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**Sunday Divine Liturgies: 9:00 am - English / 10:15 am - Ukrainian**

**Weekday Divine Liturgies: 8:00 am or 9:00 am or 7:00 pm - Holy Days Liturgy: 9:00 am or Previous Day at 7:00 pm**

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### The Theophany

*by Deacon Keith Fournier*



### The word Epiphany

means a manifestation, a making present, a revealing. We are invited on this Feast to live our lives in the Theophany of the God who is a Trinitarian communion of Perfect love. The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord marks the beginning of what is called the "public" ministry of Jesus. He was thirty years old. He died His redemptive death at Golgotha when He was only thirty three. However, He also spent thirty redemptive years of life in what writers have sometimes called His "hidden years" in Nazareth's school, "growing in wisdom and stature". (Luke 2:52) Those years were not hidden in the sense of unimportant. It simply means that we do not find much about them in the Gospel accounts. However, they are rich with meaning, revealing the deeper truths of our faith and its invitation to each one of us who bear the name Catholic to live our lives now in a new way by living them in Him. Jesus, Perfect God and Perfect Man, the Incarnate Word, Son of God and Son of Mary, gave the same glory to the Father when he was working with wood in the workshop of Nazareth as he would years later when he raised a friend named Lazarus from the dead. From the moment of His conception, the Son of God recapitulated (a favored word of the great Church father, Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons) the entire human experience, re-creating and beginning humanity anew. The word Epiphany means a manifestation, a making present, a revealing. There is no doubt that even during those so called "hidden" years the plan, purpose and redemptive implications of the entire saving life, death, and resurrection of Jesus were being manifested and revealed. They reveal how the ordinary becomes extraordinary when lived in communion with the Father. The Baptism of the Lord is also called the Theophany, in the Eastern Christian churches, Catholic and orthodox. It is the manifestation of God Himself. The Theophany has inspired extraordinary reflection in the Tradition. Here is another excerpt from an early homily: "Therefore the Lord Jesus came to baptism, and willed to have his body washed with water. Perhaps someone will say: "He who is holy, why did he wish to be baptized?" Pay attention therefore! Christ is baptized, not that he may be sanctified in the waters, but that he himself may sanctify the waters, and by his own purification may purify those streams which he touches". "For the consecration of Christ is the greater consecration of another element. For when the Savior is washed, then already for our baptism all water is cleansed and the fount

purified, that the grace of the laver may be administered to the peoples that come after. Christ therefore takes the lead in baptism, so that Christian peoples may follow after him with confidence." (St. Maximus of Turin, 423 AD) The Baptism of Jesus manifests the very life of the Holy Trinity to the whole world and opens the door, through Jesus Christ, into a communion, a participation in the life of the Trinity through Baptism into His Body, the Church. The waters of the Jordan are sanctified by the Son and now all water is sanctified. Just as the Spirit hovered over the waters of the original creation, the Spirit hovers over the waters where the Son is immersed by John. This is the reason why in the Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches, the clergy often lead the faithful to rivers and entire rivers are blessed! One of the first elements of creation - created by the Father through the Son - is now re-created through the Incarnate Son. The Word Incarnate stands in the waters of the earth which was created through Him. Into these waters, through which the people of Israel were once delivered, the entire human race is now invited to follow Jesus. What was once the means of God's judgment and purification at the time of Noah, fills the Baptismal fount where men and women are delivered from sin and made new! The Church is given new waters for her saving and sanctifying mission. The Trinity, the Communion of Divine persons in perfect unity, is revealed. In the great liturgical prayer of the East the Church proclaims: "When Thou, O Lord was baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest... O Christ our God who has appeared and enlightened the world, Glory to Thee." In his baptism in the Jordan, Jesus is not sanctified for He is without sin, we are capacitated now in Him to become "sons (and daughters) in the Son". The Theophany also reminds us that all of creation will be redeemed! As Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome, creation itself groans for that full redemption (Romans 8:28). This belief in the full redemption of creation, of a new heaven and a new earth, is integral to the Christian faith. Christians are NOT anti-matter. We profess in our ancient creed that we will await the resurrection of our bodies and life in a world to come. The Feast of the Theophany, the Baptism in the Jordan celebrates the full salvation and sanctification of all matter as well. Descending into the waters of the Jordan, Jesus, who shares our humanity, makes that living water flow with healing mercy. His Divine Life is now mediated through the Sacraments in the life of the Church which is His Body. The Word descends and begins the re-creation of the universe. This is an ongoing work which will only be complete when He returns. We who are baptized into Him are called to participate in this ongoing redemptive mission. The public mission and ministry of Jesus began at the waters of Jordan. However, it continues through His Church, of which we are made members through Baptism. We are invited on this Feast to live our lives in the Theophany of the God who is a Trinitarian communion of Perfect love. The Christian vocation, no matter what our state in life, is to reveal the Love of the Trinity to the entire human race in order to bring them to the Waters of Baptism into New Life in the new humanity of the Church which is Christ's Body.

### Why Do We Have Our Homes Blessed? *by Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div.*

The Greek definition of the word "blessed" comes from *makários*. This describes a believer as being in an enviable position for receiving God's provisions (favor) – as being an extension of his grace. This happens with receiving the Lord's inbirthings of faith (*HELPS Word Studies*).

**Begin Everything with Prayer** - Since we are reminded in Scripture to begin whatever we do with prayer, it has been the practice of Eastern Christians for centuries to have new dwellings blessed either before or just after settling in. This has been extended to one's business or office, and even college dorm rooms. "The prayers offered by the priest to bless the new dwelling is somewhat similar to the consecration of a church in that holy water, holy oil, and incense are used and a lesson from the holy Gospel is read. All the rooms of the house are sprinkled with holy water and each of the four outer walls are anointed with the sign of the Cross with holy oil, a candle placed before them, and after the censing of the house, the lesson from the Holy Gospel is read. At the conclusion of the blessing, the inhabitants are blessed with holy water: "the husband first, followed by the wife and then the children - the oldest first. Relatives and friends present are then blessed." (*Marriage and the Christian Home*, by Rev. Michael B. Henning, p.24.)

**Back to "The Fall"** - From Scripture we know that whatever God created was good, but with "the Fall", evil entered the world, corrupting the creation. God the Father sent His Son Jesus to save it by effecting a "new creation". This is celebrated at Theophany, specifically with the Great Blessing of Water. "The consecration of the waters on this feast places the entire world - through its 'prime element' of water - in the perspective of the cosmic creation, sanctification, and glorification of the Kingdom of God in Christ and the Spirit." (*The Orthodox Faith, Vol. II, Worship*, by Fr. Thomas Hopko, p.127.) All the readings, hymns, prayers, and actions of the day speak of God's presence in our entire world, His creation. Through water all of the creation is once again sanctified by God, becoming good again, the way God had intended.

**The Feast of Theophany** - The Feast of Theophany (or Epiphany) commemorates the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. We know from the troparion of the day that "the Trinity was made manifest" to us. But there's more to it than this. "When Jesus descends into the depths of the river, there occurs a profound upheaval. It is not the one baptized who is purified, for he is spotless; but it is the water that is transfigured and illumined. This water, which was believed to be transparent and purifying, is in fact polluted, inhabited by evil spirits, servants of the old gods. ... By purifying the elements, by sanctifying matter, Jesus frees the cosmos from the powers of evil." (*The Incarnate God, Vol. I*, Catherine Aslanoff, French edition editor, translated by Paul Meyendorff, p.163.)

### **The Great Blessing of Water and the Home; About Holy Water:**

Water signifies the Holy Spirit's action in Baptism, such that in the manner that "by one Spirit [believers] were all baptized", so they are "made to drink of one Spirit". Thus the Spirit is also personally the living water welling up from Christ crucified as its source and welling up in Christians to eternal life. On Theophany, that is, the Day of the Lord's Baptism, every year a great miracle is performed. The Holy Spirit, coming down upon the water, changes its natural properties. It becomes incorrupt, that is it does not spoil, remains transparent and fresh for many years, and receives the grace to heal illnesses, to drive away demons and every evil power, to preserve people and their dwellings from every danger, to sanctify various objects whether for church or home use. Therefore Eastern Christians with reverence drink Holy Water - a great Agiasma (holy thing), as the Greeks call it. Catholics should always have at home enough Theophany water so that it will last the whole year, and make use of it at every need; in cases of illness, leaving on a journey, whenever one is upset, students when going to examinations, etc. They do well who daily, before eating any kind of food, drink a little Holy Water. It strengthens the powers of our soul - if it is done, of course, with prayer and reverence, and one does not merely expect from it a mechanical result. Every priest should take care to bless a

sufficient quantity of water for his church, so that it will be on hand for the course of the whole year for every need and to be given out to those who ask for it; and parishioners should provide for themselves at Theophany with Holy Water for the whole year and even so that it can be kept for future years. The Church, blesses water and it becomes a sacramental which is capable of powerful blessings. You should sanctify things in your home. It's a custom of going around all the rooms of the house which is blessed on Theophany with a censer, with all the rest of the family carrying candles and singing the Theophany Troparion, to bless everything with holy water on a regular basis. The demons see the water, even after the water dries on the walls and you cannot see it, (except if you have sprinkled it on paper, the marks never go away then), the demons still see it, and you have marked your house as a dwelling of Christians. But of course, if you do this, then you must live as a Christian. What happened to the man who had the demons taken out of him, and the demon went around deserts and rocky places, and desolate areas, and found no place to dwell? What did the demon do? He got seven other demons worse than himself, and he went back to the man. They found his soul was all swept and garnished inside, but since the man had not lived a virtuous life since his deliverance from the one demon, and the demons were able to make their abode in him, and the last state of the man is worse than the first! There is responsibility placed upon you, brothers and sisters, because of the grace you have been given - because of your Baptism. As Baptized Catholics, you are responsible for living according to how you have promised to live. The good news is that you are ABLE to do it, because the God-man made you able to do it! God revealed Himself, and continues to reveal Himself to us, as we are able to understand Him. As we become more pure, He reveals more of His purity to us. And we ascend like eagles! That is the meaning of Theophany. ....The Great Blessing of Water takes place at the end of that day's Liturgy. Since our homes cannot be brought to the Church, the Church - through the priest and cantor - go to the homes. There the service of blessing, which began in the church, is finished with the sprinkling of water in the home. Traditionally, in most Orthodox parishes, the priest personally visits all his parishioners each year to pray with them in the place where they live, and to bless their surroundings with the newly sanctified water of Theophany. By sanctifying our living quarters, our private place, we extend the grace of God to our individual dwellings. We also bring the blessed water to our homes to use throughout the year to bless our homes and to drink whether we are ill or as part of our daily prayer life. "There are many occasions in family life when a sip of holy water can help to remind us of the blessing that was given 'to bestow sanctification', 'unto healing of soul and body', 'to be a fountain welling forth unto life eternal', as the priest prayed in the litany of Epiphany day." (*Little Falcons: Water*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1998, p.33.)

**Weaving Christ into Our Lives** - The blessing of homes by these holy waters maintains the spiritual association between the 'family church' and the parish, as well as again providing for the sharing of God's spiritual gifts. ... This annual blessing is not as elaborate as the blessing of the new dwelling, but because of this it should not be overlooked, for it is in this way that the grace of God is extended to individual dwellings." (*Marriage and the Christian Home*, p.25.) If the priest comes to bless the home when the children are present, they have the opportunity to see the parish priest in a different and personal situation. If the priest permits, they can lead the way through the house, or hold a candle. They can show him their rooms or pets or favorite toys. They receive a blessing with water. For children, the house blessing shows the connection of the Church to the home.

**In Summary** - What does it mean to ask God to bless something? All things in the world have been spoiled right along with us. God must bless His world again in order for it to be the way that He wants it to be. For this reason God sent His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit to the world: to bless everyone and everything that He made, to make all things good again. When the priest comes to bless our homes, he asks God to have mercy on the house, to rid it of every evil and to fill it with every blessing.

## Who is God?

Without the belief in God there is no belief in the rest of the Catholic faith. *But who is God? From where did God come?* We'll explore those questions by taking a look at our profession of faith that we recite each time we are at Liturgy, the Nicene Creed. I'm willing to bet that you have this whole thing memorized, but never really stopped to take a good look at what you're saying during Liturgy. All right, so not everyone is like that, but there are many people who go through the motions and never take a moment to reflect on what it is they are actually saying or the reasons they are really at Liturgy. At the beginning of the Nicene Creed we profess that "We believe in one God." God is the only god in which we believe and follow as Christians. There is no other god besides God even though we sometimes fail to recognize God as the ruler of our lives. As it pertains to the faith we only worship the one true, Trinitarian God, not anyone or anything else. God is at the center of our faith (or at least he should be). The Creed continues "the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen." **God is the divine being from which all things come** ' even the things we cannot see or do not know. God made heaven, earth, angels, saints, our bodies, our souls, everything! This part of the Creed also tells us that there is a physical realm that we can see and that there is a spiritual realm that we cannot see. God created it all. So, who is God? He is our Heavenly Father who formed us and everything else. We share in all, both parts of this creation because we have both a body and a soul. That is just the first four lines of the Nicene Creed and they sure are packed with knowledge of our Creator. One question remains, however, "from where did God come?" Well, we believe that **God always existed** and, in fact, God did not come from anything! Everything came from God. This is stated in our belief that God is the "maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen." This isn't all that Catholics believe about God though. There is even more! We believe that there is one God, but is manifested in three persons. We call this the Mystery of the Trinity. In short, there is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, each having distinct personalities. **Belief in God is necessary for salvation**. No one can essentially prove that God exists by using methods of science or other means. **Believing in God is an act of faith**. **How can I come to know God?** Coming to know God is life's most precious joy(s) because you enter into a relationship with your Creator ' the one who created you out of love and desires for you to share with him all his glory. The Church believes that people desire God and only in God will they find the truth and peace that we constantly seek. **God is always pouring out his love for us** and it's up to us to turn to God. He will never stop loving you! Knowing God takes all of one's heart, mind and soul. It also can take time. Knowing God is not one of having scientific proof that God exists, but by the seeking out of God, one's heart becomes more and more convinced that God exists. It requires patience and weeding out the distractions in your life. Often times we spend much of our lives with a complete lack of silence, always having the radio or the TV on. Just take a moment to pause in silence and listen for God. He is there. **What about all the needless suffering?** A popular argument against God is that if he really loves us so much then why is there all the suffering and pain in the world. One answer is that there is pain and suffering in the world not due to God, but due to sin that humanity brought into the world. **It is humankind that has chosen to separate itself from God** and therefore causing the pain and suffering was not in the initial plan of Creation as outlined in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God made everything wonderful and perfect for us, but by the sin of Adam we now suffer. Another response, and one that fits well into the first one, is that through pain and suffering we find God, we finally see the need to seek God and thereby form a closer relationship with him. Have

you ever had an experience where you were really injured and you have a lot of free time while recovering you started to read the Bible more? Chances are you have not, but that is just one example of how suffering brings people closer to God. *Our lives can be filled with many distractions that take away our time from God* and suffering and hardships in this world remind us that we cannot do it alone. We need the love and grace of God which we seek and he freely gives. Jesus reminds us that even though we may be suffering now it is later that we will get our reward (Mt. 5:3-12). **We should not be angry with God for suffering**, but use it as a chance to seek him and develop a closer relationship with him.

## God is true Love!

When God created us to share in His glory, He gave us free will, so that we would be capable of true love. But with free will comes the ability to renounce love. That is what amounts to sin. It's a renunciation of love; it's a turning away from moral responsibility to others that ultimately results in a separation from God. So here we are. We're not bad persons. And yet we have the freedom to do bad things to others without even seeing it. How, then, shall we ever see the truth? How shall we ever know true love?

**Finding the Truth: True Love:** God is love. And God created Heaven and Earth to share in His love. God did not create toys or slaves. He created creatures who could share in His love. He gave us His love so we could be loved. Because of the blindness that characterizes our separation from God, however, we can see nothing but our own self-indulgent illusions. Left to ourselves, we have nothing but an empty world of social constructions to give us comfort. Left to ourselves, we have nothing but pride, and in that pride we are easily deceived by evil. Left to ourselves, therefore, we are lost in slavery to sin. Therefore, only God Himself can show us what is true love. Now, if God were to appear to us in His full glory, we would surely drop down before Him in terror. But we wouldn't necessarily love Him. True love, after all, is an act of self-sacrifice offered in free will, not something engendered by fear. So, in order to teach us true love, God chose to show it to us through the life of a simple, poor man—a life which ended with the most humiliating execution known to humanity. It was as if God said to all bystanders, those present and those yet to be, "If you can love Him, My Son, this humble, broken man hanging in weakness on that cross out of love for you, you will finally begin to know Me." Christ took all of the insults patiently and quietly, without retaliation, all so that we could see the truth of the sin in our hearts and in sorrow, repent for our sins against God and Faith. And that's why Saint Paul said (1 Corinthians 1:23) that the crucifixion of Christ seemed like folly to the Greeks who valued the "wisdom" of natural philosophy; and to the Jews, who looked for powerful prophetic signs, the crucifixion was a stumbling block. For neither natural wisdom nor power can illuminate their own darkness. Baptism into Christ, therefore, calls us to a radical change in our being. In the language of computer technology, it's like saying that true Christian faith is not just an "application" that we can run on our existing "operating systems"; *true faith is a process that creates an entirely new operating system*. **"Why did Christ have to die?"** Still, there are those who ask, "But why did Christ have to die? What does this have to do with love? Why was there bloodshed?"

**Blood and Life:** Keep in mind that blood, being an essential biological aspect of life, is therefore a symbol of life itself. Consequently, to shed blood for another person means to give up one's own life in order to rescue or preserve the life of that other person. When Christ shed His blood for us, then, He did so in order to give us life—that is, freedom from our bondage to sin. Christ's death was a glorious mystery that reverberated from Heaven down to earth, for "obliterating the bond [of Original Sin] against us, with its legal claims, which was opposed to us, He also removed it from our midst, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians

2:14). And so, before His death, Christ prayed, "Father, the hour has come. Give glory to Your Son, so that Your Son may glorify You, just as You gave Him authority over all people, so that He may give eternal life to all You gave Him" (John 17:1-2).

**Our "Broken" Hearts:** The redemption worked in Christ's death was an example to us. It *showed us* how we are capable of killing God Himself in order to preserve our own self-interests. It showed us, in a way that no event in the world has ever shown before or since, how we, in our hearts—the very hearts God has created—and through our own free will, constantly injure others and defile, mock, and execute divine love in every moment of our lives. *It showed us the ugliness and sin we nurture in our own broken hearts.* So unless we choose to accept the redemption offered in His sacrifice for us—and, in humble, freely willed obedience to the will of God, die to the self-indulgent worldly attachments that nailed Him to the cross—we will never know purity of heart and true love. God loves everyone, and He calls everyone into His love. But to accept this call we must give up everything that is *not* love. This is a hard thing to accept. Many disciples abandoned Christ because of it. Even today there are those who try to make the Church "relevant" to a corrupt modern world. But Christ never said that He came to make life convenient. He came to preach the truth. Christ was not a sentimentalist. Christ called everyone—and still calls everyone—to repentance. In His own time, many persons heard His call and obeyed. But there were many persons Christ refused to heal because they refused to acknowledge and repent their sins. There were many persons He refused as disciples because they sought worldly glory instead of Heavenly peace. There were many persons He criticized as hypocrites—Pharisees, Saducees, and Herodians. **Christ was not a sentimentalist who accepted everyone "as they are."** He revealed the truth of our brokenness and called everyone to repent their sins. **And, ultimately, many of those gathered up their grudges against Him and crucified Him.** Christ, however, with the purity of being true God and true man, offers us forgiveness from our sins and whose real presence remains with us always through the Sacraments. Only in the broken bread of the Eucharist can our psychological brokenness be healed.

**Obedient Service:** Christ died also in order to be raised again, to show us that God raises into his glory *only* those who, without obstinacy or presumption, without cunning or intrigue, without strife or schism or protest, empty themselves in humble service before Him. There will always be those who resist this, those who attack the Church from without and those who sabotage it from within. Yet the choice is simple: *will you freely and totally accept the redemption from your own emptiness that is being offered to you, or will you reject it for the sake of your own convenience?* Yet, as simple as it is, the choice still requires hard work. It requires constant effort to monitor your feelings and the impulses that arise with your feelings, and to override those impulses—those signs of what you want personally—with a firm decision to live a holy lifestyle by doing *God's will.* It's all far easier to serve the devil by doing whatever you want. So if you fail to approach your salvation with fear and trembling (see Philippians 2:12b) because you aren't willing to sacrifice everything for it—as in the parables of the treasure buried in a field and the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:44-46)—then you probably don't want it that much to begin with. *But if you accept the work of your salvation, you will then, for the rest of your life, bear the sadness of a heart broken by the ignorance, apathy, and sacrilege that surround you. And yet, in the very midst of this pain, you will bear the joy of being able to say to Christ, "Thank you Lord; now I feel what You felt." And that is true love. My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love You. I ask Your pardon for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope, and do not love You.*

— *Fátima, 1917.*

## ADVICE TO PARENTS by Saint Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787)

Saint Alphonsus, founder of the Redemptorist Order, Bishop and Doctor of the Church expounds on the privilege and responsibilities of parenthood as a special vocation from God. The wisdom of this holy man has guided and fortified Catholics for over two hundred years. The gospel tells us, that a good plant cannot produce bad fruit, and that a bad one cannot produce good fruit. We learn from this, that a good father brings up good children. But, if the parents are wicked, how can the children be virtuous? Our Lord says, in the same gospel, Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? (Matt. 7:16). So, it is impossible, or rather very difficult, to find children virtuous, who are brought up by immoral parents. Fathers and mothers, be attentive to this sermon, which is of great importance to the eternal salvation of yourselves and of your children. Be attentive, young men and young women, who have not as yet chosen a state in life. If you wish to marry, learn the obligations which you contract with regard to the education of your children, and learn also, that if you do not fulfill them, you shall bring yourselves and all your children to damnation. I shall divide this into two points. In the first, I shall show how important it is to bring up children in habits of virtue; and, in the second, I shall show with what care and diligence a parent ought to labor to bring them up well. A father owes two obligations to his children; he is bound to provide for their corporal wants, and to educate them in the habits of virtue. It is not necessary to say anything else about the first obligation, than, there are some fathers more cruel than the most ferocious of wild beasts, for these squander away in eating, drinking, and pleasure, all their property, or all the fruits of their industry, and allow their children to die of hunger. Let us discuss education, which is the subject of this article. It is certain that a child's future good or bad conduct depends on his being brought up well or poorly. Nature itself teaches every parent to attend to the education of his offspring. God gives children to parents, not that they may assist the family, but that they may be brought up in the fear of God, and be directed in the way of eternal salvation. "We have," says Saint John Chrysostom, "a great deposit in children, let us attend to them with great care." Children have not been given to parents as a present, which they may dispose of as they please, but as a trust, for which, if lost through their negligence; they must render an account to God. One of the great Fathers says that on the day of judgment, parents will have to render an account for all the sins of their children. So, he who teaches his son to live well, shall die a happy and tranquil death. He that teaches his son...when he died, he was not sorrowful, neither was he confounded before his enemies (Eccl. 30: 3,5). And he will save his soul by means of his children, that is, by the virtuous education which he has given them. She shall be saved through childbearing (1 Tim. 2:15). But, on the other hand, a very uneasy and unhappy death will be the lot of those who have labored only to increase the possessions, or to multiply the honors of their family, or who have sought only to lead a life of ease and pleasure, but have not watched over the morals of their children. Saint Paul says that such parents are worse than infidels. But if any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (1 Tim. 5:8). Were fathers or mothers to lead a life of piety and continual prayer, and to communicate (receive Holy Communion) every day, they should be damned if they neglected the care of their children. If all fathers fulfilled their duty of watching over the education of their children, we should have but few crimes. By the bad education which parents give to their offspring, they cause their children, says Saint John Chrysostom, to rush into many grievous vices; and thus they deliver them up to the hands of the executioner. So it was, in one town, a parent, who was the cause of all the irregularities of his children, was justly punished for his crimes with greater severity than the children themselves. Great indeed is the misfortune of the child that has vicious parents, who are incapable of

bringing up their children in the fear of God, and who, when they see their children engage in dangerous friendships and in quarrels, instead of correcting and chastising them, they take compassion on them, and say, "What can I do? They are young; hopefully they will grow out of it." What wicked words, what a cruel education! Do you hope that when your children grow up, they will become saints? Listen to what Solomon says, "A young man, according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). A young man who has contracted a habit of sin, will not abandon it even in his old age. His bones, says holy Job, will be filled with the vices of his youth, and they will sleep with him in the dust (Job 20:11). When a young person has lived in evil habits, his bones will be filled with the vices of his youth, so that he will carry them to the grave, and the impurities, blasphemies, and hatred to which he was accustomed in his youth, will accompany him to the grave, and will sleep with him after his bones are reduced to dust and ashes. It is very easy, when they are small, to train children to habits of virtue, but, when they have come to manhood, it is equally difficult to correct them, if they have learned habits of vice. Let us come to the second point, that is, to the means of bringing up children in the practice of virtue. I beg you, fathers and mothers, to remember what I now say to you, from on it depends the eternal salvation of your own souls, and of the souls of your children. Saint Paul teaches sufficiently, in a few words, in what the proper education of children consists. He says that it consists in discipline and correction. And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord (Ephes. 5:4). Discipline, which is the same as the religious regulation of the morals of children, implies an obligation of educating them in habits of virtue by word and example. First, by words: a good father should often assemble his children, and instill into them the holy fear of God. It was in this manner that Tobias brought up his little son. The father taught him from his childhood to fear the Lord and to fly from sin. And from infancy he taught him to fear God and abstain from sin (Tobias 1:10). The wise man says, that a well educated son is the support and consolation of his father. Instruct your son, and he will refresh you, and will give delight to your soul (Prov. 29:17). But, as a well instructed son is the delight of his father's soul, so an ignorant child is a source of sorrow to a father's heart, for the ignorance of his obligations as a Christian is always accompanied with a bad life. It was related that, in the year 1248, an ignorant priest was commanded, in a certain synod, to make a discourse. He was greatly agitated by the command and the Devil appearing to him, instructed him to say, "The rectors of infernal darkness salute the rectors of parishes, and thank them for their negligence in instructing the people; because from ignorance proceeds the misconduct and the damnation of many." The same is true of negligent parents. In the first place, a parent ought to instruct his children in the truths of the Faith, and particularly in the four principle mysteries. First, that there is but One God, the Creator and Lord of all things; secondly, that this God is a remunerator, Who, in the next life, will reward the good with the eternal glory of Paradise, and will punish the wicked with the everlasting torments of Hell; thirdly, the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, that is, that in God there are Three Persons, Who are only One God, because They have but One Essence; fourthly, the mystery of the Incarnation of the Divine Word, the Son of God, and True God, Who became man in the womb of Mary, and suffered and died for our salvation. Should a father or mother say, "I myself do not know these mysteries," can such an excuse be admitted? Can one sin excuse another? If you are ignorant of these mysteries, you are obliged to learn them, and afterwards to teach them to your children. At least, send your children to a worthy catechist. What a miserable thing to see so many fathers and mothers, who are unable to instruct their children in the most necessary truths of the Faith, and who, instead of sending their sons and daughters to Christian doctrine, employ them in occupations of little account, *and when they are grown up, they do not*

*know what is meant by mortal sin, by Hell, or eternity. They do not even know the Creed, the Our Father, or the Hail Mary, which every Christian is bound to learn under pain of mortal sin.* Religious parents not only instruct their children in these things, which are the most important, but they also teach them the acts which ought to be made every morning after rising. They teach them first, to thank God for having preserved their life during the night, secondly to offer to God all their good actions which they will perform, and all the pains which they will suffer during the day, thirdly, to implore of Jesus Christ and Our Most Holy Mother Mary to preserve them from all sin during the day. They teach them to make, every evening, an examination of conscience and an act of contrition. They also teach them to make every day, the acts of Faith, Hope and Charity, to recite the Rosary, and to visit the Blessed Sacrament. Some good fathers of families are careful to get a book of meditations to read, and to have mental prayer in common for half an hour every day. This is what the Holy Ghost exhorts you to practice. Do you have children? Instruct them and bow down their neck from their childhood (Eccl. 7:25). Endeavor to train them from their infancy to these religious habits, and when they grow up, they will persevere in them. Accustom them also to go to confession and communion every week. It is also very useful to infuse good maxims into the infant minds of children. What ruin is brought upon children by their father who teaches them worldly maxims! "You must," some parents say to their children, "seek the esteem and applause of the world. God is merciful; He takes compassion on certain sins." How miserable the young man is who sins in obedience to such maxims. Good parents teach very different maxims to their children. Queen Blanche, the mother of Saint Louis, King of France, used to say to him, "My son, I would rather see you dead in my arms, than in the state of sin." So then, let it be your practice also to infuse into your children certain maxims of salvation, such as, *What will it profit us to gain the whole world, if we lose our own souls? Everything on this earth has an end, but eternity never ends. Let all be lost, provided God is not lost.* One of these maxims well impressed on the mind of a young person, will preserve him always in the grace of God. But parents are obliged to instruct their children in the practice of virtue, not only by words, *but still more by example.* If you give your children bad example, how can you expect that they will lead good lives? When a dissolute young man is corrected for a fault, he answers, "Why do you censure me, when my father does worse?" The children will complain of an ungodly father, because for his sake they are in reproach (Eccl. 41:10). How is it possible for a son to be moral and religious, when he has had the example of a father who uttered blasphemies and obscenities, who spent the entire day in the tavern, in games and drunkenness, who was in the habit of frequenting houses of bad fame, and of defrauding his neighbor? Do you expect your son to go frequently to confession, when you yourself approach the confessional scarcely once a year? It is related in a fable, that a crab one day rebuked its young for walking crookedly. They replied, "Father, let us see you walk." The father walked before them more crookedly than they did. This is what happens to the parent who gives bad example. Hence, he has not even courage to correct his children for the sins which he himself commits. According to Saint Thomas, scandalous parents compel, in a certain manner, their children to lead a bad life. "They are not," says Saint Bernard, "fathers, but murderers, they kill, not the bodies, but the souls of their children." It is useless for parents to say: "My children have been born with bad dispositions." This is not true, for, Seneca says, "You err, if you think that vices are born with us; they have been engrafted." Vices are not born with your children, but have been communicated to them by the bad example of the parents. If you had given good example to your sons, they would not be so vicious as they are. So parents, frequent the Sacraments, learn from the sermons, recite the Rosary every day, abstain from all obscene language, from detraction, and from quarrels,

and you will see that your children follow your example. It is particularly necessary to train children to virtue in their infancy, Bow down their neck from their childhood, for when they have grown up, and contracted bad habits, it will be very difficult for you to produce, by words, any amendment in their lives. To bring up children in the discipline of the Lord, it is also necessary to take away from them the occasion of doing evil. A father must forbid his children to go out at night, or to go to a house in which their virtue might be exposed to danger, or to keep bad company. Cast out, said Sarah to Abraham, this bondswoman and her son (Gen. 21:10). She wished to have Ismael, the son of Agar the bondswoman, banished from her house, that her son Isaac might not learn his vicious habits. Bad companions are the ruin of young persons. A father should not only remove the evil which he witnesses, but he is also bound to inquire after the conduct of his children, and to seek information from family and from outsiders regarding the places which his children frequent when they leave home, regarding their occupations and companions. A father ought to forbid his children ever to bring into his house stolen goods. When Tobias heard the bleating of a goat in his house, he said, Take care, perhaps it is stolen, go, restore it to its owners (Tobias 2:21). Parents should prohibit their children from all games, which bring destruction on their families and on their own souls, and also dances, suggestive entertainment, and certain dangerous conversations and parties of pleasures. A father should remove from his house books of romances, which pervert young persons, and all bad books which contain pernicious maxims, tales of obscenity, or of profane love. He should not permit his daughters to be alone with men, whether young or old. But some will say, "But this man tutors my daughter; he is a saint." The saints are in Heaven, but the saints that are on earth are flesh, and by proximate occasions, they may become devils. Another obligation of parents is to correct the faults of the family. "Bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord." There are fathers and mothers who witness faults in the family and remain silent. Through fear of displeasing their children, some fathers neglect to correct them, but if you saw your child falling into a pool of water, and in danger of being drowned, would it not be savage cruelty not to catch him by the hair, and save his life? He that spares the rod hates his son (Prov. 13:24). If you love your children, correct them, and while they are growing up, chastise them, even with the rod, as often as it may be necessary. I say, with the rod, but not with a stick; for you must correct them like a father, and not like a prison guard. You must be careful not to beat them when you are in a passion, for you will then be in danger of beating them with too much severity, and the correction will be without fruit, for then they believe that the chastisement is the effect of anger, and not of a desire on your part to see them amend their lives. I have also said, that you should correct them while they are growing up, for when they arrive at manhood, your correction will be of little use. You must then abstain from correcting them with the hand; otherwise, they will become more perverse, and will lose their respect for you. What use is it to correct children with injurious words and with imprecations? Deprive them of some part of their meals, of certain articles of dress, or shut them up in their room. I have said enough. Draw from this discourse the conclusion, that he who has brought up his children badly, will be severely punished, and that he who has trained them in the habits of virtue, will receive a great reward.

**Prayer:** *A preparatory prayer:* Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I have called daily upon thee: for thou, O Lord, art gracious and merciful, and plenteous in thy loving-kindness toward all them that call upon thee. Bow down thine ear, O Lord, and hear me: for I am poor and in misery.  
*-Respect God.* Prepare yourself interiorly to pray. Put yourself in God's presence. Humble yourself before Him. Dress plainly and modestly. Do not display or reveal your prayer pridefully to those nearby. Whenever possible, pray on your knees before a crucifix or a holy icon.

*-Thank God for all of his mercies and blessings.* [Read Psalm 102 below.]  
*-Read the Missal (Hear Me O Lord) and the Bible.* You may want to begin by reading prayers from your Missal or passages from the Bible which have significance to you. This will prepare you for further prayer.  
*-Ask God's forgiveness* for the sins you commit either by word or by deed. Though you may have trouble remembering or thinking of all your sins, the more you ask God to open your mind to your own sins the more you will be able to identify them. Be truthful and sincerely ask God's forgiveness. Make frequent use of the Sacrament of Penance.  
*-Ask for guidance.* Ask your Guardian Angel and your patron saint for assistance. Ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to pray to her Son for you.  
*-Pray for others.* Pray for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. Pray for your family, your relations, and friends and for all those who have *no one* to pray for them. Pray especially for the conversion of sinners to the Faith. Ask God to pour out His graces upon them in order that they may attain eternal salvation.  
*-Close your prayer.* One way is to say: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. **Amen.**

### **PSALM 102**

*BLESS the Lord, O my soul: and let all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all he hath done for thee. Who forgiveth all thy iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion. Who satisfieth thy desire with good things: thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's. The Lord doth mercies, and judgment for all that suffer wrong. He hath made his ways known to Moses: his wills to the children of Israel. The Lord is compassionate and merciful: longsuffering and plenteous in mercy. He will not always be angry: nor will he threaten for ever. He hath not dealt with us according to our sins: nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For according to the height of the heaven above the earth: he hath strengthened his mercy towards them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our iniquities from us. As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him: for he knoweth our frame. He remembereth that we are dust: man's days are as grass, as the flower of the field so shall he flourish. For the spirit shall pass in him, and he shall not be: and he shall know his place no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity upon them that fear him: And his justice unto children's children, to such as keep his covenant, And are mindful of his commandments to do them. The Lord hath prepared his throne in heaven: and his kingdom shall rule over all. Bless the Lord, all ye his angels: you that are mighty in strength, and execute his word, hearkening to the voice of his orders. Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts: you ministers of his that do his will. Bless the Lord, all his works: in every place of his dominion, O my soul, bless thou the Lord.*

#### **Here is a short list of sinners for whom you can pray:**

Pray for everyone trapped in crime, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for everyone trapped in alcohol, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for everyone trapped in argumentation, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for everyone trapped in gluttony, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for everyone trapped in abortion, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for everyone trapped in fornication, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for everyone trapped in lust, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for everyone trapped in love of money, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for everyone trapped in pride, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for everyone trapped in drugs, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for everyone trapped in sloth, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for everyone trapped in depression, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for all of those trapped in loneliness, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for everyone trapped in hate, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for everyone trapped in heresy, that they may be freed from it.  
 Pray for everyone trapped in atheism, that they may be freed from it.