

God Does Not Hear All Prayers

Question/Statement:

Does God hear prayers that are offered up to strange gods and from those who practice false religions? Does God hear the prayers of fallen-away Catholics? Does God hear the prayers of Catholics living in mortal sin?

RJMI Answer:

God does not hear all prayers:

“Then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear: they shall rise in the morning, and shall not find me: Because they have hated instruction, and received not the fear of the Lord, Nor consented to my counsel, but despised all my reproof.” (Prv. 1:25-31) “He that turneth away his ears from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination.” (Prv. 28:9) “Yea, and when I cry, and entreat, he hath shut out my prayer. ... Thou hast set a cloud before thee, that our prayer may not pass through.” (Lamentations 3:8, 44) “Your iniquities have divided between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he should not hear.” (Isa. 59:2)

God does not give credence to false gods and false religions. Therefore, God does not hear prayers offered up to false gods and of those who practice false religions. Also, God does not hear the prayers of impenitent fallen-away Catholics, and impenitent Catholics who are obstinately and habitually living in mortal sin.

The Catechism of Trent, Prayer: “The Lowest Degree Of Prayer: The Prayer Of The Impenitent - The last degree is that of those who not only do not repent of their sins and enormities, but, adding crime to crime, dare frequently to ask pardon of God for those sins, in which they are resolved to continue. With such dispositions they would not presume to ask pardon from their fellow-man. The prayer of such sinners is not heard by God. It is recorded of Antiochus: Then this wicked man prayed to the Lord, of whom he was not to obtain mercy. Whoever lives in this deplorable condition should be vehemently exhorted to wean himself from all affection to sin, and to return to God in good earnest and from the heart.”

That does not mean God does not want to save obstinate sinners by giving them actual grace. He does. Fallen man cannot even come to God unless God first gives him actual grace, which he could not have merited while steeped in obstinate sin and blindness. If God sees a non-Catholic, who has not yet embraced Catholic faith, responds to His actual grace by showing a good will, God will reward him with another actual grace to further aid in his repentance and conversion, and God will do all this in spite of his prayers offered up to a false god, which He does not hear. “*God... is a rewarder to them that seek him.*” (Heb. 11:6) God rewards with actual grace every good deed a man does if his motive is also good, in spite of the fact that God does not hear his prayers, because they are offered up to a false god and originate from a false religion. One must first believe in the true God in order for his prayers to be directed to the true God, and then he must be of good faith, and only then will God hear (answer) his prayers, and this presupposes that he must be a Catholic or a catechumen. That means, not even a man who rejects his false

god and religion and seeks the true God can have his prayers answered by God until he first knows and believes in the true God, directs his prayers to the true God, and is of good faith.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1913, Prayer: "Prayer presupposes faith in God and hope in His goodness. By both, God, to whom we pray, moves us to prayer. Our knowledge of God by the light of natural reason also inspires us to look to Him for help, but such prayer lacks supernatural inspiration, and though it may avail to keep us from losing our natural knowledge of God and trust in Him, or, to some extent, from offending Him, it cannot positively dispose us to receive His graces."

The Catechism of Trent carefully worded its teaching on prayers of unbelievers, never mentioning God hears prayers offered up to false gods and prayers that originate from false religions, because God never hears those prayers; if He did He would be giving credence to false gods and false religions. But God sees (hears) such a pagan's good dispositions and endeavors, and because of them, not because of his prayers offered up to a false god, God grants him grace and light.

The Catechism of Trent, Prayer: "The Third Degree Of Prayer: The Prayer Of Unbelievers - A third degree of prayer is that which is offered by those who have not as yet been illumined with the light of faith; but who, when the divine goodness illumines in their souls the feeble natural light, are strongly moved to the desire and pursuit of truth and most earnestly pray for a knowledge of it. If they persevere in such dispositions, God, in His mercy, will not neglect their earnest endeavors, as we see verified by the example of Cornelius the centurion. The doors of the divine mercy are closed against none who sincerely ask for mercy."

It is the unbeliever's endeavor to find God, not his prayer offered up to a false god, that grants him grace and enlightenment from God, enabling him to take the first step on the way to becoming a catechumen, which is to reject his false god or gods and the false religion he adheres to. Cornelius was not a pagan. He worshipped the true God, the God of Israel, but did not yet believe in Christ. Many devout believers worshipped and prayed to the God of Israel before they heard of Christ, and when they heard they believed and were baptized, which was a sign of their election.

Abram, who become Abraham, is a perfect example of God's dealings with good willed unbelievers. Abram's whole family worshipped idols in Ur of the Chaldees, as did he. He did not have one man that could teach him the truth about God. Not until Abraham rejected the idols of his father, did God reveal Himself to Abram, and then, knowing the true God as taught by God Himself, Abram had faith in the true God. He was then able to pray to the true God and thus have his prayers answered by God.

Actual grace comes from God through the Catholic Church, not from the impenitent non-Catholic's prayers. All grace, sanctifying and actual, comes from God through the Catholic Church. The only prayers that make grace available to others are those of Catholics in a state of grace. God does not hear the prayers of an impenitent non-Catholic until he becomes penitent, until he becomes a catechumen preparing to enter the Catholic Church. God does not hear the prayers of impenitent Catholics who are obstinately and habitually living in mortal sin, until they become penitent and prepare to properly confess their mortal sins. But in spite of this, God, while not hearing their prayers, still gives them actual grace, or else they could never become penitent.

“When you stretch forth your hands, I will turn away my eyes from you: and when you multiply prayer, I will not hear: for your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, be clean, take away the evil of your devices from my eyes, cease to do perversely, Learn to do well...” (Isa. 1:15-17) “Let him decline from evil and do good: Let him seek after peace and pursue it: Because the eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and his ears unto their prayers but the countenance of the Lord upon them that do evil things.” (1Pt. 3:11- 12)

Once a non-Catholic becomes penitent by becoming a catechumen, and a Catholic who is obstinately and habitually living in mortal sin becomes penitent by preparing properly to confess his mortal sins, then God hears their prayers even though they are not yet in a state of grace. *“He that loveth God, shall obtain pardon for his sins by prayer, and shall refrain himself from them, and shall be heard in the prayer of days.”* (Eclucus. 3:4) The prayers they now offer can only benefit themselves, until they enter a state of grace at which point they can also benefit others.

“The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him: to all that call upon him in truth. He will do the will of them that fear him: and he will hear their prayer, and save them.” (Ps. 144:18-19) “He that adoreth God with joy, shall be accepted, and his prayer shall approach even to the clouds.” (Eclucus. 35:20)

Not only does God not hear the prayers of impenitent fallen-away Catholics, but they are doubly under His wrath, for it would have been better if they have not known Him, then after knowing Him to turn back (2Pt. 2:20).

Venerable Louis of Granada, *The Sinners Guide*, Chap. 24: “God withdraws further and further from a sinful soul, in proportion as her vices increase. We can learn the deplorable condition into which this separation plunges the soul from God Himself, who exclaims, by His prophet, ‘Woe to them, for they have departed from me. Woe to them when I shall depart from them’ (Osee 7:13 and 9:12). This abandonment by God is the second woe of which St. John speaks of in the Apocalypse.”

Impenitent fallen-away Catholics, God does not hear your prayers. Your prayers benefit no one, not even yourselves, but only incite God’s wrath against you for sacrilege, misuse of holy things. St. Louis Marie de Montfort, in his necessary book for these days, “True Devotion to Mary,” speaks of seven false devotions to Mary, all by outward appearance seeming very sincere and pious, and each an abomination to God. Fallen-away Catholics, God will not hear your prayers until you repent, convert, and prepare to enter the Catholic Church by abjuration.

“Is this a light thing to the house of Juda, that they should commit these abominations which they have committed here: because they have filled the land with iniquity, and have turned to provoke me to anger? ...Therefore I also will deal with them in my wrath: my eye shall not spare them, neither will I shew mercy: and when they shall cry to my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them.” (Ez. 8:18-19)

Therefore, God only hears the prayers of fallen-away Catholics who have penitent hearts: those who are confused and know it and are learning the Catholic faith in order to dispel their heresy and embrace the full deposit of faith; and, Catholics who are living in mortal sin but have a penitent heart, a true desire to overcome their mortal sins, which are repugnant to them.

Catechism of Trent, Prayer: “The Second Degree Of Prayer: The Prayer Of Sinners - Another degree of prayer is that of those who are weighed down by the guilt of mortal sin, but who strive, with what is

called dead faith, to raise themselves from their condition and to ascend to God. But, in consequence of their languid state and the extreme weakness of their faith, they cannot raise themselves from the earth. **Recognizing their crimes and stung with remorse of conscience**, they bow themselves down with humility, and, far as they are removed from God, implore of Him with penitential sorrow, the pardon of their sins and the peace of reconciliation.

“The prayers of such persons are not rejected by God, but are heard by Him. Nay, in His mercy, He generously invites such as these to have recourse to Him, saying: Come to me, all you that labour, and are heavily laden, and I will refresh you, of this class was the publican, who, though he did not dare to raise his eyes towards heaven, left the Temple, as (our Lord) declares, more justified than the Pharisee.”

Catholics’ petitions are not always granted

Certain conditions must be met before a Catholic can “*Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you.*” (Mt. 7:7) These petitions to God are not always granted. “*You ask and receive not: because you ask amiss.*” (Ja. 4:3) Only if a man’s will is one with God can his petitions be granted. He must first be Catholic or a catechumen, and then be either in a state of grace or truly penitent if he is not, or God will not even hear his prayer; and, even this man, whose prayer is heard by God, is not always granted his request.

Catholic commentary, on Mt. 7:7: “Ask, and you shall receive, &c. When we offer our petitions to the Almighty, we must imitate the example of Solomon, who immediately obtained what he asked of the Lord, because he asked what he ought. Two things, therefore, are necessary to every prayer, that it be offered up with perseverance and fervor, and that it contain a lawful prayer. Chry. hom xxiv—The reasons why so many do not obtain the effects of their prayers, are,—**1st**. Because they ask for what is evil; and he that makes such a request, offers the Almighty an intolerable injury by wishing to make him as it were, the author of evil: **2nd**. Although what they ask be not evil, they seek it for an evil end. S. James iv: **3rd**. Because they who pray are themselves wicked; (S. John ix) for God doth not hear sinners: **4th**. Because they ask with no faith, or with faith weak and wavering: (S. James I) **5th**. Because although what we ask be good in itself, yet the Almighty refuses it, in order to grant us a greater good: **6th**. Because God wishes us to persevere, as he declares in the parable of the friend asking bread, Luke, ch. ii; and that we may esteem his gifts the more: **7th**. We do not always receive what we beg, because according to St. Augustine (lib. ii, de Serm. Dom. et epis. 34, ad Paulinum) God often does not grant us what we petition for, that he may grant us something more useful and profitable.

For instance, a faithful Catholic with a good motive may ask God to move him to another city, but God sees the city is not a fit place for him to dwell, or the city he lives in is better than the one he wants to move to, and thus God does not grant his petition for his own greater good. During St. Paul’s missionary journeys, he wanted to preach the gospel in Asia and Bithynia, but God forbid him to do so at that time. Instead, God sent him to Macedonia, where God knew there were more worthy souls who would hear Paul’s preaching and convert, as opposed to Asia and Bithynia.

“...They were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. And when they were come into Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia: and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not. And when they had passed through Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision was shewed to Paul in the night, which was a man of Macedonia standing and beseeching him and saying: Pass over into Macedonia and help us. And as soon as he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia: being assured that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” (Acts 16: 6-10)

St. Paul had no way of knowing ahead of time which city would reap the most benefit from his preaching. Human perspective, even with good motives, can many times be wrong. At another time, St. Paul prayed for a good thing and God did not grant his petition; instead, God gave him a better thing. St. Paul was constantly assailed by a temptation from the Satan in which he petitioned God to be freed of. God did not grant his petition; instead, God allowed the temptation to continue in order to keep St. Paul humble, and thus a greater good was served.

“And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me. For which thing, thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me. And he said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity. Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” (2 Cor. 12:7-9)

Therefore, not even Catholics in a state of grace should presume their prayers are so worthy or just that God hears and answers them all. *“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him?”* (Heb. 2:6)

Catechism of Trent, Prayer: “Unwise And Indevout Prayers Unheard - Sometimes, indeed, it happens that what we ask of God we do not obtain. But it is then especially that God looks to our welfare, either because He bestows on us other gifts of higher value and in greater abundance, or because what we ask, far from being necessary or useful, would prove superfluous and injurious. God, says St. Augustine, denies some things in His mercy which He grants in His wrath.

“Sometimes, also, such is the remissness and negligence with which we pray, that we ourselves do not attend to what we say. Since prayer is an elevation of the soul to God, if, while we pray, the mind, instead of being fixed upon God, is distracted, and the tongue slurs over the words at random, without attention, without devotion, with what propriety can we give to such empty sounds the name of Christian prayer?

“We should not, therefore, be at all surprised, if God does not comply with our requests; either because by our negligence and indifference we almost show that we do not really desire what we ask, or because we ask those things, which, if granted, would be prejudicial to our interests.”

Even though God answered many of King David’s prayers, He did not answer them all. David always hoped and did not presume God would hear his prayers. *“Hear, O God, my prayer, and despise not my supplication: Be attentive to me and hear me.”* (Ps. 54:2-3) And when God hears the just man’s prayer, he is grateful beyond measure as one unworthy.

Catechism of Trent, Prayer: “The Highest Degree Of Prayer: The Prayer Of The Just - What, then, is the best manner and the most exalted degree of prayer? It is that which is made use of by the pious and the just. Resting on the solid foundation of the true faith, they rise successively from one degree of prayer and virtue to another, until, at length, they reach that height of perfection, whence they can contemplate the infinite power, goodness, and wisdom of God; where, too, they are animated with the assured hope of obtaining not only those blessings which they desire in this life, but also those unutterable rewards which God has pledged Himself to grant to him who piously and religiously implores His assistance.

“Soaring, as it were, to heaven, on these two wings, the soul approaches, in fervent desire, the Divinity; adores with supreme praise and thanksgiving Him from whom she has received such inestimable blessings; and, like an only child, animated with singular piety and profound veneration, trustfully tells her most beloved Father all her wants.

“This sort of prayer the Sacred Scriptures express by the words pouring out. In his sight, says the Prophet, I pour out my prayer, but before him I declare my trouble. This means that he who comes to pray should conceal or omit nothing, but pour out all, flying with confidence into the bosom of God,

his most loving Father. To this the Sacred Scriptures exhort us in these words: Pour out thy heart before him, cast thy care upon the Lord. This is that degree of prayer to which St. Augustine alludes when he says in that book entitled Enchiridion: What faith believes, that hope and charity implore.”

The greatest saints knew well the great privilege of God hearing their prayers. They never presumed upon this favour as if they deserved to be heard, but only hoped that God would hear their prayers and thanked Him in all humility when He did.

“Hear, O God, my prayer, and despise not my supplication.” (Ps. 54:2) “The Lord hath heard my supplication: the Lord hath received my prayer.” (Ps. 6:10) “Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.” (Ps. 65:20)

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