the just are to be placed at the right, the sinners on the left. If something is to be accomplished according to the teaching of the Lord, then the right hand of the just must not know what

the left is doing. That is, in order to labor religiously and faithfully, we should not boast in the sight of sinners and unfaithful people. Tractate on Matthew 26.5.2–4.

6:4 Alms Given in Secret

Almsgiving in Secret.

Augustine: A hypocrite is one who pretends to be something one is not. This person pretends to be righteous yet shows no evidence of righteousness. All attention is focused on how one is being perceived or praised by others. Even pretenders may receive this praise precisely while they are deceiving those to whom they seem to be good. But they receive no reward from God the searcher of the heart—only reproach for their deceit. They may have a human reward, but from God they hear, “Depart from me, you workers of deceit. You may speak my name, but you do not do my works.” So you receive your reward with others, you have received the glory of others—so what? If you do good for the express purpose of having human glory, what good have you? The praise of others need not even be sought by one who acts rightly. We ought to follow one who acts rightly, profiting by imitating what we praise. Sermon on the Mount 2.2.5.

6:5 When You Pray

Pray with the Angels.

Chrysostom: When you pray, it is as if you were entering into a palace—not a palace on earth, but far more awesome, a palace in heaven. When you enter there, you do so with complete attentiveness and fitting respect. For in the houses of kings all turmoil is set aside, and silence reigns. Yet here you are being joined by choirs of angels. You are in communion with archangels and singing with the seraphim, who sing with great awe their spiritual hymns and sacred songs to God, the Lord of all. So when you are praying, mingle with these voices, patterning yourself according to their mystical order. It is not to human beings that you are praying but to God, who is present everywhere, who hears even before you speak and who knows already the secrets of the heart. If you pray to this One, you shall receive a great reward. “For your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly.” He did not merely say he would give it to you but reward you, as if he himself had made a pledge to you and so honored you with a great honor. Because God himself is hidden, your prayer should be hidden. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.3.

Departing with Empty Hands.

Chrysostom: While pretending to pray to God, the hypocrites are looking around for human praise. The elaborate garb they wear is laughable, and hardly that of a sincere supplicant. One who is earnestly offering a supplication looks exclusively to the One who has the power to grant the request and lets all other claims recede. But if you leave behind the one you are petitioning and immediately go wandering about looking everywhere for others' approval, you will depart with empty hands. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.2.

The Hypocrites Have Received Their Reward.

Chrysostom: Your inner will cannot be hid. This is why Jesus did not say, "They shall not receive a reward" but "They have received their reward"—already! Their reward comes from those from whom they themselves most desire to get it. God does not desire this. For God preferred to bestow upon humanity the grace that comes only from himself. Those who seek their reward from people cannot receive another reward from the One for whom they have sought nothing. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.2.

6:6 Where You Pray

The Bedroom of Our Hearts.

Hilary: We are asked to pray with the bedroom door closed, as it were, and we are taught to pour out our prayer in every place. The saints' prayers were undertaken in the presence of wild animals, in prisons, in flames, from the depths of the sea and the belly of the beast. Hence we are admonished not to enter the recesses of our homes but the bedroom of our hearts. With the office of our minds closed, we pray to God not with many words but with our conscience, for every act is superior to the words of speakers. On Matthew 5.1.

Entering the Inner Chamber.

Augustine: Enter into your inner chamber. Do not let the door stand open to the boisterous, through whom the things that are outside profanely rush in and assail the inner self. Sermon on the Mount 2.3.11.

Cleansing the Heart.

Augustine: Outside the inner chamber are all things in time and space, which knock on the door. Through our bodily senses they clamor to interrupt our prayer, so that prayer is invaded with a crowd of vain phantoms. This is why you must shut the door. The senses of the body are resisted, that the spirit of prayer may be directed to the Father. This occurs in the inmost heart, where prayer is offered to the Father in secret. There “your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” This is a fitting conclusion to good counsel, not merely calling us to pray but also showing us how, not merely calling us to give alms but also showing the right spirit for doing so. The instruction is to cleanse the heart. Nothing cleanses the heart but the undivided and single-minded striving after eternal life from the pure love of wisdom alone. Sermon on the Mount 2.3.11.

Examples of Praying in Secret.

Chromatius: We find in the books of Kings that very holy woman Hannah fulfilling the precepts of this Gospel teaching. For while praying without uttering a sound, in her heart and in the sight of God, she poured out her desire in her prayers. She was immediately found worthy to be heard by the Lord. In the same way the Lord granted to Daniel, who always prayed in secret with three servants, to understand the interpretations of his dream and the secrets of revelation. Cornelius too, not yet instructed in the precepts of the gospel, prayed secretly and faithfully in his room and was found worthy to hear the voice of the angel speaking. What should we say of Jonah, who, not only in his room but trapped in the stomach of the whale, deserved so greatly to be heard through his prayers that from the depths of the sea and from the belly of so great a beast he escaped unharmed and alive? Tractate on Matthew 27.1.4–5.

6:7 No Empty Phrases

Avoid an Abundance of Words.

Chromatius: Nonbelievers think that they can more easily obtain from the Lord what they require by using many words, but the Lord does not expect this from us. Rather, he wants us to send up our prayers not with wordy speech but with faith that comes from the heart. By doing so we command the merits of justice to him. He surely knows better all the things of which we have need and before we speak is aware of everything that we are going to request. Tractate on Matthew 27.2.1–2.

How to Pray.

Chrysostom: By the example of the importunate widow who prevailed with the pitiless and cruel ruler by persevering in her requests, we are shown how to pray. We hear the insistent voice of the friend who came late at night and roused the sleeper from his bed, not for friendship's sake but out of his urgent need. By these examples Jesus called us continually to make earnest supplication to the Father. He did not ask us to compose a prayer of ten thousand phrases and so come to him and merely repeat it. He warned against those who "think that they shall be heard for their loquacity." "For your Father knows what you need before you ask him." But if he already knows what we need, why do we pray? Not to inform God or instruct him but to beseech him closely, to be made intimate with him, by continuance in supplication; to be humbled; to be reminded of our sins. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.4.

The Wordy and the Simple Prayer.

Chromatius: We have an example of just how great a distance there is between the wordy and the humble and simple prayer in the story of the Pharisee and the publican. The prayer of the Pharisee vaunting himself in his abundance of words was rejected. The humble and contrite publican, on the other hand, asking forgiveness for his sins, came away more justified than the self-boasting Pharisee. In this we find fulfilled what was written: "The prayer of the humble penetrates the clouds," reaching God who is ready to hear the request of the one who prays. Tractate on Matthew 27.2.3.

6:8 Your Father Knows Your Needs

6:9 Approaching Our Heavenly Father

The Privilege of Calling God Abba.

Origen: According to the apostle, "as long as the heir has not reached his majority, he differs little from a servant, though he be lord of all. He remains under tutors and governors until the time of his maturity appointed by his father." But the "fullness of time" consists in our Lord Jesus Christ coming among us, when those who desire it receive adoption as sons, as Paul says in these words: "For you have not received the spirit of bondage in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, whereby we cry, 'Abba! Father!' " On Prayer 22.2.

The Limits of Spatial Metaphors.

Augustine: Let the new people, therefore, who are called to an eternal inheritance freely employ the word of the New Testament and say, "Our Father who art in heaven," that is, the place where holiness and justice reign. For God is not contained spatially. The heavens may be in a sense "higher" created bodies of the world, even while remaining created, and so cannot exist apart from some spatial location. But do not think of this spatially, as if the birds are nearer to God than we. It is not written that "the Lord is closer to tall people" or "nearer to those who live on higher hills." For it is written, "The Lord is near to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit," namely, close to those who are humble. Sermon on the Mount 2.5.17.

In Heaven All Inequities Are Overcome.

Chrysostom: This at once takes away hatred, quells pride, casts out envy and brings in the mother of all good things, charity. By inward prayer the inequality of human things is thwarted. It shows how nearly equal are the king and the poor person in all those matters that are most indispensable and of greatest weight. Behind those closed doors before God, we are all equals. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.4.

God Is Not Made Holy by Degrees.

Cyprian: We pray "Hallowed be thy name," not that we wish that God may be made holy by our prayers but that his name may be hallowed in us. But by whom is God made holy, since he himself is incomparably holy? It is because he commands us, "Be holy, even as I am holy," that we ask and entreat that we who were sanctified in baptism may continue in that which we have begun to be. And this we pray for daily, for we have need of daily sanctification, that we who daily fall away may wash out our sins by continual sanctification. Treatises, On the Lord's Prayer 12.

Glorifying His Name.

Chrysostom: The prayer to hallow God's name corresponds with what Jesus has previously taught: "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven," just as the seraphim too, giving glory, sang "Holy, holy, holy." So "hallowed" means "glorified." In effect he is saying, "Enable us to live so purely that through us all may glorify you." It points us again to

mature self-control, that we may present to all a life so irreprehensible that every one of those who observe may offer to the Lord the praise due to him for this. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.4.

6:10 God's Kingdom and Will

Christ Reigns in the Maturing Soul.

Origen: The kingdom of God, according to the word of our Lord and Savior, "comes not with observation"; and "neither shall they say, Behold here, or behold there"—but "the kingdom of God is within us" (for "the word is very near to us," in our mouths and in our hearts). So one who prays for the coming of the kingdom of God rightly prays that the kingdom of God might be established in himself, that it might bear fruit and be perfected in himself. Every saint, being ruled by God as king and obedient to the spiritual laws of God, as it were, dwells within this kingdom as in a well-ordered city. The Father is present to such a one, and Christ reigns with the Father in the soul that is maturing. This is in accord with the promise that "we will come to him and make our abode with him." On Prayer 25.1.

The Kingdom Is Christ's Own Coming.

Cyprian: We ask that the kingdom of God may come to us, even as we also ask that his name may be sanctified in us. But when was it ever the case that God did not reign? Or when did that kingdom begin with him who both always has been and never ceases to be? We are here praying that our kingdom, which has been promised us by God, may come, the very kingdom acquired by the blood and passion of Christ. We pray that we who now are his subjects in the world may hereafter reign with Christ when he reigns. For this he himself promises when he says, "Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom that has been prepared for you from the beginning of the world." Christ himself, dearest beloved, is the kingdom of God, whom we day by day desire to come, whose advent we crave to be quickly manifested to us. For since he is himself the resurrection, since in him we rise again, so also the kingdom of God may be understood to be himself, since in him we shall reign. Treatises, On the Lord's Prayer 13.

May the Kingdom Be Fully Manifested.

Augustine: The expression "thy kingdom come" is not to be thought of as if God were not now reigning. But some might get the strange impression that "come" implies "for the first time upon the earth"—as if to imply that God were not even now really reigning upon earth! Or that God had not always

reigned upon the earth from the foundation of the world! “Come,” therefore, is to be understood in the sense of “manifested to humanity.” Just as light that is present is absent to the blind or to those who shut their eyes, so the kingdom of God, though it never departs from the earth, yet is absent to those who know nothing about it. To none, however, will ignorance of God’s kingdom be permitted when his Only Begotten comes from heaven. Then he will be recognizable not only by the intellect but visibly as the Man of the Lord to judge the living and the dead. Sermon on the Mount 2.6.20.

That All May Do God’s Will.

Augustine: We pray that God’s will may be accomplished in sinners also, even as it is accomplished in the saints and the just. This can be taken in two ways. First, we are to pray even for our enemies. For what else shall we call those in spite of whose will the Christian and Catholic name still spreads? According to this understanding the petition, “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” is intended to convey the following meaning: As the righteous do your will, let sinners do it also, so they may be converted. Second, the interpretation may be taken in the sense that “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” is to be understood as a petition for the final rendering of his just due to every person. This will be done at the last judgment, when the lambs will be separated from the goats. Sermon on the Mount 2.6.22.

6:11 Asking for Our Daily Bread

The Bread That Essentially Nourishes Our True Humanity.

Origen: Since some understand from this that we are commanded to pray for material bread, it will be well to refute their error here and to establish the truth about the epiousios (supersubstantial) bread. We must ask them how it could be that he who commanded us to ask for great and heavenly favors should command us to intercede with the Father for what is small and of the earth, as if he had forgotten—so they would have it—what he had taught. For the bread that is given to our flesh is neither heavenly, nor is the request for it a great request.

We, on our part, following the Master himself who teaches us about the bread, shall treat the matter explicitly. In the Gospel according to John he says to those who had come to Capernaum seeking for him: “Amen, amen, I say to you, you seek me, not because you have seen miracles but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled.” One who has eaten of the bread blessed by Jesus and is filled with it tries all the more to understand the Son of God more perfectly and hastens to him. Hence his admirable

command: "Labor not for the meat that perishes but for that which endures to life ever-lasting, which the Son of Man will give you." ... The "true bread" is that which nourishes the true humanity, the person created after the image of God. On Prayer 27.2.

Daily Eucharist in Union with Christ.

Cyprian: "Daily bread" may be understood both spiritually and simply, because both meanings help us to understand salvation. For Christ is the bread of life; and this bread is not the bread of all, but it is our bread. And as we say "our Father," because he is the father of those who understand and believe, so too we say "our bread," because Christ is the bread of us who touch his body. Now we ask that this bread be given to us today, lest we who are in Christ and receive his Eucharist daily as the food of salvation should be separated from Christ's body through some grave offense that prohibits us from receiving the heavenly bread. For according to his words: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world." Treatises, On the Lord's Prayer 18.

Bread for Eternity.

Jerome: In the Gospel the term used by the Hebrews to denote supersubstantial bread is maar. I found that it means "for tomorrow," so that the meaning is "Give us this day our bread" for tomorrow, that is, the future. We can also understand supersubstantial bread in another sense: bread that is above all substances and surpasses all creatures. Commentary on Matthew 1.6.11.

Necessary Food for One Day.

Chrysostom: What is daily bread? Just enough for one day. Here Jesus is speaking to people who have natural needs of the flesh, who are subject to the necessities of nature. He does not pretend that we are angels. He condescends to the infirmity of our nature in giving us his commands. The severity of nature does not permit you to go without food. So for the maturing of your life, he says, I require necessary food, not a complete freedom from natural necessities. But note how even in things that are bodily, spiritual correlations abound. For it is not for riches or frills that we pray. It is not for wastefulness or extravagant clothing that we pray, but only for bread. And only for bread on a daily basis, so as not to "worry about tomorrow." The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.5.

6:12 Forgiving Debts and Debtors

Asking Pardon Daily.

Cyprian: How necessary, providential and expedient it is for us to be reminded that we are sinners and must ask pardon for our sins. And while we ask for God's forgiveness, our minds retain an awareness of those sins! Lest anyone become complacent and suffer the fate of flattering himself, he is instructed and reminded that he sins daily, while he is ordered to ask pardon for his sins. Thus John advises us in his epistle, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, the Lord is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." In his epistle there is a twofold connection. We must ask pardon for our sins and obtain forgiveness when we ask pardon. Moreover, he said that the Lord is faithful in pardoning sins and loyal to his promise, for he who taught us to ask forgiveness for our trespasses and sins promised paternal mercy and subsequent pardon. He added and clearly imparted a law that binds us by a definite condition and guarantee. We shall be pardoned for our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, knowing that we cannot obtain pardon for our sins unless we give equal pardon to those who sin against us. In this regard he says in another place: "With what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you." And the servant who, after his every offense has been forgiven by the Lord, is unwilling to forgive his fellow servant shall be sent to prison. Because he was unwilling to pardon his fellow servant, he forfeited what the Lord had pardoned him. Treatises, On the Lord's Prayer 22–23.

Praying Daily for Forgiveness.

Chrysostom: This prayer for forgiveness belongs to believers. For the uninitiated could not call God Father. We discover forgiveness within the nurturing pedagogy of the church. If then the prayer belongs to believers and they pray, entreating that sins may be forgiven them, it is clear that even after baptism the profit of repentance is not taken away. If he had not meant to signify this, why would he have instructed us to pray for forgiveness? He asks us to bring our sins to remembrance and ask for forgiveness, and he teaches us how to obtain remission. He makes the way uncomplicated. By this rule of supplication it is clear that it is possible even after the font of baptism that our offenses may still be washed away. He thereby persuades us to be modest, commands us to forgive others, sets us free from vengeful obsessions, promises pardon, and holds before us good hopes and a high view of the unspeakable mercy of God. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.5.

Forgive Those Who Ask Your Pardon.

Augustine: It is certainly a bargain to be reckoned with when we say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." We can be sure that we have violated that rule if we do not forgive those who ask our pardon, since we too want to be forgiven by our most generous Father with respect to those who seek pardon from us. Now, as to that commandment by which we are ordered to pray for our enemies, we are not ordered to pray for those who seek forgiveness. For such persons are not enemies. In no way, however, can someone really say that he is praying for a person he does not know. Therefore it must be said that we should forgive all sins committed against us if we want the Father to forgive what we have committed. Sermon on the Mount 2.8.29.

6:13 Deliverance from Evil

Whether the Devil Is Evil by Nature.

Chrysostom: Jesus here calls the devil "the wicked one," commanding us to wage against him a war that knows no truce. Yet he is not evil by nature, for evil is not something derived from any nature as created but is what has been added to nature by choice. The devil is the prototypically evil one, because of the excess of his evil choices and because he who in no respect was injured by us wages against us an implacable war. Thus we do not pray "deliver us from the wicked ones" in the plural but "from the wicked one." The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.6.

The Recapitulation of All Previous Petitions.

Cyprian: After all those things, in the prayer's summation there occurs a little clause concluding all our petitions and prayer in succinct fashion. For at the very last we state "but deliver us from evil," understanding the phrase to mean all adversities that the enemy undertakes against us in this world. There can be strong and faithful protection against these adversities if God delivers us, if, as we pray and implore, he furnishes us his aid. Moreover, when we say "deliver us from evil," nothing remains for which we should ask still further. When once we seek God's protection against evil, having obtained this, we stand secure and safe against all the works of the devil and of the world. For what fear, indeed, is there with regard to the world for one who has God as protector in the world? Treatises, On the Lord's Prayer 27.

The Ordering of the Seven Petitions.

Augustine: We must consider and carefully set forth the respective and distinctive notes of those seven petitions. While our present life is passing away like time, our hope is fixed on the life eternal, and while we cannot reach the eternal without first passing through the present life, eternal things are first in importance. In addition, the fulfillment of the first three petitions has its beginning in the life that begins and ends in this world. For the hallowing of God's name began with the advent of the Lord's humility; and the coming of his kingdom—the coming in which he will appear in brightness—will be made manifest not after the end of the world but at the ending of the world; and the perfect fulfilling of God's will on earth as in heaven—whether you take the words heaven and earth to mean the righteous and the sinful, or the spirit and the flesh, or the Lord and the church, or all of these together—will be fully achieved through the full attainment of our blessedness, and therefore at the ending of the world. But all three will continue for all eternity; for the hallowing of God's name will continue forever, and of his kingdom there is no end, and there is the promise of everlasting life for our blessedness. Therefore these three things will continue, completely fulfilled, in the life that is promised to us.

It seems to me that our remaining four petitions pertain to the needs of this temporal life. The first of them is “give us this day our daily bread”; the mere fact that it is called a “daily” bread shows that it pertains to the present time, the time which the Lord has called “today.” This is equally clear, no matter what significance one may attach to the expression “daily bread”; that is to say, whether we take it as signifying spiritual bread or the bread that is visible either in the sacrament or in our earthly food. Of course, this opinion does not imply that spiritual food is not everlasting. What the Scriptures call daily food is offered to the soul in the sound of human speech or in some kind of sign that is confined to time. There will be none of these things when everyone will be “taught of God” and will be imbibing the ineffable light of truth through mind alone but not imparting it through any bodily actions. Perhaps that is the very reason why this nourishment is called food rather than drink. For just as food must be broken up and chewed before it can become nourishment for the body, so also is the soul nourished by the Scriptures when it has uncovered and digested their inner meaning. But whatever is taken in the form of drink is not changed as it flows into the body. Therefore truth is called food as long as it is referred to as daily bread; when there will be no need of breaking it, so to speak, and chewing it, then it will be in the form of drink. This will be the case when there will be no need of discussing and discoursing, when nothing will be needed but a drink of pure and crystal truth.

In this life we are both receiving and granting forgiveness of sins, and this is the second of those four petitions. But in eternity there will be no forgiving of sins, because there will be no sins to be forgiven. Temptations make this life troublesome, but there will be no temptations after the fulfillment of the promise, "You will hide them in the secret of your presence." Of course, the evil from which we wish to be delivered is an evil that is present with us in this life, and it is during this life that we wish to be delivered from it. For through God's justice we have by our own faults made this life mortal, and through the mercy of God we are being delivered from that mortality. Sermon on the Mount 2.10.36–37.

6:14–15 Forgiving Trespasses

Readiness to Forgive.

Chrysostom: Nothing makes us so like God as our readiness to forgive the wicked and wrongdoer. For it is God who has made "the sun to shine on the evil and on the good."

For this same reason again in every one of the clauses Jesus commands us to make our prayers together in one voice, saying, "our Father," and "thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," and "give us the bread, and forgive us our debts," and "lead us not into temptation," and "deliver us." So everywhere he is teaching us to use this plural word that we may not retain so much as a vestige of resentment against our neighbor.

How great a reproof then must they deserve, who, after all this, still do not forgive and even ask God's vengeance on their enemies. In doing so they diametrically transgress this command. Meanwhile Christ is seeking in every way possible to hinder our conflicts with one another. For since love is the root of all that is good, by removing from all quarters whatever mars it he brings us together and cements us to each other. For there is not one, not a single one, whether father or mother or friend, who loves us as much as the God who created us. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.7.

The Consequence of Failure to Forgive.

Augustine: And certainly we should not heedlessly neglect to call attention to the fact that of all the pronouncements in which the Lord has ordered us to pray, he has deliberately attached a very special commendation to the pronouncement that deals with the forgiving of sins. In this pronouncement he wished us to be merciful because that is the only prescribed means of avoiding miseries. Indeed, in no

other petition do we pray in such a manner as to make a kind of covenant with the Lord, for we say, “Forgive us as we also forgive.” If we default in this covenant, the whole petition is fruitless, for he says, “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Sermon on the Mount 2.11.39.

6:16 No Dismal Faces

Looking Dismal.

Chrysostom: In this spectacle we not only imitate the hypocrites, but also we far outdo them. We sigh loudly and complain bitterly. I know some, well—actually I know many—who, even while neglecting to fast, yet still wear the garments of those who fast. They cloak themselves with a false exoneration worse than their actual sin.

“I do this,” they say, “so that I might not offend the many [who are expecting me to fast].” What are you saying? The divine law commands this [fasting], and yet you say you are causing “offense” by obeying? If you practice the inward fast you cause offense, but if you do not fast inwardly [but make a show of fasting outwardly], then quite the opposite, you are not causing offense—is there anything more foolish than this?

Why don’t you stop being worse than the hypocrites [you criticize], doubling your own hypocrisy, and instead consider to what extremes this great evil leads? Do you feel any shame now, as we look at the emphasis [of the passage] before us? For Jesus not only says that they put on appearances, but he levels [an even more] vehement attack against them when he says, “They disfigure their faces.” The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 20.1.

Voluntary Poverty.

Chrysostom: It is only after he has cast out the demon of empty conceit, and not before, that he opportunely introduces his discourse on voluntary poverty. For nothing so trains people to be fond of riches as a fondness for glory. This is what motivates those who have herds of slaves, swarms of eunuchs, horses with decorations of gold, silver tables, and all the rest of it. It makes them all the more ridiculous.

All these do not satisfy any wants or increase any pleasures. They only make a show before others. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 20.2.

6:17–18 Fasting Seen by the Father

The Pretense of Divine Service.

Augustine: Vainglory can find a place not only in the splendor and pomp of worldly wealth but even in the sordid garment of sackcloth as well. It is then all the more dangerous because it is a deception under the pretense of service to God. When one dazzles by immoderate adornment of the body and its raiment or by the splendor of whatever else one may possess, by that very fact one is easily shown to desire ostentatious display. This person deceives nobody by a crafty semblance of holiness. But if, through extraordinary squalor and shabbiness, one is attracting others' attention to one's manner of professing Christianity, and if one is doing this of choice and not merely enduring it through necessity, then one may determine by one's other works whether one is doing it through an indifference toward needless adornment or through ambition of some kind. Indeed, the Lord has forewarned us to beware of wolves in sheep's clothing: "By their fruits you shall know them." Trials of one kind or another that cause these people to lose the very advantages they have gained through their dress or claimed to deny what they sought to gain by it will inevitably reveal whether it is a case of a wolf under a sheep's skin or a sheep under its own. But just as sheep ought not to change their skin even though wolves sometimes hide themselves beneath it, so a Christian ought not try to delight the eyes of others by needless adornment just because pretenders very often assume that scanty garb which necessity demands and assume it for the purpose of deceiving those who are less aware. Sermon on the Mount 2.12.41.