

THE ARCHBISHOP OF WELLINGTON IN DUNEDIN.

ON Sunday evening the Most Rev. Dr. Redwood was present at Vespers in St. Joseph's Cathedral, Dunedin. His Grace preached an eloquent and instructive sermon, and afterwards acted as celebrant at Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament.

The Archbishop took for his text the words of our Redeemer—"Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you that your joy may be full." His Grace said the words he had quoted for the congregation seemed appropriate to the religious season which was now engaging the attention of the Church—he meant the religious season of Lent. They knew that this was the time of penance and of prayer. No doubt they had been spoken to already more than once upon the obligation of spending the religious season in a truly penitential manner; and he was going to address them for a short time upon the other great means of bringing down grace upon them this holy season. He asked his listeners if any one in whom they could place confidence were to offer them a splendid mansion, and wealth and abundance, which amongst them would not avail himself of such an opportunity to make his fortune and to live in comfort? Now he gave to them the name of one whom they could thoroughly trust—the name of Jesus Christ, the God of truth. Continuing, his Lordship said He came to tell them how they could lead a good and faithful life, how they could store up to themselves treasures of the greatest value—how they could enjoy the possession of a happy eternity. How could such wonders be wrought? The answer was by prayer. "Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you, that your joy may be full." In the whole range of Catholic teaching there was no more important subject than the necessity of prayer, which necessity was founded upon the necessity of grace. It was an article of the Catholic faith that no matter how a man might use the faculty of his intellect he could never obtain salvation without divine grace. The reason was obvious.—The end for which God had made us was a spiritual end—an end above the acquirement and knowledge even of any possible creature without the revelation of God. Our object in this life was to have hereafter participation in the life of God—to see Him face to face, unveiled, with nothing between us and His presence. This end was above the power of any creature to attain. We require a means to reach this end in keeping with its divinity. To attain spiritual ends we must use spiritual means. We must seek grace, and a soul in the state of grace is in possession of the Trinity. It was impossible for anyone to be saved without divine grace. Even a state of habitual grace was not sufficient: Without divine grace from God, a man could not be saved, and through prayer was divine grace to be obtained. The grace of graces, to die a holy death in the friendship of God, was promised to prayer and only to prayer. Hence the necessity of prayer. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ knew its necessity, and frequently went aside to pray. If we offered up our actions to Him, our actions would be so many prayers. "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" were Christ's words to men. He offered the most wonderful examples to show us the necessity of prayer, not only by His words, but also by His blessed example. We read of Him that He used to retire frequently to the tops of mountains, and down into valleys, and spend whole nights in prayer. Why? Did He need prayer to obtain grace? Certainly not. He was living grace, the fount of all grace. It is of His fulness that all receive grace. He set us an example that we should try to obtain grace. His apostles, too, inculcated the necessity of prayer. St. Paul said that we ought to be continually in prayer. He felt the necessity for grace in himself, and asked the faithful wherever he went to pray for him. He continually begged prayers of the faithful. The same doctrine was inculcated in the writings of the other Apostles. If we view the whole teachings of the Catholic Church, we find they are unanimous in inculcating the necessity of prayer. He would sum up in one short formula the whole force of this doctrine. Again and again it was said that prayer was for the soul what breath was for the body. What happens a man when his breathing power goes wrong, when his respiratory organs become injured? He grows weak and becomes unable to discharge the ordinary duties of life. His limbs are weak, his step is tottering, the hand of Death is upon him, and shortly he is in the grave—the prey of worms. So it is with a man who does not pray. His step becomes tottering, he is weak and is unable to perform the duties of a Christian. He falls into venial sin, and afterwards into mortal sin, and ultimately dies without the friendship of God. He frequently rots in the habits of sin, and becomes an object immeasurably more repulsive to the sight of God than the corpse in the grave. With regard to the temporal benefits of this world, God shows them down indifferently upon friends and foes on the good and the bad. Frequently his greatest enemies are best off in the things of the world, and some rolled in wealth are steeped in sin. They live in pleasure and end in woe. But when we consider spiritual things—these graces necessary to the salvation—we know that Almighty God has promised them, and has promised them only to prayer. And why? For most excellent reasons. First of all He requires us to pray in order to have grace; for this reason, that we may enjoy dependence on His sovereign majesty. We are His creatures—the work of His hands. He holds us up above the abyss of nothingness. He requires, therefore, that we should acknowledge our dependence upon Him. Again, Almighty God requires us to pray that we may appreciate the greatness and preciousness of the graces He bestows upon us. If everything we asked from God was granted us our humility and dependence on Him would decline. We must go before Him as supplicants. We must entreat Him, and entreat Him frequently. There is another reason why He requires us to pray, and this is an important one indeed. Almighty God requires us to pray in order that we should have these graces necessary for our salvation, in order that we might have the eternal satisfaction of being the authors of our own salvation. We have the lever whereby we may move heaven and earth. We have to take the leader to set a mighty machine in

motion, that hereafter we might be able to say, "I am landed in the realm of bliss for all eternity. I am as far as mortal can be the author of my own happiness to-day." How grand this made a man. Again, experience, which is one of the surest guides to follow in all moral matters, teaches us the necessity of prayer. Where is the man or woman who dares to say that by his or her unaided exertions their soul can be saved. If anyone say this he gives the lie to the Holy Ghost. "Without Me," says Christ, "you can do nothing," meaning in the spiritual order. He does not say like St. Augustine, "Without Me you can do but little," but he says, "Without Me you can do nothing." Under the ordinary course of providence these graces we require are promised only to prayer. We were in this world like a poor lot of lambs among wolves. We were like a city on fire, the flames of which were the crimes and lust of men. These flames raged among man, burning and consuming him. We were, again, like men sinking into the sea, and unless we were snatched from the abyss, we were lost. Sinking in the abyss of sin, how shall we escape? We have to gain grace. If these things are true, and true they are, founded as they are on the doctrine of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God of truth, founded on His word and examples, teachings and examples inculcated through the whole history of His church,—founded on right reason, founded on faith, founded on the voice of experience—they have every conceivable guarantee of truth. And if they are true, is it not a great misfortune to see men discharge so miserably this great duty of prayer. A vast number of men either did not pray at all, or they prayed badly. Let them take an example. Man rise in the morning and dress? they are already full of business, cares or sins of the day. They go to their work with no thought of God, no morning prayer. From year's end to year's end they never raise their hearts to their maker. They go to their work and do not raise their hearts to God. Therefore it is no wonder they indulge in backbiting, cursing, and swearing, no wonder their hearts run riot in abomination, no wonder their language is the language of hell, no wonder they fly into a passion, no wonder they are ready to sin. They do not deem that they require any assistance. They go in their pride and forget their God. They go with the enemy of God and into the power of the demon. Others rise in the morning and utter some prayer, and it is difficult to understand them, probably they do not know what they say themselves. They pay no attention, and expect God to pay attention. In the evening, perhaps they pray in a very perfunctory manner. Perhaps in the evening a friend comes in to tell a very amusing story, and when the time comes for prayer they go to sleep. They expect God to attend to them and they do not attend to themselves. Bad as this was, it was ten times worse to lose the spirit of prayer! As long as a man has recourse to prayer from time to time, there is still hope. He meant an appreciation of prayer. Such a person may fall into a course of sin, but all the time there is the belief in prayer in his soul. A day comes when he may be stricken down through sickness, or perhaps he hears a sermon and is roused and begins to pray to God again and desires to be reconciled with God, confesses his sins and gains absolution, and the sacred blood of Christ washes away his sins; then he dies and goes to Heaven. But when a man loses the spirit of prayer, what hope has he? He has cut himself off from the source of salvation. He is like a man in a fiery desert expecting a prolific crop. Our Blessed Lord said of salvation, that it was the one thing necessary. He (Archbishop Redwood) said the same thing of prayer. Prayer was necessary, being the only means by which we can obtain the grace of perseverance and die in God's friendship. It was the one thing necessary. How consoling it was to think that prayer was so efficacious, as powerful as it was necessary. There is no truth more clearly stated than that of the efficacy of prayer. On what did that efficacy depend? It depended on the nature of prayer. It is of the nature of the petition that it may be refused. God has a perfect right to His graces. He can shower them down or withhold them. There is no claim of justice on our part. Prayer depends upon the promise of God, upon the fidelity of God to His word. Our Blessed Saviour promised to hear our prayers. "If you ask the Father anything in My name it will be granted to you," said Christ. If we ask in the name of Jesus—and Jesus means saviour—God sooner or later will grant it. For instance, it might be thought that death was too powerful for the hand of man. We were told, the life of a man was prolonged for 15 years through prayer. Again Moses prayed and struck the sea, and the sea opened its bosom and the whole people of God moved through its depths unharmed. Armies in battle, too, were defeated by prayer. The very seasons were controlled by prayer. We are told in the Scriptures of the great drought which was removed by prayer. One day Almighty God grew weary of the infidelity, ingratitude, and baseness of the people that He was leading through so many wonders. Moses sat praying to Him, and He said, "Let Me alone—let Me destroy this people." Moses continued praying, and at last our Lord heard his prayers, and the people were brought into the promised land. It frequently happens that we pray and do not obtain what we ask. Sometimes the reason is that we pray for things which the granting of would not conduce to our salvation. Sometimes He refuses one prayer and grants another in its stead. Sometimes we pray for worldly wealth, and God sees that a struggling life is better for us, and He does not grant our prayer. Sometimes we are refused because we ask in a negligent manner. We should, first of all, pray with attention. Sir Thomas remarks that it is the very soul of prayer. If some of his listeners were appointed on a deputation to His Holiness the Pope on some vital matter affecting them personally, he was sure they would be all attention in the presence of the Pope. They would watch every movement of their bodies. Then when we prayed to God how much greater should be our solicitude when we consider that He can save us or condemn us to eternal misery. Is it a wonder that our prayers are not heard when we pray in a negligent and perfunctory manner? Again, do we pray with humility? God hearkens to the prayer of the humble, and hears not the prayer of the proud. One day ascended the temple a proud Pharisee and a poor publican. The Pharisee described his good deeds. He was proud, and his prayer was not heard; whereas the publican stood apart praying, and scarcely raising his eyes from the earth. He bowed his