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Dear Friends in Christ,

As we prepare to enter into the holy season of Lent later this month (Ash Wednesday is February 26 this year), let us recall the three preeminent good works mentioned by Our Lord in the Gospel: *almsgiving*, *fasting*, and *prayer*.

"And when ye pray," He says, "you shall not be as the hypocrites, that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men: Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father Who seeth in secret will repay thee" (Matt. 6:5-6).

Dom Prosper Guéranger, O.S.B. (1805-1875), the renowned Abbot of Solesmes and author of *The Liturgical Year*, exhorts us in Volume 5 of his *magnum opus* that "the courageous observance of the Church's precept of fasting and abstaining during Lent must be accompanied by those two other eminently good works, to which God so frequently urges us in the Scripture: prayer and almsdeeds. Just as under the term 'fasting' the Church comprises all kinds of mortification, so under the word 'prayer' she includes all those exercises of piety whereby the soul holds intercourse with her God."

This is the essence and purpose of prayer: intimate communication with God, in order to grow in His love and thus produce good fruits for His glory.

The importance of prayer is perhaps best summed up by St. Alphonsus Liguori: "He who prays is certainly saved. He who prays not is certainly damned." This is not because we somehow "earn" salvation by praying, but because prayer is essential for preserving and increasing the life of grace in our souls.

At *Catholic Family News*, we recognize the vital importance of prayer, not only for the success of our publication, but more importantly for our own sanctification and that of our readers. Knowledge of sound doctrine is essential, but it is through prayer that we receive the graces necessary to live out the truths we know.

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Sincerely in the Holy Family,

Matt Gaspers, Managing Editor

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