

# Blessing

He alone can bless that has the power. He alone is able to bless who is able to create. God alone can bless.

God, when he blesses his creature, looks upon him and calls him by his name and brings his all powerful love to bear upon the pith and centre of his being and pours out from his hand the power of fruitfulness, the power of growth and increase, of health and goodness. "I will keep mine eye upon you and make you to increase."

Only God can bless. Blessing is the disposition to be made of what a thing is or effects. It is the word of power of the Master of Creation. It is the promise and assurance of the Lord of Providence. Blessing bestows a happy destiny. Nietzsche's remark, that instead of asking favours we should confer blessings, is the saying of a rebel. He well understood his own meaning. God only can bless since God only is the master of life. By our nature we are petitioners. The contrary of blessing is cursing. A curse is a sentence and a seal of mischief. It is, like blessing, a judgment imprinted upon the forehead and the heart. It shuts off the sources of life.

God has imparted a portion of his power to bless and to curse to those whose vocation it is to create life. Parents possess this power: "The blessing of the father establishes the houses of the children." Priests possess it. As parents engender natural life, so the priest begets the supernatural life of grace. To give life is the nature and office of both.

And he also may attain to the power of blessing who no longer seeks himself but in perfect simplicity of heart wills to be the servant of him Who has life in himself.

But the power to bless is always and only from God. It fails wholly if we assume it of ourselves. By nature we are petitioners, blessers only by God's grace,--just as we have the virtue of authority, of effectual command, only by God's grace.

What applies to blessing applies also to cursing. "The mother's curse rooteth up the foundations of the children's houses," that is to say of their life and their well-being.

All the forms of nature are prefigurements of grace. The power of effectual blessing, the power which the blessing actually conveys, the real, the essential power, of which our natural life is but a figure, is God's own life. It is with himself that God blesses. The divine life is begotten by God's blessing. By it we are made sharers in the divine nature by a pure gift, a grace, bestowed on us by Christ. So also the sign of the cross is a blessing in which God bestows upon us himself.

This power of divine blessings is merely lent to those who stand in God's stead. Fathers and mothers have it by the sacrament of Christian marriage. The priest has it by the sacrament of ordination. By virtue of the sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of confirmation,--which makes us kings and priests to God,--there is given to those "who love God with all their heart and all their mind and all their strength and their neighbors as themselves", the power to bless with God's own life. To each of these the power of blessing is given with such difference as the nature of his apostleship determines.

The visible representation of blessing is the hand. By its position and action it indicates the purpose of the blessing. In Confirmation it is laid on the head so that the Spirit which has its source in God may flow through it. When the hand signs the cross on forehead or breast it is in order that the divine plenitude may be poured out freely. The hand, as it is the instrument of making and shaping, is also the instrument of spending and giving.

Finally there is the blessing given not by the hand but by the All Holy himself with the sacramental body of Christ. Let it be bestowed in profound reverence and subjection to the mystery.

