

A PRAYER OF ST. THOMAS

ADRIAN M. WADE, O.P.

NE OF the most neglected saints in the world today is Thomas Aquinas. His writings, it is true, are known throughout the world. His breadth of learning and clarity of intellect are universally acknowledged. But he was not canonized for his genius. The Church does not make saints of people because they write books. There have been other geniuses in the world whose writings have been of immense benefit to mankind. But some have been proud, snobbish, some, too, have spurned the Source of their wisdom, retaining for themselves alone all credit for their gifts.

St. Thomas was just the opposite. Rather than finding in his studies a pitfall for his soul, he sought and found in them the means to his sanctification. Keen as was his mind, his soul was full of kindness and consideration, of gentleness and deep compassion. The higher he rose in the understanding of eternal truths, the lower he stooped in his own estimation. The more brilliant became his argumentation, the more childlike became the practice of his faith. His favorite saint was the thirteen year-old girl martyr, Agnes.

The devotion of St. Thomas to the Mother of God was, as we might expect, at once penetrating and childlike. His crystal mind probed the depths of current Mariology with ever increasing discretion, cutting away whatever was illogical or clearly opposed to the deposit of faith. On the other hand, scrawled around the margin of his manuscripts we find frequent testimony of his spontaneous prayer for help and guidance: "Ave Maria, Ave Maria . . ."

He was not only a famous teacher, he was an equally popular preacher of the Word of God. And here too his devotion to Mary is evident. It is reliably attested that one whole Lenten series in Naples was devoted to an explanation of the Hail Mary. Among the many individual prayers he wrote we find frequent testimony to his love for the Blessed Mother. The prayer which follows was composed "to be said by every religious."



—Courtesy of Sister Mary of the Compassion, O.P.

PRAYER¹

O blessed and sweet Virgin Mary, Mother of God, filled with every virtue, daughter of the most high King, Mistress of the Angels, Mother of all believers, to the bosom of your compassion I commend today and all the days of my life, my body and soul, all my acts, thoughts, inclinations, desires, words and works, together with my whole life and its ending: that through your prayers these may be disposed for the good, according to the will of your beloved Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and that you, my sweet Lady, may be my help and consolation against the traps and snares of the ancient foe and of all who wish me ill.

From your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, kindly implore for me the grace to resist strongly the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil: and always to have a firm resolve of sinning no more; of persevering in your service and that of your dear Son.

I beseech you, holy Lady mine, to obtain for me true obedience and humility of heart that I may acknowledge myself in truth to be a wretchedly weak sinner—impotent to perform any good works or even to resist the continual assaults, without the grace and aid of my Creator and your holy prayers.

Beg for me also, my sweet Mistress, perpetual chastity of mind and body, that I may serve you and your beloved Son in your Order with a pure heart and a chaste body.

Obtain for me from Him a voluntary poverty together with patience and peace of mind, that I may be sustained in the labors of the Order and toil for the salvation of my neighbor and myself.

Ask for me, sweet Lady, true charity whereby I may love your holy Son with all my heart and after Him you before all else, and then my neighbor—in God and for God. So may I rejoice in his good, sorrow in his evil. May I condemn no man nor easily judge him, nor in my heart place myself above another.

Help me too, O Queen of Heaven, ever to carry in my heart both fear and love of your sweet Son and always to be thankful for so many benefits conferred on me—not by my deserving but by His kindness. Help me to make a pure and sincere confession and to do true penance, that I may obtain mercy and grace.

I pray too that at the end of my life you, O Mother without compare, Gate of Heaven, and help of sinners, may not allow me your unworthy servant to swerve from the holy Catholic faith but by your great piety and mercy may aid and defend me from evil spirits. And, at length, relying on the hope in which I repose, I pray that by the glorious passion of your blessed Son and by your own intercession you may obtain for me His pardon for my sins, and that dying in His love and yours, you may direct me into the way of health and salvation.

Amen.

¹ Translation, from *Libellus Precum*, by Adrian M. Wade, O.P.