

THE

Divine Eucharist

Extracts from the Writings and Sermons
of Venerable Pierre-Julien EYMARD,
Founder of the Congregation of the Most Blessed Sacrament

—❖— FOURTH SERIES —❖—
THE EUCHARIST AND CHRISTIAN PERFECTION



FROM THE SIXTH FRENCH EDITION.

FATHERS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

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LETTER of the ARCHBISHOP
of CHAMBÉRY.

December 11, 1875

My dear Father and Friend,

I thank you for your last gift. This younger brother appears to me worthy of its other brethren, and worthily to complete the family of the holy Père Eymard's Eucharistic Works. Indeed, I shall not be astonished if here again Jacob supplants Esau. The teaching of these three Retreats is reliable and elevated. It is like the pith and the crowning of all that has gone before.

I bless again this publication and all the good Fathers and Brothers of this new Society, and I commend myself to their prayers and to your own.

† P. A., ARCHBISHOP OF CHAMBÉRY.

IMPRIMATUR :

CAROLUS, Archiepisc. Turonensis.

Turonibus, die 19 martii, 1876.



APPROBATION.

WE have before us the fourth and last series of the Venerable Père Eymard's works. All his writings, so far collected and put into form, are now at the disposal of English readers. All have been approved at Rome as the first step toward the Beatification of the holy writer. He could not have more fittingly ended his labors with the pen than by giving us this little volume on *Christian Perfection*. It is a profound subject, which frequently daunts even the bravest of us in the spiritual life. But led on by the firm hand and gentle guidance of this holy Apostle of the Eucharist, timid souls gain confidence and expand under the sunshine of the Sacred Host.

The whole code of Christian perfection was first preached by Christ in His sermon on the mount. Pere Eymard has taken those bare, fundamental principles and clothed them with the Eucharistic spirit. They who have had not only the pleasure, but the good fortune, of reading the other three volumes from his Eucharistic pen, know that for him the Blessed Sacrament was, indeed, Christ living and breathing and still working among us. He points with all the warmth and enthusiasm of a great preacher, to the Sacred Host as the grand Model of every Christian virtue. When he urges souls to follow the counsels, it is because Jesus, "having loved His own who were in the world, loved them unto the end." He

who proclaimed of Himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," is placed before us on every page of these wonderful little books as still pleading for love and service from His redeemed ones.

May the voice of the Good Shepherd, still guarding His sheep-fold from the depths of our tabernacles all over the world, be borne to souls far and wide by the burning words of this modern propagator of the Eucharistic life ! May its spirit stir up in the hearts of the Faithful of all conditions "a great desire for Holy Communion that thus they may render themselves less unworthy to communicate daily !"

J. CARD. GIBBONS.



PREFACE.

We are happy to give to our readers the Fourth Series of Venerable Père Eymard's Instructions on the Divine Eucharist and Christian Perfection, which has been eagerly awaited since the issue of the three preceding volumes.

Here, again, we shall listen to the Father speaking. Not only his thoughts but, for the most part, his very expressions have been faithfully reproduced, for the notes which we have used were taken under his own dictation. The editor of this volume himself took those of the first and the second Retreats. Père Eymard examined them carefully, and commended their exactitude.

We are under the impression that this volume will be greatly appreciated by the numerous Congregations founded recently for the adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, since they should in a special manner find in the Eucharist the exemplar, as well as the nourishment, of their religious life.

To the secular Aggregates of the Society of the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament or, as they are known in this country, The People's Eucharistic League, it also appeals. Although

the instructions that it contains were delivered, for the most part, to the Religious of the Institute, the Aggregates, the members of the League, who, though not leading the same life, ought to breathe the same spirit, will find in it the precepts of Eucharistic perfection, that is, a Christian life whose principle, centre, and end is the Eucharist.

If all the mysteries of Jesus Christ possess in themselves so great a grace of sanctification that whoever aims at living by any one of them, thereby receiving the divine influence of all the others, arrives at perfection that is very plainly evident, and in which the spirit, the character, and the virtue proper to that mystery sovereignly dominate; if Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Calvary, above all, have their disciples, and people the paradise of the Church with saints of their own peculiar beauty, perfume, and usefulness, shall not the Holy Eucharist also, have Its disciples? shall It not form Its saints?

True it is that, as no one reaches the perfect age of Jesus Christ unless faithfully nourishing himself with the Sacrament of His Body und Blood, all the elect are really the fruits of that Tree of Life. But it may be easily understood that, if the Eucharist is the object of a dominant devotion, a central love, a constant study; if one

consecrates to It regular, special, and exclusive attention, It must operate in souls touched by this grace and faithful to this attraction a special perfection whose distinctive note will be the reproduction, as far as possible, of the virtues and states of Jesus Christ in this Mystery.

The grace of the Eucharist will flow into these souls and will inspire their conduct with the same motives that led Jesus Christ to institute and perpetuate the Sacrament of His adorable Presence, the chief of which is love, "In finem dilexit—He loved to the end!" The grace of the Eucharist will urge them to prefer the acquisition of those virtues that most evidently spring from the sacramental state of Jesus-Hostia, and none will be dearer to them than that profound humility which is His permanent state, and which constitutes the lowest degree to which love can descend.

Lastly, the supreme aim of Our Lord being to give Himself wholly and personally by Holy Communion to every Christian, in order to live in him, to take possession of his soul, his heart, his powers, that He may direct, elevate, and sanctify them in that divine union, the soul faithful to the action of Eucharistic grace, will give herself to Jesus Christ, will deliver over to

Him as purely as she can, and every day more perfectly, her being, her whole life, that He may Himself live in her, possess her entirely, and as a Master direct her conduct, thoughts, affections, and actions. Then does the Sacrament attain Its end. Jesus Christ lives in us, dwells in us and, as He lives by the Father, so do we live by Him. He is the Head, we are but His members. He is all, we are nothing, or rather, we are Himself!

Venerable Père Eymard shows in one word (which we must call sublime) the supreme aim of the work of perfection through the Eucharist: "You must be (remember it well) only human shadows and, as it were, the appearances of which the Eucharist is the substance!"

Evidently, this is not the work of a day. What generosity, what fidelity, what labors and combats this noble end exacts! This volume will serve as a guide to souls whom it interests. May it multiply adorers in spirit and in truth of the Sacrament of Love! May it help them to increase in the perfect service of the Divine Person of Jesus Christ, our King and our God, in the Holy Eucharist!



RETREAT

PREACHED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
CONGREGATION OF THE

Brothers of S^t Vincent de Paul

FOREWORD.

THE instructions of this first Retreat were given by the Venerable Père Eymard to the Congregation of the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul.

This pious Institute dates from only a few years back. Founded at Paris by the Reverend Père Le Prévost, of venerated memory, its end is to procure the glory of God and the salvation of souls by opening to the working-classes means of help, clubs, places of assembly, and churches where every evening, and all day on Sunday, workmen may find beneficial rest, lawful recreation, and good instruction.

The spirit of the work is unbounded zeal and absolute devotedness to the workmen, whom the members must search out, attract, and guard by every means supernatural charity can inspire. Here more than anywhere else, the priest and the religious of St. Vincent de Paul ought to make himself all to all to gain all these poor hearts to Jesus Christ. He ought, if occasion offered, to know how even to become a martyr, for the Abbé Planchat, martyred during the Commune, was a Brother of St. Vincent and Director of the Home of the faubourg Saint-Antoine, which he had founded.

These few remarks will explain several passages of the Retreat in which Père Eymard alludes to the end of the Institute, its works, and its foundation.

We shall not give the instructions in the order in

which they were preached. Now intended rather for spiritual reading than for meditations of Retreat, the reader will draw more profit from them by taking them one after another in logical sequence, one thus strengthening and throwing light on the other.

If, however, any one desires to follow the Retreat just as it was preached, he may take them in the order the Father mapped out for five days :

I. DAY. — I. The Graces of Retreat.

II. Prayer, Its Necessity and Character.

III. The Religious State.

II. DAY. — I. The Service of God.

II. Prayer, the Gift of Our Intellect.

III. Does God Love Me ?

III. DAY. — I. Do I Love God.

II. Prayer, the Gift of Our Heart.

III. Pardoning Love.

IV. DAY. — I. Humility.

II. Prayer, the Gift of Our Will.

III. Meekness.

V. DAY. — I. The Eucharist, the Principle of Sanctity.

II. The Rule, the Sanctification of the Religious.

III. Jesus in the Eucharist, the Model of the Three Vows.

Lastly, the sermon on the Profession of the Vows.

The GRACE of a RETREAT

for RELIGIOUS.

*Estote perfecti sicut Pater vester
cœlestis perfectus est*

Be ye perfect as your Heavenly
Father is perfect



HERE in a few words is the whole Gospel. Here is the end of Jesus Christ's coming, the aim of the whole Christian life. All the rest of the Gospel merely points out the way and the means to attain that end. To be perfect as God is perfect, holy as God is holy—behold the end and aim of all our efforts! Never shall we so perfectly attain it as to warrant our pausing to rest. Everything here on earth has its limit, but perfection has none. Perfection is a participation in the holiness of God, who is infinitely holy.

Even for souls of the best will, there are in the world great difficulties in the attainment of sanctity. Among them is the peril of self-direction, to which may be added that of absorption in the labors, the necessary duties of life, the occupations imposed by one's

condition or choice. The way of perfection is almost ignored.

Blessed are they whom God in His mercy calls to the religious life, which separates them from the world and its dangers opens to them a secure way, affords them tried and efficacious means, and employs all the resources of the most active charity to facilitate their acquiring perfection and holiness!

In the religious life time is given to the care of the soul. The religious does not hesitate to interrupt, to leave all other occupations, however good they may be, in order to take time to examine himself, to reflect on his own interior, and the great affair of his salvation. It is a great grace to have the time, the means, the opportunity to turn away from exterior things in order to think only upon God and self. That is the grace of retreat, the grace of renewal, during which we put our accounts in order, scrutinize the secret folds of our conscience, the most hidden motives of our actions, in order to free them from that spiritual rust, which we denominate routine, which fastens on to the

soul imperceptibly, like certain mollusks to the sides of a vessel, weighing it down and retarding its progress, its flight toward God. Retreat offers three principal means of interior renovation.

I. — Retreat purifies the soul from sin, above all, from the habit of sin and affection to sin.

We walk on the highway, along which the wind raises a thick dust, which falls upon us. It clings to us, even without our knowing it, and our garments become soiled.

I know very well that we make our examen carefully every evening, and that is enough to remove the heavier and more perceptible part of the dust. But on looking more attentively, is it not true that we find in our soul some venial sins inveterate and of long standing, which remain in spite of our daily examens?

We generally forget them in the confessional, and neglect to obtain pardon for them by other means. They have become habitual. They no longer shock us. They seem to be a part of ourselves. Now the

more regular our exterior life is, the more we are exposed to retaining these venial sins of habit. If we study ourselves by the light of this Retreat, we shall find certain habits of sloth, negligence, self-love, sallies of character, freedom of speech, which are so deeply rooted that we continually fall into them easily and on the slightest occasion, as we do the most ordinary things. One might say that they form a part of our life-work. We do not know their cause, for we have never searched for their root. How, then, can we rid ourselves of them?

The Retreat furnishes us more vivid light. It will discover ourselves to us, reveal to us our own interior, show us the causes of those venial sins, enable us to destroy their roots, and thus free ourselves of them. The light, the divine light that penetrates our darkness, more or less involuntary on our part, and purifies us, is the greatest good of the Retreat, for all depends on being pure. Purity alone is demanded for heaven. We enter therein with sanctity more or less adorned with virtues, with prayer more or less elevat-

ed; but no one goes in without purity, and purity of soul is sufficient for all.

How shall we receive the purifying light of the Retreat? By giving ourselves to attentive, minute examinations, by searching our conscience, like the savant studying microscopic animal life in air and water by the aid of his lens. Self-examination should be serious, severe, sincere. In making it, we should, above all, seek light from God, and then proceed in a spirit of tenderness, love, and filial piety toward Him. We must not become so absorbed in self as not to be able to act or move, but go straight to Our Lord. See what His love demands of us in spite of our continued refusal. Listen to His reproaches. See where we are under loving obligations to Him, but all this with a true desire to retrench every obstacle, to do all that is necessary to become pure. Let us reflect deeply on this thought: at the hour of death, the dying think neither of their virtues nor merits. They ask in fright whether they are pure, whether they are sufficiently so to appear before the God of purity.

II. — The second grace of Retreat is our renewal in the spirit of fervor.

It is an incontrovertible axiom that the soul of herself always tends to loss of piety, just as fire, consuming itself, always tends to its own extinction, even while sending up its most brilliant flames. And on the battlefield, though the soldier may not be killed, he gets tired even while winning, he exhausts his strength. And so the conqueror takes time to refresh his troops by rest.

The exercises and the struggles of the spiritual life use up the strength of the soul. It must have repose in order to recruit its vigor. Above all, is this necessary in an active life in which the soul pours herself out much more freely in charity to those around her. What is true for all religious is much more so for them. Let a religious, for eight days only, abandon his exercises of the interior life, his prayer, his Office, in one word, his life of piety, and we shall see what he has become at the end of that time, if he is not altogether lost!

We are only reservoirs, and not very deep

ones at that! The source is not in ourselves. If we want to pour ourselves out, we must at the same time receive, otherwise we shall soon run dry. Ah! we, more than all, who give much to others, who expend ourselves on so many works, we must begin by being well filled. We must first become saints ourselves before going to sanctify others. We must first glorify God in ourselves, if we would afterward glorify Him in others!

Jesus Christ prayed and fasted long before undertaking His exterior mission. The Apostles spent fifty days in prayer before scattering throughout the world; and Our Lord withdrew them into the desert after their first mission, which had, however, lasted only a short time.

Let us watch very closely lest, instead of expending only the interest, we touch upon the principal, eating up at once both capital and revenue, which would be to our ruin. Have we always our head well above water during our habitual occupations? Do we control our labors? Are we swayed, carried away

by them, or do we pass our life under the eye of Jesus Christ, under the empire of His grace?

The more we are engaged in holy things the more need have we of frequently with drawing into ourselves, of scrutinizing our heart and sounding its depths.

I do not say to put our virtues under our eyes in order to take complacency in them, to examine them with pride, and to number up our merits. But the fear of falling into self-complacency and self satisfaction must not prevent us from studying and rendering an exact account of our position — do we rule it? do we rise above it? If we do, oh, God be blessed! All is going well! We are seraphs hurrying, flying toward God! What do we upon this earth? We have nothing more to do here below!—But is it, indeed, so?

III.—In fine, the Retreat prepares for us a grace greater than all these, one that is not always sufficiently thought of. What is this grace?

It is that of tasting God in common, in the family, in the reunion of brethren gathered around their father. A religious makes pro

fession of immolating himself to God through love. His ordinary anticipation is sacrifice, struggle, and death on the summit of Calvary. All is dark and depressing, ever new efforts, new fatigue.

Well, the Retreat comes to afford us time and grace to enjoy God. We assemble together from everywhere in one family. The Retreat will make us taste the sweetness of fraternal charity, which will find in it new bonds, closer, more intimate.

The religious has his personal graces, but God dispenses to him still more, the social graces. The first he receives as chosen of God to sanctify himself by personal fidelity; the second he receives as member of a body which God has formed for His designs in the Church. Now, these graces come to us from Jesus Christ through the channel of the Superior. Graces follow an order established by God, a certain hierarchical order. They descend from the universal Head, who is Jesus Christ, into the secondary heads, who distribute them throughout the members. Thus the graces of Pentecost fell first upon

Mary, next to Jesus Christ, the largest channel of grace, in order afterward to fill the Apostles. The graces that the universal Church receives are transmitted to her through the Pope, her visible Head. In the same way, all the graces of a religious Society pass through the Superior thence to spread over all the members of the body. It is this that makes unity of spirit based upon unity of grace.

The Retreat places us in a perfect state to receive the graces of the spirit, of the vocation, of the body of the Society to which we belong, in a word, it puts us in the best condition to receive the grace of our religious life, by bringing us close to our Superior and uniting us more directly with him. We may say that, in general, we have not enough faith in the religious body, in the grace of the Superior. We do, indeed, believe that he represents Jesus Christ and, in a spirit of faith, we wish to obey and honor Jesus Christ in his person. But we must, besides, have faith in his grace, that is, in the power he possesses of communicating

grace to the whole body, and of giving to it that unity of spirit which forms its strength and its holiness as a religious body.

It is in this union of children around the paternal table that God communicates Himself to each of us with goodness, sweetness, and tenderness. Yes, this Retreat ought to be the Pentecost of love. That we may go forth from it strengthened and ready to resume with joy our daily work, we must have in it a taste of God. He must pet us like a tender mother.

Alas! sad to say, we are so miserable that we fear God's goodness, fear tasting it too much, fear to allow ourselves to plunge into it, to be submerged in it. We are willing to behold the sanctity, the truth, even the mercy of God, All that still leaves a certain distance between God and ourselves, and gives us, so to say, time to escape Him and not to be caught by Him. It leaves us again to ourselves. We all fear not belonging to self, because then we could no longer give ourselves a little to the world or to self-love!

But from God in His goodness, in His tenderness, in His ineffable effusions, from God clasping us to His Heart and giving us a taste of His love in perfect union, we flee! Ah! it is because if God once enters into us and fills us with His goodness, if He once makes Himself felt; if He once makes us burst into tears of love and gratitude, all is over, we are no longer our own, we are caught in the snare of His love, we can no more escape, and we must surrender unconditionally to Him!

He charms us in His tenderness, He carries us in His arms and, wounded in heart, we have but one word. "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me do? I am all Thine forever!"

Love is a captor. It gives wings, it casts fire into the soul. Ah, let us allow Our Lord to make us happy! If He once does so we shall be all His. We say to him who wants to guard his heart in the midst of the world: Take care never to shed tears and never allow them to fall before you; otherwise, you will surrender all your strength you will no more belong to yourself:

But here there is question of God, of Jesus Christ. Ah! let us permit ourselves to be inebriated by His tenderness, ravished by His love!

If we wish to make a good Retreat, let us place ourselves under the protection of Mary. She is the Mother of interior souls. She disposes of the secret treasures of Jesus' bounty. May she obtain for us self-enlightenment, a clear light, pure and effective, capable of lighting the fire of the heart and spreading the flame of the will!



The SERVICE of GOD.

I.—We ought to serve God, for we are His creatures and His property. Although God gives us liberty, He does not mean to relinquish His rights over us. We belong to Him, we are His; and should we endeavor to free ourselves by disobedience, which is a true robbery of God's goods, a denial of His rights, we then declare war against God. God has then to declare anew His right to possession, and He does so by chastisement. Did He allow the revolt to go unpunished, He would no longer be God.

God does nothing without an end. When He gave us a mind, a heart, and a will, He meant to render us capable of knowing, loving, and serving Him. How greatly this end honors us!

That God willed to render us capable of loving Him, and that He willed to accept our love, is the grandeur of Christian grace, the most brilliant testimony of God's infinite condescension. The inferior cannot presume to

love one who is above him. Love supposes or produces equality. It binds on both sides. Now, God cannot consent to be our equal, excepting by His love of condescension. But in truth, He wishes it. He wants to be loved, hence He stoops to us. Truly, He did not fear to go even to the end in that way of mercy and, becoming incarnate, sending His Son to be our Brother, He became really our equal.

But at the same time that in the Word He abases Himself to us, in the Humanity of the Word He raises us even to Himself, so that in Jesus Christ He loves us infinitely; and we, too, in Jesus Christ and by His merits, can love Him infinitely. Loving Him, we necessarily serve Him, for we cannot love Him without knowing Him; and that knowledge gives rise to the necessity of serving Him, for it shows Him to us as God, Our Lord and Master, and it puts us in our rank of creatures who owe Him all that they have and all that they are.

Thus the necessity of serving God flows from the knowledge of what He is and from

the grace to love what He gives us, as the effect springs from its natural cause.

But how serve God as He deserves, and what motives ought to animate us to serve Him well?

II.—First, it is a duty of justice which obliges us to the positive law in all that it demands. This law ought to take precedence of every private will.

So, first the law of God, the Decalogue, then the laws of the Church, all her laws; and, lastly, the laws of our state. Herein is contained the testimony of the expressed will of God. It ought to take precedence of all duties of supererogation we may have imposed upon ourselves.

Alas! under this pretext of doing more, how unfaithful are they who presume to dispense themselves from what is prescribed, and who really thereby violate some law! How many sins against the simple law of justice!

Let us base our sanctity on this firm rock: let the first foundation of our religious life be the exact and rigorous observance of the

law explicitly laid down and of the law of justice; for the religious life, while subject to the counsels, does not dispense from the common law. Our obligations increase, our graces also. We must keep the counsels and not omit the law.

The Lord in His mercy, has promised a recompense for the fulfilment of justice. He has a right to be served for Himself without any retribution, but He desires to multiply the forms of His love. After having infused His love into us in order that we may be able to merit, He crowns it in us for the 'works that it has therein performed.

Thus loved and prevented, shall we not do for God what we would do for men? If I have not done it, I am a wretch. I have preferred the devil, vanity, to the service of God! I have, perhaps, never thought of it, but that is a poor excuse. Ignorance gives no right to insult God.

III.—We must serve God, because it is to our interest, because we have everything to gain in His service, and the recompense will be magnificent. Again God's goodness shows

itself here. He could have exacted of His creature absolute service without any recompense. But no. He wills that His service itself should be useful to us and that, in serving Him, we labor far more for ourselves than for Him. His laws, in fact, afford us supernatural helps and at the same time, the rules to accomplish them. They elevate us and supply for our natural indigence. They render us happy in this world and in the other. Here below they put us at rest in the order and happiness that result from peace and the spiritual goods that flourish in it; and after this life, they give us divine and unending joy. Surely, the service that God demands of us gives more to us than to Himself! But in spite of that, we fail to serve Him, and even for our own interest! We desire with all our strength to be able to abuse our liberty, and we despise God's magnificent promises! "We bestir ourselves for a stipend," says the *Imitation*, "and we will not raise a foot for the kingdom of God." Oh, the blindness of ingratitude!

IV — But we must serve God through love.

Interested service is good, but it is not perfection. Our God is a Father, let us serve Him as children by devotedness which takes no account, which expects nothing, but which gives itself through a need of the heart, in order to return love for love. Do children demand a salary for the services they render their parents? Filial love wants no other recompense than to love and devote itself through gratitude.

At the time of the Crimean War, a soldier came to me, desiring to confess before embarking. He was not a conscript. He was going of his own free will. He had sold himself as a substitute for the support of his aged father and mother. That all appeared very natural to him, and he told me that he had only done his duty. He went off quite happy. See what filial love can do! See what human parents receive! Shall we not do as much for God? And shall not this Father of all goodness be able to rouse in us filial love, generous and disinterested? If not, it is a great shame for us!

We may, perhaps, say that we have left all

for Him. That is well, but let us examine whether we have in reality left all.

Let us, then, serve God, for it is justice. We have to repair, and the more we have offended Him, the more rigorously we ought now to observe His laws.

Let us serve Him through interest, in order to do henceforth for Him as much, at least, as we formerly did for ourselves.

Let us serve Him, above all, through love as a Father, a Friend, as Our Saviour, to return Him a little of our love for the infinite love that He has shown us, and that He still daily lavishes upon us!



The RELIGIOUS STATE.

THE religious state is along with the Episcopate, the state of perfection in the Church. There is between them this difference, that the Episcopate supposes perfection acquired, while the religious state essentially tends thereto, but by sure and perfect means.

Happy the religious who can occupy himself with his salvation alone, concentrate on that great affair all his efforts and all his graces! The secular priest is far from having these facilities. He is, above all, for others. He is God's minister to souls, an intermediary. The religious life is, then, a grace of security and mercy.

I.—It is, in effect, the greatest grace of mercy. Our Lord sees a poor soul, weak and surrounded by enemies. He knows not how to defend himself, and he will, without doubt, succumb. He calls him to the religious life. He shuts him up in that citadel in which he will escape the great struggles of the plain. There He surrounds him with graces,

lights, experience, and salutary means. The religious life is a favor, a privilege of the good God to a soul. If we would understand it, we must examine it. Ah! if we have ever drunk the poison of the world, if we have been caught in the snares of vanity and sin, if we have, in a word, experienced our own weakness and weighed the work that we did, we know well how great is the grace that withdrew us into the religious life. We do not sufficiently reflect on vocation in the light of its being a mark of Jesus Christ's love of preference for us. So now it behooves us to attach ourselves to it, to hold fast to it as to the only plank of salvation. What chances he loses who abandons the religious life he had once embraced! And what temerity to leave that fortress in order to expose himself to those dangers from which God's kind providence had snatched him, because he could not face them! The journey from the cell to heaven is short. Let us not quit it!

This is a great favor! Sometimes we pride ourselves on the merit of having become a

religious, and think we have done a heroic action. Alas! we are in arrears with mercy. The advantage is all on our side. We receive a hundred times more than we have given. It is all for our gross interest. It is we who are the gainers, we who are served by it, and not we who serve. The Society to which we belong, its Superior, its other members, its graces, its virtues, its sanctity and its experience, the will of God over it—all that is offered us, and we make use of it as belonging to us. Oh! woe to him who thinks himself something in a Society, who thinks that it owes much to him for having entered, and who makes self the end of the services that it renders! No, no, we are all the favored ones, let us understand that well. What we give is nothing in comparison with what we receive. We ought to love our Society with a love of gratitude, acknowledge what we owe to it, and incessantly thank God for the mercy He has shown us in calling us to it.

II.—The religious life is a grace of very special love, of choice, an extraordinary grace.

It is to His disciples, to those that His love distinguishes; to His chosen ones that Our Lord says: "Go, sell all that thou hast, and come follow Me."

All the helps afforded by the religious life share in the nobility of its end. All its graces are eminent. Only extraordinary graces are therein received. Everything in it elevates us to uncommon holiness, to eminent sanctity. In it we must be saints under penalty of being altogether unfaithful. There is no middle course. Every religious is called to be a great saint, and the graces he receives are in proportion to this sublime vocation.

All the means it offers, are, besides, sure and tried. The saints employed them, and sanctified themselves by faithfully doing so. The way is clearly marked out. God Himself is the guide, or His angels. It is really as in the desert, the government of God Himself represented in His visible angels. He there speaks by His law, the Rule; by His own mouth, the order of Superiors. Happy people of whom God is the leader, in the midst of whom He abides, and of whom

He intrusts the conduct to no one but Himself and His angels! The Jews wanted to have judges and kings. It was for their own loss. Would that they were still under the immediate conduct of God! This we enjoy in the religious life. Let us greatly appreciate this grace. It is not to be found in the world.

Still more, in the religious life every one is helped by his brother. They support one another. Each one increases his strength and his merits a hundredfold by the virtue and merits of his brethren? Is that nothing? Ah! if in the world they knew what the religious life is, they would storm the convents, and no one would remain in it!

III.—Lastly, the religious life is a grace of excellent and very special honor, which Jesus Christ extends to us. The religious is to Our Lord what the Cardinals are morally to the Sovereign Pontiff. He is a prince of the blood, the intimate companion of Our Lord.

To religious, the Father confides His Divine Son and Mary, as He did to Saint John.

He places in their hands the salvation of souls. Yes, He intrusts religious with the salvation of the world. To save souls, to be the victim of salvation and of life for the world, is the essence of the religious grace. He creates religious the apostles and chiefs of His chosen people. And for us in particular, see what honor He does us by confiding to us all His poor children! People hand over the education of those whom they love particularly only to safe and experienced masters. Well, He gives to us to save, preserve, instruct the poor, His dearest children. And so, the religious life gives us the plenitude of the grace of our apostolate, the most beautiful of all on earth.

See, now, whether we ought not to be saints. Alas! it is sad to see where we are!

We must, then, sanctify ourselves in good earnest; otherwise, how shall we worthily respond to this word: "God has loved me with a love of preference," if not by saying: "I will love Him without reserve!"

Our grace is so much greater as we form the beginning and the foundation of our So-

ciety. We shall not have so much glory as those that will come after us, but we shall have more merit. Our successors will live on the fruits of our labors and sacrifices. As for us, let us live of the pure love of God, and sacrifice ourselves to our work. Calvary is of greater value than Thabor!

If there are still in our Society things indeterminate, undeveloped, not yet well ordered, little and humble, let us love them. It will be our glory to have been nothing, to have made no show, and to have served God and our work amid the difficulties of formation.

We have the grace of the present time. Our Lord allows Himself to be seen in the Blessed Sacrament for the salvation of the world. He will act through us upon the people. We know that the world can be reformed only by the miserable. The majority of those that hold the first places in learning, in science, in social position, are gangrened by vice or wandering in indifference and rationalism. Too often success follows on vice. On the other side, the hatred

of the poor, of those that suffer far from God, threatens to consume everything in a horrible conflagration. That hatred must be stamped out; the clay of the people must be kneaded again, and into it breathed the breath of Jesus Christ. The poor must be led back to God, and God restored to the poor. This is our mission. Let us seek, oh, let us seek the lowly, and give to them their Brother, their Father, and their Saviour!



PRAYER,

Its NECESSITY and CHARACTER.

Oportet orare et nunquam deficere.

We ought always to pray, and not
to faint.

PRAYER, incessant prayer, otherwise called the habit of prayer, is necessary for every Christian. All have received the grace of prayer in Baptism. It is the Holy Spirit who inspires us to cry to God: "*Abba Pater*—Father, Father!" It is the gift, the grace, the privilege of all. We can do no good, practise no virtue without prayer, which obtains for us the grace of goodness and virtue. Prayer is the foundation of all the virtues, and faith itself, the beginning of justice, it but the exercise of prayer.

The prophet, therefore, thanked God for leaving him in the midst of his weaknesses, his tribulations and falls, the faculty of prayer, and he says: "*Benedictus Deus, qui non amovit orationem meam et misericordiam suam a me*—Blessed be God, who hath not turned

34 PRAYER, ITS NECESSITY, CHARACTER.

away my prayer nor His mercy from me" as if to be able to pray and to obtain mercy were one and the same thing. He comprehends the importance of prayer, and that to pray is to possess the Heart of God and the salvation of one's soul.

But prayer must be made with confidence, and confidence is breathed into us by the Holy Spirit Himself. It is He who gives us the spirit of the children of adoption, that childlike confidence which makes us turn to God as to a Father. It is given to us as a permanent gift and a habit which we ought to exercise.

It is in grace as in the order of nature. The child is essentially prayerful. It is the need of the child to supplicate its mother, to address itself to her to obtain all it wants. It does so with confidence, and that is a proof of its love. A mother is saddened and complains that her child never asks her for anything. She augurs from that that he does not love her, and she is right.

Let us, then, ask of the good God, put His goodness into play. What will He do with

graces with which His hands are filled, if we do not ask Him for them? Here is a good idea, and one fruitful in practice, that is, we must make use of God's bounty, occupy it actively in distributing graces by asking them of Him confidently. We always want to go to God by way of our misery. Doubtless, before God one should not be without humility. Let us not, however, remain too much in our lowliness. Let us think that, although a sinner, we are always the son, and He is the Father. Let us not always be like mendicants groaning at the gate and exposing our miseries. We must remember our title of son, the most beautiful, the most influential of all our names.

Strong in this confidence, let us address ourselves to Mary: "Good Mother, I come to thee with confidence, for thou must be to me the Queen of Mercy!"

Say to Jesus Christ: "Good Master, who hast suffered so much for me, let me not lose the fruit of Thy sufferings! Apply them to me Thyself abundantly.

"O good Jesus, Thou hast acquired treas-

ures of merits, and Thou hast no greater desire than to give me a share in them. Follow, then, the inclination of Thy Heart. Save me. give me to Thy Father! I will be the trophy of Thy victory. Thy glory will become brighter. For Thy name and for Thy glory, hearken to my prayer!"

Prayer is, then, all-powerful. Instead of supporting it on our misery, it should be based on God Himself; instead of being a distasteful contemplation of our own wretchedness, it should become a combat of love. Behold the gift of prayer!

II. — Many say: "I know not how to pray; and if I did receive the gift in Baptism, I do not know how to exercise it."

There is much illusion in this plea. Prayer is not a mountain to be climbed. One must proceed more simply than that. Let us pray, then, with our grace of the moment, with our grace of state. Let us pray by our titles of religious and priests, presenting ourselves such as we are, employing the little means, the faculties, such as they are, that the good God has given us.

I may say that our state, as religious, is a state, a profession of prayer. Let us perfect ourselves in our profession. Men of the world have a wonderful talent for perfecting themselves in their calling, whatever it may be. They are constantly inventing, shortening the time of manufacturing, rendering it less laborious, less costly. They are always bringing out more beautiful, more convenient things. Shall we be they who will always remain unskilful in the use of the instruments belonging to their profession? Shall we never know how to say anything but *Paters* and *Aves*? Shall all our meditation be limited to the examen of conscience, to reckoning up our faults, to gazing upon and rehearsing our miseries?

We should make of prayer a practical virtue, a virtue of every instant, whose acts should be easy and, as it were, natural. Nothing supplies for this virtue. Such the prayer, such the life. *Ille recte vivere novit, qui recte novit orare*. If we pray badly, we shall lead a poor religious life, nothing will

Superior. This exercise should excel all others in fervor and assiduity. The prayers of Rule, first and indispensable, do not ordinarily suffice to sustain the fervor of the interior life. They are made only at regular intervals. Now, it is necessary that prayer should never be discontinued. For this reason, in practice, one should always have on hand some supplementary prayers, some novena, for instance, over and above those of our profession, some devotion suited to the time or to the state of the soul. The saints used to do this. Again, we must vary the same prayer by directing its intention sometimes upon one subject, sometimes on another, for it would not be profitable, it would even be dangerous, to want always to add new formulas of prayers to the old ones. But it is well to vary the intention of our prayer according to circumstances. There are some simple souls who with their Rosary, obtain all graces, are enlightened in all things with special lights. It is because they have a very special intention.

In prayer one must have an inventive

talent, and acquire the facility of making his prayer himself. Such prayer works miracles. because it springs from the depths of the heart, from the heart supernaturalized by the presence of charity, by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Let us look to this, we who make such efforts to find the way to pray, as if prayer could be produced by our own mind and our own natural heart. I know not what pride seeks to persuade us that it is we who should pray, and it is on that account we think it necessary to make those extraordinary efforts. Ah! it is the Holy Spirit who desires to pray in us! Of ourselves, we are incapable of doing so; but the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who abides in us, wishes to help our impotence and to pray by His ineffable groanings. Then, let this Spirit of love speak and pray. The prayer that comes from Him is the true and good prayer of the heart, that which penetrates the heavens and obtains all that it asks. Prayer is, then, a thing far more simple than the demon represents to us! To be silent, to destroy obstacles, in order to let the Holy Spirit pray in us, and

to unite with the prayer that He is making in us, — behold the exercise and the virtue of prayer!

III. — Only be constant in prayer and in exercising this so necessary virtue.

There are some prayers that we ought not easily to abandon, some old formulas of childhood whose antiquity makes their virtue. They form, as it were, a part of our soul. Keep them, provided you have not too weighty a baggage of them. With still greater reason shun loading yourself with all those new prayers which are multiplying on all sides, and with whose composition every one busies himself. Above all, guard against prayers composed by women. They inundate the avenues of piety. They are not always secure from error, not always perfectly orthodox. Imagination plays a great part in them. And would you be willing to form your prayer of errors in Faith, your prayer which is your preservative, your means of intimate union with God! In practice, show, submit all new prayers to your Superior. His grace will know how to distinguish the

true from the false and, among so many unsubstantial and deceptive viands, that which is proper for you.

Again, do not place all your confidence in prayer-books. Without doubt, they are good and useful. They help, I know, but they also greatly foster laziness. I say this to you, on account of the respect this holy thing, your prayer, your intimate relations with God deserve. There are so many enlightened in our day. They think themselves enlightened by God. But it is only their own excited imagination that deludes them and makes them prophesy, for they have not received their spirit of prophecy from the Holy Ghost.

Pray by your grace of faith. Ah, to pray by faith, by submission to the will of God, in adoration of His Being, His grandeur, His beauty, and goodness,—that is not subject to illusion!

Pray with your heart, and submit to the rays of grace and love your prayer, your sentiments, all that comes forth from that heart.

As to vocal prayers, never neglect those of the Rule, but do not take up many more.

Pray also with the mind, by submitting it to the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of prayer. Form in yourself, as it were, a perpetual creation of good thoughts, but join affection to it, for the mind by itself would soon succumb under the labor and fatigue.

The saints are admirable in drawing prayerful affections from everything and everywhere. It is because they abide in God. They see everything in Him. Everything raises them to Him and excites them to love Him. Prayer is their inspiration and expiration, the movement of their affection toward God admits, undergoes no interruption, and in this way they realize the words: "*Oportet semper orare*—We must pray always."

We cannot always have new thoughts, but we can always direct our affection toward God. The heart is united to all our faculties and devotes itself to all. Along with their uninterrupted prayer, the saints found time to compose magnificent works, to traverse the world, and to discharge an indefatigable

ministry. They prayed with heart and affection, they converted all their labors into prayer.

To reach that point, one must *will* it, ask it urgently of God as the grace of graces. One must make frequent acts of it with some exterior assent which will recall his resolution, and oblige himself to some exterior signs that will arouse his attention.



PRAYER,
the GIFT of our INTELLECT.

PRAYER is the homage of the whole man, of his being and all his faculties to God. It ought, then, to begin by an offering of self to the Divine Majesty. By that we enter into the true spirit of prayer. It is a visit of homage, a recognition of God's greatness and our own dependence. The first thing to do is, then, to prostrate interiorly and exteriorly, in order to offer to God the homage of our whole being, our soul, our intellect, and our heart.

This homage ought to be deep and silent. It is the act of annihilated adoration, just as in heaven, they say not a word, and yet they say everything.

The first thing, then, is to be silent, to adore, and to annihilate one's self before God

I. — But after that begins the meditation properly so called, which is the exercise of the sanctification of our faculties. Here the mind, the heart, and the will act. As for

the body, it must be lulled to rest as much as possible, left in repose. If it is made to suffer too much, it will disturb the action of the faculties.

The first faculty that ought to be exercised in prayer is our mind, our understanding, our reason. This faculty, which perceives the relations of things, which seizes on them, gives birth to our knowledge.

Now, it is necessary to sanctify the mind, supernaturalize the intelligence. One's spiritual education is made only by God Himself, in converse with Him, in prayer. Every mind that has not received lessons from God in prayer, which has not been trained and reformed by prayer, will have an education wanting in the supernatural. Put no great confidence in him who is not accustomed to the practice of this exercise. All that books and masters can teach is but the method of prayer. They introduce into the sanctuary, but man must give up his mind to God. It is God alone who can fill it with His divine light and render his education supernatural.

This alone can form serious souls. Without prayer, they who receive Our Lord in Communion will never know how to converse with Him. Our Lord will not penetrate into their understanding, which is not open to Him. He will remain, as it were, in the ante-chamber. He will not enter into the depths of their heart. Their soul will not be nourished by Him, will not live on Him, will never be transformed into Him, abandoning her own natural life, her judgments and affections, in order to put on the life, thoughts, affections, and virtues of Jesus Christ Himself.

To return to what I was saying, in order to meditate. begin by forming thoughts and considerations in the understanding. Study, consider attentively, recall, compare, strike the flint in order to get the brilliant spark. This exercise of the understanding is essential. It is what produces the affection of the heart. It is more important than the affections themselves, which can neither be enkindled nor be lasting, if the understanding, which is their furnace, is not well fed. In heaven, it is the sight of God that produces union,

transformation, happiness. The knowledge of an object produces that object in us, and we can feel the intellectual contact of a thing without adhering to it in heart and affection. All, then, depends on knowledge. It is the foundation of prayer, its source, its furnace. To see is to love, to possess.

If the piety of our days is so languishing, so shallow, it is because people attach themselves too much to its practices, neglecting the principle. They warm the sentiments, they set the imagination boiling. They do not force themselves to reflect sufficiently, to study, to fathom, and so they fall into the piety of routine. The heart and the will turn to them by a kind of instinct and need, which they have contracted, but there is nothing solid, nothing deep, nothing very generous about it. There is wanting to them the food of the understanding, which would furnish new motives, renew them constantly, manifest God more clearly, as well as all that we owe Him.

The understanding is the seat of faith. It is faith that receives the imprint of God,

which communicates it to the heart; and it is in faith, above all, that God abides, much more than in the heart and the will. The emotions of the heart are constantly changing. The will has more or less enthusiasm according to change of circumstances. But the light of faith is invariable. It comes from the truth of God, it rests on what He is, on His word, and it rules all the dispositions, all the states of the soul.

It is this light of faith that upholds the soul, elevates, and directs it. It is the recompense of fidelity. "He that keepeth My commandments," says the Saviour,... "I will come, and I will manifest Myself to him." This is the light that He promises. This light of faith is never extinguished. No human blast can put it out. It is the beacon which is seen immovable in the most violent tempests of the heart and the senses. Deeply rooted in us, enkindled in us by the Holy Spirit Himself, there it remains in spite of all disturbances.

I do not mean to say that the understanding must be so entirely separated from the heart

that we are satisfied with the light of the former alone. No, on the contrary, the light received, formed in the understanding, should descend to the heart and there be prepared, so that the will may derive from it the fresh strength that it needs. We are one, and we can not isolate our faculties one from another. They depend on one another, they help one another, and they are all necessary to perfect our vital operations. But what I want to say is this that we must use the understanding actively, fill it with God by faith, because it is the beginning and the principle of all. Before digesting nourishment and using the strength it imparts to the body, one must first receive it, take it, and that, too, is the function of the understanding.

Saint Paul, converted by Jesus Christ, is in the very moment of his conversion a perfect image of meditation. The Lord threw him to the ground and made Himself known. "*Quis es, Domine?* — Who art Thou, Lord?" He touches him at once: "I am Jesus, but Jesus whom thou persecutest." Paul's heart is moved, he sees Jesus, Jesus crucified, and his

will is inflamed: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?"

II. — How ought we to exercise our understanding? In the first place, we must prepare our subject of prayer. It is absolutely necessary for us to know what it is going to be. It is not necessary to know beforehand all that we shall say, but it is necessary to know exactly upon what we are going to meditate.

After that we must proceed from the known to the unknown, from the natural to the supernatural, that is to say, we must make use of all that we know to facilitate the study of the truth we are proposing to ourselves.

We always have some thoughts, some remembrance of reading or lessons on the mysteries and truths of religion. We may make use of them in the beginning, applying them to our subject. They will shed greater light by being brought to bear upon the truth under actual consideration. It has its grace. Touched, struck, it will give out its spark. Little by little, the light will be-

come greater, and Our Lord will manifest Himself to our good will.

We may set out at least with our misery, with some negative truth, if we have no positive one upon the mystery or the truth we are considering. See how wanting it is to us, how far we are from it, how forbidding the contrary vice. Discover something. Establish some connection that will fix our mind on our subject. When the understanding is once fixed on it, it will always end by being penetrated more or less by it, for grace faithfully responds to the humble and upright good will.

Only let us not try to do more than our intellectual strength permits, nor seek to make the meditations of Bossuet, if we have not his genius. Let us hold on to these two keys of meditation, these two methods, one by negative truth, the other by positive truth.

The first starts from the knowledge of our nothingness, our sins, our temptations, in a word, our misery. The soul that starts from this truth, that begins her meditation by it, always has enough to occupy her. She has

always a familiar point upon which to plant her foot, and from it to take flight toward the divine truths. This is the easiest method. It is good, because it plunges us into humility, and it is always profitable to place under our eyes our own abjection, in order not to lose sight of our origin.

The positive method, on the contrary, enters at once into the truth considered in itself, into the love of the mystery. It confines itself, above all, to exalting God, to acknowledging His love, His attributes in such or such a mystery, His perfections in such or such a virtue, the glory that redounds to Him from it, the perfection with which Jesus Christ practised it.

If, for example, we are meditating on the death of Our Lord, the method of positive love leads us to think at once on the immense love He has shown us, and to offer to God the glory which His justice and majesty derived from it. It is love, glory, God or Jesus Christ in themselves that it offers for our contemplation.

By the former method, the soul beholds in

that death only her sins which caused it and, in self-examination, she seeks to find out which of them was the special cause of the sufferings and death of the Man-God. Then she plunges into regret, self-humiliation.

In this way, the positive adores, exalts God in herself; the negative beholds herself in God.

Which is preferable? To establish any comparison between two methods which come from the Spirit of God, and which lead to Him, is not necessary. In practice, the one must not be separated from the other.

But what we may say to you, to you who were not converted yesterday, is that, if you desire to be more quickly recollected, more immediately united to God, it is far better not to concentrate yourselves in yourselves, and not always to put your miseries between your soul and God. Be more desirous of seeing His goodness, His love, of contemplating Him in Himself and in His divine attributes. You will come afterward to self. Love to see the virtue in Jesus Christ, to study the perfection and intention with which

He practised it; in a word, nourish your soul with God alone. That will raise you nearer to Him, give you a greater force of expansion. Allow Our Lord to place you in the negative, show you your miseries, and plunge you into your nothingness. Thus it was that on Thabor He entertained His Apostles with the excess of His sufferings and humiliations in the midst of the splendors that environed Him.

Keep the negative method for the hours of labor, weariness, impotence, when your mind has not the strength to soar to the heights on which to contemplate pure truth, to see God and things in their divine causes.

There will result from this practice less loss of time in prayer. You will be more refined toward God, and you will discharge more properly the duties of friendship, you will be less egotistical; for there are some souls who never say a word to Our Lord about Himself, who hardly salute Him, who have no homage to present Him, but are occupied only with themselves and their needs, who present themselves only to begin at once to beg at

the very door. Be a son! Love and converse!

You will give pleasure to Our Lord by speaking of Himself, by entering a little into His interests. You will touch His Heart, like the leper who alone of the ten returned to thank for his cure. Jesus praised him for having rendered glory to God. That poor leper is an example of positive love in prayer. See how sensible Our Lord was of it! Then do you, also, give glory to God!



PRAYER,

The GIFT of OUR HEART.

E have said that meditation is the homage of man and all his faculties to God, and the sanctification of man by God. We have seen how the understanding ought to comport itself therein. Now let us speak of the heart.

I. — The understanding performs the office of the needle which introduces the thread into the fabric there to design the embroidery. The needle enters first, drawing after it the thread, but only the thread remains; thus it is with the affection of the heart. It must remain. We excite the intelligence only to warm and move the heart by motives of faith and love the most capable of touching it, for the heart follows and embraces what the understanding esteems and shows to it as good.

The affection must, then, be in accord with the reflection, be a natural consequence of it. It should be its complement and, as it

were, its expanding, its blossoming. Few thoughts are sufficient to make a good meditation. The affection ought to take the thought well conceived, well ruminated, and hold on to it, completing and amplifying it, nourishing itself with it. The thought ought to pass from the understanding to the heart without effort. Guard against raising a struggle and wearing your soul out by too many different reflections. Give to your heart to ruminate only those thoughts that your understanding has already weighed and prepared. Be satisfied with developing by the heart the thought which was in your mind. Simply convert it into affection.

Let the affection, then, be born naturally from the thought, and be conformed to the nature of your heart. Let us love God in prayer as we love them whom we ought to love. Let us love with our heart, according to its nature, its strength, its life, more or less ardently, with more tenderness or more constraint. Time, age, circumstances change the heart infinitely. Grace knows how to conform itself to the temperament of every one.

It is neither temperament nor nature that God desires us to crush in ourselves, but sin, the inclinations and the habits that come from it.

II. — Natural, that is, conforming itself, in as much as we form it in ourselves, to our individual nature. The affection ought to become supernatural by its union with divine grace, which elevates and purifies it, and by its correspondence to the movements of the Holy Spirit.

We have three ways of supernaturalizing affection: to unite it to the light of actual grace which the Holy Spirit excites in us; to allow it to follow the movement of the Holy Spirit in us; and when we feel neither the call nor the interior movement of grace, the affection must be supernaturalized by the acceptance and the offering of the state in which we are. You feel nothing? Confess in your heart your misery, your paralysis, your impotence, and even your sins. God will receive this confession of the humbled heart. It will take the place of the sweetest and most exalted affections. It is He Him-

self who sends that impotence in order to detach you from reflections to which, perhaps, you attach yourself too much. He casts you to the earth and withers you, in order to prevent your wandering in self-love. God's desire would be to press you to His Heart, but your good demands that He keep you under His feet, and empty your heart of every sentiment of love.

Humble your heart in this state, until grace visits you anew.

Affection must descend from general to particular, and the soul apply herself to taste the special and particular love of God to her in the mystery which the understanding presents. You have admired the ineffable mystery of Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Now, exclaim in your heart: "Oh, how good Thou art to remain there for me!" Place clearly before your heart the personal benefits of God to you. Show it that everything in the life, sufferings, death, and love of Jesus Christ is for you, for you alone. It will be consumed before the burning furnace of God's love. It will in

rapture exclaim: "He has loved me! He has loved me!" The conclusion of this love will be: "Who shall ever separate me from Him who loves me and whom I love?"

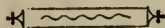
I have said that it is not necessary to meditate much in order to arrive at affection. Here, however, we must guard against sloth. The mind is slothful regarding the things of grace. It must not be allowed to pass too easily over the reflection. It would willingly act like the tribune Felix, who trembled for fear of being enlightened by Saint Paul on a truth that he did not wish to understand, and who dismissed the Apostle, saying: "*We shall hear you another day.*"

Not to apply the mind to meditate seriously under pretence that one has long known his duties, is an evident mark of sloth. Every virtue not the consequence of reflection, is soon lost. It is not sustained by conviction, sentiments pass, they come and go. Truth alone remains.

Nevertheless, nothing should be exaggerated and, if it pleases Our Lord to transport you at once into the affections, follow Him. He

has himself performed your preparatory labor

So, also, when your understanding is not sufficient to inflame you, you must take a book. It is rare for one to love to such a degree as to be able to meditate by his own strength. Some souls possess this gift, but they are few. But do not imagine that in taking a book all is done. It is necessary to appropriate what it says to one's own grace and needs. No book contains what is suitable and necessary for every one, for graces are infinitely varied, and one does not identically resemble another. The best book is that which obedience gives. But if sufficient for you to-day, it may say nothing to you to-morrow. No book satisfies always. The book that you ought to open incessantly is yourself. Again, when there is a good will all books are good. But take care not to hunt for work already done. Let us love with our own heart and with the grace that the Holy Spirit nourishes in us.



PRAYER,

the GIFT of the WILL.

PRAYER is our sanctification by means of God. It ought, then, to produce reformation of manners. That is the immediate end of prayer, its practical conclusion, its necessary result. Above all, in this matter, let us not forget that "not they who say, Lord, Lord, shall possess the kingdom of heaven, but they who faithfully fulfil the will of the Father who is in heaven."

But how proceed in the correction of one's self? What means are to be taken? What rules observed?

The art of arts, the science the most difficult is that of the direction and sanctification of souls. It is the gift of few to impart good principles, sure rules. How many souls buried in the world and its spirit would become heroic in sanctity were they well directed! They are left at petty principles, they go on from day to day, step by step, without connection. They neglect

the great principles that apply to everything, and which would make them take giant strides.

The fundamental principle is that the sanctification of a soul ought to be carried on according to its nature and special grace. Not that grace depends on nature and is subordinated to it, but grace works on nature only; nature is the material for its operations. It must then, be associated with grace and taken into account. It is, however, on grace that the manner of sanctification is, above all, to be measured; and to it conformed, without appeal, the practical rules that should be employed in directing the soul to sanctity.

Take, for instance, two men one of whom has but his grace of conversion, and the other, having belonged to God for a length of time, is drawn to sanctity.

I. — The converted one must be told to say prayers of conversion, which attack the evil directly, which struggle, which carry on a high war.

To the sensual man, the unchaste, show first of all the unhappy consequences of his

state in view of his eternal salvation. Place before him the supernatural chastisements; the last things, death, judgment, hell that he deserves, heaven closed to him, the wrath of God and His avenging justice. Make him feel the tortures of his conscience, listen to the cries of remorse. Let this be his prayer. Keep him there, and do not try to convert him by showing him only the fatal consequences of his faults for time and his own well-being. That is done too much in our day. That is trying to correct one vice by another. It is a want of faith in the supernatural power of grace.

The fruit of his meditations, the practical conclusion will be that he will govern himself rigidly and like a declared enemy of his passions. These last have their seat in the senses, in the body. Now, the body understands nothing about reasons and considerations; brute force must be brought against it. Saint Paul, when tempted, prayed to the Lord. But that was not sufficient. The revolt of the flesh continued, and so he scourged it,

chastised it, to bring it into subjection: *Castigo corpus meum.*

He, says the proverb, who has a slave and treats him indulgently, will see him revolt against him: *Sentiet contumacem.*

It is in the struggle against the flesh that the kingdom of God demands us to employ violence. Force must be used against the senses. The body must be mastered by blows. That is the only way to reach it. No doubt, the rules of prudence must be observed, but it is not for us, but for those that direct us, to fix these rules. In spite of all our care, there are certain passions against which it is necessary to struggle long, without truce or mercy. Even should we fall with weariness on the battlefield and leave there a little of our life, that is no great misfortune.

We admire the sweetness of mortified men. But they are not sweet toward themselves, even if they are toward others, or if they have not attained this resemblance with Jesus Christ by mortification and the scourge. A saint is a soldier of Jesus Christ, one who

has known labors, fatigues, bloody struggles, and who bears the marks of them.

Every Christian is launched into the thick of the fight, first to combat against himself, and then against the world within and without: "*Militia est vita hominis super terram* — Man's life on earth is a warfare." All this calls for vigorous effort.

Our Lord shows Himself sweet and tender in the beginning. He has only caresses for the infancy of the spiritual life, but He quickly leads to combat those that want to love Him. His grace is honey in the lion's jaws. He begins by sweetness, and ends by authority. After the caresses of His tenderness, come the blows of His mortification. He is at one and the same time sweet and forcible.

If you cannot like Him join sweetness to the hatred of evil, take the latter, arm yourself with strength. There is greater need of it.

It is wrong to blame the converted because they are austere, rigid, severe. "See how hard he is!" What would you have? En-

tirely taken up with lashing himself against himself, there escape him some blows against the neighbor. That must be pardoned, on account of his necessity of being violent against self. His temptation is impatience.

This is the way to establish the reform of the passions that have their seat in the exterior senses.

If there is question of uprooting a sin of the heart, tactics are different. The heart is as delicate and sensitive as the body is blind and brutal. The heart is all affection. It possesses and it is possessed by love. It acts only by sympathy. Its idol must be taken away from it, its affection changed, and itself turned from its sympathy.

In his prayer, such a one ought to consider the nothingness of what he adores, the vanity of what he loves, and even the abjection of his state. In contrast with his created idols, place before him the beauty of the uncreated Good. Take care never to withdraw from him what he has seen without giving him another object for his love, more beautiful, more worthy, sweeter than the first. The

heart cannot remain empty. Take away from it the world only to give it God. It must attach itself, it must love. That is its nature, its essence. If left alone and void, it will soon return to its first love. Give it, give it God, the Love of loves, Jesus Christ, its Saviour, infinitely good and lovable.

They over whom the heart domineers, ought to be led and instructed by the heart. They must be gently made to feel their misfortune, made to see, catch a glimpse of the happiness of attaching one's self to God and loving Him. Do not handle them too roughly, for you will break them. Be even affectionate, but do not allow yourself to be captured by them. Take care! They will be inclined to attach themselves to you, but do not permit it, though without repulsing them, shaking them off too rudely. At the beginning, a little balm is necessary for the heart. Have pity on the heart! Do not entirely discard it.

Thus, the way to reform the heart, is to reason with it by its pain, its unhappy state. After that it must be made to feel.

Show it a greater good, a purer and more perfect happiness; and, lastly, replace affection to the creature by love for the Creator.

But if the soul seeing its evil state, recognizing and admitting it, hesitates, holds back under various pretexts, fails in courage to break away from it, raise it up courageously, hesitate not to force it even violently, otherwise it will be lost! It must be snatched from the danger without delay. Permission is not needed for that. Pressing peril is a reason more than sufficient.

The method to be employed with the understanding is different. While the heart yields to sentiment, the understanding wants to be convinced by reasons; it succumbs only to evidence. Reason with it. Length of time is needed to convert it. It is difficult and rare ever to conquer it entirely, and this is especially true of pride.

Let the meditation in such cases be that of reason and light. Enlighten forcibly, in a manner to make a lively impression. Convince the understanding of its errors, show it the injustice of sin, the offence that it

offers to God, its ugliness and deformity. Say with Saint Ambrose, responding to Theodosius, who was excusing his fault by citing the example of David, 'a royal sinner, also: "If you have imitated him in his crime, imitate him in his penance!" Here is reason, evidence that convinces, and to which no reply can be given. Act in the same way in converting your own understanding and reforming it. When convinced of its faults, light will force it to submission.

II. — All that we have hitherto said regards penitents, those who are breaking with the world and sin.

As for them who belong to God by faith and charity, by charity more or less great, it is true, but who are, nevertheless, in the way of salvation, reformation of morals follows another course. It consists especially in the acquisition of the Christian virtues much more than in the destruction of sin. How is that to be put in practice?

There are two ways, and both are good. Either may be employed according to the attraction of grace. Following the first, the

soul energetically desires to attain virtue. She sees its moral good, its integrity, its supernatural beauty. She sees that virtue is proper for the Christian, that without zeal for the Christian virtues, her salvation is endangered; that the practice of perfect Christianity produces innumerable fruits in this life, but, far above all, the fruit of eternal life. This view inflames desire. She labors day by day, hour by hour, mounting from degree to degree. Her progress encouraging her she sees her upward course, and that strengthens her to labor with more fidelity. Here, indeed, is a good method which infallibly leads to sanctity. Now, you religious, begin with the practice of the duties of your state, poverty, chastity, obedience. They are the essential virtues of your state. Follow your trade above all. As for the rest, all the virtues are sisters. A single one well practised, dominates, attracts the others, and renders their practice easy. Take the virtue most necessary to your state. You must begin with the one most needed, but always hold on faithfully to those virtues that form your

law, your essential duty. Later you will occupy yourself with the virtues of counsel.

Thus, to labor for the good of virtue, for the recompense it entails, and the fruit it produces, is a good principle, a good method to follow in the reformation of one's life and in the labor of the will. But there is a better one, and that is, to labor through love, to desire only one thing, and that is to love, and in doing so, to expect all the rest.

There is no longer any question of acquiring virtue, of gathering fruits of sanctity; the only question now is of loving, of longing for God above everything, in everything, and all through love for Him. There is no longer question of impressing one's self with this truth, of convincing one's self of this principle, namely, that it is necessary to love Him and sanctify one's self by love for Him. To love—behold the principle, the beginning and the end. Means will be taken and used, but only to apply this principle, obtain this end of love. The first method in the acquisition of the virtues proceeds by analysis; the second by synthesis. This grand prin-

ciple of love is applied according to the need and progress of grace. The important thing is to establish it firmly in the beginning, to set out with it, to follow it in all things, holding on to it like a flambeau, like a clue.

Again, it is a principle which corresponds admirably to our nature and to the grace of God in us. We are the children of man. Now, the mother aims first of all to enkindle in her child the flame of love, and then she demands of it the sacrifices of obedience, submission, study, in a word, all the sacrifices demanded by education. She exacts them by urging her love for her son, which she testifies to him in so many ways, and as proofs of the gratitude and affection of her child's heart. If the child is noble and well-disposed, he understands this language, and he accomplishes heroic things through love.

We are, moreover, children of God. As such we have received in Baptism the spirit of adoption of children, which consists in the gift and the habit of love. The Holy

Spirit, substantial and subsistent love, resides in us. He fills our faculties and our soul, disposing them to love by habit and state, and by His movements exciting them to acts of love. The Holy Spirit is more in our soul than the soul is in herself, for He envelops her, elevates her, supernaturalizes her, and transforms her into Himself, who is Love, essential Love. Love is one same thing with grace. The spirit of grace is then the Spirit of Love. The movement and the aptitude of love is the acting by love, for every being acts according to its nature.

Do you understand how much this principle of love faithfully corresponds to our inmost being, to our nature and our grace as children of Adam and children of God? Why, then, not start out with the love of God in order to arrive at the virtues? Come then, let us start from it! Our greatest strength lies there!

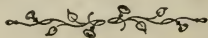
In application and practice, this love will take every form of virtue, for Saint Thomas says that perfection essentially resides in love. All the virtues, according to Saint Au-

gustine, may be reduced to love. Saint Paul said the same thing before him; and to be perfect, says the Angelic Doctor, is nothing else than "to love enough to throw aside all obstacles that oppose our union with God, the end of all perfection." Love, then becomes chastity, poverty, obedience, patience, sweetness, and humility. In all these we profess only one thing, namely, to love, to make an act of love, to destroy some obstacle to love, to help on love and union with God. Admirable unity, unique beginning! Luminous principle, strength so much the greater as it is more concentrated, point of view always the same, without division, without dispersion of force, of attention, of heart, or of soul!

Lastly, remark that Our Lord came on earth only to make His Father loved; that He was the figure of His beauty, and that He recommends to us, in short, but one thing, to love Him above all things, and all things on account of Him. The résumé of His doctrine is: "*Manete in dilectione mea* — Abide in My love!"

Behold what your state demands, the only thing that recommends it as a state, as a habit. This is what forms the centre of every Christian and supernatural life, and from the centre one goes easily and surely to the circumference, because on all points we find radii.

I counsel you, then, to establish yourselves firmly on this principle. Make it the starting-point for the reformation of your life, for your life, for your efforts after the virtues and holiness; for, to return to what we said in the beginning, the reformation of morals, the sanctification of life, the acquisition of Jesus Christ's sanctity, is the end of prayer and the end of the religious life: "*Estote perfecti sicut Pater vester cœlestis perfectus est* --- Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."



DOES GOD LOVE ME ?

HIS question is not often heard. But that is not right; for if it is well to ask ourselves whether we love God, it is also very useful to convince ourselves that God loves us.

I. — Yes, God loves us! He loves us with an eternal love, which has neither beginning nor end, neither succession nor vicissitude. We are eternal in His love. From all eternity before we had any existence, God had conceived us in His thought, willed us in His decrees, and it was a thought and a decree of love!

Ah! we shall never love Him as He has loved us. We may dilate our love, extend it, carry it beyond all bounds, but we shall always be in arrears of gratitude, always in a debt of love. Alas! we do not love Him even during the short moments of this life, which He leaves us freely to prove our gratitude, while He has loved us from all eternity! Here we find the source of those inconsolable tears of the saints on earth, The

present - hardly suffices to respond to His present love. How, then, satisfy the weight of love accumulated during endless ages? This impossibility to love sufficiently, to repair their defect of love, is the torment of the saints. They are inconsolable. The world does not understand their tears. Naturally, it must be so, for we scarcely shed tears enough over our sins to obtain pardon for them. But the saints wept for not having employed all their time in loving; and if they have offended God, their tears are never dried. Behold Saint Peter pardoned, confirmed in grace, the Head of the Church, and yet he wept incessantly. Morning found him on his knees bathed in the tears that had dug a double furrow on his emaciated cheeks by the incurable wound of his repentance. Oh, how great is our misery! Scarcely a few acts of contrition to repair lost love, love offended! Alas! it is love that lights and feeds the fire of the damned, and their most cutting regret is for not having loved

God's eternal love is manifested for us by

the benefits of time. We exist only by a benevolent creation of God's love, and we are preserved only because He bears us in His arms.

Besides, this life is given us only to love God. Man's perfection consists in that. He is good only if he loves God. This is the end fixed for him by the Creator in His loving liberality. And so it seems that, if God did not say of man when creating him, that this work of His hands was good, as He had said of all the others, it was because man will be truly finished and perfect only when he shall have loved God and proved his love by his works.

There is on the part of God as much condescension in wishing to be loved by us, in giving us the faculty and the grace to love Him, as in loving us Himself and loading us with testimonies of His love.

II. — Created in His love, it is His love that redeems us. He condescends to our nature, to the need of our heart; and because our love has become materialized, no longer loving anything but the sensible, God

accepts us such as we are, making Himself sensible in order to replace in our love the sensible idols to which we consecrated it.

Listen to this council of love: "Which of Us will go to man?" that is, which of the three Divine Persons, eternal, essentially spiritual, will become love, human love, sensible and visible, to gain man? For his heart is caught only by this means. "*And the Word was made flesh, Caro.*" We see, we understand only love, for the word itself indicates it. The Holy Spirit might have said *man*, He was made *man*. But no, *flesh*! That is a more sensible love, one more conformed to our own heart of flesh: "*Caro factum est.*"

And Jesus Christ is only God's love humanized, given to men in all possible ways, under all forms and conditions, to prove to him the love of his Creator. How can we doubt that God loves us when the Word has come to tell it to us by His speech, His eyes, His Heart, by everything that man can feel and understand?

His only purpose in coming was to tell

us: "*Sic Deus dilexit* — God has so loved the world." He loves us, He loves us as God, that is, infinitely!

He has taken into His Heart all the various forms of love that move us, and He has given us proofs of it.

Parental love being the most natural and the strongest, because it is wrapped up with the blood and the sources of life, Jesus has called Himself our Father, and He has made Himself our Brother.

Friendship, based on equality of position and character, being one form of love, He has become our Friend. The love of parents supposes some inequality, a certain distance of fear and respect, but Jesus loves us as a Brother and a Friend; consequently, all distinctions and distance disappear. With Him we share the same condition, the same name, the same table, the same life. And if He willed to be born an infant and to pass through all the ages of life, it was that in every state, at all periods of their life, all men may have in Him a Brother and be-

hold God's love humanized and like unto their own.

It was not enough for Him to become like unto us in nature. He would share our trials, our miseries, our sufferings, that we might be overcome by that evidence and forced to cry out: "Yes, God has loved us!" And He has done so. He has taken all my sins on Himself, borne them alone, and accepted their terrible chastisement: interior trials, pains of soul, horrible sufferings of body, His interior and exterior Passion! Behold the proofs of His love. Is this enough? Shall we deny a love that is proved by sufferings and death? Ah! who would do what He has done? No one no one! Shall we be unjust toward God alone, and shall we not acknowledge that He loves us?

III.—Yes, He loves us, but it would not suffice for Him to love us in general, as a whole. That would, indeed, be much, and even sufficient to save us. But He wills to go even to the end of infinite love, and so He loves us personally, individually, as if we were, each one, the only one in the world.

If some one would say to you: "God willed to love you, and to prove it He created this world with all its wonders for you alone. You are sufficient for Him. You alone are the end of all His works of nature, grace, and glory." If God Himself should add: "I will give My only Son for you. He will die for you. He will establish the Church and His Sacraments for you; and again for you He will abide in the Blessed Sacrament until the end of the world, continuing therein His life of love for you, and incessantly renewing therein His Passion and His death for the love of you. All this is for you alone"—If some one should tell you this, if God Himself should assure you of it, would you believe him? And if after that, it had to be acknowledged that you will not love Him, that all those benefits will not be able to gain your love,—ah! what would you reply? No, there could be no response to that. You would lower your eyes, you would blush, you would experience a feeling worse than that of the demons!

And yet, it is so God's love for every

one of us is personal. In all His works, He had but each one of us in view. All creatures are at the service of every one of us, as well as all graces, all treasures of sanctification, all the marvels of grace. Every one should cry out with Saint Paul: "*Dilexit me!*" He has loved me," *me, me alone*, and to prove His love for me, "He has delivered Himself for me," *for me alone*, to the death of the Cross! With how much stronger reason has He made all other things, visible and invisible, for me, for me alone!

And all that love of God may be summed up, condensed, vouched for in the gift that God made me of His Son, that Jesus Christ made me of Himself in Holy Communion. I am His end. He finishes by uniting Himself to me! All, then, was for me, and for me alone! All since the beginning of the world, and before, has prepared that Gift of personal love He makes me of His Body, His Blood, His Soul, and His Divinity, of all that He is, all that He has, for all ends in me, in my heart, in my soul,

Christian, behold your price.—God Himself! “*Tanti vales, quanti Deus!*”

Oh! after such love, I can understand hell. And we do not love God! We should commit suicide out of despair and shame as a fit punishment for such ingratitude!

And man does not love God! He offends Him! Ah! God brings contempt on Himself by dint of loving. One might say that He sought it! Would you allow yourselves to be thus despised and insulted by your children, your subordinates? God showers man with riches, loads him with benefits in spite of his sins, his daily sins! It is that he may return to Him, be conquered by Him.

We must have the hearts of demons not to love God!

And Our Lord shields the ingrates, excuses them. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” and this while they are cursing Him! No, God has no more dignity, no more honor, He has love only!

I cannot think of that. It tortures me! One would wish to kill himself for love!

The demon cried out one day by the mouth

of a possessed: "You men, God has loved you too much!"

That is true! The good God made a mistake! He has loved us too much! "*Propter nimiam charitatem qua dilexit nos* — For His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us."



DO I LOVE GOD ?

DO we love God? That is the one thing necessary. Here we must have a positive answer. No doubt, no evasion — yes or no, do we love God?

There is no middle course. We love Him or we hate Him. Do we love Him? To say yes without fear would be to proclaim one's self a saint, to crown one's self. The answer, then, will be to see whether we do not offend Him, or better still, whether we are scrupulous, considerate in our dealings with Him. We love God when we are thoughtful in our relations toward Him, for love is but the refinement of fidelity, honor, and generosity.

I. — Have we the refined fidelity of a good servant for his master? We at least owe obedience to our Sovereign Good. That is the least He can exact. We owe Him absolute obedience, submissive, unlimited, a passive obedience. They give that to human masters. Is not God of more account than an earthly master? God tells us that such or such an action militates against His author-

ity, contravenes His designs, and yet we do it all the same. Is this fidelity? Is this considerate? We deserve for such conduct exemplary chastisement, for under pain of being no longer God, God cannot permit us to violate His laws with impunity. "*Morte morieris* — Thou shalt die the death!" Such is the decree justice pronounces against us every time we violate God's authority. On the other side, He rewards us if we do not disobey Him. No master is satisfied with asking so little as the good God!

Alas! it is written that man's enemies are his servants and familiars. Let us not realize this word against God, but let us arm ourselves with that refinement of fidelity, which accomplishes the law, the whole law exactly. That is the first duty imposed on us by the title of creature, as is also that of being, in the first place, grateful if we love God.

II. — We must have, also, the considerateness of children toward their parents. A child's considerateness is a sure sign of its love.

Filial considerateness, not content with duty,

seeks and divines what pleases or displeases, in order to do the one and shun the other.

As the soul increases in piety, she becomes more refined, for refinement flourishes, expands very naturally on love. A refined soul comes to shun venial sins with as much solicitude as others use in fleeing mortal offences. A certain sin may be only venial by nature, but it is mortal for *her* heart.

Filial delicacy shuns all that might be capable of displeasing, even if it be not a sin. Oh, how many sins people would avoid if they were considerate!

III. — By our quality of religious, which unites us to God by a free choice on either side, we are more than children of the household. God has called us. He has charmed us. We have espoused Him. Now, these are the relations, so full of thoughtfulness of the spouse for the spouse, that we ought to have with Our Lord.

Well, that calls for incomparable purity, for union with Our Lord is more or less intimate according to the degree of purity. He cannot dwell in a house full of venial

sins, with people who have them without perceiving them and who commit them so easily. The religious is bound to more perfect purity than the priest himself, for he dwells with Jesus Christ, he is in constant communication with Him; and Our Lord cannot endure the sight of venial sin. Would you convert the King's court into a leprous hospital?

Ah, be careful about purity of life, purity of conscience! Do not seek so much the virtues that crown you in the eyes of men, as well as in your own, but be pure! Labor to preserve and increase your purity. Suffer not even the appearance of sin.

Our Lord loves Mary, Saint John, little children with a love of complacency because they are pure. This love is only for purity. To others He shows compassion and mercy.

Ah! be pure, and fly the least stain as you would fly a serpent! Be refined in purity!

Now, to be refined in purity, it is sufficient to love the good God more than self, more than all else. He who loves thus will never offend, will have a horror even to sadden.,

Purity is born spontaneously of love. It is not learned as a science. It is inspired. It is felt. Love gives birth to it as its beautiful white flame. When we love well, we carry delicacy even to severity, to the extreme. Refined love abhors mixture. It destroys the misty. It can live only in purity.

God's first creation was the perfect light. What God creates in the soul, also, before all else, is light. We have been baptized into the light. The newly-baptized were formerly called the illuminated. God works only in the light, and light is but the purity of love.

The state of grace is purity, and it gives heaven to those that are clothed with it. But had I all the virtues, and did I fill the world with my miracles, if I had not love, that is, the state of grace and purity, all would serve me little.

Sanctity is, then, the state of grace purified, illumined, adorned with the most perfect purity, exempt not only from grave sins, but also from the least faults. It is the purity of light prepared for the glory and the sight of God.

The martyr purified by fire, goes straight to heaven by virtue of his perfect purity. The work of grace in us is to purify us constantly. It acts in us only after having purified us, as the flame commences by consuming the rust on iron. After that it embraces it, transforms it into glowing fire, because it has become perfectly sympathetic with it; in like manner does it dry up wood, depriving it of all moisture before kindling it. Purify yourselves incessantly, ever more and more. Purity will make you saints. Pure from all evil, Jesus Christ will fill you with every good and with Himself; for He enters into us and gives us His life in proportion as we abandon our own, and empty ourselves of sin: "*Dilata cor tuum, et implebo illud!* — Enlarge thy heart, and I will fill it!"

If you are pure, if you constantly purify yourselves, you will love God truly. All consists in that.



PARDONING LOVE.

I. — God loves us personally, since He has created us and all things for us, and has redeemed us by dying for us.

There is one greater proof of God's love for us, and that is, the power He gives of obtaining pardon after having offended Him.

God's mercy to us, which rises superior to all His others mercies, is His goodness in pardoning us.

How much has God loved us? As much as He pardons us, as He has pardoned us, as He will pardon us! God is good. He loves me, since He pardons me when I have offended Him. I need no other proof. There is none more convincing, none that touches me so deeply. It was from the love that had pardoned him that Saint Paul drew his own love as an Apostle. It was from the mercy which had remitted so many sins that Saint Augustine imbibed that love which inflamed and pierced his heart, changing it into the heart of a seraph.

God's love for us is more merciful than

benevolent, because, sinners by nature, we have need of mercy above all else. It is also His mercy that, above all His other attributes, He exerts during our life on this earth. This world is its empire, and time is its reign.

Mercy has abandoned heaven. It has come down to earth, it covers, envelops man. It is his centre, his atmosphere, the air that he breathes, the light that enlightens him. We live on mercy.

It shields the sinner from the justice which would punish every sin. It arrests it, retards it until death. It follows man, accompanies him everywhere, never quits him, no, not even after death, for it follows him to purgatory. Purgatory is nothing else than the last effort of God's mercy in behalf of the sinner. Above the portals of that fiery prison is written: *Misericordia Dei!*

God's mercy for man is infinite. We shall never exhaust it. We shall never stifle it by our ingratitude. We never wear it out, never discourage it. It pardons always, pardons everything. Even when the crime is evident,

it says. "Father, forgive, for they know not what they do!"

When we reject it, ill-use it, it seizes upon us, pursues us, still eager to vanquish us: "*Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss! O My Friend!*" Our sins will never be so great as the mercy of God. There is one thing, however, one thing that it cannot conquer, and against which it can do nothing, and that is, the pride of supernatural gifts, which with full knowledge rejects God's goodness, and kills itself.

II. — The Holy Scriptures are full of proofs of the divine mercy. God designedly multiplied them, because we have absolute need of it. The sinner of necessity, as it were, despairs. That is the effect which always follows sinful pleasure, and the second effect is much more certain than the first. Adam and Eve, who fled and doubted of mercy, Cain, who rejected it and exclaimed: "*My sin is too great for pardon,*" are types of the sinner after his fall. They are discouraged for having been unfaithful; and the majority of sinners who put off their conversion are

held back by despair "It is impossible for me to be pardoned. I have too deeply offended God!" The day on which they would weep, they would be converted.

And the pious, — why do they fall? Because they, too, despair. They are discouraged by their falls. They have not succeeded. That is not what they were hoping for. The demon fills their soul with diffidence. That is his best secret for entering into the soul and ruining it. May this sentiment never rule in yours! What! would you doubt of the mercy of God! No, no! — If you fall, rise again by humble and repentant confidence. Humility that seeks to rest in its misery is only pride humbled and vexed. Humility flies toward God on the wings of confidence. "*Oratio humiliantis se, nubes penetrabit* — The prayer of him who humbleth himself, pierces the clouds."

The more pious and virtuous you are, the more you will experience temptations to discouragement. One always holds on to self, fearing to cast himself into the arms of God. And yet would you make a good act of

contrition? Instead of descending into hell to view your own place therein, make an act of faith in God's mercy. Take God by His weak side, His bowels of mercy and His Heart. A man taken by his weak side, will give his whole purse and something else besides. Show God that it is to His glory to grant you mercy, that it cannot be better exercised than on you, that you will be His victory and His masterpiece. Take God by the Heart!

I think that, by drawing nearer and nearer to God, a soul would reach the point of never again experiencing temptations to discouragement, and that in His vicinity, she would forever be established in perfect confidence. Saint Alphonsus di Liguori says that the temptations God sends to the saints are those against faith, confidence, chastity, and the *confessor*, who visibly represents God to the soul. Alas! this is very true. Such tempests are horrible! God rouses them to show men's virtue in the highest degree of confidence, in naked faith grounded on His word alone. In proportion as they advance

toward God, life is purified and transformed. When, above all, it is on the eve of finishing, in order to become the life of heaven and happiness, all the virtues impeach one. Sins grow greater, and one sees in his actions only defects. All conspire against confidence and the divine mercy. I have seen the holiest soul one could meet in heart-rending despair. It was not his faults that had reduced him to such a state, but he accused himself with tears, frozen by despair, of not having loved enough! He feared for the graces he had received, being convinced that he had not profited enough by them. Impossible to restore to him confidence. Neither exhortations, nor prayers, nor reasoning availed. He was weighed down by despair and, as it were, crushed by its weight. There was no other remedy than to say: "Ah, well! I accept this state. I will go to hell, but Thou wilt come with me, O my God!" And he found peace in this heroic act of confidence.

Oh! those temptations to despair and discouragement, those temptations against con-

fidence in God! — never entertain them in your soul. Tell them to your superior or to your confessor. Do not harbor them one instant, for they attack the sources of the spiritual life, they even dry up that of the body. Discouragement and despair produce sadness, of which the Holy Spirit says that it is a moth that preys upon the marrow of the bones. But God's mercy is life, the bright sun of life: "*Misericordia Dei super vitas!*" — The mercy of God is better than lives!"

III. — But see how God pardons. Ah! it is not like men. Man in pardoning shames the culprit, and the fear of shame prevents the child from asking forgiveness. The good God pardons with goodness. His forgiveness is a grace which restores honor, purifies, sanctifies, embellishes. It is one same act to be pardoned and to become holy. It at once restores the robe of innocence, the white robe. One abases himself only to be raised up immediately by mercy.

Men grow weary of pardoning. They are more severe toward the relapsing sinner, and impose more conditions on him. But the

more He pardons, the more merciful does God seem to become. Great sinners who return to Him are His greatest friends. He came for the sick, and for one sinner He left the angels. Provided there are some humility and confidence in our confession, we are always sure of being welcomed.

God pardons absolutely and forever. He casts our sins behind His back, say the Scriptures, He plunges them into the sea, and the scarlet of crime assumes the whiteness of snow, of innocence, in the bath of His mercy. They will never again rise up to accuse us! I love this thought of a large number of theologians, according to whom, they will not even be mentioned at the Last Judgment, because the Lord says, "*I will pardon you them, and I shall remember them no more!*"

Only, it is necessary to obtain pardon for them, and to take care not to hold on to the fag-ends of sin.

Men exact some punishment for pardon, at least the loss of position or civil honor; but Jesus Christ restores to us our honors, reëstablishes us in all our rights as before we

sinned. Thus did He reëstablish Saint Peter after his fall and confirm him in his charge of Supreme Pastor

Jesus ennobles in pardoning. Of Magdalen, the sinner, He made the heroine of supernatural love, and He publicly praised her with the most beautiful eulogium a God can make: "*Dilexit multum* — She hath loved much!

He bowed down to the ground in order not to make that other sinner of the Gospel blush. He put no question to her concerning her offence; but, on the contrary, He accused her accusers: "*Where are they who accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee?*" He placed her above them all: "*Go, and sin no more!*"

He takes sinners and makes of them princes of His mercy and love, like Saint Matthew, Saint Paul, and so many others.

And could one become discouraged after that? Know, then, that it is a need for Our Lord to pardon. His Heart is weighed down by the thought of the necessity of condemning us. He weeps over us, and when He forgives us, He is relieved and His Heart

dilated by mercy. If Our Lord could still suffer, it would be at seeing us despairing of His mercy and failing to ask pardon.

But it is to us, priests and religious, that God's mercy especially shows itself. We deserved by our sins to be degraded from our dignity, as the world does its magistrates and officers of State. But then He would no longer have priests to pardon the other sinners.

Our Lord is more benevolent toward us, His mercies more abundant, His pardon more full of kindness. It is because we have need of more pardon than others.

It is this that ought to render us more lenient toward sinners. Sinners ourselves, pardoned many times, still having need of pardon in the future, shall we not pardon?

Let us, then, have faith in the mercy of God, who will not abandon us provided we implore it with confidence and humility. Eternity will not be too long to thank Him for His infinite mercies, which have so frequently restored to us life and which will save us on the day of the Lord's justice.

THE EUCHARIST,

The PRINCIPLE of the SANCTIFICATION of the RELIGIOUS.

GUR Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar ought to be the principle of your sanctification. That is just. You are lodged with Him. Are you not in the house of Our Lord? The servant dwelling in the house of his master, is fed by him. He ought, then, to labor for him. Now, Our Lord will sanctify you if you labor according to His inspiration, under His eye, and through love for Him.

I. — One must work under the inspiration of Jesus Christ. That must guide us in all we do. Do you understand me? There are two inspirations that determine us in every task, no matter what it is. The first is sensible, namely, the order of the Superior or the sound of the bell. To act by this inspiration alone does not suffice to make a work meritorious, for we can bring to it only a material obedience like to that with which the soldier

executes orders at the command of his general. To obey the exterior sign is but the body of the virtue of obedience. A soul is necessary, and that is the inspiration of grace, the call of Our Lord. A work will be perfect if we join the interior inspiration of Our Lord to the sign that imposes it.

How must we draw inspiration from Our Lord, and how obey Him in all that we do?

By recalling His Presence in the Blessed Sacrament and by praying for His guidance. Do not go to seek Our Lord in heaven, for He is nearer to you than that. It is well; doubtless, to rise toward His glorious throne from time to time, and to desire to see His splendor, but in practical life, you should have Him nearer to you, and it is in the Most Blessed Sacrament that you should seek and find Him. Our Lord might say to you: "Why do you neglect My Presence here? Do you think it is of no importance and that you can do without it? In heaven I am the God of glory for the elect; in My Sacrament I am the God of grace for them that struggle." In all your actions, then,

draw your inspiration from His Eucharistic Presence,

How? By adoration, by prostrating yourself in spirit at His feet, by renouncing your own natural lights, and sentiments, in order to ask of Him the *how* of all things. Ask of Him in everything the best means, the best thought, the best way by acknowledging your blindness and impotence. Our Lord performed nothing but by the inspiration of His Father. He read in Him how He should think, judge, speak, and act. Do the same with regard to Jesus Christ. Then you will act by His Spirit. He will send Him to you, for the Spirit proceeds from Him, and He will communicate to you the thought and intention, supernatural and divine, of Jesus Christ.

This first inspiration is very important, because it gives to the action its impetus and character. Let us, then, labor with Our Lord and under His orders, since He is so desirous of associating us with Himself. Let us leave the direction to Him and follow it. Let us be His docile and worthy instruments,

by submitting to Him all our faculties, all our activity. Let Him direct everything to which they may be applied. It is for Him, the chief Organ and Head of the spiritual body, to give the impetus and direction. Faith is not enough. The union of souls in love is necessary.

II. — You must perform your actions under the eye of Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament that you may do them courageously, holily, and with pleasure.

Know that the eye of Jesus Christ is directly upon you. How dare we offend Him under His very eyes, for He sees us as we would see Him were the veil of the Sacred Species to fall? But, like the guilty old men of the Scriptures, we turn our back on the eye of Our Lord in order to sin, otherwise we should never dare offend Him. The Jews who insulted Him in the praetorium covered His adorable Face. His glance would have touched them or blasted them as by lightning.

Ah! if we thought that Our Lord, who is so near us on the altar and in His tabernacle, inasmuch as one same roof covers us,

is eye-witness of every one of our actions, and that at the end of the day we should have to appear in His august Presence to render Him an account of it, how faithful, diligent, and holy we should be in all our ways! Do, then, as Abraham, and hearken to Our Lord saying to you from His tabernacle: "*Walk before Me and be perfect.*"

True, God is everywhere, but we have need for Him to draw near to us under sensible signs, and this is what He does in the Blessed Sacrament.

Think, then, that He is there. That Presence is sweeter, is recalled more easily than the presence of the invisible, the impalpable Divinity. It is less easily forgotten. Recall it everywhere, whatever you may be doing; and know that it is His human glance, the eye of the glorified and risen Body that follows you through walls, and never loses sight of you.

III. — Act always through love for Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Do all for Him, and nothing but for Him alone. You have not entered religion to make for your-

self a position there, you are no longer hirelings and day-laborers. You have come through love and to sacrifice yourselves, hence, your own personality is of no account and it can never be your end.

Love even the things and persons of religion, its means and graces, because they are a part of the family and form its resources for the service of Our Lord. But do not make them the end and aim of your life. Would you make some person, some employment, or some work the end of your love? All such things are created, and they will like yourself come to an end. Would you, then, labor for man? That would be to miss your end.

Our Lord Jesus Christ alone can be the end of your love. Labor, then, for love of Him. Let all your actions be dictated by this sentiment: "My Lord and my God, I love Thee, and I prove it to Thee by performing this action." Provided God be pleased, do you be satisfied. Of what account to you is all the rest?

But it is in the Blessed Sacrament that Jesus ought to be your end, therefore, perform

all your actions in view of Holy Communion. Let that be the pivot of your day, the centre of your life, whence all radiates and to which all converges. Let all you do, be a preparation to receive Our Lord, or a thanksgiving for having received. As Communion is the end here below of all the mysteries of Jesus Christ's life, let it be the end of your life, also. It alone is worthy of being your end, the end in which you will abide, in which you will take your rest, for it alone perfectly gives you Jesus Christ, and allows you to dwell in Him. Virtues, good acts, are only means for attaining perfect union with Him.

With this end and intention, all your actions will unite to form the bouquet you will offer to your Saviour the next time He comes to you, the day after to-morrow, or even to-morrow itself

Our Lord will come to give the finishing touch to your actions, the last increase to your merits, by His personal union with you. By renewing your love, He will renew all your habits of virtue. He will increase them by increasing your love. He will produce closer

union, strengthen and render more effectual mutual society and action. You will act with Him in one same act, one same intention. Your life will be but one prolonged act of thanksgiving in which Jesus will inspire and conduct you, and in which you will be only the executor to reproduce exteriorly, by your faculties and members, by your exterior life, the divine life that He leads in your soul, for it is no longer you who will then live, but He who will live in you.

Hold on to these principles of life. Fear not to live with Our Lord, under His inspiration, His eye, in His love. That alone can make the religious life sweet and agreeable. Without that, it is a galley where men are condemned forever to forced labor. Go directly to Him. Live of Him. Live in Him. The zig-zag line does not lead straight to the end. Lose not your time in the means. Behold here the grand means, the really fruitful principle. Love the Blessed Virgin and the saints. Invoke them. Help yourself by their example, implore their aid; but let all this be only to help you to reach Our

Lord. Then offer to Him your actions and your life, for He is your centre and your end, and the centre and end of the saints themselves.



JESUS in the EUCHARIST,
the MODEL of the three VOWS.

UR Lord in His Sacrament is the principle of our holiness; still more, He is our model. The law is not sufficient for us; we must see it accomplished to understand it well. Our Lord presents Himself as our model that we may follow and reproduce Him: "*Veni, sequere Me!*"

Now, we must take Our Lord where He shows Himself to us, and that is in the Blessed Sacrament. He continues the Gospel under our eyes. The Eucharist ought to be our Gospel. It is a living Gospel. Why would you deprive yourselves of the sight of His Person in order to read His word, which comes down to you through nineteen centuries? And indeed, the Gospel itself is a closed book if Our Lord does not open it. It is in the Blessed Sacrament that He unfolds it, that He comments upon it, throws light upon it by His virtues, renewing and continuing them under our eyes. It is, then,

Our Sacramental Lord whom the religious ought to take for his model. Study Him there. "*Follow Me*", and this other word: "*Look and make according to the Model that has been shown thee,*" are for all time. They are, then, for us, also.

What is it to be a religious? It is to be a man who offers and immolates himself to God by poverty, chastity, and obedience. which he has vowed forever.

I. — You must, then, of necessity be poor. since you have vowed it. Poverty consists in having nothing and in expecting from charity even the most necessary things of life. True, in consequence of the instability of the times and the adverse spirit of civil governments, the Church is constrained no longer to admit Congregations to the solemn vows, by which the religious renounces all propriety over his possessions. By the simple vow of poverty he renounces only the use and disposal of them, retaining the ownership; but as far as regards the *practice* of poverty, the simple vow differs in nothing from the solemn.

All, then, that you have for your use, is

lent you by the Congregation. If you regard it as your own, you fail in poverty. If you say: *It is mine*, you steal. The Superior is obliged to take away from the religious all to which he appears to be attached, in order to hinder him from transgressing his vow. Take care that, after having renounced great things, you do not attach yourselves to little ones, and that your heart be not caught and bound by trifles in a way that it was not amid the abundance of wealth and fortune.

Behold a most important subject for examination. See whether you are perfectly free with regard to all things.

Or rather, look upon Our Lord in His Sacrament, and compare your poverty with His.

What does He possess? Of what does He make use exteriorly? Neither glory nor majesty nor any of the attributes of His Divinity; and the same of the faculties of His Sacred Humanity. He leaves all His possessions in heaven to be the joy of the blessed. He comes with only His Divinity and Humanity to give Himself to us, and in our breast

even to despoil Himself of them by Holy Communion. Be like Him, naked and possessing nothing but your good will. The Faithful give Our Lord all that He needs; for He consents to receive as an alms the roof that shelters Him, the articles that serve for His Sacrifice and Communion, even the white linen on which He reposes. He does not own all this as net property. It may be taken from Him at any moment, and He will not defend it. Still more! He has renounced all right over Himself. They may do to Him whatever they please. He resists no treatment, whatever it may be.

Our Lord is not annoyed at being poorly served, provided it is with good will. He rejects nothing. He is willing to make use of anything. Ah! He espouses holy poverty. It is His inseparable companion.

If poverty sometimes costs, raise your eyes, and look upon Jesus in the Eucharist. He is still poorer than you, He has much less than you. You will never equal His poverty. He keeps only the species, not even the small substance that would represent a host.

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if it remained bread. No, He has but the appearances of bread and wine, the accidents without substance. Is there anything that so nearly approaches nothingness? That is all the property of Jesus Eucharistic. Ah! study and imitate this august poverty. You have not yet reached the day when you will be entirely separated from all things and from yourself.

And yet it is then that you will find liberty. The *Imitation* says that to be free, we must seek rather to have less than more. Poverty is the independence of the freedman of Jesus Christ, of His voluntary slave, When religious bodies have become wealthy, they have perished.

The day on which the religious says: "I am rich, I have need of nothing," on that day he ceases to be a religious, and the wrath of God will fall upon the foundations of the Order which uses such language. As long as a religious body labors, confidently expecting its help from God, it prospers, it is sure of success.

This does not mean that a Society may

not possess anything. It belongs to the Rule to provide for it.

II. — Our Lord is the model of chastity. This is the second of the vows by which we promise God to love only Him, never to love any one who might take a part of that love, for you give it entirely to Him by the beautiful vow of chastity.

The grace of purity comes only from Our Lord. Communion gives it, increases it, strengthens it, preserves and maintains it against all the assaults of hell, the world, and the flesh. You drink there the virginal Blood of the spotless Lamb. It is absolutely true that, without Communion, one cannot be chaste.

In His Eucharist, Jesus is the very essence of purity. He is so pure that He unites Himself to no body, not even to the substance of the bread, since He destroys it in order to take its place; nor even to the visible accidents, for He is united to them neither substantially nor personally. He desires only a form without matter, which cannot touch Him.

This teaches us that we ought to love no one, nor unite ourselves to any one soever for himself. Unite yourselves to souls for Our Lord, but for them, never! None of those unions in some way substantial, in which hearts become one, in which souls lose themselves in one another, are absorbed by one another, so to speak! No, no union, no commingling. One must be a virgin in heart, as well as in body.

If in the past you have lost this beautiful treasure, know that we are made over, created anew when we embrace the religious life. Baptism created us in Jesus Christ. The religious profession is a Baptism. Some compare it to martyrdom. You have drawn from it, with new life, new purity. Guard it well, and to that end receive Communion. Let Our Lord come into you to practise in you Himself the holy virtue of purity.

In temptations, when they redouble and show themselves menacing, pray, and communicate more frequently than you have been accustomed to do. Extinguish the impure fire of hell by the fire of divine love. It is Jesus

who commands the winds and the tempests. They are calmed at His voice. Receive, then, frequently *Purity* in its essence, Jesus Christ, the God of all purity.

III. — The vow of obedience consummates the sacrifice of the religious. It is the essential vow of religion. It alone might suffice, for it eminently comprises the others. It perfects the holocaust begun by poverty in the goods of fortune, and continued by chastity in those of the body, by offering to God the liberty, the will, even the essence of man, his freedom of choice, and his personality.

Adore now the obedience of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. What promptitude! What passive, blind, absolute submission, without condition or reserve! The priest is His master, whom He always obeys, whether he be holy, fervent, or not. He obeys all the Faithful who oblige Him to come to them by Communion, when and as often as they present themselves. His obedience is lasting, constant, ever ready! And He is the Son of God, who rules the whole universe! And it is He, His power, that gives life and pre-

serves it to those same people whom He wills thus to obey with the absolute submission of a slave. He has no more right over His actions, over His Body, nor over His life itself, for He delivers up even His life!

There are priests of whom we might ask whether they offer the thrice-holy Sacrifice, or rather perform an insulting parody of it: *Sacrificat an insultat?* And Our Lord recoils not before the sacrileges that He receives. He will be obedient to them, always obedient until death!

Probably, your obedience will not be called on to go so far. To render homage to the obedience of Our Lord, obey Him at least in your Superiors and their representatives. Read His orders even in your Rule. Regard neither the person who commands nor the act to be performed, whether it is honorable or humiliating. Some one gives you an order, go! There is but one principle of authority, and that is God. He speaks through different instruments, and the more humble His organ, the more meritorious will be your obedience.

Only do not lose sight of Our Lord in His Sacrament of obedience, if you would have the strength to obey always, in everything, promptly and joyously. What! Our Lord comes to you whenever you wish. You choose your hour, you yourself measure your dispositions, you present yourself, and He is already there. And you? You will not go whither He tells you by the voice of your Superior! And you will not do all that He wishes! Are you, then, greater than He?

No, obey in military style. Set off at the first word. Execute punctually. The soldier knows no obstacle to his orders, and regards no one when there is question of executing them. Do you do likewise.

Obey as the angels whose outspread wings attest with what promptitude and joy they fulfil the least command of God.

Obey as does Our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, how consoling to be able to say that, by our vows, we do what Our Lord does!

Thus, Our Lord in His Sacrament will be your model in your religious virtues, as He is your principle and your end.

IV. — Something more is necessary on the part of Our Lord, and that is, He must come to practise them Himself in you. By your union with Him, it is necessary for you to do more than a single moral person, inasmuch as He gives the life, inspiration, grace, and merit, and that you act only as His member and organ.

Comprehend well this grand principle. Our Lord who has assumed the state of all the virtues in the Blessed Sacrament, having entered into His glory, can no longer make meritorious acts of them. Nevertheless, He ardently desires to practise them for the glory of His Father. He wishes to live again, to find a soul capable of meriting, with faculties that can truly love, labor, and sacrifice. It is for this that He unites Himself to His Faithful, who become His members. He is their Chief, their Head, their moral and supernatural Heart. He pours into them His grace, His divine sap, moving them, making them act and labor. Then He performs in them meritorious and satisfactory works. He takes on again His life of *viator*, His In-

carnation is recommenced. The Father sees Him again poor, chaste, obedient, meek, and humble as in the days of His mortal life. He lives again in us. Our actions are His as much as our own. The supernatural life exists entirely in this union of companionship and life. Let us enter into it, preserve it well, render it more and more close, until we reach the point of doing nothing, absolutely nothing of ourselves, whether by our reason, our heart, our faculties, or our senses, human and natural, that cannot mount to God, that cannot effect something for His glory, and even for our own eternal happiness. It is a little thing to act upon others. But let our whole life, our thoughts and actions be produced in us by Jesus Christ, who makes Himself our soul and our heart, our mind and our thought, who does all in us and in all things, who desires to replace our life by His own life; our natural being, the being of Adam, by His own supernatural being, the being of the Son of God; who, in a word, wills to substitute His own Personality for ours in order to make us His

second self, acting only by the Father, for the Father, in Jesus Christ, His Son, and in His Holy Spirit. Then we shall be true religious and saints, and God will find His glory and pleasure in us!



HUMILITY.

HICH are the foundations of sanctity? We may answer in a single word, Jesus Christ is the model, the grace, and the end.

He is the necessary model, in Him we must view the virtues in order to comprehend them. A virtue is but the reproduction of some one of His actions, the imitation of Jesus Christ in some one of His acts. It is all very well in theory to define virtue in itself; but to understand it, and above all to reproduce it supernaturally, it must be studied in Jesus Christ, otherwise we see and perform only natural virtues.

Jesus is the grace, as well as the model, of every virtue: "*Without Me,*" He says, "*you can do nothing.*" We must, then, be helped by Him. The work of virtue is only a co-operation with the divine action of Jesus Christ in us. He comes to aid us and to make us do what He Himself is doing.

He should be, also, the end of the virtues and of holiness. Every virtue must become His in order to be pleasing to God, and we

will be crowned only in Him and by Him as members under their only Head. This being premised, let us study the virtues of Jesus Christ most necessary for the religious.

I. — Now, the great virtue of Jesus Christ is humility “*Learn of Me,*” He says, “*because I am meek and humble of Heart.*” He makes humility His characteristic, His dominant virtue, in the very depths of His Heart and His divine and human character. As God, He humbles Himself; as Man, He humbles Himself still more. In everything, everywhere, we discover that humility which is His name, His sign, and His seal, as Saint Augustine says. “To name Jesus Christ is to point out humility: *Cum Christum nomino, maxime vobis humilitas commendatur.*”

Our Lord, not being able to humble Himself for His sins, since He had never committed any, embraced humility through love, choice, and complacency. As for ourselves, we must be humble both on account of our sins and for love of Jesus Christ humiliated. The first kind of humility is negative; the second, positive.

Now, Jesus Christ manifests His humility in His dependence on His Divine Father.

He refers to Him all glory, and declares that He Himself receives from Him His being, action, word, even His thought. If men proclaim Him good, He replies that God alone is good. If they ask of Him miracles, He invokes His Father before working them, as if demanding of Him the power to do so, and He avows that the Son has nothing of Himself: "*Filius a se non habet quidquam.*" He is Man. His human nature is created and dependent on God. He desires to maintain it in this dependence in the eyes of all, in order to give us the most sublime example of humility, for that same humanity, by its union with the Word, was worthy of acting by itself and of receiving all homage and adoration. But Our Lord wished to inculcate humility by practising it in voluntary and absolute dependence on His Father.

When there is question of natural trials and humiliations, He embraces them eagerly, submits to them even to their last consequences, undergoing the humiliation of weak-

ness, fatigue, sadness, dejection, fear, discouragement, and disgust. He then speaks and complains as Man.

Behold the humility of Jesus Christ! Truly, humiliation in itself is not lovable. It is enough to endure it patiently. But viewed in Jesus Christ, practised with Him and in Him, — how it changes its appearance and becomes transformed! It is no longer humiliation, it is Jesus Christ humbled, and He is nowhere so lovable as in His humiliations.

We must see, also, humility in Mary. She is the most humble of creatures, and yet she was not condemned to humility by her sins, for she had none; nor by the fear of falling, for her love united her indissolubly to God. But she is humble through love, through choice. That is positive humility, which is no other than the entire renunciation and abnegation of self, in order to receive, to live, to depend in all things only on God. Though Mary ravished God by her purity, she became His Mother by her humility

II — Here is the first-class humility that

we ought to imitate, although sinners and condemned necessarily to humble ourselves by our-state.

Let us then, refer all to God. Return to Him His graces, which He lends you only that you may make them fructify to His profit and glory. Do not pride yourselves on God's gifts. Do not appropriate them, as if they came from yourself, but confess that they are from God. Do not rely on them, as if they were part and parcel of what is naturally your due; but maintain yourself in a constant and actual dependence on God, as receiving always, but never possessing. Acknowledge that the state of grace itself which seems connatural to you, actually flows from God. that it is preserved by a positive decree of His mercy, and that of yourself you are but nothingness and absolute impotence. Take notice that Lucifer fell only for having considered his gifts as coming from himself, and for having thought himself sufficient for himself while, in truth, he existed and acted only through the divine influence of grace.

You will say, perhaps, that since you co-

operate with grace, a part of the result ought to be attributed to you, and that you may share the fruits at least by the right of the farmer whose labor increases the value of his master's lands. Not at all! Your own labor becomes valuable only by the grace which accompanies it, elevating it, rendering it supernatural and meritorious, just as it had commenced it. Doubtless, God will reward you, but it will be His own gifts that He will crown in your merits. And so, there is no moment, neither at the commencement, the middle, nor the end, when you may consider yourself as acting by yourself, by your own strength. But you are always moved, elevated, *acted upon*, by grace, by Jesus Christ, as theology says, like the member which operates only under the direction of the head and conjointly with it by the mind, the movement, and the life that it communicates to it. Now, Jesus Christ is our Head, *caput*. To that august Chief be the honor and glory of the victory, the fruit and the result of the labor, as in heaven they chant honor, strength, power, and

thanksgiving to God and to the Lamb who has conquered!

Alas, that we should rob the good God in the spiritual life! Let us say with Saint Paul: "*Not I, but the grace of God with me!*" And let us hold on to that word of Jesus Christ: "*Without Me you can do nothing, absolutely nothing.*"

But in practice, man is naturally a Pelagian. He believes himself all-sufficient. He first has recourse to his own resources, he makes use of his own means, he forms his own plans before asking God's help, so little is he impressed by his own absolute insufficiency and his necessary dependence on God! He will soon consent to be helped, and he will pray to be delivered from embarrassment, but he will not begin by turning to God before putting his hand to the task. Renounce self, then. Know for certain and for all time that of yourself you can never accomplish anything, neither here nor there, neither to-day nor to-morrow, neither for this one nor for that one, and go ask God's help before beginning anything whatsoever. This

is true humility; to omit it, is stupidity. We should perform prodigies did we act in this way, for it would be God who would operate in us. But we do just the contrary. How much time we lose in experimenting, in leaving off, in taking up again, and in failing! How many towers of Babel! We work, we perspire, we fatigue ourselves. We quail not even before failure. Pride comes in and, when we are in dead earnest, we would rather wear ourselves out than desist. But because God has no hand in it, nothing bears fruit. He looks down upon this strenuous labor, and He brings it to confusion and ruin. Beware of that! When holy obedience does not oblige you to it, and you are tenacious of a certain work, it is pride that is urging you on, and you are sowing in the whirlwind!

Be humble, then, before, during, after. To be humble is to depend on God, to be under His hand, without supporting one's self upon self, but only on His all-powerful arm.

III. — Behold in what positive humility consists! Sin counts for nothing there. — Behold

the negative, to which we are bound by our original sin, and the state in which it places us before God. Although purified from the stain by Baptism, we bear within us a nature infected by sin, bruised by sin, whose pores are open to sin, absolute poverty, pitiable misery. Alas! a weak mind, a feeble heart thoroughly vitiated — this is what we must recognize and confess before God and man. This ought to give us an inward and, as it were, natural feeling of humility, like the weakness and ignorance of the child who says so simply: "I cannot, I do not know." This is necessary, for if you do not become, especially in this point, like to little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Still more. — Our personal sins are another source of profound humility and humiliation. I am a sinner, more of a sinner than all other men, for I could have and I might have done all that they have done. With as many graces as I, they would not have been so wicked as I. That is the truth. The truly humble man places himself below all others

in his own esteem. He knows that he deserves the last place, and he places himself last. Besides, without need of comparisons and proportions, have you even once offended God? Well then, you have, you yourself, crucified Jesus Christ in you. Is not that sufficient? And if you have frequently offended Him, oh, into what abysses of humility should you not plunge and hide yourself! You have multiplied the Passion, the Crucifixion, and the Death of Jesus Christ — *Rursum crucifigentes*. Keep this before your eyes, and you will be humble. But, you will say, with such a thought one can not live. Without doubt, one should die of shame and remorse! Our Lord in pity pardons us and, in His goodness, like the father of the prodigal son, veils our faults. He pardons, he has forgotten everything, and he covers his boy's rags with festive robes. But the son accuses himself, humbles himself, and rehearses his wanderings. Behold true humility! Well, if He forgets, let us not forget. Let us not fear to descend, for God will raise us up. Pride remains in humiliation, glorying like

the cynic in its abject condition; but grace raises the humble soul making it rebound in proportion to its voluntary abasement. Humility is the fountain of living water which shoots up mightily even into eternal life:

Qui se humiliat, exaltabitur



MEEKNESS.

MEENESS, like humility, is one of Jesus Christ's characteristic virtues. It is, consequently, one of the fundamental virtues of evangelical perfection. Sanctity that is not meek is not true. Our Lord set down meekness and humility as the dominant virtues of His Heart.

I. — Upon what rests, then, its importance, and what is it that merits for it this high rank among the virtues? It is because it is the fruit of the supernatural love of God, it is man's palm of victory over his pride, it is the renovation and the transformation of the whole natural man. The old Adam is wrathful by nature, and the more so in proportion to his pride. Every proud man is violent, severe, and choleric. Impatience is nourished by pride, it is its voice and gesture. Wrath rests on the love that man entertains for himself, for his own ease, his own natural happiness. It is man's resistance to whatever tends to snatch from him what he loves. It is the cry of self-love and egoism.

Now, these are things that plunge their roots into the depths of man's being. They are his very nature. To render a man meek, is to reform him thoroughly and supernaturalize his whole nature.

All are subject to anger. The impious man knows no limits to its transports, and he attacks God Himself when he is tired of wreaking it on his fellow-men.

And those pious natures, apparently so sweet and calm,—if you inflame them, will be most terrible in their wrath. They cannot be extinguished at once, and the hot ashes will long cover coals ready to ignite. The anger of the phlegmatic is the most difficult to appease, nor does it take much to excite it!

Meekness is not, then, a natural virtue, and one attains it not by his own strength, nor by merely saying, "I want to be meek."

It is a virtue proper to Jesus Christ, entirely supernatural. For us to practise it, His grace, a powerful grace, is necessary. It is the question of simply vanquishing one's self-love entirely, and that is no easy thing. But when we reach that degree, we are pleas-

ing to Jesus Christ, who holds intercourse only with the meek. We possess the kingdom of heaven, we gain souls to God, and we deserve to reign with the Lamb.

II — We must be meek before God. God is at times severe. He hides His goodness under an irritated exterior. He appears to hold back His help, to stop the channels of grace.

He allows nothing that we undertake to succeed, even those things that are for His glory. We are contradicted, calumniated both by the good and the wicked, by enemies and friends. We are abandoned like holy Job on his dung-hill.

Then we are discouraged, and in disgust we give up everything. Sadness lords it over us with impatience. We feel secret irritation boiling up in our soul. It is then that one must be meek before God, for all that comes from Him. Meekness will make us say to Him: "My God, I know Thou art as good as Thou art just. I accept everything from Thy hand, I adore Thee in this mysterious way and in all Thy good pleasure concerning

me, for I know that all comes from Thy paternal Heart."

We suffer, but we are submissive and we serve God as on the days He turns to us the radiant sunshine of His face. God is conquered by this meekness of the submissive soul. He yields, for the experience He desired to make is over. He wanted to see whether we love Him more than His favors.

We must reach this degree of meekness toward God. Without it, we shall never accept His will, we should struggle against God Himself. From that to murmuring, to blasphemy, and to despair, the descent is rapid.

Job is our model. The Holy Spirit praises him for his meekness. He triumphed over God by supporting His visitation with patience. And yet Job had never seen Jesus Christ!

Oh, how meek Jesus Christ was toward His Father! His Father had imposed on Him all His sufferings, and He had made Him rigorously undergo all that Jesus Christ had accepted from eternity. He let Him off from nothing. And Jesus Himself said: "All justice must be fulfilled." Nevertheless, the

chalice was bitter! Jesus could not help begging His Father to spare Him, but He added: "*Father, let Thy will be done!*" And on the Cross, what a martyrdom for Him was the abandonment of His Father! And how heart-rending was that cry of the Saviour: "*Father, Father, why hast Thou abandoned Me!*" But He was not irritated. He is the Lamb that they immolate and that allows Itself to be sacrificed, and He ends His life with the words: *Consummatum est!*

God will make you taste these trials. Love needs to pass through them. Oh, how much need you have of meekness toward God! Meekly humble yourself. Have confidence in His mercy, in His goodness, which knows not how to let you perish forever. Look not at your sins, nor seek the key to your sufferings. You would only find trouble and fright. No, cast yourself on God's mercy, and say to Him: "*As Thou wilt, O my God! But Thou shalt lose nothing, for I will serve Thee in spite of trial!*"

III. — You must be meek toward the neighbor. The principle of meekness toward the

neighbor lies in charity. You will be meek toward him, if you see in him the gifts of God, if you love God in him. To love men for themselves is time and trouble lost. Men are sacks full of holes. He who puts his treasures in them, is sure to lose them.

If you behold God in the neighbor, you will put up with his defects, you will reprove him without sharpness, you will treat him as you would have treated Jesus Christ going to Calvary laden with His Cross; you will pity his misery, and it will not irritate you; you will patiently and kindly render him service, and for all this you must love God in him. Nothing is more necessary than this meekness toward the neighbor, especially in Community life. Peace, fraternal union, depend upon this meekness, for the neighbor is exacting. We must gently put up with him, remembering that, "*tit for tat*," we shall not fail to exercise him in our turn. Meekness shuns contentions and quarrels. Our Lord recommended it to His disciples at the last repast He took with them before leaving them the Supper of the Eucharist.

IV. — We must, too, be meek toward self. This may appear, perhaps, contrary to this word of the Saviour: "*He who loves his life shall lose it.*" But it is not so. If there is question of shunning sin, of flying the occasion, of combating a habit, of punishing a fault, oh, there is no question of meekness, then! Force and energy must come in there.

But against that weakness which is in us the basis of every temptation, why become irritated? That is our corrupt nature. Unless it impels us to some sinful act, why should we torment ourselves about it? Let us not uselessly fatigue our faculties already so weak.

Against one's innate misery, against that weakness it entails, which mounts not upward, which incessantly falls back on self, neither struggle nor violence must be employed, but the humility and the patience of meekness. One must accept his state just as it is, and take it to God in the same way. You are weak in mind, and still more in heart? Offer that to God. Otherwise, what will you do? We cannot kill ourselves to change ourselves.

In vain, will you be angry against yourself and vex yourself for not being perfect.

Do you want to appear so in your own eyes, and make perfection increase in you in spite of everything? You will be like those infatuated ignoramuses, or those poor proud men who want to pass for savants and millionaires — nothing more odious!

A poor person comes to you. You give him an alms, because of his need, without inquiring into the cause, more or less legitimate, of his poverty. To what purpose would you inquire and discuss? He is poor, you receive him as such, and give him charity.

Treat yourself in the same way. Your spiritual weakness and indigence are the condition of humility for you. Accept your impotence with meekness. That will engender a certain peace, which will sufficiently unite you with God.

The perfection of meekness would be even to thank the good God, for your misery glorifies His ineffable greatness; to be sensible of the least graces, and to bless Him for them as for immense favors which He

grants you who are altogether unworthy of them.

Meekness is necessary in the service of God, in all interior operations, in all spiritual communication with God, above all in prayer and direct relations with Him. You are, for example, going to make your meditation, and you have neither thoughts, nor affections, nor the means to produce them. Then say: "My God, I am nothing, but I will remain at Thy feet all the same. They do not put a child out of his father's house, because he is an imbecile! The dog has a right to lie full length at the door and to pick up the scraps that fall to the ground." This is a suffering, but it must be accepted, for it pleases God. We do not want it, but of ourselves we know not how to do better.

Irritation would be the vexation of pride, the annoyance of self-love, which dreams of great things and thinks itself capable of the most difficult.

The good God keeps us in our place and shows us our nothingness. We must regard it meekly and offer it to Him with thanksgiving,

for He will not disdain to look upon that nothingness, to send upon it a genial ray of light to make it produce, at least some little flower, at least some ears of wheat, which the angels may gather and put into the granaries of heaven; for God regards the poor man on his dung-hill, and raises up the meek whose heart is contrite.

The Prophet said, and every morning the priest repeats: "*Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me? Spera in Deo* — Hope in God!" Here is the answer, here is the remedy: meekness, hope, and confidence in the mercy of God, who disdains none of the creatures of His hand, for He has created them all in His love, and for His designs of love.



The RULE,
SANCTIFICATION of the
RELIGIOUS.

I. — What law will make you holy? The Rule, your religious Rule, the Rule of the Society to which you belong. Your holiness consists in its practice. It is for you the will of God. It tells you what is His design over you, how He desires to conduct you, what graces He will give you. The religious can sanctify himself only by his Rule. Here individual piety and observances count for nothing. Everything is given to the body as a whole, and the members have to receive their life from their union with that body. In religion we are saved only as a whole, that is, inasmuch as we are united to the body. Now, the Rule is the soul which makes the unity of a religious body. God will not recognize your personal holiness. What He looks for in you is the perfect religious of such or such an Institute. You must be blended with your Institute that you may be

a living incarnation of it. It is not the holy man, it is the holy religious, who will be crowned in you.

Do you understand from this how important it is that you should esteem your Rule; that you should value its practice above all attractions, however good they may otherwise be; that you should imbibe its spirit and judge of everything from its point of view; that it ought to be your guide, your supreme criterion?

Esteem it, love it, practise it. You will receive three great graces from it against three very dangerous temptations.

1. The Rule guards against inconstancy.

In the world, inconstancy is the great enemy of piety. Were you always at the same level? On the contrary, did not your piety follow a perpetual see-saw movement, sometimes high, sometimes low? The Rule holds you fast, and prevents your inclining to the right or to the left. It hinders you from shirking. It seizes the religious, urges him on by a constant movement, and cries to him by the voice of the regulations, of the

daily exercises, of the bell: "*Move on! Go on!*" And then, all doing the same thing, one multiplies himself a hundredfold by the strength of his brethren. He is drawn onward by those that are advancing, and it is difficult to lag behind. The love of God, and also a certain self-love, obliges one to follow. This is a great help against personal weakness and natural inconstancy.

2. The Rule protects against tepidity and negligence. When there is question of working on one's self, a man experiences difficulty, he soon finds that he always does enough. But he will greatly devote himself for others, will sacrifice himself for their advancement, though he may be lax when there is question of self. In the same measure as he rushes forth to serve the neighbor, does he experience annoyance at entering into self to sacrifice self. He thinks that devotedness to others suffices, and he makes it his life-work, as if it supplied for everything else. This is a great snare. He will lose himself under pretext of saving others.

Now, the Rule preserves us from this peril.

It lays down for you the exercises of personal holiness. It imposes on you some hours during which you have to think of yourself, work only for God in yourself. Be faithful to them. These exercises are the nourishment of your soul. Your spiritual life is supported only by them, and nothing will replace them. They have no equivalent, remember that! I except only the case of evident necessity, which is very rare. In what illusion some are on this point! They want to labor, ever to struggle. Ah! struggling does not nourish, it destroys! All that you do for others does not equal in value what the Rule orders you to do for yourself, and which you have neglected. The best reasons in this case are only pretexts that veil self-love or tepidity; for, do not forget, there is more virtue in combating against self than in combating against all the vices of the world, and there is more strength and true devotedness necessary to labor at one's own perfection than to give one's self up to that of others. We must go to God before going to men.

The pious exercises of the Rule stand, then, before all else, absolutely before all else! No exercises of personal piety then, if they are against your Rule, or if they cause you to neglect what it imposes on you. In the latter, you share the abundant grace of the whole body; in the former, you have only a little drop of individual grace.

In a word, to leave the common for the particular, is the source of all illusions.

3. The Rule fortifies you, also, against the danger of exaggeration, the foundation of illusion in the spiritual life. One is young, the heart is ardent, the imagination easily inflamed. He reads the lives of the saints. sees there some extraordinary actions, and at once desires to imitate them. He finds in some book an account of a very secret, very extraordinary way of some holy personage, and he wants to enter upon it, for it seems that sanctity is there. He forgets the whole of their ordinary life, bowed under the yoke of the Rule, in the practice of daily duties, in the mortification of the passions, and he sees only some of their

brilliant actions generally willed by God more to manifest their sanctity than to increase it.

Now, I say to you, first, of all: Are these saints of your Order? Had they the same grace and the same Rule as you?—Then, imitate them; if not, let them go. You have not their grace, and if God wills you to be a violet, why presume to make yourself a cedar? On pronouncing his vows, the religious gives up all the particular rules he had followed till then. His vows take the place of whatever obligations he may have formerly contracted. If you belonged to a Third Order, if you had some particular vows, you commute their obligations into those of your religious vows. Regard them with affection, if you wish; but let alone their practice.

Hold on to your Rule. It is sufficient for everything. Ask private penances, if you so desire. The Superior's authority interprets the Rule, therefore sanctifies and permits such penances. But he ought to watch that nothing contrary to the spirit of the Rule is in-

troduced. In this case, it is all bad, penances as well as the rest.

Be sober, modest. Have the spirit of penance and mortification. Exercise it in the ordinary practices, and guard against the extraordinary.

Lastly, you must be holy in the way that God wills, and not otherwise. The Rule points out to you the will of God. With it, you are secure, you are in His grace, you possess the means by which you will surely glorify Him. Everything else will be of no use to Him or to you, but indeed, dangerous for you. They are giant steps, but out of the way, like the great deeds of the Romans and their high moral virtues, of which Saint Augustine has said: *Magni passus, sed extra viam!*

A saint, speaking of the Rule of Saint Francis, said: "He who keeps this Rule will surely be saved." I tell you the same of your own; and without it, you will fruitlessly kill yourselves in trouble and labor, you will never reach the goal!

Keep your Rule always under your eyes.

If it does not speak clearly, have recourse to your Superior. He is the living Rule. His interpretation gives authorization.

II. — Besides for your own sanctification and the advantages I have enumerated, you ought to practise your Rule for your Congregation.

1. First of all, you ought to love this Congregation with a filial love, you ought to cherish gratitude toward it. You owe to it your eternal happiness and the peace that you taste, the facility of sanctifying yourself, the happiness you enjoy here below. Give it all your support, and this you cannot better do than by practising its Rule. Recall that one never repays a Society as it deserves for the benefits it confers. One is always a debtor to one's mother. Your daily labors are only part payment of your immense debt.

Now, for all that it gives you, it asks only that you observe its Rule. Its Rule is the essential condition of its life. If you do not observe it, you kill your mother, you destroy your adopted family, little by little you introduce division, anarchy, civil war.

Whoever fails in his Rule gives rise to a revolution, as far as he can. He makes a breach in the holy citadel. But, above all, may God preserve us from ever wishing to touch a Rule in order to change it, to modify it! Should you be recreant in this point, you overthrow it, though perhaps not formally. Keep, then, your Rule in order to preserve the life of the Society that is your mother.

2. You are under obligation to extend this Society; to render it prosperous, and to attract numerous children to it. If you do not practise your Rule they will see it, and they will withdraw from it, saying: "It is only disorder!" And thus, will they dry up a Society in its roots. It has life-force, great grace, it ought to increase. But they arrest it, paralyze it, by not observing its Rule, for its Rule is its furnace of life. It will expand only if that furnace is glowing, well-fed, well-guarded.

On beholding you, may they say: "Here are true religious. They faithfully observe their Rule." You are the fruits of the So-

ciety. As a tree is known by its fruits, it is by you that the Society will be judged. You are its rays. Shed around its light, and people will come to it.

3. Lastly, you ought to contribute to the end of your Society, and act in such a way that it may happily attain it. That end is to glorify God by works of charity among the laboring classes

If you have not your Rule at heart, what will you do for God?

You can glorify Him only in the spirit and according to the grace of your foundation and, understand well, God gives but one grace of foundation.

The great danger of nascent Societies is to be wanting in faith in the first grace. Some may enter who say "But if we modified this, if we added that, we have done wrong in acting until now in this way." — They may have talent, experience, influence. I tell you they are voluntary or involuntary traitors, who split up the first grace, the grace of the foundation, the thought of the Founder,

and they who listen to them will destroy the Society!

There are always some who think themselves called to reform their Founder and to do better than he. But God blesses only those whom He has chosen for Founder, and never those that wish to go against him. The example of Brother Elias and Saint Francis is well known. Elias wanted to add, diminish, censure; and by the order of God, the saint always answered: "Without comment, without comment, without comment!" Elias separated from the saint. He went into Germany, where he died miserably in the party of the schismatic Emperor while sustaining an antipope.

No, God never blesses outside of the first grace. They may develop it, they may draw from it all that it contains at the time and in the measure that circumstances demand; but it is never permitted to change nor introduce anything contrary to it. God will fructify only the first seed, and He will never give another.

And if any have departed from it, they

must return to it purely and simply. *Prima opera fac*, take up again your first works. return to the purity of your first grace. If not, I will scatter you: *Sin autem venio tibi et movebo candelabrum tuum de loco suo* (Apoc. II, 5). Never allow anything new or strange to be introduced into your Rule. Like that saintly Founder reply "Let them be as they are, or let them disappear altogether!" This danger is great. Guard carefully against it.

Lastly, observe your Rule, keep it religiously through respect for the good God. Your Rule comes from Him. Do you think any man would be capable of composing a Rule? No! Neither virtue nor holiness is sufficient for that. The choice, the special call from God is necessary. It is He who inspires it, and the Founder transmits it to you, tracing it in his sufferings and tears. What man could infuse light and holiness into a line written by his own hand? The Rule bears with it grace. It sanctifies. Now, God alone can give the grace and the power to sanctify.

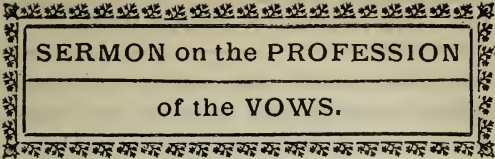
The Rule is for you what the Gospel is for the Church, the Book of life, the Book of

the word of God, filled with His truth, His light, His grace and His life. And you would dare change a syllable of that Gospel, or throw out a word? No, let all its words be sacred to you!

Hearken to the threats of Saint John written at the close of his Apocalypse. You may apply them to the book of your holy Rules:

"I testify to every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book: If any man shall add to these things, God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city!"





SERMON on the PROFESSION of the VOWS.

Elegi abjectus esse in domo Dei magis quam habitare in tabernaculis peccatorum.

I One day, in His kindness, the good God knocked at the door of your heart. He said lovingly to your soul as to the spouse in the Canticles: '*Open to Me, My sister, My love, open to Me!*' You recognized the voice of your Well-Beloved, you opened to Him, and you begged Him to enter and be Master in your house, to rule over you and all your possessions.

Our Lord promised you in return His goods, His graces, the possession of Himself. To-day there is question of signing that divine contract by the profession of your vows.

What is passing here below, is reproduced at the same time in heaven, or rather we are only registering the promises you are making to God Himself, and which He is accepting in heaven. It is the Heavenly Father who accepts you on the part of His

Son, who receives your sacrifices and your person, promising you in return the Person of Jesus Christ, His Son, and His graces.

The notary of this contract is the Sovereign Pontiff. The Superior here represents him and receives your vows in his name.

You are going, then, to pledge your word. Think seriously on it. You are still free to withdraw. When you shall have signed no one will annul the contract.

I know that the Pope can remit vows, but he does it only with difficulty, and against his will, for he knows that a vow remitted on earth is not always remitted in heaven. It is to God that one engages himself. He alone beholds the secret of hearts. He knows whether the reasons brought forward to break the chain of love are such, in reality, as represented. The Church judges by the exterior only. One is absolved only if things are such as are shown to her. Terrible doubt, which the unfortunate dispensed one carries everywhere with him!

When one signs the contract of his vows, it is with his own blood, and that first drop

demands and exacts the effusion of all that remains in his veins. One cannot deceive the Lord. He exacts the rendition of the vow made to Him, and it is better not to vow than not to fulfil one's vows.

What, then, to understand it well, is this profession you are about to make?

II — It is, as I have said, a deed of gift, a divine contract, between the religious and God Himself. A contract exacts a contribution from two parties. What do you give? You give yourself entirely and unconditionally. God does not love conditions. They hide reserves, they prevent the sincerity of the gift. He wants all or nothing

Give your whole self, the world and its riches, to which, if you do not already possess them, you might at least aspire. Renounce the power of desiring and possessing. Renounce the desire of position, of future prospects. In a word, renounce the desire of everything you might love, possess, or receive. Give it in advance. Give even the faculty and the power of ever being the object of anything whatever. This donation comprises all,

Give your person, your soul, your mind, your heart forever with the resolution of never taking them back:

What are you going to ask Our Lord to bring on His side to the common contract? Ah! I think you will not be satisfied with the hundred-fold promised to Saint Peter. No, but with Saint Thomas of Aquin, you will say: "What I ask of Thee, O my Lord and my God, is Thyself and nothing else!" You will get the hundred-fold into the bargain.

For how long a time do you sign this contract? The Rule prudently requires an engagement of some years, one or three. Are you going to say to yourselves: "Well, I give myself for that long, and in a year I shall see whether I can persevere?" Well, that beats everything! No, the heart makes perpetual vows. If you do not want to belong entirely to God, you are not worthy to belong to Him for a year. Go no further, do not go on, do not make trial of the good God! If you doubt Him, His help, His grace, His love, you are doing Him an injury.

What constitutes the greatness and the no-

bility of love, is the surrender of one's liberty, present and future, the binding of one's self forever, admitting not even the possibility of a rupture

You can no longer say: "I want to take back the gift of myself in one year I did not know this! I did not expect that!" God save you from such conduct! Draw a circle and shut yourself up in it with God, so that you may never again be able to leave it. The circle is the symbol of the infinite. In all things, then, and forever with God, to God! It is thus that love speaks and acts.

In fine, what you give to God is little, and yet it is more to God than to yourselves. Without His grace, what would it be? And then, look not so much on what you give. God will see it. It is His affair. Do you look only at the favor He grants you, the infinite mercy of which you are not worthy.

If holy King David esteemed himself more blessed and more honored to be among the lowest servants in the house of God than to reign in his own palace over an immense nation, what is not the honor done you of

entering into the chosen and privileged family of the Church of Our Lord! Estimate this grace at its true price, if you can.

Give all you have acquired of merits and virtue; give all you will acquire in the future by your actions, your labors, the sufferings of your whole life. If you have nothing, borrow the virtues and merits of Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin. Beg that good Rebecca to clothe you with the garment of Jesus, her Well-Beloved Son, that you may be pleasing to the Heavenly Father and receive His benediction. Ask her to clothe you with Jesus Himself, for then your miseries, your demerits, and imperfections will be concealed under cover of Jesus Christ's infinite holiness.

Remember this, however, that once a religious, you will not be free from temptations. The demon will tempt you in every way to take back what you have given. He will scatter gold under your feet, if needs be. Like Saint Antony, do not even look at him. Repulse him with a kick. You have given yourselves. That is something which admits

no appeal. Love gives forever and without repentance.

III Still more, the religious profession is a consecration.

Things profane are offered and consecrated to God by the rites and prayers of the Church, and thenceforth, they are destined exclusively for her worship. Thus it was that they separated under the Law the victims intended for the Lord. They were removed from common use, from the ownership of men, to become the property of the Lord, things sanctified and consecrated.

The religious profession is the consecration of the victims of the New Law, for the religious becomes by his vows the victim and the holocaust of the Lord.

It separates you, then, from the profane. It raises you above all ordinary use, removes you from all propriety either of men or your selves. You have no longer name or place, no rank, no destiny in this world, for you become the goods, the property of Our Lord, His consecrated creature.

For that end, the religious profession sanc-

tifies and ennobles you, rendering you worthy to serve so great a Master. The domestic wears the livery of his master; the Church gives you the livery of Jesus Christ. She receives your vows and makes them public, which renders you amenable to her authority alone, and having made of you her own men, she deposes you to the service of her Royal Spouse. You are the property of the Church, sacred persons; and you cannot sully yourselves by human contact without sacrilege.

Hence, honor your profession, guard the grace that is bestowed on you. The servant is bound to safeguard the honor of the master whose livery he wears. The servants of kings are ennobled by them and become, as it were, the extension, the reflection of the royal dignity. Well, religious are the nobility, the aristocracy of the Church. But as the nobility of a kingdom forms its main strength, and is always in the first rank, to defend the person of the prince and the honor of their country; as we see them expose themselves to all perils with admirable courage, which proves that they count their own

life as nothing, so ought the religious to be in the first rank to defend the sacred Person of Jesus Christ and the Church, which is His kingdom. They should be always ready for orders, always at hand, that she may send them forth to all quarters. They have given up all. What can they fear to lose? And so, of her religious, the Church makes missionaries and apostles. She always sends them on before, places them at the most difficult posts. It is by them that she works wonders among the nations, that she gains and saves the world. And that is not astonishing! They join to the power of the priesthood that of the religious consecration. They have given up in advance all that could retard them, hinder them from flying to the conquest of souls. The religious priest is essentially a conqueror, while the secular priest is more of a pastor, the shepherd of the flock — too often, alas! the guardian of tombs!

IV The profession is, in fine, a compact of companionship with Our Lord. He associates you to Himself. You must henceforth

have with Him but one same end, one same aim in all your labors. He is going to furnish you with the grace and the funds of the Society. In return, He asks of you labor and sacrifice. You must be indissolubly bound to Him, heart and soul attached to His interests and His work.

The profession is an oath, an oath to labor always for Our Lord, whatever it may cost you. It is a solemn and irrevocable oath. It must be your strength that you may never flinch. It binds for life and death.

The oath is the chief strength of those Societies that are everywhere organized for evil. They bind themselves to one another, give up their liberty and, by abominable pledges, cut off anything like withdrawal from them. They give the right of life and death, one over the other.

That makes one tremble! Men are snared, and they cannot free themselves from these diabolical complications. When one lives not in the love of God, he lives in terror!

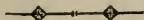
Well, do you, too, take an oath. Give to Jesus Christ the right of life and death over

you. You say that you love Him? You must prove it. The profession is an engagement to go on even to the end, to the immolation by love. And if martyrdom lies between you and the service of Our Lord, ah, well! you must pass through martyrdom in order to be faithful to your oath.

To-day, give your life, and offer your acceptance of death, should it please God to demand it of you for His love.

To die on the battlefield of the Church, is to enshroud one's self in Our Lord's glory. Happy they whom He chooses to testify to Him by the sacrifice of their life in some perilous mission! Happy they, also, who consume themselves for Him in their daily duty! Our Lord receives them into His arms.

Let your profession be that of a martyr of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Forever remember this day. Your life will witness none more beautiful. It is the day of your love!



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RETREAT

PREACHED TO THE RELIGIOUS OF THE

SOCIETY OF THE

Most Blessed Sacrament.

FOREWORD.

 HE following instructions were preached to the Religious of the Most Blessed Sacrament in the chapel of the Mother-House, Paris, 1867.

This explains Ven. Père Eymard's constant allusions to the Society of the Blessed Sacrament, its end, its works, and its Rule.

Ven. Eymard spoke to his sons *en famille*, with closed doors, as it were. He could not otherwise speak freely and say all, through fear of not being understood. The familiarity of home-life permits one to dwell more forcibly on certain things, to return to them, to repeat them in a manner more trenchant and more absolute, in order to engrave them more deeply on minds.

He repeats several times that he is preaching a Retreat of conversion, of reformation of manners, and not one of repose or perfection; consequently, he has always in hand the burning lamp of duties, obligations, which he turns about attentively on the conscience, discovering its hidden folds, unveiling the secrets that self-love voluntarily forms for itself. Showing the difference between what one really is and what one ought to be, he exhorts, he urges, he presses his hearers to set to work that their life may respond to their vocation, and their fidelity of correspondence in some degree equal the magnificence of their grace.

The Ven. Eymard did not preach the Blessed Sacrament, and he gave his reasons for it. He did not aim, as he usually did in his sermons, at preaching the Eucharist, the mysteries of Its life and the marvels of Its love. "Our Lord," he said, "will Himself make your Eucharistic Retreat. As for me, I want to be here only a John the Baptist, crying: "*Do penance!*" He wanted only "to prepare for the life of Our Lord, to conduct to the gate of sanctity," and there he paused.

There is time for all. The Christian life cannot follow the course of treatises on Christian perfection, in which they start from a definition, advancing by principles, divisions, and subdivisions, up to the end, without ever returning to the beginning, or repeating what has already been said. That is the logical way.

The practical way is different. It moves one sometimes to purify one's self, sometimes to press forward; sometimes to live the life of love, sometimes that of fear; now to keep one's self very low in humiliation, and then again, to rouse confidence as much as possible, for fear of falling into discouragement. After some years, it is necessary to return to a virtue that we think we have acquired, to renew our fervor in its practice at the beginning, because the Holy Spirit of God incessantly varies the state of souls, and breathes where He will, without their knowing whence He comes nor whither He goes. They are sure of but one thing, and that is,

that He always destroys and pursues to the death all support founded on self or on one's virtues, one's past and acquirements.

It is good, also, to make from time to time a Retreat which revives the *a, b, c* of conversion, even for persons the most virtuous, in the most heavenly vocations, and the most retired Communities. That is the moment to lay aside the ordinary motives of life, even the best and those to which one is most habituated, in order to concentrate one's attention on the law and duty, and sorrowfully to confess one's omissions, weaknesses, miseries, and sins.

We have already perused a great number of instructions on the Eucharist, the Eucharistic virtues, and the life of union and love with Our Lord, delivered by the venerated Founder of the Society of the Blessed Sacrament. We have given, also, several Eucharistic Retreats in which Jesus' love and goodness form the whole teaching, the means, and the end. Love is, indeed, the atmosphere of the Eucharist. There Our Lord, effecting the consummation of all love, He being the Love of loves, can act only according to the nature of that Mystery, that is, by love. The essential grace of the Eucharist is to nourish and increase love, to strengthen in us its habit, and to multiply its attractions, in a word, to make love live.

In this Retreat, the Father will be one with himself, he will put the finishing-stroke to the law of love.

He still shows us, in effect, Our Lord's love, but as the sovereign motive, the truly efficacious means of all sacrifice, conversion, and mortification ; love, as the sole force which causes the cross to be embraced with joy and borne with perseverance.

If he exhorts to self-purification, it is because love is, above all, fastidious. If he shows the gravity of sin, it is through the pain that it gives to Jesus Christ whose love it wounds. If he wants us to see the combat between the spirit, the heart, and the senses; he localizes its force in the love of Jesus Christ Our Lord alone.

But on account of human misery, no way of the spiritual life, however good it may be, is without danger. Imprudence and presumption impel man's mind to quit the beaten path and take imaginary short cuts,

The way of love does not escape this rock. Its danger lies in this, that they take the word for the thing, the sentiment for the reality, forgetting that love is sacrifice, death to self and the world, the life of Jesus Crucified in Jesus-Hostia. Its danger lies, again, in forgetting that this life of Jesus is exercised only by the destruction of sin and, above all, of pride ; by the faithful practice of all one's duties, by the mortification of all concupiscence of the flesh and the spirit ; in a word, the danger is found in the *dilexit me*, and in the neglect of the *tradidit semetipsum pro me*.

The Ven. Father's aim is to divert from this danger,

and to offer a remedy to him who has fallen into it. The plan of the twenty-one instructions of this Retreat may be reduced to these two terms :

Believe in Jesus' love for you in His Passion, in His Eucharist, in the vocation and the graces He has given you. *Dilexit!*

Then deliver yourself up entirely to Him by death to self, in order to prove your faith. *Tradidit!*

We shall see, also, that the Ven. Father wished that we should make to Our Lord the gift of our own personality, which gift he calls the characteristic virtue of the Religious of the Blessed Sacrament.

We shall better understand in what that consists when we shall have read the last Retreat of this volume. But at present, resuming all the spiritual doctrine of the Ven. Father, we think we shall be safe in saying that for him, for the Religious of the Blessed Sacrament, and for all souls whom grace calls to sanctify themselves by the Eucharist, the dominant motive of sanctity, the soul of perfection, and its formal matter, is the love of Our Lord, His Eucharistic love.

The principal and essential means is the gift of one's own personality, and the practical virtue of this gift is humility, the humility of love, not only that which abases on account of one's nothingness and sins, but that which renounces living for one's self, one's own principle and end in anything whatever, and which lives but of Jesus Christ, by Him and for Him alone, in the total annihilation of self.

END of the RETREAT,

SELF-PURIFICATION.

THE most important, the essential aim of this Retreat, is to examine the state of our conscience to purify it, to study the motives, the occasions, the frequency of our falls in order to apply a remedy.

I. — Are we in a state of grace? Is that our habitual state? Are we alive? All consists in that.

We must seek in what degree of life or death we are; whether we commit and in what, why, how, mortal or venial sins, and of what nature are our most frequent imperfections.

It might be that we are in a state of conscience mortally culpable. It is possible. I hope it is not so, but we are exposed to falling into that sad state as long as we are on this earth.

We shall always have the triple concupiscence, which obstinately buffets us, in order to make us fall. Even to our last sigh, we

shall feel the warring of the two men in us. Never will the carnal man accept the sway of the spiritual man; and if the latter does not defend himself by war, he will of necessity be subjugated by the former. In spite of us, this war will endure as long as ourselves. It is so much the more painful as it is waged in us and by us. We carry it around everywhere, and we are in constant danger of succumbing.

Oh! I well understand what Saint Paul exclaimed: "Better death than such a life!"

Have we not, besides, the demon who tempts us, who pursues us without relaxation, and with so much the more hatred the nearer we are to God? That is understood. Robbers do not attack beggars, and in battle it is the generals who are aimed at. By our vocation, we are nearer to Jesus. We live with Him as His familiars. Not being able to lay hands on our Master, the devil turns his rage against us, wishing that we should at least serve Him badly, if he cannot snatch us altogether from Him.

Thence it comes that, in the Eucharistic

vocation, one has often temptations until then unknown to him, temptations longer, more terrible, more abominable, even before the Most Blessed Sacrament!

And so yourselves and the demon acting against you — behold by what you are tempted. There is here sufficient to make you fall.

Does not your imagination pursue you with its remembrances? — the natural man, also, sold to iniquity?

But you will say, "I have faith!" That is possible, but the natural man has not. Your carnal heart does not love God, it loves only itself. Think you that your body loves mortification? It is an animal which sees both sides of the road bordered by what it covets. There it continually rushes. In spite of blows, it always returns. The body is like unto swine, which delight in wallowing in filth, *Sus lota in volutabro luti*; or like the dog that returns to his vomit. Oh, how trying to have a beastly body with an angelic soul made for God! But it is our condition. We are all children of sinful Adam.

The world is another occasion of sin. True,

we have quitted it, but we still see too much of it even while not seeing it, though not the scandalous world; but whatever it may be, the world has always its dangers. If the angels were visible, I tell you they would become for us a subject of temptation! It is sad! This comes from our perverted nature, which corrupts everything.

Ah! we dare not think, — it would be too frightful, — how easy is sin even among creatures, the most innocent. Yes, the angels did, indeed, sin in heaven in the presence of God, and Adam in the terrestrial Paradise!

I easily understand the saints who fled into the desert, and those that shut themselves up in a Trappist monastery in order to escape the dangers of the world.

Our vocation does not call us to that; but during our Retreat, at least, let us shut ourselves up in a Trappist monastery.

But all is not accomplished by flight. The tendency to evil pursues us everywhere.

Even were you to retire to a Carthusian monastery, you would carry self with you, and the devil would follow you. Shall you

not always have your body and your imagination? Look at Saint Jerome, after twenty years passed in the sacred grotto of Bethlehem, transported again in imagination to the dances of Rome! It is not solitude that makes saints, but the will. The devil haunts hermitages, as well as great cities.

What is to be done, then? Fight! Do not say: If I were here, or there. No! Wherever you are, you are your own most cruel enemy. Besides, peace does not consist in suffering no temptations, but in not offending God.

Oh, what misery! What are we, then, O my God? And sometimes we seek matter of humiliation, and we complain of not finding it. Humble yourselves in your corruption. Nothing is lower, nothing more contemptible than you, not even the most repulsive animals. They, at least, do not degrade themselves. You seek motives for humbling yourselves, forsooth! But your sins, your sinful nature,—behold sufficient to deserve eternal chastisements. You ought to be chased from the presence of God and from the assembly

of the saints. How is that? Can that be possible? Ah, yes! Sin is leprosy. Now, the leprous are driven out from the society of men.

II. — But how far am I in evil? — This is the question that must be determined during this Retreat. Am I in a state of grace, free from all mortal sin? What venial sins have I committed? Which are those that I retain through affection? Are not my confessions rendered useless by want of contrition?

But I have only venial sins, and venial sin does not kill. That's true, slight wounds do not kill. But wait for some occasion, and you will see whether it will not cause your death.

Be as regular to your exercises as you will, come like the others to Adoration and Office; but if you do so with your conscience burdened, you are paralyzed, you profit nothing by it.

But I hope I am not so far gone. I have at most only a doubt. — Get out of that doubt. Clear up your doubt. It is not enough to hope, you must be sure. You will

come to the truth by seriously examining yourself in the light of grace, and afterward by confession and the decision of your confessor.

Some do not take enough care to become familiar with their faults. One must always be a new-comer before God, habituated to nothing. I know that we very easily become accustomed to living in the midst of sanctity, and that we may readily grow useless in the most perfect state.

Oh, how necessary it is to watch not to become a whited sepulchre! It is very much easier, although there may be no interior devotion, to appear perfect exteriorly, than, although holy in the interior, to show it in the exterior. They who are taken up with their interior do not pay so great attention to some external miseries that still cling to them. God, also, allows them to remain in order to humble them; while the others, neglecting all care of their interior, occupy themselves only in painting and disguising themselves.

Am I one of these? — Perhaps! Examine

well whether you are making any progress in getting rid of your sins. Are you increasing in purity? That is well. Are you always at the same point? Take care! Those stagnant waters breed corruption and engender death. But, perhaps, you are less pure. You sin more easily? Oh, unhappy man! Your conscience is sleeping the sleep of death!

Take care! One reaches that point insensibly. There are many such in the service of God with no will to correct their faults and to advance, and who are benumbed in conscience. The good Christian exposed in the midst of the world watches over the least things, always struggling on account of the dangers that surround him. The former, on the contrary, allow themselves to be carried along by their Rule of life, which provides for everything, and by their state, which is in itself most perfect; like a voyager who allows himself to be put aboard a ship without inquiring its destination. But some ships go to Cayenne, and others to the Fortunate Isles. Whither are you going?

We must, then, watch. We must have an

eye to our sins, their principle, their occasion. One does not love God unless he purifies himself from his sins, at least in will; and he is not a religious so long as he is not a man pure and delicate concerning all that relates to his conscience.

Do you know what this delicacy is? It is the heart of love and, if you are not refined and tender toward the good God, you have no heart. You are religious quacks, if the mere shadow of the trouble you are about to undergo for God affrights you!

Delicacy, refinement, consists in permitting one's self nothing that might offend God. It consists in abstaining from even the appearance of evil. It is the honor due to our position and life. One preserves it through respect for God and for the honor of His service. No longer to be alive to it, is to have lost the sentiment of honor. It is the callousness, besottedness of the drunkard who reels along the streets oblivious of his shameful condition. What can make him blush? Does he still think himself a man?

Are you come to that? Have you no longer

any sentiment of your sins? and, if you do see them, do you correct them? No, I am constantly falling back into the same faults, without paying any great attention to it. Then, are you already dead! You are without feeling! There is no state more frightful than that in which one is insensible to his sins.

I know that you cannot escape sin entirely, but the evil consists in not seeing our faults. The saints saw atoms, and we are blind to rocks!

But what you say on this subject makes one tremble. If I dwelt on such thoughts, I should lose courage.—So much the better, for fear is the beginning of wisdom. How now, you would not know your sins, and you would do nothing to correct them? But there lies the evil. You are mortally sick, and you are drinking iniquity like water.

Place your hand upon your conscience. Sound it, and find out your sins mortal, venial, or against the Rule. If you go on falling into them, you are like the sun setting in a fog, disappearing, leaving after it dark-

ness, cold, and death; or are you like him mounting to your full meridian?

Take care! You are on the way to lose your vocation, whether you be novices or professed. Our Lord is going to vomit you out of His mouth. What is to be done? Give a cordial to Our Lord at once, by saying to Him from the bottom of your heart: No, my God! I want no more sin.

How severe are those words!—They are the simple truth. I know very well that you have not swallowed sins as large as camels, but I know also that a hole as large as a pin's head suffices to submerge the largest vessels.

Do not speak to me of those religious who make a trade of their holy state. I prefer to them highway sinners. When the latter return to God, they can be made in four days to mount to four degrees of virtue; the others languish in the sunshine, grow mouldy before a great fire, until Our Lord drives them forth, for of necessity it comes to that.

How is it that even very old religious turn

their back on the Lord, to whom they had pledged themselves, and return to the world as apostates? They go away of themselves without any one's sending them, by the simple consequence of their own negligence, which has degenerated into an inveterate habit of sin. They were not grave sins, but a state of routine and affection to venial sin.

Do not say: I am an adorer. I am in the sublime vocation of the angels and the saints, I belong to Our Lord's family. — That is very true, but your obligations are in proportion to the sublimity of your vocation. Have you weighed that well? Alas! some never even think of it! Some are always in their glory, exulting in the honorable rank to which God's goodness has called them near His Son! But think you, then, that even that grace may be withdrawn, if you do not correspond to it? Does God owe you anything?

We are like the poor Apostles before the coming of the Holy Spirit. Their thoughts were constantly taken up with the glory of their vocation. They spoke only of their

great Master, of His future kingdom of which they wanted to be the ministers and councillors. They were always ready to despise others. Alas! we have seen them in the day of their trial!

Remark well, their sins were all venial, but see to what they led them—they all fled, and their chief denied his Master.

Ah! let us not talk so much of our great Master, of our sublime vocation, but a little more of what we owe Him.

This Retreat is for that. All the year round we speak of Our Lord and exalt His reign. But in this Retreat, there is question only of ourselves and our obligations. We must rouse ourselves. We are half-paralyzed. Hot and vigorous treatment is necessary for us. Let us take it during the Retreat. May it consume all there is in us sinful and imperfect!

If the Retreat purifies you, it shall have accomplished all that it ought to do.

III.—By purity, by increasing and guarding it, you will practise all the virtues, and you will become perfect adorers. If your

conscience is pure, your service will be pure and worthy of the good God. You would be ashamed to come to adore Our Lord with a sullied heart, and to place Him on a vile throne.

Do people appear before a respectable person in soiled and tattered garments?

If you are pure, you will properly fulfil the mission confided to you by the Church and the Society in deputing you to Adoration, for you go to it in the name of the Church, of your brethren, and of sinners, in order to intercede for them. But if you yourselves are sinners, would you insult the good God? The first quality of a mediator, is to be agreeable to the person before whom he presents himself to intercede. And you would be willing to show the Father the executioner of His Son? How would you be able to plead successfully for others when you yourselves inspire horror?

We do not dare to look at one who has a cancer on his face, for fear of embarrassing him. And would you want Our Lord to look upon you with complacency; disfigured as you

are by sin much more hideous than any cancer?

But the good God knows our misery. He would not be offended by it. — That is true of what arises from our poor nature. That He acknowledges and pities. We are the good God's paupers. But those weaknesses of the will, those that we commit through want of delicacy and because we prefer ourselves to Him, — these the good God cannot endure. They horrify Him. He would rather send an angel to chase us like Heliodorus from His presence.

Be, then, pure that you may be fit for the service of Our Lord. It is at this we must aim. It is the first of all conditions. All the rest without that is nothing. Souls enter heaven only in a robe washed white in the Blood of the Lamb. If it is not entirely white, they have to finish its purification in purgatory. Now you are serving Our Lord in His heaven on earth.

Lastly, you come to Adoration to glorify God by your praise, your homage, and to encircle His Eucharistic Throne like the

angels and saints, chanting at the foot of His throne of glory.

But tell me, do you think you can glorify God with impure lips?

You should by your love erect for Him in your heart a throne of pure gold, as the priests raise thrones for Him in the hearts of the Faithful. But do you imagine that He will mount with pleasure a throne of mire?

Above all things, then, is it necessary for you to become pure men. Without that, you will never be servants capable of pleasing your Master. What I demand of you to that end is that you enter into yourselves, examine yourselves thoroughly, have no confidence in what you think yourself to be, but exact of yourselves a careful account of everything.

Examine again, whether your Communion and this life, made up entirely of prayer, are advancing you in holiness. In other words is it a life or an agony?

And whence comes all the misery? From a bad will, from not seriously desiring to enter into the life of Jesus Christ. We will

it, but with some conditions. We will it for one thing, but not for another.

Enter, then, into yourselves. You will be able to save yourselves in the world by fulfilling the law while enjoying its wealth and lawful pleasures. You have said: I will follow the narrow path, I abandon parents, family, liberty. You have quitted all, and you have joined the followers of Jesus Christ, And, after all, would it not be a fine thing to do nothing more than the people of the world, and to gain nothing more for heaven than they? We would, then, have deceived the good God!

The blush of shame mantles my forehead when I think that I was more perfect in the world than I am to-day! I have by degrees become accustomed to God. Oh, what a misfortune!

To decide the question, examine these three points: Are you sure of being in the state of grace or in that of sin? Are you faithful to your service? What glory are you procuring to Our Lord?

BENEFITS

of the RELIGIOUS LIFE.

THE *Imitation* says: "Frequently ask yourself why you have left the world and entered religion. Is it not to serve God and become a spiritual man?"

It is necessary for us to know the greatness of the grace which God has bestowed on us in withdrawing us from the world, and placing us in the religious life. It is a grace of infinite mercy, as well on account of the dangers from which it snatches us, as of the means of salvation that it gives us.

I. — Now, I say we have embraced the religious life, first, in order to shelter ourselves from the dangers of the world. There are certainly many perils in the world, and we might very easily lose our soul therein, as so many others have done who were better than we. We felt our weakness, we feared losing our soul there. We suffered the law of the members; we have already made shipwreck; we are wounded. And then,

if we have already served it, it retains dominion over us, and we are afraid of falling forever under its yoke.

Nothing is more frightfully true than this principle, namely, that what has once enslaved us always retains its power over us, even after our deliverance. It is the law of strength against weakness, the chastisement that sin brings with it. Hence it is, that so many persons converted and purified, fall back on the first temptation, on the first occasion which their old master shows them. The old law has again seized upon them. Evil has a magnetic influence. It deposits seeds. It leaves firebrands, which ignite at the first contact, like charred wood. There is an old sympathetic bond, which drags them along. Saint John has well said that he who sins becomes the slave of sin. It will hold him captive a long time, even after he has shaken off its chains. It is God's revenge upon the sinner who, rejecting His yoke, falls under that of the devil.

Fearing to be, like so many others, enslaved forever, we have sought a refuge from it.

We have done well. That is prudent. In ancient times, the general of the army used to proclaim: "Let those that fear, withdraw!" And the timid were not ashamed to do so, for it was a pledge of security, not only for themselves, but for the whole army.

In the same way, God told Abraham to quit the land of Ur, because in it he would not be able to sanctify himself. He made Lot, also, leave Gommorrha, although he was a saint in the midst of that abominable city. God acted prudently. The highest prudence, and the most laudable, is to shun danger.

Who is that handful of soldiers who always press on ahead? Who are those presumptuous young men who rashly confront the greatest dangers, wishing to convert the whole world? They will soon be punished, for punishment always follows presumption.

Wounded, or fully expecting to be so, we retire into the fortress with those that are unable to struggle on the plain. And so, vocation is, first of all, an affair of prudence and of the love of one's salvation. There is, consequently, no room for being so proud

of having quitted the world for the religious state. We have done it for ourselves, and we have been the gainers.

I know well that there are some difficulties to be overcome, and that it is meritorious, but when one labors for one's own interest, nothing costs. At what price would not a man have purchased a place in the Ark? At what price ought not one to purchase a place in the religious life, the true ark of salvation of which Jesus is the pilot!

We read in the Gospel that a man having found a treasure, went to hide it in a field, and then sold all he had and bought that field. Ah, well! for the religious life we ought to sell all, for it is the incomparable treasure.

It is, then, a prudent choice, one all to your own advantage, and for which you ought not to be paid. One does not pay a sick man, because he has cured him, nor a guest because the host has received him. Be, then, most grateful that you are allowed to stay here. Let no one say: "Religion is indebted to me, for I render it services." What services do you render it? Rather are you a

weight upon it. Others aspire to heaven, but you by your example hold them back to earth.

I am, therefore, not astonished at the severity of the ancient Fathers of the Desert in admitting their disciples. They received them first with contempt, humbling them, and making them wait long weeping at the gate. They mortified them, and submitted them for several years to all sorts of trials, and only then did they allow them to enter their monasteries.

In our day, faith is wanting for the endurance of such trials. Men speak only of their rights. — Rights to what, if you please? You want to be a novice? — Humble yourself, serve, and learn. The religious life expects nothing of you, but you expect everything from it. What it asks of you is not your services, but yourself.

The religious has only one right, and that is, to be humbled and contemned, none other. Should you dare look for esteem and honor? What! you would come to get everything; to receive everything from religion! It gives

you peace, safety, perseverance. It snatches you from the world and your own destruction, and yet you want honors! You want to be recompensed and paid for that!

Ah! rather attach yourself to it, in spite of all that you may have to suffer in it, as to your only refuge of salvation. It is for you the necessary, the indispensable grace. If they chase you out by one door, return by another. Tie yourself to the altar-cloths rather than let them drive you hence!

See how unhappy are they who leave religion! Daily ask God to keep you in it, and make every effort to deserve it, for it is a favor, a mercy, and not a right. Count not too much on your graces, on your call, without your own most active coöperation. While a man is carried on by grace, he is accounted brave and generous; but left to himself, he throws down his arms at the first shock, and plunges into ignominy. He cannot hold out against his senses without the rampart of very great virtue. There are some flowers that bloom only in a hot-house and under a glass shade; you are one of

them. If you do not believe it, go make a trial of it — or rather, may God preserve you from ever doing so!

II. — The religious life not only preserves you from the danger of perdition, but it provides you with the surest and most abundant means of salvation.

There is cultivated, there is the flower of the favored garden which the Church preserves for her Spouse: *Plantatus in domo Domini*. It is planted by God, and cultivated with every care by Jesus Christ,

There it is trimmed and pruned in order to bear more fruit. The good tree is that which is pruned. The nutritive force, scattered throughout too many little branches, would not produce fine fruit. They lop off most of the shoots, keeping only the principal ones that give hope. And so, in the religious life, they remove you from all that could distract you, divide your attention, and they concentrate you upon the one thing necessary.

In religion they mash the fare for you. They give you the portion of labor for every day, every instant, all prepared. They do not

ask you to weave the garment of Our Lord that you have to wear; they give it to you ready-made. All you have to do is to adorn it.

As to the servant of the Gospel who received the five talents in order to turn them to the best account, Jesus Christ gives to you the funds of the religious life that you may devote yourself to making them fructify by the most suitable means.

Our Lord would have us yield like the ever verdant trees of the Orient, which are always covered with flowers; buds, and ripe fruits.

His Church, His saints, His graces, — all are occupied with us in the religious life!

What a misfortune if such means cannot make us good! Why? The seed is bad. There is some inward canker, a hidden rot, which is eating the plant within.

If we do not advance, if even we do not keep ourselves safe, it must be confessed that we are very bad to render useless graces so magnificent! Ah! what would have become of us in the world? Long ago we might have been dead!

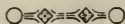
Let us, then, make up for time lost. Let

us quickly regain what is wanting to us. Let us be more faithful. If we should lose our soul with so great graces, it would show that from the beginning we were eaten away at the root by some kind of a worm, which sucked all the sap and rendered everything useless.

You perform all your exercises as do your brethren, and yet you do not profit by them. There is, then, some secret defect, some impurity in the blood. Royal families have adopted stray children, and had them educated in the very best manner. But the day came when their low instincts appeared and, instead of the princes they would have wished, they found only proud fools or cruel tyrants. Jesus Christ has taken us in our baseness and profound misery, to make us men according to His Heart. Was He not deceived? Like lions that they want to tame, but which little by little regain their natural ferocity, shall we now show our claws? Shall we be only young wolves that the Society, like a good mother, nourished in her bosom, believing them her children, but who now rise

up to devour her? But you can never injure her, because she comes from God, who will continue to protect her as He has hitherto done, because she is His. The chastisement will fall back upon yourselves. He will punish you as ingrates and parricides who have not known how to understand His infinite love!

Come, then, see whether you profit by the grace of the religious life. If not, the blame lies with yourself; you are not wholly a religious. Instead of inclosing yourself in the circle of perfection, and saying: "Cost what it may, I will never more cross that line," you trace for yourself one that suits your own fancy, you lay down conditions to God. What happens? Thus, you find in religion the same dangers as in the world, you lose your soul in the very port of salvation.



The EUCHARISTIC

VOCATION.

Non vos me elegistis, sed ego elegi vos.

You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.



WHEN one is in a vocation which demands so much holiness of its members as does ours, one is, indeed, obliged to say, "God has called me here. I have certainly not intruded myself. It is He who has chosen and invited me." If one could even doubt of this call, one would be tempted to abandon it, so greatly would he feel his inability to correspond worthily with it.

I. — Now, we have been chosen by God the Father from all eternity to become by our state adorers of His Divine Son in the Most Blessed Sacrament. He predestined us for this glorious service, for its graces and its recompense.

The Father created us to give us to Jesus Christ, and for nothing else. All creatures are, doubtless, for Him, but there is a hier-

archy in graces, there are vocations that are at the same time dignities. Thus, we have the sacerdotal vocation, the religious vocation, and our own, which brings us so near to the King, thereby ennobling us.

God the Father chose us out of a thousand, and all His graces were destined to make of us adorers. He disposed us body and soul for that. He gave us the strength, the will, congeniality, sympathy for this service. He made us love this vocation, and that is the reason why all who are truly called, derive so much benefit in the Society of the Most Blessed Sacrament. There they are in their centre and end. All in them tends to that. Place them elsewhere and they suffer, they are no longer on their own soil, under the rays of the Sun that is necessary for them. No, they are never well-off but there. Everywhere else they are on strange ground, useless and without aptitude, because their graces, their supernatural qualifications, and even their natural dispositions were prepared by God for the life of adoration and for the Most Blessed Sacrament.

This is a fact confirmed by experience. I am not speaking of those that go away, unfaithful to their sacred engagements. God knows what will become of those poor unfortunates. But I am speaking of those who, being only aspirants just beginning to receive the Eucharistic influences, abandon their vocation for something they think better. They are happy nowhere else. Their centre was before the Blessed Sacrament. There they should have lived and died. You yourselves, when on a journey, no longer know how to pray in the churches, although Our Lord is there present. But it is not your Jesus radiant and glorious, such as the Church offers you to honor by the solemn worship of Exposition.

I tell you that, when you were created, the Father said to His Son: "Here is an adorer for Thee. I will endow him with all the aptitude, graces, and qualifications for it, and he will be pleasing to Thee."

II. — Let us examine what are the qualifications for this vocation. I am not speaking of what we are, alas! but of what the vocation

is before God. I want to tell you how great and sublime this grace is in itself. I am not comparing it with what we are, nor to the vocation of others, but I am judging things in themselves according to received principles, in order to classify the virtues and the different states of the religious life.

Now, the Eucharistic vocation is among all others the excellent one. The excellence of a thing depends upon its end. The end of our vocation is the service of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the most glorious state that He can have here below, in the solemn and perpetual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. There can be no end more excellent than that, inasmuch as by our service, we come in immediate contact with Our Lord. There is no intermediary between Our Lord and our service. It is not the neighbor, works of zeal and, through the neighbor and those works. Our Lord. No, but it is Our Lord Himself alone and immediately whom we serve. Like the angels who never quit the throne of the Lamb, we are bound by our vocation to the adorable Person of Jesus

Christ, not to His members nor to His works. From Him, then, and from Him directly, our vocation. derives its dignity and excellence; for whatever serves the king is royal.

Nothing on this earth is more excellent than the Eucharist, for Jesus Christ is no longer passible as during His mortal life, but resuscitated, glorified, and regnant.

Again, we serve by adoration. But adoration being the expression of the virtue of religion is by that very fact the most excellent of all the virtues. It is again the exercise of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and these virtues having God for immediate end, hold the first rank among the virtues, and communicate their eminent dignity to the virtue of adoration. Oh! had we comprehended all the excellence of the vocation that God has given us, never would we have dared to follow it!

But for a vocation so elevated, greater perfection is necessary. How far we are from it! We should have the sanctity of Mary, of the angels and the saints, since we have here below the same employment as they have

in heaven before the throne of God. If we only had the virtues of the Christian!

What a difference between what we have and what we ought to have! These are two abysses! It makes one tremble!

You will say: "But why has the Father called us to it, if He knew that we should so badly correspond to it?" He has loved us too much! He has called us in spite of our unworthiness, in the hope of elevating us to the level of our duties.

Honor imposes obligations, they say. Honor your vocation by your virtues. Never sully the mantle of honor and glory, that beautiful white garment of Jesus Christ, which covers your indigence, and never relax in this sublime service of the King of Kings!

III — Our vocation is holy. Like that which makes virtue of the means, that is perfection more or less great with which one attains his end, our vocation possesses an immense power of sanctification, because it places us in a very special manner in participation with the state of love the highest and the most perfect, namely, the Eucharistic

state, in which Our Lord carries His love to its utmost consummation.

It is holy, because it gives us the most powerful means of sanctification, putting us in immediate relation with them and in living intercourse with Jesus Christ, who is not only a grace, but the Author Himself of grace in His Most Holy Sacrament.

It renders great glory to the Heavenly Father, because it presents to Him Jesus, His Son, in the Blessed Sacrament. Now, Jesus is there in a more perfect state than He was during His mortal life. He is there glorified and immortal, and it is this state of glory and royalty that He is incessantly immolating to the glory of His Father.

Well now! Our vocation renders us participants in these states of Our Lord. He wills to reproduce them in us and to exercise them through us. It is for that He has called us.

But in order to correspond worthily to this call, we must become saints. So holy is God that He finds stains in the angels themselves. What will it be with us? At least, we should imitate them and, veiling our face, say:

“Lord, I am not worthy of so holy a vocation!”

And yet Our Lord permits us to approach Him. He keeps us for His service. He exposes Himself for us on His throne of love. He is satisfied with our poor service, and daily does He load us with new graces. Seek not the reason for this, saving in His ineffable condescension. He hopes to make us understand, at last, what we owe Him, and to render us worthy of His adorable sanctity.

IV. — Our vocation is eminently apostolic. The apostolate is nothing else than the diffusion of God's reign in souls. It is the propagation of His knowledge and love, the destruction of sin, and the exaltation of Our Lord and His Church. Behold the great power of apostolate that our vocation gives us.

If judged by our exterior life, we pass for useless beings. We do not run after sinners, we do not go on missions, we do not teach. But it would be a mistake to place the whole apostolate in the means of exterior zeal. Such works are only the shell, the canal. The apostolate consists essentially of prayer which

obtains grace, of sacrifice which expiates sin and applies the merits and satisfactions of Jesus Christ. He is the most apostolic who, with Saint Paul, the Apostle *par excellence*, completes, fills up in himself what is wanting to the Passion of Jesus Christ for the Church; that is, who makes it live again, merit, suffer, atone in his own soul and body; for Jesus Christ lives again in us, to save through us. He demands of us to complete Him by uniting our merits to His. It is then that He continues His office of Saviour, for He is the Apostle of the Apostles, and it is He alone who, in the Apostles, redeems souls by grace and by the power of His Blood.

Now, we make Our Lord labor for the conversion of souls by exposing Him and uniting our adoration to His prayers and apostolate. It is the unique privilege of our vocation to expose Our Lord, to place Him in the solemn exercise of His office of Mediator. Indeed, it is only because we are at His feet that He is on His throne, for the Church would not permit His perpetual Presence, day and night, were there no adorers to be

found who would succeed one another by day and by night. We are necessary to Him that He may manifest Himself in His Exposition. We unbind His power.

And what does He do upon that throne? He presents to His Father His adoration, His annihilation to compensate for pride, His thanksgiving to compensate for ingratitude, His Blood and His sufferings to atone for sin, and His incessant prayers to obtain the salvation of the souls He has redeemed. Behold the public Victim! But prostrate at His feet, we unite in His intentions, we enter into His functions of Mediator. With Him we save and redeem, we participate in His perpetual apostolate.

Think you that those prayers of Jesus Christ are not more powerful than all apostolic works? They are their condition and life. Now, see, in what way we are apostles, namely, by union of prayer, suffering, sacrifice with Jesus Christ.

The missionary spreads abroad but one grace; we open the Source of graces. The apostolate is, above all, sacrifice. Jesus suffer-

ing no longer in Himself, wishes to suffer in us. He demands of us the sacrifice of our tastes, of our liberty, of our life, of our whole self in adoration. We offer it to Him, and thereby we are possessed of the greatest power of the apostolate. And that without any danger of mixing up with it the infidelity of pride, which may vitiate the apostolate; without the danger of stealing a part of the fruits for our own profit, for the apostolic life has its charms. When a preacher has health and talent; when he sees his audience hanging on his words, eagerly following his sermons; when he beholds the fruits of his labors; when he brings forth souls to grace, he experiences all the joys of a mother. His labor was, perhaps, severe, but it was mixed with many great joys and sweet rewards.

But as for us, our apostolate immolates us entirely in secret, in forgetfulness, in death at the feet of the Divine Victim. We see none of its fruits, we taste not its recompense; we are satisfied in knowing that it is productive.

Surely, he who baptizes, does not do more than he who has merited the grace of that Baptism. If no one prayed, if there were not some souls to immolate themselves with Jesus Christ for sinners, the missionary's voice would be but the empty sound of a tinkling cymbal. What could the winds produce, if the sun did not fertilize the seeds they scatter?

You will say, perhaps: "It is a good thing, though, to preach the truth, to save souls by the word." But you *will* preach, you *will* save, only it will be by Our Lord, by His direct influence. Others preach Him by His grace; we, by Himself. Others manifest His truth; we, *we* show Himself in His Presence of love, in His living Presence. By Him you will work, you will do much. But preach only by Him, and you will see that people will run to the Master from all sides, for He has said: "When I shall be lifted up, I will draw all to Me."

Behold your vocation! It is most beautiful. Love it well, and never compare it with others. Understand clearly that the service of Our Lord's Person is of far greater importance

than the service of souls, and Jesus is certainly as great as Saint Dominic or Saint Francis.

V. — But if it is so beautiful a vocation, how is it that we are so few in number? How is it that Our Lord has so few disciples while the saints have so many?

It is because the saints are looked upon as protectors, as friends near God. People go to them for help, to make use of their power, their prayers, their protection, and all that is very consoling. It is greatly to their advantage.

But when they go to Our Lord, they find nothing for self. He is the King, and they come to serve Him. He is the Master, before whom they come to bow down and adore. He is the immolated Victim, and they come to immolate self with Him.

They do not come to Our Lord to arm themselves with His help and protection, that they may afterward undertake good works for which they may have an attraction. That is the characteristic of the active vocations. But here Jesus says to you: "Serve Me, adore

Me with your whole self. Keep back nothing for self. Sacrifice to Me your attractions, your activity, your talents, your zeal, your life, all! Lay all that at My feet, make a perfect holocaust of it. Men honor Me as much in the sacrifice of their gifts to Me as in using them for the increase of My glory: *Deus meus es tu, quoniam bonorum meorum non eges.*

So too, when you came here, were you asked: "What do you bring? What dowry? What talents?" No, no, never has such a word left my lips! Never was it in my heart!

But you were asked: Will you serve?" Come, then. We do not ask anything of a servant. We give him something. The only promise exacted of him is that he should be faithful to the interests of the master whom he wishes to serve. Those things are demanded elsewhere, for they have need of wealth, they have to exercise zeal and multiply works of charity. Among 'us, we have only to serve and adore by the gift of self.

With regard to virtues, were you asked whether you would become a saint, whether

you would be humble, mortified, whether you had performed some good works! Not at all!

But you were simply asked: "Who sent you? Who attracted you?" "Jesus Christ in His Sacrament." "To whom do you come?" "To Jesus Christ." "On what conditions?" "None."

"Have you long desired this? Have you tested your desire?" "Yes."

"Will you have the courage to go through fire, for it is a fiery vocation?" "I hope so." "Come in, then, come in quickly!"

They then initiated you into the adoration and service of Our Lord. They told you that was all that was necessary for your new vocation. They recommended you to have but one aim, but one sole view, the service of His Divine Person, to desire to please Him alone, and to labor only for Him alone, for here He is all. The Society is not your end. It comes only after Our Lord. It and all its members are only His servants, and they who direct it are only the head-servants of the only Master, Our Lord. If you are pleasing to Him, you shall have nothing to fear. If you serve Him

well, nothing more can be asked of you for to serve Him is your whole perfection.

In other places, they do well to exact aptitude in their subjects for such or such a work, since it is for that they are received; for instance, teaching, the missions. When one labors in a vineyard, one has need of tools. As for us, we do not employ ourselves in what might forward the general good, because it is not the vine, but the Master of the vine that we cultivate.

Inquiry was made however, as to your respectability. No one comes here to do penance for a life of disorders. There are other places for that. The court of the King must not become a penitentiary and, before being admitted to His service, it must be proved that applicants have always led a respectable life.

Still another condition was proposed to you, namely: "Will you take your place on this prie-Dieu and, like the candle before you, there burn, there be totally consumed without even a little ashes remaining?"

"Will you be servants in the full acceptance

of the word?" You should serve Him by the entire gift of self, with no other end than that of annihilating self that He may appear. Surely, the servant cannot presume to share the honors of his master.

But it is precisely this service by one's whole self, by the sacrifice of even one's personality, which must disappear, that costs. You must be nothing: He must be all!

Oh, how difficult it is to make one's self one's own end in nothing! See whether you do not take yourself back ten times a day, acting by yourself, for yourself, looking out for your own repose, speculating upon your strength, acting naturally; and yet you must reach the point of being all His, all for Him, all by Him!

VI. — Hence, remember that the Society ought to do only one thing, and that is, to make you disappear as much as possible, in order the more to exalt Our Lord by your abasement. It should neither give nor personify itself in any of its members, were he the holiest and the most learned, but remain only the servant of Jesus, referring to Him

and offering to Him the excellent fruits of this member on whom God has lavished some of His best gifts. It ought not to glory in his success, but in having a better victim, as did Abel, to offer to his Divine Master. You may perform, also, the most brilliant works, and receive neither praise nor notice; on the contrary, they should put you and your works down very low, all the more to honor the Lord alone, who has been acting in you. But you, *you* exalt yourself individually? Never!

Praise and glory are for Our Lord alone, and all those grand works are, after all, only what you ought to perform, and they are very small compared with what the King whom you serve merits! To praise you, to thank you, would be to make you an individual and to consider you as still belonging to yourself. But you have given yourself to be nothing and to belong only to Our Lord, who alone deserves to be. Hence, praise to Him alone! The soldiers gain the victory in a battle, but the general alone has the glory and the triumph.

One day we shall be well recompensed for all that we have done. While awaiting that day, let us busy ourselves with serving. Oh, how often one takes back the gift of self by his negligence, impatience, his seeking after satisfaction, approbation, or something of the kind! That shows how difficult it is to give up self entirely.

In other Orders, they cultivate the gifts of a religious, and aim at making him produce as much as he can. He becomes a distinguished savant, a great orator. They bring him forward as much as possible, they exalt his success, they make him a kind of flag-bearer of the combat of truth and religion against error. They make use of him to say to the impious and the unbelieving: "See, what religion can make a man! You will never come up to him!"

That's all right! They are the great men of the Church. But we must never pretend to that, never cultivate a subject in order to make of him a conspicuous individual. To wish to make great men before the living God! To say to some one that he is holy

before the Holy of Holies! Imagine it! No, no, let the savants, the geniuses, and the saints abase themselves before Our Lord. Let them disappear as do the stars when the sun rises. Although their fires be not extinct, but eclipsed by the brilliancy of the sun, they can no longer be distinguished. Well, it is the same in this case. We ought to see only Our Lord, show only Him, never a man, were he a prodigy of learning, eloquence, and sanctity. Let him in the presence of Our Lord annihilate all these great gifts. His sacrifice will be all the better for it. Let him never expose himself to drawing on himself the notice, the attention, the respect due only to his Master and King.

Behold the Eucharistic vocation, the Society of the Most Blessed Sacrament with its end, its spirit, and its conditions. It is and it wishes to exist only for the service of the Person of Our Lord. It consecrates to Him all that it has, all that it is, its children and all that they are. It wants to gain nothing either for itself or for others, for it is so little in comparison with what its great King

deserves! May it at least hear Him say: "I am satisfied. Here are men who adore Me, love Me, and serve Me for Myself alone!"



The RENUNCIATION of ALL OWNERSHIP.

IF any man will follow Me let him deny himself and sell all that he possesses. "

I. - Thus does Our Lord lay down the first condition of the religious life: renunciation, the Cross, death. Because He has elsewhere promised the hundredfold to those that have left all to follow Him, it must not be imagined that religion affords natural happiness, and that people may enter it to find rest in the present life. Poor people! Looking at it in the natural light, such persons are more unhappy in religion than they would be in the world.

In the world, they have only the law to practise; here they have the counsels, as well as the law. In the world, they might have enjoyed domestic life, surrounded themselves with a family, built up a future according to their tastes, indulged in lawful pleasures; but here there is nothing of that. They cannot even enjoy the good they do

The truth is, that, when one becomes a religious, he takes up a cross which he must carry till the end of his life.

No, human happiness is not for the religious. You do not call by that name a recreation, a rest that is granted you from time to time. That only makes you feel more keenly the privation that you ordinarily endure.

Happiness in the religious life? Heavenly, yes; but human happiness,—nonsense! And so there are some who go about sad and discouraged, saying that they have made a mistake, that they had no idea things were going to be so hard. They want happiness in Turkish fashion.

Jesus has promised the hundredfold, but it is of that interior joy which is the fruit of mortification and the Cross, and not the hundredfold of natural happiness.

In the world, one may have a mixed happiness, half-heavenly, half-human, but in religion this is not possible. There, on the contrary, one can be happy only by the destruction of all that makes up natural

happiness. How many deceive themselves!

The religious must always renounce self and what he loves, always sacrifice self. Do you want to follow Jesus Christ on His throne? Follow Him in His sufferings, and understand well that you are going to daily immolation. It is hard, but it is so. It is impossible to persevere, unless we excite in ourselves these sentiments.

In our vocation, above all, is this true. It deprives us of even the consolations of zeal, and crucifies us as holocausts at the feet of Our Lord.

Missionaries have a hundredfold here below. They enjoy their conquests and conversions. Nature and grace have worked together. Nature furnished the labor, and grace made it flourish and fructify; and then, too, they are recompensed by the gratitude of souls. Here we are consumed, and no one can find even the spot upon which we have passed away.

And yet Jesus said to His Apostles: "As to you who have persevered with Me in My tribulations, behold I am going to prepare a

throne for you." He was speaking of His eternal kingdom, assured to those who are willing to fulfil certain conditions to obtain it.

The first is to leave all and to follow Jesus empty-handed. You must abandon your riches and the use of all that you possess. This is what is done at the profession.

If you have a fortune and you want to give it to the Society for the support of Our Lord and its members, do so, it is well. But it is not demanded of you. You are free to give it to whomsoever you please.

The important thing is that you reserve nothing, and that you abandon yourself to the Master, who will give you all that is necessary. But that costs! The priest loves so much to have his own little things, his books, to receive little presents, to make for himself his little spiritual boudoir! Here, nothing of all that is permitted you. You can receive nothing. The Community alone receives and disposes, and should you appropriate some thing, taking it for yourself, reserving it for your own exclusive use, you commit a theft, and you fail in poverty.

All that is in your use is but for a time, and if it should be said to you: "Go at once," you must do so immediately, abandoning everything, without thinking of what you leave behind.

One must be poor in one's food. It is true that now you have all that you need, but it may happen, from one reason or another, that something is wanting at table. If you complain then, I shall say to you. "Have you, then, made a vow always to eat two dishes at your meals? Go, go back to the world, and eat your acorns!"

Is not the poor man subjected to wait for his bread, which is not always forth coming? Well, you have made profession of being poor. Be so in reality, at least when occasion offers.

Alas! I am sure if that happened to you, you would murmur. It will happen to you. Be sure of it!

If, for example, you are traveling on a Friday, although custom allows a traveler to make use of meat if he can get nothing else, you, in homage to poverty, would eat

no meat, understand, and would content yourselves with whatever you could get, were it only bread:

Like the poor of the Lord, religious have a right only to bread and water.

I know that they give reasons for being treated comfortably. Health is weaker than it used to be, one must sustain one's self in order to work, etc. But I know, also, that by such reasoning, they come to putting sensuality and gourmandizing in the place of poverty

What! Jesus suffered hunger. With the Apostles, He was reduced to crushing the ears of corn in order to strengthen Himself a little; and we religious, we want always to have enough so that nothing ever fails! What becomes of the poverty of Our Lord?

We should be poor in our clothing. If we look out for what is fine and beautiful, we fail in poverty. The greatest scandal of poor Italy was to see there religious men vying with women in the fineness and whiteness of their habits.

Examine yourselves well on this point. Fine

cloth lasts longer, they say, and it is economical to make use of it. I tell you it is only pride in poverty.

"But they give it to me, and poverty wills that I should receive it." Ask permission first, and then wear it with reluctance and shame. Go to Argenteuil and there see Our Lord's tunic. Is that made of fine cloth? If you are a religious of Our Lord, adopt His costume.

Indulge in no illusion. It is very fine, very easy to say: "I am poor." Look into yourself, and see whether you are or are not poor. Examine to what you are attached, and cast it away, for it would ruin you.

The religious is like a passenger traveling with all his fortune on a ship well provided with everything. A tempest arises. Jesus Christ is only a few feet off in a little boat. He extends to you a plank of rescue, only a plank, — understand? "Come to Me, but leave all. Your baggage would capsize the plank, and you and it would be lost."

Have, then, always before your eyes this truth, that you have left all, and that you

have come here for Our Lord without reserve or condition. Take nothing back neither for the body nor for the mind, for besides poverty with regard to external goods, the religious must renounce self in body, mind, and heart, in order to give all to Our Lord.

III. — Our Lord expects of you this double homage of body and soul. Keep back the gifts of the soul no more than those of the body, if you wish to be a good and loyal servant.

He endows you with intelligence, and He wants its fruits. Let all your studies be for Him. Examine yourself well on this subject, and you will find that you are taking back something every day. You study for yourself, through your natural attraction for such or such a subject, and yet the science of the Most Blessed Sacrament ought to be yours, and your only science.

Have you always in view this sole knowledge of His Divine Person, of His supreme service? No, and that is because you have not given your mind to it perfectly.

Have you given your heart? Do you love

Him alone? But in what degree? Have you not other affections that thwart the former? Examine whence come your thoughts, whether they are habitually fixed on Our Lord, His love, His adorable Presence. We think on what we love. Where your thought is, thither your heart turns.

If you love Our Lord alone and above all else, you will think of nothing but Him, you will study Him with ardor, and you will end by understanding Him. It was the love of the saints that made them conceive thoughts so noble, and the most loving were the most learned. God is light, because He is love.

Well, now, your heart — is it all for the Most Blessed Sacrament? Have you nothing opposed to Its service, nothing outside of it? There is the touchstone.

Let your body, also, be entirely for the service of Our Lord. This is absolutely necessary, if you want wholly to give yourself. Saint Teresa says that, as long as we have not abandoned to God our health, we have not yet given Him anything. She is right.

In the order of health, what appears the least perfect is often the most difficult and becomes the occasion of holiness.

If you say: "I want to give my mind first," that is sloth. First give your body; you will give your mind afterward. That costs more, because we are essentially corporeal and sunk in the senses.

In practice, the *ego* is the body, the natural, the sensual, much more than is the mind. Our mind, shut up in the flesh, seems to become itself flesh. Give, then, first the body, which so entirely absorbs your attention.

Some there are who wish to serve Our Lord only on condition of being better treated than they were in the world. Oh, how many there are who demand of religion only its advantages, who enter it only to make sure of their bread, to find in it a resource, a commodious shelter! Religious nobodies! Garibaldi might have recruited his ranks from them, for they are robbers in the sanctuary, and God could say to them: "You have considered Me of less account than your body!"

Let us examine ourselves well on this point.

There is something to do here for sure!

Behold the total gift, behold renunciation. The vow of poverty extends to our whole being. To pause on exterior things, is not to comprehend the mind. Poverty consecrates the whole religious. If we do not give ourselves entirely, we enter not into the virtue of poverty. It is easy to say: "My God, I give Thee all," but it is not so easy to do so.

Come, then, reflect, reason out your duty. Know well what you should do and to whom you have engaged yourself. Always rise to the *primum mobile* of your life, that is, to your good will and intention. Let the love of God ever combat your self-love.

Whenever you possess more than Jesus Christ, correct yourself.

You have made a vow always to advance. Flinch not, look neither to the right nor to the left. Behind you are the bayonets of God's justice; to right and left, are the precipices of hell! Act through principle, for that endures; sentiment, on the contrary, gleams and dies out.

Some are seen entering religion flushed with joy, speaking only of the happiness of the religious life, of their delight to enter. In general, count little on them. They are caught by the heart like children. Theirs is a sudden blaze, which has no fuel

But when some one presents himself, saying: "I am come to immolate myself daily for God by renunciation. Up to this day, I have been bad enough, but I will now be a victim of propitiation for my own sins." Ah! here is a true vocation!

Go on, then, through conviction, through an unshaken and evident persuasion that it is your duty and the will of God. Say to yourself that your happiness itself lies in so doing.

You can no longer shrink. In the world, you would drag your vows like the chain and ball of a galley-slave, and if you live a tepid life in religion, you will be in a true hell. You will do as much as others, but without profit. To do good outwardly, to condemn one's self to a life of rule and constraint without experiencing any interior

satisfaction; to be even punished at every instant by remorse, fear, and agony of conscience, — but that would not be supportable! Peace of conscience, at least, is necessary.

If it costs to do good, it costs very much more not to do it while appearing to do it. It is impossible to lead the life of a saint and yet be a demon interiorly.

Give yourselves, then, entirely and in all truth, and let it be through reason and conviction. If your body complains, show it what it gains by doing well, since it has to lead the same life as the others even if it does not wish it.

As for your mind, — show it how noble it is, how good and great to serve Our Lord. Show it good in itself, and that it should not be through interest, but for love, that it devotes itself, and then act accordingly.



SIN, the INJURY DONE

to GOD.

HAT is most displeasing to God on earth and in us, is sin. This truth must be attentively considered. The just, and the saints themselves, are not exempt from sin. And we, have we not on our conscience, perhaps, at least some venial sins? Have we never had to weep over mortal sins?

There is but one evil on earth, but one thing to dread, and that is sin. All creation pleases God, even those beings which to us appear hurtful. Neither the worm nor the mire of the earth, offends God's sight, for those things are in their natural state. Sin, on the contrary, is a perversion of the divine will, a degrading of His work, a contradiction of His nature and of His divine Being. Sin tends to annihilate God, for it denies and attacks His attributes. Now, those attributes are His nature itself.

Let us now consider this frightful evil against God.

I. — Sin is an offence, an insult offered to the sovereign authority of God, to His majesty, to His empire. It is the creature insulting his Creator.

People easily think that sin is not so greatly opposed to God, does not affect Him so much, since He does not show Himself angry, does not chastise the offence immediately. And yet what more serious than to fail in respect to a superior? Want of respect to others is in society the cause of hatred, duels, wars. It is a crime.

Not to give to one's superior in the world the place and the marks of honor due him, is to despise him. And truly, men are very watchful on these points. They are things that are not allowed to pass. They are inexcusable. People always suppose you have received education enough to respect others, and they reject from society the badly reared. They despise them, they do not even look at them.

Well, then, does God deserve to be treated uncivilly? Is He not the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, He to whom everything in

heaven and on earth is subject, whom the elements obey, whom the angels regard with trembling, and for whom His desires are orders?

Animals, plants, inanimate beings, recognize God's dominion and obey Him. It is without sentiment, indeed, but their obedience is no less homage to His authority which governs them.

The sinner alone dares despise divine authority. God lays down laws. He threatens, He punishes transgressors. The sinner mocks at God, at His threats, at His chastisements.

You have not done so in this sentiment. That is possible, but your actions have done so. And if you do not insult Him directly and to His face, you despise Him by your indifference and forgetfulness. The sin is not less.

Pay strict attention! At the judgment, God will know very well how to show you your acts of contempt. He will say to you: "You obeyed men. Am I of less value than a man? You respected a creature, and kept your insults for your Creator. Was it this that I

deserved?" And you will not know what to answer to irritated Justice whose light will place clearly before your eyes all the horror of sin, its incalculable consequences, and your own most secret intentions.

But so many others offend God! — You are, then, willing to damn yourself with them? And you will offend God, because He does not at once punish those that insult Him?

And we, we sin before the face of God, in the Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, of Jesus Christ living there His life of the Man-God! We do as the abominable executioners who insulted Him to His face on Calvary! The executioners of the praetorium, at least, veiled His face before insulting Him. They dared not do so under His gaze! And we, through sloth, through negligence, and other reasons, commit under His eyes faults that are real sacrileges, venial, if you choose, but sacrileges all the same.

Oh, if we had a little refinement of soul, never would we offend the good God! There is no need to be scrupulous in order to avoid

even the appearances of sin. The scrupulous man is he who is always in the state of half-consent. It is sufficient to be of a sensitive conscience. When we esteem, we do not insult

But men we see. We think not of God because we do not see Him. Have you, then, no faith? Faith is a real sight, which certifies to us the things of God more plainly than our eyes show us exterior objects.

We see by the eyes of faith as by the intelligence. Do you see the relations of the sciences, the laws of number? And yet you believe them. Why do you not believe in God?

Our greatest evil is sloth, negligence, forgetfulness, and discouragement. That shows our little faith, respect, and love. We want what gives us pleasure, and we refuse what contradicts us

How often, also, have we been restrained by human respect! We have left God for men, and transgressed His law through fear of what they might say. What contempt or what indifference! And it is God whom we treat thus!

II. — Sin is opposed to God's sanctity, which is His nature. God is essentially holy. Sanctity is the first of His attributes. It is all that is good, beautiful, and true; and it is against it that sin rises up.

We sully the divine sanctity in ourselves, for this sanctity dwells in us. We received an emanation of it in Baptism, which renders us holy and like unto God by sanctifying grace. We sully this divine image. Our soul is from God, our body the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are the members of Jesus Christ. We profane His body, we plunge Jesus Christ and the white robe of holiness and justice He has given us into a filthy pool, we deliver Him to the demon.

Sin is infectious. It is corruption, putrid dissolution. It turns our soul into a horrible corpse, above all, sins of sensuality, and we appear before God in that state! With what horror we must inspire Him, as well as the angels and the saints, for they all see us!

Saint Paul tells us: "To show forth the good odor of Jesus Christ," and we spread an infectious odor. There have been saints

who recognized sinners by their odor. Ah! if our sins spread around their natural odor so that others perceived it and told us of it, what shame! We would not dare to show ourselves, we could not bear ourselves! They say of Antiochus that the wound inflicted on him in punishment of his pride was so infectious that it filled his army with pestilence. Behold the exhalation of our sins!

We sully the sanctity of God in our body and in our soul by sin. How can God enter a soul in which sin dwells? How can He set foot in it? And yet we force Him to come into this impure cesspool. Oh, of what are we thinking!

As for sins of human weakness, they are only dust, and God does not hold in horror this dust inherent to our misery. But sins of the will, of affection, of habit!

It would be better not to receive the Body of Our Lord than to take It into our heart, if stained with habitual sins. He enters but with disgust. We do violence to Him. He is bound, and He obeys us. But at the hour of death, we shall see His vengeance! His

voice will be terrible: "How didst thou dare to receive Me into thy body sullied with abomination!"

We presume to take our filthy corruption even to the Body of Jesus Christ to befoul It, for those Species that we touch, are Jesus Christ Himself. They are inseparably united to Him. The Church wills that we adore them with the same worship of *latria* as His own visible Body. It is, then, He whom we sully by our abominable contact!

But the sin in our soul rebounds upon the Most Holy Trinity Itself, which dwells therein, and which is sullied by its fetidness; for the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, come into us substantially and really when we communicate; so that all that is sacred, *God*, the three Divine Persons, Jesus Christ, are all attacked by sin.

Oh, how God bears with such things! If He punished at once, we would be constantly beaten with rods like Heliodorus at the gate of the Temple. His goodness puts up with us, but is goodness a reason for being insulted?

I know not of what we are thinking, but enraged against self, one is forced to exclaim: "do not treat God as men treat their lowest domestics!"

"I did not think of that." You are bound to think of it. It is not lawful to commit crimes, in order to distract one's self. He who has gone so far as to forget duties so essential as the respect due to the sanctity of God, is more culpable than he who offends Him through the seduction of passion.

Oh, the divine sanctity will have its revenge! It will provoke the arm of justice, for God cannot consent to our profaning Him in this way. It is a fearful thing to say, but we make God serve us in our iniquities, and it is of that He complains. "*Servire me fecisti in peccatis tuis.*" We cannot make a movement in which God does not cooperate, in which we do not force Him to make an actual act of the will. We thus turn the power and the life that He gives us against His own designs, and what was good when emanating from Him, we render bad. This is doing violence to Him. He will avenge

Himself eternally, for He will have His day!

III. — Lastly, sin is an injury offered to the goodness of God, an abominable ingratitude. How is it possible that, living on His bounty and mercy, we go on offending Him?

God is so good that, if He could die again for us, He would do so. And because He is good, we offend Him!

He does not want to damn us at once. Well, then, we will sin another time!

Oh, when we think of these things, we say: "I am the abomination of creatures." Ah, yes, to be sure! And as sin is measured by the graces and favors received from the divine bounty, judge of the enormity of our sins.

Men are more offended at the coldness of a friend than at the outrages of an enemy. How little considerate are we toward the best of friends!

We, at least, hide ourselves when offending Him. Not at all! We sin under His Eucharistic gaze. We offend Him at His very feet while in adoration! Oh, what shall we do? Conceive horror for self, looking upon self as an abortion, a wretch.

Nevertheless, God keeps on treating me as a friend. That proves how very good He is. But you, if I should tell you that all sins flourished in your soul, if I could unveil it and show you to the eyes of all such as you are in the eyes of God, what would you say? You would blush with shame, you would want to hide yourself under the earth. Ah, well, blush, for God sees you! Oh, shun sin, above all things, sin no more! Men forgive a child for not helping its parents, for not knowing how to do anything; but they never forgive it for insulting them.

Start, at least, from this principle of good sense, that you should not do to God what you would not have a man do to you.

Have, at least, as much honor as the soldier who wants to pass his time without punishment, only that he may be able to say: "I never was punished." Shall we not have that last sentiment of honor, and shall we not pass one day without sin? Oh, it would be too bad!

I beg of you, do not offend the good God any more. Be more or less humble, patient,

mortified; perform the most beautiful actions, or do nothing at all. I can pass over your not having virtues, but at least, I entreat you, no sin, no sin!



The EFFECTS of VENIAL SIN.

IT is very certain that the love of God supplies for everything, suffices for everything. But when it does not purify from sin, it is not true, or not yet very strong. The first effect of love is to purify.

For this reason, we must go on examining sin, its fatal consequences, to awaken horror for it.

Whence comes it that we have so little horror for sin, that we remain in it without fear, that we know of its being in us, and yet take no care to shun it or to correct ourselves? It comes from bad will or negligence from want of delicacy of conscience, or from our little love of God.

If men did for the good God and for their soul what they do to succeed in business affairs or in any other state in which they are, they would soon become saints. God has to pay us for what we do for Him and for the care we take of our soul, but He is badly served in spite of that!

Some say: "But what is it, after all, but a

venial sin? It is only a little fault which does not kill the soul." And on the score of venial sin, they no longer disquiet themselves. Oh, what purgatory will teach us! But now, see what are the effects of venial sin, and you will comprehend how much you ought to shun it.

I am not speaking of those faults of weakness and frailty, against which we are on our guard, which we commit only through surprise, and of which we get rid at once as soon as committed, but of the affection to venial sin, which makes one commit it easily, little sensitive to the wrong that he does, taking no care not to expose himself to it again in a word, I am speaking of venial sin which is committed through affection and which has become habitual.

I. — Venial sin paralyzes God's power over our soul. When God encounters venial sin on His way to the soul, His power is arrested, it can do nothing.

In the other world, justice is indemnified without needing the consent of the culpable. But here below, liberty is always granted us.

God can do in us only what we consent to allow Him to do, and the perverse will of man, in repulsing God's power, is stronger than God's will. Yes, indeed! God can do nothing with one whose conscience is taken up by an affection to venial sin. It is impossible for Him to unite His power with ours, His action to ours. Sin is by its very nature, a turning away from God. It constitutes an opposition between essence and essence, between nature and nature. What would you have God do? He cannot destroy us. He has given us a certain time to live and to enjoy our liberty, and He respects that decree.

Venial sin arrests the course of God's goodness. Grace is the effusion of the divine goodness. Now, God is absolutely unable to give His grace to one who says by act: "I do not want it." He cannot render good an act bad by nature. Venial sin is refusal opposed to the grace that solicits. It annuls its action. God, not being able to force the door of the heart, withdraws. He does not violently force an entrance. The Scripture

so often shows Him present to the soul as a friend demanding entrance with His graces, supplicating Israel to hear Him. Our Lord, also, during His life asked men to receive Him well. They would not, and He was obliged to retire.

I am speaking only of venial sin which, not entirely destroying the state of grace paralyzes its action. It is not opposed to the habit of charity, but to its efficacy and its acts

Venial sin is opposed to actual grace, so necessary to him who would act supernaturally that without it we can absolutely do nothing for salvation. Actual grace is a light, an inspiration. It is the action of Jesus Christ and His Spirit in us. Now, venial sin destroys or hinders its effects. It obscures the soul, it limits its gaze, it envelops it in darkness. The light of grace presents itself incessantly to enlighten our intelligence, to show it supernatural motives, the divine good; but if we close the entrance, it cannot penetrate. This sun of love will light up the stone of our tomb, while we ourselves remain buried in darkness.

In this venial sin corresponds to a secret instinct of our fallen nature. Man fears God's light more than His goodness itself. Light remains, it stays. The Jews did not want even to listen to Jesus Christ, and they stoned Him when He wished to tell them the truth. So some do not want to listen to a beggar relating his misery. They give him an alms at once in order not to have to look upon what might too deeply touch them. And so we, too, do not like to see ourselves, nor to see God and His will and what He demands. But the light that we reject accuses us, and this so much the more as it is greater. What will it be for us who live in the darkness of sin before the brilliant light of the Eucharist? We can, indeed, say that we sin in the light. Our sins are all the more serious, and we shall be punished more severely.

Grace is, also, a vivifying heat by which God desires to touch our will, exciting it sweetly in order to bend it to what He is demanding of us. But sin is the cold, the icy coldness of the tomb. It prevents the divine heat from penetrating to our heart, for fear

of our being awakened from our torpor. And yet the heat emanating from the Blessed Sacrament is so powerful, so sweet, so beneficent! There is the furnace of the living Heart of Jesus Christ. But sin makes us flee from it. If we feel that Our Lord is presenting to us His Heart in order to gain our love, we flee. We are afraid of His saying to us: "I love thee!" for we should then be obliged to respond: "And I, also!" They say it, indeed, on the tip of the lips and while retreating, but they do not want to be taken at their word. When an enemy allows himself to be embraced, he is disarmed, he becomes a friend. It would be the same with us, but we fear the duties of friendship.

Grace is, again, the action of the Holy Spirit by which He renews and continues in us the life of Jesus Christ. He says to us: "Take My grace, and perform this good action, make this sacrifice, labor with Me. I will supply the funds and the means, you shall have the merit and the fruit." But sin prevents our accepting this loving pro-

posal, it rejects it, and this contract of companionship becomes impossible, for Our Lord cannot join His action to sin, which is opposed to Him. So venial sin is the destruction of actual grace, preventing and destroying its action. It binds Jesus Christ at the gate of the soul. Little by little, it ruins sanctifying grace which, like stagnant water, becomes corrupt, because no living source feeds it, no movement purifies it.

Venial sin destroys the glory that we ought to render to God by our actions.

God is the Owner and Master of our life, and we are His tenants and servants. He intrusts to us talents to be put out at interest. It is a rigorous obligation for us to procure His glory on earth. Recall how the servant who neglected, who buried his talent, was punished.

By sin we cease to recognize God as our Master to whom we owe everything. We take His place, and we act for ourselves. What glory remains for Him from actions performed through self-love? Sin destroys all that could elevate toward Him and glorify

Him. It annihilates God's glory in His creatures. Behold the conflict mortal sin wages against God and His attributes!

II. — Considered, besides, in its effects on us, how sad is venial sin! See what it did in the Apostles. For three years they had lived with Our Lord, seeing Him, listening to Him, rejoicing in His miracles and in His particular and private explanations. Did they profit by them? Not at all. They did not even go so far as to correct themselves of their defects. Their ambition, their jealousy, their self-love still domineered them. What, then, was the obstacle? Venial sin, for the Gospel records their faults, and they were but venial faults, only venial faults. But see, whither they conducted. Behold them fleeing from the Garden of Olives, and Peter denying his Master. Judas, also, had lived with Our Lord, and his infidelity began with only small faults of cupidity.

I assure you, one may, in fact, live in the holiest vocation, may spend his lifetime before the Blessed Sacrament, and yet for all that not be a saint

Oh, have pity, at least, on Our Lord, do not insult Him to His face! People do not chase away a beggar with injuries although they can not give him anything. Jesus is begging for our heart. They do not return rude words to a benefactor who has bestowed a gift upon them. With how many benefits is not Our Lord incessantly loading us!

And that is not all. Venial sin, which paralyzes God's power, delivers us into that of the demon and of corrupt nature, which he governs. Then we act by the instincts of nature, by self-love, and we succeed and are satisfied, for nature is very skilful when it acts for itself. But what is there for God in these works?

In effect, annulling actual grace by venial sin, all that we do under its influence remains. God offers us His grace, but we refuse it, we reject His guidance in order to depend on ourselves, and that is an infidelity.

Know that all a man's actions performed purely from nature are not sins, and that he can, even without supernatural grace, per-

form some acts of the moral virtues that are both good and honorable. But that is not mounting on high. For an action to reach the throne of God there to be crowned, it must be borne up by grace, which alone has the power to carry it on to eternal life.

And then, if this is true in theory, it is otherwise in practice. I do not believe in the moral virtues of men who have not the divine virtues. He who refuses the grace of God which is offered to him, in order to act by nature, acts perversely.

But how much truer is that for us! We fall not from graces as great as ours, without breaking limbs.

We deprive ourselves, in consequence, of merit. He who labors in sin wears himself out without gaining anything. Still more, he will be punished for what he ought to do, since he has the grace for it, and does not coöperate. Our good works then become our condemnation, for all that venial sin touches, it renders useless. It is the worm at the root.

If what you have commenced well by grace you finish by self-love, it becomes worthless

as far as recompense is concerned. So, venial sin renders good things bad. It looks out for them in order eventually to destroy them. We are then, like the laborer who sees the hail destroying in the twinkling of an eye the hopes and labors of a year. A little sin of self-love, a look upon self, is sufficient for that.

Lastly, venial sin makes us unhappy. The tepid religious is the most unhappy of men. He labors as much as his brethren but, unlike them, he does not receive those heavenly consolations that sweeten labor. He refuses them. On account of that obstacle of sin, which is an insurmountable barrier to His goodness, God cannot make him taste His peace, His unction.

He no longer tastes the joys of a good conscience, for they flourish only in consciences that God illumines and visits. His own, instead of being this perpetual feast, is dark and breathes of brimstone. It is tortured by remorse and fear. It is always trembling and carrying around with it perpetual chastisement.

He has not even the consolations that the world gives to its servants. The world cannot come to him with its pleasures and, should he abandon his vocation to go demand them of it, it does but increase his unhappiness, for he drags after him everywhere the chains of his vows and obligations.

Oh, how dear one pays for venial sin! It enters by flattering, and it remains to bite. It is a swarm of ants that eat away the heart. No more pleasure, no more joy in prayer, the soul no longer wants to see God! Do you not know this from experience?

Come, now, let us love Our Lord so much at least as not to offend Him any more and, above all, not to remain in sin. May love and repentance raise us out of it at once!

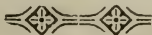
How we pain the good God. It would be easy during the retreat to add up our venial sins for a day. You would be frightened to see the sum total. What would it be, could you count all you have committed in your lifetime? One minute is sufficient to commit a sin, and interior sins call for still

less time. Our venial sins are incalculable.

Some think themselves responsible for only those that they know. Let us say for those that they commit, for that is another thing. To know and to commit, are two things.

Our Lord says we shall render an account for every idle word. If an idle word forms a subject for judgment, count, if you can, your sins of sloth, of sensuality, of vanity, of self-love. You will have to see them in purgatory, and expiate them to the last farthing.

Be, then, very scrupulous about the least faults, about everything that concerns your conscience and the Rule. Take care! They who abandon their vocation for crimes have begun by nothings. When a stone becomes detached from a mountain, we know not how far it may fall. We know only that the greater the height from which it falls, the deeper will be the descent.



OUR LORD'S EXPIATION of SIN.

LET us meditate on the way Our Lord expiated sin. We shall find there the true idea of reparation and penitence, and we shall comprehend its malice.

Some say: "What wrong has sin done to God, after all? In reality, it neither attacks nor destroys the essence of God. It takes nothing from His happiness. What can pygmies do against a giant?"

This is the reasoning of the world. The pious, also, use it more or less in order to excuse themselves for their sins.

Here is the answer: God, in order to manifest clearly what sin is in His eyes, has given His own Son to pay the debt rigorously, and to expiate it in a manner equal to the offence. Sin deserves all that Jesus suffered. God did but satisfy the demands of His justice by condemning Him to that terrible Passion and to that death on Calvary.

Jesus came and, having taken upon Him-

self our sins, became our security, and endured all that we should have to undergo. If, then, you would comprehend the magnitude of the evil, study the greatness of the reparation. Sin means Jesus Crucified.

Now, as all sins spring from these three sources, pride, cupidity, and the pleasures of the flesh, let us see how Jesus has expiated this triple evil.

I. — Jesus took upon Himself every humiliation in order to repair every species of pride. The Word was humbled even to the form of a slave. He came on earth to be annihilated. His whole life was but one long humiliation ending in the opprobrium of Calvary.

Behold Him humbling Himself in His birth. Men love to vaunt their birth, their noble origin. They love to tell of the château in which they were born. To confound this pride of station, Jesus was born in a stable.

Men speak of their education, of their illustrious masters. Jesus fled into Egypt. He returned to Nazareth, a country of such ill-fame that a well-bred man would say: "Can

anything good come from Nazareth?" In the eyes of the public a Nazarene counted less than nothing.

Men like to say: "I am from a fine country, a great city, a rich region." Jesus says: "I am from Nazareth," although, in reality, He was of the royal city of Juda. One might say that He had a weakness for humiliation, His boast being annihilation in every thing.

Men speak of their successes, their studies. They so much love to pass for savants! Jesus was the Word of God. He knew everything, and yet for thirty years, He maintained silence. He passed for an illiterate man, a day-laborer, a carpenter.

Later on, He will perform admirable works, but He will give orders for them to be hidden, to be passed over in silence; and when men want to glorify Him, He will flee to the desert.

Men love to make a boast of their relations with the great and the influential, and to say: "That illustrious man is my friend. He knows me. He receives me." Thus they elevate themselves in their friends.

Our Lord was not known by the great, and He knew no person of influence. On the contrary, the rich and the great are His enemies, because He is poor and hails from Galilee. He used to be surrounded by the poor, the untutored, the coarse-mannered. As a general thing, only the poor and the lowly followed Him and formed His auditory. Others came only to surprise Him in His words. If, however, one or two great men among the people were attracted to Him, they hid, they came to Him by night. There was a kind of shame attached to being seen with Him.

Behold how Our Lord during His life repaid for pride!

But how recount the humiliations of His Passion? I enter not into detail, for you know it. But follow Our Lord to the house of Caiaphas, Herod, Pilate, and see what pride cost Him! Look at Him on the Cross between two thieves, execrated by all, and in some measure rightly, since He willed to pass for guilty. The judges of His country having condemned Him, all who beheld Him

on the Cross, cried out: "Cursed is He that hangeth on the Cross!"

Thus was He the accursed of God and of man, a worm of the earth. Men dared not even look upon Him, such was the humiliation, such the humiliations of every kind that mantled Him, that disfigured Him. Never did a leper excite such disgust!

Humility — so fondly did Our Lord embrace it, love it, make it His own that it is the only thing in which He glories and wishes us to see in Him: "*Discite a me quia humilis corde* — Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of Heart!"

See what pride cost Him, what the Father exacted of His Son, to satisfy His justice and to restore the rights of His Majesty wounded by sin! Do you still say that God is indifferent to sin?

Now, every time that we commit a sin of pride, we renew all the humiliations of Our Lord.

Pride is at the bottom of our being. All our sins spring from it directly or indirectly. Take away pride, and you dry up their source.

Concupiscence itself is most frequently its punishment, for God, as says Saint Paul, abandons to the insensate desires of the flesh men who yield to their pride. The avaricious man is what he is only through pride. Egoism is his last word: self, to the cost of all else; self, the end of all. All sins may thus establish relationship, trace their lineage to pride. It is what Our Lord expiated more than all other sins, and willed, above all, to be humbled in everything and at all times.

But there is one species of pride which must be shunned more than any other, and that is, spiritual pride, which consists in glorifying self in God's graces, in making self the end of one's supernatural gifts, in crowning self with God's benefits. It is pride springing from one's noble vocation, from the priesthood, by which one seeks to elevate himself in the eyes of men on account of his prerogatives, and attract upon himself their esteem and confidence. Such was the pride of Lucifer in heaven, the worst pride of all, for that is sacrilegious pride.

It is, also, the most subtle and lasting.

When one prides himself on some natural quality, such as his fortune, his knowledge, it is only in passing. He soon finds some one richer and more learned than himself. But of that satanic pride, who can explore its depths? Your outward life is in keeping with what you want people to think of you. The world sees only your graces, the place you occupy in the sanctuary, and it knows not of your deep-rooted unworthiness. This kind of pride always strikes deeper and deeper roots. It is a sacrilegious robbery. It is seizing upon God's gifts, stealing from Him the love of souls, to which He has a right, and to accomplish that end they make use of His grace, of his own functions, of the sublime gifts He has bestowed on them as His ministers.

We wish to be esteemed among men on account of the dignity to which God has called us, as if we ourselves had merited it, as if we held it of ourselves as the just recompense of our deserts. Of these entirely gratuitous gifts which God has confided to us that we may put them out at profit for

Him and deliver them over to His Christian family, we make a throne for self and lay claim to be honored instead of God whom we have deprived of it! I declare that this sacrilegious pride is worse than even that of Lucifer and his angels. when they fell from heaven, for they had never beheld Jesus Sacramental!

And we are proud before Our Lord annihilated, humbled to an unheard of excess! We even go so far as to elevate self upon Our Lord's abasement, and make of it a ladder by which to rise!

I am convinced that all the punishments God sends to His elect, to those of His sanctuary, are only to chastise that abominable pride, for it is so deceitful in reality and in outward appearance that God alone can punish it. See what falls, into what abysses they tumble who make self their end and their recompense by crowning themselves with their gifts and taking to themselves the homage of souls!

Worldings say that there is no one so proud as religious with their privileges and

their beautiful habits. May they never be able to say that of us! Always remember that Jesus Christ is in the midst of you hidden, annihilated, deprived of all glory, and even of every sign of glory divine or human. Wrap yourselves up in the obscurity under which He is hiding His Divinity and His Humanity, His glory and all His gifts, and never emerge from it

Do you not see that to expiate pride, Our Lord wills to continue till the end of the world humbled in the Eucharist? Of all the sufferings of His mortal life, He retains only His humiliation. You see Him there always humbled; or rather, you do not even see Him, for He has no being, He has only the appearance of being.

The humiliations of the Eucharist are perpetuated only to form a counterpoise to the fatal effects of spiritual pride, which makes so terrible ravages even in the assembly of the saints. What horror God must have of it for Him to condemn His glorious Son, who ought to have been reigning in splendor and majesty, to such excess of humiliation,

and that till the end of time in the Eucharist!

II. — I shall say little of the way Our Lord repairs concupiscence after earthly goods. Avarice cannot be the sin of religious such as you, for you own nothing, you are not aiming at making a fortune.

Still take care against spiritual cupidity, spiritual ambition. Know that nothing is more shameful than to enter religion there to make a position for one's self, to find therein what one could never have achieved in the world. There are some who, not being able to rise through want of talent, enter religion in order to receive from it name, position, influence. Because of the glory crowning the name of some Institute, they hope to become popular preachers, popular confessors. More do this than is suspected. They deserve to be struck by the divine wrath! We are not far wrong if we seek the cause of the terrible chastisements that fell on the Religious Orders during the French Revolution, in those members who were religious rather for their own

aggrandizement than for God, who labored more for their own interests than for His glory

To expiate these evils of cupidity, Our Lord came poor of poor parents. He worked for His daily bread, He received assistance from charity, He died poor, owning not even the winding-sheet for His burial. He lived without support, without protectors. He never had any position, but went here and there, as the Spirit urged Him, preaching to all, sometimes followed, sometimes abandoned. He could say of Himself "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve."

III. — Our Lord expiated concupiscence of the flesh by the austerity and sufferings of His whole life, but above all by those of His Passion. Some may ask how the Father could have the heart to condemn Our Lord to torments so cruel as those that He endured. Our Lord had to repair for our sensuality, for the sins of our flesh. The Father let nothing pass away from His Son. He did not even allow Himself to be moved by that prolonged prayer accompanied by tears and

sweat and blood, which Our Lord made to Him for three hours in the Garden of Olives. Not all that was necessary to expiate the sins of sensuality.

It was, above all, according to some saints, during His bloody Agony in Gethsemani, that Our Lord repaired for the sins of thought.

Are those sins, then, so grave? Yes, there is often more of sensuality in the thought than in the act; at least, it may be renewed without interruption, it may be dwelt upon, while the act is committed but in passing. It was for this that Our Lord suffered the crucifixion of His soul during three hours. It was a suffering as great, as intense as that of the Cross, for the special support of His Divinity was needed to prevent His succumbing under it. His crushed soul abandoned Him. Oh, what our evil thoughts have made Him endure! Through them alone, He endured all that Passion of Gethsemani. And the sensuality of gourmandizing. The Saviour who had always lived like, the poor, content with bread and water the

greater part of the time, took nothing during the whole of His Passion, though having sweat blood and water, having been flagellated with three thousand blows, having traversed under the Eastern sun the streets of Jerusalem laden with His Cross, and having fallen, unable to go farther, and parched with devouring thirst. And yet He waited until He reached Calvary. There only did He ask for some relief for that thirst, and they presented Him vinegar!

The sensuality of the bed. Was the bed of the Cross rather hard? And that of Gethsemani? It began by the straw in the stable, then the bare earth, a stone of the wayside, were Jesus' bed and pillow during His life. The straw, the ground, and the Cross — behold how He repaired for the immortification of the couch!

As to the sin against holy purity, we dare not even mention it or show how the Saviour expiated it, so humiliating was it for Jesus to be obliged to take upon Himself that horrible sin, also.

They led Him, purity itself, before the in-

cestuous Herod. Of whom was the court of that lewd man composed? To what looks was Jesus there to be subjected? And Pilate and the pagan executioners, — what were they but idolaters of the senses, like all pagans? Jesus consented to submit to the shame of nudity, of complete stripping before those wretches; and it is in the nakedness of the Cross that He will show Himself even to the end of the world, exposed to the railleries of libertines, as well as to the adoration of pure souls. He is a worm of the earth! He is naked in expiation and covered with ignominy to expiate the sin that Adam committed in innocent nudity and clothed with glory. No, there is not in creation a being as naked as Our Lord in His Passion!

And the vanity of sensuality, the vanity of the body, see Our Lord repairing it. People idolize their hair, they powder their face. Our Lord's head was pierced with a crown of thorns and His cheeks covered with spittle. The feet that men cover so elegantly and which lead them to evil, the hands that they keep so white and delicate in order to per-

form it — do you see how Our Lord's are pierced with nails? His body is everywhere dug, because we are vain and sensual in all our members.

Behold how worthy reparation is made, by always choosing the contrary to the evil, and by repairing it under all its forms

Behold why the saints spent their whole life mortifying themselves!

The whole man is summed up in these three things: the mind and its pride, the heart and its cupidity, the flesh and its concupiscence. Jesus expiated these three evils, these three sources of sin.

IV. — But if the Heavenly Father exacted such reparation from His Son, how will it fare with us? What torments He will invent against us, not for expiation, but to punish us!

You see, then, in Our Lord what sin is. If it were so small a thing, God would not arm Himself with all His justice against His Son merely because He has assumed its responsibility, and although He had never committed it. God would rather cease to be God than to suffer sin to go unpunished.

And at the end of your life, had you lived the life of a saint and performed miracles, if there remain a single sin in you, only a little dust of sin, you would go to get rid of it in the flames of purgatory.

God does not look upon sin as a jest. We are His children. Our place is in heaven. He is there awaiting us, and He wants to clasp us in His arms. But as long as there is one sin on us, He will keep us at a distance, for ages if necessary.

Now, listen! Have you committed a mortal sin in your life? Then, you deserve hell. Why are you not there? Justice which does not punish the guilty is not justice. God is, then, no longer just? Yes, but He sees His Son supplicating Him to spare you. "Do not strike," says Jesus to His angry Father, "wait awhile!" He presses you to His Heart, covers you with His Person. "I want to resuscitate him, to give Him My blood to purify him. Let Me save him!"

And the Father spares us. Justice suspends its course and, instead of chastisement, we are honored, loaded with graces and favors.

In this life goodness is greater than justice. It will be otherwise after death! .

Expiate your sins, then. Weep over them incessantly. Saint Peter did not remain long in his sin, but he bewailed it all his life. Expiate, above all, certain sins which attack Our Lord in His Heart. When one has a friend, one never pardons himself for having given Him pain.

Doubtless, God has pardoned you, but *you*, do you not pardon yourself. Be toward God, who is so good, like the child whom its mother has forgiven, but who, in spite of that, returns constantly to ask pardon, so sorry is it for having offended the mother it loves so much!



HELL.

LET us speak of hell. The greatest saints have been helped by this consideration, and they have found in it motives for loving Our Lord more. Love produces sanctity, but sometimes it has need of being helped by fear. There are times when it is necessary.

I. — I confess this subject affrights me, and that the hardest truth to believe is that of hell. Every one believes in it, however, infidels, pagans, Turks, and heretics, as well as Catholics, all believe in it. And yet the incredulous, or those whose faith is dormant, are frightened by this truth and, if some one proves it to them, they blaspheme against God. There are countries where hell cannot be spoken of without scandalizing and driving the people away.

Hell makes a salutary impression only on those that love God; others make use of it only to insult Him more by blaspheming His justice.

Now, how is it that God who is so good,

can condemn one of His creatures whom He has made in His love, one of His children whom He so loves, to eternal hell? It is true, however, for after death He is without mercy. The elect are few, He has said. Of the two ways that lead, the one to life and the other to death, the first is little trodden, but the second runs all over the world. According to these words, the greater part of men will be damned. Although the Gospel does not speak in plain terms on this point, yet what we see is sufficiently clear to make us fear.

But the mystery is still more obscure. How can God, who is so good, condemn so many souls to hell for all eternity? We know men who would condemn to death not even the greatest villains, and yet God condemns without pity, and to such a death, to such torments: Mercy appears, however, to follow us into the other life, since He pardons the souls in purgatory. He is pitiless only toward the damned. He condemns them and laughs at them: "*Subsannabo vos!* I also will laugh in your destruction."

There are however some among these

damned souls who served Him a long time, who passed for saints on earth. "*Subsanabo!*" God finds in them a mortal sin, He counts all their services for nothing, and He hurls them into the abyss of hell.

Eternity! Eternity of chastisement, of the loss of God! When we think of it, we shudder with fright!

Above all, an eternity of despair, of shame, of punishments — the very words make us tremble! And we know of Doctors who taught that hell is not eternal, because it would be too repugnant to the goodness of God; but that, after a thousand years, it would be closed. That is an error condemned by the Church. But we can easily understand that such an error would have many partisans. It does away with that fear of hell and eternal pain, and soothes the frightened soul. No! Ever to despair, to tear out one's hair, to gnash the teeth, to be eaten up with remorse, that is the eternal law of hell.

Even in this life, despair is one of the most cruel torments. Men can resist it only by a special help of grace. They who have

no faith prefer death to despair, and they shun it by suicide. But in hell they cannot take their life, they live on in agony, in the agonies of a despair that will know no end, that will never receive a ray of consolation, a drop of refreshment!

Here is a scene which has been deeply engraven in my memory, and which will give you some idea of the suffering of despair:

In the year 1852, there was brought to me one possessed, a very good man, and in his moments of liberty, an excellent Christian. The demon spoke by his mouth. He blasphemed against the everlasting torments to which he was condemned. A priest who was present said to him: "To what conditions would you consent, in order to obtain in a million of years one gleam of hope?" Then that demon, who said he had once been a seraph in heaven and was called Astaroth, illumined the face of the possessed man with a sinister brightness, and replied in a voice hissing with rage: "If from hell to heaven, there were a pillar bristling with scythes, poignards, and other sharp instruments, and

it were necessary to mount it every day for that million of years, we would all do it, for the sake of being able to hope merely for one minute. But that cannot be done!" And blaspheming with rage, he launched imprecations against God. "Oh," said he to us, "how unjust is God! You men, you have sinned a thousand times more than we! We sinned but once, and you renew your crimes daily. And yet He pardons you. All the love is for you; for us, the vengeance of justice!" And he tore his hair in despair. He would have killed himself had he not been restrained.

Behold, again, in the Gospel, that unfortunate-rich man of the earth in hell. He supplicated Father Abraham to give him one drop, only one drop of water to moisten his burning lips. "It is impossible," responded the Lord. "There is an impassable abyss between you and us! You enjoyed when on earth, now you are suffering justly!" Do you understand that word? That man had not committed any of those great crimes which human justice punishes, he had only

enjoyed immoderately the good things of earth. He was condemned without hope, without consolation, forever, forever!

The greatest suffering of the damned is not physical, but moral suffering. Their greatest punishment is in the imagination, their memory, and their understanding.

But, more than all, what must not those souls suffer who, for the greater part of their life, performed good works, or even, like that priest Saprise, of whom the History of the Church speaks, who had begun to suffer the first torments of martyrdom, but who did not persevere to the end? Ah, they are the truly despairing, the damned that suffer most! They once loved God. They could so easily have continued faithful to Him. They see that now They had a foretaste of eternal happiness when they served Him, and now they behold themselves forever separated from Him! Forever! since, as says the Wise Man, there are three great abysses which never say enough, the miser, death, and hell!

The conclusion for us is to fear, to work

out our salvation with fear and trembling. There are in hell some who certainly have not sinned so much as I. Oh, how good was God not to have struck me at once after I had sinned! I deserved it, however. Had He condemned me, I should have had nothing to say. The assassin has no reply to make when he is condemned to death. It is the law of retaliation. Now, a single one of my mortal sins put Jesus Christ to death. I am His executioner and His assassin.

Hell is not wanting in men who, when on earth, were regarded as saints. There are priests and religious there, for certain. The same might happen to me, for they were holier than I.

How good is God not to have abandoned me! On the other side, who can say whether I shall persevere till the end? This is the great question. I now desire it, certainly; but shall I always say so?

Men have not enough horror for sin, and when they commit it, they have not sufficient courage to do penance for it as they should.

They hope, and they say: " When I get sick, I will go to confession. I will make a good act of contrition, and secure my salvation that way. " No, no! Illusion! Our Lord has promised to come to us like a thief. He will laugh at us, and frustrate all our plans.

And then, in reality, who knows whether I shall not again commit some mortal sin? Who knows whether, if for the Faith I were dragged before some tribunal, I would not apostatize? That happens to those that are negligent about little things.

Moreover, the doubt alone is frightful. The fear inspired by these words: " Who knows whether he is worthy of love or hate? " terrified even Saint Bernard.

Let us, then, adopt the most energetic means. Let us not confide in our own desires and resolutions only, for one is never secure when there is question of eternity.

Who knows whether I am not already on the downward course, whether I am not about to lapse into mortal sin?

To know this, examine your most ordinary temptations and your venial sins. They are

the little cords with which Dalila bound Samson before she found out his secret. He arose and broke them easily; but one day, he allowed himself to be entirely deluded, and you know his unhappy end.

There are certain venial sins, certain temptations that almost always end in mortal sin.

First of all, there are the temptations of impurity. Saint Alphonsus di Liguori says there is, perhaps, not one damned soul that is not in hell in consequence of impurity, or with sins of impurity

Then come the sins of pride, above all, of spiritual and satanic pride, which always leads to apostasy.

See to it, and see hell at the end. That will make you enter into yourselves, and you will, perhaps, be converted.

If the sight of hell on one side, and that of the immense and infinite love that God bears us on the other, no longer make any impression on us, we are hastening to our eternal perdition! Let some occasion present itself, and it is all over with us!

But I know what some may say to excuse

themselves in their own eyes: " I am a religious of the Blessed Sacrament I am living with Jesus, my Saviour What have I to fear? "

Judas, also, lived with Jesus.

" But I love the good God Judas, also, loved Our Lord in the beginning, but tepidity came, little by little, and extinguished that love. Then he became sacrilegious and the executioner of His Master

There were two thieves on Calvary One was a saint, declared such by Our Lord Himself, the other was a reprobate.

To live with Jesus Christ in presence of His great Sacrament of Love, is everything for him who desires, cost what it may, to save his soul; but it only increases the chastisement of him who there dāms himself. He falls from heaven as did the rebel angels. He plunges with them to the very bottom of the abyss, and finds there prepared especially for him more cruel tortures, very personal torments: "*Potentes potentior tormenta patientur.*" The mighty shall mightily suffer torments. "

The MERCY of JESUS.

LET us meditate on the goodness of Our Lord in pardoning us.

I. We have greatly offended. The days of our life are much less numerous than our sins, for we can offend by every one of our thoughts, and even mix up sin with our good works. We should have to despair at having sinned so much, of feeling ourselves again so borne to evil, if God were not infinitely good.

If we only offended Him by the passions of our depraved nature, — but no, His graces, His gifts, Himself, we make use of all to sin. I mean when we pride ourselves on the graces of our vocation or of our priesthood. These faults cause Him double pain because our malice is greater as the graces we abuse are more excellent. In the next place, He regards us as His friends, and you know how much the wounds of a friend make one suffer.

The malice of him who abuses the choice

graces of God is so great, and men are so alive to the fact of its deserving His vengeance that the majority of those that fall after having been loaded with special privileges of grace by the good God, remain in evil, not so much because they love evil as because they despair of pardon for a sin so great as theirs. Every sinner, however, must of necessity consider God under the aspect of His mercy. Before His other attributes, His sanctity, His majesty, His justice, he would feel crushed.

But who would not look up with confidence to Jesus Christ so good, so merciful, the Incarnate Mercy? Sinners used to go to Our Lord without fear. They mentioned their crimes, expressed their regret, and were immediately pardoned.

One will fear a man, however good and holy he may be, will blush to confess to him his sin, since he feels that that man's holiness is his own condemnation, and that he himself has not been able to persevere in good as he has done. But he goes to Jesus without fear, because He is the Saviour, the

Physician, who came for them who had fallen. He sees in Him, not the aspect of a man, still less of an accuser or a judge. Jesus is only mercy personified. Jesus is formed of, altogether made of, mercy. Saint Paul, telling us this, says with good reason. "The goodness and mercy of our God have appeared in Jesus Christ, the Saviour." Mercy is the expression of His thoughts, His looks, His words, His actions. He was so governed by it that He was seen clothed only with mercy, in order that the most guilty, the most hardened sinners might go to Him. Our fathers, who lived shortly after Him, represented Him in the catacombs under the figure of Orpheus, who charmed by the music of his lyre the savage beasts, attracting them to himself, and holding them captive at his feet. And thus Our Lord drew sinners. They surrounded Him. He loved to find Himself in the midst of them and, by His kind words, He touched them and restored them to life: "I am come only for sinners and the lost sheep."

He watched that this character of His mission should not be changed under any

circumstance. When the son of Zebedee wanted to punish a guilty city for not wishing to receive Him, Jesus reprehended him severely: " You know not of what spirit you are!

He openly declared against the malevolence and calumnies of the Pharisees: " Not they who are in health, but the sick need a physician. "

Such is His mission, to pardon, to save, to show mercy. Saint Paul says that the Father sent Him to show forth forever the superabundant riches of His goodness and mercy. Take away mercy from His character, and Jesus Christ no longer exists.

In the institution of the Church and the priesthood, He wished again to perpetuate forever His mercy. Priests do not exist to give certificates of virtue to the just, but to absolve and console poor sinners.

Behold Our Lord! Study now the all-merciful circumstances of the pardon He accords sinners.

II He waits for us. Justice, unless it shows itself weak, demands the punishment immediately after the fault. But Jesus, like

the vinedresser of the Gospel, asks for a delay. "Be patient! I love this poor sinner," says Jesus to His Father, who is ready to strike. "I want to save him. By dint of care, I shall restore him to righteousness and life. I desire to make of him a gem in My crown of Saviour!" and He enfolds him in His arms, protecting him from blows.

He waits for us. Even while we are in sin, He is loading us with favors. Many sinners thereby deceive themselves, taking occasion from it to think their sins do no great injury to God, since He does not punish them, whereas, when they have returned to Him, on looking back they are astonished at His having been so good as to give them time to be converted. That is the longanimity of mercy, patient even to excess!

Still more, God shows the sinner greater kindness than He did when the latter followed the good way.

Many are scandalized at this. "God forgets His dignity," they say. They should put His goodness above every other attribute.

Jesus has said that for a single lost sheep He would leave the ninety-nine, and that there would be more joy in heaven on the return of one sinner than for the perseverance of ninety-nine just men.

Ah! it is very necessary for Our Lord to show more condescension for the poor sinner than for the just, since he has so much more need of it. He is at the bottom of the pit, so some one must descend to draw him out.

Oh, how Jesus longs for the sinner's return! How He endures the duty of waiting for him! He presents Himself to him, solicits and torments his heart, until He gets him back again. He is like a mother who weeps over her child, pursues it with her tears and caresses, in order to make it leave the evil path.

We may say that if God were not infinite and indefatigable in His action, the seeking after sinners would alone destroy His happiness and His power. Our Lord, during His lifetime, gave Himself up to the pursuit of them, and the thought of them always made

Him sad. He often wept over their misfortune, and all the goodness of the just, not even the holiness of Mary, could console Him. Now He prays for them, watches for their coming, and sends His angels in search of them. He moves heaven and earth to save a sinner.

They say sometimes that it is sufficient to be impious to be long-lived. We might believe it on seeing God's longanimity toward certain impious men. The Holy Spirit, also, has said: "The just man dies in the midst of his good works, and the impious man lives long in his iniquity." God is waiting to convert him. He permits him to heap up crime upon crime that He may make of him a trophy of His mercy. He loves those great strokes of grace, those miracles of His mercy. They are feast-days of mercy, holidays in heaven.

"God waits to have pity on us." Every hour of that waiting is a new pardon, a new creation of mercy toward us, for justice pressingly urges its claims. It constantly demands our death, which it cannot allow to be de-

ferred. Every moment of our life belongs to God, and would be sufficient for our death. Mercy snatches the sentence from Him, thus perpetually creating for us a new life. Oh, what thanks do we owe the divine mercy!

What touches sinners more than all else is that God has waited for them. "What! He has preserved my life, which I used only to offend Him!" and they shed tears of gratitude.

But what shall we say of His goodness in receiving and pardoning us? Oh, truly God's mercy is too great! If He severely reproached us for our faults, if He imposed on us public penances as did the Church in the first ages, He would still be too good in pardoning us at that price. But no reproaches. He speaks to us neither of our ingratitude, nor of our cruelty. He veils His justice, silences it, in order to show us only His Heart. He takes us in His arms, presses us to His Heart, like the Father of the prodigal, and tenderly embraces us with tears of joy. He replies not to our self-accusation, or rather, He replies: "Bring him his first robe. Put a gold

ring on his finger, and let us make merry, for my son was dead, and he is again alive."

In the world, they who solicit favors are made to wait, but Jesus forestalls us. He even gives us hope upon which we dared not count. He rouses our confidence, gives us new life. The sweetest moment of all in the life of the sinner, the most touching, that which will ever make him shed tears of joy, is the moment of his conversion, when Jesus gives him the assurance of pardon, and says to him: "Go in peace!"

He rises from agony, he resuscitates from the tomb, he is restored to life. Confession has cost, but once made, he experiences only the joys of a mother after bringing her first-born into the world. He wants only one thing, only to fall on his knees, to weep, and to say: "Lord, I have sinned! I do not deserve to be pardoned." Then God forgets all, pardons all.

Look at Our Lord during His life,—how well He knew how to pardon! The adulterous woman is there. Jesus reproaches her with nothing, but He humbles her accusers and

puts them to flight. He does not even glance at the woman, for fear of making her blush, but sends her away absolved.

And Magdalen—very far from reproaching her with her disorders, He praises her, defends her, and crowns her with this word "She hath loved much!"

And now, heir of His mercy, the minister of Jesus Christ has only one word to say to the repentant sinner: "Go in peace! You are pardoned forever."

His mercy knows no bounds. The Lord declares that He will no more remember our sins, that He will cast them behind Him into the depths of the sea, and that, were our crimes red as scarlet, He would make them white as snow in His mercy.

The glory of the divine mercy is to destroy the body of sin, and to act so powerfully that what it has effaced is gone forever. It operates so energetically that it creates in us a new heart, a new mind, a new being; and if a sinner returns to his crimes after having been once converted, he will be judged only for the sins committed since his new fall,

and not for those that have been forgiven.

But then he is more ungrateful, more guilty. That is true, and he will be punished according to the degree of his ingratitude, but not for those sins that mercy has effaced.

What can the good God do more for sinners? One might be tempted to think that He is in connivance with them, such goodness does He show them! Our Lord hides them under His mantle, covers them with His Blood, makes them enter into His wounds as into a refuge secure against irritated justice. Like a mother hiding her child from the pursuit of human justice, though even he had made an attempt on her own life, because before all else, she is his mother, so is Jesus, above all, a Saviour.

To our pardon, Jesus joins graces of ineffable sweetness. He deprives us of the painful remembrance of our sins. Instead of keeping us in sentiments of continual regret, He diminishes our sorrow, and restores our confidence. He gives peace and joy to such a degree that he who confesses in shame and tears, rises so happy after

the absolution that he is quite astonished.

In the world, a man released from prison is always marked by dishonor and a bad name. But Jesus rehabilitates those that He pardons. He treats them as if they had never offended Him, and frequently the greatest sinners become the greatest saints.

Saint Paul wrote, to the glory of mercy, that he had been a blasphemer and a persecutor, the greatest of sinners. But Our Lord called him a vessel of election.

Saint Peter received, in return for his triple denial, the triple crown of his tiara. Our Lord knows how to pardon as God.

And we ourselves, despite our sins -has He not honored us with the priesthood, the religious life, chosen graces, graces of honor? Has He not crowned us with glory and honor, and covered us with the buckler of His benevolent preference? He has forgotten all. He even forgets our present miseries, and that we still offend Him in spite of His so great love.

But it is not for us to forget! Let us live on gratitude and love for this mercy.

Let us count only on it, for it is thanks to it that we have not been condemned forever like so many others: "*Misericordia Domini quia non sumus consumpti!*" — The mercy of the Lord that we have not been consumed. "



The FAMILY of the MOST
BLESSED SACRAMENT.

IN French, we no longer make use of the word family to designate the servants of a person. We restrict that term. to the members related by blood or affinity. But the Church has preserved that signification and, at Rome, the Pontifical family comprises all officials attached to the person of the Holy Father.

Now, Our Lord has called us to be His servants, His familiars. We have come to serve His Divine Person, to the exclusion of every other function. Let us understand well this essential condition of our vocation.

All Christians are the servants of God, but some serve Him in the world according to the law of the Commandments while retaining their liberty for all other things. They give the intention to God, but reserve for themselves the action. Provided the intention refers their actions to a good end, approved by God, they may labor at their

own interests and according to their own tastes. They have a mixed end, and they labor for it at the same time. Nothing more legitimate. At certain times only, when there is question of salvation, God orders them to prefer Him to all other interests, that is when those interests are opposed to their salvation. Then they must sacrifice everything, in order to remain faithful to Him.

But Our Lord chose in the world another class of servants, who make profession of laboring only for His interests. These are religious, who take the place of the seventy-two disciples and the twelve Apostles, whom He had chosen from among all others during His lifetime

Now, among religious, some are attached to His mission, others to His Person. The former spread His teachings; the latter serve Him as a King, a royal person is served, for Our Lord still lives among us. He is in the Most Blessed Sacrament to exercise His priesthood. He is there as God and Man. Does not this Presence call for a special service, a court, a family, which has

no other occupation than to serve the great King?

Ah, well! This is what the Society of the Most Blessed Sacrament proposes to itself. By the authority of His Vicar, Our Lord has given to it this peculiar and special end, to serve the Person of Jesus Christ, to live around Him, to compose His court and His suite in such a way that we never quit Him, and that He may never appear without His servants, who have no other duty than to follow Him and serve Him.

He has called us to enter into this family of His domestics. You came preferring this noble and beautiful servitude to all the employments in the Church, to which you might have aspired for His glory. But it is all for Him, all through Him, all on account of Him. You must work for Him alone, leaving all other employments to others, living but for Him, and not for your own zeal and works. As a domestic on entering the service of His Lord, becomes the property of his master and clothes himself with his livery, so you will lose your name and personality.

You have promised this, perhaps without well comprehending to what you have engaged yourself. Now, pay strict attention.

This entire and absolute service was the condition of your admission. It ought to be the law of your life. The perfection of your sanctity is to serve. Your talents and virtues, your qualifications and your priesthood, — all ought to be confounded under the name of service and be nothing more than acts of it. You are no longer anything else than a servant, a domestic, one of the family of Our Lord in His royal Sacrament.

I will say without hesitation that the way Our Lord wants us to be with Him is like to that of the Apostles, for they, too, were, and far more than the seventy-two disciples, the family of Our Lord when living on this earth. Besides that their personal service ceased at the death of Our Lord, because they had then to scatter in order to announce His reign and found the Church, there are between their service and ours other differences which it is well to note, the better to understand how much Our Lord wants us for

Himself. exclusively for Himself in His Eucharistic life, which will end only with the world.

II. The Apostles followed Our Lord to be instructed by Him, They were pupils of His teaching and examples, and they had to study them deeply in order to repeat them to the Church and preach them everywhere.

We do not come to be instructed, but to serve Our Lord. We come but to give Him all that we have and all that we are. We come for Him, not for ourselves. No doubt. He has to instruct us, and even to teach us the manner of serving Him, for who knows anything that he has not learned from the grace of Jesus Christ? But I wish to say that the first and dominant end of our vocation is, not to come to acquire something, but to consume ourselves in His service.

The Apostles generally followed Our Lord in His missions, as well in Jerusalem as in the towns of Judea and Galilee. But He separated from them at times, and sent them, too, on missions far from Him.

As for us, we cannot separate even one moment from Our Lord; that is, under pain of failing in its end, the Society ought always to be with Him in the person of some of its members, for Our Lord cannot be exposed without adorers, and we are the adorers under obligation of attendance on Him. As in heaven, there are angels who are never sent down to earth, but who are constantly around the throne of God, so ought we always to surround His Eucharistic throne. We exist only for that. If the Eucharist were to be taken away from earth, if Exposition could no longer be carried on, the Society would have no reason for existence, because its essential end would be destroyed.

The Apostles were fed and entertained by Our Lord, but they did not feed Him. This Master furnished them with necessities, and often served them Himself.

But we, *we* both feed Him and entertain Him. It is our beautiful privilege to give Him a throne and ornaments. Those flowers, those lights, which must always adorn His throne, and which are like the rich tap-

estry that He wished to be hung in the Cenacle, are given to Him by us. If we own something, the best of it is for Him, the leavings for us. By this we afford Him the means of manifesting His royalty, and of solemnly fulfilling His office of Mediator between earth and heaven, of Ambassador from the Church to the Father.

We must add the interior ornamentation, the spiritual nourishment, for Our Lord desires that worship far more than the other. He wishes to be nourished with acts of love, faith, and reparation. All our virtues are for Him, and not for ourselves. We ought to offer Him all their merits, for He is the Master, the Owner of our soul, and all the actions of a servant are for his master. If we do not give to Our Lord this spiritual nourishment, we deprive Him of what He chiefly desires, for it is our soul that He most longs for.

Again, He expects His glory from us, and we ought to procure it by every means in our power, above all by fidelity, recollection in this service, for the good behavior

of servants is the glory of their master.

Behold in what our service before Our Lord differs from that of the Apostles. But He offers us the highest advantages, if we know how to reap them. Listen to them!

III. The Apostles became the friends and confidants of Our Lord. He had no secrets from them. "I call you not only My servants, but My friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known to you."

The Gospel relates some of the confidential communications that He made to them. Doubtless, they received many others, but they kept them, pondering them in their own heart.

Well, in the life of adoration does not Our Lord reveal to us His secrets? If we do not hear them, it is our own fault, for we do not listen. But we have an actual right to them springing from our familiarity with Jesus. The secrets that He desires to impart to us are sweeter and closer even than those that He confided to the Apostles, because they are made heart

to heart without the intermedium of the senses. Many of those secrets remained obscure to the Apostles until Pentecost. But the Holy Ghost came. He cleared away difficulties concerning the Eucharist. He inhabits that Cenacle of love. Nothing can prevent our understanding all the secrets of Our Lord, nothing but our own infidelity. But if we were faithful, we should receive more intimate communications than did the saints. When we are some time with any one, we come to know all his thoughts. All that is necessary is a persevering and earnest fidelity. We must be faithful to union with Him Saint Magdalen of Pazzi had made for herself a cell in the tribune of the church, in order never to quit Our Lord. Thus it was that the saints came to know all the secrets of His Heart.

Be interior, assiduous in your converse with Jesus, and you, too, will have His secrets. Living under the same roof breaks down all estrangement, both in good as in evil.

Samson lived a long time without reveal-

ing his secret; but he took a wife from among the Philistines. Daily intercourse pierced through all veils and, little by little, he allowed himself to be surprised. It was for his own destruction.

If we were truly men of adoration, we could touch, as it were, with the finger, the Heart of Our Lord, we could read in His Soul!

Do we not feel something when we come to adoration purified and prepared by some sacrifices that have cost? How quickly then the hour flies! It is Thabor where Jesus silently reveals Himself to your soul, and ravishes you with joy and happiness. Then you have no need of words, for Jesus speaks sufficiently. You say nothing, but you are making a sublime prayer.

This is your portion as an adorer. Why do you not cultivate it more? As I say to you often: Pray from your own soul, by your own grace and your heart of an adorer. Put aside for awhile all those books of devotion, unless sleep or sloth prevent your praying. Know your own profession. Make

use of your right as an adorer, and go to Our Lord by your position, your title of one of His household.

Moreover, the Apostles were the heirs of Our Lord. They received from Him the price of Redemption to spread it all over the world, the fruits of His Blood, His Sacraments, the power of His word, the infallibility of His doctrine, and the grace of His miracles. To-day, they are the heirs of His glory in heaven. But they were, also, the heirs of His sufferings and death.

I say that Our Lord wants to give us all that in the order of our vocation. We have not to convert the world to the Faith; our mission is connected with Our Lord's sacramental state. We ought to be apostles, ministers, instruments of the Eucharist; and as the Apostles received the grace to preach the Cross, Our Lord gives us the grace to preach the Eucharist. The Eucharist ought to be our centre, our life, our strength of action and apostolate. If a religious of the Blessed Sacrament were put under the wine-press, he should come out

a host! Our Eucharistic graces are first and foremost for the world, therefore, we expose Our Lord in the cities that people may see Him and come to adore Him.

We ought to preach the Eucharist by our works. our writings, and our words. No one ought to speak better of the Eucharist than we. We are Its religious. Who has better spoken of Our Lord than the Evangelists? They lived with Him!

Yes, no one ought to speak more or better of the Eucharist than we; not by way of boasting, but because it is our profession. It will ever be so, I hope.

I cannot understand how a religious of the Blessed Sacrament could desire to excel in any other science than that of the Eucharist. Our state is the Eucharist. If we do not know how to make everything tend to It, we have not the science belonging to our state.

Some ignore the Eucharist! they do not preach It! The Faithful complain of this, and look for those that will distribute to them this word of true life. If preachers

do not preach It, it is because their heart does not know It. If preachers would adore It more, they would preach It more, also. And yet there is no salvation but in Jesus Christ present among us.

For you who are not priests, my brethren, but who are, however, adorers, you ought to talk among yourselves of the Blessed Sacrament and of all that relates to Its honor. Speak of It before strangers, preach It in some sort in your conversation. Where is the artisan who does not frequently speak of his trade?

As Saint Paul desired to know but Jesus Christ, and Jesus crucified, so we ought to know only the Blessed Sacrament; otherwise, we are not yet in the plenitude of our grace. Remember you are called to set fire to the four quarters of the world with the burning torch of Jesus exposed on the altars!

And the miracles?—You will perform spiritual miracles. You will cure souls by virtue of the Eucharist. Oh, how powerful It is to touch, to convert, to lead back to God souls furthest removed from Him! But know

how to apply It. Show Its goodness. Draw forth from It the salutary sap and all Its virtue to cure souls. You have in the Eucharist the unique and sovereign remedy, as says the Church in the post-communion on the Feast of Saint Magdalen.

You have Our Lord for bodily cures, also. He is the divine ointment that cures every wound. Did not virtue escape from His Sacred Humanity, curing every disease? It was necessary only to touch Him to be healed. Has His power grown less? Is not contact with Him always as helpful?

I tell you that the little lamp which burns before Our Lord has never failed to cure those that, in their infirmities, have been anointed with its oil, which is faith and love.

God preserve us from those miracles in which is seen the hand of man! We must then hide, for fear they should adore us more than the Master. But you will perform miracles through Christ, through His Sacrament, if you have sufficient faith in Him. We must oblige Our Lord to manifest Himself gloriously, that all may know that it

is He who, in His great love, is hiding Himself behind those veils.

God keep us, also, from those magnificent and illustrious preachers capable of filling the world with their renown! Such men remain strangers to the knowledge of the Most Blessed Sacrament. They stammer when speaking of the Eucharist.

The science of the Blessed Sacrament will always be sufficient for your sermons, for It can never be exhausted. Study It, serve It well, love It generously, and you will find everything in the Eucharist, the fiery word, knowledge, and miracles.

Yes, even miracles. No one has ever been recommended to the Most Blessed Sacrament without receiving the grace that he asked. Our Lord does but keep His word. The first day that we placed Him upon His throne, we asked Him for what He had granted Solomon for the Temple, namely, that He would be pleased to accord the same to His sanctuaries, in order to make Himself known, and to bring to Him the whole world.

We said to Him: "Honor this house by the manifestation of Thy glory and goodness, that all may come here, and that not one of those that enter to solicit a favor may go away without being heard favorably." As for myself, I have never yet had a refusal from Our Lord.

In fine, the Apostles received the solemn promise of the kingdom of heaven, and all died martyrs. There have been few martyrs of the Blessed Sacrament, such as the young Tarcisius in the early ages, and the martyrs of Gorcum. There will be more, I hope.

At all events, there will be martyrs of love. I think that we ought to die on the prie-Dieu, at the feet of Our Lord. He who shall have fallen there, will be well received in heaven. This would be only to exchange the service of grace for the service of glory in full possession. How happy, then, we ought to be in so holy a vocation! We take the place of the Apostles around His Person, and it appears that we receive more graces, and that the effusion of His goodness is greater. We are bound to Him

as servants. He makes not a movement without us. His love wills to depend on our care and our presence.

Saint Peter showed to the Jews Calvary still reeking with the Blood of Jesus Christ; we point out the Sacrament full of life and love for men, and we give It to all.

Like us, the Apostles could not expose the Eucharist. They were even obliged to hide It, on account of the persecutions. The time for the Eucharist had not yet come. The world had to be conquered by the Cross of Jesus Christ before elevating Him on a throne to reign. But to-day, He desires to manifest Himself, He wishes to reign everywhere. The age of the Eucharist is opening. Ah! ask for the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Beg Him to form for Himself servants and Apostles of His reign of love, that He may be well-known, loved, and served by all. *Adveniat regnum tuum!*

LOVE, the PRINCIPLE of the SPIRITUAL COMBAT.

HAT must we do to belong entirely to Our Lord, and to make progress in His service?

I answer in one word: We must combat through love for Him, and in the strength of that love, everything that is opposed to His reign and to His life in us.

I. Man is faced by two laws: the love of God and the love of self. These two loves are forever at war. One of the two must be obeyed. A choice must be made of one or the other. Neutrality is impossible.

An habitually virtuous life does not end the combat. We are a balance. The more holy we become and rise toward God, the more are we combated and dragged down by self-love.

You have chosen the love of Jesus Christ. Well, then, He must be your law, your model, your centre, and your end! To live for Him, you must live of Him and by Him.

This demands that we should declare war

against the human *ego*, against self-love; that we must clothe ourselves with the strength of divine love, which is stronger than death; against ourselves, against all things. But this force must be regulated and directed. We must combat courageously and be skilful in employing the best means.

How shall we get that strength? Through Jesus Christ: *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat.*

This force is a constant necessity at every instant, never any rest. The old man is never slain. We may chain him, arrest him in one or other of his eager desires, but he will reappear in something else. We must always begin anew, always use fresh vigilance. They who do not start from this principle are already conquered by a false peace.

Strength consists in the love of God: *Fortis ut mors dilectio*. Jesus Christ must be loved sovereignly, universally, absolutely. Nothing must be put above Him, nothing on a par with Him. This demands a complete sacrifice of self-love, which is always crying out: "*I! for me!*" We must reply: "*Our*

Lord! What does Our Lord want? What does He not want?" That once known, ought to be sufficient to determine our action. His will, His glory, His pleasure, behold our law, our word of command. Well understood, the word of command insures victory.

II The first combat to which we must deliver ourselves, through the strength of the love of Jesus Christ, is in the mind; to will or not to will, to determine interiorly, to place one's soul in the state of refusal or acceptance. There all begins. The combat in action is only secondary, and its result depends on the first interior combat. God is a spirit, and our soul made to His image, is our principle, our sovereign principle and moving power. Its acts are, then, most important. They are those that are crowned or punished, for even good works, unless they spring from a pure intention, are of no worth before God. What He demands, above all, is the gift of our soul, its submission to His law. It is for this reason that the demon is constantly attacking the interior will, trying

to blind it, to weaken it, if he cannot corrupt it altogether.

Pride and the seven capital sins, are, above all, spiritual; and if we do not repulse them in our mind, we are lost. It is the mind that directs life, it is the starting-point of our actions.

Watch, then, over your thoughts, over your imagination which suggests them. Watch over all your thoughts, even over those that, having a praiseworthy end, leave, nevertheless, I know not what ill-defined disquietude. Watch! for in mental combats, even peevishness, a single voluntary pause in the struggle, means defeat, and we are caught. One instant is sufficient for either defeat or victory.

Know how to say *yes* or *no*; no examining, no hesitation. Be not of those loitering, misty, muddy minds that want to see how far their evil thoughts will carry them, that want to analyze them, that pause only when the case becomes grave, and that rouse themselves only after being wounded. Refined souls perceive the evil at its first appearance. When a thought goes so far as to creep into

your mind, you are already conquered. Some want to know how it will turn out, they want to enjoy it just a little. The whole of it? Oh, no, but only the least bit of it, like one who would not dishonor herself, but who would allow herself to be flattered, who would like to know how far she is loved, — she is already lost!

We amuse ourselves with the evil thought by half-glances, half-consent. Is it any wonder that our conscience is always troubled? Remember that the most frequent sins are those of the mind, of the imagination, of pride, vanity, impatience, or of interior sensuality, for we have not the opportunity to sin materially, nor would we go so far!

If our adorations are so badly made, if we experience nothing in them, it is because our poor mind is harassed by all kinds of natural, human, frivolous, or bad thoughts, which we habitually entertain there. It has no longer the strength, the courage to look up to Heaven.

III. The second combat is that of the heart. The heart is a blind faculty, which

readily attaches itself to everything that is allowed to touch it.

The good attracts wherever it is seen, and it is very quick to attach to itself souls in whom is found piety, above all, unctuous piety joined to an expansive nature.

It is very dangerous to converse even with human angels. They have everything to attract our heart, one same love, one same piety, an identical fund of good, which creates purely natural sympathy. The devil makes use of this to distract us from the soul to the senses, from the things of God to the things of man. Water and earth are two very pure elements. Mix them together, and they become mud.

One suspects no danger, because that person is so good, so devoted at heart to the good God. He assures himself at any rate and silences prudential fear by the thought of his own good intentions. In times of sadness, above all, in trials interior or otherwise, they look to one another for kind words, for consolation. They love to encourage one another, to hear one another say that he or she is

good, that he has zeal, virtue, that he succeeds. They love to receive grateful acknowledgments for the good they have really done each other, — and here lies the danger.

Accustomed to burn with the love of God, and feeling that flame no more, one cannot support the privation. He must pour out that heart which is accustomed to do so. The bosom of God being closed, he pours it into that of the creature, and all very holily, without intending any evil, without even seeing it very clearly, or, at least, without wishing to confess it even to himself. Oh, to what that often leads! How easily he falls from God to the creature, from supernatural love to natural love!

You must, then, act energetically against this inclination, these natural sympathies of the heart. Take it into your hands, shut it up, and let no one occupy it naturally any more than your thoughts. Give it entirely to God and to Him alone. Let no one penetrate into it, not even for a moment; otherwise, you will have tempests and thunderbolts, and you risk being submerged.

God demands of you your heart. He wishes it absolutely. If you refuse it to Him, you refuse Him everything, and there can no longer be union between you and Him. The heart is our whole self, our joys, our trials, our affections. God wishes all these, or nothing. When there is question of final love, there is none to share with the neighbor. God wants our whole heart, and consents to divide it with no one. Certainly, it is not too great! Give it to Him whole and entire. If you break it into parts, know that the creature will always get more than the Creator.

You should no longer love any one with a love purely personal. You should no longer do for him what affords you pleasure of which he is the end. None of your sympathies, none of your affections may henceforth be given to the creature, may rest in him, otherwise you belong not to Our Lord. You are only a pagan in religion, for a pagan is one who adores the creature.

Shall I, then, no longer love my neighbor? — Supernaturally, yes! with a love that rests not in him but goes to God in him. That

is well. But with a final love, which gives itself, no! You will give to the neighbor the acts and the fruits of charity; but the heart, the tree that produces them, Our Lord alone wants to possess. You will still be a son, you will communicate flames to your relatives and friends; but the furnace, for God alone.

See how far that goes! If any one loves you naturally, on account of your qualities, you should say to him " I know you not! You are deceiving yourself in attaching yourself to me. I no longer have a natural existence. I have given my person and my heart to Jesus Christ: He alone lives in me. You would make me a man again? —Never! I want no more to be *I myself*, and *you*, you love this *I!* I want no longer to be treated as one who belongs to himself. who can give and receive. Seek in me Jesus Christ, for it is He whom I have chosen to be the Master of all that I am, of all that I have. I am now only a member of which He is the only Head, a servant who has no longer a name nor an indepen-

dent life, and who can receive nothing but for his Master. I wish, then, no longer to be esteemed or loved personally, I want no longer to be the object of anything whatsoever."

Do not forget this, for you will be pursued by the esteem, the admiration, and the love of pure souls, angels of this earth, on account of your sublime vocation and your glorious ministry around the most Blessed Sacrament. They will desire, at least, to see you, hoping to derive from your presence some great good for themselves. They will try to speak with you and listen to you, and they will carry away your least words with emotion. If you lend yourselves to that, you will be unfaithful to your Master, you will be usurping His place.

You, adorers and servers of Jesus Christ annihilated, you take His glory, that glory and that love which He expects for the magnificent favors He has shown you, and you crown yourselves with them? You receive those homages to which He alone has a right? You are robbers of the sanctuary, and you profane the dignity of the Eucharistic

and religious vocation. You are aiming at being gods, and you are serving Our Lord in order to elevate yourselves at His expense! Woe to you!

If you do not comprehend all that I am saying to you, you will make the experience of it when you shall have had some success in the good that you do. But notice whether some are not already running after you, whether they are not around you too much. Take care of allowing yourself to be put, like Dagon, in place of the Ark. Like that idol, you will be broken by the wrath of the Lord.

IV. There still remains the combat of the will, of the will that acts. That will of the old man must be mortified. It is always trying to rebel. Crush it. It is always saying: « It is enough », or else, « After awhile » Take hold of that will, and pit lessly immolate it at every moment. Contradict it in everything that it wants to do. Here it is that a man must hate his soul to possess it, and lose it to gain it. This is the sacrifice of the wole man.

A man cannot find in self a love greater than self. It would be contrary to reason that an effect should be greater than its cause. Seek, then, a love that comes from on high, from Jesus Christ, for it alone can arm us to struggle against self.

This combat against nature in the mind, the heart, and the will, must last as long as our life, as long as ourselves. Yes, we shall die struggling.

It is hard, but we reach it by the love of Our Lord. The only thing to be done is to deal it a great blow in the beginning. That will be not only the death-blow, but also the blow of victory. If you do that, you will be very happy, because from that instant you shall have lost self and found God.



The SPIRIT of PENANCE.

*Durus est hic sermo, et quis potest
eum audire ?*

This is a hard saying and, who
can take it ?

THUS exclaimed the Pharisees when Our Lord set forth to them the Mystery of the Eucharist, and demanded of them the submission of their Jewish repugnances to the Faith of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps, you also say: "If constant mortification is the condition of the religious life, it is too hard."

True, it is hard, and there are few who persevere in it and become saints. They mortify themselves for a time while the passions are still to be feared; and when peace reigns they cease to do so. From this it comes that there are so many of merely ordinary virtue, and that they never rise above the vulgar level. Sloth leads to that state. Now we are full of fervor, but the Retreat is not sufficient to form us to a habit and, when it

is over, we fall back to where we were before.

I. How ward off this danger? By asking of God the spirit of penance. It is absolutely necessary to acquire the spirit of penance. Without it you will effect nothing lasting. You will fall back into tepidity and, after the Retreat, you will be more unhappy than before, because you shall have to reproach yourself with having lost great graces.

What is the spirit of penance? It is the constant will to mortify one's self in everything as soon as the occasion presents itself, and of seeking that occasion should it fail to come.

There are some moments for corporal mortification, but there are none marked out for that of the spirit. We make use of some corporal mortification in the time of temptation, of seductive dangers, to expiate some fault, or when we are seized with a strong desire of pleasing God. But we may have the spirit of penance in everything, carry it about with us and apply it to everything, because it is an all-embracing desire. On

that account, it is the perfection of mortification.

Ask it of God with earnestness. Exercise yourself in it during your Adorations and Communions. Beg for it incessantly. Make of it a general intention which will embrace your whole life, and which may be, as it were, the seal of all your resolutions. Make also, a particular intention by which you will determine upon certain acts of the day to which you will especially apply it. Hesitate not even to perform corporal penance to obtain this spirit, which will make of your entire life a holocaust offered to the glory of God, as was the life of Our Lord.

For the practice of this virtue, offer to God all that He will send you in the way of suffering and contradiction, and be faithful to those bodily privations recommended by the saints, and which form, as it were, an integral part of sanctity. Practise them to this end in the refectory, on your couch, in prayer and in labor, and in the secret of your cell.

But if you habituate yourself to offer to Our Lord through love your legitimate joys,

even your spiritual ones, they will form a bouquet. This is the true mortification of love, the most perfect spirit of penance.

There are two ways of honoring Our Lord by penance; the one is inspired by negative love, the other by positive love. By the first, we prevent evil or we correct it. It is necessary, but it makes us act only through the strict duty of Christian justice. For the practice of this kind of penance, it suffices to have a conscience and to know one's self to be a sinner. This is rigorous reparation. It would be a very unfortunate thing not to have sufficient love to mortify one's self in this way.

But the penance that springs from positive love is what I counsel you, what I desire for you. It is more noble. It is not satisfied with paying its debts, but it gives over and above of all that it owns. Animated by this love, we do not mortify ourselves to avoid hell, but to please God. We deprive ourselves of what we might lawfully get. It is the sacrifice of filial love. It applies itself to everything, finding in all things matter

from which to cull some privation to offer at once to the Well-Beloved.

By this loving mortification, we make self the end of nothing. We refer to God all praise, even that which might be justly ours. We desire nothing for self. This is not that false, worldly humility which makes a semblance of turning away from the praises that are given it, but which in reality refuses them only to have them repeated with more earnestness. No, on certain occasions, we must know how to accept eulogium and how to be silent. That is a great sacrifice of humility.

In like manner, you would like to obtain permission for something that pleases you, and you want to demand it at once. But you defer asking, in order to mortify your will so desirous of its own good. This is mortification of love.

Again, you are at Adoration, and you experience great joy. You might, indeed, enjoy it, but you prefer to sacrifice it to Our Lord, and you begin to meditate on His Passion. Oh! this is the most agreeable thing you

can offer Him, for is there anything sweeter and more lawful than the spiritual joys of prayer?

On the contrary, you are in aridity and, having done all that you could to remove the causes that keep you there by your own fault, perhaps, it continues. That is a suffering for you. You might take a book in order to go out of yourself and distract your mind from the weight that overwhelms it, but you prefer, for the love of Our Lord, to accept that state with resignation. Oh, how satisfied Our Lord would be with that! — And you, also, in the depths of your soul, although perhaps you may not be conscious of it.

If you possess the spirit of this loving mortification, you will not be disquieted at not having the other virtues. In it you practise them all, for it is perfection in action, following you everywhere, immolating you everywhere in the most excellent way to the good pleasure of God.

He who mortifies himself through justice obtains peace. He who adds to this the mor-

tification of love obtains joy and a great increase of happiness. No one is more happy, more joyous than the most mortified religious.

To love God above everything and for Himself is a certain sign of the true love of God. The mortification of simple penitence through justice does not prove that a man loves God more than himself. It touches not the interior, it is satisfied with what is rigorously necessary; he may be outwardly very obedient in all that is commanded, and very disobedient interiorly.

The mortification of love immolates the interior. It goes straight to God, sacrificing self only to please Him and to avenge His rights upon itself. It executes against itself, through love of Him and for His glory, acts of justice, and it is its own purgatory. It does not wait till chastisement is imposed upon it, it anticipates it. It desires God for Himself, and never asks anything of Him for self, unless ever to love Him more.

Ah, what a grand way to approach God! Such a one has ever the fire of love in hand

to destroy, to consume all that is opposed to the life of God and His good pleasure in him. He disappears in order to make God increase and appear more. God becomes the only end to which all is sacrificed. This is a treasure that you hold in your own hands. Recognize it and profit by it. Study it, penetrate into its depths. Let it become the frequent subject of your examens.

In the morning, foresee the mortifications of the day. In the evening, if you have practised them, thank God for it, or ask pardon for having been too indolent in doing so. Measure all things by this standard. Here lies the true secret of spiritual advancement.

If you take not my word for this marvelous virtue, try it yourselves, for a time, at least; and when you shall have had a taste of it, ah! you will not give it up. You must become convinced of it, enthusiastic over it, for to do anything well, to arrive at the possession of a virtue, one must first esteem it, then admire it, then love it passionately. The will and the body will perform easily what the mind judges good and the heart greatly desires.

Cultivate, then, the spirit of penance. Mortify yourselves in everything and everywhere, in body and soul, in mind and heart, through love for Our Lord Jesus Christ. Ah! I would that these words were fire and engraved with a red-hot iron in your heart! Look not at the pain in them, but at the unction. The Cross is more of a consolation than a punishment. The saints understood it, and therefore they embraced it with such love and joy.



The MORTIFICATION of the SENSES.

E have said that it is absolutely necessary to give one's mind to God, that the most dangerous struggles are those of the mind, that tepidity of life has its source in sloth and indecision in choosing God and rejecting evil. We have said that, at once and unhesitatingly, thoughts that have even the appearance of evil must be banished.

We have said that it is necessary to give our heart to God, that He exacts it absolutely for Himself alone; but that, in order that the gift of our heart may be constant, we must offer it through the love of generosity and sacrifice. This love is the spirit of penance, the mortification of love. It is the true way to sanctity. Without it, all the rest is nonsense, ways more or less flowery intended to amuse. All other means are child's play in the service of God.

There is no question of that. We must be serious. May God preserve us from the friv-

olous! We can make nothing out of ^o them. Levity is, as it were, an oil that floats over their mind and heart, preventing grace from penetrating into them. No; have one thought, one very definite aim, and tend thereto by serious means suitable to conduct you to it.

I. Now, to come to belonging entirely to Our Lord, one must absolutely give Him both body and senses, and for that he must become their master. Cost what it may, we must have in our pocket the keys of our own house. We must keep the body under the empire of duty, under the empire of the will and of the grace of God.

The body has neither intelligence nor faith, therefore must the will subdue and lead it. The body is an animal which can be reasoned with only by blows. It knows neither sobriety nor honor, and it cares not for virtue. Of its nature, it is disorderly and tends obstinately to its own satisfaction. It desires sensible good, its own particular good, and with all the violence of concupiscence it inclines to its own enjoyment. If reason opposes it, it tries to prevent it and attain the object of

its desires in spite of it. It is a rude combat; and if, unhappily, the mind is in connivance with it, we are lost.

It is for this reason that interior mortification is not sufficient. The body, which has the power to betray us, must also be mortified.

Perhaps, if you have a very strong will and a very great love, you will be able to get along without that, but as a general rule, it is better to have good ramparts well guarded and gates well closed.

The evil man ought to be continually repressed, kept down, and mortified, for he has only brutish instincts. The mind ought to be directed and elevated toward God, the body restrained and mortified. The spirit should not be fettered, for fear of stifling it, but it should be constantly directed to God. Prayer, which is essentially a function of the mind, is denominated the elevation of the soul to God. The mind has need of light, the heart of nourishment, the body of repression. It must be conquered and chained.

The will which is the *yes* or the *no*, which forms the royalty of man, ought to have for only end the will of God, to which it should be constantly united and submissive. The mind sees, the heart labors, the will decides. The will ought to be mistress of both mind and heart. It is the sovereign, and it is able for all with the grace of God. It is admirable, this Christian will which, clothed with the strength of God Himself knows no obstacles.

God is with the will to vanquish, when the will is with God in submission to Him.

The will should always rule over the body and the senses. It is a difficult and fortunate thing to become master of one's body. On account of contact with the world, there are some discouraging difficulties, and it is rare for one to become absolute master of his senses. For a time, yes; but surprise awaits you, seizes you when you think least of it. Occasions, attractions are so numerous, so subtle! They entangle you 'on all sides. Then, some day, comes an occasion in which one feels all his weakness returning; like the

domestic animal, very gentle ordinarily, but which, when roused to passion, no longer recognizes his master.

This it is that discourages converted sinners. They are faithful for a long time, then suddenly they feel the most violent attacks, and sometimes experience heavy falls. The heart and the soul were, indeed, converted, but the body had not changed.

To love God, to pray, to make resolutions, are good and necessary. But still more is it necessary to keep your slave in subjection. As long as a man is not master of his own body, he is neither holy nor truly pious. He cannot produce good acts, he is not in a state of solid and lasting piety.

Oh, how hard it is to arrive at the death of the body! A man consents to the sacrifice of the mind and the heart— but the body, — oh, not so readily! Examine your life, and you will see that your sins come through the senses. They attack the soul, but by means of the body. That is easily understood. Our soul is united and bound to the senses in such a way that it can do nothing without

their help. But they make use of that to betray it as often as they can, to injure it instead of serving it. They do everything to attract it to themselves. And so, the body is the irreconcilable enemy of grace, which wills to sanctify our soul and unite it to God, separate it from things terrestrial to attach it to things celestial. The body escapes all vigilance, corrodes all bonds. It knows its power and still more, it has its allies even in the mind, the soul, and the heart, for since sin entered the world, the whole man, both interior and exterior, is wounded and inclined to evil.

By the original fall, reason in the midst of the senses has but feeble light and, again, it is dulled by the bad use we have, perhaps, made of it. It disappears before the fire of the senses, which possess two-thirds of man. If you do not begin the work of your sanctification by mortifying them in order to reduce them, you amuse yourself, your time is lost.

Recall what we have said of the mortification of love. The first victim it ought to sacrifice to God is the body.

In all his epistles, Saint Paul preaches the crucifixion of the flesh, of the senses, of the old man. He must be reduced to slavery, for never will he who has not entirely conquered, be virtuous. In that consists the exterior exercise and the proof of the virtue of mortification.

II. There is a heresy current in the world, which is making fearful ravages in morals. They say: "There is no original sin. The body, as well as the mind is in its rectitude. Then, all their instincts are good, and they ought to be satisfied." Thus do they legitimatize the most deplorable excesses. If there has been no fall, of what good is reparation? By this reasoning, they deny the necessity of Christian mortification and of even simple moral restraint.

This error has glided even into piety. It has invaded the direction of souls by veiling itself a little, naturally, and by not avowing its principles so openly, for that would make souls recoil. But you read books, you hear certain confessors saying that exterior mortification is not necessary. If it is proper for religious,

it is not so for people of the world. Fasts, discipline of the body — they are good for the cloister. It is better to conduct souls by sweetness. — To this I reply: Sweetness belongs to God. It is for Him to cause it to be felt in the soul as an encouragement and recompense. But it is for man to coöperate; it is his to mortify and crucify self. He has been condemned to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. The earth is cursed for him, creatures are for him a continual occasion of sin. He must separate from them; he must bid adieu to them, that he may not rest in them preferring them to God. How can he reach this point but by mortification of the senses?

Remark that man is constantly attracted to his body. The vices of the soul lay hold on the body through the senses. Become corporal, they are more tenacious, more guilty. If their exterior life is not supported, they will die more quickly.

Thus pride which is not allowed to manifest itself by vanity, by honors and first places does not last. By rejecting eulogiums and

exterior marks of vanity, pride is stifled in itself

The aim of the avaricious man is, also, the body. He amasses wealth only to enjoy it some day, when he shall have acquired enough.

How many people live only to eat, and disfigure in themselves the image of Jesus Christ to take that of one of the vilest animals!

What shall I say of the other vices, of anger, sloth, and, above all, of the shameful vice? The body is the field of their enjoyment. They nourish themselves for it, they live on its sensations. They have all struck deep roots into it.

Listen to Saint Paul demanding the chastisement of the members. He speaks of chastising his body, that body of death, and of the Christian he gives this beautiful definition: " He is a man crucified in his flesh, and living of the virtue of the love of God. " Here is mortification, and for all!

Saint Paul is only echoing the Precursor, upon whose lips Our Lord placed these first words: Do penance and abandon your evil ways. Bring forth worthy fruits of penance,

namely, expiate by humiliations, fasting, and ashes the sins of your senses. May we behold these fruits as we have seen the crimes!

The Church, instructed by Our Lord, exacts corporal penance: fasting, public prayers, solemn expiation. These authorities speak loudly enough against the teachers of sensualistic piety.

III. Corporal mortification is, then, lawful and necessary. It is for all times, for all persons. Practise it, for you have need of it. Here are some new motives:

Our body is evil, infected by sin, filled with bad inclinations. It must be purified, restored to health by blows, as the tempest purifies the atmosphere; as the sick, by certain strong doses, are made to cast off the bad humors that disable them.

We have sinned not only in our origin, but voluntarily by our acts and senses. They must be renewed in the mortification of Jesus Christ, for we have corrupted a nature already vitiated.

Every sin deserves punishment equal to its malice. Voluntary reparation ought, then,

to be equal to the punishment demanded by justice. If we have committed one single mortal sin, we have deserved hell. How shall we discharge the debt of hell??

Should we have only venial sins, how compensate for the purgatorial flames?

God has pardoned us, it is true, and you enter at once into the joy of the angels, as if you had never sinned. But satisfaction — what of that? We should have our sins ever before our eyes, in order to repair them, for true conversion consists not only in sinning no more, but in repairing for the past. Let us purify ourselves, or God will, indeed, purify us by His chastisements either in this life or in the other.

Because we do it not, He frequently stretches out His own hand. See, you say, that person. How he suffers, how he is persecuted! He does not deserve it. It is possible that that may be a trial of love, but it is often an expiation of sin. God has made him do penance, because he forgot what he owes.

Temptations assail you and make you suffer.

They are long and grievous. It is a true punishment, you say.

But have you ever yielded to them? Expiate now God is inflicting on you the chastisement that you yourself have not had the courage to undergo

But in such a case, is it, then, good to have temptations? Yes, it pays past debts and keeps one in humility. It forces one to do penance, to struggle when he would like to be in peace.

There is, above all, a kind of trial which brings with it much suffering, and that is the persecutions and calumnies coming from the devout. Nothing gives so much pain, because their virtue makes you think they have cause for what they do and say, and that it is God Himself who is angry with you. Sometimes He permits the best of people not to see clearly, and to persecute you in spite of your innocence, in order to purify you more.

Sickness and physical sufferings are, again, corporal expiation that God imposes. Do not seek them, no more than temptations and persecutions. But if they come, thank the

mercy of God for them, which makes you do penance now to spare you later.

Lastly, it is not sufficient to embrace works of corporal mortification, because one has sinned. That is only simple justice. It is not enough. If you want to do only that, you need not have taken the trouble to come into religion. And, then, this penance is all for ourselves. It is to make us shun future pains and procure our salvation.

We should, moreover, practise the mortification of Jesus Christ, who chose suffering not through necessity, but through love, because He saw in it the means of more clearly proving His love for His Father and for us. We should consider this mortification as a virtue to be acquired, and say: " Even had I no sin to expiate, I wish to mortify myself, because Jesus Christ has given me the example. He was scourged and crucified, He suffered hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness joyfully for the love of God, His Father. I want to be like Him. "

Behold the beautiful, the true motive for mortification! Let us embrace it, let us clothe

ourselves with the garments of Jesus Christ, in which alone we can please the Heavenly Father, namely, mortification and the Cross.

IV. How shall we practise this virtue? By never enjoying anything, by depriving our body of the pleasure it desires, by never seeking our own satisfaction in ourselves nor in the things around us, by never looking for the approbation and the praise of men.

We may practise mortification by denying ourselves in eating, not so much in quantity as in quality, and embracing with permission the corporal mortifications and the humiliations so loved by the saints. Rest assured, you will be able to do all that without falling sick.

Do it then. Without it, all your professions of love for God are but illusions and, did God not know our ignorance, they would be insolence.

Some say that it is hard to mortify one's self always. I believe it. One must carry his cross every day, have his sword constantly in hand. But we do not discharge debts with sentiment and loving words, but with penance. That is the coin of Calvary.

First of all, we should perform all the mortifications of our state in life. They absolutely oblige, and above all others. It would be wrong to neglect them for others. Then again, we must seek occasions, be ingenious in punishing one's self and immolating one's body to God by sacrifice incessantly renewed.

Had we no love for mortification, we might have room to despair. Some seek their own ease above everything else. They allow the bell to ring without at once obeying it. They have always too much to do when obedience prescribes something. They are slow in rising, they lie some moments longer in bed. What advancement do they make? They arrive after the Office has begun. The devil leads them in and presents them to Our Lord, saying mockingly: "Behold a slave who wants to be fed. That is the reason that he attends the Office. But I have robbed Thee of all the merit that he might have offered Thee."

Oh, it is a shame to be so wanting in exactitude toward Our Lord, our King!

When conversing with some one in the parlor, they remain a few moments after the

bell has rung, in order not to appear impolite, or to multiply words of regard. But the good God who is calling you? — Ah, well, He can wait!

Is it possible? Are not the passions terrible when we reason with them? And yet, I am speaking the truth, though not the whole truth.

And then, after all that, we want to be treated as princes. Nothing must be wanting to us. We must be served promptly and comfortably. The religious life is a Calvary and a school of suffering, but some enter to make in it a bed of idleness. As soon as anything is wanting to them, they become impatient, they murmur. They speak of their rights. They have them always in hand as a buckler. Ah, then know that, as religious, you have a right only to bread and water and a camp-bed. You are sinners, and you have deserved to be arraigned at the judgment-seat of God. The Rule mitigates that, because it is a mother; but by rights, that is what you deserve.

And, in fact, before entering religion, were

we all so well-off that nothing was ever wanting to us? Perhaps, we came from a family of the working-class, or we were shepherds. In our childhood, we had to work in order to help gain bread for the family. Are you come into the religious life to be better treated than in your own home? A hundred times better would it have been for you to have remained there!

Well then, we must begin! It is a serious thing. Regard not the form of my words, but their meaning. We do not say it everyday nor in public, because he who would do so, would begin his own condemnation. But it is the truth.

Come, then! The religious life is a death, but one that gives life. Understand it in this way, let the love that crucified Our Lord fasten you to the Cross with Him.



The GIFT of SELF.

I.  O attain to the virtue of strength and Christian mortification there is a means, the most powerful of all, and it alone can perfect all the others, and that is, the love of Our Lord.

The means of acquiring a virtue must be in accordance with prudence, but elevated by love. Saint Paul reached at once the perfection of Jesus Christ by the love of the Cross. God cast him to the earth to manifest Himself to him in His love; and in this single word, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." He revealed to him all the love of the Redemption, of Calvary, of His death. Paul understood all, and he went away repeating the great word: "*Dilexit me, et tradidit semetipsum pro me*—He loved me and delivered Himself for me."

After that, he looked upon the greatest sacrifices as small. He accepted all. He delivered himself to Jesus Christ, saying that he lived no longer, but that Jesus alone lived in him; that for him there were no

longer either parents or friends, or Jews, or Gentiles, or life, or death, but in all things Jesus Christ: *Omnia et in omnibus Christus.*

Listen to him: "Since Jesus Christ has loved me, I will love Him in spite of everything, and nothing shall hinder me from loving Him! The things of time, the spiritual powers, hunger, nakedness, the sword, death, — nothing shall separate me from the charity of Jesus Christ by whom we triumph over all things, *Sed in his superamus propter eum qui dilexit nos.* "

But for that he regards the love of Jesus Christ as belonging to him, as personal. He makes himself the end of that love: "He loved *me*, *Paul*. He loved me to such a degree that He delivered Himself to death for me: *Dilexit me!* I shall love Him, also, and I shall know only Him, and Him crucified. "

Jesus Christ has loved us also, *us*. The proof is that He has called us to the priesthood and the religious life. He has given us this grace of preference, and daily He renews and increases it by fresh graces. After dying

on the Cross for every one of us, He dies daily in this Sacrament, and again, for each one of us. If He had not died, He would now mount Calvary to save us; and if He had not² already instituted the Blessed Sacrament, He would institute It for each one of us. Does not Saint Paul say: "*He loved me*" concentrating in himself alone all the love of Our Lord? He is right, and we ought to do as he.

That the love of God may enkindle our soul, it must be concentrated entirely on self, as in a powerful lens..

Redemption is for all of us, but it is entirely for each one in particular. It is like the sun which, shining at one and the same time on all creation, does not give you less of its light and heat than if it shone upon you alone.

A man is of no value compared with Jesus Christ, it is true, nor does he merit that personal and individual gift of the Son of God. But if Jesus Christ wills to love him more than he deserves, if He wills to show Him excess of love in order to triumph over his heart (for the Cross and the Eucharist

are, both excesses) who will prevent Him? He is infinite in His love and in His gifts, and the Infinite in giving Himself neither divides nor diminishes Himself.

Let us now look at what regards our vocation. The Eucharist — is It not for you all entire? The Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament — is it not you who make it? The Church has given It into your keeping and, as long as there will be a religious of the Blessed Sacrament able to kneel at the prie-Dieu, solemn Exposition and Adoration will be kept for him, will belong to him.

Jesus loves you, then, in particular, and does He not come every day entirely to you and for you alone?

II. How respond to this personal, individual love, which leads Jesus Christ to give Himself entirely to each one? Gift calls for gift. Since Our Lord gives Himself with His graces, give Him not only your works, but yourselves.

To understand how you ought to make this gift, look at your Model, Jesus Christ Himself giving Himself to His Father to be His servant.

The Eternal Word came upon this earth to offer to the Father a perfect sacrifice. Now, He begins by sacrificing to Him the Humanity that He took and united to Himself, by depriving it of its natural and human personality, thereby reducing it to a state of dependence, slavery, and absolute sacrifice. But the human Soul of Jesus, the Sacred Humanity, accepts lovingly and for life the privation in which it is. It manifests it by His words and acts. In effect, open the Gospel, and there you see Our Lord refusing, as Man, to direct Himself, to act or judge by Himself and, above all, to receive the glory and honor that people wished to give Him.

It is as Man united to the Person of the Word, that He says: "The Son of Man can do nothing but what He has seen the Father do." "I do all that pleases My Father." "I seek not My own glory, but the glory of Him who sent Me." And again: "Why call me good? One is good, — God."

Whence this insistence in attributing nothing to Himself, in wishing nothing for Himself? It is because to direct, to lead, to receive

glory and affection, belong to man's personality, it is the characteristic of the human *ego*. Now, Our Lord having sacrificed His in order to depend only on the Divine Person of the Word and live only by It, wishes to be faithful to His sacrifice, and to prove that It alone is His principle and His end.

By this, Our Lord is in a state of perpetual servitude, the state of victim and holocaust, since as Man He has sacrificed what most contributes to the pride and glory of man, the human *ego*, the human personality.

Thence it follows, that His sufferings and His Passion are but the execution, the accomplishment of the first sacrifice that He made of Himself to His Father on coming into this world: "Burnt offering and sin-offering Thou didst not require, then said I: Behold I come. "

But what is most marvelous is that this state of absolute dependence remains in Our Lord, and will eternally remain in Him. In the Blessed Sacrament as in heaven, wherever Jesus Christ is, the Father beholds Him sacrificed to Himself, always dependent on the per-

sonality of the Word and offering Himself in sacrifice to His Infinite Majesty.

It is, moreover, in the Eucharist that Our Lord best manifests that interior sacrifice by obeying, by depending on all priests, and even upon all the Faithful, and by His state of exterior annihilation.

Behold how Our Lord was the Servant of His Father, how He gives Himself to Him, to save us and perfectly to glorify Him.

Well, you can imitate Him in this gift of Himself. What do I say? That is the very grace of your vocation.

These words of your Rule: "They shall serve by the gift of themselves," which are written in its most important chapter, since it treats of Adoration, — these words place you under the obligation of imitating Our Lord in His sacrifice of personality.

True, you cannot destroy, really sacrifice your human personality. The Word alone, because He was God, had this power over the humanity to which He united Himself in order to make of it His victim; but you can and you ought to imitate by grace and

virtue what He did in reality by His power

How can you do that? By making to Our Lord the entire and absolute gift of your personality; by taking Him, in this consecration, as your Master, not for some passing acts, but forever and for everything.

For that you must renounce the right to be your own guide, giving to Him and to Him alone the right to direct you, and laboring only for Him alone. You must be unreservedly submissive to His will over you and all that concerns you, in soul and body, in the present and in the future. You must cease to be a person who possesses and governs himself, for you are no longer but a servant, a member, an instrument led by Our Lord alone. He will manifest to you His will by the law of your state, obedience to your Superiors, the movements of His grace and the events of every instant.

Again, He should be your only end. Your gifts and virtues, your studies and labors, should be only for Him, and in all things you should have in view but His good pleasure and glory. Your actions and your sufferings,

your merits,—all ought to be remitted into His hands, as to Him who possesses you and by whom you act. Even the gifts of grace and glory you ought to desire only as means of loving and glorifying Him more. The gift of perfect love is that which loves God for Himself and because He deserves it, although there might be no other reason for loving Him. In this we do not exclude the other motives of love, but we propose to ourselves the most perfect.

Do you comprehend how beautiful is the grace granted you by your vocation, of placing yourself under the obligation of making to God a sacrifice of personality analogous to that which Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, makes?

I say that it is the proper and distinctive mark of our vocation. As the Franciscan is distinguished from all others by his poverty and the renunciation of all propriety, as each Order has its own dominant virtue, so renunciation not only of what we have, but of what we are, our own personality, — behold the characteristic of our vocation.

The religious state does not exact this formal gift. It is sufficient to sacrifice one's will, one's goods, and one's body by the three vows. But your vocation demands still more, that we should give our personality.

We should be, remember it well, but human shadows, like the species of which the Blessed Sacrament is the living and personal subject.

This gift is nothing new in itself. Saint Paul says: " I live no more, but Jesus lives in me. " Many saints have taught it, and all have practised it; for how reach sanctity without giving one's self entirely to Jesus Christ to be absorbed by Him?

But it is new, inasmuch as we propose it as the dominant virtue of a whole Society. Practised by those that have a special attraction for it, this gift has never been proposed as a general and universal law, as the starting-point and the foundation of religious perfection for a whole body. It is looked upon as the consummation of sanctity and the portion of only a few. But the *Imitation* says: " A spontaneous oblation of thyself

into the hands of God ought to precede all thy works, if thou wouldst obtain liberty and grace" (Bk. IV, c. 8).

It is for this reason that we propose it as the elementary means of holiness for all, as the very key of Eucharistic perfection, whose whole effort will afterward be to render that gift always more complete and more pure.

We do so, because we understand that it is the best manner of participating in Our Lord's state of adoration in the Blessed Sacrament, in which He adores His Father by His personal annihilation. Let us adore Him, then as Himself, and with Him the Father, by the annihilation of our personality.

Here lie your grace and your virtue. It is for you and for such souls in the world as have the attraction to the Blessed Sacrament. Study it and, if you understand it well, you will open a new way in piety, not in itself, but in its practice. It is the grace of sanctity by the Eucharist.

III. But as Our Lord has manifested the gift that He has made of Himself to His Father by His life of continual sacrifice, so

once given to Him, you ought like Him, for love and with joy, embrace the Cross and the death of the Cross. As this gift can be made only by love, so it is by love that you ought to sacrifice self to realize it.

Our Lord never took any natural pleasure; but in everything He sought the good pleasure of His Father. Behold true love! And I tell you that, if you do not love Our Lord, you will not love His Cross. You may perform crucifying acts for some moments but you will not live in the state of one crucified, and you will not persevere. You will do what is just necessary to be saved; but you will not serve God, you will not glorify Him in the way by which He calls you to do so.

Love Him, then, and suffer for Him, but only because He has loved you. When something presents itself to be done, examine how Our Lord did it, enter into His intentions, and do it as He did. You know His life.

If it is an action of which the Gospel makes no mention, ask yourself: How would Our Lord have done this? Consult your grace; His will in you, and act accordingly. In

this way, you will have a model to reproduce. You will be united to Him in action as an instrument in the hand that guides it. You will be in His company. You will make one with Him, — He the Head and the Chief, you the member and the servant.

But try always to please Him at any cost. To imitate, is good; to give pleasure is more perfect. Do not be satisfied with what He exacts, but as soon as you think that something would please Him, do it.

Love every one according to your grace and your state. Young people love more with the heart and through the virtue of gratitude; the more mature through positive virtue and reason; and old men through the sacrifice of resignation, for all are deserting them. Love Him, then, according to your grace and your age, only love Him more than everything and all others. The recompense of your sacrifices will be to love Him more. This is the only thing for which we ought to be eager, namely, while giving others to Him, to give ourselves

But if we love Him more, He will give

us to taste more abundantly the suavity of His love, the sweetness of His Heart, the delights of converse with Him. We love Him so little that we do not often taste these ineffable delights. Are you not humbled at experiencing nothing on your prie-Dieu? Ask the good God by incessant sacrifices, to make you feel His Heart by increasing His love in you. Endeavor to find that Heart so tender and, when you are sleeping upon His Breast, ah! remain there as long as you can, and drink at the sources of love!

If you love, you will grow in the strength and the power of mortification, you will seek for it as for something you need; but if you love little, ah, you will be little mortified! Mortification is the measure of love, the touchstone of holiness. Even if you preached magnificently and converted all the world without this virtue you are like the baptismal water which purifies the neophyte and runs off to lose itself in the piscina.

Let this mortification through love become the soul of your soul.

Love, and when some sacrifice faces you,

say: " O my God, who hast loved me so much, I will do this for Thee, to return Thee a little love! "

After this act of love, the sacrifice will no longer cost. It is already made in your will and heart.



EVERYTHING OUGHT TO
BE DONE WELL.

YOU will remark that in this Retreat I do not speak to you of Our Lord and of the Blessed Sacrament. There is a time for everything. Now there is question not of Him, but of you. This Retreat is to make you good servants of His Divine Person, by purifying you from the faults that mark your service and by acquiring the virtues that are necessary for it

To-day, we say. Everything ought to be done well. The good God must be able to say of us what they said of Our Lord: "He has done all things well — *Bene omnia fecit.*" All and each in particular. "*Age quod agis* — Do well what you do," says the *Imitation*. Every man to his own business!

All actions have a right to be performed well. The day of a religious of the Blessed Sacrament is a chain of which, in the morning, he clasps the first link to the Eucharist and in the evening the last. There ought

to be neither break nor difference neither in the metal of the links nor in their form. They ought to be all Eucharistic, made with Eucharistic grace and love, and on the model of the Eucharist. You ought to perform manual labor as well as you do Adoration or Communion, because your actions derive their merit from the Master who commands them, and for whom you are doing them.

All Our Lord's acts were divine and of infinite merit, because the Person of the Word, who directed them and appropriated them, was divine. All your actions ought to be religious and Eucharistic, done according to your grace of a Religious of the Blessed Sacrament, thence drawing their respective value.

All that you have to do here is a part of your Eucharistic service and, if you are inspired with this principle, you will no longer care for one thing more than another. All are in themselves indifferent. Their merit comes only from the will of Our Lord, who orders them by the Rule; and were you to perform an heroic action not demanded of you, instead of an ordinary and simple one prescribed you by

obedience, it would be a work of death, and God would reprove you for it. There is no good but what is commanded you for His service. Doubtless, certain actions more nearly touch His adorable Person and are done under His very eye. They are more consoling and more honorable. But to leave some employment of obedience to go to Adoration, for example, to the feet of Our Lord, would be ill-done. The seal of His will is not on that work, and He does not accept it.

II. That an action may be well done, certain special conditions are necessary for it.

In the first place, God must will it. All our acts are indifferent, and this is true, above all, for those that live under obedience. As for people in the world who retain their liberty, they should do this rather than that according to circumstances. They may dispose their life within the limits of God's law. But for us, obedience equalizes all our actions. They must, then, be performed as indicated. The Rule fixes for you the ordinary employment of your life. The living authority,

the Superior, determines the rest of your actions. In fine, the necessity of order shows you in certain cases what you ought to do.

You ought to leave everything, even your communications with God, in order to obey the Rule and your Superior. And should you receive a revelation contrary to your Rule, you should hold to your Rule and believe the marvel an illusion. God cannot speak against the Rule.

There are some who are willing to prefer their own interior sentiment to what authority prescribes, their own inspiration to that of obedience. These are protestants in the spiritual life. There are more of them in our days than ever before. When faith decreases, illusion increases.

Whoever, as an excuse for his tenacity to his own judgment and disobedience, says to you: "I am in an extraordinary, supernatural way. God Himself is ordering me to do so and so," listen patiently to him and then, without noticing what he has said, give him this reply: "*Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde*," "Learn of Me because I am

meek and humble of heart" and leave him to his pretended supernatural way.

Even if Our Lord were with you in your cell, you ought to leave it and go where you are called at the sound of the bell.

Nevertheless, there are some interior inspirations that incline to such or such a work. There are both true and false inspirations. To find out whether they come from God, consult the Rule. It is silent? Consult the Spirit about the matter. And if you want to be perfect, go ask advice and permission of your Superior. I except only prayer in the cell. To that you may give yourself up during all the time left free from special obedience.

III. To judge of the degree of goodness of our actions, let us recall this axiom.

"*Bonum ex integra causa; malum ex quocumque defectu* — For an action to be good, it ought to be good in every way; a single defect on any one point vitiates it entirely."

It is for this reason, therefore, that an action should correspond, first, to its nature; for instance, Adoration, according to the meth-

od taught you; study, according to the rules; employment, according to received custom.

It should be performed in its own time. If you yourself change the time of an action, you vitiate it. God's grace is attached to that hour. It is a divine messenger, which does not wait. For the divine Office, for example, the angel of God, the angel of prayer, comes at the beginning of it, giving to every one the grace to say it with recollection. You are not there, you will find that you will say your Office badly. If, however, obedience has detained you elsewhere, or if it is not by your own fault that you are late, Our Lord answers for you and reserves for you your grace. To make Our Lord wait, is an insult, do not forget that. Let us, then, for His sake, have a certain pride in performing our service well.

Our actions must be done in the proper place. Grace is attached to places, also. The grace is where the Rule wishes you to be, and there, too, is the glory of God. The Church attaches Indulgences to places, and obedience sanctifies them.

Our actions should be performed according to their circumstances, according to their particular manner. Do not perform magnificently an action that ought to be simple. Attend to the exterior and recognized form of every thing. Our Lord's service is composed of acts whose form is prescribed. Hold to that, for it is the plan of your obedience.

Again, to our actions, we must give a soul, and that is, purity of intention. Perform your actions neither through pride if you succeed, nor through vexation if you do not. These are gnawing worms which, leaving the action externally good, have ruined it within. Have always a supernatural intention. Do all for the love of Our Lord. This is not necessary to make the action meritorious. A motive of any virtue whatever will be sufficient for that, but an action performed through love is more precious and agreeable to God.

Be, also, faithful in doing them, performing them entirely, neglecting nothing, for it is a little portion of the gift of God which must not be lost. Crumbs are pearls in the service of Our Lord.

Lastly, give them humility for end and vesture, that they may all tend to that humility in which Our Lord envelops Himself in the Blessed Sacrament. This will preserve you from vanity and discouragement. Saint Bernard says that God neither asks nor looks for success, but only for the care that we take to do His will. To succeed or not to succeed is only secondary.

Lay up these words. They are for every day and for all the actions of your life.



SANCTITY by the RULE.

I.  HE law of your holiness and the condition of the glory of God in you, as well as the power of the duration and action of the Society, consist in the observance of the Rule.

Although a man might become a saint without the religious Rule, this holiness can not be yours.

We must distinguish between regulation and the Rule. Regulation is the Rule materialized, the nomenclature of its positive prescriptions. It is the word of command, the order of each action. The Rule is the spirit of our actions. It is the interior law, the form of sanctity. It is what gives spiritual education.

I say that you can become saints only by the perfect practice of your Rule, for God has created you only to be Religious of the Blessed Sacrament. Everything in you is for that grace and for that life. The Rule is the Gospel applied to your temperament and needs. The Gospel is the general law; the Rule, the particular law. If all religious bodies

are identical inasmuch as they are composed of the disciples of Jesus Christ and because all practise His counsels, they are, nevertheless, distinguished from one another by the spirit and end for which they practise them.

Every man is bound to know and to practise the Gospel. As for you, if you know and practise your Rule, it suffices. That is your Gospel;

You will say, perhaps, that ours is not approved by the Holy See. That is true. Nevertheless, the approbation of the Society by the Holy See is an indirect approbation of the Rule. They have examined it at Rome. They have concluded that it is capable of forming religious with one special aim useful to the Church, having the power to glorify God and sanctify souls. They praised it as a whole. The Holy Father pointed out some corrections, and they have been made in it. You ought not, therefore, to respect it less, under pretext that it is not yet canonically approved (1).

1. Ven. Père Eymard uttered these words in 1867. But since then the Constitutions drawn up by him, and

It is through prudence and favor that the Church has not yet approved it. Her approbation gives to a Rule a definite character after which it can no longer be retrenched nor added to without her permission. But now we can still do so, and it is necessary in the beginning.

While waiting for us to solicit a definite approbation, your own conduct must approve this Rule. The Church wants to find out whether it is practicable. If you do not practise it, to what purpose have it approved?

The Society says to you: I beg you, my children, observe the Rule that I give you. practise the virtues that it teaches you, that it may be seen whether these are, indeed, the virtues that your vocation exacts. Why do you wish Our Lord to inspire His Vicar to approve the Rule, if men are not found sufficiently holy to put it in practice?

at which he labored constantly and even till his last hour as *at his only book*, have been approved by a Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. — We allow his argument to stand however, in its first form, as being more forcible.

Observe it, then. Keep it with love and respect.

-It is respectable for you. We do not say that; because we have made it, we are but wretchedness. Nor do we tell you that it has come from Heaven by a particular revelation, nor by a miracle of assistance direct from the Holy Spirit. It has none of these extraordinary characteristics of so many other holy Rules.

The thought that conceived it, the pen that wrote it were inspired only by this, to serve Our Lord in His Sacrament of Love by a Society of men who would devote themselves especially and entirely to that service.

God has not given it through its members those brilliant sanctions that consecrate a Rule. We have no shining saints neither living nor dead, who preach it and recommend it. It has, then, no glory from its children.

What, then, is its glory? It is to have none before men. It is a teacher, an institute, to form you to give yourselves to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. What glory is there in that?

But let the Society possess a thaumaturgus, and all would flock to hear his teaching, see his miracles. They would not even go in to the Master. They would come to try the spirit of that man, and they would go away glorifying themselves in it. Who would remain in the shade with Our Lord?

The glory of the Rule and of the Society, consequently, is in its end, which is the service, so noble, so glorious, of Our Lord reigning and triumphing on His throne of love. His glory, again, consists in forming you for Himself. If the Rule can make good servants whom the world ignores, but who are pleasing to their Divine Master, it wishes nothing more.

We should bless God for the obscurity in which He leaves the Society. Let its Rule be dearer to you on account of its little eclat, for its obscurity places you more perfectly in your state of adorers, which is humility. If you understand and practise it, you will be saints.

It is hidden and mysterious as Our Lord in His Sacrament. The world will never comprehend it. Does it comprehend Our Lord

and His Mystery of love? But they who have the vocation comprehend it, and it will lead them to perfection.

It places us in the Blessed Sacrament and reduces us to nothing. Other Rules perfect the individual in order to make him a useful man, whom they can oppose to human glory in order to prove that of religion, and it is well. But yours hides you, annihilates you in order to lose you in Our Lord, for you have not to come forward and do battle, but to adore.

II. Practise it, then, and love it, for it alone will sanctify you. First of all, because it puts you in the way of holiness and constitutes for you an atmosphere of graces. Afterward, it points out to you by its regulations what you have to do at every hour of the day. It makes known to you the actual will of God over you, and that is a great point. What kills the devotion of pious laics and of the priest in the world, is liberty. They know not what they have to do, and whether they have done all that God requires of them. The Rule shields you from this danger. When it leaves you free, it

shows you the Superior who can regulate for you. Again, the Rule gives you special grace adapted to your spiritual temperament. It is for you a résumé of all truth. It is your special grace, that which God destined for you when He conceived you in His thought, that which must gain the crown He then laid up for you.

Every man has his own grace, and he must be led in a special manner. The Rule is your grace of life. It is the light suitable for your mind and your eyes. It shows you Our Lord in everything and everywhere. It establishes you in Him and upon Him without distracting you by anything else, because He alone is your end and your all.

A saint once said: "I want to die with my Rule, which has been my way; my Crucifix, which has been my strength; and my Rosary, which has been my perseverance." Instead of the Cross, put the Blessed Sacrament, and ask the same grace.

Besides your personal sanctity, you ought to practise the Rule for the sake of the Society, your Mother. Its life is in the Rule

observed and sanctified by the practice of her children.

It is not your number that will support, strengthen, and give long life to the Society, but the practice of the Rule.

The Rule is its soul and life. Every Society consists in authority. There lie its strength and its centre, and he who does not obey the Rule disarms authority and gives death to the Society.

Still more, the Rule is its power of action. The Society cannot lead you to the virtues of Our Lord if you do not follow the way that it traces out in the Rule. By failing in obedience to the Rule, you paralyze the Society.

On the contrary, if you have love and zeal for the Rule, the Rule will be its glory. Then vocations will come, and the Society will extend afar; for the first thing that postulants look for is the Rule, and they cannot better see it than in those that comment it practically by their conduct. In order to attract, the Society should be luminous as the sun; but you are its rays. When one desires

to become a religious, he does not ask to see the buildings nor the habit. He wants to see the works, and to observe whether the members are saints. And when the Rule is well kept in any place, they enter there with confidence, for they say: « Here I should reach sanctity, for they follow a sure path. »

The Rule violated can complain and, like God, curse its transgressors: "They who despise Me, shall be despised — *Qui contemnunt me, erunt ignobiles.*" Yes, Our Lord will despise them.

Remember that all who have abandoned their vocation had little esteem for the Rule. They wanted to add to it or retrench from it. But Our Lord rejected them, because He does not want two laws, nor a will contrary to His own, which He has indicated to the founder.

It is not for me, to give the sanction nor to recommend the Rule. I am but a weak instrument. But the weaker the instrument, the more does Our Lord show His strength in defending it; and the better the instrument, the more severe does Our Lord show Himself.

Never is any one sent away, nor does he go of himself; but he is chased away by Our Lord Himself, because he has been unfaithful to the Rule.

Keep the Rule if you wish to glorify Our Lord. Since you have entered religion, He wishes no longer your individuality, however good it may be. You have become a member of a body, and you are no longer an independent individual. You can no longer do anything but when united to the soul and the body to which you are joined, and your personal virtues, not practised in the spirit of your Rule, no longer honor Our Lord.

Even should you martyrize yourself if it be outside your Rule, Our Lord will pay no attention to it. And you will not persevere, and you will not attain very high perfection, for you are deprived of your necessary grace. Pay attention! Take a religious of moderate talents, but possessing fully the spirit of his Rule, esteeming it, and faithfully employing the means of apostolate that it furnishes; take another, superior to the first both in knowledge and talents, but making little use of the

means afforded by his Rule, and you will see that the former will effect wonders while the latter will have no fruit to show for his efforts.

Come then, the Rule! Behold your grand ascetic book, your power, and your grace! It, above and before all things, is what must make you saints. Let it be your criterion in your studies and labors, and judge nothing but by it and from its point of view. There lies the secret of your strength, because it is the bond of your union. There is the future of the Society and the glorification of the Eucharistic reign of Our Lord.

Love it well, then, if you love the Society, for the Rule and the Society are but one and the same thing, the latter living only by the former, which is its soul.

Ought you not to love the Society as your mother with the most devoted love? We can say of it what the woman said of Mary, the Mother of the Saviour: "Blessed the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck! "

Yes, bless the Society, respect it, and surround it with your esteem, for it is honor-

able as the daughter of the Church, as the spouse of Jesus Christ glorified and reigning in the Blessed Sacrament. It has been approved by a great and saintly Pope.

Give it the love of true children, of well-born sons, for it has brought you forth in sorrow.

Submit to it your intelligence and your works, for it is your mistress in doctrine it will make your spiritual education. Live in its spirit, its maxims, and its means, if you want to attain its end, which is likewise the end of your vocation and your life, your happiness in this world and in the next, the reign of the Eucharist in yourselves and on all sides.



PRAYER, the MEANS of our
SANCTITY.

TO perform well our actions, behold our spiritual business, to perform them according to the Rule, behold our sanctification; to perform them in the spirit of prayer, behold our perfection!

I. For several reasons, the spirit of prayer is absolutely indispensable.

In the first place you have need of God's grace, of superabundant grace, for you are contemplative adorers, and as such obliged to lead a life entirely celestial and ever animated by supernatural motives. The only means of obtaining this grace is prayer. And as you have need of grace at every instant, it is necessary for you to form the habit of prayer, to become men of prayer.

I lay down as a principle that the grace of the Society is a grace of prayer, that the spirit of prayer is one of its characteristic and distinctive virtues. This grace is the dowry of all whom Our Lord calls here, for He

gives the grace when He makes known the call. Naturally, and as it were instinctively, you ought to possess the spirit of prayer, for it forms part of your state as a religious adorer. And as every creature fulfils quite naturally, with satisfaction, and as if it knew no other thing, the end for which it was created, so ought you to practise the life of prayer with facility, and with the joy of a being acting conformably to its end.

We have by virtue of the Rule, counting the choral Office, eight hours daily of public prayer in the chapel. How will you live, if you do not know how to occupy yourself during all this time?

But I tell you since God has called you, since you have remained, since you make these eight hours of prayer, you have, more or less, the gift of prayer. God never calls to an end without giving the means, and one sign of vocation, above all others, will be the making with pleasure these eight hours of prayer. But if we make them only perforce; if we are glad when they are over, we have no vocation, or, indeed, we have lost it.

II Prayer ought to be not only the grace of our sanctification, but its principal exercise, the virtue of virtues. By it you will have the virtues of your state, because, being a virtue which has God for immediate object, it attracts the other virtues after it and makes use of them to exercise itself.

All will go well when your soul shall have taken with appetite its spiritual nourishment. You will have strength for the sacrifice, and vigilance for the combat. Ah! why do we not place our perfection in prayer? Why do we not direct our studies, our virtues, to increase the state and the practice of prayer in ourselves? We employ our time and our graces in correcting some defects; but even should we not leave a single one, we must not pause there, for our end is the service of Our Lord by Adoration, and it is only in order to make our Adoration better that we ought to correct our faults and acquire virtues. This is necessary, it is indispensable, for Our Lord can admit holy servants only. But even should they possess virtue, still the spirit of prayer must give to it the form suitable for the

service of Our Lord, which is Adoration.

For us, then, all consists in performing this royal service well. Make for yourselves, therefore, a science of Adoration. Make of all that you read a manual, a repetoire of material for Adoration. When you read a pious book, let it be only to discover some new aliment for prayer. After prayer, all the rest will follow as something over and above.

But if you pray badly, be sure you can never practise virtue. Again, you must have some centre of rest, and that cannot be found in virtue; consummate sanctity is necessary for that. But for us virtue is combat, and never shall I tell you to find therein your resting-place. If you should pause in it, you would fall like the bird which ceases to flap its wings. You must reach the perfection of the Father who is in heaven. You can never say: "It is enough. Now I shall rest."

Nor will study nor knowledge afford you the happiness of repose. What does one know as a whole?

You will find your happiness, remember it well, only in your communications with God,

in your Adorations, in your thanksgivings, but above all in your Adorations; for frequently thanksgiving is struggling and suffering, because Our Lord wants us to share in His Cross and humility by coming to us as the Divine Crucified.

But in your Adorations, you must be happy, you must there taste God; and if you are not happy in them, I tremble for your vocation. Every state in which God places a soul, renders her happy, unless she is unfaithful. And remark that if you give way to discouragement, if you have not put your whole heart in your work, it is because your Adorations are faulty. People do not suffer when they love, or rather joy being above suffering, they feel only happiness.

But to enjoy Adoration, one must make Adoration. He must give himself up to it, prepare for it, labor for it. He must make it the end and aim of everything he does.

You would wish to be like the Israelites in the wilderness where the manna fell every morning, requiring only to be gathered. That was an admirable miracle of condescension

which could not last, and in the Promised Land, as in Paradise itself, labor was the law.

People enjoy themselves greatly at a delicious festivity, thinking not of the expense and the trouble of those that have prepared it. Do you want to enjoy the delights of prayer at the banquet of Adoration? Prepare it, for you will taste only what you shall have prepared.

III. Your Adorations must be made according to the method of the Society, the method proper to your vocation.

Every religious body employs the method best suited to its needs and its end. We have adopted the method of the four ends of the Sacrifice as uniting us better than any other to Jesus Christ, the first and perfect Adorer, whose Adorations and prayers for the glory of His Father and salvation of souls we ought to reproduce. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is His prayer *par excellence*. It is the prayer *par excellence* of the Church, also, and it reunites in itself all the duties that the creature owes to the Creator, while at the

same time it expresses all that we should ask.

To adore, to thank, to ask pardon, and to pray in union with the Sacrifice of adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and petition of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament — this is the method of the Society, this is what ought to be sufficient for you. Other methods are not made for you, they do not correspond to your grace. If yours is not sufficient, it is because you do not know how to make use of it. You are sick, or you are children who do not know how to manage your tools. But learn, ask, you have the radical grace for it.

But with this method, which is, as it were, the plan of your Adorations, you must diversify them, giving to each a distinct character, in order to shun routine and loss of time. You have three every day.

Now, the first ought to be an Adoration of virtue in which the interior labor, the instruction of your soul and the correction of your defects should form the principal occupation. It is an Adoration of perfection

and sanctity, the school and the apprenticeship of the past and of the Eucharistic life of Jesus whose mysteries and virtues you are meditating. You try to practise them first in your Adoration, and afterward by taking the resolutions necessary for the conforming of your life to them.

The second ought to be an Adoration of suffering, in which you unite in the passion of Our Lord, meditating on His sufferings interior and exterior, for suffering is the perfection of the virtues.

But the third ought to be an Adoration of recollection, of rest and joy in the goodness of Our Lord, upon His Heart or at His feet. There meditate the joyous and glorious mysteries of His life, behold His love, and taste His tenderness, no longer in labor, but in silence and repose.

I do not tell you to seek for joy only. But Our Lord will give it to you, for you have need of it, as He Himself feels the need of communicating it to you. He loves so much to give happiness! See how every time He manifested Himself to the Apostles, it was always

peace; joy, happiness. If you never taste this, it is your own fault.

I am very particular about this, that you be happy in prayer. It is your encouragement, it is the oil that makes the wheels run smoothly. When you do not experience it, you ought to say: "I am not faithful, I do nothing well," and that discourages you. "I do nothing well, — that is very possible, but pause not there. Humble yourself and begin again. Take the means to do better.

That may also be a trial from the good God. The saints were long tried in this way, and you are not yet a saint. As a rule, if you feel no happiness in prayer, it is your own fault. Humble yourself, then, and by a better life, quickly regain the good graces of Our Lord.

If you do not reach the point of being happy in your Adorations, I pity you greatly. You will have no other consolation. Men cannot give it to you, you will not find it at the table nor in repose, for you will have to labor. And, again what kind of consolations are those? True, they say of the

religious that he has no cares, but that is an insult. Happiness is but the soul's contentment. Neither will the exterior ministry console you, for that will be permitted you only as far as your spirit of prayer and the regularity of your Adorations do not suffer from it.

The world will not come to you, and even should you have some success among souls, that joy will not be left to you; for you should be like John the Baptist pointing out Our Lord and seeing himself as was right, abandoned by his own who flock around Him whom he points out.

And then, believe me, nothing, no one can really make you happy but Our Lord. Your heart becomes paralyzed whenever you put it in contact with any other thing than that to which it is sensitive, namely prayer and the good God. He has given you a heart like to the sensitive plant, which can endure the touch of the sunbeam and of the celestial dew only, but which closes up to any other.

Be, then, men of Adoration, have the spirit of prayer. Love Adoration, and go to it joyfully as to the Banquet of heaven, and

then you will be happy, you will serve the Lord in the joy of your heart. Ah! be contented with the good God.



FRATERNAL CHARITY.

ABIDE with God that you may learn His kindness. Abide in recollection with yourselves that you may discover your own misery and learn how to despise yourselves. These are the two sources of fraternal charity, and the secret of love for the brethren.

Fraternal charity is the well-beloved virtue of Our Lord. It is the characteristic of His true disciples: "They will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for the other."

This is the whole law, says Saint John. He who practises it, is a good religious. Charity alone is sufficient, for it is the Lord's precept.

He who loves his brother loves God. Our Lord makes over to the neighbor the right that He Himself has to our love, and if we do not love the neighbor whom we see, how shall we love God whom we do not see?

Jesus Christ calls charity a new precept. Although men had to love one another before His advent, yet not having seen the love

of the Saviour, they did not know how to love one another supernaturally. Since He has made Himself our Brother and died for us, we know what we owe to all men, who in Him have become our brethren.

But fraternal charity is still more gravely imposed on us who live by the Blessed Sacrament, for it is the law of the Last Supper and the virtue of the Eucharist.

What, then, are the characteristics of fraternal charity? The same as those of Our Lord's love for us.

First, Our Lord loved us for ourselves, and not for Himself. Love that loves others for self, is only egoism. We must, then, love our brethren for their spiritual good, and even for their temporal good according as charity demands it. That is love pure and supernatural,

We ought to love our brethren with whom we live more than any one else: "He who loves not his own is worse than a pagan." Our charity ought to be extended to the body and the soul of our brother, because he has given to the Society his body and soul. For

his soul you are bound to pray, and keep him from committing a fault when you can. To love souls, to hinder God from being offended, this is what rouses zeal in Apostles and good priests. After the service of His Person, nothing glorifies Our Lord so much as spiritual charity toward our brethren. There are in it two fruits for His glory, that of the act you perform, and that of the brother whom you prevent from falling.

Fraternal charity possesses wonderful influence. It never labors in vain, even when not obtaining what it seeks. The merit of it is yours who have tried to do good, but have not succeeded. In heaven, the saints are rewarded for the good they have done to souls who are damned, in spite of their efforts. In the same way, a Superior who turns all his zeal to the practice of the Rule has the same merit whether his subjects do or do not hearken to his admonitions. To give an alms is a good thing even though the unfortunate recipient will make use of it for an evil purpose.

Have, then, charity for your brethren. Let your first love be for them. It would be a

great misfortune for you to have more charity for people out-doors than for those of the family. You owe yourself to your neighbor only according to the measure of your mission, and not to the full extent of charity.

In your prayers, yes, be universal; in action, remain in the limits of obedience. And still in your prayers, you ought to place your Eucharistic family before all others, even your parents themselves coming after. You belong more to your family of grace than to your family of flesh. You owe yourself to the first by the sacrifice of the second. I know that the heart will retain more natural sentiment for the mother from whom you have received life; but for the Society, your mother by adoption, ought to be the first sentiments of grace, the first supernatural love. Your heart ought to be where are your affairs and your life. "Man shall leave father and mother, and adhere to his wife," says the Lord. You have espoused the Society. Put her before everything else.

Apply prayer to the soul of your parents, your relatives. That is a duty of gratitude.

But with their temporal concerns, you ought no longer to busy yourself. In any kind of necessity, obedience will tell you what is to be done.

You have, also, renounced individual charity to the poor. Remember those unfortunates before God. That is all you can do. It is a great sacrifice not to be able to give, and they who have had the habit of giving alms feel it keenly. Let your heart and the world cry out against you, for you are poor, and you can no longer dispose of a cent. To satisfy the precept, the Superior will give alms in your name

As for you, remember that every good thing that God does not demand is evil, and that your vow is opposed to your liberality. And so, your brethren before all.

Now, love them for the pure love of God and themselves in God, and not for any seeking for their gratitude and a return. Render them all the services that you can and that are proper; and when you do them a good turn, let it be for this motive alone. Then you will not complain that they do not thank you for it. Did you do it for thanks? But if

it is for God, what need have you of the thanks of men? You have done what you ought, and you waste your charity and deprive God of His glory when you want a personal return. I say, even if they want to testify too much gratitude to you, you ought to take offence at it as at an injury. You have done only your duty in rendering service.

Let your charity extend to all your brethren without distinction. All are your brethren, and all have equal rights, although you do not owe to all the same exterior testimonies. Priests by their character have a right to more honor and respect. They are priests, and as such represent the Sovereign Priest, Jesus Christ. They are kind toward you and treat you with condescension, and to them you owe very profound respect. Never let a laic presume to think himself equal to a priest, and treat him with familiarity. Never regard him as a comrade, but as a superior. Remain in your place; and if priests are willing to descend to you, take advantage of it only to lower yourself still more.

Another characteristic of Our Lord's charity

is humility. Our Lord looked upon Himself only as the servant of His Apostles. Never put yourself above others. Never esteem yourself more than they on account of your knowledge or virtues.

Our Lord treated His Apostles with respect, for charity ought to be respectful. Familiarity is pride and contempt. Our Lord reprehended His Apostles when necessary, and He gave them good advice for their correction; but when He reprehended them, He did not lower them. He taught them to be respectful to one another, and if He frequently told them that He loved them, it was that they might behold in one another the objects of His love, His privileged friends. I repeat it, the charity which does not pay honor is pride. It builds for self a throne out of the abasement of others.

Perhaps your brother has fewer gifts than you, less knowledge, less virtue. In that he owes you respect. But would you wish on that account a place above him, and treat him haughtily? That would be natural and wordly. If you want to show personalities you must first

attain superiority. But then it would not be love that animates you, but a worldly point of honor. Now, there is no question of that here.

We must, it is true, for the sake of order, observe the law of precedence; but that is not for the sake of persons, but for the dignity and maintenance of order. It is the hierarchy established by God even in heaven, and by Our Lord in the Church. Apart from that, I beg of you, entertain none of that sensitiveness which savors of ambition and worldly vanity. Let honor be cheerfully rendered by every one and sought by no one. Honor the least of your brethren with an unaffected and cordial love, not measured by his qualities nor by your own natural sympathy, for all that is human.

What you ought to honor in your brother is the grace that Jesus Christ has infused into his soul, his vocation to the service of the same King, Jesus Christ Himself who dwells in him and comes to him by Communion; in fine, Jesus Christ honors your brother, do you honor him, also. He serves the Master as well as you and, if he possesses the

appearance of virtues, you ought to believe that he really possesses them. Conscience makes this an obligation of justice for you.

That humble brother, that ignoramus, will, perhaps, be higher than you in glory. Honor in him the future prince of God's glory; and even were he only the reliquary of Jesus Christ, who comes into his heart, would not that be sufficient to clothe him with esteem and respect?

Again, charity ought to be devoted. Honor is not enough. One must give help, be devoted to the soul of one's brother, pray often that he may become more holy, that he may arrive at perfection. When God shows us a defect in him, it is in order that we may correct it, at least by prayer; and we fail in charity, if we do it not according to our power.

As to exterior charity, the Rule marks out for you your duties. If you have the care of him help him, do it devotedly. If you are associated with one of your brethren in some employment of which he has charge, you become his inferior, and you owe him submission in all that regards that employment.

As to souls outside, you must be very devoted to them, but by prayer. You must have a universal heart both to love souls and to labor for their salvation, but principally by the apostolate of prayer and mortification. It is more fruitful than that of the word; it is the beginning of martyrdom and perfect charity. We behold persons entering religion in order to be victims for souls. By their immolation, they win more souls than all preachers together. They are the mediators of salvation.

Practise, then, charity always and in all things, for the occasions are numberless. If they do not come to you, seek them. When you are free to choose between two good works, one personal, the other charitable, take the latter. It has double merit.

But, above all, I repeat, let your charity be humble. Proud charity is egoism, or forced charity

Ponder upon these words: Am I supernaturally charitable? Do I honor my brethren by my charity? Am I devoted to them?

How many sins are committed against char-

ity in thought by rash judgments! Remember what will distress you most at the moment of death, after thoughts against chastity, will be the remembrance of those against charity. Who has made you the judge of your brethren? This inquietude at death, according to Saint Vincent Ferrer, is the punishment that always attacks that sort of sin, even in this world. The first movements of rash judgment are of no account; but to encourage them, to acquiesce, is to be our brother's murderer in our own heart.

Again by words. Oh, with how many faults pious and religious souls have to reproach themselves on this point!

There are still other sins against charity by act and by omission. Let us examine ourselves on them, and adopt the means to correct them.

He who does not sin against the neighbor, is almost free from sin against God, because love is *one*, although it has a double object and, as it were, two channels.

SIMPLICITY.

THE just man walks simply; and the impious man, deceitfully.

I counsel you earnestly to make simplicity the mould and the foundation of your life. This virtue was recommended by Our Lord: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of God." It is the form of humility and its vesture. It is poverty of spirit beatified by the Divine Master.

If you have given yourself to Our Lord no longer to have any personality, you ought to be simple as the little child that one carries in the arms or leads by the hand, that acts only by its mother. Our Lord will be your wisdom and your prudence.

One of the characteristics of holiness is simplicity, while one of the principal signs of spiritual decadence is duplicity.

To sanctify one's self and to be happy in the life of prayer and Rule which we have embraced, we must be simple.

I. First of all, simple with God. "He who walks simply, walks securely," says the Holy Spirit. This simplicity with God is precisely the confidence with which a soul places herself in the hands of God, because she knows His goodness. She abandons herself to everything that He may will and she is disquieted by nothing that may happen to her. She beholds only the will of God in persons and events the most varied, and this singleness of view is already great holiness, because it shows her everything at one glance, and she is surprised at nothing

When a soul is troubled and disquieted, she is no longer simple. She is looking down at her feet, instead of keeping her glance raised above her head. We must be like the simple, candid child that hides nothing, that does all its mother wishes and only because its mother wishes without questioning whether it is good or bad. Think, too, that God is good, that He wishes to be your good, and that you cannot glorify Him more than by doing His will.

When we possess this simplicity, everything

appears possible, nothing any longer costs. It is enough that God wills it.

II. Be simple toward your Superiors, that they may not groan under their burden, for that would not be advantageous to you

A Superior is a shepherd who has charge of souls. He answers for your life and your soul. Lessen the burden for him. Act so that he may approach you without fear of seeing his orders or his remonstrances taken badly, misinterpreted, and therefore rendered capable of producing more harm than good.

I have remarked that, when the members of a Community are not simple with their Superior, God does not bless it. For, understand, God blesses a Superior more than all the religious, and He blesses the religious only through him. All the graces are deposited in him, who is the head, that they may flow down upon the members, as the oil of anointing flowed from the head of Aaron down to the hem of his garment. But God never blesses religious who are against their Superior in points of duty and of his charge. You understand clearly that God is always

one with Himself, and that He cannot go against him whom He has chosen to represent Him.

Ah! my brethren, how painful it is to be Superior! It should, indeed, be the good God who nails you on this cross; for unless he be a proud man, devoured with the desire of shining before others, or an avaricious man who wants at any cost to handle a little money, never would one dare to desire such a charge. Seen from a distance, it is fine, perhaps; but close at hand, it is a far other thing. If there is one unfortunate being, it is a Superior. Never has he a moment to taste the happiness of peace. He belongs to all and to everyone. He has to sacrifice himself on a rude cross.

But there are honors attached to it! — What honors? Ah! if you knew what value is placed on these honors by the Superiors-General who govern the great Orders, who command legions of religious, and whose position is so high at Rome and in the Church! No, they are there only to behold misery, to receive only crowns of thorns. And to

whom do they confide all their anxiety and trials? They have to stifle them in their own heart and turn to God

Never envy your Superiors, but pity them. They have taken upon themselves your responsibility and, at the Day of Judgment, they will have to answer for you. To desire superiority, is to have lost one's head.

Honor your Superiors simply, without flattering them. The flatterer despises or insults him upon whom he fawns. Whoever you are, be perfectly simple with them. Genius is simple, while false knowledge is puffed up. Believe me, be simple as children. You may be more learned than your Superior in many things, but in the knowledge of his charge, never! Superiors receive from God special gifts for themselves and, above all, the gift of penetrating hearts. It would seem that God gives them this privilege of maternal love, which divines the heart of the child. I generally know of what you are thinking, in what state you are, what you want, even before you have told me.

Be simple with them in the relations of

life; be a child toward your father. Many fail in simplicity not daring to tell their needs and troubles, either hiding them or telling them only by half; but the good God tells the Superior all. The Superior has general graces for the whole family, and every one receives from God only in proportion to the measure of his confidence in His representative. Be simple, then, in making requests. Before asking for anything whatever, examine whether the Superior can grant your request without infringing upon the rights of the Rule, and without making an exception or showing personal favor in your regard. Next ask God whether your desire is according to His Heart. After having thus prayed, if you still have the wish for something, oh, go confidently and simply make it known! God will inspire His servant to do the right thing. If you hesitate, if you are timid, you are a stranger, and not a son of the family. The Superior would wish always to say yes, because he is a father. To refuse, gives him pain; but he is obliged to do it when any one asks something through mere whim, which

might be hurtful, or which might militate against the general good. To accede to such a request, would be to commit a fault that he would have to expiate in purgatory.

When you are in recreation and the Superior presents himself, after saluting him, continue the conversation upon whatever topic it may have turned, for that will interest him. He is a father who wants to join in the pleasures of his children. If you interrupt your conversation, if you change the subject, it is a sign that you talk of things you do not want him to hear. Then, were they not bad?

Well now, you see clearly that simplicity toward Superiors brings happiness, for every family has its centre. The hardness of the diamond comes from the cohesion of its molecules. The Community in which inferiors are united with their Superiors, resists every attempt of the demon to dissolve it.

Pay attention to this. Never criticize and never listen to criticisms on the acts of your Superiors, whoever they may be. Even should your Superior have all the defects in the world, pray, suffer, but never judge. The good

God will take his part, while you attack the very heart of the life of obedience.

Oh! there are, unhappily, in religious houses always some who sow cockle by criticizing Superiors. Whoever you may be, if they criticize him before you, protest, silence the critic, no matter who he is, were he even a priest, a savant, eminent for all qualities. Do not suffer a whole society to perish through the pride and discontent of a single individual, for that is what would happen. God treats subjects as they treat their Superiors. As the subjects, so the Superior. God gives the subjects only what they deserve and, if you have a bad Superior, it is because you have deserved it. Change then, be humble and submit, and God will give you a father.

Oh, I beg of you, never suffer fault-finding in your presence. Remember the admirable conduct of Constantine refusing to judge the Bishops accused before him. He who curiously scrutinizes majesty will be crushed by its weight, that is, he who searches into and reveals the defects of those in authority will be cursed by God as Cham was by Noc.

It is known by experience that God never blesses a religious who does not walk simply before his Superior. And the lower the position from which the Superior has come, the less his learning, the less remarkable for natural qualities, the greater is the offence, the more terrible the vengeance, for God is more careful to protect the weak.

III. Be simple among your brethren and with yourselves. Charity springs from truth. Never falsify, not even in joke. Remember that Our Lord held lying and pretence in horror.

Love and respect one another as brethren. Let criticism of the neighbor find no place in your conversation. Have no eyes to see only defects, have simple eyes. It is for God and the Superior to see defects, and to discern the goats from the sheep. Be always simple among yourselves, saying simply what you think in the hearing of all, without parties, without asides. The simplicity of the dove is the bond of peace.

I except our relations with strangers; then the prudence of the serpent is necessary.

Never speak to strangers of the affairs of the house. It is only a busybody who recounts to every one the family secrets. Discretion is necessary. No one ought to betray authority, and indiscretion is unpardonable. He who knows not how to be discreet, is a conceited person who can be pumped by flattery. Listen, speak little, edify outsiders by your silence. Be well-bred and polite, be gentlemanly in your conduct, for your vocation elevates you to a noble condition. Honor by your manners and command honor for your character without affectation or mincing, but with true supernatural charity, which is marked by urbanity and refinement under all circumstances.

Be meek and humble toward all, and let the world talk, if it does not find you aimable enough for it. Aim at nothing else than the good God. What is all the rest to you!

Blessed are the simple! They possess God, His grace, and His power of action. .



The EARNESTNESS of LIFE.

IT is to be desired that this Retreat should have for one of its results what I am now going to propose to you, namely, that you become earnest men.

Had I begun the Retreat with this truth, as I might have done, I should have missed my aim. You would all have sought after recollection, but it is not of recollection that I wish to speak. Recollection is only the flower and the fruit. What I want is, that the character itself become serious. Recollection is capable of more or less degrees, it varies according to the thoughts and the states of the soul. What I desire for you is a character founded always and in all things on earnestness. He who is not earnest of character and heart, is capable of nothing. We call such a man light-headed.

Give no credence to his words. He is not thinking of what he is saying, he speaks without reflection. His speech flows incoherently, showing very plainly his want of judgment. A man of this character, who speaks to

every one of everything at random, is in the world called a fop.

He who does not reflect necessarily forms false judgments, for judgment is the result of ideas compared with one another. But the frivolous man gives himself no trouble on this point,

He has memory, perhaps, and imagination, but he acts by impulse. Instead of one thing, he begins ten, he promises, but does not perform.

What dominates in him is the heart. Take him in passing. When sentiment and impulse pass, there is nothing left. What would you do with such a subject in the religious life?

Do not try to educate him. You will lose your time. Occupy him in exterior things, for he will never apply to serious study.

What a misfortune are these light-headed men in the world when they possess wealth! What rules the world and drowns it in scandals, is this light-headedness. In religion it is a radical evil, and a light man will always be a poor religious. The grace of the virtues is infused, but their practice is acquired by

subsequent labor and attention. They must be cultivated, and that is what a frivolous man will never do.

Virtue is a plant from Calvary, which Our Lord confides to us that we may cultivate it with blood and tears. Its strength is in its root, which strikes into the soil of the soul. If through frivolity you leave that root uncovered, the shrub will die.

Virtue calls for struggles in which one must be skilful, able, and vigilant. A man has before him an enemy always new, who endlessly varies his attacks. If you bring against him only the piety of sentiment, you will not know how to baffle his snares, you will not even perceive them in time. He will surprise you a thousand times, and you will have received a wound even before you dream of resisting.

Knowledge to lead the interior life is necessary, a very great intelligence as to the needs of one's soul. For obedience and the virtues of the common life, there is not so much need of mind; but to lead the life of prayer, our life of Adoration, the

mind, as well as the heart, must be exercised.

You must know how to study self and to study Our Lord. You ought constantly to have your eye on your Model, to measure Him, and then to refer those measurements to yourself and your duties. It is an affair of constant observation, of intelligent study, which demands of us seriousness.

Books are not sufficient; personal labor is necessary. One must study, must scrutinize with his mind and his grace, Our Lord and His mysteries, His intentions in His Eucharistic life, and in His ways over souls. A man who does not know how to reflect, will never persevere in our vocation, unless he condemns himself to recite myriads of Rosaries. To spend your three hours daily on the prie-Dieu, you must be learned and eloquent, educated and very intelligent. I do not mean natural intelligence, but that which grace confers, which Our Lord communicates to him who is serious, and who earnestly applies himself to live the interior life. Experience confirms what I say. If you take the most pious people of the world, even priests them-

selves, and put them on this *prie-Dieu* for our three hours, they will not know how to employ their time. It is your grace *for you*, but correspond to it by earnestness of life. Reflect on and reason out your own case.

All who have left us found fault with Adoration. They did not know what to do during it, and they grew tired. Pay attention, then, to yourselves!

Correct that levity which carries you away or, at least, prevents your enjoying Our Lord in Adoration, understanding Him, and discovering the ravishing marvels of His love.

The earnest mind is that which lives on the truth of God and things. It abides in truth, in reality, and not in sentiment.

The serious man is the man of duty. He does not act because it so pleases him, but because his duty commands him. He searches into the reason of his duty and of all his actions, in order to accomplish them according to their spirit, but not because he wants to know the reason of the command before obeying. He obeys at once, at the first signal, because it is his duty. But instead

of doing so mechanically, he fixes his thoughts on the glory that God will derive from that action, upon the good that will redound from it to the Society and to his own soul. In this spirit, he applies to what he has to do, and does it better. He recoils not before any difficulty. He looks at it attentively, conquers it, or turns it aside. The frivolous man perseveres only as long as he feels a taste for anything. He stops short before a difficulty, or when his enthusiasm cools.

The earnest man dissects the virtues. "I want to be humble, for instance, in such or such a conjuncture, for such or such motives. Why? Because, sinner that I am, I must repair my pride, because Jesus was humble, because this virtue opens heaven and is the measure of glory." He scrutinizes reasons and motives, he persuades his own mind about them, and he ends by forming a strong desire for humility.

If you act through impression and sentiment, once the time has passed,—and it does not last long,—nothing remains.

Take a man, pious, but light-minded, and a sinner only just converted, but earnest, and lead them both at the same time on to perfection. The second will soon outstrip the first. He, says the *Imitation*, who labors zealously will make more profit in spite of his having more passions to overcome than the man of a good natural disposition who applies with less care to the acquisition of the virtues.

One must be earnest in employing usefully all one's time for God and his soul. The Rule cannot fix everything, and in what it imposes much is still left to the inclination of individuals. It furnishes the form and the method, but how varied is its application! This is the work left to each one. What will you do with this latitude if you have a light mind? You will lose your time, it will pass, all will be carried away by this unfortunate defect. You will not know how to converse with Our Lord, you will not hear His voice, you will not understand His Spirit, and He will not be able to act upon you.

And again, what graces can He intrust

to you? Would you have all your graces fall on the highway or among thorns, which will grow up and stifle them? The light mind is the great highway swept by every wind, traversed by all passers-by, and on which nothing rests.

One must be earnest, in order to act for the best in certain cases in which he cannot take counsel with any one. Important employments may be confided to you, you may have responsibility, accidents may happen, and you are obliged to act for yourself. But you are light-minded? You will know only how to compromise yourself, and thereby render yourself unfit to serve the Society.

Labor, then, in an orderly manner to acquire virtues. Pursue the work with the spirit of observation, with constancy. Proceed always by principle. God's way over a soul whom He wills to lead on to sanctity is to give her, above all, a serious mind. Even before He shows her His grace of choice, He makes her reflect. When He spoke to the Prophets, the Lord began by rousing

their attention; and when they transmitted His orders to the people, they said: "Hear, O Israel, hear!"

On Sinai, He multiplied prodigies in order to strike the mind of the inconstant people, of all nations the most light-minded in their resolves. And when Our Lord wanted to form His Apostles, He took them into the desert with Himself, that nothing might distract them. He who wants to make a reservoir has to dig into the earth, that the water may gather in it and there remain.

The light-minded never knows what he ought to do. He is in perpetual need, but the serious man always finds wherewith to occupy Himself.

When God forms a soul to prayer, He gives her the power to sound her own heart and to dwell within herself. Later on, he leads her to comprehend the designs of His providence and to search into His ways: "*Maria conservabat omnia verba haec in corde suo*—Mary kept all these words in her heart."

Have, then, earnestness of character with regard to faith, conscience, and the religious

life. This is a grace that ought to be solicited of God. Without it, one will never accomplish anything.

Levity is the first cause, although an indirect one, of all sins, of all defects, and above all of the want of the spirit of prayer Defective Adorations, forgetfulness of the divine Presence, contemptible familiarity, unceremoniousness with Our Lord,—all come from it.

You have, perhaps, a well-disposed heart, but a light mind has counteracted that good disposition. Grace presented itself, but you were not at home.

Levity plunges us into constant embarrassment. The demon watches to cast those that have this defect, though otherwise zealous and good-hearted, into a thousand little works, good without doubt, but unconnected, in order that they may no longer behold themselves; for he is master of the situation when he can cast the soul into the net of distraction, embarrassment, and inquietude by the multiplicity of her occupations.

Experience shows that business affairs

hinder the calm necessary to the life of Adoration. Going abroad and absence, above all, bring about the loss of facility in conversing with Our Lord. It is for this reason that the Society refuses the preaching of stations and is very reserved in permitting absence, in order that you may preserve the seriousness of the life of Adoration, and always be free and ready for the service of the Lord. This is a servitude, it is true, but a royal servitude!



FRUITS and RESOLUTIONS

of the RETREAT.

EEP the good things committed to you. Labor as a good soldier of Christ. Dive into these things, and put them in practice." Such among other things were the counsels that Saint Paul gave to Timothy, his disciple, after making him Bishop of Ephesus.

I. "*Depositum custodi.*—Guard the good things of truth."

Our Lord has given you His truth. He has told you what was an obstacle to His life and His glory in you. He has given you good sentiments and a good will. You have begun a true religious life. Guard well the treasure of your Retreat, by watching against the temptations of the evil one.

He does not attack openly, for his hideousness would make you flee. But he fascinates us, bewilders us, and seizes us from behind. "*Circuil quærens quem devoret*—He goes about seeking whom he may devour."

You now know what temptations triumph

over you and trouble you. You know how the world dissipates you and engages your attention. Take good care not to allow it to reach you. Guard even against the saints of the world!

You are a royal priesthood, a holy people. Do not profane your dignity by exposing it. Do not mix in outside affairs.

If obedience places you in relations with the world, be angels, that is, messengers who come and go, delivering your message and immediately returning. Do not be too accessible. So much for the world.

Watch, also, over the traitor who is in you, who is yourself. Keep him down by force, for he is your unrelenting enemy. We understand the hatred of the saints for their body, which they combated as their greatest enemy.

Let us distrust ourselves. We must hate and struggle against ourselves without relaxation. As soon as we have said, "It is enough," we are lost.

Alas! even after the very best resolutions, we are so weak and so tepid! We come

from confession, we meet another occasion at the door, and we fall again. We have in us a powder-mill that explodes at every contact with fire, were it only a spark.

“In omnibus vigilia.” Watch in all things and everywhere. Watch over your senses, above all, over your eyes. We shall not be masters of ourselves as long as we can not restrain our eyes.

If you wish to be in peace, never have in your mind the picture of any creature, and remember that the eyes are painters.

Love every one in general, commend every one to God, and know no one in particular, unless charity or obedience makes it a special duty for you. Leave the obligation of conversing with the world to your Superiors. It is on them such responsibility is incumbent.

Oh, how happy you are to be burdened with no one! You are independents. All your heart, all your life may be for Our Lord! He must imprint Himself on it all entire, not broken, not shattered as in troubled water or a concave mirror.

You must be' photographs of Our Lord. The lens is your own soul, the light is His love, the model is Jesus Christ.

Ah, be determined with creatures! Know how to cut short. Be independents. Be even haughty when there is question of guarding yourselves. Do not allow yourselves to be bound in spider-webs.

How often I have regretted being a shepherd of souls! One is ever, as it were, on a rough sea. People come to abuse one, to deceive one. One must listen to everybody and, in spite of one's self, be sprinkled with dust.

And you who are not obliged by your charge to intercourse with the world, will you go to seek it although God does not require it of you? Ah, shelter yourselves in the sacred sanctuary of Jesus Christ, your King, for whom alone you are here!

II. "*Labora ut bonus miles Christi.*—Labor like good soldiers of Jesus Christ."

To take care, is well. That is enough in the beginning. The virtues that we transplant are tender shoots, which must needs

be protected against the intense cold or the too scorching heat, in order to take root.

Later on, they must be cultivated. This work consists in purifying one's self incessantly, acquiring the spirit and the habit of prayer, and reforming one's manners by conforming one's life to that of Our Lord. Here generosity, coöperation, and faithful correspondence to grace, are necessary.

We must begin with one virtue, the one that ought to be in us the dominant virtue, the characteristic virtue, while at the same time we acquire the perfection of our Rule, for as religious we are obliged to this perfection.

You must first acquire the exterior perfection of your Rule, namely, modesty, silence, good use of your time, obedience, and fidelity to the exercises of piety. You should know how to be ready for everything required of you, and to be idle if you are ordered to rest.

For the interior, see of what you have need. Attend first to your conscience. If it torments you, ah! give it your first attention,

leave everything to set it in order first of all.

If it is your heart which allows itself to be caught by creatures or to sleep through sloth, cast it into the love of God, into continual sacrifices. In this way you will fill it with divine love, and there will no longer be room for the creature.

If it is the mind that is light, nail it to the Cross of Jesus Christ. Choose some fixed, some striking thought. Hold on to it for several consecutive days. Dwell on it for eight days. Your mind is a child. The more it amuses itself, the more it wants to amuse itself. It must be restrained by something that strikes it powerfully, or by a touching thought that moves you. Place it often in the presence of God. Have some thought on hand that rouses you and recalls His presence. If you concentrate your mind on one point, you will do so on others. It then acquires an energy of principle and action no longer upon one thing, but upon all that presents itself to be done.

Take whatever thought suits you best, but

do not rely too much either on your heart or your mind. Dwell not exclusively on your conscience, but let the practical and continued result of the Retreat be to make you embrace once for all, both interiorly and exteriorly, the mortification of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. "*In his esto.*—Abide in that, " and thus revive the work of the Retreat.

Take in hand the affair of your amendment. Begin with the exterior. I have often given utterance to this principle that we must go from the interior to the exterior. Begin by reforming the interior before attacking exterior faults. This is true theoretically, and also for souls that are already interior. They fall only through weakness. They have already conquered their great exterior defects. The combat now for them is above all interior.

But this is not true for beginners. You seek God like poor souls that have need of pardon. You must first become reconciled to Him, by destroying those obstacles that come from without and acquiring the power

to mortify self in all that is material, all that arrests your progress and turns you to evil. You are only children in prayer. If you have not books at that time, you do not know how to occupy yourselves. You are not yet able to walk under the interior inspiration of Our Lord.

What shall I say to these latter? Shall you occupy yourselves only with labor and interior combat? No.

In your state, there is question less of interior progress than of disengaging yourselves from the chains of the senses, less of advancing than of purifying yourselves and getting rid of the roots of sin.

You love God, doubtless, but like children. You have not been rooted on Calvary. If you launch out into interior ways without the curb of mortification and exterior reformation, you will become fanatics and visionaries.

To wish to apply the principles of the interior life of union and love to souls that are yet full of their senses, is to build upon sand, and without foundation.

God's grace works in the interior, but it

is for us to join to it exterior labor. It works from within to without. In our coöperation with it, we must go from without to within.

The two actions must be joined and never separated, filling our soul with love by prayer, and purifying ourselves exteriorly by mortification.

It is easy to say, "I love God," but if this word is not followed by mortification, it is vain and unfounded. Self-love has quickly taken the place of the love of God.

Love alone makes saints. There is nothing truer than this principle, but it must be applied with discernment. Now, the love of Jesus Christ for us is His Cross.

Personal mortification of justice and penitence must be the foundation and the exercise of love; and if one has not sinned, it must be mortification through love inspired by the example of Our Lord's sufferings.

Put your confidence in God, and wage the great struggle of mortification.

Think not on the years and years you must live in this struggle. You have not

at present the grace of the future, but for every moment its own sufficient grace will be given.

To-day you have only to accept the combat and take a generous resolution. Be satisfied with that, and count upon grace for the future.

Besides that, look for success from God alone, count on Him alone. Have confidence in His grace for the victory. Do not trust too much to the means, however good they may be, nor upon the success of your prayers, nor upon the victories you may have gained over your faults, for he who analyzes his success loses it.

Expect some defeats, but do not let them discourage you. When you shall have fallen, acknowledge your fault and your weakness, and ask God to hold out to you a helping hand.

The humility which rises again is a perfect victory, and it becomes more vigilant. God sometimes sanctifies souls only by their falls and wretchedness. We are already so borne along by pride that, if God did not

humble us at times, we should become more proud, more wicked than Satan, because we are grosser than he, and equally proud.

Do you grieve over the fact that God leads you by the way of humiliation? But that's a favor! Every one will pity you and help you. If you appeared richer than others, every one would oppose you. No, put on the habit of your Master. If He showed Himself in His glory, every one would come to Him; but while He is poor and humiliated, the world passes Him by. Love to be unknown and humiliated with Him.

I have finished. I leave to Our Lord to give you Himself, in your Adorations, the Eucharistic Retreat, and to teach you His life of love, prayer, and sacrifice in the Blessed Sacrament. I want to be only a John Baptist crying. "Do penance!" I have shown you the way, I have led you up to the portal of sanctity, and there I pause.

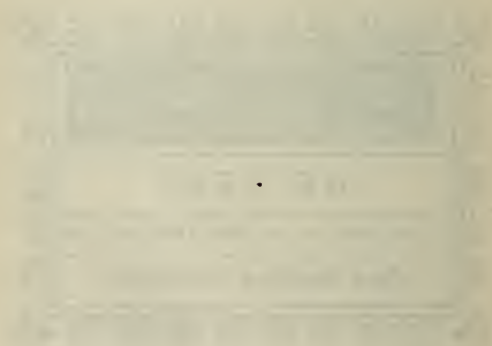
Behold your Saviour, your King, your Master! Love Him, glorify Him, serve Him! This is my only desire!



RETREAT

PREACHED TO THE SERVANTS OF THE

Most Blessed Sacrament.





FOREWORD.

This Retreat was preached during the month of November, 1866, to the Servants of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Here again, we behold the Father in the midst of his children. The notes piously taken while he spoke, breathe the perfume of paternal intimacy and familiarity, which his title and the love borne him as such authorized.

Only in the two meditations on the gift of self, in which the Venerable Father touches on the most elevated doctrines of theology concerning the Word Incarnate, are there some omissions. We can understand that a woman little familiar with such subjects could not follow the Father, word for word, in the development of this beautiful doctrine. But some words here and there were thrown in as landmarks, in order that we might be able some day to resume the course of the conference, and render it complete. This is what we have endeavored to do, by drawing our inspiration especially from a personal Retreat of two months, which the Venerable Father ended with the gift of self, in which this teaching is laid down in detail

We hope this Retreat will put the finishing-stroke to a clear understanding of the spirit of sanctity through the Eucharist. Many secrets of divine love are here brought to light, and the heart sees opening

up to it a field of immense love. It is to pure love; to the love of God loved for Himself, that the Father incessantly exhorts. Although he does not reject interested love so necessary to our weakness, it seems that there was for his' soul no satisfying love but that which loves in order to love, that sees in the virtues and in sacrifice only love, that desires for its reward only a greater love, and that aims at heaven only because there we love better and eternally.

The practice and guarantee of this love, he places in fidelity to duty, in tender considerateness never to offend even in the least point; in sacrificing to the love of God nature, not only in its evil instincts and its roots of sin, but in itself, in its natural personality, in the principle which constitutes it the child of the earthly Adam.

The gift of one's own personality is, in effect, the essential means of binding one's self to live of love, since it consists in remitting one's self entirely into the hands of Jesus Christ, taking Him for one's only motive and end, dedicating and devoting one's self to His service as a slave without name or ownership. This gift is meant to establish, as far as in us lies, Jesus as our own person, and to bind us to live with His grace, only as members, a nature directed by Him.

This doctrine is not new. In the seventeenth century, Cardinal de Bérulle reduced it to the formula of a vow, which was approved by over ten Bishops and Doctors.

By this vow, one simply engages himself never to retract the donation he has made of himself, his whole self, soul, body, faculties, actions, merits, and sufferings, his whole being to Jesus Christ, to all His designs over him, and to all His commands. In the second place, he resolves to live as far as possible according to the spirit of this vow, always accepting the views and ways of grace preferably to natural views and human means, by abandoning himself in everything and for everything to the conduct of Providence, by laboring always for God, for Jesus Christ, chosen as the unique Master and Proprietor of his being, of all his properties, qualities, actions, and possessions.

There is no additional duty, no obligation under pain of sin, for this beautiful vow consists only in an obligation of love, an elevation of intention, and that is all. Does not this realize the life of Jesus in us? And followed out in practice with perseverance and good-will, does it not make saints, that is, other Jesus Christs?

After the Retreat, of which we have spoken above, the Venerable Father made this vow of the gift of self to Jesus Christ, March 21, 1865. He summed it up in these two words: "Nothing by myself, nothing for myself. All by Jesus Christ, all for Jesus Christ in me!"

Then, comprehending how powerful is this means of sanctification, since it places us in the perfect grace

of Christianity, by giving us entirely to Jesus Christ, and by renewing and perfecting by a free and deliberate vow the consecration of our whole being which was made to Him in Baptism, he exclaimed : " Ah ! had I understood this means sooner ! What time gained, how many more merits for Jesus Christ ! " Who does not understand, in effect, that this vow is but an explicit renovation, carried in the light of faith even to its last consequences, of the vows of Baptism ? We have, then, renounced the devil and his works, that is, all that is of the demon in man, and all that is simply of Adam in us, in order to belong to Jesus Christ. But is it only by the acts of the Christian life, by the fulfilment of the Law, that we belong to Jesus Christ ? Is it not rather, first and above all, by the very substance of life, by a radical adjunct, voluntary and absolute, embracing the being, as well as its acts ?

Sanctifying grace, which is the life of Jesus in us, is a state, a stable thing, fixed, inherent in the very substance itself of our regenerated being. We should, then, give ourselves to it in a similar manner by our state, by a constant profession of living only of it, in it, and by it. The gift of self is nothing else than this profession.

Whether we think it or not, it is also at the foundation of the religious vows. However little we may desire to practise them perfectly, we see it springing up as the natural fruit of this consecration which,

certainly, is sufficient to deliver the whole being over to Jesus Christ. And what does the religious consecration mean except the reproducing of the life of Jesus Himself, the first and perfect Religious of God, who became such only because He had sacrificed to the Word His human personality and who, living thus separated from Himself, was by His state perpetually offered and immolated to the Father by the Word.

When we read attentively the meditations of this Retreat and those of the preceding, we shall readily comprehend the spirit and the practice of the vow of impersonality as the Venerable Father understood it. To them who desire more extended explanation, we recommend a little book of Père Grou entitled : *Du don de soi-même à Dieu*, which is a continuation of a *Retraite sur l'amour de Dieu* (1) ; and again, the *Vie du Père Charles de Condren*, by the Abbé Pin (2), in which may be seen the perfect practice of the vow ; lastly, in the Works of the Cardinal de Bérulle, *Discours et Élévations sur l'Incarnation* (3).

1. *Lecoffre*, Paris.

2. *Chaufard*, Marseilles.

3. *Migne*, Paris.

CONVERSION

is ALWAYS NECESSARY.

RETREAT is the greatest of all graces. because it comprehends all the graces of conversion and renewal in the devout life. When God wills to convert a soul, He puts her into a Retreat. We all need conversion, because we have defects, and because we carry in us the old man. It is true that, in the devout life faults are less apparent, less gross; but as by them we sin against Our Lord's love of preference for us, His Heart is more sensitive to them.

Retreat is a real conversion of the old man into the new, or of an imperfect virtue into a perfect virtue; and, believe me, it costs more to be converted from an imperfect state than to rise out of sin. The evil is less apparent, less avowed, and pride often takes it for good. How difficult it is to persuade the semi-perfect that they are below what Our Lord wishes, and to make them acknowledge their defects!

Oh! I do not like to hear: "They are religious, then they are saints, angels!" All that is only dust in the eyes. One is a saint only on entering heaven. Examine yourselves in the light of Our Lord's love. Look at the duties of your vocation, and tell me whether you are saints!

I do not say that you have on your conscience those sins that roll us in the mud. But there are sins of the sanctuary, sins of the service of God. They are so much the more painful to Our Lord as He loves us more, as He has granted us more graces. Oh! how pained, how saddened is Our Lord on seeing us offending Him even at His feet, under His gaze; and that, in the midst of His choice graces, we live not of Him and for Him, but of the old man and for the old man! Is there no pride in our life, in our thoughts, in our actions?—that pride which delights in self, which secretly judges others, which puts itself above them, esteeming only its own excellence? Here, indeed, is need of conversion, the conversion from spiritual pride. This pride is the worst of

all, since one is then proud of the grace that he receives, of the good that he does.

Have we no self-love, that egotism which makes us love God, not for Himself, but for one's self?—that personal pride which makes self, and not the good God, the end of our life and our love? One never calls one's self to account for this, and yet it exists. It is always I, *ego*.

Every one is attacked by this malady, but we more easily in Community than the devout in the world, where the trials of every day, the crosses of all kinds, leave no leisure for so much thought of self. More occupied with resisting and combating, they more easily forget the spiritual and personal I. But in Community, where we live under the beautiful sun of graces, we have the love of self in our heart, we constantly contemplate self, making it the end of our thoughts and virtues.

Now, for you, adoratrices, your Rule orders you to love God by the sacrifice of your own personality, which ever tends toward becoming a centre, an end, something outside of God.

Again, it is this love of one's personality that is the furnace of idleness, of sensuality, which loves repose and rejects mortification, for the old man does not love mortification. He wants his rest, his tranquility. He is by nature slothful.

Still more, your dominant virtue is the humility of love. That is the royal virtue, which puts in practice the gift and the sacrifice of personality. It is from it that all your other virtues ought to draw their strength. If you have it not, although possessing the others, you are laying up in a perforated sack.

It is the characteristic virtue of the Eucharist. It is the love of the annihilation of Our Lord for man. Without it, you have not your characteristic virtue.

You call yourselves the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. What, then, is the virtue of a servant, if not humility? The servant has no longer a name, a house, a family. He lives no longer for himself. His condition is to serve, his aim is the interest of his master, his name is that of him whom he serves.

In humility, then, lies all for you. This Retreat must perfect you in this virtue, and you ought to labor all your life to acquire it. You will never reach the point of possessing it in all its entirety. That is Our Lord's perfection. But I say that an adoratrice who grows in the humility of love, will be the holiest of all.

Examine, then, attentively whether or not you are striving to attain it, how you stand in this so necessary virtue. Examine whether you love God with a perfect love; whether, on the contrary, you do not love the virtues for yourselves,—good works, graces, the neighbor for self, and not for God. See whether you are not your own end, your own centre. The love of annihilation is necessary.

In this Retreat, begin by the grace of conversion. Begin by that. Then apply yourself to your grace of vocation and, lastly, to your grace of adoration. These are the three degrees of grace that God vouchsafes you, and they exact of you corresponding duties.

Examine them in the light of love that Our Lord offers you during these days of

grace. By it He wishes to testify to you His friendship, to make you repose at His feet, to repair your strength, and renew you in fervor. Act in such a way that this Retreat may be the best of all.



The ETERNAL LOVE of GOD.

OD has loved us from all eternity. This is a truth upon which we ought to meditate all our life. We have always existed in the love of the good God, always been present to the thought of the Holy Trinity. The Father thought of His creature, the Son of those that He was to redeem, the Holy Spirit of those that He was to sanctify.

God has always loved me! Grand thought, which shows our greatness and the nobility of our origin. We were still in nothingness, although in God we had a life preexistent to our creation. He saw us, He loved us with a love of benevolence, as a mother already loves the child she bears in her womb.

He pressed us to His Heart, saying: "Behold this little creature who will be born at such a time, under such circumstances, who will have such and such a grace, and who will love Me!" This truth ought to rouse gratitude in us. God loved us first. Then our love belongs to Him, though it will

never return what it owes to infinite love. To the creature who would demand our heart, we should respond "God has loved me first. It is to Him I owe it."

The good God loves us with a love of benevolence. He does not love us from interested motives, for He has no need of us. He has loved us, then, only to testify for us love, a love absolutely gratuitous. He loves us to render us happy. He gives me everything without thought of self-interest, for I can do nothing to increase His glory and happiness.

Still more, He has created us under the best conditions of grace, in a Catholic country, of Christian parents, who have given us a pious education—but how number up all the graces with which He has surrounded us in order to lead us where we are!

He has chosen you to serve Him in His Sacrament of Love, and to belong to Him alone. Do you deserve it? It is a grace of preference. But by it, He reveals to you the whole plan of His eternal love, the design of His providence is manifested to you. He

predestined you, He created you and conserved you in His love only that one day you might know Him, love Him, and serve Him by the gift of your life, only that you might give yourself to Him who has given you all things.

God desires to be the centre and the end of man's love. He has subjected to him everything in the universe, and He wants his love for Himself, for Himself alone. He expressly reserves it for Himself. He wishes to be his end, in order to be the first to have all his love, and here there are no limits. He wishes that we love Him with a filial, absolute, sovereign love. This is the precept that He has given to all men.

But there is a love that God has not exacted of all and that He leaves us free to offer Him, namely, the virginal love which is given to Him without being shared by any creature. We were free either to offer Him a virginal heart, or to ally with Him a creature in our love, by a union which He Himself has consecrated. But we have not desired this portion, however honorable

it might have been. We have preferred God to all else, because He revealed Himself to us with more loveliness, because He showed Himself to our soul with more love than to many others. Ah! here it is that we see His benevolence, His preventing love of preference! On our side, we owe Him a love unique, whole, and entire.

He has said to us: "As creature, you owe Me love as to your last end. But if you wish to love Me still more, with a pure, virginal love, I will introduce you into the privacy of My Heart." And your ravished soul exclaimed "My God, I will love only Thee!"

How you ought to thank the good God for having prepared and reserved this choice grace for you! What happiness! What honor! How you ought to love Him!

And, now, how respond to the love of a God who wishes to be loved in a special manner by you, who wishes to be the only end of your life, of your mind, and of your heart? Ah! let us ask His pardon for having spent so much of our life with

out loving Him. Let us thank Him, let us live on acts of thanksgiving, and thus return to Him the fruits of the grace of which we have deprived Him by loving Him too little up to this day.

We generally say that time lost never returns. This is true if we love God only to fulfil the commandment; but in embracing the counsels, by doing more than we are rigorously obliged to do, we regain lost time. How beautiful it is to see a soul who wishes to repair for lost love and who says: "I do not want to be satisfied with the Commandment to love. Nothing will be too much for the love of my God." In one day, such a soul does more than another in a lifetime. Thus it was that Saint Magdalen with one act of love redeemed her whole past. "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much!"



CONFERENCE

ON DIRECTION.

DIRECTION should apply not to our sins, but to our defects. We should examine and expose in it our defects of body, mind, heart, and will, also our shortcomings in the service of Our Lord.

The defects of the body are those exterior faults which proceed from temperament and from individual character. Temperament itself is not a defect, but only its excesses, its sallies against sound reason. You are lively. Is that a fault? No. But in what do you exceed through vivacity? Here is the object of direction. The defect is the excess.

Remember that the exterior must be corrected first. Look at your soul, then, in your exterior, in order to see what there is to be made over.

After that, you must examine whether there are any defects of heart, that is, whether there are any disorderly affections or antipathies. You must see clearly whither your

heart is carried, whether it does not love too much, whether it does not seek too eagerly those that it finds sympathetic. If it does, it is natural, imperfect. — But I do not consent to it.—Then there is no sin. But it is none the less a bad root on which direction ought to be exercised. Direction is not confession.

Direction is the history of our soul.

Lay open temptations of sympathy or of aversion toward the neighbor. With self, what temptations to discouragement, dejection, sadness? With God, what temptations against confidence in Him at prayer at Adoration? So much for the heart.

For the will, say what costs you in regard to obedience, tell your repugnances, in what you have the most trouble to obey. The resistance of nature shows you on what point your will is more feeble, and by what you might slip into formal sin.

As for the defects of the mind, they are more tenacious than the others. They must be followed up long and attentively in direction, but without discouragement.

While by violence we may readily snatch the body from what it covets; while the heart as quickly forgets that it has loved when we change its object, the mind reasons, reflects, and cannot turn away from that on which it has fixed itself.

The mind leads the man, his senses, his heart, and his will. If it is not ruled by the Spirit of God, it is very bad. It becomes satanic pride and the principle of ruin.

One's defects of mind, one's fixed and personal ideas must be well searched into. It must be seen whether any thought troubles you, habitually disquiets you, above all in prayer and Adoration.

We must be very careful not to allow ourselves to entertain certain thoughts, which become for the mind a kind of disease. When one indulges an impression of pleasure, and still more of pain, the mind finally loses all tranquility. It is no longer sufficiently at peace to pray, and so the soul grows quite sick, because the mind is sick.

Oh! guard well against trouble of mind!
The body is stubborn; but when we have

conquered it from the beginning, it becomes our slave. When the heart does not relish God, it flies to the creature, because it has the need of pouring itself out; but if God is proposed to it, if He is shown to it in all His love, it returns and attaches itself to Him. In the same manner, souls that have passionately loved pleasure, once returned to God, abandon the world with the same ardor, fly toward perfection, and become saints.

But for the mind, it is another thing. When a fault has grown to be a fault of the mind, it is very difficult to conquer it and to deliver one's self from it. It is commonly said that a proud man cannot be corrected. Why? Because pride is a defect that has its seat in the mind. He is persuaded that he is always right, he does not admit that he is proud, he adores his own opinion, and wishes to receive neither admonition nor reprimand.

Again, violence can effect nothing against the troubles and defects of the mind; rather does it contribute to keeping them alive.

Some people become irritated and excited. They resolve energetically to think no more about their trouble, and yet they return to it a hundred times. They say: "I will not disquiet myself about that," and they force themselves to turn away from it. But all is useless, their disquietude redoubles. What, then, must be done?—Call patience to your aid. Combât by patience.

In practice, when a person endures pain of mind, let him examine whether it comes from some sin, or whether it is only a trial. If it is from sin, it is easy to get rid of it. He has but to go to confession. If it is only a trial or a temptation, never dwell on it wilfully. Patience is the only means to be employed in this case. If a person allows his mind to become disquieted under such circumstances, he will get sick, and that will only increase the evil.

He must not disquiet himself as to the consequences. It is clear that, as soon as one wishes not to sin, he does not sin. But then, one does not feel this assurance, and it is that which makes him suffer.

By what sign, may it be recognized that a thought is a mental trial? When the fixed and persistent thought is not simply in God or in duty, that is, when, instead of remaining at home in our own house, we go abroad into those of others.

We are all inclined to that, and subject to this kind of trial. The devil is always seeking to seize upon our mind, for it is the gate of the house.

We should be like children, without preoccupation, and masters of our mind in the good God. When you come to Adoration, to Communion, you should be, as it were, entirely fresh, so that nothing past should burden or occupy your mind, in order that you may be ready to receive whatever impression the good God wishes. You must have peace of mind, and for that end, you must be submissive to God, resolved to follow His will, and to accomplish it as soon as it is made manifest to you; in a word, it is necessary for you to be entirely given up to the divine will. Here is peace. Doubtless, you will have combats, but they will

not harm you, because you will be in the peace of duty, in the peace of grace and of the Law.

In giving an account of your soul, you must study God's way in you, what direction He gives you interiorly. Explain, first of all, what is your grace of recollection, what sacrifices God demands of you, and what are your attractions in prayer. See what is the grace that unites you to God, that makes you practise His holy will. God attracts sometimes by a grace of force, sometimes by a grace of sweetness. His Spirit is very active, and It constantly solicits the attentive soul. If you do not perceive Its movement, it is because you are not at home in your own soul. Grace knocks in vain, and passes on.

Observing the foregoing points, you will give a good account of your interior. Do not fear to disclose your exterior defects. Timidity in this matter is a sign of self-love.

But hearken to this: You must reach the point at which you live of the spiritual relig-

ious life, of the Eucharistic life, that is, you must live of God Himself, purely for God, above all creatures. Habituate yourself to find in God your food, your nourishment, your strength, and your life. I tell you, go to Our Lord, abide in Him. I shall add that the true religious ought to possess great obedience, submission, and humility. but at the same time just as great liberty and independence.

The good God has bestowed on me a great grace, and that is I am not disquieted as to whether I have or have not hearts devoted to me. And if any one should come and say to me that he thinks of me in his heart, I should say to Him: "You are, then, very rich in heart? What! You have only one poor little heart, and you do not keep it all entire for the good God? That is too bad!" Love, then, those that hold the place of God, and render them filial obedience, but passing beyond, go and rest in God Himself.

I tell you not to restrain your confidence; on the contrary, you ought to open your

heart with all confidence. But the heart itself, the final affection, ought to be for God alone.

A soul espoused to Our Lord, ought to reach the point of living of God, and acting with her gaze upon Our Lord. He enters into relations with her, and He loves her. His love radiates over all that surrounds her. Let her, too, enter into constant and direct communication with Him.

Directors are merely to lead us to God. They are guides whom we should obey, but not a bond, not an attachment, not a servitude. God alone is the end. Let your heart rest in Him, entirely independent of every creature.

The moon is beautiful, because she reflects the sun's rays. When turned toward him, she is wholly white, she is filled with his rays, and she radiates them even to the earth. But let a cloud intervene, and she is at once in darkness. Thus it is that a soul turned toward God is filled with the rays of His grace, and she reflects them even on her neighbor by charity. But nothing

must intercept the influences that she receives from her focus of light.

Let us give ourselves, then, neither to creatures nor to ourselves, but let us live of God, for God, and be always at His disposition, always under His gaze of light and love.



GOD has CREATED US

for HEAVEN.



OD has created us for heaven, and not for earth. He has created us in order to render us eternally happy. The life of time is only the road, the bridge, over which we must pass in order to enter Paradise.

As soon as a man is baptized, his name is inscribed in the Book of Life. He has his place in heaven, he is an heir of glory, he has the right of heritage with Jesus Christ and in Him.

Paradise is God possessed, the term of God's love for us. Love longs to give itself and to share all that it has and all that it is. God, who is infinite love, does not desire to be happy alone. He puts us in Paradise, in order to give Himself to us just as He is, in all His perfections, in His infinite happiness.

Here below, God cannot give Himself to us in the whole extent of His love, because we are in a state of purification, incapable

of receiving and containing Him. In order that God should give Himself fully to us, we should have the capacity of Jesus Christ. He forms it in us day by day, but only on the day of our death, if we die in His love, will it be complete and perfect.

Here below, God enters into us and gives Himself according to the measure of the room that we make for Him. We give Him more or less of it. He occupies only just as much as we allow Him, always less than He Himself desires. He is constantly knocking to get in further. He is not entirely within us.

But in heaven, we shall be in God, plunged in Him, totally penetrated by Him, receiving in a capacity in some measure infinite, and that without intermediary. We shall see and love Him in the same way that He sees and loves Himself. This will be the complete communication of perfect love. The saints on this earth have certain presentiments of the tenderness, the intensity, the happiness of this union; and, feeling that they cannot yet taste it, they groan, they suffer as did

Saint Teresa, who died from not being able to die.

But a soul who does not live by love for God, suffers in another way. She is not happy, because she does not correspond generously enough with divine love. She hears a call and feels an attraction to which she does not respond. God punishes her by preventing her from being at rest in the happiness of sloth that she creates for herself.

I will say that divine love, also, suffers from not being able to enter, that some do it violence by resisting it. With the eyes of faith, we may be able to see the love of God soliciting our heart, and begging us to allow it to penetrate further, and we say to it: "It is too much. One would have to love too much. Do not come in!"

How often God is thus dismissed! He can enter only if we permit Him, and it seems that the demon, who also stands at the gate of our heart, says to God mockingly: "What are you doing there, Lord? You are waiting for them to open to you, but it is trouble lost. They do not want you,

They prefer the nothings and the vanities that I give, to your love!" And thus does the demon humiliate God's love. But in Paradise, the love of God finds no obstacle. It displays itself in all its power, and the soul is in God as God is in the soul. Then there is liberty of love, effusion of love, and it is this that makes Paradise. God gives His gifts, His goodness, His riches, His tenderness. He gives to the soul all that He has, and in Him the soul is deified as well as beatified.

Behold our end, to become one with God by love, by the possession, and the enjoyment of unlimited happiness; to live in love eternal, happy with the happiness of God, beautiful with His beauty, rejoicing in the happiness of Mary, of all the elect, and of the angels, as if it were our own. What a sublime end! what an end of love!

With a true and earnest desire, God wishes us in Paradise. He wants to make us all enter therein, and that at once. This was the desire that would have been realized for all, if Adam had not broken the law

of love by sin. But now God gives it only to those that are clothed with the merits of His Divine Son's Redemption

As for us, we are in the way, we are going there, we are tending to it along the road that God Himself has marked out. The soul that loves God dies not. She simply reaches the end of her journey, and the barriers fall. She only changes her condition. Her love of suffering becomes a love of beatitude. Her body itself does but rest in the earth, therein preparing for its renewal in glory. Plants and animals die, but man dies not, he only changes his state. The earth will not retain the dust of his bones. It will restore all for the glorious resurrection, and the whole man will live again forever.

Paradise is, then, our end prepared by God in order that we may be enabled to love Him infinitely. We must, then, desire it for that, above all, since we can there love the good God without obstacle, without end, without limit.

There are degrees in the desire of heaven.

Some say "I want to go to heaven, because I shall be happy there, because people are so well-off there. " This is the first and lowest of desires for heaven. It is lawful, but it is chiefly the desire of those that live only for self, that work only for wages as the day-laborers. It is lawful, it fits in perfectly with the Christian law. But where is the love, where is the desire to see the good God?

Others say: "I want to go to Paradise, that I may no more offend God." That is better, that desire is more noble, it has the interests of God's glory more in view. There is some love in that motive since it is to be forever faithful to Him that they desire heaven.

But there are others who say: "I want to go to Paradise in order to love the good God, to see Him, to praise Him, and always to thank Him." Oh! here is perfection, since they want the good God for Himself. What a pleasing thing to hear one speaking in this way! We say: Here are souls who really love. It is, indeed, beautiful!

But would it not be better, instead of desiring heaven, to ask to remain upon earth in order to labor and suffer in humiliation?

Some of the saints made this prayer in a transport of love. But I think, taking the thing in itself, there is more perfection in wishing to go to God in order to love Him more; the one desires to increase his crown, the other wants to glorify God by the love of heaven, which is far more powerful than love here below. If the desire of heaven in order to love more were not in itself more perfect and gave not more glory to God than the desire of remaining on earth in order to labor more, how explain those ardent longings that the saints in general had for heaven, even at the time when they were laboring most for God? Had they thought it more perfect to remain, they would not have so urgently supplicated to be united to God. But they knew that in heaven they could love and glorify Him more. Thus Saint Paul, though converting the nations, earnestly demanded the dissolution of his body. However holy

one may be, he will never love as much here below as he will love in the Fatherland.

Behold the beautiful desire of heaven, behold the most perfect! Sigh thus after Paradise.

Love essentially longs for union. The greater the love, the more it aims at close and perfect union. If I love the good God, I desire Him, He loves me, and He, too, desires me. These two attractions end by exhausting life, and then love enters into all its power and its liberty of expansion in the bosom of God.

The desire of heaven is holy. God wishes us frequently to desire it, and that is the reason He has filled our life with suffering, persecution, and the cross. It is for that He permits the inconstancy of human friendships. He does not want us to be attached to the goods of this world, nor to any one in the world. We are not made for one another, but for God alone. The happiness of this world is but a point without continuity, without length. One cannot attach himself to it for any length of time, cannot establish himself in it.

We complain of the difficulties of the way, of the crosses that we encounter. They are the key of Paradise. Life is a road bordered by briers and thorns. Our Lord is walking before us bearing His Cross, let us follow Him. He has left the imprint of His steps, let us place our feet in them. If we turn to the right or to the left, thinking to find happiness, we shall scratch ourselves with the thorns, for it is the Saviour Himself who compares the joys of this world to thorns.

Follow, then, Our Lord, for He is on the way to Paradise. Take your cross, carry it courageously to the end in order to arrive in His suite. Fear not to suffer and to die daily for Paradise. If you find the road difficult, Our Lord says to you that you will thereby arrive more quickly.

Do not think so much of the difficulties of the way. That which His grace has traced out for you, is the good way for you, and His mercy will sustain you in it. It is that way which will surely lead you straight to heaven.

HEAVEN is GIVEN

ONLY TO PURITY OF HEART.



OD in His love has created us for heaven. Heaven ought to be the object of all our desires, our only true end. We are on earth only to render ourselves worthy of heaven. But heaven is not given; it has to be purchased. Little children who die after Baptism receive it without personal merit, it is true. Our Lord pays for them, but adults receive it only on a title of justice, *Coronam justitiæ*. True it is that God gives us the means of meriting it, but we must correspond with His grace and faithfully employ those means. He gives and He recompenses in us His own gifts, if we have rendered them fruitful. Thus does He reconcile the goodness of His mercy and the requirements of His justice.

Let us not forget that we have to merit, purchase, and pay for heaven. The present time is intended only for amassing its price. The crown of justice is given only to victory,

and to receive it we must persevere till death. It is not enough to run the race for some years, one is crowned only when he reaches the goal. For every one, the absolute and necessary price of heaven, is fidelity to his own grace, to his particular grace. God does not demand from all an equal measure of merits and virtues; but there is, nevertheless, one measure strictly required, one condition essential for all, and that is the state of grace. One must be pure to enter heaven. This law is indispensable and without exception,—heaven is awarded only to purity. Nothing soiled will ever enter there.

Hence, not knowing when God will call us, let us have always at hand the price of our Paradise, and let us be pure of heart, pure in our life, free from all sin. The purer we shall be, for there are degrees in purity, the more glorious shall we be in heaven, and the nearer we shall approach to God. It is purity of life that decides the degree of every saint's glory.

„We must, then, adhere to purity of life. Let us not turn away from it, for it is

essential, absolutely necessary. We must be free from every mortal sin under pain of eternal damnation, and from every venial sin under pain of delaying our happiness, sometimes for a very long time

Do you want, then, to go to Paradise? Be pure from every mortal sin, and I add: Be pure from every deliberate venial sin. Oh, never consent to it; or if you do get rid of it at once! In the Old Law, God prescribed innumerable purifications. This was the warning that He gave us of the necessity of purifying ourselves incessantly by the baptism of love in the Holy Spirit.

Are you sensitive on the subject of purity, avoiding even the appearance of sin, the least occasions, all that which, far or near, looks like sin? If so, you are on the straight road to Paradise; purgatory will have no work to do in you.

Shun, then, the least faults, in order not to force Our Lord to make you wait for your reward. It distresses Him much to put souls into purgatory. He does it, because

His justice demands it, but it is most painful to His love.

The conclusion of all this is that you be ready to die rather than commit a mortal sin, and ready to die, also, rather than commit a venial sin with deliberation. Rather endure all things, rather death itself than offend God! It would be better to let the whole world go to ruin rather than try to save it by the smallest venial sin.

Live, then, in this disposition of enduring everything, of allowing yourself to be despoiled of everything, to be ready to beg your bread barefoot, rather than consent to a venial sin.

But how often we tell fibs to excuse ourselves and hide our faults!

How many sins against the neighbor! Be very strict in this regard. God is very reserved in pardoning such sins. Because they are sins of society, committed against family union, He metes out their punishment upon the whole family. They strike Him in the Heart, and He has not patience to await the other life in order to punish them. He

takes vengeance upon them in this world, and terribly! Such faults violate His two most sacred laws, that of the love of God, and that of the love of the neighbor. And yet, how many faults against charity, humility, patience with regard to the neighbor! Our Lord warns us that we shall render an account for every useless word. What will it be for those words against authority, those backbiting words, those words against God's goodness, those words against the poor of Jesus Christ, against the lowly who are already humiliated by their inferiority, whatever it may be!

Ah, what matter for the examen! What fuel for the fire of purgatory! Do not excuse yourselves for these faults. Some may tell you through charity that they are small, that you commit them only through levity and surprise. But never do you say that to yourselves. Can we excuse ourselves for having given pain to the good God?

Now examine again the good that you have spoiled, the grace that you have lost. —They are not sins, do you say?—In them-

selves, perhaps not; but yes, indeed, in their cause. How have you lost those graces? By sloth, by negligence, is it not? You are, then, guilty of negligence and sloth.

Yes, yes, you may expect to go a long time to purgatory, and for these trifles, for a little word that escaped you, and which you knew not how to repress. Ah, you will remember it a long time! A little laziness, a little duty put off, for all such things you will pay in purgatory even to the last farthing.

Fly the shadow of sin, says the Holy Spirit, as you would flee from a viper. Notice carefully that He is speaking of only the shadow of sin, and He recommends flight from it as from death itself.

Do not delude yourselves. We can appear perfect exteriorly, and yet commit many sins interiorly. Most of the sins of a religious are in the heart, in thought, feeling, pausing in the interior will without manifesting themselves in the exterior act.

And then, what abomination, very often what folly! We commit faults against the

good God in order not to displease the creature, in order not to sadden her, or even to give her pleasure; but no one deserves that you should give her pleasure at the price of venial sin!

I can understand faults of weakness and surprise; but what I cannot understand, is that some commit such sins through fear of displeasing the creature. What I understand is that I am master of my own conscience, that no one can do it violence, and I would rather make an enemy than wound my conscience.

Is it not true that a child can never be forced to strike its father? Well conscience has no friend. When there is question of sin, you know no one. It is life or death. "This thing pleases you? So much the better. That thing displeases you? So much the worse. I know only God and my own conscience!"

The world says that the saints are inflexible. That's what they ought to be. It says that religious people are intolerant. That's what they have to be.

You say that we should yield all we can, and be conciliating. You are going to sully yourselves. Are you obliged to taste poison in order to try it? Remember that old man Eleazar whose enemies wanted him to eat in secret the flesh of the sacrifice, which was forbidden. No, he preferred death.

Well now, our whole Christian life religious and Eucharistic, ought to tend to make us purer. The sun's rays, striking through the air, purify it. Ah, behold the divine sun, the sun of love! It ought to purify you. The love of God is the fire of our life. Its first and last effect is to purify us.

Remember that they who have a pure heart are happy, because they will see God, and because they are the virgins who, singing His canticle, will follow the Lamb in heaven whithersoever He goeth.

I was very much touched the first time that I read that verse. Not all the saints, but the saints that are virgins, have the beautiful privilege of drawing nearest to the Lamb.

Consequently, be always pure. And when

you shall have displeased Our Lord, give yourself no rest until you have purified yourself, and He has pardoned you. Be pure, and for that be very loving. It is love that makes the refinement and the whiteness of purity. It is love that renders it luminous and brilliant. May Our Lord say to you as to Magdalen: "Many sins are forgiven you, because you have loved much."

A pure soul is heaven begun, for Paradise does but consummate and crown her purity.



CONFERENCE

ON the EXAMENS.

IT is good and necessary to have some methods for the different exercises of one's life, because if we rely on our good will, we shall lose three-fourths of our time in considering how to perform them, aridity being more frequent than fervor.

Methods are to the devout life what discipline is for an army. If every one fought according to his own ideas, there would be no longer any force of cohesion. The order well given, well transmitted and executed from point to point, assures victory. In the same way, exercises made with order support one another and encompass our life, hindering it from straying, and maintaining it in the facility of acting always according to obedience and grace.

I am going to speak to you about examens. First, let us lay down some principles.

If every religious were very recollected in God, he would be always present to himself and would follow without effort and by a single interior glance, even the first movements of his heart. He would, at first sight recognize all that might be contrary to the truth or to the sanctity of God.

To supply for the weakness of virtue and to hold it always on the alert, your Rule orders you three examens every day, namely, the examen of foresight in the morning, the particular examen at noon; and the general examen of the whole day in the evening before retiring.

Perform these different examens with great care and diligence, because they are the indispensable means to arrive at the knowledge of your faults and effectually to correct them. Make them even the matter connected with your spiritual direction, as far as regards exterior defects and temptations.

In your examens, aim first at correcting all your exterior defects, one after another, or according as circumstances render you

weaker in one or the other. Exterior defects wound directly and openly the respect and dignity of your service near Our Lord. They are more opposed to charity and the edification of the neighbor.

Remember, however, that the best made examens always remain fruitless, if the sanction of penitence and some means of greater vigilance do not assure their efficacy. One of these means is the little reminder which we call a *bernard*, whose beads serve to mark, as soon as committed, faults or omissions, in order that they may be recalled more readily in the next examen. Get one, and carry it about you and, at every failure in your resolutions, draw down a bead. It is very simple but little means lead to great things.

Now, let us see the nature of the examen and its practice.

In the first place, you must give to it primary importance, and consecrate to it all the diligence it deserves. The examen is the true discussion of our interior and exterior acts, in order to observe and discover

defects, humbling ourselves for them before God, and trying to amend for His love and glory. .

People do not like the examen. It is the most difficult and the most repugnant act of piety. Because no one likes to behold himself always guilty and always humiliated. It also costs much to reflect on one's thoughts, to analyze and discuss them. One would often prefer some great exterior mortification to some minutes of serious examen; and yet, without the examen, amendment is impossible. One never corrects that of which he is ignorant. Hence, more true humility, since this virtue rests on the truth derived from the knowledge of one's misery. Confidence in God loses its eloquence before poverty and misery, and even love is silent, because one is in self-ignorance.

It is, then, too true that a pious soul who does not follow herself up, who does not examine herself regularly, is no longer sensitive to the avoidance of sin. She becomes exterior, an enigma and a mystery to herself. She is like a wheatfield, which

presents a fine appearance, because it is still green, but which tares invade and devour the sap. On the day of the harvest only poor and scattered ears will be found.

A pious soul who does not examine herself is always on extremes, either in blind security, like the merchant who ruins himself by selling at a loss without knowing it; or in false and exaggerated humility, because she does not want to take the trouble to examine and determine precisely the truth of her state. She thinks that she has done well and has said all in confessing herself before God and her own self the poorest and most miserable of creatures, and this same accusation she carries to the tribunal of penance. Now, what happens? She remains ever in her defects, her piety, meantime, constantly decreasing.

The best agent of the examen is love. A soul that loves God with all her heart easily sees her faults, and even the smallest movement of evil nature, and she is instantly conscious of the presence of the tempter. Such a soul beholds herself in God

as in a faithful mirror. She reads herself in God as does the child who, at a mere glance, reads its fault in the trouble, or the silence, or the withdrawal of affection on the part of its father and mother. This is the most perfect examen, since it is in its centre of action and perfection, in the life of love, which suffices for all things, and is the end of all means of holiness, whatever they may be.

This should be the first disposition of the soul on coming before the Blessed Sacrament. The light of the divine fire that burns in the Heart of Our Lord ought, at the beginning of all your Adorations, penetrate into the inmost recesses of your soul, and show you in one instant all its poverty and all its actual misery. It should fill it at once with a profound sense of its ingratitude, its unworthiness while, at the same time, encouraging it by confidence of obtaining pardon, since you are at the foot of the throne of grace and mercy.

When one enters the presence of a prince, his first act is to look at him, and then to

cast a glance on self to see whether everything about him is as it should be, whether he will be pleasing to him just as he is.

But in this method there is less an examen properly so called than the vigilance of refinement. Make of the examen a religious exercise in itself, according to the form and method that we shall here give you by the application of the four ends of the Holy Sacrifice.

The first is the examen of foresight, which is made in the morning. It should last only five minutes.

1. *Adore* Our Lord as your King, who is calling you to labor this day in His lovely service and for His glory. Offer Him at once and for the whole day the homage of your heart, mind, body, of your whole life, because He sovereignly deserves it from every creature. Rejoice at the honor, the happiness of spending this beautiful day wholly in the service of the adorable Eucharist.

2. *Thank* this good Master for so great a grace, as well as for all others of your

life, but principally for your Baptism, your vocation, and for the graces His love has prepared for you to-day. Thank Him for accepting your services. To serve Him one day is worth a whole life time, all Paradise.

3. *Recognize* your weakness and defects in view of so beautiful and holy a vocation as is that of Adoration. *Confess* anew to Our Lord your faults of the eve, your habitual tepidity. *Detest* again that spirit of the world which is always reviving, the power of self-love, dissipation of soul, cowardice of the will; and *promise* Our Lord to correct your dominant defect, of which you will determine some special act to shun and to correct on the present day. *Recall* the particular resolution you took for the whole month at your monthly retreat. Resolve what acts of it you will make during the day; but, above all, fix upon some penance to perform after your failings, immediately after, if possible. This is important.

4. *Pray* and ask Our Lord for the grace to be more faithful to-day. Commend yourself to the Blessed Virgin and to your good angel,

and set to work with the help of grace.

We may, also, make five acts for the examen in this order: Recall the presence of God, and adore Him; thank Him; implore light of the Holy Spirit through the intercession of Mary; then inquire into one's faults; lastly, repent and resolve.

The four ends of the Holy Sacrifice comprise these acts, as you see. It is better for you to make use of this method, which you already employ at Adoration and in Communion. That leads to unity in piety; and it is very advantageous to simplify these pious means.

In the same way, again, when a feast, or a mystery, or some special circumstance presents itself, let your examen touch upon the spirit of the occasion. Adore Our Lord in the state of this mystery, and perform the other acts in its spirit. You will, then, have its grace for the whole day.

The second examen is that which I shall call particular, because it bears upon some certain point. Make it, also, during two or three minutes only.

1. Adore Our Lord as a good Master, in whose service you are happy to be.

2. Thank Him, but quickly, by a single act, for the past half-day.

3. Cast a rapid glance on the actions of the morning, to see whether you have performed them well, according to the law of obedience and the virtue proper to them. Then concentrate your examen upon the virtue that you are aiming to acquire especially during this month. See whether you have made some positive acts of the virtue that you had determined in the examen of foresight.

4. Excite yourself to contrition and to keep it better.

The third examen is that of the whole day, called the general examen. It is made on all the duties of your vocation and on all the faults you may have committed during the whole day.

Make it, also, by the four ends of the Holy Sacrifice, but with the following modifications:

1. Adore Our Lord as your Judge, to

whom you come to render an account of your day as of the last, perhaps, that He will give you before calling you to appear at His tribunal.

Thank Him for all the graces of the day, run over the principal ones, and praise His infinite goodness toward you.

3. Humble yourself, and examine your conscience by glancing at the different duties of the day from your rising until the evening. Recall the resolutions of the morning and of noon. See whether you have made the acts that you promised.

4. Lastly, excite yourself to true contrition as you do when you receive sacramental absolution. Make satisfaction to Divine Justice by the penance proposed, and abandon yourself to the mercy of God. Then go asleep near Him, under His roof, or better, in His arms so maternal.

Remark relatively to the contrition of the examen, the best means is humbly to ask it of God. It is not necessary to feel it. He really has it who asks for it with humility and earnestness, although he may feel no

movement of it. The sensible feeling is never requisite. As one advances in age, he feels less. As for those that always want to feel keenly, if they are not careful, they will hurt themselves.

Remark again that the examen ought to be made on positive acts, which have really taken place, whether from without, or only in the will. As to temptations, do not try to recall them, to give life to their phantoms, in order to know whether, perhaps, you have not consented. This is not necessary. It is a ruse of the demon to make the temptation return, to make you find in it a little pleasure, and to extort from you a half-consent.

No, be conscientious, but not scrupulous. When one has been wounded, one feels it enough without having need to search minutely. You will very soon be conscious of remorse and trouble. Humble yourself for it without trying to awaken what has been hushed to rest, and which might, perhaps, sully you by its remembrance.

So much for the examen, its nature and

its spirit. Be very faithful to it, and you will find peace in it, while at the same time Our Lord will reward you magnificently for having faithfully administered in the little things of every day, the talents and -graces that He has entrusted to you.



WE MUST LIVE

of the MERCY of GOD.

 HE Prophet composed a Canticle, the most beautiful with which his heart had been inspired. It is the canticle of the mercy of God, in which he repeats at every verse that His mercy endureth forever. (Ps. CXXXV.)

David had good reason to bless that mercy, to sing that ocean of mercy, because he had sinned, and that mercy had saved him from his sin. There are saints who are the work of divine mercy, and who became greater saints by the power of mercy and by the constant homage they afterward rendered to it, than they would have been by innocence and virginity. Witness Saint Peter, far greater, far more devoted after his sin than before, also Saint Paul and Saint Magdalen. Their sanctity was nourished on mercy, their tears were the food of their love.

If you are angels, live of the majesty of

God; but if you are human and sinners, live of the mercy, exalt the goodness of God who has saved you, and who gives you life. We must learn how to exalt the mercy of the good God, to see therein all our gifts, all our graces, and to have constantly on our lips this cry of gratitude: "My God, Thou hast been so good to me who am so wicked!"

This thought of past sins does not render one unhappy. It detaches from sin and attaches to the divine goodness. If one weeps over it, the heart pours itself out in sweet tears of penance and love, and such tears make one happy.

Every one knows how much he owes to the mercy of God, and we can all say that it is due to Him that we have not fallen into hell. The more sins we have committed, the more grateful should we be to His mercy.

If we have never sinned mortally, God's mercy in pardoning us our venial sins is not less. It is always the fruit of Jesus' blood. And then we renew them so often

that God has to exercise it incessantly, while the occasions of mortal sin are rarer. Besides, when we sin venially, we are in His friendship, and we afflict His Heart and His love in the tenderest point.

God's mercy is magnanimous. He pardons generously and forever, for He knows not how to forget only half. He restores the joy of innocence and the honor of the first state. He pardons not as a man, but as God. He wishes us still to remember our sins, but with a thought of love, of gratitude, in order to laud His mercy which has pardoned them.

And yet, we sometimes tremble and ask whether God has indeed pardoned our sins. Have you prayed earnestly that He would pardon them? Have you come with confidence that He might pardon them? Yes. Well, then, God has pardoned them. That confidence—it is He who has inspired you with it. Had He not wished to pardon you, He would not have called you to Him, nor led you to His feet. And again, did not Our Lord give you some moments, in

Communion or in devout Adoration, above all at night, in which you tasted so sweet a peace that you were surprised at it? Alone with the good God, you were so happy that you forgot your body and the earth. You were transported into an atmosphere of divine peace. It seemed to you to eat the good God! This is a proof that He has pardoned your sins. God loads you with caresses, presses you to His Heart, embraces you. If He did not love you as His child to whom He has restored its rights and His love, He would not treat you thus.

In the same way, the contentment you feel after your confessions is a proof of your pardon and of the renewal of friendship. God wishes us to have the consciousness of pardon, by the friendship that He testifies toward us. How consoling this is! He is not satisfied with giving us faith in the power of the Sacrament of Penance, He gives us, moreover, testimonies of friendship, in order that we may go away happy and, as it were, sure of our pardon.

God's mercy is such that one might think

He wishes to tempt us. Our Lord says to us: "Sin not. Nevertheless, if you offend My Father, come quickly to Me, and I will pardon you." Can mercy go farther than to grant pardon to the sinner in advance, and promise to place itself between him and Divine Justice? These are the excesses of mercy which triumph over God's justice—*Misericordia superexaltat iudicium?*

Live, then, of this mercy. Let its patience in waiting so long and pardoning so often draw you toward it. The sooner you return after having sinned, the sooner will you be pardoned. Consequently, no discouragement! Never say: "I have sinned too much to be pardoned. See how many times I fall back into the same faults!"—No, but see how much greater than sin is mercy. You are able to count your sins, but you cannot measure mercy. Return, then, always without delay as often as you offend, and say, as the weeping child to its mother: "My God, I have given Thee pain, I have wounded Thy Heart, pardon me!" You will not rise without having received pardon.

The good God is, then, very good in His mercy! He has multiplied the means of pardon. It is not necessary to confess every time you have committed a venial sin. He has placed in your hands the sacramentals, the *Confiteor*, the *Pater*, and above all holy water. Any one of these with an act of regret, purifies you. Holy Mass and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament are, also, sacraments of mercy. Lastly, there is love, the turning of the contrite heart toward Our Lord, which is an absolving from venial faults. How sweet to receive absolution from Our Lord Himself! When a soul is at Our Lord's feet, humbling herself, believing herself unworthy to communicate because she has sinned, oh, Our Lord pardons her, gives her absolution for her fault! Our Lord loves us to make Him pardon us in this way, because love then repairs far beyond the injury of the fault.

Believe me, then, live always of the mercy of God. Let me suppose that you have never committed sin; but can you not commit it? Oh! yes, as much as the greatest

criminals. If, then, you can commit it, what difference is there between you and him who has really committed it? What has preserved you? Mercy, the same that reclaimed, me, a sinner. We are then, both the one and the other, debtors to this divine mercy. And you yourselves owe it more, you whom it preserved at the moment, perhaps, when having already taken the first step toward evil, you were going to consummate it. By withdrawing you from it, mercy has performed two miracles instead of one. Live, then, also on gratitude toward it, and place all your trust in it.

If the good God were not infinite in mercy, if He did not know that it could never be exhausted, however great the floods of it that He constantly pours out, He never would have undertaken to lead us to Paradise. How many preventing graces to give, how many falls to repair, how many long-suffering pardons, what innumerable pardons during a man's lifetime! The good God is never discouraged, His mercy never

abandons us, and at our last sigh, it is there to receive us.

It is God's mercy that disposes for us all our graces. It was it that prepared for you this vocation which you never could have merited by yourselves. So many other souls in the world who are purer than you, who deserve more than you to be always in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament as Its servants, Its family! But mercy loves you. It has called you, and it desires now to give you all that is wanting to you.

Ah! say whether or not the good God has not been good to you, whether He has not been prodigal of mercy! And you will not live in this love, in this infinite mercy? You will still rest your glance on self, and be held back by a spider-web? No, live of the love of God's love and mercy, and you will begin to become saints!



The VIRGINAL LOVE of JESUS.



OD created you in His love. His mercy has loaded you with graces. He has placed you in the best conditions for salvation. How respond to this love, if not by love? God having so greatly loved you, it is for you a necessity to love Him.

But to you, above all, who have vowed yourselves to Him by the religious life, it is a necessity to live of love. The vow of virginity that you have made, is none other than the vow of love, which obliges you by your state, by your vocation to love. The other vows are a profession of the evangelical virtues; but by the vow of virginity, you say to God: "My God, I vow to love Thee perpetually, and none other than Thou shall ever possess my heart."

How beautiful is this vow which gives heart and love to God alone! In the early days of the Church, before there were any monasteries, it was the only vow made, and

by it virgins were religious in the world. They continued to dwell in their families, but they were considered a sacred Order of the Church, an eminent Order, which Saint Paul and the Fathers exalt by the most magnificent eulogiums. Nothing is so beautiful as the prayers of the consecration of a virgin, handed down to us from the Apostolic age!

This vow by itself alone consecrates to God. It separates from the common, communicates a sacred dignity. Like the priest and the chalice of the Holy Sacrifice, the virgin is a sacred thing. Her vow takes the place of the holy anointing. This vow consecrates the virgin to Jesus Christ as His spouse. It is the contract of an eternal alliance with Him. For the woman, it takes the place of the sacerdotal consecration which devotes the Levite to Our Lord as His eternal minister.

Ah, well! you have made this beautiful vow. Its nobility springs from this that it has its seat in the heart, and gives its love and affection to Jesus Christ. It is a vow of absolute

and irrevocable love, which obliges you to love Our God above all others, entirely and in a virginal manner. The vows of obedience and poverty are the way of merit; but the vow of virginity is the way of love and excellence, for it elevates those that make it to the honor of being truly the spouses of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord loves this vow. He is jealous of it. I think, indeed, it is the vow of the heart and of love. You ought, then, to love it in a special manner and without division. You are no longer free as regards your heart and its affections, all belong to your Divine Spouse. Ah! do not mingle the love of creatures with His love. That would be an abominable profanation.

As the unfaithful spouse is branded forever with the name of adulteress, the Church stamps the virgin who violates her vow of virginity with still more shameful disgrace. She calls it sacrilege. It is the name that she gives to those that profane the sacred vessels, the holy temple, the Sacred Hosts, The unfaithful virgin, also, profanes a thing

that is holy and consecrated to Jesus Christ. Our Lord had reserved her for Himself. He wished her to be His, and His alone. He wanted her whole heart, her whole love. She profaned the sacred vessel of Jesus Christ, His ciborium, and His host!

You must, then, love Our Lord as faithful spouses, you must submit to all His rights. You are bound forever, and you will be crowned under the title of faithful virgins, or condemned as sacrilegious virgins.

You have vowed and consecrated yourselves. You must, moreover, be immolated to Our Lord. What do I mean by this? That you must be immolated to the love of your Spouse, and live for Him in continual sacrifice. Your vow, by constituting you a sacred thing, marks you out for sacrifice like the victims that are chosen young, pure, and without blemish, and are destined to be immolated to the Lord from the moment they are separated from the profane.

Love is crucifying. It immolates. Moreover, it is to the Crucified Spouse that you are united. Ought not the spouse to share

the state of her Spouse? It is not yet time to enjoy the happiness of your union. As long as you are 'on earth, you are only the betrothed of Jesus Christ. You belong to Him, you are no longer free, but the plenitude of union and His delights are for heaven. In the meantime, Our Lord will visit you from time to time, and He will send His angels to console you, but you must not expect present enjoyment.

This is the time to perfect yourselves, to adorn yourselves with virtues for the day of your eternal nuptials. Our Lord wants to see in you wise and prudent virgins who fill their lamps with oil, and who watch for the coming of the Spouse. The virtues of Our Lord are not acquired all at once. Their practice costs. Devote yourselves to them without fear, with courage and perseverance. They must be your adornment on the day on which He will present you to His Father for the celebration of the heavenly nuptials in Paradise in presence of His angels.

Recall, however, that, on account of your

title of spouses, you are bound to devote yourselves through love to the practice of the virtues, that all you do ought to prove this love to your Spouse, and that you should recoil from no sacrifice for Him. Let your love be sovereign, absolute, unique, and for nothing but Him. Neither self nor any creature has a right outside of Him. What! you would make yourself the end of that heart which Our Lord ennoble by His grace, which He fills with His love, in order to be the only and sovereign object of it?

Will you make any creature whatsoever the end of that heart by stealing it from Him to whom it belongs? God preserve you from that! In the religious life, above all, you ought to love one another. You form a circle around Our Lord, but He is to be the only centre of it. Let all its rays converge straight to Him. Woe to you, if you do not love Our Lord, or if you do not love Him alone!

But how ought you to love Him? You ought to love Him as He loves you. Love

calls for equality, reciprocity. Now, Our Lord loves you as He loves His Father, that is, just as Jesus loves His Father by a continual reference of all that He is, of all that He does to His glory and service, so Our Lord has a constant relation of love and grace toward you. His Heart, His spirit, His merits are all yours. He loves you with His whole being, making you the end of His thoughts, His love, of all His actions and sufferings.

Behold, then, how you ought to love Him by referring all that you are, all that you have, your merits and sufferings, your entire life to Him, by love. Give Him your mind, in order to think only of Him and for Him; your will, that it may be happy in obeying and serving Him in all that He wills; your body, that He may reproduce in it His virtues and His meritorious sufferings. Establish and preserve this constant relation between your faculties and His faculties, your mind and His mind, your heart and His Heart, your body and His Body, in a word, between your whole being

and His whole Being. In this way, will you love as you are loved.

Our Lord says to you: "I am thinking of you constantly. Why will you not think constantly of Me?"

"My Heart desires only to do you good, to fill you with love. Why does your heart not make some return to Me by continual homage of gratitude and love?"

"I give you My Body. I immolate It daily for you in sacrifice, and I even give It to you to eat, so that It becomes your Victim, your Food. Why will you not consecrate all your senses and your body to suffer with me and repair sin, which offends My Father and wounds My Heart?"

Oh, how Our Lord suffers if we do not respond to His love! He loves us with so much ardor, with so strong a love. Beholding you, you, poor, little creature, poor worm of the earth, He says to you: "I love thee with a passionate love. I love thee, I am captivated by thee!" His passion makes Him forget His dignity. He desires a return, He demands it, and He longs to be loved by

this worm, as if such love were worthy of Him and would make His happiness! In human relations, if an inferior says to his superior: "I love you," he insults him, for it is putting himself on a level with him and exacting a return. He has a right only to respect him. But Our Lord effaces all distances of dignity, and says to us: "I love thee, love Me!"

When we love some one, we want to see him, to look at him constantly. And so Our Lord is always casting on you a glance of love. He regards you with eyes full of kindness, full of a father's tenderness. He follows you everywhere. You are His constant thought. Why do you not look at Him? Your loving eyes ought to be fixed upon Our Lord, and never lose sight of Him. If your bodily eyes are arrested by walls, those of the soul can behold Him everywhere. Sight is knowledge, it is love, and love is ever a painter. It creates the object loved, and constantly places it before the eyes.

Our Lord is always wishing you well,

always seeking the occasion to confer new benefits upon you. Why do you not do all through love for Him? First, in your exercises of piety, but still more in your cell, in your employments. Why is not every one of your actions a homage of love to Him?

What is love, except a pure flame that mounts toward heaven? What you do not for His love is mingled with smoke while you might be a flame bright and clear.

Again, Our Lord loves you with an ever increasing love, which is always a new and greater grace. Our Lord varies and increases incessantly His gifts of grace, and ever shows Himself in a new light. The love of to-day is greater than that of yesterday, and until the end of your life it will daily increase, because every new grace is an addition to those of the past. His love expands like the flower, which, opening under the rising sun, continues to unfold until it is perfect in the noonday rays.

You, too, ought to love Him ever with a new love. You must be able to say

to Him: "I love Thee to-day more than yesterday, because I have one day more, more graces, more debts of love!"

Pay these debts by living of love, of gratitude, of homage, by retaining nothing for self of whatever you do.

Personality, the *ego*, always remains, you draw to self. That wound, which is constantly opening must be healed by the fire of love.

In doing everyting for Our Lord, you are doing nothing extraordinary, but only your simple duty. You will never reach Our Lord's love for you. Many of the saints wept at not being able to love Our Lord enough, and they cried out: "Ah! why have I not an infinite love to respond to His infinite love!" Such tears are very pleasing to the good God. They are the desires and the impotence of love. It is the little creature holding out its arms to the Creator from the river of time, longing to embrace Him. And God responds: "I love thee, poor little worm of the earth!"

Ah, then, will you love Our Lord? Give yourself to Him and live for Him by love,

as He lives for you. Seek in your heart all that can give Him most pleasure, as He does for you. Is this perfection? No, it is only the beginning, and your duty as a child. There cannot be pride in presuming to act in this way. Who can be proud when looking at Our Lord?

Renew your vow of virginity. It is your vow of love. The others are the fruit of your life, but this is your flower. Renew it often. Say: "My God, I consecrate myself to Thee in order to love Thee chastely, in order to love Thee,—how shall I say?—with a love of blood, with an eternal love!"



CONFERENCE

ON CONFESSION.

CONFESSION is the last plank of salvation that God gives us amid the tempests of this wicked world. To render it useless is infallibly to ruin one's self, since there is no other means of pardon. There remains, indeed, the act of perfect love which justifies, but it must contain also the desire of confession. Take great care, then, to shun whatever could injure the good of confession, and practise what assures to it utility and success.

In the first place, rigorously shun all natural and human relations with the confessor during the dread action of confession. He is no longer a man, he is Jesus Christ on His tribunal of justice and mercy.

It is the Saviour Himself who communicates to him by the Sacrament of Order this power, formidable and consoling at the same time, of doing what He Himself does. "What soever sins you shall loose upon earth shall

be loosed in heaven, and whatsoever sins you shall bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven."

Thus the priest's judgment is the rule of the judgment of God. His sentence precedes that of Heaven. It is the law that Jesus Christ has established, that He respects and follows.

The confessor is, then, the minister of God's justice, the guardian of the divine law. He must assure its execution and punish the infraction of it under pain of being an unfaithful minister, and of taking in purgatory or in hell the place of the guilty unjustly absolved.

He has to judge. He ought, then, to know the nature and the number of our faults; hence, the necessity for sincere and entire accusation on the part of the penitent. Go to him, then, in the truth and sincerity of your conscience.

But the confessor is, above all, the minister of mercy. He is a father, as well as a judge, the divine physician of our souls, the good Samaritan of our wounds. Jesus has placed in his hands all the graces of

Redemption. He has given him power to restore life to our souls. Go to him, therefore, with the confidence of faith.

Again, avoid in confession all that is foreign to this great action, because you lose sight of the chief end and expose yourself to failing in respect toward the Sacrament, to diminishing, to losing contrition. This is the danger of frequent confessions. They commence with God and often end with the creature, or fall into mere trifling. Shun that as you would poison.

Carefully avoid every discussion, every useless explanation, because you ought neither to lose your own time nor uselessly take up that of the priest, which is so very precious. Another reason is that what is useless is often dangerous and may easily become culpable. It is rare, indeed, that vanity or some research of self-love is not the principle of it.

See Magdalen. By her position at the feet of the Saviour, note how entirely she is absorbed in her confession; and in her contrition, by the tears of her heart.

Consider the poor publican humble and humiliated in the lower part of the Temple. He speaks only of his sins to the Divine Mercy, paying no attention to what is going on around him nor to the words of the Pharisee.

Ah! if people thought seriously that the confession they are about to make, or are making at that very moment, may decide their eternity, that it may be the last absolution they shall receive, the last confession before death, they would make it better!

If we would seriously consider the malice and the number of our sins in presence of the sufferings and humiliations of the Saviour dying on the Cross for us, our heart would not be so hard and, above all, so distracted.

If our love for Jesus Christ were more heartfelt, more absorbing, how much more refined it would be!

To confess all, it is necessary to examine one's self well. Now, a good examen calls for three conditions:

1. We should ask God for the grace to

know ourselves such as we are in His eyes; then we should invoke the help of the Most Holy Virgin and of our good angel, the witness of all our actions.

2. The search for our sins. The simplest way to do this, is attentively to pass in review the employments of the day from the moment of awaking till evening, running through successively each duty of the day, and the way in which it was accomplished. As for extraordinary faults, they leave, as a rule, a sufficient impression so that one will have no need to seek them with inquietude.

It is neither a simple nor a fruitful means to make one's examen by seeking in what we have failed in all our thoughts, words, and actions, without following any daily order. We lose ourselves in so vast a field, and an effort of the memory, which fatigues the mind to the detriment of compunction, is necessary for it.

Do not make it in that way. First, examine exterior sins. Interior ones may be supposed from them. Examine them in yourself, recall-

ing your daily duties toward God, namely, what you owe to piety, to the Sacraments, to your vows, to the duties of your state; relations of respect and obedience to Superiors, of gentleness and charity toward the neighbor, of humility and mortification toward yourself.

As for temptations, do not judge them by their impression, nor by the trouble into which they throw you, nor by their duration. Sin begins only at the light, or at the cry of conscience warned and enlightened, and not in sleep or in the distraction of the will.

3. Give more time to contrition than to the examen. The examen shows the wound, contrition is the remedy. Excite yourself to contrition not so much by considerations of the mind as by affection of heart. After that think of your obligations as a Christian, a religious, an adoratrice. As a Christian, behold Jesus humiliated, sad, and suffering in you, owing to your venial sins; God preserve you from crucifying and putting Him to death in your body and soul

by mortal sin! As a religious, see the pain you have given by your infidelities of heart to your Divine Spouse Jesus who loves you with so much tenderness. As adoratrice, see the weakness and malice of your soul, which have had the power to paralyze the special graces, the very particular love that Jesus testifies for you, and perhaps, to stifle and destroy it.

See the Most Blessed Virgin holding in her arms the Body of Jesus crucified and bruised by your sins. Kiss those wounds of love, weep upon His Heart, and then go and kneel in humble penitence at the feet of the priest.

Remember, also, that God pardons only the contrite and humble heart, and that the most powerful motive for contrition is that of divine love, regret for having offended Him who has loved us so much. It ought to make the smallest offence the greatest evil in our eyes, since it wounds a God infinitely good and amiable.

In the act of confessing, observe three duties:

1. Tell your sins in all simplicity, confessing them as you know them and are affected by them at the moment.

2. Accuse yourself with propriety, in becoming words, through respect for the priest and for yourself. Enter into no detail upon the way in which you committed the sin. The way falls not under the law of accusation. It is even prohibited when there is question of sins against chastity. Tell the nature of sins of thought without recounting them in detail, without explaining them, which is never obligatory. Mention your sins of words, but without repeating the words. Be satisfied with mentioning their species, namely, against charity, or authority, or chastity. As to sins of act, tell the nature of the sin, its grievousness. In sins of omission, state what duty you have omitted.

3. Accuse yourself with humility, as a guilty man who tells his fault to Him who already knows it better than he does himself, but who wishes by making him repeat it to test his sincerity and repentance. Let your humility consist in seeing and telling

your faults truthfully, and not exaggerating them. Exaggeration is often the fruit either of sloth which does not want the trouble of examining, or of tepidity which clothes itself with false contrition.

Carefully distinguish sin from imperfection. Sin is a positive act of the will; imperfection is the product of our misery, of our weakness. It is more an act of the imagination than of reason, more a foolish and airy vapor of the mind than malice of the heart, rather sloth of the senses than refusal of the will.

Again, in accusing yourself, shun inquietude and eagerness, which diminish the attention and confidence of the soul, by enclosing its liberty of action in the nets and fetters of fear and doubt. When, therefore, you are disquieted and uncertain about some fault, you should lay it before the confessor to get counsel, and not confess as a real fault that which is often no fault at all. He will tell you that it would be better sometimes to pass entirely over certain troubles than to tell them through fear

otherwise they fill the soul with those vain apprehensions which produce scruples and distress.

Again, you are not obliged, and you ought not, in accusing yourself of a sin of which your confessor personally may have been the cause or the object, mention that personal circumstance to him. Propriety, as well as prudence, demands its suppression, and the law of integrity of accusation does not oblige to it.

You should know distinctly that the accusation of venial sins is not like that of mortal sins. Mortal sins ought to be declared in confession with number, kind, and the circumstances that change their species or notably aggravate them. With venial sins, it is not so. A pious soul who will in good faith declare only three or four, but with regret that implicitly extends to all the others, and with a firm purpose of amendment, will receive the remission of all, although she has accused herself of only some. This means that mortal sins are pardoned only individually, consequently they

have to be declared formally, but venial sins collectively with general and implicit contrition. It is like a bundle of weeds, of which we see only those on the surface, and which we throw into the fire to be burned altogether, those we do not see, as well as those we do see.

It is, however, as says the Council of Trent, a laudable and salutary custom to confess all the venial sins that we remember. But what I wish is that you do not go too much into detail, be not too punctilious in your accusations. God does not exact so rigorous an examen. It is that rigor which exposes you to the loss of liberty and peace of mind, of sweet and gentle piety of heart.

We remark that those who give themselves much trouble in preparing and confessing, do not ordinarily amend their faults. They follow their own ideas and their old routine, in spite of all that is said to them. One might say that they confess only to relieve their own disordered mind, which has formed this need of pouring itself out. They would do far better to believe their

confessor, to speak less, and to amend their ways.

Shun a second defect, namely lay aside all those general and prolix accusations which determine nothing. They are useless, since they submit no definite sin to the judgment of the confessor. Confession is like the prayer of which Our Lord speaks,—the shorter it is, the more frequently the better.

Lastly, when you have finished your accusation, do not seek for more sins, as if you had forgotten something. Even if one should present itself with doubt and trouble, but uncertain, discard it. You have already said what your conscientious examen has shown you. Now is the moment to listen in silence and with docility to what the priest, in the name of Jesus Christ, says to you.

In leaving the confessional, imagine yourself going out from holy Baptism, entirely cleansed and adorned with the Blood of Our Lord. Take care not to think over your accusation. If it recurs to your memory, banish it as a dangerous temptation. All is pardoned. Magdalen did not rehearse her

sins in detail, for she had accused herself of them all in her penitent love. All were truly forgiven her.

Joyfully thank Our Lord for having pardoned you, for having given you new life. Share the joy of a man drawn from an abyss, whose wounds have been closed, and who now walks on full of health and vigor.

Recall the good advice you have received, and renew the resolutions of amendment that you have formed. Ask God through the help of Mary, to be faithful, and perform the penance that has been imposed on you.

Still another word of advice. As purity of conscience is the nuptial robe necessary for the service of the Heavenly Spouse, in order to keep it unsullied, approach the tribunal of penance every eight days.

In order to supply for the accusations made without true contrition, also to humble self and know self better, it is good to make a monthly review, and every year an annual review of all one's faults.

To prepare for confession, to examine one's self and make acts of contrition, a quarter

of an hour is not too much to devote to this exercise. Give the same time after confession to renew contrition, to insist upon the firm purpose of amendment, and to make acts of sorrow based upon that infinite love, that unlimited mercy, which has again pardoned and restored life, honor, and joy of heart

When one confesses very frequently, confession ought to be surrounded by serious guarantees, above all, by those that assure contrition. Without that, one falls into routine, which annuls the good effects of this Sacrament of mercy and salvation.



The GIFT of one's
PERSONALITY to JESUS.

Y the religious profession, you have given to God what belongs to you but you have not given, at least in an expressed manner, your own being, your personality.

Personality is the being itself, the principle of life, of action. It is what constitutes you a human and individual person, that which distinguishes you from every other person, and establishes you in the highest perfection of nature. It is the personality which possesses in you the soul and the body, the faculties and the senses; which makes them act and which is responsible for their acts, which imparts to them their quality of human acts. It is that which receives, also, all that is referred to you, as affection, praise, and every quality of body and mind, for it is not your body nor your mind precisely that people want to love and praise, but *you*, the person who is clothed with

these gifts and who, indeed, makes good use of them.

Now, the religious profession does not explicitly emit the gift of personality. By the vow of poverty, you give your goods, by that of virginity, your heart; and your will, by the vow of obedience. Without doubt, if taken in their full extent, even interior and spiritual, these vows embrace you completely, and consecrate you entirely to God; for Saint Thomas teaches that the religious profession is in itself a holocaust of the whole man, and consequently, of his being and personality itself

But in order to give you an easier means to practise your vows in this spirit of holocaust, which is true adoration, I propose to you now to make to Our Lord a formal and explicit gift of yourself and your personality. This gift will add no exterior obligation to those of your three vows. But it will strengthen them more perfectly, and make you practise them according to the true spirit of your vocation, for the Eucharist is the Gift

You are not only spouses, but adoratrices and servants of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The property of the servant is to lose his name, and the slave formerly lost even all propriety over himself, his actions, his labors, his life. Your name of servants signifies slaves of love. By this act, you will become nothing to yourselves, and Jesus Christ will enter into possession of you.

But to do that, would be self-annihilation you say. I should appear senseless.—Yes, in the eyes of men, but in the eyes of God you would be only generous in love.

The virtue of this gift is that you give yourself to Our Lord through love for Him, in total forgetfulness of self, in order to acknowledge and adore His sovereign dominion over you. It is He, His rights, His love, His glory that you look at in it, before and above all else, and not His gifts nor His personal interests. His gifts of grace, you demand humbly, for without them you can do nothing; and far from renouncing the recompense, you know that this gift of love is already an immense merit for heaven

But above all these motives, rises that of the love that God deserves for Himself, and of the rights His infinite love creates for Him over every creature, and over you in particular. This view absorbs you, is sufficient for you. You give yourself in order to return love for love, and the first reward that you desire is that God may be served, loved, and adored, and that He may reign entirely over you by your own annihilation.

I do not say that you will be able to establish yourself in a state of pure love, so that you will never leave it, or that you ought to renounce acts of the other virtues. No, far from me this thought, condemnable and condemned, because it is false and impossible to realize here below! But you ought to aim at practising, as far as possible, all the virtues in this spirit of gift, of love, for it is, above all, a direction of the intention, and not a multiplication of new works and duties.

The religious life is a gift, it is true, and it is, after all, for God, that one vows himself to it; but it offers for heaven and

for the present moment such returns that they alone should be a sufficient attraction. You renounce family joys, but religion returns you a hundredfold, father, mother, brothers, sisters. You renounce temporal goods, but religion gives you spiritual ones. You renounce the conduct of yourself, but you find a sure way already traced out and devout guides.

Certainly, these are profits that compensate for some sacrifices; and to become a religious for these gains alone, which follow on the gain of heaven, is very legitimate.

But without rejecting such advantages, do you wish to sanctify your vows by making them a true holocaust? Do you wish to elevate their intention even to the perfection of the purest love? Join thereto the gift of self. Here you give only to give, without desiring even to think of return, simply because the life of love is to give, to live vowed, given, devoted.

And then, each vow cuts off only one branch of your being, gives only one part of your life, but love desires to surrender

the trunk, the being itself. Ah, well! by the gift of self you go even to the root of your being, you totally renounce self, you no longer morally exist in your own eyes, and you should cease to exist in the eyes of others, by never making self the end either of yourself or of them. You sever every relation of friendship and affection of which you might be the end, either with your Sisters or with those whom you love in God. Our Lord, whom you have chosen to replace your *Ego*, becomes the chief end and the absolute possessor of your works, your sufferings, and your merits. Henceforth, He alone must live and rule in you. He is the Master, He your *Ego*, He your *Person*.

No longer must you receive anything for yourself personally, neither praise nor affection. You are no longer mistress in your own house, and whatever you might receive would be stolen from Our Lord, since you have bound yourself entirely to Him.

When people visit a house, they ask to see the master, and not the domestics. If

they make a mistake and salute the servant, ought she not to say: "You mistake. I am nobody here. I shall call my master"? in the same way you will be no longer anything, you will receive nothing, you will act no longer for yourself, but for Our Lord. In everything there shall be only He.

The slave does not draw up acts of ownership, he has no signature. Well, you also will no longer do anything of yourselves, under your own personal inspiration, but you will wait until Our Lord orders you to act. You will remain in perfect dependence on and in expectation of His grace and of the sign of His will to accomplish it in all things. You will do nothing if it orders you to do nothing, even were you to see the best chances of success and the most encouraging inducements to labor for His glory. Wait until He moves you just as one's personality makes the faculties and the members act, and the latter give movement to inanimate instruments.

You will never again say: "I want, I do not want," for the *ego* is no other thing

than personality, and the will is its chief organ. Let Our Lord alone will in you. If in spoken language you cannot altogether renounce this mode of speaking, do not let the interior respond to it, and maintain yourself in the most complete submission before Our Lord.

No more personal and human motives in anything! You will love the servants of God and your Sisters, because Our Lord loves them, and because they, too, love Him. He alone ought to be your determinant motive. your pillar of support, and your end for thinking, judging, willing, and acting

You will disappear. No longer will there be any interests for you, but those of Jesus Christ. He alone will live in you.

Here is your true grace, the grace of the Eucharist Our Lord has said: "*As My Father sends Me and as I live by Him and for Him; that is, as the Word, I live only of the life that the Father communicates to Me eternally, and, as Man, only of the life that the Word gives Me in time by the hypostatic union; so, too, he that eateth*

Me shall live by Me, that is, I will communicate to him My life of grace and later My life of glory. I will become in him all things, for I will dwell in him and I will change him into Myself. I will be his principle, as the Father is My principle. His actions willed and directed by Me, performed by Me in him, will be elevated in Me to the rank of holy and divine actions. Again, as I refer to My Father all the fruits of merit, glory, and honor that the life that He communicates to Me produces, so he in whom I will abide and to whom I will give My life, shall faithfully return to Me the glory, the honor, and all the fruits of his labors. He who eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abides in Me, and I in him, in order to live there and reign.

Our Lord again says after the Last Supper "*As Thou art in Me, O Father, and I in Thee, so let them be one in Us.*" This is that magnificent unity which is commenced in Baptism, which is continued by the state of grace, but which finds in the Eucharist its aliment and perfection here below. It

is the particular fruit of the Eucharist.

May your whole life fully realize this word of Saint Paul: "*I live, now not I, but it is Jesus who liveth in me!*" Behold the perfect gift of self, the gift of one's personality to Our Lord!



JESUS and MARY,

MODELS of the GIFT of SELF.

 E have said that our personality must be consecrated to God by giving to Him the *Ego*, that is the *being*,—the *Ego*, that is, the centre of relations, which receives praise and affection,—this *Ego* which is our natural end. By the making of the vows alone, it is true, one gives one's self to God; but I propose to you to make a more explicit consecration of yourselves to Jesus Christ, in virtue of which you will practise your religious vows and all the virtues in a spirit of love for God loved for Himself, of total renunciation of yourselves, and of offering, sacrifice, and holocaust of your very being to Jesus Christ living in you as your first principle, and your only end of nature and grace.

But, you will say, it is very difficult to reach the point of always loving Jesus Christ for Himself, and of never seeking self in anything. That is true, it is difficult to reach

the perfection of love, and it is impossible always to act through actual love; but what I propose to you is to give yourselves to God by an act of love which embraces your being and your entire life, and then to act as much as possible in the spirit of this gift of love. There is a great difference between these two things, the possessing the habit of a virtue and acting by its spirit, or the actual and constant exercise of it by positive acts.

Thus, your vows of religion constitute you religious. Even when you are not making formal acts of poverty or obedience, you are still acting as religious, and you should always act, at least according to the spirit of those vows. Well, in the same way, by giving your personality once for all to Our Lord, you place yourself in His hands in a state of abandonment, of personal annihilation. Henceforth, by virtue of this gift, you consider yourself wholly dependent on Jesus Christ, and you endeavor to allow Our Lord, instead of yourselves, to live, act, command, and receive all in you.

The perfection of this gift of self, which will be the life and the perfect reign of Jesus in you, is, without doubt, never attained here below, but why not engage one's self to aim at it incessantly? And as one is not expected to be perfectly obedient in order to make the vow of obedience; as, on the contrary, it is made at the commencement of the religious life, because the vow will give its own help and grace, so I ask you to make to Our Lord this gift of self. You will practise it at first very imperfectly, then less so, then better. It will bring you a particular grace, which will increase by your faithful correspondence and, little by little, you will acquire the habit of no longer regarding self as your principle and end; but you will act under the will of Our Lord, in dependence on Him, and only for Him; you will, as it were, return the fruit of all things to Him who has effected them in you. You will reach the point of knowing how habitually to renounce self completely and of living only of Jesus Christ, by Jesus Christ. in Jesus

Christ, and for Jesus Christ. Now, this is the gift of self, a consécration whose spirit extends over all the acts of life, by virtue of which one looks upon himself before God no longer as a person, but as a member of the Body of Jesus Christ, who is its Head, its Soul, its Person. At this point, he aims at judging nothing, undertaking nothing by himself. He is now only an intermediary, an instrument of Our Lord's will. He is no longer anything final nor central for creatures, and consequently, he neither seeks nor accepts for himself their esteem and affection, but delivers up, faithfully passes over everything to the Divine Person to whom he has given himself, into whose hands he has made the entire remission of himself. The motive of this gift is a generous and disinterested love for the beauty, the amiability of Jesus Christ. It is the acknowledgment of His rights, above all, of those which Communion creates over us, for by it He takes possession of our being, therein to live and command as Sovereign Master.

You have a perfect model of this life in which one gives himself entirely to God for God Himself, first, in the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.

The holy Gospel calls her *full of grace*. The angel said to her: "*The Lord is with thee.*" But in what way? Fully, sovereignly. The Holy Ghost reigns in her mind and heart, directing therein all and every one of her thoughts and affections. He is the being of Mary and Mary is no longer anything in herself, but all in the Spirit of God, who covers her, envelops her, and clothes every one of her powers with the rays of His grace and His love.

Mary manifests her correspondence to this life of God in her by that blessed word, one of the most beautiful the world has ever heard: "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord!*" What does she mean to say? "I abandon myself, I give myself all entire to what my Lord and my God may wish to do in me. I desire never to think, nor will, nor act but as His servant, inspired, moved, and conducted in everything by His will."

“ Behold the handmaid of the Lord !

This is the formula of the gift of self for the slave loses his name, his authority, even his life, all which are made over to him who owns him. And so Mary was ever the loving slave of the Holy Spirit, and her whole life was but one manifestation of her submission, obedience, and total forgetfulness of self. She did all this through love, and so she is called the Mother of beautiful love, that is, of the love which loves God for Himself, because of His perfections and beauties, because He is the principle and the end of all things.

See her during her whole life, always the victim of this pure love, loving her Divine Son, not for herself, but for Himself, never asking of Him any consolation for herself, not trying to turn Him away from death nor even to retard it one moment in order to enjoy her dear Son a little longer; but on the contrary, accompanying Him to Calvary there to suffer with Him, ready to take His place had the Father so willed, and even to immolate Him herself in obe-

dience to the orders of His divine justice. Does she seek self in all this? Is this not love for love?

Our Lord made her practise this love all her life. He allowed her to be poor, abandoned, suffering in heart, even refusing her those consolations that would have been so legitimate during His public life. At Cana, when they told Him that His Mother was standing without seeking Him, Our Lord treated His Mother with seeming harshness. It was because He knew that she loved Him purely, that she looked for nothing as His natural Mother, but that she was much more His handmaid, His disciple, His member by supernatural faith and love.

The Blessed Virgin, who had received so many graces, who performed all her actions with such perfection, had to glorify God by acknowledging herself nothing, by offering to Him all their merit, by referring to Him all their glory. Never has Our Lord lived, never will He live so fully in any creature, never will He reign in any other so sovereignly. It was no longer Mary, but

Jesus who thought, judged, willed. Mary was satisfied to repeat by every one of her thoughts, by each pulsation of her heart, and still more by every one of her actions

Behold the handmaid of the Lord—*Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum!*”

Never any resistance, never any hesitation, disagreement, nor delay with regard to the will of Jesus Christ in her, but identity of sentiments, views, and wills. She was His throne and His couch of repose, His tabernacle and His Paradise of delights, and she will be forever in glory what she was in labor and merit: “*Déus in medio ejus non commovebitur.*”

Behold your model, since you are the servants of Jesus Sacramental! Have ever on your lips and realize by love that word of Mary: “*Behold the handmaid of the Lord!*” and live of love for your Master.

But this beautiful model is not sufficient. There is one still more perfect; and when I propose to give your personality through love, I am putting you in the way of doing what Jesus Christ Himself was the first to

do leaving us the example to follow. Yes, Jesus Christ served His Father by the constant sacrifice of His human Personality and if you clearly comprehend this thought, you will exclaim: "O my Lord Jesus Christ, I want to serve Thy Father as Thou didst!" In fact, to give one's personality, to abstract from self in everything, is to reproduce by grace and as much as man's nature permits. the mystery and the spirit of the Incarnation of the Word. Grand thought, if well understood! —

In Our Lord there are two natures, the human nature and the divine nature, but there is only one single Person, the Person of the Word. To understand this, you must know that every nature aims essentially at the attainment of its natural perfection, and as soon as the body is united to the soul, this union produces the human personality, which forms man's highest perfection, making him exist, guiding and possessing the soul and the body, and being the principle of all life.

But by an unprecedented action of God.

which will never again be renewed. at the moment when the Body and the Soul of Jesus were created in the womb of Mary by the operation of the Holy Ghost, the Person of the Word, united Himself to them, appropriated them and, by His presence, anticipated the human personality which would have resulted from the union of a soul and a human body. This Divine Person possessed Himself of it forever and as the Divine Nature is from all eternity the proper nature of the Word, so the Sacred Humanity became from that moment His second nature as well. One single Divine Person possesses two natures and acts by the faculties of both, the Divine and the human. Such is the mystery of the Word made Man.

But why does not the Word admit the human personality of the nature that He assumed? It is because one being can have only one person, since the person is the last complement of the being, and renders it incommunicable to every other being; so that, if the Humanity of Jesus had had its own human personality, it could not have

been united to the Word in unity of Person as was necessary for the accomplishment of the Redemption

A heretic once said that, the Person of the Word having united Himself to Jesus Christ already a human person, from it there resulted two persons in Jesus Christ, and that there were in Him a man and a God, thence it followed, that God the Father was the principle of the Divine Person, and Mary of the human person. But, then, who has saved us in Jesus Christ? The God? Not at all, for God cannot die. The man? With still greater reason, no, for a man's death would not be of sufficient value to redeem other men

The Catholic Faith teaches, then, that human nature has no personality in Jesus Christ, that it is directly united to the Person of the Word, who is its proper and unique Person; that Mary is the Mother not of a man, but of a human nature subsisting in the Person of the Word, and consequently, that she is the Mother of the Word incarnate.

But in this privation, there is for Jesus Christ as Man the source of an all special life. He does not possess Himself, does not direct Himself. He is not an individuality a person, but He is vowed and dedicated by a dependence not only of the will, but of nature and of essence, to the Person of the Word; whence it follows that, as our person possesses us, commands and acts by our faculties of soul and body, so in Jesus Christ the Person of the Word possesses, acts, and commands alone as mistress by all the spiritual and corporal faculties of Jesus Christ. The Humanity of Jesus Christ becomes, then, the servant and the slave of the Word forever, for this state of hypostatic union is to last eternally

Contemplate this adorable mystery of the dependence of the Sacred Humanity on the Person of the Word in the life of Our Lord. It was the Person of the Word who commanded the human nature and directed it in all its interior and exterior operations. It was to It that Our Lord referred the honor, the affection, and in It that He placed

the end of all things, and never in His Humanity. When people addressed themselves to Him as to a Man, He would receive nothing from them, neither praise, nor affection, nor service. He even wanted to do nothing as Man independently of His Divine Person. In order to convince men of this state, He was very severe, as we see by His words to His divine Mother, to Saint Peter, and to the Pharisees. He said: "The Son of Man can do nothing of Himself, nor by Himself. He can speak, act, will only in accordance with His Father and by His Father," that is, only according to the judgment and will that His Father communicates to the Word as God, and that this Word manifests to the Humanity which belongs to Him as His servant and created organ.

Jesus Christ, then, as Man in His human nature, in His Sacred Humanity, was in and for all things submissive to the Divine Person of the Word, to whom He had been given as sole possession. He labored only for the Word, for, existing not in Himself,

but only in the Person of the Word, He could not think of being His own end. But He was the active workman, the servant, the submissive and faithful organ of the Divine Word.

Ah, well! if you wish to give your personality to Our Lord, you will imitate by grace what He Himself did by His essential state as much as by love, you will give yourself totally; and as much as the power of His grace will permit you, you will discard you will separate from your own personality, renouncing its rights, its views, its interests, and you will beg Our Lord to take the place of all that. By means of His grace, you will comport yourself toward Him with submission as entire as your soul and its faculties, your body and your members show forth in obeying your personality; or rather, you should endeavor to imitate the submission, the dependence the state of absolute and loving servitude that His Sacred Humanity manifested toward the Divine Person of the Word

To continue and to reproduce in our

selves Jesus Christ,—is this not the work of works? To unite one's self to the spirit of His mysteries in order to reproduce them in one's self,—is this not the best means of holiness? Well, by the gift of personality, you unite yourself to the state which is in Jesus Christ the foundation, the root of all the mysteries, of all the acts, of all the words, of all the merits of His life on earth, for it was not once in passing, not for one act only of His life, but for His whole life, that He was deprived of human personality. He came into this world by this sacrifice and this gift. All His mysteries followed afterward and, unfolding one after another, according as the Holy Spirit led Him, they showed forth this gift and this sacrifice. They drew from this state, on the one side, their infinite value, and on the other, their infinite humiliations, also. As God, equal to the Father, Jesus Christ performed miracles; as Man, He prayed, annihilated Himself before His Father, feared, suffered and died. As the Man God, He satisfied Divine Justice and redeemed us.

See what sublime dignity this Sacred Humanity received in exchange for its human personality! United hypostatically, that is, in a union of existence and subsistence to the Word of God, it was the Humanity of God. In seeing Jesus Christ, one saw God. It was the countenance, the word, the arm of God Himself.

Admirable union! Adorable unity! And so the Sacred Humanity, as a faithful servant, referred everything to the Person of the Word, His ruler, His principle, and through It to the Holy Trinity

All Christians have the grace to imitate Jesus Christ in that, for Jesus Christ desires to live in them, to annihilate in them the natural man and to take his place, so that, according to the word of Saint Paul, it would be He who would live in us and not we ourselves. Why not embrace this state once for all? Why not enter, by a formal act of donation to Jesus Christ, into this grace of true Christianity, of true interior service as the greatest love the greatest glory of God?

The whole life afterward would be only the renewal, the perfecting of this gift. All the virtues, all the duties of your state you would practise in the spirit of this gift. It would be a continual sacrificial holocaust of your life, giving to it a grace and a unity that would augment your powers and double your merits.

Is it not sovereignly just that, since there can be in every being but one first principle, and in a man but one personality, ours should give place to that of Jesus Christ? If this gift were not implicitly contained in the promises of our Baptism and in our religious profession, would we belong fully to Jesus Christ? Hence, why not renew it by a positive and formal intention, giving ourselves forever to His adorable Person by renouncing our own?

To comprehend clearly the practice of this gift, read the Gospel of Saint John. There you will hear Our Lord affirming that He can do nothing of Himself whether as to thinking, for He consults the thought of His Father, that is, the Divinity in Him.

for the Father and the Word are but one same Divinity; or as to acting, for He asks the Father what He wills; or as to judging, for He first has to know the Father's judgment.

You will see Him not permitting any one to exalt Him as Man, if the praise given Him is not referred to the Divinity in Him: "Why do you call Me good? God alone is good."

You will see Him never allowing any one to love Him naturally, that is, with a love which pauses on His Humanity, since it is to the person love and affection are directed, and as Man He had annihilated His person. Saint Peter, who wanted to deter Him from suffering, He repulsed as Satan. Even the affection of His holy Mother He refused when she seemed to address herself to the Man in Him; and so in the Temple He replied to her tears and gentle rebuke by these words: "And why did you seek Me? Do you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" And yet He loved His tender Mother, and He had no greater

joy than to be loved by her. But He did not want us to deceive ourselves as to the character of that love, which should never fix itself on Him as Man and the Son of Mary, but should go even to His Divine Person, which was in Him the only end of every action, as well as the term of all affection.

Well, now, do the same. Jesus Christ is in you. He abides therein, He dwells therein. Let Him live there in liberty, with authority, and as your first principle. Form with Him by denying your own *ego*, one person, divine and human. Let Him be your person. Be but His nature, in order to serve Him by your soul and your senses. Refer all affection, honor, and glory to Him. You belong to Him, you live and subsist in Him. You are His member, His organ. It is very just that He should be the end, as He is the principle.

The sovereign end of Communion is to form unity of life and person between Jesus Christ and us. It is not perfect if we do not arrive at that,—for it is not our works

alone that He desires when descending into us, but ourselves. It seems to me that Our Lord, on quitting the tabernacle to come to us, says: "I am going to be incarnated in this person. I am going to unite Myself sacramentally to her, in order that My Personality may take the place of hers. I want to be her principle, and to elevate her being and her actions to the divine Unity. I shall think and will in her soul. I shall live in her body, love in her heart, glorify My Father in her as I glorified Him on earth in My Sacred Humanity. I am going to continue for the glory of My Father, for His love, and for the honor of this creature, My meriting and suffering life. I shall give to her actions a supernatural and divine value, and I shall be the centre of her affections and the principle of a new life, which will be the reproduction of My own life."

Oh! enter into this way! Become the true servants of the Divine Person of Jesus Christ in you. Still more, become His victims, for God is a consuming fire. And

as the Word immolated and consumed His Humanity by a life of constant suffering in soul and body, and by the death of the Cross, so, once given to Jesus Christ, He will immolate you entirely.

Behold the practice: first, never to seek anything for self; to refuse the esteem and affection of creatures; to see them despising and persecuting you, not only without uttering a complaint, but recognizing that nothing is more just. That costs, certainly, but one kills himself in order to live!

To accept humiliation, to immolate one's body and its sensuality in everything, is painful, one feels resistance; but do you not think that Our Lord, also, felt the suffering of His sacrifice? Listen to Him in the Garden of Olives: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me!" It is the cry of His Humanity. But immediately He subjects it to His Divine Person and stretches it on the funereal pile: "But not My will, but Thine be done!"

You will feel the conflict, also, temptation and humiliation. But if you fail in your

promises by retaking yourself in something, grace will be ever present to raise you up. You will renew your gift, and thus you will persevere in your dependence, and you will be always the servant and the victim of the glory and the will of God.

Come, then, give yourselves most generously and without counting the cost. "To Thee, Divine Person in me, honor, love, and glory! — To myself humiliation and contempt!"

Yes, without counting the cost! Our Lord will recompense you well if you give yourself in this way. First, even by giving to Jesus the honor and glory of your works, they take on an inherent, essential merit that will be yours, that you will keep for heaven. You receive, also, the increase of grace that every meritorious work produces. Then Jesus Christ ascends to heaven by His own right, but He bears with Him all that belongs to Him and you make one with Him. Can He forget His own Flesh? No, He will take care of its glory and happiness. As for you, from this moment,

place all your delight in giving yourself to Him by a love always purer, more generous and more faithful.



The INTERIOR EDUCATION of an ADORATRICE.

THE interior education of an adoratrice consists in learning to live interiorly and to think, speak, and converse with Our Lord. Children are taught to think rightly and then to speak well. There should be a choice, a certain refinement in language. Everybody does not know how to talk, and there must be a certain education to enable one to follow a conversation. This is still more true in the interior life, in the life with Our Lord.

When a person has not a well marked vocation, when he is ignorant of his dominant attraction and his grace of life, he thinks little and sometimes not at all. He has a vague, an entirely exterior piety, which consists only in practices. It frequently happens that we meet devout persons who ordinarily are not inspired by one supernatural, religious, divine thought. Their life is a circle out of which they never pass.

They are accustomed to it, they follow the movement of their pious exercises, but their heart has no expansive life. They have not that life of the soul which burns, which is ever rising toward new sacrifices, borne along by new motives. Their interior knowledge goes no farther than the practices in which they live.

It would be very unfortunate if professional adoratrices were among their number. A religious soul ought incessantly to aspire to greater perfection. She is making progress only when she is learning better to converse with God, and is ever receiving interior nourishment sufficient to renew and increase her supernatural energies.

A soul that thinks, that knows how to reflect—put her in any situation whatever,—has nothing to fear. Now, your vocation obliges you to this interior life, to this inner life in which without outward help you can converse with Our Lord in your soul.

Unhappily, we can habituate ourselves, also, to our state. We limit ourselves to materially performing holy practices, and we

have the sad talent of leading a life exterior and personal in the midst of the graces of the Eucharistic life. What a misfortune! What treasures of grace lost!

In order to avoid this, accustom yourselves to think seriously. Let your thoughts and intentions be very clear, very definite.

Renew them often and let them be, indeed, for Our Lord, by Our Lord, and with Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament. You must reach the point of thinking in all things by the Holy Eucharist. Let all your thoughts turn that way, springing from and ending there. You have the grace for it, it is your interior service, it is a necessity for you. Without that, how adore in spirit and truth? You would be only a body, a mechanical adorer, moved only by the force of the exterior Rule. Our Lord wishes the actual and continual service of your whole being, and He loves the interior far better than the exterior service which is, as it were, only the bark.

You must make the idea of unity predominate throughout your whole life by the

thought of the Eucharist. Unity comprises Our Lord entirely: His past life, which prepared the Eucharist; His present life, which is passed under your eyes and of which you behold the virtues; His future life, which will be only the extension, glorified and unveiled, of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. See, then, Our Lord living His life of love in the Blessed Sacrament, applying therein the love of all His virtues, of all His mysteries. The Eucharist belongs to every feast and to every day in the year. We can recall nothing of which It is not the living memorial. We celebrate in the Eucharist the enduring love of Our Lord, His love actual and living until the end of the world. All religion, with its mysteries and feasts, its virtues and graces, as well as its duties, is vivified by the love of the Eucharist, drawing from It both life and grace.

You should love nothing but in the Eucharist and on account of its relations to the Eucharist. Jesus Eucharistic ought to be your final love in all things. You ought to love only on account of Him.

We think as we love. If you love Our Lord, you will think of Him spontaneously and without effort. You will find Him everywhere and in every thing. You will see only Him, and this knowledge is better than all books, it takes the place of them all. But for this one must have Him very really in his heart. The habitual thought follows the affection, and quite naturally attaches itself to it.

It would be sad were you of the number of those souls that think of Our Lord only when He scourges them. Oh, do not force Our Lord to send you trials and temptations, in order to oblige you to think of Him! Let it not be the demon who forces you to recur to God, but the promptings of your own heart of a child and an adoratrice.

See the Apostles on the Lake of Tiberias. They had left Our Lord in a corner of the boat, and they were, no doubt, chatting together about their nets and their fishing, forgetful of their Divine Master. Our Lord then stirred up a tempest, and the Apostles affrighted ran to Him: "Save us, we perish!"

Do not act in that way. Do not wait until interest or chastisement drives you to Our-Lord, but live in habitual converse with Him. If we love Him, we shall know how to think of Him.

Let us make our romance divine! But no! Such a comparison, although well expressing what I want to say, is too human. But let us passionately love, and we shall continually think upon the object of our love. We shall see Him everywhere we shall labor only to give Him pleasure We must lose ourselves in Jesus!

Learn, then, to think of Our Lord, but find Him where He is for you, not in heaven, but in the Blessed Sacrament. Let Him be the sun that enlightens your whole life. Live always under Its rays, and let none of Its light and beneficent warmth escape; for He shares with us all His rays and, while the material sun abandons us when it enlightens the opposite hemisphere, the Eucharist condenses in Itself all Its divine beams and uninterruptedly showers them upon us. To the east, we have His

Birth, to the south, Nazareth; to the north, Calvary; and in the west, the Tomb. Follow Him in all the states in which He places you, go where He sends you, you will find Him everywhere. "*Nec est qui se abscondat a calore ejus*—And there is no one that can hide himself from His heat."

Let your love be your science of adoration. When you go to adore, do not begin with books, think for yourselves. Ask the Divine Master to instruct you. Be certain that an Adoration made by your own weakness, with all your miseries, is of more value than all you can borrow from books, because it is *yours*.

Books are excellent helps when the mind is so distracted or so powerless that one can draw nothing from it. But in the ordinary state of your life, do not have easy recourse to such means. In reality, we take a book more frequently because we have not the courage to support dryness and disgust.

Adore simply with your heart, and know that love is the true science of adoration

We notice that God often renders the mind incapable of reasoning and reflecting. Why? Because we are by nature great prattlers. We always want to talk to Him. The good God shuts up our mind and seems to say to us: "Go into thy own heart."

If then, instead of reasoning, instead of seeking means and explanations in our own mind, we say simply: "My God, I offer Thee my misery, my dryness, all that I am, an abyss of misery," oh! we touch the Heart of God, and He can say: "Behold a soul that loves Me more than her own pleasure and the sweetness of My graces."

Love, then, and think. This is the whole interior life. If you learn to think, if you have the courage to think perseveringly on Our Lord and to converse with Him, not only at the prie-Dieu, but during your occupations, in your cell, oh, you will never have tasted anything like it! Then one dreams of God, one loves Him everywhere and in all things. The soul then rises to God peacefully and without effort, because

her thoughts are ever fixed on Him. She appears to float, and the flapping of her wings is no longer seen.

It is an established principle that the proper word to express the thought is always found when the latter is clear and well understood in the mind. It is said, also, that what is well comprehended, is well retained. You will then say to the good God the sentiment of your soul, and you will well know how to say it, if you love. Then your Adorations will always be new, because love is a flame always new. You must reach that degree. That is life. All else is a languishing in self. Then one spends good and beautiful moments; then one loves the good God as He should be loved in order to live the interior life by truth and charity, by union of thought, heart, and life with Him.



The SPIRIT of the VOWS

and the GIFT of SELF.

I.

THE first gift of love that a Servant of the Most Blessed Sacrament ought to bring to her Divine Master is obedience. Obedience is the virtue that constitutes her condition of servant. The name expresses it plainly enough.

Then, you will love the obedience which makes you true religious of Jesus. You will fear nothing so much as being deprived in your actions of the grace, as well as of the merit, of obedience. If you are asked what you are doing, you must be able to answer: I am obeying through love.

Your vow obliges you faithfully to accomplish whatever obedience may prescribe to you, namely: the Constitutions in whatever they mark out for the whole Community or for each individual in her particular employment; the regulation of the common

exercises, the positive orders, general or particular, given by Superiors.

But the best obedience is that inspired by love and accomplished by cheerful virtue.

The perfection of obedience lies in the simplicity of love; this is the obedience of the child. Look, then, for only one thing to urge you to obey, the will of God or His good pleasure, because all that God wills is good, all that He loves is holy, all that He wishes is for our greater good. Behold the whole science of the true children of God.

Do not obey your Superiors because they are good, or pious, or learned. That would be to obey the creature, a natural obedience worthless for heaven.

Never obey through human fear of the person or of the reprimand. That would be to obey as a beast deprived of reason. That would be humiliating obedience worthy only of a slave.

But obey God who commands you through a creature whom He has invested with His own authority, and who is only a speak-

ing-trumpet, a divine representative. To try your faith and humble your self-love, God does not Himself command you; nevertheless, the order comes direct from Him.

Obeys for love of Jesus, for His glory, in order to honor the obedience of His life and Passion, and lastly and above all, to glorify His Eucharistic obedience, which is greater still.

How admirable is that obedience of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament! It is unattended by glory, its perfection is not seen. It is almost always without honor. Who in the world reflects on it, even the Christian, even the pious soul? It is humiliated, since He obeys even the sacrilegious, the apostate, the soul in abominable sin. Thus has the law of His love willed. It is perpetual. By His sacramental state, He is dependent upon and subject to man. He has become his Prisoner of love. Behold your Master. To lead you to love obedience, He obeys even in His state of glory and royalty!

Then let your obedience be prompt as that of the angel when God calls him, as

that of Jesus when the priest consecrates Him. Let it be joyous as the gift of generous love.

To command you in the name of God is to do you great honor; it is also to wish you much good, since it is to put you in the very virtue of Jesus sacramental. It is to enrich you, since it is to make of your life a continual victory, as says the Holy Ghost. Obey, then, through love, with all your heart and mind and will

II.

In consecrating yourself to God by the vow of chastity, you pledge yourself to have no other spouse than the King of purity, in order to be more perfectly at His divine service. By that vow you declare eternal divorce from the world, its vanities and pleasures, and you wish henceforth to please Jesus Christ alone and to love Him sovereignly.

It is a beautiful virtue, a glorious crown. And yet, love not holy purity only because

it renders you the sister of the angels, beautiful and adorned before God. Love that beautiful flower, because it is pleasing to the great King, because it charms His love and honors Him in His very essence, for He is the thrice-holy God, and holiness is purity.

Be also for His love thrice-pure. pure in your body, because it is the living temple of the Holy Trinity; pure in your mind because it is the mirror in which God desires to reflect His truth, as well as His goodness; pure in your heart, because it is the sanctuary in which your Spouse abides. You are God's heaven! Then, let nothing sullied enter and remain therein.

Holy purity is the only dowry that the Heavenly Spouse demands of you. It is the nuptial robe. Your vow is the divine ring of your alliance with Jesus.

Be, then, holily jealous of the honor of your vocation, as well as of your service. It is comprised entirely in virginity. But holy purity, like the lily of the desert, grows in the midst of thorns. Guard it well by

surrounding yourself with the thorns of modesty and moderation. Like the lily turning toward heaven its spotless chalice, never look down upon earth, but up to God. So delicate is this queen of flowers that, to touch it is to blight it. Its whiteness is unequalled, sunlight only makes it appear in all its splendor. Its stalk is dark and without beauty, which is all centred in its brilliant crown. And so, let all your virtues be the humble servants of that which attracts the eyes and the love of the great King. May He alone receive the first and the last glance of your heart as of your whole life!

Daughters of the Queen of virgins, be like unto your Mother. She trembles with reserve and holy modesty at the sight of an angel in human form. She loves more than all else what she knows to be loved by God in her above all else.

Remember that you bear in your purity the honor of your vocation, the duty of your state, the life of the Congregation your mother, and the reign of God in you!

III

A Servant of the Blessed Sacrament ought to possess nothing as her own, but to live the common life, content with everything, and happy when, by the privation of something useful or even necessary, she can say to Our Lord: "I am the poor one of Thy love!"

On entering the Congregation, the first duty and the first act of love is to despoil ourselves of all that we have, keeping for our use only what holy obedience determines that we may be free from all earthly cares and become the children of Divine Providence.

By poverty, you ought to consider yourselves dead to the world, to live hidden in God with Jesus Christ. You can, consequently, retain nothing for your future needs, nor take upon yourself the supporting of good works, whether of charity or almsgiving. The world is dead to you, and you are dead to it.

Love the holy poverty of Jesus as a good mother, who will take good care of you

and allow you to want for nothing, provided you cheerfully abandon yourself to Divine Providence. The peace and joy of the Holy Spirit are delicious fruits of poverty. It gives to love its wings, to virtue its aliment, to your whole life its merit and glory. Under its reign, what is little becomes great, what is distasteful becomes delightful.

Such is the secret of the poor of Jesus Christ. He has, in effect, said to them: "Ye are blessed, because yours is the kingdom of God."

In espousing Jesus, you espouse His state of poverty. The bride assumes the rank of the bridegroom. Now, Jesus is poor in His clothing, in His nourishment, in His abode, in His labor. You will live, then, as He does, as His Blessed Mother, as dear Saint Joseph, His loving foster-father. They were happy in their poverty, and Heaven looked down in admiration on a God become poor for love of man, and to teach him the price of poverty.

But you will, above all, admire and imitate the poverty that He practises in the Blessed

Sacrament. In spite of His state of glory and power, He still desires to honor and practise lovely poverty, that we may always have its grace and model before our eyes.

Material poverty suffices, it is true, for satisfying the rigor of the vow; but it is to spiritual poverty, poverty of spirit, that we must aim, as to the highest point of virtue, and even to the extreme limit of sanctity

Poverty of spirit is nothing else than the soul of true humility. It is perfect love. It is the sovereign means of God's glory, for the more the poor in spirit abase themselves in their lowliness, the more they honor God, their Creator, for they thus acknowledge that their being, their life, their gifts and graces, all proceed from Him and belong absolutely to Him.

Should it please God to make you feel your poverty and His absolute dominion over you by paralyzing your intelligence, by withering up your heart, by taking away from you the sweetness of His grace and the peace of His service, by delivering you thus despoil-

ed to the tempest of the passions, to the fury of demons, isolating you from all created help, even hiding Himself from you, oh! then, thank Him, confessing that you do not yet suffer all you deserve. Fall down and adore God in naked and absolute poverty. You will thereby glorify Him more than by all the most magnificent works.

IV.

To these three vows, you must join the Eucharistic consecration of your personality, or the gift of self, which is the end and the perfection of your vocation.

The soul of this gift is the entire and unreserved donation of your whole being to the service and the glory of the God of the Eucharist, as His true and happy servant, who desires to love Him for Himself, and who seeks no other gain than Himself, His better service, no other happiness than to behold Him known, loved, and served by everyone.

Love this Eucharistic gift as a man loves

his life; for if you are a religious by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, this Eucharistic gift makes you practise them in the spirit proper to your holy vocation of Servant of the Most Blessed Sacrament. It is the sap and the form of your vows. This gift offers and sacrifices to your only Master the merit and the glory of all their acts. It is the holocaustal fire which consumes the victim entirely in God. It is the blessed chain which attaches you, binds you interiorly to the throne of the Divine Lamb. It makes you His property, His member, His organ. By it Jesus alone becomes the principle that moves your thought, will, and action. He alone becomes the end of your actions, your merits, and your sufferings. What an admirable union! How near it brings you to Jesus-Hostia! What do I say? Through grace, it makes of Him and of you but one same victim, one mystical being.

But remember, also, that it obliges you to a more perfect service, a greater love, a more generous devotedness. *Noblesse oblige!* You must return to the Lord all the interest

of the rich capital that He has entrusted to you.

But how shall you recognize in yourself the true service of Jesus? By ever ready good-will, by holy joy of soul, by peace in your vocation, by desiring nothing excepting to love more and serve better your Lord and your God, and by spiritual hunger and thirst for His greater glory.

Your service is the service of adoration toward the Divine Person of Our Lord. It is, consequently, whatever there is in itself the most perfect. It is a life and a service of immolation to God. You must perpetually immolate self. Be attentive to the smallest service. It is God everywhere. Everywhere He is to be served with the same dependence, the same devotedness. What makes the perfection of an action is not what it appears, but the love with which it is done. Serve Him, then, with your whole self.

Jesus in His tabernacle is our Friend; upon the altar, He is our Victim; but upon His throne, He is the King of heaven and earth.

Your graces, your virtues, your good works—all belong not to you. All that you do here is for your Master. Labor not for self. Destroy, sacrifice your personality of Adam, and put Our Lord in its place. Then say: "It is no longer I who live. It is Jesus Christ who lives in me." If you serve Our Lord for yourselves, you pervert grace, you blight it. The grace of God is God's. Nothing belongs to you. All is His, the heart, the mind, the body, and time itself. He wants all. You have resolved to be faithful to Him, then do not rob Him of anything. And when you fulfil that resolution, still say: "I am a useless servant!"

But it is not enough to live for Jesus, to give and consecrate to Him all that we have, all that we are. We must live of Jesus, of His Eucharistic life, for Jesus is living in His sacramental state, there He leads a life proper to the Eucharist. What is this life?

It is a life of death. Behold Jesus is dead to everything in this world, its goods, its pleasures. He no longer has any natural

relations with anyone. He no longer speaks the language of men. He allows us no longer to gaze on His beautiful countenance of Saviour, on His gentle, fatherly eyes. He wills that His Person should no longer come under the action of our senses, although He is there perfect Man, living with all His members and human organs. He wills to live, but in a state of death.

Be like your good Master, dead to the world. For the future, desire only one thing, to be known, to be loved but by God alone. For that, live of His sacramental grace. Reproduce it in yourselves by veiling your good works, by veiling your virtues, by veiling your natural qualities, as well as your supernatural gifts.

See in Jesus sacramental the virtues you ought to practise. Appropriately them to yourselves and complete them in yourselves. Yes, the Eucharistic virtues are incomplete in this sense, that Jesus can no longer perform their meritorious acts, and that He takes but their state. Thus, His Body can no longer give to the virtue of mortification the life of

suffering which is its aliment, since He is glorified and impassible. Humiliation can no longer abase Him and make Him practise meritorious humility. Real sacrifice can no longer immolate His life and shed His Blood. His Heart loves, but no longer feels the sorrows of love, as in the Garden of Olives. His charity opens the bosom of mercy to all the miserable; but it is necessary to lead the sinner to Him, for He can no longer run after Him as He once did. He supplicates the Father for us by showing Him His sacred Wounds, but they are now luminous and glorified, nor do they any longer pour out that Blood which goes up to God as the cry and the incense of repairing love.

What, then, is wanting to Jesus? May you complete Him, may you give Him a heart which can be sad, a body that suffers! To save and to repair, He has need of your sorrows, of your passion, of your blood!

Saint Paul in crucifying himself, said: "I fill up in my flesh those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ " Ah! in

what way? By suffering and sacrifice, which associate me and unite me to the infinite merits of the Saviour's sufferings.

Behold to what the gift of personality engages you: to be the members, the meriting, obedient, and suffering nature of Jesus who will offer it to His Father in sacrifice for His glory, for the salvation of souls, and for the interests of His Church

Live, then, of Jesus, for Jesus, not as the day-laborer who looks for his wages at the close of each day's work, not as the hired servant who serves for a time, in order to have an independent position later on. No, serve Jesus without wages, without free days without days of rest, without consolation without glory. Serve Him for Himself, as the candle that burns and consumes itself without noise, without interruption before the Sacred Host, leaving not even some ashes after it!



The VIRTUE of the GIFT

of SELF :

THE HUMILITY of LOVE.

As adoratrices, what, in practice, should be your special and characteristic virtue? It should be the humility of the love of Our Lord. It is only by this virtue that you will please your good Master, only by it that you will be good adoratrices, and happy in your vocation. By the gift of self, you pledge yourselves to be nothing, either in yourselves or in others. Humility alone will maintain you in this nothingness, which is the all in all of Our Lord. And then, it is the virtue of love, its proper virtue. In the Eucharist, Our Lord loves us even to excess, and that is the reason He gives Himself in It in the excess of annihilation. He must find in us a heart that loves what He loves, for He has said, "Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of Heart."

If you do not possess humility, you will not long remain pure, because pride sullies

the soul. You may be charitable as much as one can be with pride; you may have the virtues of purity, mortification, and zeal, but if they are not all guarded and nourished by humility, they are lost. Pride dissipates all and prevents your virtues from having consistency.

You will remain in Eucharistic grace only by humility. This virtue is the dowry of love. You must possess it in order to go to Our Lord. With every other virtue you may be able to impersonate self and rest in self; but by humility, you disappear in order to allow Our Lord alone to appear.

Our Lord communicates Himself to us only by the way of humility. He would be glad to bestow on us His gifts of tenderness, of contemplation, and even of ecstasy; but on account of our want of humility, we could not bear them.

As Saint Paul says of Our Lord that He was exalted only because He had been humbled and annihilated, if you want Him to draw you to His Heart and to load you with His favors, be truly humble.

If you labor at humility, you labor at true sanctity. The more humble you are the more holy you will be. Humility is the exact measure, and it never deceives.

Humility is the mother, the root; and the flower of all the virtues. It is the mistress of God's power, the guardian of His treasures and of all His graces.

Be, then, very humble. And with what kind of humility? With the perfect humility of spirit. This consists in truly and sincerely believing yourself the last of creatures and the most miserable of all, deserving of hell a thousand and a thousand times. Confess this to God frequently and with conviction: "Lord, I am not worthy of the least of Thy graces, I deserve not the last of Thy attention. Leave to me the trials of penance, for compared with what I deserve, they will be a favor. Leave me at the door of the temple, striking my breast like the publican, for that is my place."

Then you ought to be content when some humiliation comes to you, some cross, or some trial of any kind. Be always satisfied

with everything, since you know that you have deserved far more. In interior trials and abandonment by God, above all, you will say: "Lord, this is nothing! It is not enough for what I deserve!" By this you will become all-powerful over the Heart of God.

If God puts you on the dunghill of your sins and miseries, and if all creatures pursue or abandon you, learn how to say: "I am repairing for my sin, and I have what is due me." Job glorified God on his dunghill more than upon his throne and, in triumphing over himself, he triumphed over God.

With this humility of spirit, you will always be content, never troubled. Labor at it earnestly.

Humility of heart must also be acquired and that is, to love God in trial and humiliation. A humble soul has peace in trial. Her heart suffers, it is true, but through love she wishes what God wills, she loves His crucifying will and, in spite of all her sorrows, she sings: *Fiat voluntas tua!* God certainly does not ask us to love trials,

dryness, and persecution for themselves, but to love His will which sends them. And if we love Him, we shall support them with patience, in silence, and before Him alone. This is sublime. We may weep, for He permits poor nature's tears to flow, but He asks that patience should sanctify them.

Then the heart attached to the will of God, loves it and prefers it to everything else. The soul, become devoted to God who is trying it, is sweet toward everyone. She says: "My soul, be not sad. Keep a smiling countenance, be friendly toward those that apparently do thee wrong; for it is not their hand that touches thee, but the Hand of Him whom I desire to love, because He is always lovable!" Be, then, humble of heart, affection, and will. I do not say to seek humiliations or trials, but to receive them well whenever they present themselves

Be humble exteriorly in word, in demeanor, everywhere humbly modest. Be humble in never seeking esteem, and in willingly seeing yourself deprived of it. The good God permits that the saints should be calumniated, derided,

persecuted. The Master endured the same, so it is an honor for you if He makes you pass along that way. Rejoice at it, I say to you, for to be honored is to expose glory that God has placed in you and which He expects you to return to Him faithfully. Rejoice, then, when you are forgotten, when they treat you with disdain, when they despise you, even when they calumniate you. You are then in your royal virtue, the humility of Our Lord.

Now, to acquire it, continued labor is necessary. No one reaches the perfection of this beautiful virtue, so never give yourselves any rest, but always tend toward it with all your strength. The good God will afford you constant occasions for it and He will give also the grace to use them well.

It is a duty ever to humble yourselves, for this virtue like love may always be exercised. It knows no obstacle. There is a time for penitential works and for works of charity but there is none for the practice of humility which, if it cannot always be practised exteriorly, can be cultivated by the sentiment

and the knowledge of what you are before God. Place your soul in a state of humility. and continually keep it there by interior acts of personal abasement.

Behold your virtue! Without humility, you will never be adoratrices. It must become your dominant and characteristic virtue. There is no piety without humility, no good prayer, no adoration in spirit and truth, since humility is the rule of all this. If some great virtue were demanded of you, such as fortitude, magnanimity, and penitence you might say: "I am not capable of mounting so high." But here there is question of descending, for humility is the virtue of weakness, poverty, and ignorance, and you cannot say that you are incapable of descending.

You should, therefore, constantly have humility in view as the indispensable means of your vocation. But to labor at it in view of your own misery and humiliation is not enough to acquire it well. There is a better means, and that is, to love Our Lord in His humiliations. If you love Him, you will live in Him. Now, He summarizes Himself entire

ly in these words: "I am humble of Heart." If you love Our Lord, you will love what He loves. He loves humility and humiliation. His characteristic is humility.

We should honor Our Lord in the manner and the virtue that He shows us in the Blessed Sacrament. Now, which is the virtue that He constantly practises there, constantly and openly teaches there to all, even to the most ignorant? Humility, annihilation. He is more humiliated there than in His birth, His life, even His death. His annihilation there veils and buries all, His Divinity, His Humanity, His words, and His actions. If, then, you desire to honor Him, as is the essential duty of your vocation, honor Him in His state of humility, imitate Him in what He actually is. He has descended lower than man, lower than the slave, lower than the least of animated beings, since He is only a thing, an appearance of bread destined to be eaten and destroyed. Descend, then, in order to find Him where He is. You must glorify Our Lord humble, make for Him a throne of self, put self under

His feet. Oh, how low He is! Whatever you may do, you will never be lower than Our Lord. Descend, descend always, to honor and love Him by your humility and your own annihilation.

Why is He so humbled? In order to show us that He loves us, in order to glorify His Father, and to repair human pride. Ah, well! do you, also, glorify God by your humility, love Our Lord even so far as annihilating self, and abase yourselves for so many souls that wish not to humble themselves. Our Lord bears in Himself the punishment of their pride. You must come to His aid and help Him by wearing with Him His mantle of humiliation.

The Heavenly Father says to you: "I have given you My Son in this state of Eucharistic annihilation in order to show you how much He loves you and abases Himself for you. Return to Him what He has done for you. Humble yourself. Espouse His humility which He has not willed to renounce even in His glorified state!"

Ask Our Lord earnestly for His spirit of

Eucharistic humility, of which you have the model always under your eyes. His Presence gives you the grace of it. Hold it in love and practise it faithfully. May every pulsation of your heart say to God: "Give me humility! Make me humble! Make me love humiliation!"

Exercise yourselves therein every day. In the morning, in the examen of foresight, determine upon some acts of it during the day. Use up successively all the acts and all the application of humility of heart, of mind, of body. Here is work for a long time, and you will not be at a loss to know what resolution to take.

I have told you: "Will you please Our Lord and enter into the very essence of your vocation?—Give to Him your personality." To-day, I add: "Will you persevere in this gift? You can do so only by constant humility. Humility must be the aliment of this gift. If you are always humble, you will go on always giving yourself, since by humility you go out of self, descend from self, in order to give place to Our Lord.

The practical virtue of the gift of self is, then, humility Undertake it with all your heart.



The SUPERNATURAL LIFE.

 HERE is one capital question in the service of God, in the work of your own perfection, which 'takes the lead of all others, and which is their life, and that is, do, you know whether you live the supernatural life. whether you live of the grace and of the life itself of Our Lord. You understand that it would be the greatest of misfortunes to live naturally in a vocation so filled with graces and love, and there find the means of paralyzing the grace of God.

The question thus presents itself: We are going from earth to heaven. God has created us for this divine end. Earth is only a preparation where we receive the means suited to our end, and which are, consequently, divine. It is the grace of Our Lord that really elevates the life of man to a state supernatural and divine. We receive the capability of living in a supernatural state, of thinking, of loving, of acting supernaturally, and of leading upon this earth the life itself of God, the life of heaven,

according to the word of Saint Paul: "Our life is in heaven."

"Our life is in heaven." God unceasingly gives us this grace. The Sacraments of the Church are only to increase and renew it. But do you know that, environed by graces, living in a holy state, laboring much, we may, notwithstanding, act only naturally? In that case, we are doing nothing for the glory of God, and gaining nothing for heaven. Oh! that is a frightful power we possess of ^{*}corrupting the grace of God and of performing the best works through ourselves and in a natural manner, instead of doing them through Him and through His grace.

Those that live in the most pious surroundings fall so much the more easily into this defect, for they are blinded by appearances. What deceives, what abuses, what brings on the change, and keeps them in the natural life, is that they taste more joy in it, find more peace in the good works that they perform in the natural spirit, by following their own inclination, than in

those they do supernaturally. This satisfaction deceives many souls. They look upon it as an approval from God, but what a deception! Do we not see many Christians who are in a state of sin owing to the omission of essential duties, who do not confess, do not make their Easter, and yet who are tranquil and happy? They have preserved some Christian habits, they say their prayers, go to Mass, fulfil very well the duties of their state. They are in peace, they are happy. But remorse?—They do not feel it, and that is the reward for the natural good they do, but a natural recompense, also. It is the peace of the Jews, the happiness of time. They are deceived by it, and are astonished when some one speaks to them of conversion. You are not in that state. But only see how such persons' happiness in what they do, is subject to illusion. When after performing some act, you are carried away by natural joy, very frequently you may say: "Oh! this is my reward, for I have nothing more to expect in heaven!"

To work from a natural motive is to

gather into a pierced sack that can hold nothing.

But what, then, is it to live naturally? It is to labor for self, to be the end of one's actions instead of doing them for God. It is to act by the movement of one's own inclination, of one's own self-love, to seek self, our own rest, our own natural advantage in what we do.

You are natural if you are sensual in mind, seeking to satisfy its curiosity; in your heart, if you seek to pour it out, to rest in the affection of the creature, or even if you allow yourself to be dejected when God withdraws from you His consolations; in your body, if you allow yourself to become indolent and to seek after repose. You are natural if you do not accept the states in which God places you, dryness, temptations, sufferings; if instead of accepting them patiently, you say with impatience: "Oh, I wish I were happy!"

Fear this natural life!—What! you have left the riches and pleasures of the world to give yourself to God and now you would

have the secret of losing all by laboring for yourself alone?

Our poor *Ego* is the root of the natural life. It is self-love that wants to be its own end and to enjoy whatever it does. No, follow Our Lord and bear His Cross. He who bears his Cross does not enjoy.

Faith is necessary for the supernatural life; but it alone does not suffice, for it may be found even in the sinner, and whatever the sinner does, counts not for heaven. His works are wanting in the divine life, which supposes, above all, the state of grace, freedom from all mortal sin.

The supernatural life consists, first, in the state of grace, in being a friend of God, and in living in that state of active faith which operates through charity. Did a person aim at but one thing in his life, namely, the keeping of himself in the state of grace, that would be perfection, because that would suppose excessive care not to offend God. The state of grace, then, makes us practise all the virtues, for the Holy Spirit, who would dwell in us, would

constantly excite our will, and make us incessantly produce holy acts, as ground well dug and sown faithfully yields its fruit. The state of grace vivifies everything. By perfecting itself, it perfects everything. Certain mystics say "It is sufficient that you always preserve your state of grace, for all that you do under its influence will be pure and supernatural. The state sanctifies the acts." As in Our Lord the union of the Person of the Word with His Humanity elevates His least works, making of them divine works, so, if you are in a state of grace, and you act by virtue of this state, all that you do is good and meritorious before God.

Be that as it may, an intention is necessary to supernaturalize our actions. Which intention is necessary, for there are several?

Some wish to act by a supernatural and actual intention, so that before every action they ought to say, at least interiorly: "My God, I offer Thee this thought, this action, for such or such a supernatural motive," for a motive of any virtue, it matters not

which, suffices. If it be the motive of love, it will be perfect.

Nevertheless, this actual intention is difficult to have always, and so, many declare that the virtual intention is sufficient. We act by a virtual intention when the action that we are performing proceeds from an antecedent act of the will, which has once been made and which still lasts in its influence and force. Thus if one offers to God in the morning through love all the actions of his day, that would be sufficient to turn all his actions into love provided he did not retract the first intention, and that the act be good in itself and pleasing to God; and so of the other virtues. The virtual intention may last more than a day in certain cases in which the mind is powerfully affected, as in time of pain or trial. It may sanctify all the sufferings of that cross without its being formulated again before each in particular.

Some are of opinion that the virtual intention is all sufficient. It is that which acts no longer on the action performed, but which, having been made beforehand

and not having been positively retracted, is understood by that fact alone still to last. In this case, the state of grace in itself alone, without any need of other motives, suffices to render meritorious and supernatural all the actions performed by the just, all their good and virtuous actions of whatever virtue they may be.

Without doubt, it is better to aim at having a supernatural intention either actual or virtual. But the opinion just given is very encouraging, and greatly increases the power and nobility of the state of grace.

Great vigilance is, then, necessary to shun voluntary sins. A sin of weakness does not entirely destroy the intention. It interrupts it, but it can be renewed. But those committed through bad will and affection to sin paralyze the state of grace and lead to its loss by mortal sin.

Keep yourselves pure, therefore, so that all you do may, also, be pure.

I want nothing exaggerated but, on the other hand, nothing relaxed. I say to you also: Think as frequently as you can about

renewing your supernatural intention. Do it, above all, at the change of action. You are in a holy and supernatural state, I know, but it is safer to gather new strength repeatedly, and produce according to your occupation as many acts as possible. Without this, the habitual intention, even the virtual intention, languishes and becomes incapable of supernaturalizing our actions. Hence, how many merits lost! Our actions may, indeed, be relatively good, but they do not merit eternal recompense.

Again, act as much as you can according to the perfection of your state of grace, which is a state of charity and love for God, and which entertains in the soul the Holy Spirit who resides there. Is it not right to act as frequently as possible through the proper virtue of this state namely, through love? Then the soul desires not only not to displease God, but to please Him, to be agreeable to Him by doing what she can in the best possible way. She is always seeking the most perfect, because she knows that is more pleasing to God. Such or such

a thing is neither necessary nor commanded, but she will do it to please God. That is sufficient for her. It is her word of command, her inspiration.

The soul then fears sin, the least sin, not so much on account of its deformity as of the good of which it deprives her, because it displeases God, wounds His love and offends the delicacy of friendship.

Heroism does not consist in not displeasing, but in always pleasing. This is the point at which you must arrive. It is the perfection of the Christian life, of the life of grace.

Let us, then, live in this thought of pleasing God in order never to displease Him, and for that end let us walk ever in His presence. And this presence is not far from us. It is our very selves, living, acting. It is the Real Presence of God, of the Holy Spirit, of Jesus. Let us fix the gaze of our heart upon It, permitting ourselves to be distracted from It neither by persons nor things. We shall then know what God wills and what He wills not, and His known good pleasure will be sufficient for us.

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The PURITY of LOVE.

OD has loved us with a love infinite, perpetual, eternal. You know the proofs of it, you have seen them, and the conclusion is that you ought to love Him with all your strength.

The first condition of this love is to be pure and not to offend Him. We must reach that degree of the love of the good God at which one unhesitatingly avoids all that displeases Him. If you do not possess this refinement, you do not love Him. It is the commencement and the essential condition of love. If you desire to love Him perfectly, give yourself to Him and you will attain the highest degree of love by giving your personality, by renouncing for the love of God all that you have and all that you are, by reserving nothing for self, by keeping nothing for self, and by never considering self in anything. This is to give one's self to God for God. Desire no other honor than that of serving Him, no other consolation than that of loving Him.

Reject all that others might want to give you as to *you*, to you as a centre, and refer all to Our Lord. You should exercise yourself in this incessantly, and render glory to God by your whole self.

By the gift of personality, you make an exchange, you put the Person of Jesus Christ in the place of your own, and you become no longer anything but His member, His organ. You have given yourselves thus to Him, you no more belong to yourselves. Oh! do not take self back through honor, consolation, esteem, affection, and self-love. For this a great grace of humility is needed, you must possess this virtue in the very depths of your being. Humility—what is that but a participation in the state of Our Lord, who is always giving Himself and, for that end, always humbling Himself, annihilating Himself? Hence, all that is humble is the life of Our Lord in you, and all that comes to you of humiliation, annihilation, is only a little reflection of what Our Lord has suffered. If creatures and God Himself unite, and everything goes against you—oh, what

a favor! The Heavenly Father is beginning to treat you as He did His Divine Son. Thank Him heartily, for it is a favor. God is going to see whether you love Him, for humiliation is the life of divine love

It is, then, necessary to be humble of heart, mind, will, body, and life. This is the only means of truly testifying your love for Our Lord. It is His own life in Himself. Since He is in you, allow Him to live His own life, which is a life of humiliation and annihilation.

To-day, I am come to ask another thing of you. To be pure, to be humble, is a great deal; but there is need of something that will give you strength, vigor, and that is, the strength, the vigor of the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Love is strength itself. It is stronger than death.

Now, love demands that we take no complacency outside of Our Lord. Jesus Christ is the last word of love, its centre, its element, its unique principle, and its sovereign end alone. If you love Him as He deserves to be loved, you must take no pleasure

outside of Him. This appears easy, and yet it costs most; it is perfection itself, because it is love in action.

Will you take no satisfaction outside of Our Lord, your Master? Be not, then, an egoist in disguise. You would not commit an act of infidelity, of indelicacy in His presence! This holds good even in the natural order. When two friends love each other well, the one cannot issue an invitation without including his friend. The well-bred child never receives anything without running at once to show it to its mother. A wife cannot accept a gift, nor even a compliment, without sharing it with her spouse. A contrary mode of acting, would insult him. In fine, the first thought when one loves, is to share, to make the beloved participate in all that we have and in all that we esteem good and beautiful.

Now, I ask you, if you love Our Lord, if He is the law of your heart and of your life, could you taste any pleasure without Him? Could you receive any delight, any flower of love, of honor, or of esteem without

offering it to Him? That could not be! You want to love Him very sincerely, do you not? Ah! then, understand this well— never take any satisfaction of what kind soever, apart from Our Lord. Renounce every pleasure in which He does not share. This appears to be only justice and propriety, but it is, also, the highest perfection.

Now, for the application of this principle. Our Lord says to the soul that loves Him: "Give Me thy heart," that is, all thy affection, all thy love. The spouse of the Canticles says: "My Beloved is all mine, and I am all His." It is not a question of merely soul and body, but of every thought, every affection. Like the Apostles, we must persevere with Our Lord in all things

If you desire to enjoy nothing outside of Our Lord, you will commit but very few sins, and very light ones. There may be faults of surprise, of weakness, and of negligence; but where there is no satisfaction, no resting of the heart, no will or sentiment, there is no great malice. What makes the malice and the gravity of sin, is the enjoy-

ment that one finds in it, because then he places his happiness and his end out of God.

Thus, in pride, it is the satisfaction of the mind that is sought. Pride rests in self and in this sentiment: They are honoring me! Voluptuousness finds its heart-satisfaction, or that of the senses, in reciprocal testimonies of love. It reposes therein and enjoys. This is what forms the malice of those sins as of all others. And that which is punished, that which burns in hell and in purgatory, is the satisfaction, the enjoyment that men have sought to draw from contempt of the Supreme Being, who is God.

If, then, you wish to enjoy nothing without Our Lord, you will be very pure, you will fly those personal satisfactions that create natural sympathies, you will be on your guard against sensuality of the heart, which is nothing else than the satisfaction felt by the heart in things natural and sensible, or to put it in other words, in the creature.

You will, also, be very humble if you renounce every satisfaction outside of Our

Lord, for the foundation of pride is only the satisfaction of mind, its complacency in its own self-esteem or in the esteem of others.

Be on your guard, also, to take no sensual pleasure. The sensual man in you is always seeking to enjoy. You must reject every temptation that he stirs up in you. You must be very watchful to avoid everything that can give evil or imperfect satisfaction, as well as all that might prove a temptation. All that must be torn away from self, and you must ever be on your guard, even in things the most legitimate and necessary in life, against every sensual idea and enjoyment. Thus, for example, in eating, there is danger of satisfying taste and sensuality rather than of eating through the necessity of supporting life. What is necessary must be taken in obedience to God. It is not possible not to perceive the flavor of food. It has even been designed by God that the food may have a taste which will contribute to this animal action. But we must not pause on it with complacency. This pleasure must be restrained by the mortifica-

tion of sobriety. If we should overstep the limits and allow our taste to satisfy itself, there is a venial sin of gluttony. It is the same with regard to the eyes, the ears, and all the senses. We commit as many sins of sensuality as we take satisfaction in sensible things.

And yet we must not entertain any exaggerated fear on these points. Nothing so holds back the soul and keeps her captive as always to fear. Be delicate, but not scrupulous. Go on simply and frankly. Do not bind yourselves in the chain of perpetual fear under pretext that temptation may follow. Be only careful and vigilant in rejecting it as soon as it presents itself

There are some souls too lax, too slow, who allow temptation to enter their heart, and they complain! But you have not been vigilant and careful, since "you did not perceive its approach." And if you saw it coming, why did you not at once banish it? Because it was no great thing?—You are very imprudent! You allowed the spark to rest on your hand too long, and now

you complain of being burned. How foolish you are! You should have shaken it off your hand! There has been, at least, some fault of negligence. You were not at your post of vigilance and conscientiousness.

Behold the rule that must be followed with the old man and his sensuality. We shall be tormented by him even to the end. He has no faith, and he cares little for our good desires. He wants only to enjoy and, in union with the evil one, he is constantly aiming at stealing something from us, and getting his share of enjoyment.

When we have escaped him, he tries to disquiet us, make us return upon self to examine the temptation and see how far it went. But take care! That is a snare. You have already been scorched, and you are picking up the coal again! See how under the pretext of examining, people sully the imagination. They always find some satisfaction in reviewing their sins of sensuality, even while humbling themselves for them. Take care! You are going to fill your head with them, and you will be persecuted by

them! Do not waste your time. What need have you to know what it was? Are you sorry for having rejected it too soon the first time, without enjoying it? There was nothing in it then, but now there *is* something in it. No, no! Do not put yourself in the fog and mud of your temptations under pretext of humbling yourself. That is the demon's humility! Ascend the mountain, enlighten yourself in the love of Our Lord, and leave all to His mercy. This is a good way to shun temptations against sensuality.

You now know that the first degree of the purity of love consists in desiring outside of God no natural and sensual satisfaction. The second is to share every good and lawful satisfaction with Our Lord. This is more perfect.

There are some species of satisfaction that we may very lawfully taste in the gifts of God, but they have a natural side. If we share them with Our Lord by offering them to Him, we purify and sanctify them. The purity of love calls for that.

You feel the warm rays of the sun in

the beautiful springtime, you admire its brilliancy, and you are glad. That is well and allowable, but offer that pleasure to God, saying: "How good Thou art, O my God, who dost make this beautiful sun shine for me!"

You see in a garden the beautiful flowers, which unfold for you their varied colors mingled with such skill and grace, and which waft you their perfume like the kiss of friendship. To enjoy the sight, to breathe the perfume is not at all wrong; but think of your Spouse, and point out to Him those flowers, saying: "I thank Thee, my God! Thou art a good and great artist!" You eat some fruit, and you cannot help relishing its exquisite freshness. It is God who has placed it there for you, so bless Him at once for it. "By my sins, I deserve only gall and wormwood. But Thou art kind, and Thou givest me this sweetness. I thank Thee, O my God!" In this way, you will not enjoy natural goods naturally when you enjoy them with Our Lord.

A man who lives by the senses, on the contrary, takes pleasure in seeing. He in-

hales perfumes, he tastes flavors, but he never thinks of raising his eyes toward Him who gives them to him. He makes himself his own end, he enjoys sensually. You, also, would fall into the same way, if you paused too long to enjoy the excellence of things. A little is lawful, but too much is sensual. We must always rest in God more than in the thing He gives us. We must enjoy the good in passing while thanking God who permits us these innocent satisfactions, in order to render life's exile less painful for us.

There are some saints of more austere mortification, who reject even the satisfaction sanctified by the offering made to God. But there are others, like Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Francis de Sales, who taste the gifts of God and God in His gifts. Thus did David render thanks to God for all His gifts in the beautiful canticle of the *Benedicite*. They made use of everything to go to God and to thank Him. In all His gifts, they saw an ever new proof of His goodness.

Saint Francis of Assisi suffered much from his eyes. Those around him used to bathe them in cold water to relieve the suffering, and the dear saint praised God aloud for having imparted to the water the power to refresh his burning pupils.

On another occasion when he was sick, a good lady was inspired by God to prepare for him a fish which she knew the saint liked. At first, he had the thought not to accept it, but to deprive himself of it as did David offering to God the cup of water that a soldier had brought him at the peril of his own life. But on second thought, he said: "No, that would wound our good daughter," and he ate it, giving thanks to God.

And so never to pause in created things, but to find in them wherewith to praise God and to share the pleasure of them with Our Lord—such is the second degree of the purity of love. Practise this even in spiritual things. If the good God were to send you an angel to console and help you, and were you to dismiss Him, saying:

"I prefer to suffer alone, I wish only to be crucified," that would be pride unadulterated. The angel should have no sooner disappeared than you would begin to lament, because the demon would have taken his place. I mean by this that, if the good God sent you the means of receiving some good counsel, of asking for enlightenment, it would be a help from His goodness. Make use of it simply and joyously, and thank God for it. Then when this messenger of divine grace shall have ended his mission to you, allow him to depart without falling into despondency. God remains to you! Thus it was when the archangel Raphael, having fulfilled his mission to the young Tobias and his father, suddenly disappeared from their sight. Instead of weeping and lamenting and losing their time in regrets, on account of the advantages they had found in his presence, they fell on their knees and, for three hours, thanked the goodness of God.

I permit you, then, to take all that the good God sends you, not to enjoy it as

an egoist and to place therein your end, but to find in it matter to share with Our Lord, and to praise His infinite bounty, which takes pleasure in giving us what can be of service to us, or even be agreeable to us.

Still more, a soul that loves the good God well, and that gives to Him her personality, knows not how to taste any joy apart from Our Lord. She wishes to share with Him not only her crosses—as we know so well how to do in order to get rid of them—but all her joys as well. She can no longer be happy without Our Lord. I am now speaking of the joys of the soul, of those joys that God sheds into the soul during prayer, Communion, and after some sacrifice. She is pleased. She hastens to tell it to her Spouse, for if He did not share it, it would hold no happiness for her.

Oh! it must be said to our shame, these joys are so sweet to us, so good, that, like certain birds of prey, we would wish to hide them in a corner there to enjoy them all alone. No, no, never enjoy them alone! Without Our Lord, desire neither di-

vine favors nor celestial consolations. Do not rest in the goodness, sweetness, beauty of such favors as in your centre. If you repose in them as in your end you dry up their source. Instead of looking at the love of the Heart of Jesus, some pause in its rays. They attend only to their consolations, and not to Him who gives them. Our Lord then closes His hand, suspends His favors, because such souls do not behave with sufficient refinement toward Him. We must not want to enjoy God without God, but to bless Him, to offer everything to Him, and to behold *Him*, rather than all the effects of His grace that we experience.

Lastly, the third degree of the purity of love is indifference to the states through which God wishes to make us pass, whether of joy or of desolation. In the case in which we are free, in which we have the choice, it is a generous will which always takes the most painful, the most crucifying, because it was thus that Jesus Christ Himself did.

Oh! how a soul pleases God when she

says: "My God, I know that Thou art goodness itself. I shall receive in the same manner consolations and desolations, and because, coming from Thee, the trial can be only a favor of Thy bounty, I shall receive it with thanksgiving!" This is perfect indifference. One does not even look at the thing. It comes from God! Then desolation becomes consolation. "Thou dost will that, O my God? That affords Thee pleasure? And to me also!—That does not please Thee, Thou dost not want it? Oh! neither do I! For body as well as for soul, nothing but what Thou dost will. I will go where Thou dost wish, I will remain wherever Thou placest me equally joyous and contented with all!"

But there is something better still. It is the soul that says: "My God, I know that what pleases Thee most is renunciation sacrifice, immolation in the natural and in the supernatural order, and it is that that I choose! Thou wilt not be displeased if having before me satisfaction and sacrifice, I leave the first and take the second. I

do so because the latter having more love, pleases Thee more." The good God looks down on these souls with complacency. He admires them. His law does not exact this but love does, and God is happy when you act thus.

But this must spring from the spontaneity of your love, for God leaves you free. He even hides Himself in order to allow you to choose. No exterior sign shows you which of two things He desires. Then one consults his own heart, saying to himself "Our Lord has testified to me His love by always choosing sacrifice and suffering, so I am going to do the same. I am going to show the good God that I love Him more than He rigorously demands of me. What have I to fear? It is not I myself that I am seeking, for what I am going to embrace is the most humiliating, the most crucifying." Behold love's highest flight!

But in order to be wise and prudent in all that we are saying, keep this rule. When the good God positively places you in some grace, do not look for another. Remain

in it as long as He manifests to you His will. What He wills is the most perfect for you, even if it be not the most perfect in itself. Perform it just as well as you can. Be satisfied with following the attraction of grace that He gives you for the moment. Perfection is in the state God shows to each one as his own.

It is true that the sublimity of love is always to divine what is the most pleasing to the good God. As long as you are not guided by some law or some positive grace, consult His love, follow His inspiration, and thus you will always walk in love, and that is necessary!

But no pleasure, no satisfaction out of God. That is the keen sense of justice. Secondly, every satisfaction that He grants me, I shall return to Him through gratitude. Lastly, complete indifference between joy and pain and, in the liberty of choice, I shall always choose through love what He has chosen for me, the most painful, the most crucifying, and the most humiliating. Behold the degrees and the laws of the purity of love!

PATIENCE and HUMILITY.

UR Lord bore in Him two states, a state of glory and a state of humiliation. Possessing in Himself glory and Divinity, the beatitude of the soul, He kept within Him the rays and the joys of that state, and allowed His sensitive soul to be enveloped by humiliation, fear, suffering, and all the weaknesses of humanity, sin on'y excepted.

Something analogous takes place in us. We have one side very beautiful, very noble very admirable. God's grace, His virtues, even His sanctity, are in us. The Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Trinity dwell in us. God is in us, and we are in Him. That is very beautiful and, in the eyes of the angels, it must be a ravishing spectacle. We have our dignities, and they are the foundation of our hope. But we cannot enjoy them, for they are veiled from us, they are invisible. They are the spectacle that God reserves for Himself in us.

But, on the contrary, we have a visible

side that He leaves to us. It is the personal side, it is that which is from ourselves in us. This vitiated nature of Adam, our passions, our infirmities, our defects, our miseries, actual sin, is what Saint Paul calls in one word, the flesh of sin, *caro peccati*, and again, simply *peccatum*, sin, that is, all that comes from sin and disposes thereto, though even that would not be sin of itself. All that part of us is visible and very sensible. It envelops us on all sides, and is very humiliating.

Why has God thus invested us with the humiliation of our nature, instead of allowing the grandeur of His grace to appear in us? Why does He will that we should feel much more in ourselves the son of Adam, the sinner, than the son of God regenerated in Jesus Christ?

We answer in one single word, which comprehends all—in order to keep us in humility by humiliation. The good God knows that we are so borne to pride, so prone to be content with ourselves through self-love, and to exhibit ourselves for the

admiration of others that, in order to save us and to safeguard His grace in us, He is obliged to leave us in the slime of humiliation, and our own miseries, and not in the glory and honor of His service

Hence, results something that we can scarcely credit although it is very true, and that is, the more graces God bestows, the more He abases. The more saintly a man is, the more he is humbled; the more he is elevated on one side, the deeper he is sunk in the mire on the other.

Why? Because that keeps us in humility, and humility is the characteristic of Our Lord, which He loves to find in us, and by which alone we can please Him.

And so we might say that a little saint is little humbled, that a great saint is greatly humbled, and that the very great saint has to be the anathema of the world, the object of all kinds of humiliations and maledictions. Who was ever humiliated as was Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy of Holies?

That is the condition Like Him we must

climb up to Calvary by passing through the Sanhedrim, through the prætorium of all those humiliations which reduced Him to greater contempt than a worm of the earth, and through the malediction of men. We are affrighted when we read the *Lives* of the great saints, at seeing through what they have passed, how the world maltreated them, how they were judged and calumniated. It was necessary. The Cross is the way of holiness; its characteristic, its nourishment, its surety is humiliation.

If the saints were elevated, exalted, it was but for some moments. By how many years of humiliations did they pay for those short moments of glory! We count their miracles, their ecstasies, the consolations and wonders of their ministry; but who can number up their humiliations, as well on the part of God as on that of men?

If we knew our own merits, if we succeeded and could see our success, we should rejoice in it. But this is not the time for rest. In such enjoyment, pride finds its contentment, and so the good God humbles

us. He places under our eyes only our sins, our defects, our failures, all that can lower us in our own esteem, in order to keep us little and poor. Then we acknowledge our weakness, we pray, we have recourse to God, recognizing that we are nothing and that He is all, like Saint Paul who, after having labored so much, feared to see himself a castaway, and cried out: "I have done nothing!" His love counted as nothing all his labor compared with what he would have wished to have done for Our Lord.

Ah, well! even if you have always been pious, even if you have always served Our Lord, I would say to you: You have done nothing. See what you should have done!

Let us go down, then, into what we are, into our weakness, in order to experience the need we have of God. The more one feels his misery, the more he recurs to God. He calls Jesus Christ to his aid, he unites himself to Him, he comprehends that if he is alone he will be lost. How struggle against the demon, against the passions, how

above all rise from his falls without Jesus Christ? He calls Him, and He is there. Then he is not discouraged. If you become discouraged, it is because you are proud, you support yourself on yourself. Seeing that you will not be able to hold on, instead of acknowledging it courageously and humbling yourself simply, you prefer to give up all in advance, and thus escape the shame of having labored unsuccessfully. That is pride.

However, Our Lord is there. He offers you His grace and His strength, but on one condition, and that is, that you recognize that you can do nothing without it, and that you humbly and earnestly ask for it.

The humble sentiment of our own weakness produces confidence. You are discouraged only because you have not confidence in Our Lord. You do not acknowledge that without Him you can do nothing, and you forget that you can do all things in Him who strengthens you.

When you have done badly, say with

certainty: "It is because I have confided in myself." Do not add pride to pride by becoming discouraged. We are naturally presumptuous. We constantly try to slip away from the good God. But no, go with Him; for you will fall if you walk alone.

You commit few positive sins, I hope, because you sincerely love Our Lord. But how many negative sins, I mean actions full of self-love, deceit, jealousy, sensuality, sloth, in fine, all the capital sins, though in a degree venial or imperfect! And all this is because you lean upon self. You fall into these faults only because you do not sufficiently look up to God.

If you have the habitual sentiment of your own weakness, you will never expose yourself to temptation. In presence of a sacrifice to be made, an occasion to flee, you will turn instantly to God: "My God, give me Thy grace, humility to support this humiliation, patience with that character, Thy strength and Thy grace for everything, for I feel my weakness.

Oh, how God loves to hear that from

us! How quickly He flies to our aid! It is a joy for Him to help us! Our strength lies in the fact that God sees us all the time, in union with Him, and in the help of the Lord.

Humility endues you with the strength of God, and it is, moreover, the means of your sanctity. There is no saint here below who can rest, saying: "I have reached the degree to which God calls me." No, neither in the virtues nor in love does that ever come to pass. To possess a virtue in its perfection? That is to resemble Jesus Christ perfectly, and do you think yourself there? If any one would say that to you, he would be mocking you. You have only some shreds of virtue, and do you think yourself perfect in love? No! You are climbing the mountain of perfection, but you are not yet at its summit.

Where, then, is your sanctity, if it is neither in your works, nor in your virtues, nor in your love? In the patience to acquire it, little by little; to labor incessantly and perseveringly, humbly and patiently at cloth-

ing yourself with the virtues of Our Lord Jesus Christ. All the labor of sanctity lies in patience to acquire it.

To sanctify self is to form Jesus Christ in self. That shapeless block of rough, hard stone, which is yourself, must be wrought upon. To chisel it, polish it, bring it in some degree to resemble the model, is not the affair of a day. Observation, study, labor are necessary. It has to be demolished, cut, repaired, and reconstructed. It is the work of a whole lifetime, and so patience is needed. And what is this patience? It is confidence in God and diffidence in self.

We must confide in God in everything and in spite of everything! He wills that you should be in humiliation, that you should not succeed? Remain there. Advance as He wills you to advance. Confide and abandon yourself entirely to Him. Count no more on yourself in anything whatsoever.

You frequently blaze up and, taking a good resolution, you say: "I want to love God well," and you go on with the assurance of walking a long time without pausing.

But what! behold a frightful temptation against faith, charity, chastity assails you. You repulse it, but it returns with greater violence. What is to be done? Humble yourself, and be patient. If you cast yourself into the thick of the fight you help to keep it up, and you will become discouraged before conquering. But turn away from self, abandon yourself to God; acknowledge that, in spite of your good desires, you are capable of nothing, and you will triumph by patience. Humble yourself and say to God: "My God, Thou dost will that I should be humbled by the evil one, ah, well, may Thy will be done! But assist me if Thou wilt not deliver me, that at least I may not offend Thee. I am willing to live in the midst of demons, provided that, with Thy holy grace, I do not offend Thee!"

Such a state is a martyrdom of the love of God. See how God is magnified in the patience of His servants! Nothing renders so much glory to God as the miserable man who offers to Him his misery and who perseveres in loving Him in the midst of

temptation. The more he lowers himself, the more he elevates and glorifies God. God is elevated in proportion to the depths to which man lowers himself.

Love patience in such states. When God sends temptations, they will remain, whatever you may do, until He withdraws them. Patiently humble yourself, and you will spare yourself much annoyance and headache! If one so tempted merely struggles, resists violently, he forms the habit of becoming irritable, and the character and the heart grow impatient and choleric. If he could tear out his soul, he would do so in order to free himself from that fire which devours him, from those thorns that pierce him. What is he to do? Ah! remain on his dunghill with the holy man Job as long as the good God wills him to do so!

Oh! the beautiful moral lesson God gives us in these words: "Remember to bring forth fruit in patience." The Apostles would have wished to conquer Judea and the whole world in a day. They were so persuaded of their Master's power that they could not

think any one would resist them. They thought not of obstacles. Look at Peter! Look at John himself! But Our Lord said to them: "You will bring forth fruit in patience." He was the first to die without His having been able to convert either Judea or Jerusalem; and among the Apostles themselves, some converted very few infidels. Witness Saint James, who gained to Jesus Christ only seven pagans in Spain!

Ah! patience is nothing else than humility in practice. Patience consists in confidence in God and the humbling of self.

I say to you, then, in your pains, in your dryness, in your weakness, in all that springs from the old man, and in all kinds of trials, have patience even with God, have pity on your own soul.

'Is not God patience itself toward souls, toward you? Does He become infuriated and violently dash things to pieces? No, He awaits the fruit of His seed years and years. He daily does the little that our coöperation permits Him to do. He recommences what our faults have demolished. He

is the grace itself of patience and our model.

Do not measure your advancement by the progress you are able to notice in yourself, by your success in the virtues, but by patience greater, firmer, sweeter, and more humble. You are not bound to know so exactly your progress and your gains.

Our Lord never so much glorified His Father as in His failures among men, and by bearing with patience the imperfections, the coarseness, and the weakness of His Apostles; by His patience in awaiting the will and the hour of His Father in order to act; by His patience in succeeding only in the measure that His Father willed during His public life; and by His patience in His Passion, in which He consented to go through what would naturally annihilate His work forever.

Place all your virtue, then, in strengthening yourself in patience. You will have in everything the success that is necessary when you shall have reached the point of being humiliated. Your virtue is to be laid low, like the manure, at the foot of the tree. Keep yourself at the root and very low, and not

upon the branches, for they might snap.

It is in humility that God wants to draw you to Himself. That is why He has descended so low and annihilated Himself, that we may never be elevated so near to Him as when we shall have sunk lower in the humiliations in which He maintains us and awaits us.

The greatest saints are truly persuaded that they are only great sinners, and they say it as they think it. Some look upon this expression as exaggerated. They cannot believe it, they say. And yet the saints are really convinced that they are the greatest sinner before God, because they have true humility and patience, which are the means of knowing one's misery in its very depths.

Again, we must have patience in prayer. We pray, and we want to be heard favorably on the instant. We ask something, and that alone we want. God, on the contrary, is pleased to make us wait, or to grant us some other favor. He tries us in this way continually. We ask for fervor, for love, and He leaves us in stupidity of heart and deso-

lation. We ask for light, and He plunges us in darkness. We ask for sentiment, and He leaves us in aridity. It seems to us that it would be much better if we were burning with the love of God and zeal for His glory. The good God judges otherwise, and esteems Himself more glorified by our patience and humiliation. Think as He does. He knows better than you the means that will be for His glory, therefore accept what He sends you. Then the soul is satisfied in whatever state God keeps her. She is always contented with the good God.

We ought to ask simply the grace and the virtues that are necessary for us, and incessantly say to God: "Speak! What dost Thou wish me to do to please Thee?" Very frequently God will make no answer, but leave us in doubt. That is to make us increase in patience and humility, which are far better than the most beautiful actions. It is God's way, His method to lead to holy love, to true sanctity. In patience, the soul finds the exercise of all the virtues. Love God by patience and you will be meek,

humble, and charitable. We cannot be patient with God without being so with persons and events.

By patience, you will love God more than His gifts, for He changes not. He is always as lovable when He tries as when He consoles, and it is He whom we must love above all His gifts. If you are not patient, you will never be interior souls, holy souls, no, not even virtuous souls.

Nature is slow. They who cultivate it know how to wait. God is slower still. He goes slowly about all that He does, in order to conquer our pride, the confidence and assurance we have in ourselves and in our own way of doing things, also to render us dependent on His grace, His guidance, and Himself. Sanctity consists not in the fervor of love, but in patience to labor without fervor and to bear with the delays of God.

He wills to grant to some the grace of prayer, of contemplation. He begins by plunging the soul into a great temptation to terror, either at the sight of her own

sins, or by that of the hell which she deserves, and this in order to increase her patience, humility, and trust in God. If we were attentive, we should hear Our Lord continually saying to us: "Wait, wait, and pray!" Always patience! Patience renders every work perfect.

During this life, we cultivate the seed of the glory of God, of our own sanctity and eternal happiness. All these heavenly plants, instead of germinating and rising above the ground, ought to strike downward. It is low down that are found the atmosphere and the sunbeams necessary for them. If they push up by our side, the air and the sun of the world weaken them and make them die. Then, labor low down in patience, humility, and poverty. These virtues are the throne of God in us, and they assure to us His throne of glory in heaven.



CONFIDENCE and REPOSE

in GOD ALONE.

YOUR heart ought to be satisfied with the good God, for He has been so good to you during this Retreat, He has granted you so many precious graces. He has shown you not only the truth of holiness, but also the truth of His love for you. It is much to know the truth of God, His grace and His rights, but to know His love for us, that He does love us and how much He loves us, is the knowledge of rapture!

At this sight, you have said: "I, too, will love God, greatly, generously, purely. His love shall be my life and my law. It shall be my law of mortification and purity. Still more, that love shall be the law of my transformation into God in the deification of my love, for I no longer wish to live of myself. Jesus will live in me. I shall be His human nature, a member of His Body, and He shall be my personality, my living principle.

You are aspiring very high! But that is right. God predestines us not only to be called, but to be in very truth His children, sons of God, according to the words of Saint John. This is the grace given to all. With how much greater reason to you whom He has called to this contemplative vocation which among all others holds the first rank, which is the better part, as Our Lord Himself said!

You are, moreover, contemplatives and adoratrices, that is, you live in more constant relation, a relation closer, more intimate with Our Lord. Your life is passed under His eyes, in His sanctuary. It is entirely made up of family relations with Him. It is a domestic service toward His Divine Person. Ah, if you love Him only as do the people in the world, how unworthy you will be of this sublime vocation! You ought to be like the candle that burns, but without diminishing, and burns ever more purely.

Love, then, live of love and of the gift of yourselves. If you receive much, He will demand much of you. Expect a severe

judgment at the end of your life. Our Lord will ask an account of so many graces; not **one** must remain sterile. And if to the so **great** love that He has for you, you have **not** responded; if His graces, sown in you with such profusion, have not produced fruit, they will cry for vengeance. Expect a terrible purgatory. If you do not love Our Lord purely, you will be cruelly punished since He has loved you so much. Behold your graces, also, but see at the same time the responsibility they impose upon you. You say: "I want to do well, but I am afraid. I dare not promise myself to persevere, I dare not trust in myself, knowing my own weakness."

Oh! do not let that arrest you! It is very happy for you that you do not dare to confide in yourself; but upon what will you rest in order to be very faithful? Here it is. It is the subject of this meditation. Lay firmly the foundation, the reason of your hope, your support, your strength, your confidence in God alone, and not in *se f* nor in creatures, even did you think them saints and human

angels. In your Superiors even, and in all whom God has given you for your guidance seek only Our Lord, and make Him the absolute foundation of your trust in them. If you depend on any creature whatsoever you depend upon a reed, a straw.

Look not for the proof of your virtue in the esteem of the creature, not even, perhaps, in that of a confessor, of a Superior. That is, at any rate, subject to illusion, to self-seeking, and to self-love.

The greatest temptation that can obscure the purity of love, is the appearance of holiness. People love saints, men and women. They want to see them, to speak to them to receive from them some mark of sanctity. They think they have it ready-made, since they rouse their esteem.

God places you in relation with one of His saints. It is a grace. Use it faithfully as long as He permits you, but do not rest in it. On the contrary, make use of that saint in order to place more confidence in God alone. If you should place too much confidence in him, your confidence in God

diminishes. It will no longer be so refined but shared between God and the creature. God is the loser there, for you are preferring a creature to Him! Whenever you put your trust in a creature, were he an angel on earth, you lose sight of the Creator. I do not say it is a sin, but it may tarnish the gold of charity.

The good God makes use for souls, for the souls of His children, of tutors, of angels-Raphael. They are meant to sustain you in your weakness, to lead you by the right road of obedience. Draw great profit from their help. Love and cherish them but love still more the God who gives them to you, place your trust in Him alone, and let Him be your end.

God alone judges souls, and it would be an error to think yourself holy, because you may be favorably considered by His saints. Never say: "The good God loves me, I am sure of it, and I may be at peace since His saints love me." To build upon anything like that, is to expose yourself to self-deception. It is to rest in the creature, and

you will see that God will be jealous of it. He desires to possess all alone our whole confidence. He desires that nothing should come between your heart and Him, for that would paralyze His action and His glory.

“But he is a saint, an angel!”—Doubtless, but he is a creature still. He is a vase that may be shattered. He is subject to misery God will, perhaps, permit you no longer to find in him what you seek too eagerly. He will have no more light for your soul, his devotedness will diminish, he will change; lastly, he will become for you a trial, perhaps a temptation, and a very painful one.

What, then, is to be done? Place your confidence in God alone, above all men, all saints, all angels, and say: “What I find not in them, God wants to give me Himself.”

When we really make use of a saint only to go to God, when our confidence, our eyes, and heart are steadily fixed on God alone, nothing could be more just. We walk freely and independently. But when we repose in the creature, we are disquieted and troubled. It is a mixture that casts a mist over the

eyes, mud under the feet. All is spoiled.

Like every one else, you have experienced it. There is nothing that causes so much suffering as to see a good, pious person not sufficiently supernatural.

You glory in being the friend of a saint, in being directed by a man who passes for such, and you put all your confidence in that. But suddenly, whether it is that he reprimands you or abandons you, you think all lost, you torment yourself, you despair. All that comes not from God.

Let it not be so with you who live in so intimate relations with Our Lord Jesus Christ. Accustom yourself in presence of the sun to forget the stars, and ever to place the Master before the servants.

Our Lord attaches much importance to this, that the blossom, the first movement of your confidence should be for Him. When you have been too natural, even in the smallest trouble, instead of recurring to Him, you have run to His servants, asking from creatures what they have not and cannot give. But should He give it to them

for you, wait till your next Adoration to seek and call Our Lord in vain. He will answer: "Since I do not deserve your confidence, go, find your saint. I have nothing to say to you." Divine Love is susceptible jealous, and avenges your indelicate forgetfulness by silence. Our Lord is jealous of the heart that has given itself to Him and that He has accepted, giving Himself in return. Why offer this injury to your Spouse, by having more confidence in His servants than in Him?

You have certainly experienced it. When, at the feet of Our Lord, your soul is powerless to say anything to Him, when in glacial coldness, say unhesitatingly. "I am expiating my thoughtless conduct. I have gone too quickly and too naturally to those whom Our Lord has given me for my guidance. I have put the servant before the Master!"

Place your confidence, then, in Our Lord alone. Go to Him for grace. Why expect grace from a creature who gives it not? Grace comes from Our Lord alone, who imparts it only to those that address them

selves to Him with confidence, and who receive it in the state of innocence.

Be, then, refined on this point. Give your whole heart to your Master. Why have you not absolute confidence? Since He has called you to this vocation of adoratrices, it is in order to live with Him; hence, you have a particular grace, the grace of state, as it were, to approach Him freely and to live with Him. Be, then, all to Our Lord for His own sake, and to Jesus for Jesus with Mary. Go to His saints, but in order that they may lead you to Him. Go to the saints of Jesus for Jesus.

He confides you to a direction which you ought to obey, but there remains a life of the soul, of prayer, and of love. Our Lord wants to be the Master Himself. Your soul is in the care of Jesus. No one knows as well as He the secret of what is best for it. In virtue of your vocation, you give to Jesus your personality. It is that, in all things, He may guide and direct you Himself; and if you have entered into your grace, you will know how to go to Him

and to be contented only in Him, for every vocation renders the duty it imposes easy and sympathetic. Have confidence in your grace, and be sure that Our Lord has prepared it in advance, and that it is waiting for you before Adoration, before the duty, before the sacrifice. It is your right founded on His love and His call. Know, then, that He is in you, ready to hear you and to guide you. But ask it of Him. Address yourself to Him and confide in Him.

Have confidence in His love. Our Lord loves you with an unchanging love, an infinite love, a Eucharistic love, with a love of vocation, and in all that appertains to this love He can refuse you nothing.

If you love purely, as is your duty and your grace, and address yourself to Our Lord in all your needs, saying: "My God, my Lord, I ask for Thy love, for this grace, only to serve Thee better, not for myself, but for Thee, O my only Master," Our Lord, touched at seeing that you desire Him alone and His best service, can refuse you nothing.

You give Him pleasure by praying in this manner. You glorify Him, and you please the Heavenly Father, who has said: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

And the greater your love, the greater your confidence, and the greater your power, over the Heart of God. Our Lord is there. He is going to knock before entering. Do not wait for that. Go on before Him. Forestall Him by your confidence. These are the true relations of love!

Accustom yourselves to act in this way. The more you practise confidence, the more your confidence will increase, for every habit is increased and rendered easy by its acts. The more sacrifices you make, the more pleasing does sacrifice become to you. You add a grace to the grace that you already possess. Graces thus joined one to another form a chain that nothing can break, a bond of love that can never be severed.

Then with Saint Paul say: "I can do all in Him who strengtheneth me." Then you will love to do great things by love,

for Saint Paul says elsewhere: "The love of God presses me, torments me, sets me on fire." He seems to say that love is a press. Ah, yes! for understand it well, love tries us, presses us all entire in order to make us enter into Jesus, as the millstone crushes and mingles together several kinds of grain, and expresses from them but one liquor.

Have confidence in Jesus even in your discouragement, when your body or mind is reduced to weakness and refuses to serve you. Then say: "I confide not in myself, but in Thee, O my God! I can do all in Thee if Thou wilt help me. I have nothing, I can do almost nothing, but I am going to begin, and Thou wilt finish!" Then begin. Do the little that you can. The good God will take upon Himself the rest.

The good God is pleased to multiply difficulties. He brings to a halt, He nails down in impotence. Souls wish to act, but they cannot. It is agony. "No, never can I mount up to God!" But you are making a step by praying, by calling. God comes

then. He gives you the wings of love, and soon you are astonished at your flight into liberty and grace.

Go on, Our Lord is yours! Go to Him with confidence. Exercise yourself in confidence. Always have confidence in Him and diffidence in self. This is what I desire for you now and ever.



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THE LAST SUPPER

"Take ye and eat; this is my body. Take ye
and drink; this is my blood."

(*St. Matthew xxvi, 26, 27*)

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THE DISCIPLES OF EMMAUS

"He took bread, blessed it, brake it and gave it unto them. Then only were their eyes opened and they knew Him."

(*St. Luke xxiv, 30*)

