

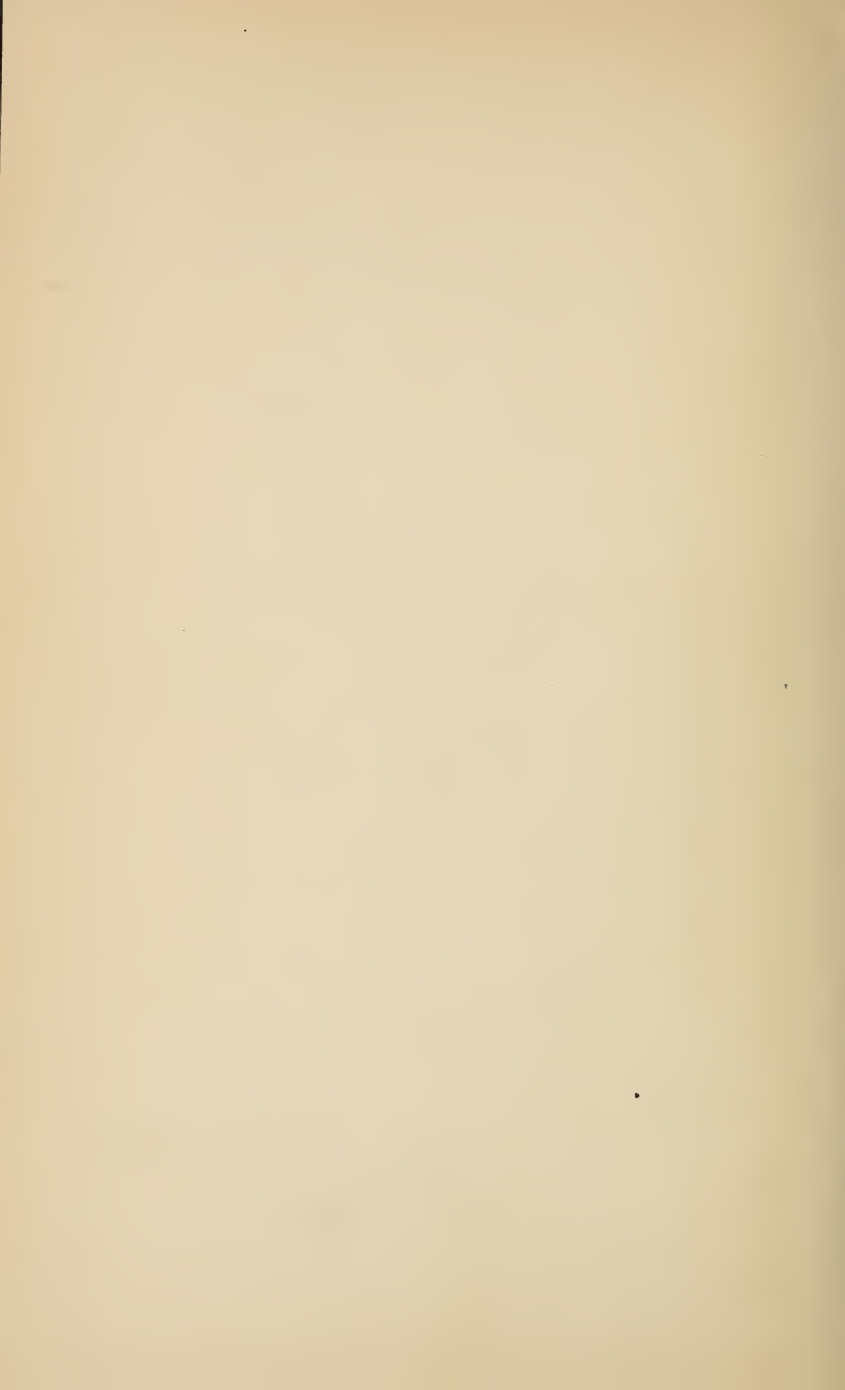


Class RX 2375

Book . G4

Copyright N^o

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.



A PRIVATE RETREAT FOR RELIGIOUS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

MANUAL OF THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

Paper, *net*, \$0.20; 25 copies, \$4.50

Cloth, *net*, 0.40; 25 copies, 9.00

A brief, clear, and systematic exposition of the reason and authority of religion.

MISSION REMEMBRANCE OF THE REDEMPTORIST
FATHERS

Cloth, 32mo, \$0.50

A prayer-book, as well as a book of instruction. Its chief end is to keep alive the remembrance and fruits of the mission.

A PRIVATE RETREAT FOR RELIGIOUS

ENRICHED WITH REFLECTIONS AND SELECT
READINGS TAKEN FROM THE SPIRITUAL
WRITINGS OF ST. ALPHONSUS

BY

REV. PETER GEIERMANN, C.S.S.R.

*Author of "Manual of Theology for the Laity," "The Mission
Remembrance of the Redemptorist Fathers," etc.*

"I called upon God and the spirit of wisdom came upon me."
(Wis. vii. 7.)

NEW YORK CINCINNATI CHICAGO
BENZIGER BROTHERS

PRINTERS TO THE
HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE

PUBLISHERS OF
BENZIGER'S MAGAZINE

1909

BX 2375
.G4

Approbation of the Superior

The Book entitled "A Private Retreat for Religious," by Rev. Peter Geiermann, C.S.S.R., having been examined by two Theologians of our Congregation, is hereby approved by us. By virtue of powers granted us by Most Rev. M. Raus, Superior-General of our Congregation, we permit the publication of the above-named work.

THOS. P. BROWN, C.S.S.R.,
Sup. Prov. St. Louis.

ST. LOUIS, Feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Help,
June 21, 1908.

Nihil Obstat;

REMY LAFORT,
Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur.

✠ JOHN M. FARLEY,
Archbishop of New York.

NEW YORK, February 17, 1909.

COPYRIGHT, 1909. BY BENZIGER BROTHERS

LIBRARY of CONGRESS
Two Copies Received
JUN 22 1909
Copyright Entry
June 22, 1909
CLASS a Xc. No.
242707
COPY R.

To
The Holy Spirit
The Sanctifier of Souls

M.D. 25 Apr. 1932

Preface

THERE are many earnest souls working in the vineyard of the Lord, whose labors do not permit them to make the annual public retreat. Many others desire to spend a few days in solitude at the close of the year, or at some other time when their occupation will allow them to do so. There are still others, who, deriving more benefit from a private than a public retreat, prefer to make the spiritual exercises in total seclusion and silence. To all such this *Private Retreat for Religious* is offered as an aid.

To derive a lasting benefit from the exercise of a retreat we must do three things: (1) meditate on the eternal truths till they permeate our very being; (2) examine our conscience till we come to know ourselves, if possible, as God knows us; (3) submit ourselves unreservedly to the influence of grace by fervent prayer. Thus only can we form and live up to practical resolutions which will bring us to perfection, for only by frequent, sincere, and systematic reflection can we make the salutary truths of our holy religion our own. By fidelity to this practice we shall not only absorb these truths into our mind, but we shall also make them, so to speak, enter into and become a part of our very flesh and blood. Unless we become in this way so familiarized with the eternal truths that, like St. Aloysius, we instinctively ask, "What does this count for eternity?" we can not look upon life habitually from the point of view of almighty God. And yet, this is literally necessary for every true follower of Jesus Christ.

However, familiarity with the eternal truths does not suffice in itself. We must apply these truths to the circumstances of our individual spheres. To accomplish this we need self-knowledge. The better we know ourselves, the easier will it be for us to amend our lives and perfect them. An additional motive for persevering in this self-examination arises from its humiliating our pride and purifying our self-love—so necessary to dispel delusion. In proportion as we practise this humility and mortification, do we dispose ourselves for the light and strength of grace. Under such circumstances prayer will never be an empty formality, but the abandonment of ourselves entirely to the influence of the Holy Spirit.

To attain this end we must bring five dispositions to the holy exercises: (1) sincerity with God, who abhors the hypocrite; (2) the goodwill, not merely to desire, but also to live in accordance with reason and grace; (3) order in our efforts, thus husbanding time and energy and ensuring the best results; (4) patient perseverance or fidelity to the exercises; (5) above all, a boundless confidence in God.

In making the spiritual exercises, especially in private, some persons experience difficulty in employing the time profitably; others, in digesting the truths of the spiritual life; and others again, in acquiring the necessary knowledge of themselves. In this our *Private Retreat*, we have tried to remove these difficulties as far as possible, (1) by supplying abundant matter; (2) by working out the entire meditation as far as circumstances will permit; (3) by adding appropriate reading and examinations. The eternal truths are thus placed before the soul with clearness and applied in a way to enlighten the mind

and inflame the heart. Considerations are really only of so much practical value as they add to self-knowledge or move the heart to God. On this account St. Alphonsus, whose method we have followed and whose writings we use, insists so much on "Affections and Prayers" in communing with God. As the meditations of most Religious of our day last but a half hour, we have divided the meditations of this retreat into two parts, and added an appropriate Reflection from St. Alphonsus for the benefit of those who may desire to prolong the exercise. Each point of the meditation is divided into "Considerations and Applications" and "Affections and Prayers"; the first aims at subjecting the mind, while the other is intended to conform the will to the mind and heart of God. The soul is further aided in acquiring the theory and practice of the spiritual life by daily spiritual reading and examinations, and by a systematic interior examination, which will be introduced at the proper stage of the exercises.

To facilitate the concentration of the mind on the work of the retreat, and to remove all unnecessary anxiety regarding its success, a special end is proposed for each day. By keeping this special end in view day after day, the success of the retreat is, humanly speaking, secured at every step; for the various exercises of the consecutive days not only harmonize with the general plan, but constitute its gradual development. A person who goes through the exercises of the retreat in this logical way may say with St. Paul, "I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air; but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection" (1 *Cor.* ix. 26-27).

Contents

	PAGE
PREFACE	7
How to Profit by a Retreat	17
The Manner of Making a Private Retreat	18
Introductory Reflections on Solitude	21
Invitation to Solitude	23
Surrender to the Holy Spirit	24
Veni Creator Spiritus	25
Acts Before and After an Exercise of the Retreat	26
MEDITATION FOR THE EVENING PRECEDING THE RETREAT.—	
Opening of the Retreat	28

First Day

THE DAY OF THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL	35
FIRST MEDITATION.—The Value of the Soul	36
Optional Reflection.—The Pilgrimage of Life	41
Optional Reading.—Vocation	44
SECOND MEDITATION.—The Importance of Saving the Soul	46
Optional Reflection.—The Thought of Eternity	53
Particular Examination.—On Humility toward the Holy Spirit	56
THIRD MEDITATION.—The Value of a Baptized Soul	57
Optional Reflection.—Detachment from Creatures	62
Optional Reading.—Generosity Pleasing to God and Necessary for Religious	65
FOURTH MEDITATION.—The Dignity of a Religious	68
Optional Reflection.—On the Retired Life	73
Examination.—On the Christian Ideal	76
Protestation for a Happy Death	77
Hymn.—To the Creator	80

Second Day

THE DAY OF EXAMINATION	81
FIRST MEDITATION.—On the Malice of Sin	82
Optional Reflection.—God Deserves to be Loved Above Everything	87
Optional Reading.—The Life of a Religious the Life of Christ	90

	PAGE
SECOND MEDITATION.—On the Sin of a Christian	93
Optional Reflection.—On Loving God without Reserve	98
Particular Examination.—On Sincerity toward the Holy Spirit	101
THIRD MEDITATION.—Tepidity in a Religious	102
Optional Reflection.—On Desire and Resolution	107
Optional Reading.—The Excellence of Virginity	111
FOURTH MEDITATION.—On Hell	114
Optional Reflection.—On Contempt of the World	119
Examination.—On Sinful Actions	123
Hymn.—Invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary	124

Third Day

THE DAY OF KNOWLEDGE	126
FIRST MEDITATION.—The Thought of Death	127
Optional Reflection.—On the Science of the Saints	132
Optional Reading.—On Detachment from Self-Esteem	135
SECOND MEDITATION.—The Religious at the Particular Judgment	138
Optional Reflection.—Our Safety Consists in Prayer	143
Particular Examination.—On Docility to the Holy Spirit	147
THIRD MEDITATION.—The Religious at the General Judgment	148
Optional Reflection.—On the Necessity of Mental Prayer	153
Optional Reading.—On Detachment from Self-Will	156
FOURTH MEDITATION.—On the Object of the General Judgment	159
Optional Reflection.—On Preparation for Death	165
Examination.—On the Eternal Truths	167
Hymn.—The Loving Soul in Desolation	169

Fourth Day

THE DAY OF RESOLUTION	171
FIRST MEDITATION.—The Mercy of God	172
Optional Reflection.—On Lukewarmness	177
Optional Reading.—On Temptations and Trials in Religion	180
SECOND MEDITATION.—John Preaching at the Jordan. True Repentance	185
The Science of Self-Knowledge	191
Optional Reflection.—Sentiments of Sorrow and Amendment	201
Particular Examination.—On Patience in Following the Holy Spirit	205
THIRD MEDITATION.—Jesus Our Guide	205
Optional Reflection.—On Confidence in Jesus Christ	210
Optional Reading.—The Peace God gives to Good Religious	213

	PAGE
FOURTH MEDITATION.—Mary Our Model. The Value of Spiritual Things	216
Optional Reflection.—Mary, Model of Virtue	222
Examination.—On Past Resolutions	224
Hymn.—The Love of Jesus for the Soul	225

Fifth Day

THE DAY OF FAITH	228
FIRST MEDITATION.—The Birth of Jesus. The Inscrutable Ways of God	229
Optional Reflections:	
(1) Sentiments of Faith	235
(2) A Dart of Fire.—The Love of God	238
Optional Readings:	
(1) Mary, Model of Faith	239
(2) The Object of Mental Prayer	242
SECOND MEDITATION.—The Flight into Egypt. Submission to God's Decrees	246
Optional Reflection.—Sentiments of Conformity to the Will of God	251
Particular Examination.—On Confidence in the Holy Spirit	253
THIRD MEDITATION.—The Hidden Life of Jesus. Perfect Obedience	254
Optional Reflections:	
(1) The Friends of Jesus Hate the World	259
(2) A Dart of Fire.—The Obedience of Jesus	261
Optional Readings:	
(1) Mary, Model of Obedience	262
(2) On Fidelity in Adversity	264
FOURTH MEDITATION.—The Baptism of Jesus. Humility	268
Optional Reflection.—On Meekness and Humility	273
Examination.—On Practical Faith	276
Hymn.—The Soul Sighing for Jesus	277

Sixth Day

THE DAY OF GENEROSITY	279
FIRST MEDITATION.—The First Disciples. A Generous Resolve	280
Optional Reflections:	
(1) Perfect Resignation to the Divine Will	285
(2) A Dart of Fire.—God Annihilated by Love	289
Optional Readings:	
(1) Mary, Model of Humility	290
(2) Mortification	296

	PAGE
SECOND MEDITATION.—The Multiplication of Bread. Confidence in God	299
Optional Reflection.—Mary, Model of Hope	304
Particular Examination.—On Generosity toward the Holy Spirit	307
THIRD MEDITATION.—Jesus and the Scribe. Poverty	308
Optional Reflections:	
(1) In God Alone is Found True Peace	313
(2) A Dart of Fire.—The Sacrifice of Jesus	315
Optional Readings:	
(1) Mary, Model of Poverty	317
(2) Resolution	319
FOURTH MEDITATION.—The Beloved Disciple. Chastity	324
Optional Reflection.—Mary, Model of Chastity	329
Examination.—On the Spirit of Generosity	333
Hymn.—To the Holy Ghost	334

Seventh Day

A DAY OF PRACTICE	336
FIRST MEDITATION.—The Fear of the Lord	337
Optional Reflections:	
(1) Purity of Intention	343
(2) A Dart of Fire.—The Love of God the Father for Us	346
Optional Readings:	
(1) Mary, Model of Prayer	347
(2) Ambition	350
SECOND MEDITATION.—The Public Life of Jesus. Intercourse with the World	354
Optional Reflection.—Zeal for Souls	359
Particular Examination.—On Abandonment to the Holy Spirit	362
THIRD MEDITATION.—The Agony in the Garden. Dangers of Sadness	362
Optional Reflections:	
(1) Dryness of Spirit	368
(2) A Dart of Fire.—The Sorrows of Jesus	371
Optional Readings:	
(1) Mary, Model of Patience	373
(2) Necessity of Banishing Melancholy	375
FOURTH MEDITATION.—Jesus Carries His Cross. Perseverance of Virtue	377
Optional Reflection.—Jesus Dies and Triumphs over Death	383
Examination.—On the Order of the Day	385
Hymn.—To Jesus in His Passion	387
Prayer to Jesus Suffering	388

Eighth Day

	PAGE
A DAY OF UNION	392
FIRST MEDITATION.—The Empty Cross. The Cross in Daily Life	393
Optional Reflections:	
(1) Our Salvation is in the Cross	399
(2) A Dart of Fire.—The Abandonment of Jesus	403
Optional Readings:	
(1) Mary, Model of the Love of God	404
(2) Happiness Obtained by Perfect Conformity to God's Will	408
SECOND MEDITATION.—Our Glorious Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament	413
Optional Reflections:	
(1) The Loving Heart of Jesus	418
(2) Affections of Love toward the Sacred Heart	421
Particular Examination.—On Love of the Holy Spirit	422
THIRD MEDITATION.—Behold Thy Mother. Mary Our Mother. Consecration	423
Optional Reflections:	
(1) Acclamations in Praise of Mary	431
(2) A Dart of Fire.—Invitation of Jesus	436
Optional Readings:	
(1) Mary, Model of Fraternal Charity	438
(2) Means of Acquiring the Love of Jesus Christ	440
(3) Aspirations of Love to Jesus Christ	442
FOURTH MEDITATION.—The Love of God	444
Optional Reflections:	
(1) The Means of Loving God and of Becoming a Saint	450
(2) Sighs of Love toward God	451
Examination.—On Union with God	458
Renewal of Religious Profession	460
Hymn.—Aspirations to Jesus	460

Conclusion

I.—Examination.—On the Retreat	462
II.—Summary of Virtues that Make a Religious a Saint	462
III.—Spiritual Maxims for a Religious	467
IV.—Maxims for Attaining Perfection	470
V.—Devout Aspirations	472
VI.—Hymn.—Mary Our Hope	474
VII.—Exhortation to Religious to Advance in Perfection	475

How to Profit by the Retreat

(From St. Alphonsus)

1. THE first intention you should have in making these exercises is to discover the will of God in your regard. In going into solitude, therefore, say within yourself, "I will hear what the Lord God shall speak to me." "I go to learn what the Lord will tell me and what He wishes from me."

2. It is also necessary that you have the determined will to obey God and to follow your vocation without reserve.

3. Pray earnestly, therefore, for light to know and strength to fulfil God's holy will. But pray with indifference of mind, for God gives this grace to those only who wish to conform to His holy will.

4. Read the meditations attentively and let them serve as sermons, reflecting on them for half an hour.

5. The best place to make mental prayer is before the Blessed Sacrament.

6. Though the morning and the evening are the best time for meditation, try to follow the rule of the saints during your retreat and devote all free time to mental prayer.

7. Guard against distractions from without: "Be still, and see that I am God" (*Ps.* xl. 11).

8. Guard also against distractions from within, and think only of the good of your soul.

9. Recommend yourself with confidence to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to His holy mother Mary.

10. Recite the following short prayer during the exercises:

“My God, I am that miserable one who in the past has despised Thee; but now I esteem and love Thee above everything, nor will I love any other but Thee. Thou wouldst have me belong entirely to Thee; to Thee I will belong entirely. ‘Speak, O Lord, for Thy servant heareth.’ Let me know what Thou wishest from me, and I will do all; and let me especially know in what I must amend my life to serve Thee perfectly. ‘Make Thou known to me the way in which I should walk.’ ”

The Manner of Making a Private Retreat

(From *St. Alphonsus*)

I. THE OBJECT OR AIM OF THE RETREAT

A RETREAT has the same end or purpose as mental prayer in general, of which it is only an extraordinary exercise. We make a retreat in order to be enlightened; to know, purify, and correct ourselves; to be united with God and to pray to Him; to renew our spirit; to maintain ourselves in virtue and to increase in fervor.

II. THE PLACE

In order to be really in retreat we must retire from whatever may disturb silence and recollection. If we have a choice, we should choose the

convent that will be most favorable to both silence and recollection, so that the body as well as the spirit may be in retreat.

III. ITS DURATION

St. Alphonsus teaches that it is advisable to devote to the spiritual exercises at least an hour every day, a day in every month, and a week in every year, to keep up the fire of divine love in the soul. The annual retreat should therefore last about eight days.

IV. ORDER OF THE EXERCISES

Every one may regulate the exercises of the day to suit his own circumstances. The following may serve as an example of the order of the day:

A. M.

5 or 5:30. Meditation.

6 or 6:30. Mass. When we go to communion we make half an hour's preparation and an hour's thanksgiving.

7:30. Mental rest for an hour. Breakfast, work, walk in silence.

8:30. Visit to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin. Rosary.

9. The Way of the Cross.

10. Spiritual reading for half an hour.

10:30. Meditation.

11:45. Particular examination.

12. Mental rest for an hour and a half. Dinner, work, walk in silence.

P. M.

1:30. Vocal prayers, as vespers, compline, etc.

2. Visit to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin.

3. Spiritual reading from the life of a saint of your Order.

3:30. Meditation.

4:30. Remission.

6. Meditation.

7. Mental rest. Supper, work.

8. Recollection before the Blessed Sacrament. Examination, protestation for a happy death.

8:30. Night prayers, during which an examination of conscience is made on the faults of the day. At the end we read some thoughts for the next morning's meditation.

We employ the intervals that remain free according to our devotion, in praying, in conversing intimately with God, in reading, in briefly noting down good thoughts or a good resolution, in examining our conscience, etc.

V. SILENCE AND RECOLLECTION

If we can not keep strict silence during the whole retreat, as it is advisable for us to do, we should at least avoid everything that may disturb interior recollection, without which there would be no retreat. All mental strain is also hurtful; it is to the heart that God speaks in calmness and peace. A retreat is not a hardship, but a spiritual repose to which Our Lord kindly invites us in order that we may sweetly commune with Him. "Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little" (*Mark* vi. 31).

VI. THE MEDITATIONS

Each meditation should last at least half an hour. If time permits, the meditation may profit-

ably be extended to three-quarters of an hour and even to a full hour.

VII. MORTIFICATION

Prayer is the soul of the retreat; but in order to pray well we must practise not only exterior, but especially interior mortification; to this let us add spiritual alms. "Prayer is good with fasting and alms" (*Tob. xii. 8*).

VIII. THE SACRAMENTS

In our confession we should review the faults committed since our last retreat, or make a general confession as our director may think best. We should not fail to consult our director about any important point that may arise; for the road of obedience is always most secure and most meritorious. After our confession is over we should receive holy communion daily to the end of the retreat.

Introductory Reflections on Solitude

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

OUR LORD one day said to St. Teresa, "I would willingly speak to many souls, but the world makes so much noise in their hearts that they can not hear my voice." God does not speak to us in the midst of the turmoil and affairs of the world, knowing that, if He were to speak, He would not be understood. The words of God are His holy inspirations, the light He bestows and the calls He extends; through which the saints are enlightened and inflamed with divine love; but

they who do not love solitude will be unable to hear these voices of God. "Who will give me the wings of a dove, that I may fly away, and be at rest?" David desired to have the wings of a dove, that he might leave this earth, and not touch it, even with his feet, and thus give rest to his soul. But while we are in this life, it is not given to us to leave the earth. We must, however, take care to love retirement, so far as it is possible, conversing alone with God; and thus gaining strength for avoiding those defects that arise because we are obliged to have intercourse with the world; as David said, at the very time he was ruling his kingdom, "Behold, I have fled far away, and abode in the wilderness."

"But what does the solitude of the body profit," asks St. Gregory, "if the solitude of the heart be not there?" That a soul may be wholly given to God, two things are necessary: the first is, to detach oneself from the love of every created thing; the second, to consecrate all one's love to God; and these are implied in true solitude of heart. Oh, how easily is God found by every one who detaches himself from creatures in order to find Him! "The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh Him." St. Francis de Sales wrote, "The pure love of God consumes everything that is not God, in order to convert everything into itself." We must, therefore, offer ourselves as an enclosed garden, for the holy spouse in the Canticles is called by God: "My sister, my spouse, is an enclosed garden." The soul that keeps its heart shut against earthly affections is called an enclosed garden. It is God who has given us everything that we have, and it is right that He should require of us all our love. When, then, any creature would enter and take up a portion of

that love, which as Religious we are bound to give to God alone, we must altogether deny that creature an entrance, and turning to our greatest good, we must say with all our heart, "What have I in heaven, and what have I desired upon earth, but Thee, O God of my heart, and my portion forever?" "O my God! what but Thyself can satisfy my soul? No; except Thee I desire nothing either in heaven or on earth; Thou alone art sufficient for me, O God of my heart, and my portion forever!"

HYMN

Invitation to Solitude by the Holy Spirit

"I will lead her into solitude, and I will speak to her heart" (Osee ii. 14).

Fly hither from the storm that rages round;
 Fly, where true peace in solitude is found;
 Where cares and strife and worldly troubles cease,
 Here I invite Thee to repose in peace.
 A gift awaits thee here; My light divine,
 To loving souls so dear, on thee shall shine;
 Here thou shalt see how vile is all the earth,
 How sweet my love to those who know its worth.

Then from my lips that sweet inviting word,
 That bids thee love Me, shall by thee be heard;
 How much I always loved thee thou shalt see,
 And how ungrateful thou hast been to Me.
 Sweet contrite tears thy wounds of sin shall heal,
 The ardor of My love thou then shalt feel.
 And here I wait thee to bestow in love
 A foretaste of the joys of heaven above.

Surrender to the Holy Spirit

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

HOLY Spirit, divine paraclete, father of the poor, consoler of the afflicted, light of hearts, sanctifier of souls! behold me prostrate in Thy presence. I adore Thee with the most profound submission, and I repeat a thousand times with the seraphs who are before Thy throne, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" I firmly believe that Thou art eternal, consubstantial with the Father and the Son. I hope that by Thy goodness Thou wilt sanctify and save my soul. I love Thee, O God of love! I love Thee more than all the things of this world; I love Thee with all my affections, because Thou art that infinite Goodness which alone merits all love; and since, insensible as I have been to Thy holy inspirations, I have been so ungrateful as to offend Thee by so many sins, I ask Thee a thousand pardons for them, and I supremely regret having ever displeased Thee, O sovereign Good! I offer Thee my heart, cold as it is, and I supplicate Thee to let a ray of Thy light and a spark of Thy fire enter it during this holy retreat, to melt the hardened ice of my iniquities. Thou who hast filled with immense graces the soul of Mary, and inflamed with a holy zeal the hearts of the apostles, vouchsafe also to set on fire my heart with Thy love. Thou art a divine spirit; fortify me against evil spirits. Thou art a fire; enkindle in me the fire of Thy love. Thou art a light; enlighten me so that I may know eternal things. Thou art a dove; give me great purity of heart. Thou art a breath that is full of sweetness; dissipate the storms that my pas-

sions raise against me. Thou art a tongue; teach me the manner of praising Thee without ceasing. Thou art a cloud; cover me with the shadow of Thy protection; and, finally, since Thou art the author of all heavenly gifts, Oh, I beseech Thee to grant them to me; vivify me by Thy grace, sanctify me by Thy charity, govern me by Thy wisdom, adopt me by Thy bounty as Thy child, and save me by Thy infinite mercy, so that I may never cease to bless Thee, to praise Thee, to love Thee, as first during my life on earth and afterward for all eternity in heaven. Amen.

HYMN

Veni Creator Spiritus

(From St. Alphonsus)

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come
From Thy bright heavenly throne;
Come, take possession of our souls
And make them all Thine own.

Thou who art called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above;
The living spring, the living fire,
Sweet unction, and true love.

Thou who art sevenfold in Thy grace,
Finger of God's right hand;
His promise, teaching little ones
To speak and understand.

Oh! guide our minds with Thy blest light,
With love our hearts inflame;
And with Thy strength, which ne'er decays,
Confirm our mortal frame.

Far from us drive our hellish foe;
 True peace unto us bring;
 And through all perils lead us safe,
 Beneath Thy sacred wing.

Through Thee may we the Father know
 Through Thee th' eternal Son,
 And Thee, the Spirit of them both—
 Thrice blessed Three in One.

All glory to the Father be
 With His coequal Son,
 The like to Thee, great Paraclete,
 While endless ages run.

V. Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created;

R. And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Let us Pray

ASSIST us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, with the power of Thy Holy Spirit, that our hearts may be purified according to Thy mercy, and we be defended from all adversities. Amen.

**Acts for Before and After an Exercise of
 the Retreat**

(From St. Alphonsus)

I. PREPARATORY ACTS

1. *Invocation of the Holy Spirit*

Veni, Sancte Spiritus, etc.

2. *Faith and Adoration*

My God, I believe that Thou art here present, and I adore Thee with my whole soul.

3. *Humility and Contrition*

Lord, I should now be in hell in punishment for the offences I have committed against Thee. I am sorry for them from the bottom of my heart; have mercy on me.

4. *Petition for Light and Strength*

Eternal Father, for the sake of Jesus and Mary, give me light and strength in this meditation, that I may draw profit from it.

One Hail Mary, in recommendation to Mary, Joseph, our guardian angel, and patron saints.

II. CONCLUDING ACTS

1. *Thanksgiving*

My God, I thank Thee for the lights and the graces Thou hast given me during this exercise.

2. *Resolution*

I resolve to be faithful to the resolution with which Thou hast inspired me.

3. *Petition*

For the sake of Jesus and Mary, help me to be faithful to this resolution, O God.

4. *Thanksgiving*

Salve Regina.

5. *For Souls in Purgatory and Poor Sinners*

An Our Father and a Hail Mary.

MEDITATION FOR THE EVENING PRECEDING THE RETREAT

In the Cenacle—Opening of the Retreat

MY SOUL, place thyself under the special protection of the Holy Ghost during the days of this retreat. Make Him, the Author of the supernatural life in man, the guide in all thy exercises. He is called the sanctifier of souls, because He applies to them the merits of Christ and enables them to work for heaven. Without His assistance it is impossible to lead a truly spiritual life. "No one can say, the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 *Cor.* xii. 3). No one can perform any supernaturally good act without His aid. Since this is so, it stands to reason, my soul, that thou shouldst practise a special devotion to the Holy Spirit. Make use of this time, therefore, to show thy reverence, gratitude, and love to Him.

Consider now (I) what the Holy Spirit does for those souls who place themselves unreservedly in His hands; and (II) what thou must do, especially during this holy retreat, to receive from Him the fulness of grace and to complete thy spiritual exercises renewed in spirit.

POINT I

CONSIDERATION AND APPLICATION

If thou wishest to see what the Holy Spirit does for souls who abandon themselves to His absolute

guidance, then behold what occurred on the great feast of Pentecost.

a. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting" (*Acts* ii. 2). By this storm the Holy Spirit wishes to call our attention to that wonderful activity which He develops in the Christian soul. The storm breaks down all obstruction and purifies the air. The Holy Spirit must do the same in thy soul if there is to be a renewal of the spiritual life. He must break down the obstacles that have arisen to the operation of grace, and remove everything harmful to virtue. Consider the apostles! Before the descent of the Holy Ghost they had many faults and imperfections, many perverse inclinations which opposed the grace of God and prevented it from making them conformable to their divine model. But when the Holy Spirit entered their hearts He removed the obstacles which had hindered the operation of grace in their souls, He broke their pride, He killed every earthly inclination, extinguished the fire of hatred, modified their anger and impetuosity, banished their exalted opinion of self, and purified their whole interior life. Now their hearts are well ordered and prepared to receive the fulness of grace He pours out upon them.

b. "And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (*Acts* ii. 3-4). By appearing as fiery tongues the Holy Spirit wished to call thy attention to another wonderful operation. He enlightens the soul with heavenly light. He gives it a clear knowledge and profound comprehension of the truths of salvation. He fortifies the faith

of the soul and gives to it the strength to convince others of their importance. Jesus Christ had told the apostles all things, but they often did not understand. The Holy Spirit now inebriates them in the Saviour's heavenly doctrines and they are filled with enthusiasm for them.

c. "And they began to speak with divers tongues according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak" (*Acts* ii. 4). And "Peter stood up, lifted up his voice, and spoke to them" (*Acts* ii. 14). Here we observe another effect of the Holy Ghost, the power which He confers upon a docile soul. He not only enlightens the mind in regard to the truths of faith, but He also inflames the heart to live in accordance with these truths. Formerly the apostles were weak, now they are strong. Then they were timid, now they profess and preach their faith openly, "rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (*Acts* v. 41).

Thou, my soul, art about to spend a few days in silent communion with the Holy Spirit. Ask Him now to remove all obstacles in the way of thy spiritual progress. Beg Him to cast a ray of heavenly light into thy heart, that thou mayest know thyself and understand the importance of the eternal truths. Beg of Him the strength necessary to form and carry out those resolutions which thy condition demands. Approach Him with confidence, for "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity" (*Rom.* viii. 26).

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O my God, hitherto I have done nothing for Thee, who hast done such great things for me! Alas! my coldness deserves that Thou shouldst "vomit me out of Thy mouth." O Holy Spirit, I

beseech Thee, "*fove quod est frigidum,*" "warm that which is cold"; deliver me from this coldness, and enkindle within me an earnest desire of pleasing Thee. I now renounce all my worldly gratifications; and I hope rather to die than give Thee the least displeasure. Thou didst appear in the shape of fiery tongues; I consecrate my tongue to Thee, that it may never offend Thee again. Thou didst give it to me, O my God, to praise Thee, and I have made use of it to offend Thee, and to draw others also into sinning against Thee. I repent of this with my whole soul. Oh, for the love of Jesus Christ, who, during His whole life on earth honored Thee so much with His tongue, grant that I may during this holy retreat profit by Thy holy word and speak sincerely to Thee. Grant also that from this day forth I may honor Thee constantly by celebrating Thy praises, by frequently invoking Thy aid, and by speaking of Thy goodness and of the infinite love which Thou deservest. I love Thee, my sovereign good, I love Thee, O God of love! O Mary, thou art the most dear spouse of the Holy Ghost; obtain for me this fire.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Consider, moreover, my soul, what thou must do to receive the fulness of grace. Prepare thyself as did the apostles. The Saviour had commanded them to remain in the city till they received power from on high. On their return they therefore went up into an upper room, and persevered with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus" (*Acts i. 14*).

These few words indicate everything that is

necessary to prepare the heart for the operation of the Holy Ghost.

a. The first requisite is retirement and recollection. The apostles should remain peaceably in the city, and not return to their home in Galilee. My soul, follow thou their conduct. Keep thyself in retirement and great recollection. This retirement is a penance that will cure thy heart of attachment to earthly things, distractions, and mental dissipation. It will bring thee much nearer to God. Retirement is a source of holy thoughts, the best means of self-knowledge, and prepares thy heart for the visit of the Holy Spirit. Avoid every distraction, therefore, and wait patiently for Him who will speak to thee.

b. The second means is diligent, persevering prayer. The apostles persevered with one mind in prayer. They had retired for this very purpose, to invoke the Holy Spirit by humble supplication. Do thou the same; convince thyself first of thy spiritual misery, of thy poverty and dependence, and then pray with all the ardor of thy soul for grace and mercy. Pray during these days with fervor and perseverance. Prayer is useful. It is absolutely necessary.

c. The third means is harmony. The apostles showed their harmony especially by praying for one another. Prayer is most powerful especially where two or three are gathered together in prayer. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in their midst" (*Matt.* 18-20).

So, my soul, must thou also enter solitude with a heart that entertains no aversion, no bitterness, no repugnance for thy neighbor. Thou must generously forgive all, wish well to all, and pray for all.

If thou didst have some misunderstanding with a neighbor, be reconciled before thou enterest solitude, so that thou canst place thy hand on thy heart and say, "There is nothing in my heart that can displease the spirit of love."

Be sure to enter into the daily exercises with joy and fervor. Rest assured that by this means especially thou wilt draw the Holy Spirit upon thee.

My soul, art thou prepared to enter this holy retreat with the dispositions of the first disciples of Christ? Art thou at peace with God and man? Art thou willing to remain as much as possible in holy retirement? To be recollected at all times? To pray with special fervor? To perform especially the common acts with all possible devotion? Art thou firmly determined to make this retreat in such a way that thou wilt be ready to come from it into the presence of Jesus Christ to be judged, and to give an account of thy stewardship?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O holy and divine Spirit, I will no longer live to myself; but I will spend all the days that remain for me in this life in loving Thee and pleasing Thee. Therefore I beseech Thee to grant me the gift of prayer. Do Thou descend into my heart, and teach me to pray as I ought. I desire to make this holy retreat well. Accept my sincere desire. Give me the grace to pray with recollection during these holy exercises. Give me the strength not to leave off through weariness. Give me the spirit of prayer, that is to say, the grace constantly to pray to Thee, and to use those prayers which are dearest to Thy sacred Heart. I was once lost through my fault, but I see from

all the loving kindness Thou hast bestowed upon me, that Thou willest that I should be saved and become truly sanctified. I desire to become holy to give Thee pleasure, and in order that I may love Thy infinite goodness more and more. I love Thee, O my sovereign good, my love, my all; and because I love Thee I give myself entirely to Thee.

O Mary, my hope, do thou protect me.

FIRST DAY

The Day of the Christian Ideal

Dedicated to the Spirit of Holy Fear

Disposition.—Humility.

Motto.—“Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”
(*Acts ix. 6.*)

The Special End of this day's exercises is to bring home to the soul the exalted CHRISTIAN IDEAL of our earthly pilgrimage, and thereby move it to appreciate the benefits of creation, destiny, the true faith, and the crowning gift of a religious vocation.

Reading.—The end or purpose of your Institute as taught by your Rules and Constitutions.

PRAYER TO OBTAIN THE GIFT OF THE FEAR OF THE LORD

Holy Spirit, divine consoler! I adore Thee as my true God, just as I adore God the Father and God the Son. I bless Thee by uniting myself to the blessings that Thou dost receive from the angels and the seraphs. I offer Thee my whole heart, and I render Thee heartfelt thanks for all the benefits that Thou hast bestowed and dost unceasingly bestow upon the world. Thou who art the author of all supernatural gifts, and who didst enrich with immense favors the soul of the blessed virgin Mary, the mother of God, I beseech Thee to visit me by Thy grace and Thy love, and

to grant me the gift of Thy holy Fear in order that it may prevent me from falling any more into my past infidelities, for which I now ask Thee a thousand times to forgive me.

One *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, *Glory be to the Father*, three times.

THOUGHTS AND EJACULATIONS

O God, who knows what fate awaits me?
I shall be either eternally happy or eternally miserable.

Of what worth is all the world without God?
Let me lose all, but let me not lose my God.
Jesus and Mary, you are my hope.

FIRST MEDITATION

The Value of the Soul

POINT I

“*The breath of the Almighty gave me life*”
(*Job xxxiii. 4*).

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

THE value of an immortal soul can best be estimated from the manner in which God created the soul of Adam, as recorded in Holy Scripture. All other creatures of the visible world God produced from the primeval matter which He created “in the beginning.” In their last analysis they are only elementary substances. But the soul of man was produced immediately by God. “And the Lord God breathed into the face of man the breath of life and man became a living soul”

(*Gen. ii. 7*). The soul of man has, therefore, nothing in common with "dust and ashes." It was created by God and is intimately related to Him. Every human soul is breathed into its material temple by the Holy Ghost Himself. Other creatures came into existence at the word of God. "He spoke and they were made." The very words of God, when about to create the human soul, indicate that He was about to produce a being that He valued more than all other creatures combined. "And now let us make man." Behold God's exalted model in creating the human soul: "Let us make man to our own image and likeness." Consider man's wonderful gifts; understanding, free will, immortality! Indeed the human soul is more precious than all the other creatures of the visible world.

I am, then, a noble creature of God, endowed with extraordinary faculties. I was made, like the angels, to the image and likeness of God. Other creatures come into existence, flourish, and die. But I will last forever. I am a living breath of God's holy spirit, like Him endowed with immortality. Indeed, He esteems me higher than all the animals of the field, all the birds of the air, all the beauties of nature, yes, more than the entire visible world.

It is indeed true that "God has loved me with an everlasting love." He has created me of His own free will. He has made me to His "image and likeness," when it was in his power to make me a perishable worm of the earth. How have I regarded that soul which God esteems so highly? What gratitude, what love have I shown the God of goodness for making me to His own image and likeness? Have I shown by my daily life that I appreciated my exalted position, that I valued

my soul as God does? Have I used my understanding to know God more and more? Have I employed my will solely in loving the God of goodness? Or have I used the very gifts of God to offend Him? Have I made his "image" more and more like to Him by virtue, or have I sacrilegiously defaced it by actual sin?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O Spirit of love and holiness, enlighten my understanding to appreciate my immortal soul at its true value. Inflammé my heart to repair the disorders of the past by my fervor in the future. I am a poor, sinful being. I have repaid the goodness of God with the blackest ingratitude. I have sought the vain things of the world. I have lavished my affections upon creatures. I repent with all my heart of my base ingratitude. I am sincerely sorry for having despised and misused Thy gifts. I desire to change my life. I will henceforth esteem my immortal soul as a pearl of inestimable price. I will consider it my most sacred duty to treasure it as Thy own image and likeness. I hope to devote all my faculties to Thee. My understanding shall daily seek new reasons for loving Thee. My will shall henceforth be entirely conformable to Thy own. I trust, O God, that Thou, who hast created me, will not abandon me. I hope for the forgiveness of my sins. I hope that Thy grace will accompany me as a pillar of light and strength, and will enable me to value my soul as Thy sacred image and to perfect in it Thy likeness by the practice of every virtue.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

The value of a soul can be correctly estimated from the actions of those who were in a position to judge of it and from the price they paid to secure their soul's salvation. Take the saints of God; what sacrifices have they not made? What penances have they not performed? What vigils and fasts! With what heroic patience did they not overcome all obstacles to secure the salvation of their souls. Satan also is an expert at estimating the value of a soul. Because he understands its great value he goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. The angels, too, understand the value of a human soul. They see that it is made to the image and likeness of God. Hence they take a great interest in our welfare. They joyfully guard and guide each soul. For they are "ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation" (*Heb. i. 14*).

But the best judge of the value of a human soul is the incarnate Son of God Himself. Behold the price He paid to ransom the soul! He bought us back at the exceeding great price of *His most precious blood—that is the value of an immortal soul!* Hence St. Eusebius rightly exclaims, "Do you wish to know the value of your soul? Then ask your Saviour upon the cross!"

Yes, my soul, if thou wishest to know thy true value, ask the saints in heaven. Ask the devil who is seeking to bring about thy ruin. Ask the guardian angel who is ever at thy side. Yes, ask the Saviour the price He offered for it. He answers with a parable. "The kingdom of Heaven is like to a merchant, seek-

ing good pearls. Who, when He found one pearl of great price, went his way and sold all that he had, and bought it" (*Matt.* xiii. 45-46). Thou, my soul, art that pearl. The merchant is the Son of God. He came upon earth to seek pearls, precious pearls—immortal souls. He sold all that He had. He became the poorest of the children of men. "He had not even whereon to lay His head." He sold His honor! He sold His good name! He was reviled and spat upon, clothed in derision, crowned with thorns, crucified, abandoned by God and man. He gave up His soul in desolation. He gave up His life! He parted even with the consolations of His very divinity, by wilfully suffering all humiliations. And all this He joyfully sacrificed, willingly paid for the redemption of thy immortal soul. Behold thy value! Behold thy ransom! Indeed "thou hast been bought with a great price" (*1 Cor.* vi. 20).

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I thank Thee for this inestimable gift. I thank Thee for this great knowledge. O Holy Spirit, I thank Thee for having made my soul a nobler being than all visible creation. My Jesus, I am Thine. Thou hast ransomed me. Would it, then, not be a shame, a disgrace, O God, if I would still continue to be forgetful of my immortal soul? If I were to pamper a mortal body, that will soon be the food of worms, and forget and neglect that soul which the Holy Spirit has fashioned with so much skill, which my Jesus has redeemed at so great a price? I repent of my past indifference. Give me the grace to have the value of my soul always before me, to live as the saints have lived,

to act as my Redeemer would wish me, to live in perfect conformity to His holy will.

Resolution

Yes, O God of love, I will hearken to Thy precept and save my soul. I will watch over it with great care (*Deut. xi. 13-14*). May it ever be in my hands (*Ps. cxviii. 109*), to guard it from danger. Nothing shall be more dear to me than my soul, which the Almighty loves more than the entire world, and which is the image and likeness of God. "If I forget Thee, may my right hand be forgotten. Let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I do not remember Thee, if I make not Thee the beginning of my joy" (*Ps. cxxxvi. 5, 6*).

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

The Pilgrimage of Life

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

While we live in this life, we are so many pilgrims, who wander up and down upon the earth, far from our country, which is heaven, where the Lord awaits us, that we may rejoice forever in His glorious countenance. "While we are in the body," writes the Apostle, "we are absent from the Lord." If, then, we love God, we ought to have a continual desire to leave this place of exile, by being separated from the body, that we may go and see Him. It was for this that St. Paul ever sighed, as he said, "We are confident, and have a good will to be absent rather from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

Before our redemption, miserable children of Adam as we are, the way of approach to God

was closed; but Jesus Christ by His death has obtained for us the grace of having it in our power to become the children of God; and thus has opened to us the gates by which we can have access, as children, to our Father, almighty God.

On this account St. Paul says, "Now, therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and the domestics of God." Thus, so long as we are in the grace of God, we enjoy the citizenship of paradise, and belong to the family of God. St. Augustine says, "Nature corrupted with sin produces citizens of an earthly city; but grace, which frees our nature from sin, makes us citizens of a heavenly country and vessels of mercy."

This made David say, "I am a stranger on earth; hide not Thy commandments from me." O Lord! I am a pilgrim upon this earth; teach me to keep Thy precepts, as they are the road by which I may reach my country in heaven. It is not wonderful that the wicked should wish to live forever in this world, for they justly fear that they shall pass from the pains of this life to the eternal and infinitely more terrible pains of hell; but how can he who loves God, and has a moral certainty that he is in the state of grace, desire to go on living in this vale of tears, in continual bitterness, troubled by reproaches of conscience, and in danger of perishing? How can he help longing to depart at once to unite himself to God in a blessed country, where there is no danger of sin or death? Oh, how souls that love God groan continually while they live, and cry out with David, "Woe is me, for my banishment is prolonged!" Unhappy is he who must continue to live a long time in this world, in the midst of so many perils to his salvation. Therefore it is that the saints have

continually had this prayer upon their lips, "Thy kingdom come." Quickly, O Lord! quickly carry us to Thy kingdom. Let us make speed, then, as the Apostle exhorts us, to enter that kingdom, where we shall find perfect peace and contentment. "Let us hasten to enter into that rest." Let us hasten, I say, with desire, and not cease to walk onward till we come to that blessed harbor which God has prepared for them that love Him.

"He that runs," says St. John Chrysostom, "pays not heed to the spectators, but to the crown of victory; he stands not, but hastens on his course." Therefore, the saint argues that the longer our life, the more we should hasten with good works to win the palm. Thus our one constant prayer for the relief of the troubles and trials which we endure in this life ought to be: "Thy kingdom come." Lord, may Thy kingdom speedily come, where, united eternally with Thee, and seeing Thee face to face, we shall no longer know fear, or danger, or falling away. And when we find ourselves afflicted with the labors or dishonors of the world, let us comfort ourselves with the great reward that God prepares for those who suffer for the love of Him. "Rejoice in that day, and be glad; for behold, your reward is great in heaven." St. Cyprian said that with good reason Our Lord wills that we should rejoice in labors and persecutions, because then the true soldiers of God are proven, and crowns are distributed to the faithful.

Behold, O my God! my heart is ready; behold me prepared for every cross that Thou givest me to endure. No, I desire not delights or pleasures in this life; he who has offended Thee and deserves hell, deserves not pleasures. I am ready to suffer all the infirmities and adversities that

Thou sendest me. I am ready to embrace all the slights of men; I am content, if it pleases Thee, to be deprived of all bodily and spiritual consolations; it is enough that Thou dost not deprive me of Thyself, and of the eternal love of Thee. This I deserve not, but I hope for it, through the blood that Thou hast shed for me. I love Thee, O my God, my love, my all! I shall live forever, and I shall love Thee forever, as I hope; and my paradise will ever be to rejoice in Thy infinite joy, which Thou dost truly merit through Thine infinite goodness.

OPTIONAL READING

Vocation

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

It is evident that our eternal salvation depends principally upon the choice of our state of life. Father Granada calls this choice the chief wheel of our whole life. Hence, as when in a watch the mainspring is impaired the whole watch stops, so, in the order of our salvation, if we make a mistake as to the state to which we are called, our whole life, as St. Gregory says, will be out of joint.

In that state to which God calls us He has prepared the efficacious means necessary for our salvation. For, as St. Cyprian says, "The grace of the Holy Spirit is given according to the order of God, and not according to our own will"; and therefore St. Paul writes, "every one hath his proper gift from God" (1 *Cor.* vii. 7). That is, as Cornelius à Lapide explains it, God gives to every one his vocation, and chooses the state in which He wishes him to be saved. This is the order of predestination described by the same apostle: "Whom He predestinated, them He also

called; and whom He called, them He also justified, and them He also glorified." A vocation to the religious state secures us against the temptations of the world, gives us the assurance of most efficacious grace, and keeps the object of our earthly pilgrimage ever before us. "With desolation is all the land made desolate," says the prophet Jeremias, "because there is none that considereth in the heart." The religious life is the oasis in this desolate land. For, in every well-regulated religious house, meditation on the eternal truths is made every day, and even several times a day. "Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." This great means of salvation is secured in religion. "And therefore," says St. Alphonsus, "in this light of divine things, which there continually shines, it is morally impossible to live, at least for a long time, far from God, and without one's account ready for eternity."

Prayer

O my God! how have I ever deserved this great mercy, that, having left so many others to live in the midst of the world, Thou hast willed to call me—who have offended Thee more than others, and deserved, more than they, to be deprived of Thy divine light—to enjoy the honor of living as a friend in Thy own house! O Lord! grant that I may understand this exceeding grace which Thou hast bestowed on me, that I may ever thank Thee for it, as I purpose and hope to do always during my life and throughout eternity. Do not permit me to be ungrateful for it. Since Thou hast been so liberal toward me, and hast in Thy love preferred me to others, it is but just that, more than others, I should serve and love

Thee. O my Jesus! Thou wouldst have me to be wholly Thine, and to Thee I give myself entirely. Accept me, and henceforth keep me as Thine own. Finish Thou the work which Thou hast begun. Thou hast called me to Thy house, because Thou wilt have me become a saint. Make me, then, what Thou wilt have me. Do this, O eternal Father! for the love of Jesus Christ, in whom is all my confidence. I love Thee, my sovereign good, I love Thee. O infinite goodness, I love Thee only, and will love Thee forever! O Mary, my hope, come to my assistance; grant that I may be always faithful and thankful to my Lord.

SECOND MEDITATION

The Importance of Saving Our Souls

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

"I am thy reward exceeding great" (Gen. xv. 1).

MAN should save his soul at any price, because an infinite reward awaits him in the next world. If God had created man for His glory alone, man could never pay his debt of gratitude. Even the longest life spent in God's service would not equal the benefits of creation and preservation. But God desires to make man happy in the next world. Like the master in the gospel, He has called man to work in His vineyard. He desires a reasonable, a loyal service. He indeed says, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God and serve Him alone" (Deut. vi. 13), but when the day of life is over He will

reward man according to his works. "I will be thy reward exceeding great." On earth persons slave and deny themselves in many things to amass a fleeting fortune, while they neglect the great reward of heaven. "Heaven is both a gift and a reward," says St. Augustine, "for when God rewards our merits, He crowns His gifts." While man is making the pilgrimage of life, he may neglect "the one thing necessary," and, like a child sent on an urgent errand, amuse himself by the wayside of life. But when he enters the next world, he realizes that God is the object of his existence, the end of his pilgrimage, the truth that alone can make him free, the infinite good that alone can satisfy the longing of his heart. Like a belated traveler, man then hastens to that end to rest from the labors, trials, and fatigue of his journey. "Every tear will be wiped away and every sorrow forgotten." The darkness of error, of doubt, and uncertainty is dispelled by the light of the eternal truth. "We shall see Him as He is." Man will realize that God is good, infinitely good; he will taste this goodness, enjoy it, be inebriated with it. In God he will enjoy the grandeur of heaven, the company of the angels and saints, and the society of the queen of heaven herself. Of this reward, infinite in value, St. Paul said, "That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 *Cor.* ii. 9). Our Saviour therefore asks, "What exchange will a man give for his soul?" and again, "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (*Matt.* xvi. 26). The reward of heaven is the possession of the infinite God and all that is His own. Hence Father Nierenburg rightly says that "one

moment in heaven would more than repay all the labors, sufferings, and trials of earth."

Oh, my soul, dost thou realize thy exalted destiny, and the importance of securing thy happiness in the next world? Time is rushing by like an angry torrent. Most of thy days are already swallowed up in eternity; thou wilt follow soon. What treasures hast thou laid up where neither the rust nor moth doth consume? Perhaps, instead of laying up treasures in heaven, thou has neglected the one thing necessary. Hast thou become the slave of pride and self-love even in the convent, instead of serving God with thy whole heart and soul? Where will thy journey end? Thou canst not turn back; thou *must* enter the next world. Thank God that the choice still rests with thee. Wilt thou possess God, the infinite good, or be an outcast with the demons? Dost thou prefer the light of eternal truth, or the darkness of hell? Wilt thou hesitate to choose between the company of the blessed, and the company of the lost? Between the joys of heaven and the torments of hell? What has caused thee to jeopardize thy salvation in the past? Wilt thou not now, at least, serve God faithfully and secure thy salvation? Oh, do not stand idle in the market-place! Thy loss will be irreparable. Heaven is cheap at any price. Behold the price thy Saviour paid to open heaven for thee! What effort wilt thou make to enter? Ask thyself, like St. Bernard, "*Ad quid venisti?*" Why didst thou forsake the world and its vanities and come to the convent? *Was it not to save thy soul?*

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

Oh, my sovereign good! I am that wretch who has turned his back upon Thee, and renounced

Thy love. I therefore do not deserve to see or love Thee. But to show mercy to me, Thou hast not shown mercy to Thyself, but hast condemned Thyself to a painful and ignominious death on an infamous gibbet. Thy death, therefore, makes me hope that I shall one day save my soul and enjoy Thee face to face, and that I shall then love Thee with all my strength. But now that I am in danger of losing Thee forever, now that I am conscious of having turned away from Thee by my sins, what shall I do during the remainder of my life? Shall I continue to offend Thee? No, my Jesus! I detest with a sovereign hatred the offences I have been guilty of against Thee. I feel a sovereign sorrow for having insulted Thee, and I love Thee with my whole heart. Wilt Thou cast off a soul that repents and loves Thee? No; I know, O my Redeemer! that Thou hast said that Thou wilt not reject any one who comes to Thee with a penitent heart. "Him that cometh to Me, I will not cast out." My Jesus, I renounce all things, and turn to Thee. I embrace Thee, and unite Thee to my heart; do Thou also embrace me, and unite me to Thy heart. I dare to speak in this manner, because I speak and converse with infinite goodness. I speak to a God who was content to die for love of me. My dear Saviour! grant me true repentance and perseverance in Thy love. My dear mother Mary! I place my salvation in thy hands; through the love which thou didst bear to Jesus Christ obtain for me the grace of final perseverance. Such is my hope, such my desire.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Another reason why man should save his soul above all things is because that soul will live forever, either in the enjoyment of heaven, or suffering the torments of hell. The soul is immortal. It is a spirit; it can think, and love, and act as a spirit. "God created man incorruptible, and to the image of His own likeness He made him" (*Wis. ii. 23*). If heaven so far surpasses earth, that all the labors, sufferings, and trials of time are well repaid by one moment of the enjoyment of heaven, what will compare to its eternal joys? Who can estimate the reward "exceeding great" in eternity, "the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding" (*Phil. iv. 7*)? Time is merely a wave on the ocean of eternity. Why, then, should man be solicitous about temporal things, saying, "What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed?" (*Matt. vi. 31*.) Should he not rather seek first the kingdom of God, and His justice? Did the Saviour not say, "heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (*Mark xiii. 31*)? The reward of man, if worthy, is certain, but he may fail to secure it. Many are called, but few are chosen. A small number only make sure of their election, while there is still time for them to do so. Therefore the Saviour warns all, saying: "Take ye heed, watch, and pray; for ye know not when the time is. Even as a man, who, going into a far country, left his house, and gave authority to his servants over every work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore (for you know not when the lord of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock

crowning, or in the morning). Lest coming on a sudden, he will find you sleeping. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch'' (*Mark* xiii. 33-37). For the same reason St. Paul exhorted his beloved disciples, saying, "With fear and trembling work out your salvation'' (*Phil.* ii. 12). Make sure of the one thing necessary, we can imagine him repeating; life is only an empty bubble that may burst at any moment. You will live forever. As you sow in time so shall you reap in eternity. The eternal joys of heaven are cheap at any price. Your share in them will be proportioned to the efforts you now make to save your soul and serve God. But if the reward of heaven is exceeding great, the same must be said of the torments of hell; they, too, will never end. After years and years have rolled by and time will have been swallowed up in eternity, the joys of heaven and the pains of hell will go on and on, forever and forever.

Oh, my soul, what an awful thought, to live forever! and how frightful the uncertainty! how irreparable the final consequences! If God had demanded an account of thy stewardship when thou wert in sin, thou wouldst now lament, but it would be too late to repent. How good God has been in giving thee this time to save thyself for eternity! How couldst thou have been so blind as to risk the eternal joys of heaven for a momentary pleasure of earth? Thank God for the light of this salutary truth. Thy Saviour could estimate the eternal reward of heaven; what sacrifices has He made for thy sake! What wilt thou now do to insure it forever? Behold the way of life and the way of death is still before thee. Repent of thy past negligence. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. According to the violence

that thou wilt do to thyself in conforming to God's holy will, so shall be thy claim to the reward exceeding great in heaven.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

My dear Jesus! Thou hast taught me this prayer, "Thy kingdom come." I therefore now pray that Thy kingdom may come into my heart, so that Thou mayest possess it entirely, and that my soul may possess Thee, its sovereign good, O my Jesus! Thou hast spared nothing in order to save me and to give me Thy love; save me, then, and let my salvation consist in loving Thee always in this life and in the next. I have so often turned my back upon Thee, and yet Thou assurest me that Thou wilt not disdain to embrace me for all eternity in heaven, with as much love as if I had never offended Thee. Knowing this, can I ever love anything else but Thee, who wishest to bestow heaven upon me, after I have so often deserved hell? Ah, my Jesus! would that I had never offended Thee! Oh! were I born again I would always love Thee. But what is done is done. I repent of the past. I can now do no more than give Thee the remainder of my life. Yes, I give it entirely to Thee. I consecrate myself entirely to Thy love. All earthly affections depart from my heart, give place to my God, who wishes to possess it entirely for time and for eternity. Yes; take possession of my whole being, my redeemer, my love, and my God!

Resolution

I hear Thee say, "Save thy soul!" Yes, cost what it may, I will save my soul. From this day forward I will think only of pleasing Thee. Assist me by Thy grace. I hope in Thy merits.

Increase in me continually Thy love, and the desire of pleasing Thee. When, O Lord! shall the day come that I shall be safe with Thee in heaven? Ah, my God! keep Thy hand upon me, that I may nevermore offend Thee. O Mary! when shall I see myself at thy feet in paradise? Assist me, my Mother; do not permit me to be lost, and to go forever away from thy Son and thee.

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

The Thought of Eternity

(From St. Alphonsus)

St. Augustine called the thought of eternity the great thought—*magna cogitatio*. This thought has brought the saints to count the treasures and greatness of this life as nothing more than straw, dust, smoke, and refuse. This thought has sent many anchorites to hide themselves in deserts and caves, and has led many noble youths, and even kings and emperors, to shut themselves up in cloisters. This thought has given courage to martyrs to endure the torture of piercing nails and heated irons, and even of being burned to death.

No; we are not created for this earth. The end for which God has placed us in the world is this, that with our good deeds we may inherit eternal life. The end is eternal life. And, therefore, St. Eucherius said that the only affair that we should attend to in this life is eternity; that is, we should win a happy eternity, and escape a miserable one. The object for which we struggle is eternity. If assured of this, we are forever blessed; failing in it, we are forever miserable.

Happy he who lives ever with eternity in view, with a lively faith that he must speedily die, and enter upon eternity. The just man liveth by faith. It is faith that makes the just to live in the sight of God, that gives light to their souls, by withdrawing them from earthly affections, that places before their thoughts the eternal blessings which God promises to them that love Him.

St. Teresa said that all sins had their origin in a want of faith. Therefore, in order to overcome our passions and temptations we ought constantly to revive our faith by saying, "I believe in the life everlasting." I believe that after this life, which will soon be ended, there is an eternal life, either full of joy or full of pain, which will befall me, according to my merits or demerits.

St. Augustine also said that a man who believes in eternity, and yet is not converted to God, has either lost his senses or his faith. "O eternity! he that meditates upon thee and repents not, either has not faith, or he has no heart." So St. John Chrysostom relates that the Gentiles, when they saw Christians sinning, thought them either liars or fools. "If you believe not what you say you believe, you are liars," they said; "if you believe in eternity and sin, you are fools." "Woe to sinners who enter upon eternity without having known it because they would not think upon it!" exclaims St. Cæsarius; and then he adds, "but oh, double woe! They enter upon it, and they never come forth."

St. Teresa said constantly to her disciples, "My children, there is one soul, one eternity." By which she meant, "My children, we have one soul, and when that is lost, all is lost; and once lost, it is lost forever." In a word, upon that last dying breath depends whether we are forever blessed or

forever lost. If the eternity of the next life, if paradise, if hell were mere fictions of literary men and things of doubtful reality, even then it ought to be our greatest care to live well and avoid even the risk of losing our soul forever. But these things are not doubtful; they are *certain*. They are matters of faith; they more surely exist than those things which we see with our eyes. Let us, then, pray to Our Lord, "Increase our faith"; for if we are not strong in faith, we may become worse than Luther or Calvin. On the other hand, one thought of living faith upon the eternity that awaits us may lead us to become saints.

St. Gregory wrote that they who meditate on eternity are neither puffed up by prosperity, nor cast down by adversity; for they desire nothing and they fear nothing in this world. When we are obliged to suffer infirmity or persecution, let us think of the hell which we have deserved through our sins. When we do this, every cross will seem light, and we shall thank God and say, "It is the mercy of the Lord that we are not consumed." We shall declare with David, "Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell." Through myself I was already lost; Thou hast done this, O God of mercy! Thou hast stretched forth Thy hand, and drawn me forth from hell; "Thou hast delivered my soul that it should not perish."

O my God! Thou knowest how often I have deserved hell; but, notwithstanding, Thou biddest me hope, and I desire to hope. My sins terrify me; but Thy death giveth me courage, and Thy promise of pardon to him that repenteth. A contrite and humbled heart, O God! Thou wilt not despise. I have dishonored Thee in the past, but now I love Thee above all things; and I grieve,

more than for any other evil, that I have offended Thee. O my Jesus! have mercy upon me. Mary, mother of God, pray for me.

PARTICULAR EXAMINATION

Our Humility Toward the Holy Spirit

Do I realize:

That of myself I am nothing?

That I have nothing that I have not received?

That I have deserved nothing that I have received?

That but for my faults I might have received sufficient grace to make me a saint?

That I deserve to be in hell for my sins?

That God is infinite goodness, love, and mercy?

That He has been very good, loving, and merciful to me?

That the success of this retreat depends on His grace?

That I should humbly subject myself to the Holy Spirit?

How have I observed the necessary silence, recollection, and spirit of prayer?

Say an act of contrition for faults, of thanksgiving for lights and graces.

Make a renewal of humble submission to the Holy Spirit.

THIRD MEDITATION

Value of a Baptized Soul

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

CONSIDER the incomparable beauty of a Christian soul. When a child is born into the world it is indeed an image of God, but it is defiled by original sin. It is brought to the font of Baptism. Oh, what a change is then wrought! The Holy Ghost washes that soul in the blood of Jesus Christ, in the blood of that "Lamb that takes away the sins of the world." He purifies it from every stain of original and actual sin. All that is displeasing in the sight of Heaven is washed away. The curse of God is removed. The night of sin has passed. The first ray of heavenly favor passes into that regenerated soul. The Holy Ghost says, "Let there be light." And the light of grace dispels the darkness of sin. Thus the natural image of God is restored, and the All-Holy contemplates with pleasure this being that is a reflection of His divine essence.

But this is not all. The divine Artist proceeds to adorn this purified soul with all the charms of sanctifying grace. He gives to the soul a most wonderful supernatural likeness to its Lord and God. For this grace permeates the very essence of that soul and makes it bright and pleasing in God's sight. In a certain sense, it makes that soul "a sharer of the divine nature itself." The effects of this grace are:

a. A wonderful spiritual beauty which it imparts to the soul, so that God addresses it in the

words of the Canticle of Canticles, "How beautiful art thou, my love, how beautiful art thou!" (*Cant.* iv. 1.)

b. A second effect of sanctifying grace is that it imparts to the soul a higher, a supernatural, a wholly divine life. For this reason St. John calls this grace "the seed of God" (1 *John* iii. 9).

c. Another effect, and one that closely follows the preceding, is the divine adoption of that soul as a child of God. The reception of sanctifying grace is our re-birth "of the Holy Ghost." We become, in consequence, the children of God. This spiritual sonship rests on a participation of the divine nature, and produces that supernatural likeness of God in us. St. John had this in mind when he said, "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God" (1 *John* iii. 1). And again, "He has given them power to be made the sons of God" (*John* i. 12). St. Peter expresses the idea even more clearly: "He hath given us most great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature" (2 *Peter* i. 4).

d. A last effect of sanctifying grace upon the soul is the right to inherit the kingdom of Heaven. As St. Paul says: "If sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (*Rom.* viii. 17).

See, then, my soul, what the Holy Ghost has done for thee in holy Baptism! He has purified thee from all sin. He has raised thee to a supernatural state. He has made thee a partaker of the divine nature. He has made thee a child of God and an heir to the kingdom of Heaven. What hast thou done to show thyself worthy of so great a favor? What hast thou done to ex-

press thy gratitude for these gifts that surpass all understanding? What hast thou rendered to the Lord for all that He hath rendered unto thee? Hast thou kept that image undefiled? Hast thou endeavored to adorn it daily by the practice of every virtue? Alas, what a prodigal, what a degenerate child hast thou become! Instead of singing the praises of God forever and ever, instead of valuing the life of grace above all riches, instead of living only to love and serve God, how often hast thou deliberately offended Him? How often hast thou been influenced by earth to forget heaven? How often hast thou permitted the flesh to govern the spirit? How often hast thou hearkened to the suggestions of the evil one, and turned a deaf ear to the inspirations of thy heavenly Father? How little did it take at times to turn thee from the straight and narrow path to that broad and even way which leadeth to destruction?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

Oh, heavenly Father, look upon thy prodigal child humbly prostrate before Thee! Do not cast me from Thee as I deserve. Do not drive me from Thy house, lest I perish miserably. Take me back, I beseech Thee. Let me be the humblest of Thy servants. I truly repent of my ingratitude. I earnestly desire to love Thee, to serve Thee with all my strength. Thou hast made me a partaker of Thy divine nature by the grace of holy Baptism. With Thy help I wish to lead a truly supernatural life. I wish to live only to please Thee. Give me light to know my sins and grace to detest them. Give me strength to avoid all that might soil the wedding garment of grace that Thou hast placed upon me. Make me love

Thee, make me serve Thee. Help me to keep my soul undefiled by sin. Help me to adorn it by the practice of every virtue. Give me humility and I shall be humble. Increase my faith, increase my hope. In flame me with Thy love, that I may love Thee with my whole mind, my whole heart, with all my strength. Make me live according to Thy holy will.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Consider another distinction that the Holy Ghost confers upon Christians in holy Baptism. He makes them members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ. He makes them members of God's kingdom upon earth, of the holy Catholic Church. He confers upon them the dignity of a Christian, by impressing upon them the indelible mark of Jesus Christ. This dignity of a Christian confers upon them an undisputed right to the infinite treasures of the Redemption which Christ our Lord has laid up for all His followers. The Holy Ghost applies these treasures to the soul by keeping it in an intimate union with the God-Man, so that, as the principle of life passes through the vine to all the branches and produces leaves, blossoms, and fruit, so, in like manner, the sentiments, merits, and virtues of the Saviour pass to the Christian soul, and under the co-operation of the Holy Spirit produce in it wonderful fruits that will ripen into eternal life.

By Baptism, moreover, the Christian soul becomes a temple of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit is not satisfied with making man a child of the heavenly Father and a mystical member of Jesus Christ; He Himself, also, has entered in

and taken up His abode in him. "Know you not," asks St. Paul of the Corinthians, "that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you?" (1 *Cor.* vi. 19).

Yes, my soul, thou art a branch on the tree of life. Thou art a member of Christ's spiritual body; thou bearest His mark so indelibly impressed upon thee that an eternity will never efface it. Thou art the sacred temple of the Holy Ghost. Thou art that sanctuary in which dwells the dispenser of grace. Thy heart is a garden in which He came to raise the flowers of virtue. The divine Spirit does all in His power to adorn His temple. Ah, thou art, indeed, the most precious of created things. How great must be the love of the divine Spirit for thee if He does all He can to adorn thee thus during life. With what beauty will He not endow thee in heaven if thou dost place no obstacle in the way.

How hast thou acted, O my soul? Hast thou been at all times a living member of Christ? Hast thou always lived in accordance with thy divine adoption? Have thy actions always been animated with the fire of divine charity which Christ came to cast upon earth? Hast thou not rather, perhaps, cast out the spirit of love from the temple that He had built, and enthroned the father of lies in His stead? Art thou not, perhaps at this very time, permitting the canker of an evil habit to sap thy spiritual strength? Change, then, thy ways, I beseech thee, O my soul, before it is too late.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, so good, so kind, so lovable, I acknowledge my indifference and my base ingratitude. I repent of often having acted in a way unworthy of

a member of Christ's living body. I am sorry for having desecrated that temple which the Spirit of love has constructed with so much care. I detest my conduct; I beg for pardon. Have pity on me. I desire truly to make amends. I hope to lead a new life, a life which befits my divine adoption—a life of grace—a life in accordance with the sublime dignity of a Christian.

Resolution

I resolve with the assistance of God's grace to sin no more. I resolve to practise virtue, to be a living member of Jesus Christ, to be an undefiled temple of the Holy Ghost. I will live, as a Christian, a supernatural life of filial love.

Mary, help of Christians, pray for me.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

Detachment from Creatures

(From St. Alphonsus)

In order to love God with all our heart, we must separate ourselves from everything that is not God, or that does not tend to God. He chooses to be alone in the possession of our hearts; He admits no rivals there; and with reason, because He is our only Lord, who has given us everything. Still further, He is our only lover, who has loved us not for His own interest, but solely from His goodness; and because He thus loves us exceedingly, He desires that we should love Him with all our hearts. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."

To love God with our whole heart implies two things; the first is, to drive from it every affection

that is not for God, or not according to the will of God. "If I knew," says St. Francis de Sales, "that I had one fiber in my heart which did not belong to God, I would instantly tear it out." The second is prayer, by which holy love introduces itself into the heart. But if the heart does not fly from earth, love can not enter, for it finds no place for itself. On the other hand, a heart detached from all creatures instantly becomes inflamed, and increases in divine love with every breathing of grace.

"Pure love," said the holy Bishop of Geneva, "consumes everything that is not God, in order to change it into itself; because everything that is done for God is the love of God." Oh, how good is God and how liberal to those souls that seek nothing but Him and His will! "The Lord is good to them that seek Him." Happy he, who living still in this world, can say truthfully, with St. Francis of Assisi, "My God and my all!" and thus can hold in contempt all the vanities of the world. "I have despised the kingdom of the world, and all the glory of this life, for the love of Jesus Christ my Lord."

When, then, creatures would enter into our heart and take a share of this love we owe to God, we must immediately banish them, shutting the door against them, and saying, "Begone, begone to those who desire you; my heart I have given wholly to Jesus Christ; for you there is no place." And, in addition to this resolution to desire nothing but God, we must hate that which the world loves, and love that which the world hates.

Above all, to attain to perfect love, we must deny ourselves, embracing that which is distasteful to self-love, and rejecting that which self-love demands. A certain thing is pleasant to us; for

that very reason it is often good to reject it. A certain medicine is disagreeable, because it is bitter; it is an act of virtue to take it for the very reason that it is bitter. It is unpleasant to us to do good to a certain person who has been ungrateful to us; we must, by all means, do good to him, for the very reason that he has been ungrateful. Further, St. Francis de Sales said that we must love even virtues with detachment of heart; for example, we ought to love meditation and retirement; but when they are forbidden to us, through the calls of obedience or of charity, we must leave them both without being disquieted. And thus it is necessary to embrace with equanimity everything that happens to us through the will of God. Happy he who wishes to have, or not to have, whatever happens, because God wishes it. And, therefore, we must pray Our Lord to enable us to find peace in everything that He appoints for us. It is certain that no one is more happy in the world than he who despises the things of the world, and who lives in continual conformity to the will of God. Therefore, it is a useful thing frequently during the day, or at least at the time of prayer and communion, to renew before our crucifix the total renunciation of ourselves and of all our possessions, saying: "O my Jesus! I desire to think no more of myself. I give myself wholly to Thee; do with me what Thou wilt. I see that everything that the world offers me is vanity and deceit. From this day I would seek nothing but Thee and Thy good will; help me to be faithful to Thee.

"O sweet Virgin Mary, pray to Jesus for me."

OPTIONAL READING

Generosity Most Pleasing to God, and Necessary for Religious*(From St. Alphonsus)*

God loves all those who love Him: "I love those that love me" (*Prov.* viii. 17). Many, however, give themselves to God, but still keep in their hearts some attachment to creatures, which prevents them from belonging entirely to God. How, then, shall God give Himself entirely to the one, who, besides his God, loves creatures still? It is just that He should act with reserve toward him. On the contrary, He gives Himself entirely to those souls, who, driving from their hearts everything that is not God and that does not lead them to His love, and giving themselves to Him without reserve, truly say to Him, "My God and my all." As long as St. Teresa entertained an inordinate attachment for a relative, she could not hear from Jesus Christ what she afterward heard, when, freeing herself from every attachment, she gave herself entirely to the divine love, "Now, because thou art all Mine, I am all thine."

The Son of God has already given Himself entirely to us: "A Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us" (*Is.* ix. 6). He has given Himself to us through the love He bears us. "He hath loved us and hath delivered Himself for us" (*Eph.* v. 2). "It is, then, just," says St. John Chrysostom, "that when God has given Himself to you without reserve, He has given thee all—nothing has He left to Himself—you also should give yourself to God without reserve, and henceforth, burning with divine love, you should sing to Him:

Thine wholly always will I be;
 Thou hast bestowed Thyself on me;
 Wholly I give myself to Thee.

St. Teresa revealed to one of her nuns, that God loves one soul, who, as a spouse, gives herself entirely to Him, more than He does a thousand tepid and imperfect ones. From these generous souls, given entirely to God, is the choir of seraphim completed. The Lord Himself says that He loves that soul which attends to perfection so much, that He seems not to love any other. "One is My love; My perfect one is but one" (*Cant.* vi. 8). Hence Blessed Giles exhorted us: "One for one," by which he wished to say, that this one soul we have we should give wholly, not divided, to that One who alone deserves all love, on whom depends all our good, and who loves us more than all. "Leave all, and you shall find all," says Thomas à Kempis. Leave all for God, and in God you shall find all. "O soul," concludes St. Bernard, "be alone, that you may keep yourself for Him alone." Keep yourself alone, give no part of your affections to creatures, that you may belong only to Him, who alone deserves an infinite love, and whom alone you should love.

Prayer

"My Beloved to me, and I to Him" (*Cant.* ii. 6). O my God! as Thou hast thus given Thyself entirely to me, I would be too ungrateful if I should not give myself entirely to Thee; since Thou wouldst have me belong wholly to Thee, behold, O my Lord! I give myself entirely to Thee. Accept me through Thy mercy; disdain me not. Grant that this my heart, which once loved creatures, may turn now wholly to Thy infinite

goodness. "Let me henceforth die," said St. Teresa; "let another than myself live in me. Let God live in me and give me life. Let Him reign, and let me be His slave, for my soul wishes no other liberty." This heart of mine is too small, O God most worthy of love, and it is too little able to love Thee, who art deserving of an infinite love. I should, then, commit against Thee too great an injustice, should I still divide it by loving anything besides Thee. I love only Thee, I renounce all creatures, and I give myself entirely to Thee, my Jesus, my saviour, my love, my all. I say, and always will say: "What have I in heaven, and besides Thee, what do I desire on earth? . . . Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever" (*Ps.* lxxii. 25, 26). I desire nothing, either in this life or in the next, but to possess the treasure of Thy love. God of my heart, I am unwilling that creatures should have any more a place in my heart; Thou alone must be its master. To Thee alone shall it belong for the future. Thou alone shalt be my God, my repose, my desire, all my love. I say with St. Ignatius, "Give me only Thy love and Thy grace, and I am rich enough."

O most holy Virgin Mary, obtain for me this, that I may be faithful to God, and never make void the gift that I have made of myself to Him.

FOURTH MEDITATION

The Dignity of a Religious

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

“How beautiful art Thou, my love, how beautiful art Thou” (Cant. iv. 1).

CONSIDER how the Holy Spirit has called into existence the various Religious Orders in the Church. The Saviour has indeed promulgated the evangelical counsels and said, “If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (*Matt.* xix. 21). But the production of the Religious Orders, with their peculiar objects and means, is the work of the Holy Ghost. It was He that inspired the founders with their idea and enlightened, strengthened, and guided them in its execution. The Holy Spirit gave each Religious Order its distinctive characteristics and approved them by the mouth of the Church. The Holy Ghost wishes to render the merits of Christ fruitful in the hearts of the individual faithful soul and to transform the same into a perfect image of Jesus Christ. Among the faithful in the world the Holy Spirit finds many obstacles to His work. He has, therefore, at all times sought out generous souls, animated with a desire of perfection. He called them away from the noise of the world to serve God with an undivided heart and strive after perfection in a Religious family composed of persons of the same mind. This striving after perfection is the essen-

tial obligation of a Religious. To the Religious, especially, the Saviour says, "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." The Holy Spirit finally inspires and prepares individual souls for the religious state. As Jesus, "being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the desert" (*Luke iv. 1*), so the same Holy Spirit calls and conducts every Religious to the solitude of the convent. When He has brought the soul to the convent, He there gives to each Religious the special grace to acquire the spirit of that institute. The means He employs to attain this end are the Rules and Constitutions of the Order, and especially obedience to lawful superiors. The voice of the Superior is for the subject the voice of God. By blind obedience, the Religious becomes a fit subject for the interior unhampered operation of the Holy Ghost.

Thou, my soul, hast received from the Holy Spirit this inestimable grace of a vocation to the religious state. Thou hast hearkened to that divine call and entered religion. Thou hast received most special blessings. What sacrifices hast thou made, what generosity hast thou shown to prove thyself worthy of so sublime a calling? Thou hast come to be transformed entirely into Christ. Canst thou say with St. Paul, "I live, now, not I, but Christ liveth in me?" Thou hast taken upon thyself the sacred obligation of striving after perfection. How hast thou reconciled thy many acts of uncharitableness, thy many murmurings, thy spiritual sloth, thy unmortified life, with these sacred obligations? Art thou a Religious in name, in appearance only? Hast thou come to the sacred precincts of the convent to be a hypocrite, a "whited sepulcher"? Consider thy dispositions now. Are they the same as they were the day

thou didst enter? Hast thou the same generosity, the same humility, the same purity of intention, the same fervor as on the day thou didst receive the holy habit? Are there not many things in thy conduct that conflict with thy good resolutions? Behold now is the time to make amends. The Holy Spirit in His goodness gives thee this great grace of beginning anew. Ask the Holy Spirit to pardon thy past indifference. Show by thy recollection, by thy fervor during this holy retreat that thou wishest to amend, to go back to first principles, to begin anew and increase daily in fervor.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God of love, who hast called me to religion to become a perfect copy of my Redeemer, look upon me with an eye of pity; have mercy on me. I repent of my negligent, indolent life. I am sincerely sorry for all the faults that I have committed against the Rule. I detest every violation of my vows, and of the spirit of my institute. Particularly do I detest my pride, my want of charity, my self-indulgence. I desire now to begin to love Thee in real earnest. My fervor in the future shall exceed my negligence of the past. I desire to live entirely in conformity to the holy will of God. I long to have Christ live anew in me. Give me the grace to comprehend and practise the spirit of this holy institute. Make me persevere in Thy love until death. May every thought of my mind, every sentiment of my heart be henceforth directed to Thee. Help me to be generous and disinterested. Make me "be meek and humble of heart." Help me to live and die united to Thee.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Consider, my soul, what the Holy Spirit demands, and has a right to expect of thee. He has given thee gratuitously the priceless gift of a religious vocation. Before He transforms thee into the likeness of thy Lord and crowns thee with the grace of perseverance, He makes several just demands upon thee.

1. He first requires thee ever to esteem the grace of vocation, and never to permit a day to pass without expressing to Him the gratitude of a loving heart. As the Saviour addressed the apostles, so can the Holy Spirit speak to every Religious. "Know you, what I have done to you?" (*John* xiii. 12.)

2. Then the Holy Spirit demands that thou renounce the world and sever every bond that unites thy heart with it. Thus only can there be any question for thee of perfection. The Holy Spirit cries to thee in the words of the Royal Psalmist: "Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear; and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the king shall greatly desire thy beauty" (*Ps.* xlv. 11-12).

3. Next the Holy Spirit justly asks of thee that thou energetically strive after perfection. Thy state obliges thee to seek and strive after perfection and to use every means to attain it. If thou lovest sight of this thou art in reality a Religious in name only, even though thou still be a useful member of the Community.

4. The Holy Spirit finally demands of thee that thou give thyself unreservedly to Him, thy spiritual Spouse. He asks thee to love Him with an undivided heart so that thou canst say with the

spouse in the Canticles, "My beloved to me, and I to him" (*Cant.* ii. 16). Consider how intensely He loves thee, according to His own words: "And I will espouse thee to Me forever; and I will espouse thee to Me in justice, and judgment, and in mercy . . . and thou shalt know that I am the Lord" (*Osee* ii. 19-20).

So the Holy Spirit demands thee entirely, unreservedly, my soul. Thou shouldst, then, be dead to all else and live only for Him, to suffer only for Him, to make sacrifices for Him. Remember that He is a jealous God. Of how much coldness, of how much indifference, does thy conscience not accuse thee? How many days hast thou passed without thanking God for thy vocation? How many days in dissipation, in idleness? How curious hast thou been in regard to the news of the world? How solicitous to see thy friends and relations? How rarely hast thou sacrificed thy pride, how often hast thou permitted thy stubborn will to follow its inclination?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God of love, I thank Thee now for the great grace of a religious vocation. I thank Thee for having taken me away from the dangers of the world and surrounded me with Thy graces in the convent. I detest my past tepidity and negligence. But I wish to show my gratitude in the future. My entire life shall henceforth be consecrated unreservedly to Thee. Every breath that I draw, every beat of my heart, every thought of my mind, every movement of my will shall henceforth be an act of love for Thee. I desire to live only for Thee, only to give Thee pleasure. I desire to live henceforth entirely in conformity with Thy holy will. I desire to serve Thee for Thy

sake alone, only to show my gratitude to Thee for the innumerable graces which Thou hast lavished upon me. I will strive daily that Christ may be formed in me, that I may be meek and humble like Him, humble and obedient like the child Jesus at Nazareth, patient and obedient like the Man of Sorrows upon the cross.

Resolution

Hear, then, my resolve, which I make before heaven and earth. "I will save my soul." I will be a most faithful spouse of the Holy Ghost. I will shape my life according to the pattern that was shown me upon the Mount. I will strive after perfection in all my actions. I will be faithful in little things. I will be humble, obedient, charitable at all times. Bless me, O God of goodness and love, that I may be faithful to my resolutions and to Thee until death.

Mary, my Mother, help me, take me under thy protection, and I shall be faithful to my God and to thee.

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

The Retired Life

(From St. Alphonsus)

Souls that love God find their paradise in the retired life, in which they have no communication with men. It brings no bitterness nor weariness to us to converse with God and to separate ourselves from creatures. His conversation has no bitterness, nor does His society bring weariness, but joy and gladness. Worldly people, with good reason, flee from solitude; because in solitude, where they are not occupied with diversions or worldly business, the remorse of conscience makes

itself felt more acutely in their hearts; and, therefore, such persons seek relief, or at least distraction from their thoughts, by conversing with men; but the more they study to forget themselves among men, and in the midst of worldly affairs, the more they encounter thorns and bitter disappointments.

To the lovers of God this does not happen, because in their retirement they find a sweet companion who gives them more comfort and gladness than the company of all their friends or relatives, or the highest personages of the earth. St. Bernard said, "I am never less alone than when alone, never less alone than when far from men; for then I find God, who speaks to me, and then I find myself more ready to listen to Him, and more prepared to attach myself to Him." Our Saviour desired that His disciples, although He had destined them to propagate the Faith by journeying through the whole world, from time to time should leave their labors and retire to solitude, to commune with God alone. Besides, let us remember that Jesus Christ, from the time when He began His public life, was wont to send them into the different parts of Judea, that they might convert sinners; but after their labors He also called upon them to retire to some solitary place, saying to them, "Come ye apart to the desert, and rest a while; for those who came and returned were many, and the disciples had not time to eat."

If Our Lord said, even to the apostles, "Rest a while," it is indeed necessary for all holy laborers to retire from time to time into solitude, to preserve their recollection with God, and to obtain strength to labor with greater vigor for the salvation of souls.

He that labors for his neighbor, but with little zeal, and with little love for God, retaining some object dictated by self-love, and seeking to gain honor or wealth, does little for the gaining of souls. Therefore Our Lord said to His workmen, "Rest a little while." Certainly Jesus Christ did not mean by this expression that the apostles were to slumber, but that they should repose in holding communion with God, in praying to Him for the graces necessary for living well, and thus should gain strength for the work of saving souls; for without this rest with God in prayer, strength fails for laboring rightly to our own benefit and to the profit of others.

St. Lawrence Justinian wisely remarks, when speaking of the retired life, that it is to be always loved, but not always possessed, meaning to say that they who are called by God to the conversion of sinners or instruction of souls must not remain always in solitude, shut up in a cell, for they would fail of their divine calling, to obey which, when it is God who calls them, they must leave their retirement; yet they should never cease to love and to sigh for solitude whenever God makes it more easy for them to find it.

O my Jesus! I have loved solitude little, because I have loved Thee little. I have gone about seeking pleasures and refreshment from creatures who have made me lose Thee, the infinite good. Miserable am I, that for so many years I have kept my heart distracted, thinking only of the good things of earth and forgetting Thee. Oh, take Thou this heart of mine, since Thou hast bought it with Thy blood! In flame it with Thy love, and possess it for Thine own. O Mary, Queen of Heaven! thou canst obtain for me this grace; through thee I hope for it.

EXAMINATION

Our Lord the Christian Ideal

Am I filled with reverence for the infinite majesty of God? Am I grateful for the eternal love with which He has loved me? Do I love Him because He has loved me first? Because He is deserving of all love? Do I appreciate the benefits of creation and redemption? Do I realize that I am the immortal image of God! Am I aware that I am hastening to eternity? Am I mindful that I am created for heaven? Do I realize that every step I take brings me nearer to heaven or to hell, to God or to Satan, to eternal happiness or to unending woe? Am I actuated by the importance of saving my soul at any price? "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" What have the saints done for heaven? Can I not do with God's grace what they have done? How have I acted as a child of God? Have I forgotten that I have renounced Satan and all his works and pomps? Am I aware that I swore allegiance to Jesus Christ? He bore His cross for me; do I bear mine for Him? He died to save my soul; have I been mindful of "the one thing necessary"? He has been faithful to me; have I been faithful to Him?

The Holy Spirit called me to religion that I might receive a beautiful crown in heaven. Do I appreciate my vocation more than when I entered? Am I filled with gratitude for this great grace? Have I ever looked back to the world with regret and envy? Am I determined to persevere? To labor, suffer, and pray with great generosity? To do great things for the honor and glory of God, for the good of my neighbor, for my own sanctification, for the sake of the re-

ward of heaven? Have I always regarded life from the standpoint of almighty God and of eternity? Do I, now, at least, prefer the spiritual to the material, the eternal to the temporal, heaven to hell, God to the flesh, the world, and the devil? Am I determined to become a saint, even if no one else will, for the love of God and for the sake of the eternal reward?

Protestation for a Happy Death

(From St. Alphonsus)

My God, prostrate in Thy presence, I adore Thee; and I intend to make the following protestations, as if I were on the point of passing from this life to eternity:

My Lord, because Thou art infallible truth, and hast revealed it to Thy holy Church, I believe in the mystery of the most holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons, but only one God, who eternally rewards the just with heaven, and punishes sinners in hell. I believe that the second Person—that is, the Son of God—became man and died for the salvation of men; and I believe all that the holy Church believes. I thank Thee for having made me a Christian; and I protest that I wish to live and die in this holy faith.

O God, my hope, trusting in Thy promises, I hope from Thy mercy, not through my merits, but through the merits of Jesus Christ, for the pardon of my sins, perseverance in Thy grace, and, after this miserable life, for the glory of heaven. And should the devil at death tempt me to despair at the sight of my sins, I protest that I wish always to hope in Thee, my Lord, and that I wish to die in the loving arms of Thy goodness.

O God, worthy of infinite love, I love Thee with my whole heart, and more than I love myself; and I protest that I wish to die making an act of love, that thus I may continue to love Thee for eternity in heaven; which, for this purpose, I ask and desire of Thee. And if, O Lord, instead of loving Thee, I have hitherto despised Thy infinite goodness, I am sorry for it with my whole heart, and I protest that I wish to die bewailing and detesting forever the offences I have offered to Thee. I purpose, for the future, to die rather than commit another sin. And, for the love of Thee, I pardon all who have offended me.

O my God! I accept death, and all the pains that will accompany my death. I unite them to the sorrows and to the death of Jesus Christ, and offer them in honor of Thy supreme dominion, and in satisfaction for my sins. O Lord! for the sake of the great sacrifice of Himself which Thy divine Son offered on the altar of the cross, accept this sacrifice of my life which I offer to Thee. I now, for the moment of my death, resign myself entirely to Thy divine will, protesting that I wish to die, saying, "O Lord! Thy will be always done." Most holy Virgin Mary, my advocate and my mother, thou, after God, art and shalt be my hope and consolation at the hour of death. I now invoke thee, and pray thee to assist me in that last moment. Come, then, and take my soul, and present it to thy Son. From this moment I expect thee, and hope to die under thy protection and prostrate at thy feet. My protector, St. Joseph, St. Michael, the archangel, my guardian angel, my holy patrons, come all, and assist me in that last battle with hell.

And Thou, my crucified Love, Thou, my Jesus, who, to obtain for me a good death, hast volun-

tarily chosen so painful a one as that of the cross, remember at that hour that I am one of the sheep which Thou hast purchased with Thy blood. O my Saviour, who alone can console me and save me at that hour when every one on this earth will have abandoned me, and when no friend will be able to assist me, make me then worthy to receive Thee as my Viaticum! Do not permit me to lose Thee forever, and forever to remain at a distance from Thee. No, my beloved Saviour; since I now embrace Thee, receive me then into Thy holy wounds. At my last breath I intend to breathe forth my soul into the loving wound in Thy side, saying now, for that moment: Jesus and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul; Jesus and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul.

Happy suffering, to suffer for God! Happy death, to die in the Lord!

I embrace thee, O my good Redeemer, that I may die in Thy embraces. If, O my soul! at thy departure from this world, Mary assists thee, and Jesus receives thee, death will be for thee not death, but sweet repose.

'Tis blessed to suffer, Creator most kind;

'Tis blessed to die, and to suffer for Thee.

I embrace Thee, O Crucified! hoping to find

Thine arms everlasting in death circling me.

So it will not be death, but ineffable rest,

That shall close at the last on these earth-wearied eyes,

When my forehead by Mary is soothingly prest,

And Jesus receives my last penitent sighs.

PRAYER FOR HAPPY DEATH

My Lord Jesus Christ, by that bitterness which Thou didst endure on the cross, when Thy blessed soul was departed from Thy most sacred body, have pity on my sinful soul, when it leaves my miserable body to enter into eternity.

O Mary! by that grief which thou didst experience on Calvary in seeing Jesus expire on the cross before thine eyes, obtain for me a good death, that loving Jesus and thee, my mother, in this life, I may attain heaven, where I shall love thee for all eternity. Amen.

HYMN

To God the Creator

(From St. Alphonsus)

Why didst Thou not create my soul
From all eternity,
Since from eternity, dear Lord!
Thou always lovest me?

For then to Thee a grateful love
My heart could have returned
From that first moment all unsought
Thy love for me has burned.

I pine not now for the delights
Of paradise above,
But only to behold Thy face,
And gaze on Thee in love.

I longed to be forever fixed
In that blest changeless state,
Where I might love Thee with a love
Immeasurably great.

I look around: amazed, I cry,
Is it, alas! for this—
This lump of earth, this ant-hill vile—
Men lose eternal bliss?

To suffer or to die, my soul!
For if thou canst not gain
The battle to be fought on earth,
In heaven thou canst not reign.

God sees me—and He is my judge;
The sentence, heaven or hell;
And there where'er my doom decides,
Forever shall I dwell.

THE SECOND DAY

The Day of Examination

Dedicated to the Spirit of Piety

Disposition.—Sincerity.

Motto.—“Lord, that I may see” (*Luke xviii. 41*).

The special end of this day’s holy exercises is to examine into the past, to discover how far the soul has adopted the CHRISTIAN IDEAL in theory and in practice, and in what it has failed.

Reading.—The spirit of your Institute, from your Rules and Constitutions.

PRAYER TO OBTAIN THE GIFT OF PIETY

HOLY Spirit, divine consoler! I adore Thee as my true God, just as I adore God the Father and God the Son. I bless Thee by uniting myself to the blessings that Thou dost receive from the angels and the saints. I offer Thee my whole heart, and I give to Thee heartfelt thanks for all the benefits that Thou hast bestowed and dost unceasingly bestow upon the world. Thou who art the author of all supernatural gifts, and who didst enrich with immense favors the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of God, I beseech Thee to visit me by Thy grace and Thy love, and to grant me the gift of piety, in order that I may in future serve Thee with greater fervor, follow with greater promptness Thy holy inspirations,

and observe with greater exactness Thy holy precept.

One *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, *Glory be to the Father*, three times.

THOUGHTS AND EJACULATIONS

Would that I had died before I ever offended Thee.

I will rather die than lose God.

My God help me for the love of Jesus Christ.

Let me give myself entirely to Thee this day.

Mary my hope, have pity on me.

FIRST MEDITATION

The Malice of Sin

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

CONSIDER, my soul, the malice of actual sin. God has a fourfold undeniable right upon man, and man deliberately tramples upon this right whenever he commits an actual sin.

1. God is the Lord and Master of the universe. "He spoke and they were made" (*Ps.* xxxii. 9). The heavenly choirs constantly sing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come" (*Apoc.* iv. 4-8). For the Lord our God is worthy to receive glory and honor and power, because He has created all things. God requires reverence and homage as the all-powerful One. His power indeed extends from heaven to earth. His wisdom directs all. He has arranged everything by His all-wise

providence. He is present to all creation by His essence. The universe gives testimony of His glory. The angels adore Him with profound reverence. Man, too, is His creature and owes Him submission. When, therefore, man breaks the law of God, he deliberately and freely slights the God of infinite power. And he does this under the very eyes of almighty God Himself.

2. Man, moreover, owes God, the ruler of the universe, obedience and submission. Could there be a higher authority than that of God over His creatures? Now God has made His will clearly known to man. And yet man, who is but dust and ashes, has rebelled against his Creator by actual sin. He says with Lucifer, "I will not serve." I care not for His commandment. I will live as I please, and not as pleases Him. "Who is the Almighty," the sinner asks, "that we should serve Him?" (*Job xxi. 15*). "For he hath stretched out his hand against God and hath strengthened himself against the Almighty" (*Job xv. 25*).

My soul, thou art upon earth only to please God. All that thou art, all that thou hast, all that thou canst ever be, must come from Him. He is the Lord, the Master. He has a perfect right to thy undivided service. He commands thee to keep His holy law, to reverence and do homage to His sacred being, to acknowledge thy dependence upon Him. How often hast thou refused to render that homage, how often hast thou transgressed His holy law! How often, instead of showing thy love, thy gratitude, hast thou murmured and rebelled against thy best friend, thy greatest benefactor! Thou art but dust; how, then, darrest thou rebel against the God of infinite power and majesty? How dare refuse to revere, obey, and love, when He asks

it, or demands it? and that in His very presence, to His very face?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O Lord God, king of all ages, behold a miserable creature before Thee who has often rebelled against Thee, who has refused Thee the homage of his heart, even after Thou didst condescend to ask it. I am a most ungrateful sinner. I have offended Thee, my God, who hast loved me so much. I deserve no pardon. The fire of hell is my just portion, after the stubborn, insolent, disobedient life that I have led. But I will sin no more. I wish to change my life. I really desire to reverence Thee, to obey Thee, to love Thee, with all my heart. I will never again sin against Thee. I will live entirely in conformity to Thy holy will. Thy will shall be my will. Never will I forget my wickedness in sinning against Thee. "My sins shall be before me always." "Wash me, O Lord, more and more, that I may become whiter than snow." Enlighten my mind, direct my heart, increase my strength, that I may always do Thy holy will. Keep me from sin. Rather take away my life than permit me ever wilfully to offend Thee again.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

We owe God gratitude and love. The greater, the more spontaneous the gift, the more undeserving the recipient, the greater should be the gratitude and love manifested in return. God has done more for us than all our relatives, than all our friends, than the entire world could do for us. "Every best gift, and every perfect gift is

from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (*Jas. i. 17*). In fact, man's entire life is a continuous chain of divine favors. These favors, these blessings, are of the highest value, of the greatest moment. God has, indeed, moved heaven and earth to make man happy. He has even gone so far as to sacrifice His only begotten Son for our sake, "For God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (*John iii. 16*). He has done this, as He Himself says, out of love for us. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (*Jer. xxxi. 3*). And all these favors, these marks of love, were entirely undeserved by man. It would naturally seem, then, that man, overcome with gratitude for the love that was shown him, would gladly do all that he could apprehend to be the good pleasure of his great benefactor. But, alas, this is not the case. By his action man says to the God of love: "I despise your favor, I mock your solicitude which is so much concerned in my welfare. You bless me, but I curse You in return."

Man, finally, owes God, his final end, the most perfect good, the preference to all earthly things. God has a right to be the first object of man's longings and exertions. God has, indeed, gone so far in His love for man that He has promised the eternal possession of heaven, with the beatific vision; in a word, a participation in all His eternal beatitude, as the reward for man's service. This inestimable reward should spur man on and give him courage to make God the object of all his thoughts and desires. This, indeed, should move man to spend the few years of

his life in faithful service. For only the possession of God, of heaven, can render man perfectly happy. But, alas, man thinks more of transitory pleasures than he does of the eternal joys of heaven. He prefers time to eternity.

Art thou, my soul, one of those ungrateful wretches that curse the God who blesses thee? Why dost thou refuse Him that gratitude and love which thou givest to His very creatures? He is thy best friend, thy generous benefactor. He has gone so far as to satisfy for thy past sins by the death of His only-begotten Son upon the cross. But now He demands that thou stop sinning, that thou appreciate His goodness, and return love for love. To draw thee on to serve Him, He promises thee eternal beatitude, eternal possession of Himself. Wilt thou not repent? Oh, promise Him that thou wouldst rather die a thousand deaths, that thou wouldst rather die this moment, rather suffer anything, than ever offend this God of goodness again.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

How can I dare to approach Thee, O God of love, after I have been so ungrateful, after I have so often rebelled against Thy ordinances, transgressed Thy holy law so frequently, so deliberately, so wilfully? May I still hope for pardon? My hope is in the merits of Thy Son, who died for me. I repent of all my sins; I repent because I lost my right to heaven, because I deserved hell for preferring a creature to Thee. I am heartily sorry because I have offended Thee, Father almighty, my creator, preserver of all things, the redeemer of mankind, God of goodness and of love. Thou art the joy of the angels and of the saints. Thou art a reward exceedingly great. Accept my

sorrow. Give me a sorrow equal to my sins. May they ever be before my eyes to remind me of Thy great love and of my base ingratitude. "My sins shall be before me always." I desire, henceforth, to love Thee, to serve Thee as faithfully as the angels serve Thee in heaven, as perfectly, were it possible, as the blessed Virgin Mary served Thee upon earth. Help me to love and serve Thee. Prevent me from falling into sin again. I trust in the promises of my Saviour. I confide in the protection of Mary.

Resolution

I will avoid sin as the greatest evil, because it robs God of the reverence and homage due Him, because it deprives Him of the obedience and submission that I owe Him, because it takes from Him that gratitude and love that is His due, but especially because it divides with a creature that love which is entirely due to God. O God, have mercy upon me.

Mary, thou art my hope! Save me from sin!

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

God Deserves to be Loved Above Everything

(From St. Alphonsus)

St. Teresa said that it was a great favor that God should call a soul to love Him. Let us, then, love Him, since we are called to this love, and let us love Him as He desires to be loved. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." The venerable Louis da Ponte felt ashamed at saying to God, "O Lord, I love Thee above everything; I love Thee more than all creatures, than all

riches, than all honors, than all earthly pleasures"; for it seemed to him that it was equivalent to saying, "My God, I love Thee more than straw, and smoke, and dust."

But God is satisfied that we should love Him above all things. Therefore, at least, let us say: "Yea, O Lord! I love Thee more than all the honors of the world, more than all its riches, more than all my kindred and friends; I love Thee more than health, more than my good name, more than science, more than all my comforts; I love Thee more than everything I possess, more than myself."

Ah, let us still further say: O Lord! I value Thy graces and Thy gifts; but more than all Thy gifts, I love Thyself, who alone art infinite goodness, and a good worthy of infinite love, which exceeds every other good thing. And, therefore, O my God, whatever Thou mayest give me short of Thyself, which is not Thyself, is not sufficient for me; if Thou givest me Thyself, Thou alone art sufficient for me. Let others seek what they will, I will seek nothing but Thee alone, my love, my all. In Thee alone I receive all that I can find or desire."

The sacred Spouse said, that above all things, she had chosen to love her beloved: "My beloved is fair and ruddy, and chosen out of thousands." And whom shall we choose to love? Among all our friends of this world, where can we find a friend more worthy of love and more faithful than God, or one who has loved us more than God? Let us pray, then, and let us pray continually, "O Lord! draw me after Thee; for if Thou dost not draw me after Thee, I can not come to Thee."

O Jesus! my Saviour, when will it be that, stripped of all other affections, I may ask and

seek for none but Thee! I fain would detach myself from everything; but some importunate affections constantly enter my heart, and draw me away from Thee. Detach me, then, from all things with Thy powerful hand, and make Thyself the one object of all my affections and all my thoughts.

St. Augustine said that he who has God has everything, and he who has not God has nothing. What do riches profit a man if he lives apart from God? What does it profit a monarch to extend his dominions, if he has not the grace of God? What does it profit a man of letters to understand many sciences and languages, if he knows not how to love God? While David was yet king, but in a state of sin, he walked in his gardens, he went to his sports and all other pleasures; but these things seemed to say, "Where is thy God? Wouldst thou seek in us thy happiness? Go seek God, whom thou hast left, for He alone can give thee rest." And thus David confessed that, in the midst of all these pleasures, he found not peace, and mourned night and day, considering that he was without God. "Tears were my bread night and day, while they daily said to me, Where is thy God?"

In the midst of the miseries and toils of this world, who can console us better than Jesus Christ? He alone says, "Come to me, all ye that labor, and are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you." O folly of the worldly! One single tear shed for our sins, one cry, "My God!" uttered in love by a soul in a state of grace, is worth more than a thousand festivals, a thousand plays, a thousand banquets, in giving contentment to a heart in love with the world. I say again, O folly! and a folly, too, which none

can remedy when there comes that death, when it is night, as the Gospel says, "The night cometh, in which no man can work." Wherefore Our Lord warns us to walk while the light favors us; for the night will come, when no man can walk. Let God alone, then, be all our treasure, all our love; and let all our desire be to please Him, who will not suffer us to surpass Him in love. He rewards a hundredfold everything that we do to give Him pleasure.

O my God, and all my good! be Thou the ruling power of my soul; and as I would choose to love Thee above all things, so do Thou grant that in all things I may prefer Thy will to my own pleasure. O my Jesus! I trust in Thy blood, that, through all my life that remains, I may love none but Thee upon this earth, that I may come one day to possess Thee forever in the kingdom of the blessed. O holy Virgin! aid me with thy powerful prayers, and carry me to kiss thy feet in paradise.

OPTIONAL READING

The Life of a Religious the Life of Jesus Christ

(From St. Alphonsus)

The Apostle says that the eternal Father predestines to the kingdom of heaven those only who live conformably to the life of the incarnate Word: "Whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son" (*Rom. viii. 29*). How happy then, and secure of paradise, should not Religious be, seeing that God has called them to a state of life which of all states is the most conformable to the life of Jesus Christ.

Jesus on this earth wished to live poor as the son and helpmate of a mechanic, in a poor dwelling, with poor clothing and poor food. "Being rich, He became poor for your sake, that through His poverty you might be rich" (2 *Cor.* viii. 9). Moreover, He chose a life the most entirely mortified, far from the delights of the world, and always full of pain and sorrow, from His birth to His death; hence by the prophet He is called "the Man of Sorrows." By this He wished to give His servants to understand what should be the life of those who wished to follow Him. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (*Matt.* xvi. 24). According to this example, and to this invitation of Jesus Christ, the saints have endeavored to dispossess themselves of all earthly goods, and to load themselves with pains and crosses, in order thus to follow Christ, their beloved Lord. Thus acted St. Benedict, who, being the son of the lord of Noricia, and a relative of the Emperor Justinian, and born amidst the riches and the pleasures of the world, while yet a youth of only fourteen years went to live in a cavern on Mount Subiaco, where he received no other sustenance than a piece of bread brought him every day as an alms by the hermit Romanus.

So acted St. Francis of Assisi, who renounced in favor of his father the whole lawful portion of his inheritance, even to the shirt he had on his back, and thus, poor and mortified, consecrated himself to Jesus Christ. Thus St. Francis Borgia, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, the one being duke of Gandia, the other Marquis of Castiglione, left all their riches, their estates, their vassals, their country, their house, their parents, and went to live a poor life in religion.

At present, worldlings think those to be fools who renounce earth for heaven, but in the valley of Josaphat they will know that they themselves have been the fools; and when they see the saints on their thrones crowned by God, they will say, lamenting and in despair: "These are they whom we had sometime in derision.... We fools esteemed their life madness.... Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints" (*Wis.* v. 3-5).

Prayer

Ah! my Master and my Redeemer Jesus, I am, then, of the number of those fortunate ones whom Thou hast called to follow Thee. O my Lord! I thank Thee for this. I leave all; I would I had more to leave, that I might draw near to Thee, my King and my God, who for the love of me, and to give me courage by Thy example, hast chosen for Thyself a life so poor and so painful. Lead on, O Lord! I will follow Thee. Choose Thou for me what cross Thou wilt, and help me. I will always carry it with constancy and love. I regret that for the past I have abandoned Thee, to follow my own desires and the vanities of the world, but now I will leave Thee no more. Bind me to Thy cross, and if through weakness I sometimes resist, draw me by the sweet bonds of Thy love. Suffer not that I should ever leave Thee again. Yes, my Jesus, I renounce all the satisfactions of the world; my only satisfaction shall be to continue to love Thee, and to suffer all that pleases Thee. I hope thus to come to myself one day in Thy kingdom, to be united to Thee by that bond of eternal love, where, loving Thee in Thy unveiled glory, I need no more fear to be cast off

and separated from Thee. I love Thee, O my God, my all! and will always love Thee.

Behold my hope, O most holy Mary, thou who, because the most conformed to Jesus, art now the most powerful to obtain this grace. Be thou my protectress!

SECOND MEDITATION

The Sin of a Christian

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

CONSIDER the heinous wrong a Christian does to his own soul when he commits a mortal sin.

1. That soul was made by the divine Creator to the image and likeness of the Most High. By its very nature it has a resemblance to God. Though man can not totally destroy this likeness by sin, he can deliberately degrade this likeness and ruin it. Yes, by sin he defiles and soils this image of almighty God. By mortal sin man casts this image of God in a sink of corruption and shockingly sullies that likeness which the Holy Spirit has indelibly impressed upon it.

2. By Baptism man becomes a child of grace. A new supernatural resemblance to God is conferred upon his soul. A new bond of union, the bond of charity, now unites this favored soul to God. A new beauty, the dazzling wedding garment of sanctifying grace, is put upon that soul by the Spirit of love and is made the cause of rejoicing in the kingdom of heaven. By one mortal sin all this supernatural splendor is annihilated. The

soul is robbed of all her spiritual beauty and becomes an abomination before the Lord, an object of horror in the sight of heaven. That soul has fallen from grace, has died the death of sin, and become a decaying corpse in the sight of the Almighty. The venial sins that man commits are like so many festering ulcers, like shocking cancers upon the soul. Wilt thou not realize how this grieves the heavenly Father and saddens the Holy Spirit, who brought forth that soul to the spiritual life?

Thou, my soul, wert made to the image and likeness of God. In holy Baptism thou wert born again, born to a supernatural life, a life of grace. Thou didst become a child of God, a partaker of the divine nature itself. Thou wert doubly then the likeness of God. Thou didst resemble God more than ever a human child resembled its parent. Thou didst well know the goodness of thy heavenly Father, the malice, the wickedness of sin, and yet, alas, alas, how many sins hast thou committed during life! How often hast thou saddened the heart of God by thy sinful conduct? How often displeased the Holy Spirit who brought thee forth to the supernatural life? How often hast thou steeped the precious image of God in the mire of sin? How often hast thou permitted frightful, horrible ulcers of sin to appear and fester, even taken a fiendish delight in their abomination? How often, perhaps, torn off the garment of sanctifying grace by mortal sin! How often robbed thyself of that supernatural resemblance to the God of infinite perfection, of infinite love, solely to gratify some fancy, some inordinate desire!

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

Fool that I have been! If I have a picture of a dear relative or friend I treasure it with great care. But how negligent have I been about my likeness of almighty God, especially since it has been a mark of His special regard for me. Other pictures will perish with time, but this likeness is indelibly imprinted upon my soul. Ah, I lament that I have not treasured this divine image more, I lament that I have been so ungrateful, so indifferent. But, henceforth, I desire to make amends for the past. I desire to do penance for my sins. I will purify my soul from every stain; I will be most careful to avoid whatever may sully the image of God within me. I will treasure my wedding garment with great care. I hope to wear it undefiled till my last breath, to esteem it as I ought for its own sake, and out of gratitude to almighty God.

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

In Baptism the soul of man became the temple of the Holy Ghost. The dispenser of grace has taken up His abode there to apply to the soul the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. He entered to plant the seed of virtue and He tends it that it may blossom and bear fruit. He wishes the higher, supernatural life to flourish. How great an honor is this for man! But when man commits a mortal sin he expels the divine Sanctifier. That Christian desecrates the temple of the Holy Ghost; he converts the sanctuary of grace into a place of execration. This is "the abomination in the holy place." For the Apostle says, "Know you not that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any

man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy'' (1 *Cor.* iii. 16).

God had always been jealous of His temple. Baltassar, the king of Babylon, did but desecrate the holy vessel that his father had brought from Jerusalem. And that very night the hand of God appeared and wrote the king's death sentence upon the wall before him.

By Baptism, finally, the human soul became a member of Christ's mystical body. It became a member of the one true Church, a branch of the divine vine, so that the supernatural life with all its fertility could flow into it from Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who effects this wonderful union between the soul and Christ and causes the life-giving blood, the life of grace, to circulate from the head to all the members. Thus, this divine spirit puts the soul in a position to produce in itself supernatural virtues, according to the model and example of the incarnate Son of God.

But what does the Christian do when he knowingly and willingly commits a mortal sin? He deliberately casts his Saviour away, and tramples on His all-embracing love. He tears himself away from the embrace of his divine friend, from the heart of his loving redeemer, and thereby causes deep wounds to himself and to Him. He inflicts a mortal wound upon himself, so that the higher divine life in him perishes, and he becomes a dead branch on the vine, a branch that deserves to be cast into the fire.

Yes, my soul, thou hast been made the temple of the Most High. In holy Baptism thou didst become a member of Christ's mystical body, a branch on the true vine, so that thou couldst live in Christ and Christ live in thee. But, alas, if thou hast committed but one mortal sin thou hast

fallen like a star from heaven! Thou hast driven the Spirit of love from thee and torn thyself away from the divine Heart on which thou couldst rest thy weary head like the favorite disciple. How many reasons hast thou to remember the sins of thy past life in the bitterness of thy soul and to address the Holy Spirit in the words of the Royal Psalmist: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy great mercy. And according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity" (*Ps.* l. 1). "For if Thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand?" (*Ps.* cxxix. 3). How frequently hast thou not committed at least venial sins that have wounded thee severely, that have grieved the Holy Spirit and weakened thy bond of union with Christ? How often perhaps committed mortal sin and thus died a spiritual death?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

I am a most miserable, a wretched sinner, I have deliberately destroyed the temple of the Most High. I have rebelled against my Saviour and nailed Him anew to the cross by my sins. I am the cause of Thy complaint to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, "What pains Me most is that even souls specially consecrated to Me should inflict injuries upon Me." If I have been one of these souls in the past, I will be so no longer. Pardon me my great iniquity. Thou "dost not wish the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live." I cast myself, as the returned prodigal, at Thy feet. Permit me, henceforth, to be the least of Thy servants. I repent of all my past sins. I will offend Thee no more. I desire to live only for Thee. I hope yet to be a worthy temple of the Holy Spirit.

With Thy grace I will rise again to the life of grace. I will again try to produce those fruits of virtue which Thou invitest me to learn of Thee.

Resolution

I firmly resolve to repair in my soul the effects of sin by contrition, penance, voluntary mortification, and patience in all trials. I will never again grieve the Holy Spirit by any deliberate sin. I will be ever mindful of the admonition of the Apostle: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of Redemption" (*Eph.* iv. 30).

My Jesus bless my good resolution. O Mary, I place all my hope in thee.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

On Loving God Without Reserve

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

St. Philip Neri said that so much of our love as we fix upon creatures we take away from God; and therefore, our Saviour, as St. Jerome wrote, is jealous of our hearts. As He Himself has loved us so abundantly, He desires to reign alone in our hearts, and to have no rivals there who may rob Him of a portion of that love which He desires to have wholly to Himself; and therefore it displeases Him to see us attached to any affection which is not from Him. And does our Saviour ask too much, after having given His own blood and life, dying for us upon the cross? Does He not deserve to be loved by us with all our hearts, and without reserve?

St. John of the Cross said that every attachment to creatures hinders us from belonging

wholly to God. "Who will give me the wings of a dove, that I may fly away and be at rest?" says the Psalmist. There are souls who are called by God to become saints, but who, coming to Him with reserve, and not giving Him their whole love, retain some affection for earthly things, and thus never become, and never will become, holy. They fain would fly, but being held down by some attachment they can not but remain fixed upon earth. We must, therefore, strip ourselves of everything. Every attachment, says the same St. John, whether great or small, hinders the soul from flying to God.

St. Gertrude once prayed to Our Lord that He would teach her what He would have her do. He answered, "I desire nothing from thee but a devoted heart." And it was this which David sought from God, "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" O my God, give me a pure heart; that is, emptied and stripped of every earthly affection.

"All for all," wrote Thomas à Kempis. To gain all, we must give all. To possess God, we must leave all that is not God. Then the soul can say to its Lord, "My Jesus, I have left all for Thee; give Thyself wholly to me." To attain this, we must not cease to beg of God that He would fill us with His holy love. Love is that mighty fire that burns up in our hearts every affection that is not for God. St. Francis de Sales said that when a house is in flames we throw the furniture out of the windows; by which he meant that when a soul is inflamed, and the divine love takes possession of it, it has no need of sermons or spiritual directors to detach it from the world; the love of God itself will cleanse the heart, and purge it of every impure desire.

Holy love is introduced in the Canticles under

the symbol of a cellar of wine: "The king brought me into the wine-cellar; He created love within me." In this blessed cellar the souls that are the brides of Christ, inebriated with the wine of holy love, lose all desire for the things of the world, admire God alone, in all things seek God alone, speak only of God, and desire to think only of God; and when they hear others speak of riches, dignities and pleasures, they turn to God and say to Him with a burning sigh, "My God, and my all!" What a world, what pleasures, what honors! Be Thou all my joy, all my contentment. St. Teresa wrote, when speaking of the prayer of union with God, that this union consists in dying to all worldly things, in order to possess nothing but God.

That a soul may give itself wholly to God, three things are especially necessary: (1.) The avoidance of all defects, even the very least, accompanied with conquests over every inordinate desire, such as an abstinence from observing an object of sight or hearing, from certain little pleasures of sense, from certain witty or unnecessary conversations. (2.) Among things which are good, the constant choice of those that are the best and the most pleasing to God. (3.) The receiving with peace of mind and thanksgiving, from the divine hands, all things that are displeasing to our self-love.

O my Jesus, my love, my all! how can I see Thee dying upon a shameful cross, despised by all, and consumed by anguish, and then go and receive earthly enjoyment and glories? I would be wholly Thine. Forget the offences I have committed against Thee, and receive me. Teach me to know from what things I ought to separate myself, and what I must do to please Thee; all this

I desire to do. Give me strength to follow Thy will, and to be faithful to Thee. O my beloved Redeemer! Thou willest that I should give myself to Thee without reserve, that I may unite myself wholly to Thy heart. Behold, this day I give myself wholly to Thee, without reserve, everything that I am; from Thee I hope for grace to be faithful even to death.

O mother of God, and my own mother Mary! obtain for me the grace of holy perseverance.

PARTICULAR EXAMINATION

On Sincerity Toward the Holy Spirit

Do I realize:

That I am dealing with my God?

That He knows all the secrets of my heart?

That He desires to aid me?

That my salvation is at stake?

That God detests all insincerity?

That my interest requires my sincerity?

That the Holy Spirit deserves my confidence?

Do I really wish to know myself?

Do I really desire to progress in the spiritual life?

Have I sincerely accepted the light of grace?

Am I impartial in my examination of myself, or do I permit pride and self-love to blind me?

Say an act of contrition for faults, and an act of thanksgiving for lights, and renew sincere dispositions.

THIRD MEDITATION

Tepidity in a Religious

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

JERUSALEM is a picture of a soul dedicated to God that does not come up to the expectation of the Holy Ghost.

1. Among all the cities of the world, Jerusalem was especially sought out and blessed by almighty God. Jerusalem was in reality the city of God, privileged and preferred as the center from which the blessing of God flowed to the twelve tribes of Israel. There stood the Temple, in which the most solemn and magnificent feasts were annually celebrated. Had God not, then, the right to expect that Jerusalem would distinguish herself above all cities by her zeal in His service? But think of the Religious! Is the Religious not a privileged soul, a soul enjoying God's special love, a soul that God has singled out and preferred before all others? What can, what must He, then, demand?

2. Consider, moreover, that Jerusalem became unfaithful to almighty God, that she gradually sank deeper and deeper into the abyss of indifference and godlessness. How did this happen? (a) The inhabitants forgot the many divine favors lavished upon them and neglected to show their gratitude; (b) The daily sacrifices, the greatest solemnities of the year, made little impression on most of the inhabitants; (c) Having lost all taste and inclination for the supernatural, they devoted all their energies to the acquisition

of riches, power, and worldly greatness; (*d*) They finally went so far in their godless conduct as to become hardened and impenitent in their ways. They turned a deaf ear to all admonitions, yes, killed the prophets, and persecuted all that spoke to them in the name of God.

The same is often the case with a soul consecrated to God. God requires of Religious that in humility they acknowledge the divine favors received and thank the God of goodness daily for the same. As soon as a Religious neglects this he despises his vocation and the countless graces that he daily receives. He has begun his downward course. The daily exercises of piety, the most sacred religious rites, become a matter of routine for him. He no longer derives any spiritual benefit from them. He begins to seek gratification in worldly distractions, in ease and comfort, in eating and drinking, in the praise and applause of the world. He gradually arrives at the last stage of his downward course. He becomes hardened in his ways, despises all admonitions of friends, even of lawful superiors.

Thou, my soul, hast received the peerless vocation to the religious life. From among innumerable others, many perhaps better than thyself, God has singled thee out as the object of His special predilection. He has destined thee to be a channel of grace to countless souls. How hast thou treasured thy vocation? Hast thou daily thanked God for this mark of His special love? Hast thou continually sought to draw profit from the many and various religious exercises in which thou didst daily take part? Hast thou endeavored to perform them with a lively faith, from supernatural motives, or hast thou in course of time degenerated so

much as to look upon these exercises as a burden, and hast thou in consequence performed them through routine? Hast thou grown lax, unmortified, indulgent, fond of dissipation and worldly applause? Hast thou praised God with thy lips, but kept thy heart far from Him? Oh, repent while it is yet time! Harken to the voice of conscience, to the admonitions of thy Superiors! See the edifying conduct of those around thee. Receive the grace of God with gratitude. Repent of thy tepidity. Return to thy primitive fervor. God will not despise an humble and contrite heart.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God of infinite good, I, a most ungrateful sinner, cast myself before Thee and crave Thy pardon. Treat me not as I deserve, according to Thy justice, but according to the greatness of Thy mercy. I have shown myself most ungrateful in the past. Thou hast placed me in Thy holy place and I have desecrated it. I repent of my irreverence, of my indifference in Thy service. If Thou wilt pardon me I will repair my negligence by my fervor in the future. I desire really to begin to love Thee, I desire to show my gratitude by mortifying myself in all things, by living entirely in conformity with Thy holy will. I desire no other reward than to be permitted to love Thee, to serve Thee, to sacrifice myself entirely for Thee. I will henceforth do all that I can to please Thee. I will perform my religious exercises with great promptitude and fervor. I wish to live only to glorify Thy holy name, to bring all to the knowledge of Thy goodness, to the service of so amiable a master, of so good a God. Give me the grace, I beseech Thee, to conform

myself entirely to Thy holy will. May Thy will be my will in prosperity as well as in adversity. May my life be a life of detachment from the world with its vain joys and pleasures. May my life be hidden away in Christ my Saviour, that I may say with St. Paul, "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me" (*Gal. ii. 20*).

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Consider the punishment that overtook Jerusalem. By her continual opposition to the divine will Jerusalem sealed her own doom. "If thou also hadst known," said the Saviour to her in His sorrow, "and that in this thy day the things that are to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone; because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation" (*Luke xix. 42-44*). This prophecy was literally fulfilled. Never did the earth witness such a desolation. Thus, a soul that is habitually lax, tepid in following her sacred calling, will gradually be encompassed more and more by her evil passions, so that repentance becomes almost impossible. She loses all the merit of the past which she accumulated during many years of hard labor. Finally, her name will be blotted out from the Book of Life, and the light of grace will be taken from her and given to another.

Tremble, my soul, at the sight of such a ruin! Many other souls, at one time far more faithful

than thyself, have fallen and perished by the way-side. Examine thyself and see what use thou hast made of the many special graces that the Holy Spirit has lavished upon thee. How often hast thou neglected His holy inspirations. Examine thy evil inclinations carefully, lest they encompass thee with a wall of sin, transgressions, and negligence, and hedge thee in on every side so that a return to first fervor, a true repentance, will be humanly impossible. Thou knowest that nothing is so opposed to the workings of God's grace as worldliness, that spirit of ease and comfort that seeks only a life of natural gratification. This spirit would ruin in thee that temple of the Holy Spirit and leave no stone upon a stone. This spirit would level thee to the ground, blot thee out of the Book of Life, out of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, out of the love of the Holy Spirit. Woe, eternal woe then betide thee!

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I thank Thee that Thou hast not blotted me out of the Book of Life as I have deserved. I am grateful for Thy patience with me. I will deplore my lukewarmness all the days of my life. I deserve not to be heard by Thee, but I still hope for pardon, for the grace of perfect repentance. In the future I hope to love Thee, to serve Thee with gratitude, to be mindful of Thy many graces. To lead a holy, recollected life shall be my aim. Help me to perform my devotions with greater recollection, with greater fervor, with greater love the oftener that I repeat them. May every act of my life be an act of gratitude that Thou hast spared me. May it be an act of love for the love that Thou hast shown me. May my entire life be one of humble submission to Thy holy will, be-

cause Thou hast deigned to lavish Thy special graces upon me. Help me to use the means of increasing in fervor, in piety, in love of Thee. May I live only to love Thee, to do Thy good pleasure.

Resolution

I will often recall the words of St. Bernard: "It is easier to convert a man of the world than a Religious who has become entirely lax." This thought shall inspire me with fear, and urge me to use the means of growing in fervor. Have mercy on me, O Lord, according to the greatness of Thy mercy and remember not my former sins.

Mary, refuge of sinners, pray for me that I may grow in fervor and the love of God.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

On Desire and Resolution

(From St. Alphonsus)

All holiness consists in loving God. The love of God is that infinite treasure by which we gain the friendship of God. God is ready to give this treasure of His holy love, but He wills that we earnestly desire it. He that faintly desires any good thing takes little trouble to gain it. On the other hand, St. Lawrence Justinian said that an earnest desire lightens all toil, and gives us strength. And thus, he who little desires to advance in divine love, instead of becoming more ardent in the way of perfection, ever becomes more and more lukewarm, and thus is ever in imminent peril of falling headlong down some precipice. And, on the other hand, whoever aspires with fervent desire after perfection, and

strengthens himself daily to advance in its path, little by little with time will attain it. St. Teresa said, "God never gives many favors, except to those who earnestly desire His love." And again, "God leaves no good desire without its reward." And therefore the saint advises every one not to suffer his desires to abate, because, trusting in God, and strengthening ourselves little by little, we shall reach that point which all the saints have attained.

It is a deceit of the devil, according to the opinion of the same saint, which makes us think that it is a mark of pride to desire to become a saint. It would be pride and presumption, if we trusted to our works or intentions; but if we hope for all from God, He will give us that strength which we have not. Let us, then, desire, with a very great desire, to attain to a lofty height of divine love; and let us say with courage, "I can do all things through Him that strengtheneth me." And if we do not find that we possess this great desire, at least let us ask it urgently of Jesus Christ, that He may give it to us.

We will now pass on to the second means, resolution. Good desires must be accompanied by a determined spirit to strengthen ourselves in the attainment of the desired blessing. Many desire perfection, but take no right means to gain it; they want to live in a desert, to accomplish great works of penance and prayer, to endure martyrdom, but such desires are nothing better than mere fancies, which instead of benefiting them, do them great harm. "These are the desires which slay the slothful man." Such a person, feeding himself upon these fruitless desires, pays no attention to the cure of his defects, the mortification of his appetites, or patience in suffering contempt and

crosses. He would do great things, but such as are incompatible with his present condition, and therefore his imperfections increase; in the time of adversity he is agitated; every infirmity makes him impatient, and thus he lives and dies.

If, therefore, we truly desire to become saints, let us resolve: (1.) To avoid every venial sin, however slight; (2.) To detach ourselves from every earthly desire; (3.) Not to cease our accustomed exercises of prayer and mortification, however great may be the weariness and dryness we feel in them; (4.) To meditate daily on the passion of Jesus Christ, which inflames with divine love every heart that meditates upon it; (5.) To resign ourselves in peace to the will of God in all things that trouble us, as Father Balthazer Alvarez said: "He who in trouble resigns himself to the divine will, runs posthaste to God;" (6.) To beg continually of God the gift of His holy love.

"The devil," said St. Teresa, "has no dread of irresolute souls." On the contrary, he who resolves to give himself truly to God will overcome even what seemed impossible. A resolved will conquers everything. Let us study to redeem the time that is lost. The time that remains, let us give it all to God. All time that is not devoted to God is lost. Do we not fear lest God should abandon us to our lukewarmness, which may lead us to utter ruin? Let us take courage, and live from this day forth upon the holy maxim, "We must please God even to death." Souls thus resolute are assisted by the Lord in the way of perfection.

He who would belong wholly to God must resolve: (1.) Not to commit even the slightest venial sin; (2.) To give himself to God without

reserve, and therefore to neglect nothing which may be pleasing to God, always with the approbation of his director; (3.) Out of all good things to choose that which is for him, under the circumstances, most pleasing to God; (4.) Not to wait for the morrow, but to do whatever can be done, to-day; (5.) To pray daily to God for increase in His holy love. With love everything can be done; without love, nothing. To gain everything, we must give everything. Jesus has given Himself wholly to us, that we may be wholly His.

O miserable being that I am! O Thou God of my soul! for so many years I have lived upon earth, and what progress have I made in Thy love? My progress has been in my faults, in self-love, and in sins. And shall I live this life even unto death? No; Jesus my Saviour, help me. I would no longer be so ungrateful as I have been till now. I would truly love Thee, and would leave all to please Thee. Give me Thy hand, O Jesus! Thou who has poured forth all Thy blood, that Thou mightest see me Thine. Such would I be, with Thy grace. Even till death, aid me, and strip me of everything which may hinder me from belonging wholly to Thee, who hast so much loved me. Grant it to me through Thy merits; from Thee I hope for it. And I hope for it also from thee, O my mother Mary! With thy prayers, which can obtain everything from God, obtain for me the grace of belonging wholly to Him.

OPTIONAL READING

The Excellence of Virginity*(From St. Alphonsus)*

Persons who consecrate their virginity to Jesus Christ become in the eyes of God as beautiful as the angels of heaven. "They shall be as the angels of God in heaven" (*Matt.* xxii. 30). Baronius relates that upon the death of the holy virgin Georgia an immense multitude of doves was seen flying around her; and when the body was carried to the church they ranged themselves along that part of the roof which was over the corpse, and did not leave until she was buried. Those doves were thought to be angels who accompanied that virginal body.

Virgins, moreover, who have left the world and dedicated themselves to Jesus Christ are His spouses. In the gospel our Redeemer is called father, or master, or shepherd of our souls; but with regard to those virgins He calls Himself their spouse; they "went out to meet the bridegroom" (*Matt.* xxv. 1).

When a young woman wishes to marry, she will examine, if she is prudent, which of her suitors is the most worthy. Let us, then, learn from the spouse in the sacred Canticles, who well knows, what manner of spouse is He to whom consecrated virgins aspire. Tell me, O sacred spouse, what manner of spouse is He who makes you so fortunate? "My beloved is white," she says, "and ruddy, chosen out of thousands" (*Cant.* v. 10). He is all white by reason of His purity; and ruddy by reason of the love with which He burns. He is, in fine, so noble and so kind as to be the most lovable of spouses.

With reason, then, did the glorious St. Agnes, as we learn from St. Ambrose, when it was proposed to her to marry the son of the Prefect of Rome, reply that she had a much more advantageous engagement in view. When some ladies were endeavoring to persuade St. Domitilla to marry Count Aurelian, nephew of the Emperor, saying there was no obstacle, as he was willing that she should remain a Christian, the saint replied, "Tell me, if a monarch and a clown both aspired to the hand of a maiden, which would she choose? Now, should I marry Aurelian, I would have to leave the King of heaven; it would be folly. I will not do so." And thus, in order to remain faithful to Jesus Christ, to whom she had already consecrated her virginity, she was willing to be burned alive, a death which her barbarous suitor caused her to suffer.

Those spouses of Jesus Christ who leave the world for His sake become His beloved; they are called the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb (*Apoc.* xiv. 4). Why the first-fruits? "Because," says Cardinal Hugo, "as the first-fruits are more grateful than any other to man, so virgins are dearer to God than any others." The divine spouse feeds amongst the lilies: "Who feedeth among the lilies" (*Cant.* ii. 16). And what is meant by lilies, if not those devout souls who have consecrated their virginity to Jesus Christ? Venerable Bede writes that the song of the virgins—that is the glory which they give to God by preserving unsullied the lily of their purity—is far more pleasing to Him than the song of all the other saints. The Holy Ghost says that there is nothing comparable to virginity (*Ecclus.* xxvi. 20). And for this reason some theologians say our blessed Mother would have consented to forego

the dignity of becoming the mother of God could it have been had only at the expense of her virginity. Who on this earth can conceive the glory which God has prepared for His virgin spouses in paradise? Theologians say that virgins have in heaven their own "aureola," or special crown of glory, which is not given to the other saints.

Prayer

O my Jesus, my God, and my Redeemer! who hast died for me, compassionate me who call Thee spouse. I see that Thou hast called me to this honor, and I know not how to thank Thee for this grace. I should now perhaps have been in hell; but Thou, instead of chastising me, hast called me to be Thy spouse! Yes, my spouse, I have left the world, I have left all through love of Thee; I give myself entirely to Thee. What world? What world do I speak of? My Jesus, henceforward Thou art my only good, my only love. Thou desirest my entire heart; gladly I resign it entirely to Thee. Receive me in Thy mercy, and do not reject me as I have deserved. Forget all the offences that I have given Thee, of which I repent with my whole soul; would that I had died before offending Thee! Pardon me; inflame me with Thy holy love, and give me Thy aid, in order that I may be faithful to Thee, and never leave Thee. Thou, my spouse, hast given Thyself all to me. Behold! I give myself entirely to Thee. Mary, my queen and my mother, chain my heart to that of Jesus Christ, and unite them both, so that they may never again be separated.

FOURTH MEDITATION

Hell

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

THE damned in hell suffer a double punishment: the pain of sense and the pain of loss, or the pains of the body and the pains of the soul. Consider these pains, my soul, and be inspired with a great fear of hell.

The pain of sense includes all that the human senses can suffer:

1. *Sight*.—The wicked will be “cast into exterior darkness” (*Matt.* xxii. 13). They will be in a fearful prison into which a ray of light will never enter. They will be in “a land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth” (*Job* x. 22). “They shall be gathered together as in the gathering of one bundle into the pit, and they shall be shut up there in prison” (*Is.* xxiv. 22). They will see only the avenging fire, the infuriated demons, their companions in sin, and the hideous members of their own bodies.

2. *Hearing*.—The damned will hear the infernal howlings of the demons, their hellish yelling and their taunting sarcasm, the curses, maledictions, execrations of the countless reprobate, “the weeping and gnashing of teeth” (*Matt.* viii. 12).

3. *Smell*.—The damned will be tormented with the offensive odor of sulphur and brimstone, with the pestilential exhalations of the damned bodies, and the stench of their putrid bodies, as they are piled one upon another, “gathered into bundles.”

“Their slain shall be cast forth; and out of their carcasses shall rise a stench” (*Is.* xxxiv. 3).

4. *Taste*.—The damned shall suffer a fearful hunger. “Woe to you that are filled, for you shall hunger,” says Our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount (*Luke* vi. 25). Their thirst will be tormented. “Their wine is the gall of dragons, and the venom of asps” (*Deut.* xxxii. 33). “Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and will give them gall to drink” (*Jer.* xxiii. 15). Listen to the prayer of Dives: “Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame” (*Luke* xvi. 24).

5. *Touch*.—The sense of touch will have its punishment. “He will give fire and worms into their flesh, that they may burn and may feel forever” (*Judith* xvi. 21). “Every one will be salted with fire” (*Mark* iv. 48). There will be fire in the flesh, in the bones, fire in the veins, fire in the mouth, fire in the eyes, fire in the entire body. Fire will burn and punish every sin that the body helped commit.

O my soul, let me ask thee in the words of the prophet Isaias, “Canst thou dwell with devouring fire?” (*Is.* xxxiii. 14.) Think of the most hideous sight that thou hast ever seen; what is it compared to the shadow of death? Think of the most blood-curdling sound thou didst ever hear; how does it compare to the “weeping and gnashing” of the damned in hell? Think of the vilest smell that earth can produce; it is sweet perfume to the damned in hell. Thou now complainest of hunger and thirst; consider that the most famishing hunger and the most parched thirst of earth would be the greatest relief in hell. The rich man asked but for one drop of water. Thou now

complainer of the weather, of the heat and the cold. The damned are salted with fire. Earthly fire is but a faint image of the fire of hell. It was given us as a blessing, whereas this was kindled by the anger of an outraged God. How hast thou mortified thy faculties, my soul? Hast thou perhaps exposed thyself to those sins for which the damned in hell are now suffering? Hast thou always been chaste and modest in thy looks or hast thou permitted thy eyes to wander to forbidden objects? Hast thou lived to eat and drink instead of eating to live in God's service? If thou dost not mortify thy taste now, God may mortify it for thee through all eternity. Hast thou been vain in dress, pampering the body, rendering it effeminate and sensual? Mortify thy flesh now, lest God salt it with the fire of hell.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I owe it to thy goodness that I am not already in hell. I have been so negligent, so self-indulgent, so curious, so vain, so idle, in spite of all Thy graces and heavenly helps. Thanks to Thy grace, I have still an opportunity to escape hell. I thank Thee for this great grace, O holy Spirit! I repent sincerely of all my sins. I wish to live only for Thee in the future. I wish to love Thee, to serve Thee; even though there were no hell, I would consecrate myself entirely to Thee. My eyes shall open only to see Thy beauty. My tongue shall move only to praise Thy name. My entire body shall henceforth be devoted only to Thy grateful service. Increase my love; perfect my desire. Direct me to devote my faculties, to use my senses, only to glorify Thy holy name.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

The pain of loss, or the pain of the soul, is the punishment inflicted for the loss of sanctifying grace and all consequent blessings. The reprobate suffer entire separation from God, without any consolation from the Holy Ghost, cursed by Him who alone can satisfy the human heart. They are abandoned in a fourfold spiritual pain:

1. They are without the consolation of a good conscience. They know their guilt. Conscience has become "the worm that dieth not."

2. They look about them in vain for a shadow of love or sympathy. They are utterly abandoned and alone, without a friend. They are without a companion, though crowded in countless myriads one upon another. They are strangers to that sweet consciousness arising from compassion and sympathy. They are damned among the damned, alone and without pity.

3. They suffer with the consciousness that their torments will not benefit them in any way. Their sufferings do not decrease by duration, do not satisfy, do not repair for their sins. Their sufferings are unfruitful, interminable, and do not even blunt their susceptibilities or decrease their repugnance to them. What ground for despair is there not in this thought?

4. Finally, they suffer without the sweet presence of the divine consoler. Upon earth the Holy Spirit changes tears of sorrow into tears of joy by His presence. He renders the heaviest cross light. But the damned have lost God forever. They have driven Him out of their heart, trampled upon His graces, refused to reproduce the image of Christ in their souls by the practice of vir-

tue. Now He has cursed them, abandoned them forever. Their thirst for God, for happiness, for beatitude, is insatiable and will never be quenched.

O my soul, how often hast thou received the sweet consolation of the Holy Spirit! How often has the voice of conscience, how often has the thought that others love thee, been a consolation to thee! "For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God" (*Rom.* viii. 16). How often hast thou not drawn supernatural consolation from unsought crosses and affliction. How often, especially, hast thou been consoled by the mysterious presence of the Holy Spirit. "Because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us" (*Rom.* v. 5). But the damned in hell have no consolation in their suffering. Not from the voice of conscience, for that is their first accuser. Not from their companions, for there is no bond of union, no harmony, no sympathy, existing among them. Not from their suffering, for it brings no relief, no solace, no comfort. They know that they must suffer, suffer forever, and ever, and ever. Neither do they receive any consolation from the Holy Spirit whom they have driven from their hearts. This is their greatest pain, that they shall never see God, the only good of all real goodness, the only beauty of all beauty. Though their heart is created for the enjoyment of the good and the beautiful, though their intellect is created for the possession of the eternal truth, they will never find Him. "You shall seek Me," says the Holy Spirit, "and not find Me."

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God of my soul, I thank Thee for the knowledge of this great truth. I thank Thee for having

kept me out of hell until now. Help me up the narrow and rugged path, I beseech Thee. I would willingly rather suffer all the pains, all the sufferings of this life, than lose Thee, who art the only true good. I now have some perception of the pains which Thy justice inflicts on all who persist in abusing Thy love and goodness upon earth. O God, I do not wish to go to hell. I will love Thee, I desire to love Thee always, to love Thee alone. I desire rather to die than to cease to love Thee. I repent of all that ever displeased Thee during my life. Would that I could induce all to love Thee as the blessed Virgin Mary loved Thee. Then all men would glorify Thy goodness.

Resolution

I resolve to act on the suggestion of St. Bernard and go down in spirit to hell during life that I may not go there after death. And I now say with St. Augustine, "Lord, here cut, here burn, here never spare me, that Thou mayest spare me in eternity. From eternal death, O Lord, deliver me!"

O Mary, my hope, thou hast power to save me.

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

Contempt of the World

(From St. Alphonsus)

The thought of the vanity of the world, and that all things that the world values are but vain and deceitful, has made many souls resolve to give themselves wholly to God. "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" How many has this great

maxim of the Gospel brought to leave relatives, country, possessions, honors, even kingdoms, to shut themselves up in a cloister, or go into the desert, there to think of God alone! The day of death is called the day of loss. "The day of loss is at hand." It is a day of loss, because all the goods gained on earth must then be left. Wherefore St. Ambrose wisely says that we falsely call these good things our good things, because we can not carry them with us into the other world, where we must dwell forever. It is our holy deeds that accompany us and they alone will comfort us in eternity.

All earthly fortunes, the highest dignities, gold, silver, the most precious jewels, when contemplated from the bed of death, lose their splendor; the dark shadow of death obscures even scepters and crowns, and makes us see that whatever the world values is but smoke, dust, vanity, and misery. And, in truth, at the time of death, what profit is there in all the riches acquired by the dying person, if nothing belongs to him after death, save a coffin, in which he is placed but to corrupt? Or what will vaunted beauty of body serve, when there remains of it only a little dust and a few fleshless limbs?

What is the life of man upon earth? Behold it, as described by St. James: "What is your life? It is a smoke which appeareth for a little while, and then will pass away." To-day a man called great is esteemed, feared, and praised; tomorrow he is despised, contemned, and abused. "I saw the wicked lifted up on high; I went by, and behold he was gone." He is no longer found in this, his beloved house, in this great palace which he built. And where is he? He is but dust in the grave!

“A false balance in his hand.” In these words the Holy Spirit advises us not to be deceived by the world, because the world weighs its goods in a false balance. We ought to weigh them in the true balance of faith, which will show us what are the true goods of which it can never be said that they speedily vanish. St. Teresa said we should not take account of anything that ends with death. O God! what greatness remains to statesmen, commanders of armies, princes, and emperors, now that the scene is changed, and they find themselves in eternity! “Their memory has perished with a sound.” They made a great figure in the world, and their names resounded among all; but when they were dead, rank, name, and everything was changed. It is useful here to notice an inscription placed over a certain cemetery in which many distinguished men and women are buried: “See where end all greatness, all earthly pomp, all beauty.” Worms, dust, a worthless stone, a little sand, close the brief scene at the end of all.

“The fashion of this world passeth away.” Our life is but a scene that passes away and speedily ends; and it must end for all, whether nobles or commoners, kings or subjects, rich or poor. Happy he who, in this scene, has played his part well before God. King Philip III of Spain died in the prime of manhood, at the age of forty-three; and before he died he said to those who stood by: “When I am dead, proclaim the spectacle that you now see; proclaim that, in death, to have been a king, serves only to make one feel the pain of having reigned.” And then he ended with a sigh, saying, “Oh, that during this time I had been in a desert, becoming a saint, that now I might appear with more confidence before the tribunal of Jesus Christ!”

We know the change of life of St. Francis Borgia at the sight of the corpse of the Empress Isabella, who in life was most beautiful, but, after death was so changed as to strike horror into all who saw her. Borgia, when he beheld her so, exclaimed, "Thus, then, end the good things of this world!" and he gave himself wholly to God. Oh, that we could all imitate him before death comes upon us! But let us haste, because death runs toward us, and we know not when it will arrive. Let us not so act that the light that God will give us then will cause nothing but remorse when we hold in our hands the candle of death. Let us resolve to do now what we shall then wish to have done, and shall not be able to do.

My God, it is enough that Thou hast hitherto borne with me; I do not wish that Thou shouldst wait longer for me to give myself wholly to Thee. Thou hast called me many times to have done with this world, and to give myself all to Thy love. Now Thou turnest to me in order to have me call unto Thee; behold me, receive me into Thy arms, while at this moment I abandon myself wholly to Thee. O spotless Lamb, who at Calvary was sacrificed on a cross for me, wash me first with Thy blood, and pardon all the injuries that Thou hast received from me; and then inflame me with Thy holy love. I love Thee above everything; I love Thee with all my heart. And what object can I find in the world more worthy of love than Thou art, and which has loved me more?

O Mary, mother of God, and my advocate! pray for me; obtain for me a true and lasting change of life. In thee I trust.

EXAMINATION

On Sinful Actions

Have I had the unutterable misfortune to commit a mortal sin since my last retreat? Have I done penance for it? Have I habitually committed venial sins? with knowledge and deliberation? Have I made peace with my faults? made no serious effort to amend? or were they faults of human frailty? resulting from a want of recollection? from inadvertence? from a want of humility and mortification? were they public faults? Against the commandments, my holy vows, or my Rule? Did I give scandal? Have my faults grown into bad habits? of pride? selfishness? uncharitableness? immodesty? Have I allowed my tongue to offend or injure? Have I been disobedient? What is the cause of my daily faults? Have I really become lax? Should I say that some one else were lax that has been as negligent as I have been?

Has the work and suffering of the past year disheartened me? Have I forgotten that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence"? Am I willing now to begin in real earnest? Am I heartily sorry for all my sins? Am I resolved to work in real earnest for the honor and glory of God? to follow my Saviour with my daily cross? out of love for Him who has suffered so much for me? to do penance for all my sins, which caused Him so much suffering?

Have I truly repented of my sins? confessed them as I ought? Have I made reparation for my disobedience and uncharitableness? ought I not to do so now? Does my sorrow spring from the love of God? Am I sorry for my sins only because I do not wish to go to hell and to lose heaven?

Does God not deserve that I be truly converted to Him? Shall I refuse to give Him my heart? Shall I show Him my love and gratitude by making this retreat well? Will this really be the foundation of a holy and hidden life?

Protestation for a Happy Death. (See p. 77.)

HYMN

Invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary

(From St. Alphonsus)

Haste, my Mother, run to help me;
 Mother, haste, do not delay.
 See from hell the envious serpent
 Comes my troubled soul to slay.

Oh! his very look affrights me,
 And his cruel rage I fear.
 Whither fly if he attacks me?
 See him, see him coming near!

Lo! I faint away with terror,
 For if yet thou dost delay,
 He will dart at me his venom;
 Then, alas, I am his prey.

Cries and tears have nought availed me,
 Spite of all, I see him there;
 Saints I call till I am weary,
 Still he stands with threat'ning air,

Now his mighty jaws are open,
 And his forked tongue I see;
 Oh! he coils to spring upon me—
 Mother! hasten, make him flee.

Mary! yes, the name of Mary
Strikes with dread my cruel foe,
Straight he flees, as from the sunbeam
Swiftly melts the winter's snow.

Now he's gone, but do thou ever
Stay beside me, Mother dear;
Then the hellish fiend to tempt me
Nevermore will venture near.

THE THIRD DAY
The Day of Knowledge

Dedicated to the Spirit of Knowledge

Disposition.—Docility.

Motto.—“What I am in the sight of God, that I am and nothing more.”—ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI.

The Special End of this day's exercises is to discover how far the eternal truths have influenced the soul to strive after the CHRISTIAN IDEAL in daily life, and how the soul appears in the sight of God.

Reading.—The special obligations of a member of your Order, from your Rules.

PRAYER TO OBTAIN THE GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE

HOLY Spirit, divine consoler, I adore Thee as my true God, just as I adore God the Father and God the Son. I bless Thee by uniting myself to the hymns of praise that Thou dost receive from the angels and the seraphs. I offer Thee my whole heart, and I render Thee heartfelt thanks for all the benefits that Thou hast bestowed and dost unceasingly bestow upon the world. Thou who art the author of all supernatural gifts, who didst enrich with immense favors the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of God, I beseech Thee to visit me by Thy grace and Thy love, and to grant me the gift of knowledge in order that I may be able to know well the things of God, and that, enlightened by Thy instructions, I may

steadily walk in the way of my eternal salvation.

One *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, and *Glory be to the Father* three times.

THOUGHTS AND EJACULATIONS

Here am I, O Lord; do with me what Thou wilt.
Let me die rather than again offend Thee.

Grant that I may overcome all things to please Thee.

I desire to die for Thee who didst die for me.

My Jesus, make me all Thine before I die!

O Mary, draw me entirely to God.

FIRST MEDITATION

The Thought of Death

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

THE thought of death urges us strongly to do two things: to avoid sin and to practise virtue. The thought of death is the best protection against two sins that are the source of many others: they are pride and sensuality. Earnest consideration of death will dry up these sources.

a. Pride consists in overestimating oneself. Pride manifests itself by hiding our faults from us and making us rebellious against almighty God. Pride makes us despise our neighbor and leads us to many sins against charity. And yet St. James asks, "What is your life? It is a vapor which appeareth for a little while and afterward shall vanish away" (iv. 15). And the Wise Man says:

“What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow and like a post that runneth on” (*Wis.* v. 8-9).

b. Another fruitful source of sin is sensuality, or the desire to satisfy the body in its low desires, to satisfy those gratifications after which it continually hankers. Whoever gives way to these inclinations worships his body and sacrifices everything to it. He pampers it, gratifies it by laziness and comfort, by over-indulgence in sleep, inordinate care, by gluttony, intemperance, inordinate and particular friendships, and finally by immodesty and immorality.

The best remedy for both these sins is the thought of death. Yes, death alone can tell us what we are. Death alone can tell us what we shall be a few years hence. Now you are in excellent health, now perhaps you are gifted, learned in the arts and sciences, yet you rebel against almighty God and despise your neighbor. The thought of death tells man that he is but dust and ashes, that he “shall shortly wither away as grass and as the green herbs shall quickly fall” (*Ps.* xxxvi. 2); that “the wages of sin is death,” that “God hath abolished the memory of the proud and hath preserved the memory of them that are humble in mind” (*Ecclus.* x. 21). “For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in the flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting” (*Gal.* vi. 8).

“Remember,” my soul, “thy last end and thou shalt never sin.” Pride is the root of all sin. Sensuality is intimately associated with it. Death tells thee that thou hast nothing of thyself in which to glory. All thou hast that is not a gift of God is

thy sin. And surely of this thou ought not to boast. Do, then, not overestimate thy own gifts, nor glory in them as if thou hadst not received them from God.

The thought of death, that it will bring thy body to corruption, ought to inspire thee to serve God alone, to use thy body for His glory, but never to indulge it inordinately. Care for it in order that thou mayest use it in the service of God and work for the good of thy neighbor, but never pamper it for its own sake. Thy body will soon collapse and become an object of horror and disgust. "Under thee shall the moth be strewed and worms shall be thy covering" (*Is.* xiv. 11).

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I thank Thee for the thought of death. May it ever be before my eyes to make me know myself as I am in Thy sight, for "I really am only what I am in Thy sight and nothing more" (St. Francis of Assisi). Drive pride far from my mind and heart. I desire to acknowledge my entire dependence upon Thee. I desire to know Thee, to love Thee, to serve Thee. I desire to love my neighbor as myself for love of Thee. This I can not do when blinded by pride. Make me often think of the lesson which death teaches me in regard to my body. Impress deeply upon my mind that I must die, though I know not when, nor where, nor how. I desire to lead a mortified life upon earth that I may be worthy of enjoying Thee forever in heaven. Help me to restrain my eyes. Seal Thou my lips. Give me the strength to rule my body and never become the slave of its inclinations. I repent of my pride in the past. I detest my want of mortification. The future shall be for me with Thy grace a life of humble service in

Thy holy cause, a life of constant penance to keep me entirely in subjection to Thee.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

The frequent thought of death, of the close of earthly existence, is beneficial in another way to man. By it the Holy Ghost continually spurs men on in the performance of good works and to the frequent and conscientious use of the means of grace. With the last pulsation of his heart ends for man the time in which the fruits of the Redemption are applied to him in the form of grace. With death ends the time of grace, the time of merit. During life the Holy Spirit places most wonderful graces at our disposal. By using them conscientiously and with great fervor it is entirely in our power to make them bear fruit for eternity. We can daily gather treasures that will have an eternal reward. But the time will pass during which the Holy Spirit will permit us to draw at pleasure from the channels of divine grace. The night will come in which no man can work. Death will close our opportunities and seal our lot forever. It would therefore seem that the proper, the only reasonable thing for Religious to do would be to work with untiring zeal, with great fidelity in using the means of grace which Holy Church places at their disposal. The thought of death will enable them to assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass with all reverence and devotion, to receive the sacrament of Penance frequently with a contrite and humble heart, to receive their sacramental Lord with a heart burning with charity. It will enable them always to have eternity in view.

My soul, has the thought of death inspired thee thus? Hast thou sought always to co-operate with the grace the Holy Spirit lavished upon thee? Hast thou sought to earn new graces, to increase continually in merit and the love of God? Or hast thou been cold and indifferent? Hast thou received the great means of grace through routine, rather than through an earnest desire for heavenly things? Hast thou become negligent in thy preparation, careless in the use of the means of grace? Time is passing quickly, and beware, my soul, lest thou arrive unexpectedly at that place where it is written: "The night cometh when no man can work" (*John* ix. 4). How bitter will thy departure then be! How painful the thought, the remembrance of thy bad, negligent use of the means of grace. "Hasten the time, and remember the end, that they may declare Thy wonderful works" (*Ecclus.* xxxvi. 10). "O that they would be wise and understand, and would provide for their last end" (*Deut.* xxxii. 29).

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

I repent, O God, of all my past negligence, of all my indifference. Would that I had always the salutary thought of death before me. Would that I had always judged of things as I shall judge them in the hour of death. I thank Thee, O God, that the time of sowing, the time of grace, the time of merit, has not yet drawn to an end. I desire to live henceforth only for Thee, only for Thy service. I will live entirely in conformity with Thy holy will. I will co-operate diligently with Thy holy grace. I will prepare with great fervor for the reception of the holy sacraments. I will be as patient in suffering and affliction as I would desire to be and to have been at the hour of death.

Give me Thy help, for without Thee I can do nothing. I desire to become a living copy of Christ, my Saviour. I desire that He shall live anew in me. What time of life yet remains to me I will spend in works of penance, in fervent prayer, in works of charity.

Resolution

I will ask myself frequently in course of the day: "How wouldst thou do this at the hour of death? Will the thought of this action then be a consolation or a pain to Thee? Wilt thou at the hour of death lay as much stress on this affair as now?" Especially at night will I examine my works in this true mirror of the soul. O Lord, "Let my soul die the death of the just and my last end be like to them" (*Num.* xxiii. 10).

Mary, my mother, help me to die a good death.

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

The Science of the Saints

(From St. Alphonsus)

There are two kinds of sciences upon earth, one heavenly, the other worldly. The heavenly is that which leads us to please God, and makes us great in heaven. The worldly is that which moves us to please ourselves, and to become great in the world. But this worldly science is folly in the sight of God. "The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God." It is folly, for it makes fools of those who cultivate it; it makes them fools, and like brutes, for it teaches them to gratify their carnal appetites like beasts. St. John Chrysostom wrote, "We call him a man who preserves com-

plete the image of a man; and what is the image of a man? to be rational." Hence it is, that if a brute were ever to act according to reason, we should say that such a brute acted like a man; so we say that a man who acts upon sensual appetites and contrary to reason acts like a brute.

But to return to the human and natural knowledge of earthly things, what do men know of all things which they have studied? What are we but so many blind moles, who, besides the truths which we know by faith, know only by means of our senses, or by conjecture; so that everything is uncertain and fallible. What writers on such subjects, however applauded they may be, have escaped the criticism of others? But the evil is that "the knowledge of the world puffs us up," and makes us proud and prone to despise others—a pernicious fault, for, as St. James says: "God resisteth the proud and gives grace to the humble."

"Oh, that they would be wise and understand, and know the latter end." Oh, if men would act by reason and the divine law, and then would learn to provide, not so much for a temporal existence, which speedily ends, as for eternity, they would assuredly not occupy themselves in the attainment of any knowledge, except such as aids them in obtaining eternal happiness and avoiding eternal pains.

St. John Chrysostom advises us to walk among the tombs of the dead, in order to learn the knowledge of salvation. Oh, what a school of truth are the sepulchers for learning the vanity of the world! Let us go to the tombs. "There," said the saint, "there I see nothing but corruption, bones, and worms." From all these skeletons which I see, I can not tell which belonged to the

ignorant and which to the learned. I only see that with death all the glories of the world ended for them. What remained to a Cicero, a Demosthenes, an Ulpian? "They have slept their sleep and have found nothing in their hands." Blessed is he who has received from God the science of the saints. The science of the saints is to know the love of God. How many in the world are well versed in literature, learning, and science, but what will all this profit them if they know not the love of God? "Blessed is he," said St. Augustine, "who knows God, even if he knows nothing else." He that knows God and loves Him, though he be ignorant of what others know, is more learned than the learned who know not how to love God.

"Let the unlearned arise, and seize upon heaven!" cried the same St. Augustine. How learned were St. Francis of Assisi, St. Pascal, St. John of God! Ignorant in worldly knowledge, but well skilled in that which is divine. "Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes." By the wise we are here to understand the worldly-wise, who labor for the possessions and glories of the world, and think little of eternal joys. And by babes we are to understand simple souls, who know little of worldly wisdom, but devote all their care to pleasing God.

Let us not, then, envy those who know many things; let us only envy those who know how to love Jesus Christ; and let us imitate St. Paul, who said that he desired to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. Happy are we if we attain to the knowledge of the love which Jesus crucified had for us, and from this book of love attain to the love of Him. O Thou, who art my true and perfect lover, where shall I find one who

has so loved me as Thou hast! During my life that is past, I have lost my time in attaining the knowledge of many things which have profited my soul nothing, and I have thought nothing of knowing how to love Thee. I see that my life has been lost. I perceive that Thou callest me to Thy holy love; behold, I leave all; from this day forth, my one thought shall be to please Thee, my highest good. I give myself wholly to Thee; accept me; give me help to be faithful to Thee; I desire to be no longer my own, but all, all Thine.

O Mother of God! do thou also help me with thy prayers.

OPTIONAL READING

On Detachment from Self-Esteem

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

A true Religious must be altogether detached from all self-esteem. Many leave their country, home, and friends, but carry with them a certain esteem of themselves; but this is the most hurtful attachment of all. The greatest sacrifice we can make to God is to give Him not only goods, pleasures, and home, but ourselves also, by leaving ourselves. This is that denying of self which Jesus Christ recommended above all to His followers. And for this self-denial, it is necessary that every one should first trample under foot all self-esteem, by desiring, or at least embracing, every imaginable contempt which he may meet with in religion; as, for example, to see others, whom perhaps he thinks less deserving, preferred to himself, or to be considered unfit to be employed, or only employed in lower and more laborious occupations. He should know that in the

house of God those charges are the highest and the most honorable which are imposed by obedience. God forbid that any one should seek for or aspire to any office or charge of pre-eminence! This would be a strange thing in religion, and he would be noted as proud and ambitious, and as such deserve to be put to penance, and especially mortified in this point. Better would it be, that a Religious Order should be destroyed, than that there should enter into it that accursed pest of ambition, which, when it enters, disfigures the most exemplary Communities and the most beautiful works of God.

A true Religious should even feel consoled in spirit when he sees himself looked down on by his companions. I say consoled in spirit; nor need a subject be uneasy when he feels resentment in his lower nature; it is enough that the spirit embraces it, and that he rejoices at it in the superior part of his soul.

Thus also seeing himself continually reprimanded and mortified by all, not only by superiors, but also by equals and inferiors, he should heartily and with tranquil mind thank those who thus reprimand him and have the charity to admonish him, answering that he will be more attentive not to fall into that fault again. One of the greatest desires of the saints in this world was to be contemned for the love of Jesus Christ. This it is that St. John of the Cross asked for, when Jesus Christ appeared to him with a cross on His shoulder and said, "John, ask from me what thou wilt," and St. John answered, "Lord, to suffer and be despised for Thee."

Theologians teach, with St. Francis de Sales, that the highest degree of humility we can have is to be pleased with abjections and humiliations.

And in this consists also one of the greatest merits that we can have with God. Some contempt or affront suffered in peace for the love of God is of greater value in His sight than many disciplines and fasts.

It is necessary to know that to suffer contempt either from superiors or from companions is a thing unavoidable even in the most holy Communities. Read the lives of the saints, and you will see how many mortifications were encountered by St. Francis Regis, St. Francis of Jerome, Father Torres, and others. The Lord sometimes permits that even between saints there should exist, though without their faults, certain natural antipathies, or at least a certain diversity of character between subjects of the greatest piety, which will cause them to suffer many contradictions. At other times false reports will be spread and believed; God Himself will permit this, in order that the subjects may have occasion to exercise themselves in patience and humility.

In a word, he will gain little in religion and lose much who can not quietly put up with contempt and contradiction; and, therefore, he who enters religion to give himself entirely to God should be ashamed not to know how to bear contempt when he appears before Jesus Christ, who was filled with opprobrium for love of us. Let every one be attentive to this, and resolve to be pleased in religion with all objections, and to prepare himself to suffer many of them, for without the least doubt he will have many to bear. Otherwise, the disquiet caused by contradictions and contempt, badly endured, might trouble him so much as to make him lose his vocation and drive him out of religion. Oh, how many have lost their vocation on account of such impatience in

humiliations! But of what service to the Order or to God can he be who does not know how to bear contempt for His sake! And how can any one ever be said to be dead according to that promise which he made to Jesus Christ, on entering religion, to die to himself, if he remain alive to resentment and disquiet when he sees himself humbled? Out of the Order with such subjects, so attached to their own esteem—out with them! It is well for them to go as soon as possible, that they may not also infect the rest with their pride. In religion every one should be dead, and especially to his own self-esteem; otherwise it is better for them not to enter, or to depart if they have already entered.

SECOND MEDITATION

The Religious at the Particular Judgment

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

BRING vividly before thy mind that thou art on thy deathbed and that thou seest thyself battling with death. See thy pale, sunken cheeks, thy fading eyes, that have lost all their luster, thy colorless lips, thy half open mouth; observe the deep, rattling noise of thy breath! See the cold sweat gathering on thy brow and slowly trickling down thy cheek! See thy cold, clammy hands from which all warmth, all strength, all life have departed! See thy breast heave and sink, to retard thy parting life with a few breaths! After a few minutes thou wilt have breathed thy last.

Thy name will be entered on the death register and thy body lowered into a deep, dark, narrow grave.

The world with all its allurements, with all its enjoyments, exists for thee no longer. Imagine that, abandoned and alone, thou art fighting this last battle of life. All that thou canst hear is the ticking of the clock and the death-rattle in thy breast. But thy mind is clear at this very moment. Thou art in the full possession of thy faculties. Thou art even looking into eternity, for material things no longer make any impression on thy senses. "After death the judgment." Ask thyself now, by the faint glimmer of the blessed candle which is lighting thy way to eternity, the following questions:

What dost thou now think of thy obligations? When thou wert in good health thou wert inclined to make light of the obligations thy calling imposed upon thee. They came around so regularly and they filled thee with repugnance. Didst thou not become careless and perform them through routine? And yet these obligations were of great importance in the eyes of God. What dost thou now think by the light of the candle, of the manner in which thou didst perform them? Consider each of thy obligations? What of thy faith, thy patience, thy humility, thy charity, thy zeal for the good of thy neighbor and the glory of God? What dost thou now think of thy many faults, thy deliberate sins? How easily didst thou permit thy self-love to deceive thee. What dost thou now think of those "trifles" of thy words, thy jokes, thy recreations, thy uncharitable actions. What dost thou now think of thy good works, of thy works of penance, of thy mortifications of the eyes, of the tongue? What dost

thou now care for the applause of the world? Ah, how hast thou changed; thou seest things in a different light, thou judgest them in a different way.

Yes, my soul, what dost thou now, on the threshold of eternity, think of the sufferings, of the tribulations of life? What dost thou now think of the value of thy own sufferings? Hast thou made them fruitful for eternity by patience and resignation?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God of my soul, how different do things appear at this awful moment from what I often considered them through life. How imperfect have been my works! How poor and mean at times my acts of virtue, how imperfect my intentions! How negligent have I been to do Thy holy will when I knew it well. How easily have I excused myself under any slight pretext! How careless have I been to promote Thy honor and glory. How often have I sought rather my own renown than Thine. How often have I been guided by the false maxims of the world. How often have I been influenced by human respect. How indulgent have I been of myself and, alas, how hard-hearted and cruel at times with my neighbor. O God, I repent of my sinfulness. I detest my innumerable faults and imperfections. If it be possible, I willingly sacrifice myself to repair Thy honor and glory. If it be still possible that in spite of all I love Thee, I now wish to love Thee in a way that will make amends for all my carelessness and indifference. In Thy infinite mercy let me die in Thy love, because I still hope in the goodness of God, who pardoned the dying thief upon the cross. Let me breathe my dying breath in

conformity with Thy holy will. O Mary, mother of Jesus, advocate of the most abandoned, in thy hands I place my cause. Take me under Thy protection, and save me in virtue of the sword of sorrows that pierced thy soul beneath the cross of thy dying Son.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

That final struggle is over. The sword of death has done its work. The body is cold and silent. The eyes are lifeless and glassy. The mouth is still open. The heart has ceased to beat. Eternity has begun. As soon, my soul, as thou leavest the body, thou standest in the awful presence of thy Lord and Master. Jesus Christ came upon earth for love of thee. He lived and labored and suffered and died for thee. With the last drop of His sacred blood He redeemed thee from the jaws of hell and gave thee graces innumerable to earn an eternal crown. Step forward now and give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer. Art thou prepared to give an account of every thought of thy mind, every desire of thy heart, every word that thou didst ever utter, every action that thou didst ever perform? Art thou prepared to have the angels scrutinize thy every intention, thy every motive?

Alas, my soul, how hast thou deceived thyself. Didst thou not know that God alone could make thee happy, that thou owest all to Him, that thou shouldst serve Him alone? How negligent, how careless, hast thou been with the holy sacraments of the Church. How indifferent hast thou been in the practice of virtue. How cold has been

thy faith and devotion. How dead thy hope, how lame and delusive thy humility. How little didst thou care for the cross, though Jesus thy Saviour, thy present Judge, died upon it for thy sake. How often by thy acts hast thou denied Him before men, though thy Saviour had said, "He that denieth Me before man, him also will I deny before My Father who is in heaven." Thou hast vowed to strive after perfection, and, alas, hast been so inconstant, so dissipated in mind, so neglectful of thy interior, so attached to things of the world and often so rebellious to God's holy will.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I thank Thee that this is an anticipated judgment. I thank Thee that I am yet among the living and have not died an unprepared death. I understand full well that Thou lovest me with an infinite love, since Thou still permittest me to live after all my negligence in Thy service. I see full well that I must change in many things if ever I wish to die a tranquil death. O holy Spirit, I thank Thee for having enlightened me in this hour. "O death, thy sentence is good" (*Ecclus.* xli. 3). I repent with all my heart of all my past sins. I detest them with all the powers of my soul. I grieve sincerely for having been so remiss, so negligent in doing good. My prayers, my meditations, how hurriedly have they been made, and at times not made at all. How often have I neglected to mortify my eyes, my tongue, my appetite, even when I felt in conscience bound to do so! I detest this lukewarmness. My only real consolation now is the little good that I have done during life, the little fidelity that I have shown in God's service. Would

that I had served God with all my heart, with all my strength. I might then exclaim with St. Peter Alcantara, "O blessed penance, O blessed penance, that has brought me so great a reward!"

Resolution

I will often recall to mind the words of St. Augustine, "Let us live well lest we die an unhappy death." In the days of health I will strive to produce such works as will render death and judgment light to me. "I cried to Thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my hope, my portion in the land of the living. . . . Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Thy name" (*Ps. cxli. 6, 8*). O Jesus, by the judgment Thou didst endure for me on the cross, help me to judge myself severely during life that I may die a holy death and thus anticipate the rigors of Thy judgment. O Mary, my mother, intercede for me. Help me to live well that I may be with thee for ever in heaven.

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

Our Safety Consists in Prayer

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

Prayer is not only useful, but necessary for salvation; and therefore God, who desires that we should be saved, has enjoined it as a precept. "Seek, and it shall be given you." It was an error of Wyclif, condemned by the Council of Constance, to say that prayer was a subject of divine counsel to us, and not of command. "*It is necessary*"—not it is advisable or fitting—"always to pray." Where-

fore Doctors of the Church always say that he can not be held innocent of grievous sin who neglects to recommend himself to God, at least *once a month*, and at all times when he finds himself assaulted by severe temptation.

The reason of this necessity of recommending ourselves often to God arises from our inability to do any good work, or to entertain any good thoughts of ourselves alone. "Without Me ye can do nothing." "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves." Therefore, St. Philip Neri said that he despaired of himself. On the other hand, St. Augustine wrote that "God desires to bestow His graces, but only on those who ask for them. And especially," said the saint, "God only gives the grace of perseverance to those who seek it."

It is a fact that the devil never ceases to go about seeking to devour us, and therefore we need ever to defend ourselves by prayer. "Continual prayer is necessary for men," said St. Thomas. And Jesus Christ first taught us, "We must always pray, and not faint." Otherwise, how can we resist the perpetual temptations of the world and the devil? It was the error of Jansenius, condemned by the Church, that the observance of certain precepts was impossible, and that sometimes grace itself fails to render it possible to us. "God is faithful," said St. Paul, "who does not suffer us to be tempted above our strength." Yet He desires, that when we are tried we should have recourse to Him for help to resist. St. Augustine wrote, "The law is given that grace may be sought; grace is given that the law may be fulfilled." Granting that the law can not be obeyed by us without grace, God has yet given us the law, in order that we may seek

the grace to fulfil it. All this was well expressed by the Council of Trent in these words: "God does not command things that are impossible, but in commanding us He counsels thee both to do what thou canst and seek for aid for what thou canst not do, and He helps thee that thou mayest be able to do it."

Thus, the Lord is ever ready to give us His help, in order that we may not be overcome by temptation; but He only gives this help to those who fly to Him in the time of trial, and especially in temptations against chastity, as the Wise Man wrote: "Because I knew that thus only could I preserve continence, if God should grant it, therefore I went to the Lord and besought Him." Let us rest assured that we can never overcome our carnal appetites if God does not give us help, and this help we can not have without prayer; but if we pray we shall assuredly have power to resist the devil in everything, and the strength of God shall strengthen us; as St. Paul says, "I can do all things through God who strengtheneth me."

It is also most useful to us, in order to obtain divine grace, that we should have recourse to the intercession of the saints, who have great power with God, especially for the benefit of those who have a particular devotion to them. And this is not a mere devotion dependent upon our private fancy, but it is a duty, as St. Thomas writes, that the divine law requires that we mortals should receive the aid which is necessary for our salvation, through the prayers of the saints. Especially does this aid come through the intercession of Mary, whose prayers are of more value than those of all the other saints; so much so, indeed, that, as St. Bernard says, it is through her in-

tercession that we have access to Jesus Christ, our mediator and saviour. "Through thee we have access to the Son, O thou giver of grace, and mother of our salvation! that through thee He may receive us, who through thee was given for us." This is the teaching of the Church. Hence St. Bernard also says, "Let us seek for grace, and let us seek it through Mary; for he that seeks, finds, and can not be deceived."

Let us, then, pray, and pray with confidence, says the Apostle. Let us go boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in time of need. Jesus Christ now sits on the throne of grace to comfort all who fly to Him, and says, "Seek, and it shall be given you." On the day of judgment He will also sit upon His throne, but it will be a throne of judgment. What madness, then, it is in those who, having it in their power to be delivered from their miseries by going to Jesus, now that He sits on His throne of grace, wait till He becomes their judge, and will not avail themselves of His mercy. Now He says to us, that whatever we ask of Him, if we have confidence, He will give us. And what more can one friend do to another to show his love than say, "Seek what thou wilt, and I will give it to thee." St. James adds more, and says, "If any man need wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives to all men abundantly, and reproaches not, and it shall be given him." By "wisdom" is here meant the knowledge of the salvation of the soul; to have this wisdom, we must seek of God the graces necessary to bring us to salvation. And will God give them? Most assuredly He will give them, and in still greater abundance than we ask them. Let us observe also the words, "He does not re-

proach us." If the sinner repents of his sins, and asks salvation of God, God does not that which men do, who reproach the ungrateful with their ingratitude, and deny them what they ask, but He gives it to them willingly, and even more than they beg for. If, then, we would be saved, we must have our lips ever opened to pray, and say, "My God, help me; my God, have mercy on me; Mary, have mercy." When we cease to pray, we are lost. Let us pray for ourselves. Let us pray for sinners, for this is most pleasing to God. Let us also pray daily for the holy souls in purgatory; those holy prisoners are most grateful to all who pray for them. Whensoever we pray, let us seek grace of God through the merits of Jesus Christ, for He Himself assures us that whatever we ask in His name, He will give it to us.

O my God! this is the grace which, above all others, I ask through the merits of Jesus Christ. Grant that throughout my life, and especially in time of temptation, I may recommend myself to Thee, and hope for Thy help through the love of Jesus and Mary. O holy Virgin! obtain for me this grace on which depends my salvation.

PARTICULAR EXAMINATION

On Docility to the Holy Spirit

Do I realize:

That the Holy Spirit is a great teacher?

That He is both able and willing to aid me?

That in His goodness He desires to teach me the knowledge of myself?

That in His love He is more zealous for my progress even than I am myself?

That He expects a great docility on the part of His disciples?

That docility is necessary for me to know myself as God knows me?

Have I been attentive and willing to learn from this teacher?

Do I really desire to know all?

Am I resolved to profit by His lights?

Say an act of contrition for faults, an act of thanksgiving for lights, and renew sentiments of docility. Resolve to profit by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

THIRD MEDITATION

The Religious at the General Judgment

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

ON THE Last Day, when the works of man shall have been destroyed, the hour of judgment will approach. In the silence of death, the sound of the trumpet of resurrection will suddenly be heard. The moment has arrived when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, "Arise, ye dead and come to judgment." "And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life, but they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment" (*John* v. 29). "And many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (*Dan.* xii. 2). O what a sight! To see all mankind arise from the grave and be conducted by the angels of God to the place of judgment. There they stand, all peoples, all

nations that have ever lived—all the children of Adam. The sign of the Son of man, the cross, is shining like a flame of fire above them. All earthly greatness now disappears. There is no more distinction of rank, of birth, of riches, of genius, or of talent. All this has come to an end forever. All that is terrestrial has ceased, all vanity has disappeared. The mists of time, which represented things in a false color, have vanished. The sunlight of divine truth has shed its rays upon the assembled multitude. There kings stand among peasants, millionaires among beggars, the learned among the ignorant, religious, priests, and bishops among the laity! Earthly preference has come to an end. “In that day a man shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold” (*Is. ii. 20*).

Look, above that surging multitude the cross of the Redeemer is shining brightly. “Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven” (*Matt. xxiv. 30*). The cross and the science of the cross remain, but all human systems and institutions have vanished. The teaching of the cross alone survives the world, and according to this teaching the world will now be judged.

My soul, thou also art among that vast throng. Thou art come to be publicly judged according to the doctrine of the cross. Where is now that prominence, that greatness, that blind pretension which thou hast fondly cherished? What a shocking revelation is this to thee who hast sought the applause of the world? What does it profit thee now to have been prominent during life, to have had the reputation of learning, of wealth and influence? Yes, what art thou now, denuded of all with which nature and art, rank and learning invested thee? Nothing but a poor creature, less

perhaps than some poor beggar whom thou didst despise during life!

O think of thyself, my soul! Dost thou not lay by far too much stress upon external appearances, which do not increase thy true value? How vain is now the praise of the world? Dost thou now understand those words of thy Saviour: "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Behold, the watchword of the Saviour is written upon the cross: "Humility, penance, self-denial." Has this, alas, been thy rule of life, the principle of thy conduct? Or hast thou been often influenced by pride, gratification, and indulgence? Examine thy motives, judge them according to the commandments of God and the precepts of Holy Church. Weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary. Measure them by thy holy Rule. How far have the principles of the saints or the maxims of the world guided thee?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God of my soul, well do I now understand the words of St. Francis of Assisi: "I am, what I am before God and nothing more." Alas, this has not always been my practice, or rather the principle of my conduct. How often have I deceived myself and made others think me better, more learned, more gifted than I really was! How often have I acted through pride, through love of ease and comfort, through human respect, through negligence, than from love of Thee! Oh, I repent of all my worldliness with all my heart. In the future I desire to live entirely for Thee. The watchword of my Saviour, "Humility, penance, and self-denial," shall henceforth be the principle of my actions. Impress these words

deeply upon my mind, engrave them upon my heart, that they may never leave me. With them I will dispose myself for Thy grace, with them I shall do penance for my sins, with them I shall be enabled to live entirely in conformity with Thy holy will.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Behold, the divine Judge now appears, and at His command the angels separate the good from the bad and place the former to the right but the latter to the left. Oh, what a spectacle will this separation present! It will be a parting of persons, a parting of hearts forever. No opposition will be of any avail. The inflexible will of the divine Judge will separate persons forever.

Upon earth the human race constitutes one great family. It is the wish of the Holy Ghost that all the members of this vast family should be united by the bond of love. Hence the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This fraternal charity must be founded on divine charity. Our love for God must be the source, the foundation, and the guide of our love for our neighbor. If our fraternal charity is not regulated and guided by divine charity, it is no true charity.

On the day of the general judgment all actions that did not spring from divine charity and were not guided by it will have no value. Then the elect only love the elect. They detest and condemn and would gladly undo if possible whatever they did contrary to divine charity during life. Though forgiven in the tribunal of Penance they would gladly lament these misdeeds for all eternity. But God in His goodness screens these re-

pented faults as with a pall of oblivion, and wipes away the penitent's tears.

But the reprobate, those to the left, possess no trace of charity whatever. They detest all their fellow creatures alike and hate God with an eternal hatred. They hate and curse their lives, all the charity they ever performed. This consuming hatred will be their portion forever; it will be the portion of all who die deprived of the grace of God.

O my soul, thou art now face to face with a fundamental truth in the supernatural life. Thou seest that whatever does not proceed from divine charity and is not guided by it will have no value on that awful day. How many actions hast thou performed that were altogether sinful, and therefore destructive of this divine bond of union? How many countless actions didst thou perform that were purely natural of themselves and not supernaturalized by a good intention? Dost thou now see what thou hast neglected by thy indifference? How many of thy works hast thou vitiated by thy mere natural and selfish motives? Dost thou find one action of them in a hundred, yes, in a thousand, that is composed of the unalloyed good of divine charity? How much of thy life hast thou cast away? How little hast thou really given to God even after thou didst come to His service? Behold thou hast yet a short time to amend and bring forth fruits worthy of the living vine of which thou art a branch, worthy of the Holy Spirit who wishes to reproduce in thee the works of God, for "God is love."

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I repent with all my heart of the bad use I have made of my time. Thou hast created

me to love Thee and I have so often forgotten Thee and even offended Thee. Have mercy upon me, I beseech Thee. I trust that Thou wilt be lenient with me. I hope, then, for pardon and the grace to change my life. I desire to love Thee alone during the time that yet remains. I desire to love Thee out of pure love, with a grateful heart for all the blessings which Thou hast bestowed upon me. O help me to be faithful to Thee whilst Thou art my faithful, my best, my only true friend, that I may not have to fear Thee on that great day when all thy creatures will have to appear before Thee, when Thou wilt be the stern Judge of the living and the dead.

Resolution

I will cling to the principle of St. Stanislaus: "I am born for eternity, not for the world; therefore, I will live for eternity and not for time." I will do this especially by a frequent renewal of my good intentions to do all for love of God. "Withhold not, O Lord, Thy tender mercies from me. Thy mercy and Thy truth have always upheld me" (*Ps.* xxxix. 12). O Mary, thou didst understand the emptiness of earthly things better than any other human being; help me by thy influence to despise the fleeting goods of this world, that I may secure an eternal inheritance in heaven.

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

The Necessity of Mental Prayer

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

Mental prayer is in the first place necessary, in order that we may have light to go on the

journey to eternity. Eternal truths are spiritual things that are not seen with the eyes of the body, but only by the reflection of the mind. He that does not meditate does not see them; and thus he advances with difficulty along the way of salvation. And further, he who does not meditate, does not know his failings, and thus, says St. Bernard, he does not detest them; so, also, he does not see the perils of his state, and therefore does not think of avoiding them. But when we meditate, our failings and perils quickly present themselves; and when we see them we seek to remedy them. St. Bernard said that meditation regulates our affections, directs our actions, and corrects our faults.

In the second place, without meditation we have no strength to resist temptation and practise virtue. St. Teresa said that when a man leaves off meditation, the devil has no need of carrying him to hell, for he throws himself into it. And the reason is, that without meditation there is no prayer. God has every willingness to give us graces; but St. Gregory said that before giving them He desires to be asked, and that He is then, as it were, compelled to give them through our prayers. But without prayer we shall have no strength to resist our enemies, and thus shall not obtain perseverance in what is good. Palafox, in his note upon the tenth letter of St. Teresa, wrote thus: "How will the Lord give us perseverance if we do not ask for it? and how shall we ask it without meditation?" While he who practises meditation is "like a tree planted near the running water" (*Ps. i. 3*).

And, further, meditation is the happy furnace in which souls are inflamed with divine love. "In my meditation a fire shall flame out." St. Cath-

erine of Bologna said, "Meditation is the bond which binds the soul to God; the king brought me into the wine-cellar, He fixed His love upon me." This wine-cellar is meditation, in which the soul becomes so inebriated with divine love that it loses, as it were, its sense for the things of the world; it sees only that which pleases its beloved; it speaks only of the beloved; it would only hear of the beloved; every other discourse wearies and troubles it. In meditation, the soul, retiring to converse alone with God, rests upon itself. "He shall sit solitary and hold his peace; because he hath taken it upon himself." When the soul sits—that is, shuts itself up in meditation to consider how worthy is God of love, and how great is the love He bears to it—it then tastes of God, and fills itself with holy thoughts, and detaches itself from earthly affections, conceives great desires for becoming holy, and finally resolves to give itself entirely to God. And where but in meditation have the saints made their most generous resolutions, which have lifted them up to the highest point of perfection?

Let us hear what St. John of the Cross said, speaking of mental prayer: "Here we open our heart, here we learn sweet doctrines, and make ourselves belong wholly to God, reserving nothing, and espousing ourselves to Him." And St. Aloysius Gonzaga said that no one will ever attain a high degree of perfection who is not much given to meditation. Let us, then, earnestly apply ourselves to it, and not leave it for any weariness that we may experience; this weariness which we endure for God will be abundantly recompensed by Him.

Pardon me, O my God, my slothfulness; what treasures of grace have I lost in so often neglect-

ing to meditate! For the future give me grace to be faithful through life in conversing with Thee, with whom I hope to converse forever in heaven. I do not ask Thee to delight me here with Thy consolations; I do not deserve it; it is enough that Thou dost suffer me to approach Thy feet to recommend to Thee my poor soul, which is thus miserable because it has separated itself from Thee. Here, O my crucified Jesus! the sole memory of Thy passion shall keep me detached from earth and united with Thee. O holy Virgin Mary! aid me with thy prayers.

OPTIONAL READING

Detachment from Self-Will

(From St. Alphonsus)

A Religious must altogether renounce his own will, consecrating it entirely to holy obedience. Of all things, this is the most necessary. What does it avail to leave comforts, parents, and honors if one still carries into religion one's own will? In this principally consists the denial of ourselves, the spiritual death, and the entire surrender of ourselves to Jesus Christ. The gift of the heart, that is of the will, is what pleases Him most, and what he wishes from the children of religion. Otherwise, if we do not entirely detach ourselves from our will and renounce it in all, all mortifications, all meditations and prayers, and all other sacrifices will be of little avail. It is, then, evident that this is the greatest merit that we can have before God, and it is the sure and only way of pleasing Him in all things, so that then we can each one of us say what Jesus our

Saviour said: "I do always the things that please Him." Certainly he who in religion lives without self-will may say and hope that in all that he does he pleases God, whether he studies or prays or works, whether he goes to the refectory or to recreation or to rest; for in religion not a step is made, not a breath drawn, but in obedience to the Rule or to Superiors. The world does not know, and even certain persons given to spirituality have little idea, of the great value of a Community life under obedience. It is true that outside of religious Communities there are to be found many persons who do much, and maybe more than those that live under obedience; they preach, they teach, do penance, pray, and fast; but in all this they consult more or less their own will. God grant that at the Day of Judgment they may not have to lament as those mentioned in the Scripture: "Why have we fasted, and Thou hast not regarded; why have we humbled our souls, and Thou hast not taken notice? Behold in the day of your fast your own will is found." On which passage St. Bernard remarks: "Self-will is a great evil, for it is the cause that what is good in itself may be for you no good at all." This is to be understood, when in all these exercises one seeks not God, but oneself. On the contrary, he who does all by obedience is sure that in all he pleases God. The Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus said that she prized her vocation to religion so much principally for two reasons: the first was, that in the monastery she enjoyed always the presence and company of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; and the other was, that there by obedience she belonged entirely to God, sacrificing to Him her own will.

It is related by Father Rodriguez that after the

death of Dositheus, the disciple of St. Dorotheus, the Lord revealed that in those five years he had lived under obedience, though by reason of his infirmities he could not practise the austerities of the other monks, yet by the virtue of obedience he had merited the reward of St. Paul the Hermit, and of St. Antony the Abbot.

He, then, who wishes to persevere in religion must resolve to renounce his own will entirely and to will only what holy obedience wills. God preserve any Religious from ever letting fall from his mouth the words *I will* or *I will not!* But in all things, even when asked by superiors what he desires, he should only answer, "I wish what holy obedience wills." And, provided there is no evident sin, he should in every command imposed on him obey blindly and without examination; because the duty of examining and deciding the doubts belong not to him, but to his superiors. Otherwise, if in obeying he does not submit his judgment to that of the Superior, his obedience will be imperfect. St. Ignatius of Loyola said "that prudence in things of obedience is not required in subjects, but in superiors; and if there is prudence in obeying, it is to obey without prudence." St. Bernard says, "Perfect obedience is indiscreet"; and in another place he says, "For a prudent novice to remain in religion is an impossible thing"; and adding the reason for it, he said: "To judge belongs to the Superior, and to obey, to the subject."

But to make progress in this virtue of obedience, on which all depends, he must always keep his mind ready to do all that to which he feels the greatest repugnance, and, on the contrary, he must be prepared to bear it quietly when he sees that all that he seeks or desires is refused to him.

It will happen that when he wishes to be in solitude, to apply himself to prayer or study, he will be the most employed in exterior occupations. For, though it is true that in religion we lead as much as possible a solitary life when at home, and that for this end there are many hours of silence, the retreat each year, besides daily spiritual exercises, nevertheless, if in an active Institute a Religious is continually employed by obedience, he should content himself with the prayers and exercises of the Community. He must be prepared sometimes to go even without these, when obedience will have him do so, without either excusing himself or being disquieted, being well persuaded of that which St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi was so confident of when she said: "All the things which are done through obedience are but so many prayers."

FOURTH MEDITATION

Object of the General Judgment

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

THE time of harvest (*Matt.* xiii. 30), the great day of the Lord (*Joel* ii. 11), has arrived. The Son of God, surrounded by myriads of angels, has descended to earth with great power and majesty. The angels have divided mankind, the good to the right, and the wicked to the left of the Judge. "Now will the Holy Ghost convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment" (*John* xvi. 8).

God created all things for Himself, for His honor and glory. God is the center, the upholder of all honor; this His very nature demands. Irrational creatures honor Him of necessity. But man should do this of his free will. This is, in one word, man's obligation. "Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is all man" (*Eccles. xii. 13*). But, alas, the contrary is often the case. Many care nothing about God. Others offend Him continually by their sinful lives. Even many Religious, on account of their indifference, fulfil but few of their obligations perfectly. Nay more, they dishonor God by their want of fervor and fraternal charity. And they do this without making reparation during life for the scandal they give. Can the infinite justice of God pass this over in silence? Does His justice not demand a public reparation, even before the same witnesses? Certainly it does, and this takes place on the Last Day. Therefore all now prostrate themselves before the God-Man and confess Him to be the All-Holy to whom all honor and glory is due. They do this crushed by the majesty of the divine Judge. Thus the words of the Apostle are literally fulfilled: "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (*Philipp. ii. 10-11*).

Bear in mind that thou art created to glorify God. Glorify Him thou must, whether thou wilt or not, my soul. Thou wilt either render Him honor and glory during thy earthly career, or thou wilt glorify Him by compulsion on the "great day." If thou glorify Him now, "He will be thy reward exceeding great." If not, thou wilt have

to repair thy sin by a public homage, a public humiliation on the day of final reckoning.

Think often on this, my soul. Live now to solve the one problem of thy life. Look not to the right nor to the left; serve God with all thy heart. Do this freely and joyfully; do it faithfully and constantly; then thou wilt be able to join with all thy heart in the hymn of praise with which the saints will close the world cycle: "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honor, and power, because Thou hast created all things; and for Thy will they were, and have been created" (*Apoc.* iv. 11). But if thou doest it not during thy earthly career, then woe be to thee. "For the great day of the Lord is near . . . A day of wrath . . . a day of calamity and misery . . . And I will distress men . . . Neither shall their silver and their gold be able to deliver them" (*Soph.* i. 15-18).

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God of infinite goodness, thou hast created me for Thy own honor and glory. Thou lovest me with an eternal love and askest me to love Thee in return. Thou hast showered all possible blessings upon me; Thou hast raised me to the supernatural life, and made me an heir of heaven. Thou didst not hesitate to sacrifice Thy only begotten Son for my sake, and now Thou rightly expectest that I should show my gratitude to Thee by loving and serving Thee all the days of my life. All other creatures honor Thee perfectly according to their nature. I alone, who have received so many special blessings, have turned my back upon Thee. And yet this conduct is not only foolish but mad. I must glorify Thee. I must

either glorify Thy goodness and love upon earth, or I must glorify Thy justice before all mankind. O God, every possible motive that I can have tells me to glorify Thy goodness and love during life. I would be the most ungrateful of creatures if I did not do so. I would make myself unhappy for time and for eternity. I repent, O God of love and mercy, of all the disorders of my past life. Would that I could blot them out with my life's blood. With the help of Thy grace I desire to show my gratitude in the future. I am nothing of myself. But I confide in the goodness of Him who died for me upon the cross. I desire to love Thee with all my heart. My whole life shall henceforth be directed solely to Thy greater honor and glory. In future I will live only to love and serve Thee according to Thy holy will. Help me to glorify Thy goodness upon earth, that I may praise Thy infinite perfection with all the just on the day of awful reckoning.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

If God is really the only object worthy of absolute honor, then everything else is worthy of esteem only in so far as it comes from God or is directed to Him. This is especially the case with man. Only such are in truth deserving of honor who honor almighty God. On the contrary, all who do not glorify God, no matter what their rank or position, have no true claim to honor and esteem. At present we find the contrary to be the rule. The good are passed by, even despised at times, but the wicked are praised and honored. But at the general judgment this flagrant injustice will be repaired in a most striking manner.

The good will be brought to light and crowned with honor and glory. But the wicked will be overwhelmed with confusion. Conscious of their disgrace they will call out to the mountains, "Fall upon us," and to the hills, "Cover us" (*Luke* xxiii. 30).

The same reasoning applies to the actions of men. Even the smallest action deserves praise if it be performed for God's honor and glory, in conformity with His holy will. On the contrary, the most brilliant actions are deserving of no recognition if they are not referred to almighty God. At present, alas, man does not always act according to this principle. Consequently, this injustice will be solemnly repaired on the Last Day. On that day every individual act of man will be estimated at its true value and rewarded or punished accordingly. Then will the true servants of God be crowned and glorified and their works receive an eternal reward. Then will the wicked be unmasked and their works overwhelmed with confusion. "For behold...unto you that fear My name, the Sun of justice shall arise...and you shall tread down the wicked when they shall be ashes under the sole of your feet" (*Mal.* iv. 2-3).

O my soul, dost thou understand these great truths, that thou art deserving of honor and recognition only in so far as thou honorest and glorifiest almighty God, and that thy works are deserving of recognition only in so far as they are prompted by divine charity and are directed to God's honor and glory, according to His holy will? Look to thyself, my soul, and see what claim thou and thy works have to a recognition in the past. Look at things as they will appear on the day of general reckoning, when God's honor will

be vindicated and thou receive a just reward.

1. Hast thou been one of those pious and true servants of God, who seek only the glory of God and strive to do His will in all things? If so, thank God.

2. Hast thou been one of those religious politicians who didst receive much honor from men but didst not seek the glory of God alone? If thou belongest to this class thou hast reason to tremble, to fear, to repent.

3. Have thy works really been performed for God's glory, or had they only the appearance of good? Remember that thou mayest deceive men now, but all things will come to light on the last day.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I thank Thee for all the good Thy grace did enable me to perform. I lament that in so many things I sought only the gratification of my own will. I repent of all the dishonor I have caused Thee, of all the honor I have failed to show Thee. I desire to change my life. I desire to live wholly for Thee, to give pleasure to Thee alone, and only to love and praise Thy holy name. I desire to love and serve Thee with the fidelity of the angels, with the perfection of the blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. I do not wish to appear empty-handed before Thee. Bless my good intentions.

Resolution

I resolve to make Thy glory the object of all my actions. I resolve to regulate my life entirely according to Thy holy will. I resolve to live and act only out of love for Thee. "To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor

and glory forever and ever (*Tim.* i. 17). Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory" (*Ps.* cxiii. 9). O Mary, mother of perseverance, help me to be faithful to God till my dying breath.

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

Preparation for Death

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

Death is certain. "It is appointed to all men once to die." On the other hand, the time and manner of our death are uncertain. Therefore Jesus Christ exhorts us, "Be ye ready, for ye know not the hour when the Son of man cometh." He says, "Be ye ready;" and therefore it is necessary not only to be prepared for death when it comes, but we must be ready to embrace it in whatever manner and in whatever circumstances it may come to us. It is, accordingly, very desirable that every one, at least once a month, should make the following act of devotion:

Behold, O my God! I am ready to embrace that death which Thou dost destine for me. From this time I embrace it, and I sacrifice my life in honor of Thy majesty, and also in penance for my sins, being resigned that this flesh, to please which I have so often offended Thee, should be devoured by worms, and be reduced to dust. O my Jesus! I unite the pains and agonies which Thou, my Saviour, didst suffer in Thy death. I accept death with all the circumstances Thou mayest appoint; I accept its time, whether it be near or distant; I accept the manner, whether sudden or not, and that more or less painful illness which may please

Thee. In everything I resign myself to Thy holy will. Give me strength to suffer all with patience.

“What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits He hath given me?” I thank Thee, O my God! first for the gift of faith, declaring that I desire to die a child of the holy Catholic Church. I thank Thee for not having caused me to die when I was in sin, and for having so often pardoned me with so much mercy. I thank Thee for so many lights of grace with which Thou hast sought to draw me to Thy love. I pray Thee to grant me to die after receiving the holy Viaticum, that, united with Thee, I may present myself at Thy tribunal. I do not deserve to hear from Thy mouth, “Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will set thee over many; enter into the joy of thy Lord.” I do not deserve it, for in nothing have I been perfectly faithful to Thee; but Thy death gives me hope that I shall be admitted to heaven, to love Thee there eternally with all my powers.

O my crucified Love! have mercy upon me; look upon me with that love with which Thou didst look upon me from the cross when dying for me. “Remember not the sins of my youth and my ignorance, O Lord.” My sins terrify me, but I am comforted by that cross, on which I see Thee dead through the love of me. “Behold the wood of the cross on which hung the salvation of the world.” I desire to end my life, that I may cease to offend Thee; by the blood that was shed for me, pardon me all my sins before death comes upon me. O blood of the Innocent, wash away the stains of the guilty.

My Jesus, I embrace Thy cross, and kiss the wounds of Thy holy feet, before which I desire to breathe my soul away. Leave me not at the last

hour; "We pray Thee save Thy servants whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood." I love Thee with all my heart, I love Thee more than myself, I repent with all my soul that I have displeased Thee. O Lord! I was lost, but Thou in Thy goodness hast delivered me from the world; receive, then, my soul from this hour, until it leaves the world. Therefore I pray with St. Agatha, "Lord, Thou who hast taken from me the love of this world, receive my soul. In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me not be confounded forever; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."

O holy Virgin! help me at the moment of my death; holy Mary, mother of God, pray for me a sinner, now and at the hour of my death. In thee. O Lady! have I hoped, I shall not be confounded forever. St. Joseph, my protector, obtain for me a holy death. My guardian angel, St. Michael the archangel, defend me from the evil one in the last conflict. My holy patrons, and all saints in paradise, succor me in that last hour. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, be with me at the hour of my death.

EXAMINATION

On the Eternal Truths

Have I acted as though God had given me an indefinite lease on life? Am I aware that I must render an account of my stewardship? that the trial of life, the possibility of merit, ends with death? that I shall be judged in the strictest justice, rewarded or punished according to my deserts? Do I remember that on the day of the general judgment my entire life will be mani-

festes to the entire world? Have I taken more care of my body than of my soul? Do I realize that it does not matter when or where I live as long as I am ever ready to appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ? Am I more concerned about sanctifying the present moment than about living a long life? Do recollection and purity of heart interest me more than food, clothing, and rest? Do I make more effort to walk in the presence of God than to seek distractions? Do I realize that time is quickly passing? that life, even when long, is but a wave on the ocean of eternity? that heaven is my true home? that it depends on me whether I shall enter it? The graces I have received would suffice to make a saint of many others; what have they profited me? How many opportunities of doing good have I let pass by? How I shall regret this negligence when I appear before the judgment seat of God! What will be my confusion then if I have been a slothful Religious! Have I been more concerned about pleasing others than about pleasing almighty God? What will vanity, self-love, ease, and comfort profit me in eternity? Have I profited by the privilege of prayer? made my meditations well? heard Holy Mass devoutly? received holy communion fervently? Am I nearer and dearer to God than I was a year ago? What have I really done for heaven?

“Remember thy last end.”

Protestation for a Happy Death. (P. 77.)

HYMN

The Loving Soul in Desolation*(From St. Alphonsus)*

O dark and solitary grove,
 Whose somber shades impart
 A gloom that makes thee well accord
 With my sad, lonely heart;

Come, bear me friendly company,
 Compassionate my woe,
 And suffer thus without restraint
 My sobs and tears to flow.

I weep, and ever still must weep;
 Nought can my tears restrain,
 Until my God, my best beloved
 At length I find again.

Ah! where art Thou, my only good?
 Ah! whither hast Thou gone?
 Far, far away, thus leaving me
 Disconsolate alone.

Where is that happy time, O God,
 That time of joy and grace,
 When the loved Spouse consoled my heart
 With his sweet heavenly face;

When in the sweetest sleep of soul,
 He aimed the flaming dart,
 Inflicting first a wound of love,
 Then ravishing my heart.

When, all inflamed with love divine,
 My sighs were breaths of fire;
 And while I loved, still more and more
 To love was my desire.

Alas! how soon the cruel storm
 Succeeds the calm so dear!
 The very light of heaven above
 Now fills my soul with fear.

THE DAY OF KNOWLEDGE

Horrors I see and feel around
Where'er I look or go;
And everything inspires with dread,
And adds fresh pain and woe.

Alas! forsaken and alone
Myself I ever see,
And in my bitter agony
No one can comfort me.

Death, death itself with cruel spite
Torments, but does not kill;
The gates are shut; I cannot flee,
I live a captive still.

I fain would flee—but where, to find
A hand to set me free,
If He who life alone can give
Flies far away from me?

O my Belovèd! help Thou me;
If Thou hast gone, return.
See how I sigh disconsolate,
And for Thy presence yearn.

Ah! be at length appeased with me;
My Life! return again;
And since 'tis Thou hast pierced me thus,
Heal Thou my hidden pain.

Good cause hast Thou, dear Lord, I own,
Forever to depart;
Yet see, ah! see, Thy chains remain
Entwined around my heart.

And should there be, alas, no hope
Of pardon yet for me,
Still know, dear Jesus, I am Thine,
And Thine will ever be.

I love Thee, though I seem to be
But hateful in Thy sight;
And I will ever follow Thee
Where'er Thou turn Thy flight.

THE FOURTH DAY

The Day of Resolution

Dedicated to the Spirit of Fortitude

Disposition.—Patience.

Motto.—“Turn ye to Me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn to you” (*Zach.* i. 3).

The Special End of the exercises of this day is to convert the soul entirely to God, and to induce it to resolve on following Jesus, its guide, in imitation of Mary, its model, with a whole heart, that thus it may attain the CHRISTIAN IDEAL.

Reading.—The Obligations of Religious Vows, from your Rules and Constitutions.

PRAYER TO OBTAIN THE GIFT OF FORTITUDE

Holy Spirit, divine consoler! I adore Thee as my true God, just as I adore God the Father and God the Son. I bless Thee by uniting myself to the blessings that Thou dost receive from the angels and seraphs. I offer Thee my whole heart, and I render Thee heartfelt thanks for all the benefits that Thou hast bestowed and dost unceasingly bestow upon the world. Thou, who art the author of all supernatural gifts, and who didst enrich with immense favors the soul of the blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of God, I beseech Thee to visit me by Thy grace and Thy love, and to grant me the gift of Fortitude, in order that I may be able courageously to overcome all the

attacks of the devil, and escape all the dangers of the world that stand in the way of my eternal salvation.

One *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, *Glory be to the Father* three times.

THOUGHTS AND EJACULATIONS

Eternal Father, help me for the love of Jesus.
 I believe in Thee, I hope in Thee, I love Thee!
 Suffer me not to separate myself from Thee!
 My Jesus, Thou alone art sufficient for me!
 I hope to love Thee for eternity, O eternal God.
 I wish to do everything that I know to be Thy pleasure.

O tears of Mary! obtain for me sorrow for my sins.

FIRST MEDITATION

The Mercy of God

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

AMONG all the attributes of God, none appear in so favorable a light upon earth as His boundless mercy for man. Does it not require an abundance of compassion, patience, and longanimity on the part of almighty God to permit the sinner even to exist? And yet the Royal Prophet exclaims: "The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord!" (*Ps.* xxxii. 5.) And St. Paul also adds, "God is rich in mercy" (*Eph.* ii. 4). To obtain a faint idea of the mercy of God consider:

1. The malice of sin. No matter how you regard sin, it certainly provokes the all-just God to

anger and constrains Him to avenge His inalienable rights. The sinful act is a shameful rebellion against the holiest of authorities. Man, who commits the sin, is a miserable worm of the earth, a handful of dust, a creature that depends entirely upon God's goodness for his existence. Man, moreover, commits his sin under the very eyes of God, who can annihilate him by a single word, and that without doing violence to His own happiness. And in spite of all this, God patiently suffers the sinner to go on for years and years. Is that not a most astounding example of the mercy of God?

2. Consider, moreover, that God is not satisfied with permitting the sinner to exist; the Holy Ghost actually pursues the sinner with His love and overwhelms him with favors. He continually offers him pardon on the easiest possible conditions, and even importunes him with His grace, though He gains nothing by the sinner's return.

3. Consider the touching, lovable admonitions with which the Holy Ghost invites in the Scriptures the sinner to return. Think of the touching parable of the Prodigal, of the Good Shepherd. Think of the God-Man, who suffered the most ignominious death for the salvation of sinners. Ah, the mercies of God exceed all His works!

O my soul, is this not an excess of mercy! Canst thou reflect on all this and not exclaim in admiration: "O God, who is like to Thee in charity and compassion?" "Who is like to Thee, O God, who takest away iniquity and passeth by the sin of the remnant of Thy inheritance? He will send His fury in no more, because He delighteth in mercy" (*Mich.* vii. 18). Think of thy past days, my soul, how often, how repeatedly hast thou offended the Holy One? Had He not, then, the power of condemning thee to the eternal pains of hell? Had

He not the right to do so? Couldst thou have complained if He had given His justice full scope? Wouldst thou not have to cry from the depth of hell: "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right" (*Ps. cxviii. 137*). But, no, He has not done it. He bore patiently with all thy insults. Art thou not, then, thyself a living miracle of the mercy of God? Indeed, as many sinners as exist upon earth are so many monuments to His mercy. "He hath not dealt with us according to our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For according to the height of the heavens above the earth; He hath strengthened His mercy toward them that fear Him" (*Ps. cii. 10-11*).

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, is it possible that Thou hast done so much for me and that I have remained ungrateful? Is it possible that Thy only begotten Son died out of pure mercy a sinner for me? Couldst Thou go to such extremes, even when the conversion of a sinner is no gain to Thee? Ah, then, surely Thy mercies exceed all Thy works. If Thou didst not destroy me when I offended Thee, if Thou didst even pursue me with Thy grace and urge me to return when I was resolved to live in sin, I trust that Thou wilt pardon me, now that I detest my sins with all my heart and resolve to return to Thee. But how can I dare to raise my eyes to Thee after offending Thee so often? Only the remembrance of Thy tender mercies can give me confidence. If Thou wilt pardon me I will be mindful of Thy goodness and serve Thee with gratitude all the days of my life. Oh, how was it possible that I should rise up against my God, my creator, my redeemer, my sanctifier, and offend Him in return for all His goodness! A

thousand deaths would not make amends for my sin, and yet Thou pursuest me with Thy grace. Thou constrainest me to return. Ah, henceforth, I shall truly live only for Thee. Thy will shall be my will, Thy pleasure, my pleasure. My only desire shall be to please so good a God.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

To understand the greatness of the mercy of God consider, moreover, that the Holy Ghost not only receives the sinner with open arms when he returns with true repentance, but that He ever rewards the sinner with the most precious graces and overwhelms him with the sweetest consolations. Almighty God could, indeed, act otherwise at the repentance of a sinner. He could rightly impose on him thousands and thousands of years of penance. He could subject him to the most painful and the most humiliating of penances. And if, even under these considerations God would pardon man, the angels of heaven would still marvel at the extent of the divine mercy. We could consider ourselves fortunate to obtain forgiveness even at that price and escape the pains of hell. God could have demanded even more than this; He could have made a condition of our pardon that we die the same painful death that His divine Son died for us. He was not bound to spare us and sacrifice His Son. But nothing like this has happened, "For Thy mercy is great above the heavens" (*Ps. cvii. 5*). At the first sigh of repentance, as soon as the sinner kneels and confesses his sins to God's minister, God gives that prodigal the kiss of peace and remembers no longer his transgressions. He harbors no feeling

of bitterness or revenge toward the sinner. He even bestows special graces upon him after removing the stings of conscience. He shows this fatherly love even to the greatest of sinners. "If your sins be as scarlet they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson they shall be white as wool" (*Is. i. 18*). The good thief after leading a life of sin received pardon and paradise. The publican prayed and was forgiven.

But God even rewards the sinner that is converted from his ways. He restores to him his rights as a child of God and all the merits that he had accumulated before his sin. He crowns His mercy by inviting the repentant soul to the mystic banquet, that love feast, the holy communion, there to be nourished and strengthened by the Bread of Life.

Behold, my soul, the extent of the mercy of God. Cast thyself, then, with childlike confidence into the arms of this merciful Father and exclaim: "The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever!" (*Ps. lxxxviii. 2*). Indeed, my soul, thou oughtest to be grateful for His tender mercy, for going in search of thee when thou didst stray away, for receiving thee when thou didst return, for forgiving thee the entire debt, when He could have demanded that thou shouldst die a painful death, or endure all manner of suffering during thy life to regain His friendship. Repent, then, of even the least imperfection. If thou wilt be faithful the few days that yet remain to thee, the Holy Spirit will crown thee with a diadem of glory and conduct thee to the never-ending joys of heaven after death.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God of mercy, I will not cause Thee to seek me any longer. I return to Thee as the prodigal returned to his father. I beg only to be allowed henceforth to be the lowest of thy faithful servants. "Father, I have sinned before heaven and against Thee; I no longer deserve to be called Thy son." Have pity on me. I desire to love Thee alone in the future. I desire to live in entire conformity to Thy holy will. I desire to love and serve Thee perfectly with Thy help. I desire to act only to please Thee, to glorify Thy mercy.

Resolution

I resolve to redouble my love, to avoid the occasions of sin, to persevere in the service of the God of mercy. "I will praise Thee, O Lord, among the people; I will sing a psalm to Thee among the nations. For Thy mercy is magnified even to the heavens, and Thy truth unto the clouds. Be Thou exalted, O God above the heavens; and Thy glory above all the earth" (*Ps.* lvi. 10-12). "O my God! what mercy hast Thou shown me! I live entirely on Thy mercy"—ST. AUGUSTINE.

Live, Jesus my love, and Mary my hope.

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

Lukewarmness

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

There are two kinds of lukewarmness; one that can be avoided, and the other that can not. We can not avoid that kind which, in the present state of being, is suffered even by spiritual souls, who,

through their natural weakness, can not avoid falling, but who, from time to time, without the full consent of their will, fall into some light fault. From such defect no one is free, because of the corruption of our nature through original sin, without a most special grace, which was granted to none but the Mother of God. God Himself permits these flaws in His saints in order to keep them humble. Often they find themselves without fervor, wearied and wandering in their devout exercises, and at such times of dryness they are more apt to fall into many defects, at least without deliberation. For the rest, they who find themselves in this condition must not leave off their ordinary devotions nor lose courage, nor believe that they have fallen into real lukewarmness; for this is not so. Let them go on with their accustomed exercises, let them detest their defects, let them often renew their resolutions of giving themselves wholly to God, and let them have confidence in Him, for He will comfort them.

There is true lukewarmness to be mourned over when the soul falls into venial sins with a full will, and grieves but little for them, and takes little care to avoid them, asserting that they are trifles of a moment. What! is it nothing to displease God? St. Teresa said to her nuns, "My daughters, may God deliver you from known sins, however small."

Yet people say that such sins do not deprive us of the grace of God. He that says this is in imminent danger of seeing himself one day deprived of divine grace, and in a state of mortal sin. St. Gregory writes, that whoever falls into deliberate venial sins habitually, without feeling pain at it, and without thinking of amending himself, does not stay just where he has fallen, but goes on

headlong over the precipice. "The soul never lies on the spot where it falls." Mortal diseases do not always spring from serious disorders, but from slight ones of long continuance; and thus the fall of certain souls into a state of mortal sin is often to be attributed to the repetition of venial sins, which make the soul so weak, that when it is attacked by any powerful temptation it has no strength to resist, and so it falls.

"He that despiseth little things, by little degrees shall he fall." He that takes no account of trifling falls, will one day find himself upon a precipice. The Lord said, "Because Thou art lukewarm, I am about to vomit thee out of my mouth." This signifies that the soul would be abandoned by God, or at least deprived of those special aids which are necessary to preserve us in a state of grace. Let us pay good heed to this. The Council of Trent condemns those who say that we can persevere in grace without a special help from God: "If any man shall say that the justified can persevere in the justification he has received without the special help of God, let him be anathema." Thus, we can not persevere in grace without a special extraordinary help from God; but this special help God will justly deny to one who makes no account of committing many venial sins with his eyes open. Is God bound to give this special help to one who thinks nothing of voluntarily causing Him continual displeasure? "He that sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly." If we act grudgingly with God, how can we hope that God will act bountifully with us?

Miserable is that soul that is at peace with sin, even when the sin is venial! Such a one will go from bad to worse; for his passions, ever gaining strength, easily blind him; and when a man is

blind, it is easy for him to find himself falling down a precipice when he least expects it. Let us fear to fall into voluntary lukewarmness; for it is like a fever, which does not cause much alarm, but is in itself so malignant that it is cured only with great difficulty.

For the rest, though it is very difficult for a lukewarm person to amend, yet there are remedies, if only he desires amendment. The remedies are: (1) a resolution to escape at all costs, from this miserable state; (2) the removal of the occasion of falling, without which there is no hope of amendment; (3) the constant recommendation of himself to God, with fervent prayer that He may give him strength to escape from this deplorable condition, continued until he finds himself free.

O Lord, have mercy upon me! I see that I have deserved to be abandoned by Thee for the many defects in the service I offer Thee. Miserable am I, for I see myself without love, without confidence, and without desire. O my Jesus! abandon me not; stretch forth Thy powerful hand and raise me from this depth of lukewarmness in which I see that I have fallen. Grant this strength by the merits of Thy passion, in which I trust. O holy Virgin, pray to Jesus for me!

OPTIONAL READING

Temptations and Trials in Religion

(From St. Alphonsus)

When any one has entered religion, however truly he may be called, and though he may have conquered all his passions and his earthly affections, let him not imagine that he will be exempt

from other temptations and trials, such as tediousness, darkness, various fears, which God Himself will send him, in order to establish him more firmly in his vocation. We must remember that even the saints who have loved their vocation the most have sometimes suffered great darkness with regard to it, and that it seemed to them as if they were deceived and would not be able to save themselves in that state. So it happened with St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, and St. Jane Frances de Chantal. But by recommending themselves to God that darkness was dissipated, and they recovered their peace of mind. Thus the Lord tries His most beloved children, as it was said to Tobias: "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." And in the Book of Deuteronomy: "The Lord your God trieth you, that it may appear whether you love Him or no." Let each one, therefore, prepare himself to suffer in religion this darkness. It will sometimes appear to him that he can not bear the observance of the Order; that he will have no more peace of mind, or will not even be able to save his soul. But most of all, every one must be on his guard when the temptation presents specious scruples or pretexts of greater spiritual good, in order to make him abandon his vocation.

The principal remedies in such temptations are two in number, to have recourse to God and to the Superior.

The first is to have recourse to prayer: "Go ye to Him and be enlightened." For as it will not be possible for temptation to overcome him who has recourse to prayer, so he who does not recommend himself to God will surely be overcome by it. And let it be remarked, that sometimes it will not suf-

vice to have recourse to God once, or for a few days, to become victorious. Perhaps the Lord will permit the temptation to continue, even after we have prayed for several weeks, months, and even years; but let us be assured that he who ceases not to recommend himself to God will certainly be enlightened and victorious, and thereafter he will have more peace and be more steadfast in his vocation. Until we have gone through that storm, which for the most part comes over all, let none of us think himself secure. Let it be remarked, however, that in this time of temptation we should not expect to have fervor and sufficient clearness of reason to tranquilize ourselves, for in the midst of this darkness we see nothing but confusion. We have nothing, then, to do but to say to God, "O Lord, help me! O Lord, help me!" and also to have frequent recourse to the blessed Virgin Mary, who is the mother of perseverance, confiding in that divine promise, "Ask, and you shall receive." And it is certain that he who, with the help of divine grace, is victorious in such a combat, finds afterward a double calm and peace in his vocation.

The second remedy, and a principal and necessary one in such temptations, is to communicate to the Superior, or to our spiritual father, the temptation that afflicts us, and this at once, before the temptation becomes strong. St. Philip Neri said that when a temptation is thus manifested it is half vanquished. On the contrary, there is in such a case no greater evil than to conceal the temptation from Superiors; for then, on the one hand, God withdraws His light, because of the little fidelity shown by the subject in not disclosing it, and, on the other hand, whilst the mine is not sprung the temptation gains strength. Hence it

may be held for certain, that he will surely lose his vocation who, when he is tempted against it, does not disclose his temptations.

Let it be understood that in religion the most dangerous temptations that hell can bring against us are those against vocation, in which, if it should succeed and conquer, by that one stroke it will have gained many victories; for when a subject has lost his vocation and left religion, what further good will he be able to do in the service of God? Though the enemy may make him believe that out of religion he will have more peace and be able to do more good, nevertheless let him hold for certain, that as soon as he is out of it he will feel such a remorse in his heart that he will never more have peace. And God grant that such a remorse may not torment him afterward through all eternity in hell, in which he who through his own fault loses his vocation falls very easily. He will be so lukewarm and discouraged in doing good, that he will not even have the courage to raise his eyes to heaven. It will be an easy thing for him to give up prayer altogether, because as often as he begins it he will feel a hell of remorse, hearing his conscience reproach him, saying: "What hast thou done? thou hast abandoned God; thou hast lost thy vocation, and for what? to follow thy own caprice." Let him be certain that he will have to hear this reproach through his whole life, and still more shall he hear it made to him in the hour of his death, when, in sight of eternity, instead of dying in the house of God and in the midst of his brethren in religion he will have to die among strangers. Let Religious always beseech God to let them die rather than to permit that greatest of disgraces, the greatness of which they will better understand, to their greater torment, at

the hour of death, because then there will be no more any remedy for their error. For him, then, who is tempted against his vocation, this is the best meditation that he can make at the time of the temptation, that is, namely, to reflect what torment the remorse of having lost his vocation, and of having to die out of religion, through his caprice, through his own fault, will cause him at the hour of death.

Finally, let him who has entered religion resolve to become a saint, and to suffer every exterior and interior pain, in order to be faithful to God, and not lose his vocation. What a beautiful sight it is to see in religion souls wholly given to God, who live in the world as if out of the world, without any other thought than that of pleasing God.

In religion each one has to live only for eternal life. What happiness for us, if we spend these few days of our life for God! And to this he is especially obliged who has perhaps already spent much of his life in the service of the world. Let us set eternity before our eyes, and then we shall suffer all with peace and joyfulness. Let us thank God, who gave us so much light and so many means to serve Him perfectly, since He has chosen us, from among so many, to serve Him in religion, having bestowed on us the gift of His holy love. Let us make haste to please Him in the practice of virtue, reflecting as St. Teresa said to her daughters, that we have already by His grace done the principal thing necessary to become saints, by turning our backs on the world and all its goods; the least yet remains to be done, in order that we may be saints. "I hold it as certain, that for those who die in religion Jesus Christ has prepared a prominent place in paradise." On this earth we shall

be poor, despised, and treated as fools, but in the other life our lot will be changed.

Let us always recommend ourselves to our Redeemer hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, and to most holy Mary, because in religion all subjects must profess a most special love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and for the immaculate Virgin Mary, and let us have great confidence. Jesus Christ has chosen us to be His chosen friends, as we may confidently conclude from the protection that He extends to all Religious Orders, and to each member of them. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"

O Lord! finish Thy work, and for Thy glory grant us to be all Thine, so that all the members of Thy Orders may, until the day of judgment, be pleasing to Thee, and gain over to Thee an immense number of souls. Amen.

SECOND MEDITATION

John Preaching at the Jordan—True Repentance

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

THE Evangelists tell us that John, the son of Zachary, was inspired by God to "prepare the way of the Lord." He therefore came into the country about the Jordan preaching "the remission of sins." To all that lent him a willing ear he said: "Do penance; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (*Matt.* iii. 2). The kingdom of heaven consists in the reign of God over the minds and hearts and actions of men.

His revelation has been given to direct the minds of men to God, the eternal Truth. His grace has been poured out upon men to incline their hearts to Him, the uncreated beauty and goodness. To induce man to direct his actions to God's honor and glory, out of love for Him, according to His holy will, He has said, "I am thy protector and thy reward exceeding great" (*Gen. xv. 1*). By sin, man turns away from God. He fills his mind with the ignorance, darkness, and error of the world. He feeds his heart on the honors, riches, and pleasures of life. He submits his daily actions to the dominion of the flesh, the world, and the devil. Thus man weighs God in the balance of his heart, insults and despises Him in His very presence, and overwhelms Him with the basest ingratitude.

Before the sinner can, therefore, share in the mercies of God, with which the Holy Spirit pursues him, and become a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, he must "do penance." The first step of a penitent is to acknowledge the error and evil of his ways; the second is to detest the same with an upright mind and a sorrowing heart; the third, to return to God, implore His pardon and vow fidelity in His service. Thus alone does the sinner show his practical good will. For, as he turned away from God by a perverse use of his free will, so now, aided by the Holy Spirit, he freely turns from the creature and subjects his mind and heart and actions to his God.

Alas, my soul, the preaching of John the Baptist applies more to thee than to the Jews. Thou knewest the truths of God better than they. Thou hadst stronger motives for loving God and seeking His holy will in all things than they. Thou hadst received so many graces from the Holy Spirit,

and still thou hadst offended God by sin. Even after thou hadst been specially favored by the God of majesty and goodness, didst thou not deliberately turn away from Him, and give thy mind to the vanities of the world, thy heart to the gratification of self-love, and thy time and energies to the empty pleasures of life? Oh, how low hast thou fallen! What injury hast thou done to God! What harm hast thou done to thyself! From a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, thou hast become an idolater in practice, a subject of ridicule for the demons of hell. Do penance, then, do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Turn from the evil of your ways. "Turn to the Lord, and forsake thy sins" (*Ecclus.* xvii. 21). Harken to the voice of the Holy Spirit. He encourages thee, saying: "Turn ye to Me . . . and I will turn to you" (*Zach.* i. 3). What hast thou gained by rebelling against thy Lord and God? Nothing, nothing, nothing! Thy mind has been darkened. Thou hast lost thy peace of heart. Instead of profiting by life, thou hast lost for time and eternity. Do penance, do penance. Call on the Lord while He is nigh. Accept His grace while He offers it to thee. Work for Him "whilst it is day. The night cometh, when no man can work" (*John* ix. 4).

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I thank Thee that Thou hast not condemned me to hell as I have deserved by my sins. How patient, how long-suffering hast Thou been with me in the past! How gracious, how generous, how condescending art Thou with me now! And I have been so cold, so indifferent toward Thee. I have rebelled against Thy sovereign majesty and made myself the slave of a creature.

I have despised Thee, the infinite good, and erected an idol in my heart. I have overwhelmed Thee, my benefactor, with the basest kind of ingratitude. Canst Thou still forgive me when I knew what I was doing? Ah, great is Thy mercy, greater than my sins. I now see the error of my ways. I detest my sins with all my heart. I am sorry for them because thereby I have turned away from heaven and condemned myself to hell. I detest them especially because they have displeased Thee, the infinite good. Thou sayest, "Turn to Me, and I will turn to you." Turn to me, then, O God of love and mercy. For behold, I return to Thee, never to leave Thee. I resolve to be faithful to Thee. Gladly will I henceforth suffer everything to prove my love and gratitude.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

"Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of penance," said John to the people of his day. "For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire" (*Luke* iii. 8, 9). This warning of St. John the Baptist applies with special force to the Religious of our day. For, "unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required" (*Luke* xii. 48). Besides, Holy Scripture teaches that there is a measure of sin beyond which God will not pardon. "Thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight" (*Wis.* xi. 21). For, though God is infinitely merciful, the human heart can not receive an infinite mercy. If the sinner, therefore, neglects to bring forth fruits worthy of penance, the Saviour may say to him as He said to

the barren fig-tree: "May no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever" (*Matt.* xxi. 19). The fruits worthy of penance, which God expects from an heir to the kingdom of heaven, are: (1) an honest examination of conscience; (2) an upright confession; (3) a radical amendment of life. How many persons habitually delude themselves! They never go to the root of the evil. They confess their sins again and again, but they never amend their lives. What a revelation it will be for them when they appear before the judgment seat of God! Too late will they then understand that saying of the great St. Francis Assisi: "What I am in the sight of God, that I am, and nothing more!" Others with greater malice never reduce their good resolutions to practice. They leave not only their sins but also their purpose of amendment in the confessional. Are these fruits worthy of penance? Is this not a barren tree?

"O my soul, judge thyself, that thou mayest not be judged" (1 *Cor.* xi. 31). See what fruits worthy of penance thou hast brought forth. Hast thou really been in earnest about thy conversion? Hast thou carefully examined into thy transgressions? Hast thou been as careful about remedying the cause of thy relapse as thou hast been to confess the number of thy imperfections? Hast thou really dug round the root of thy predominant passion and applied a practical purpose of amendment? Or hast thou been committing and confessing the same sins over and over again without any effort to amend, or even without any actual purpose of amendment? Lay the axe, then, to the root of the evil, lest thou be cut down and cast into the fire. Examine thy conscience seriously. Confess thy sins honestly. Then concentrate thy energies on amending thy life and making atone-

ment for thy sins. The evidence of true repentance is the fruit worthy of penance, heartfelt sorrow for the past, vigilance and generosity in the present, and a firm determination for the future.

O my God, I am filled with confusion when I think of my negligence in bringing forth fruits worthy of penance. I have broken my promises so often that I fear I may have almost exhausted my measure of grace. Oh, do not say "thy sins are numbered. Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting." Give me one more opportunity. I place my hopes in the merits of my Saviour. "He came to heal the contrite of heart" (*Is.* lxi. 1). "I know that I have reason to fear about sins forgiven" (*Ecclus.* v. 5). But I am sorry for all. "My sin is always before me" (*Ps.* l. 5). I detest my sins with all my heart. I have confessed them. I will do penance for them all the days of my life. I would rather die than ever offend Thee again. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy" (*Ps.* l. 1). I desire to serve Thee with a generous heart. Let me see the dangers that threaten me. Then give me the good will, the strength, and the perseverance to bring forth fruits worthy of penance" (*Luke* iii. 8).

Resolution

I resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to do penance for the sins of the past, to watch over my heart, and to use the means to persevere in Thy service until death. I know I must overcome all to gain all. Oh, that I could die of grief every time I think of having voluntarily lost Thee. O loving Heart of Jesus, inflame this poor heart of mine. O Mary, my Mother! again I beg of thee,

make me all for Jesus. Thou canst do so; I hope for it from thee.

The Science of Self-Knowledge

A. INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT WORLD

“You know not of what spirit you are” (*Luke ix. 55*), said Our Saviour one day to His disciples. He could say the same to many Religious of our day. “The discerning of spirits” is indeed a gift of the Holy Spirit (*1 Cor. xii. 10*). Still, reason can discover many things. Then, prayer procures for us the light of the Holy Spirit. By diligence and prayer, therefore, a generous, willing soul can gradually see herself as God sees her. The following rules, formulated by the experience of ages, will aid us to acquire this knowledge of ourselves:

1. Whatever quiets the conscience of the habitual sinner or the person in danger of sin comes from Satan.

2. On the other hand, whatever disquiets the conscience of such persons is the work of the Holy Spirit.

3. Scruples and anxiety, in those making an honest effort, come from Satan.

4. Fervor and zeal in the same is the work of the Holy Spirit.

5. Spiritual consolation is that interior peace and happiness of the soul which prompts it to advance in self-denial and the love of God.

6. Spiritual desolation is that interior trial of the soul in which the light of grace is wanting, and the soul is inclined by the evil one to sadness and despondency.

7. It is imprudent to change that rule of life

during spiritual desolation which we have formed during the time of spiritual consolation.

8. By prayer, penance, and self-denial the soul should try to be at peace in time of spiritual desolation. In severe desolation St. Teresa prefers work to supererogatory prayer.

9. God permits spiritual desolation to try our virtue and good will.

10. Patience in the present and hope in the future are necessary in spiritual desolation.

11. Spiritual despondency has a threefold cause: (*a.*) Tepidity and laziness in our devotions. (*b.*) The intention of God to try us. (*c.*) The intention of God to make us realize our utter dependance on Him.

12. In time of consolations prepare for the trial of spiritual desolation.

13. In time of consolation the soul should exercise herself in humility and contempt of self.

14. If we despise and resist Satan manfully, he loses courage and departs.

15. If we fear him and hesitate, Satan becomes the worst of tyrants.

16. Satan hates detection; if we reveal our trials to our spiritual adviser, he desists.

17. Satan generally attacks the soul through her predominant passion.

18. The grace of God always brings peace; Satan brings confusion and sadness.

19. God can give peace without any intervening natural course.

20. When a natural reason precedes consolation, this may come from God from merely natural causes, or from Satan.

21. Satan tries to bring the pious soul to destruction by imprudent piety.

22. If the beginning, continuance, and end of

our thoughts are good, the thought comes from God.

23. If our thoughts seem good but lead to evil, they come from the evil one.

24. If Satan has once deceived you, it is well to examine his work of deception and thereby guard yourself against a repetition.

25. The soul progressing in virtue is led peacefully by God, while Satan's action is violent.

26. The soul that has fallen into sin is left in peace by Satan but God gives her no rest.

27. The inspirations of grace harmonize with faith and common-sense; not so those of Satan.

B. KNOWLEDGE OF SELF

To obtain a correct knowledge of ourselves we must examine:

1. The principles that actuate us.
2. The actions we have performed.

THE PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

- I. Our natural or acquired inclinations.
- II. The impulse of grace.
- III. The temptations of Satan.
- IV. The influence of others.

I. Natural or Acquired Inclinations

1. In Regard to Ourselves:
 - a. Selfishness, which always seeks its own.
 - b. Pride, vanity, self-esteem, and self-complacency.
 - c. Sensuality, which desires all that gratifies the senses.
 - d. Love of ease and comfort, which shuns exertion and work.

2. In Regard to Our Neighbors:
 - a. Coldness and negligence toward them.
 - b. A spirit of contempt and ridicule.
 - c. A love of power over them, which will not be contradicted.
 - d. Cunning, envy, want of confidence, malice, desire of doing harm.
3. In Regard to God:
 - a. Want of confidence, servile fear, which leads to negligence.
 - b. Half-heartedness, which divides the heart between God and the world.
 - c. Self-complacency, which gives honor to self in place of to God.
 - d. Too great activity and imprudent zeal.
4. In Regard to Faults Committed:
 - a. The slothful soul is easily discouraged.
 - b. The sensualist consoles himself with the hope of pardon.
 - c. The proud soul gives way to momentary grief, which is passionate, but eventually likes to blame God for its fault.
 - d. The self-interested soul grows sad, dreamy, and melancholy.

II. The Impulse of Grace

(To avoid evil and do good.)

1. Manifests itself in our conversion.
2. It works on nature and perfects it.
3. It draws us to prayer and the practice of virtue.

III. *The Temptations of Satan*

(To avoid good and to do evil.)

1. He makes use of our pride and want of faith to fill the mind with error, and with false principles and maxims.
2. He intensifies our inclination to evil, and disgusts us with good.
3. He tempts us:
 - a. By representing the evil as good.
 - b. By inciting the passions to evil.
4. He usually tempts us to:
 - a. Sensuality and enjoyment.
 - b. Negligence and carelessness.
 - c. Disquiet and confusion.
5. He sometimes tempts us to:
 - a. Despair.
 - b. Hatred of God.
 - c. Blasphemy.

IV. *The Influence of Our Neighbor*

(It may be for good or evil.)

1. By their good or evil example.
2. By their good or evil advice.
3. By their good or evil co-operation.

THE EFFECTS PRODUCED BY THESE PRINCIPLES

- I. The dispositions of the heart.
- II. Distractions of the mind.
- III. Doubts about action.
- IV. Words that determine us to action when in doubt.
 - a. Between nature and grace.
 - b. Between good and evil.

I. The Dispositions of the Heart

1. In peace or in unrest these indicate its inclinations.

2. These inclinations easily recognized when acting spontaneously, *e. g.*:

a. At prayer.

b. At recreation.

c. At meals.

d. While traveling, *i. e.*, in unusual surroundings.

3. Also recognized from the first impulses we experience.

4. Likewise from the inclination of our hearts.

a. On awakening.

b. During conversation.

c. To what it frequently reverts during the day.

II. Distractions of the Mind

1. A wandering of the imagination to indifferent subjects.

2. Those that engage our hearts and reveal its inclination.

III. Doubts about Action

We doubt whether under certain circumstances:

1. We should act or remain passive.

2. We should speak or remain silent.

3. We should gratify or deny ourselves, etc.

If we never doubt about our perfection we are dominated by self-love.

IV. Words That Determine Us to Action When in Doubt

1. For good and virtuous deeds:
 - a. The beginner says: "You must become used to it," etc.
 - b. The more proficient: "It is my duty."
 - c. The perfect: "God deserves it."
2. For evil:
 - a. In mortal sin: "I can't help it." "The temptation is too great," etc.
 - b. In venial sin: "It's only a trifle." "I'll make it all right."
 - c. The selfish person says: "I need it." "God is not so exacting."
3. These deciding words indicate:
 - a. The motion of grace and of our predominant passion.
 - b. The degree of virtue or of vice we have attained.
 - c. That it is easier to overcome our faults than we imagine.

C. ANNUAL INTERIOR EXAMINATION

Without self-knowledge there can be no great progress. It is customary for Religious, therefore, to make a special examination of their interior at the time of their annual retreat. The examination of conscience in preparation for a holy confession relates to sinful acts and habits. The examination of the interior should be more thorough. It regards not only sin but also the inclinations, passions, principles of actions, and desires that engender, prompt, and stimulate the actions of the soul.

I. GENERAL SURVEY

1. Review the preceding truths.
2. They reveal the roots of good and of evil actions and inclinations.
3. They also manifest the cause of our temptations and trials.

II. GENERAL QUESTIONS

Is your present state satisfactory? If not, why not? Have you progressed in virtue or receded? What particular virtue have you acquired since your last examination? What particular fault have you eradicated? Has your desire of perfection increased or diminished? Are you more attached to your vocation? Are you more generous in making sacrifices? Are you more fervent? more punctual? more united to God? Have you acquired greater facility in your spiritual exercises? Are you faithful to your meditations and examinations of conscience?

III. PARTICULAR QUESTIONS

1. Sins.—Are they fewer? less deliberate? Do you perceive them better? Do you bear corrections better? Have you greater sorrow? a firmer purpose of amendment?
2. Passions.—Can you control them with greater ease and less internal disturbance? Do you overcome temptations more efficaciously? Have you diminished your bad habits?
3. Virtues.—Are you more fervent and do you experience less repugnance in obedience, humility, charity, piety, mortification? Do you experience greater ease where sacrifices are required? Do you find virtue as easy when alone as in the presence of others?

4. Crosses.—Do you bear them easily? or do you complain? Is your repugnance less wilful? Are you less anxious to escape them? Are you resigned to superiors? to incompatible associates?

5. Love of God.—Do you find it easy to work solely for the glory of God, out of love for Him, according to His holy will? Have you greater facility in speaking to God? Do you experience less weariness in prayer? Do you realize the necessity of prayer? Are you more recollected? Have you greater desire for holy communion? Do you find it easier to give up all for love of God?

6. Exercises of Piety.—Do you perform them perfectly? Do you allow voluntary distractions? or habitual dissipation? Are you pre-occupied with your work?

IV. FURTHER QUESTIONS.

1. Meditation.—Has it engaged your thoughts in the preceding evening and in the morning? Have you prepared for it? Do you form particular resolutions for the day? Do you renew them?

2. Holy Mass.—Do you assist with devotion? Have you a particular intention? Do you always make a spiritual communion?

3. Confession.—Do you go through routine? Do you devote too much time and attention to the examination of conscience? Are you wanting in contrition? In amendment?

4. Holy Communion.—Have you always prepared for it? Do you make the immediate acts with fervor? Do you always make some offering of self-denial to Our Lord? Do you make your thanksgiving well?

5. Prayer.—Do you pray with attention, rec-

ollection, and devotion? with confidence? Are you in the habit of renewing your good intention frequently? Do you often raise your mind and heart to God by means of holy aspirations and affections?

6. Blessed Sacrament.—Have you a lively faith in it? Are you recollected, grave, and modest in the chapel? Do you visit your Lord in this sacrament of His love?

7. The Blessed Virgin.—Do you esteem and love her? Have you a childlike confidence in her? Do you have recourse to her in all your difficulties?

8. Regular Observance.—Do you observe the Rule punctually? exactly? promptly? in a spirit of faith? Do you keep silence in the places and at times prescribed? Have you scandalized others by talking or otherwise violating the rules? Have you been faithful to your work? Have you wasted any time? Have you prepared well for your work?

9. Toward Superiors and Associates.—Have you looked on them in a spirit of faith? Have you obeyed simply, promptly? Have you criticized them? and that publicly? Have you been sincere with your superiors? Have you been kind and charitable in thought, word, deed? Have you given way to sentimental friendships? Have you always been modest? Have you given good example?

10. Care of Perfection.—Have you been serious about it? Have you observed the spirit and the letter of your holy Rule? Have you observed your vows? and practised the corresponding virtues? Do you limit yourself with what is merely necessary? Have you given no liberty to your thoughts and imaginations? Have you made

progress in mortification? Have you given way to sensuality or manners at meals? Have you advanced in humility? Have you combatted your ruling passion? Controlled your temper? Made your particular examen well? What is keeping you from making more progress? Have you an honest, generous good will?

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

Sentiments of Sorrow and Amendment

(From St. Alphonsus)

My Jesus, by that hatred which Thou hadst for my sins in the Garden of Gethsemani, give me true sorrow for all the offences that I have committed against Thee. O my accursed sins, I hate and detest you; you have made me lose the grace of God. I repent, my Jesus, for having turned my back upon Thee. Would that I had suffered any evil, rather than ever have offended Thee.

Ah, my sweet Redeemer, when I remember all the displeasure that I have given Thee, I do not weep so much on account of the hell I have deserved, as on account of the love Thou hast borne me! Yes; because the fire of hell which I have deserved is not so great as the immense love that Thou hast shown me in Thy passion and death. And how is it, O God, that, knowing this, Thou, my Lord, didst allow Thyself to be bound for me, scourged for me, spit upon for me, hanged upon a cross to die for me—how is it that I could have so often despised Thy grace and turned my back upon Thee? I repent, and I am sorry above all things. Oh, that I could die of grief!

I know the evil that I have done in separating

myself from Thee, my sovereign good. I ought to have suffered any pain, any evil, any death, rather than to offend Thee; and what greater evil could I commit than that of voluntarily losing Thy grace? Ah, my Jesus, my greatest affliction is that I have despised Thy infinite goodness.

I thank Thee, my Lord, for the sweet promise of pardon that Thou hast made to sinners, forgetting the sins of those who repent of having offended Thee. "I will not remember any of their iniquities." It is all the fruit of Thy passion. O sweet passion! O sweet mercy! O sweet love of Jesus Christ, Thou art my hope. What would have become of me, my Jesus, if Thou hadst not died, and paid the debt of my sins?

O God, I thought of offending Thee, whilst Thou didst think of nothing but mercy toward me! After my sins I thought not of repenting; but Thou didst still think to call me. Finally, I have done all in my power to procure my own damnation; and Thou hast done all Thou couldst to save me from being damned. Thou art, then, an infinite good, and I have despised Thee; Thou art my Lord, and I have lost the respect due to Thee; Thou art infinite goodness, and I have turned my back upon Thee; Thou art worthy of infinite love, and hast loved me so much, and I have refused Thee my love, and displeased Thee so often. But Thou hast said that Thou canst not despise a heart that humbles itself and repents. Behold, I embrace Thy cross as a penitent; I repent with all my heart, for having displeased Thee. Receive me to Thy favor, for the sake of that blood which Thou hast shed for me.

O Mary, hope of sinners, do thou obtain pardon for me, perseverance and the love of Jesus Christ!

My Jesus, I love Thee, and firmly resolve to lose

all rather than forfeit Thy grace. I am weak, but Thou art strong. Thy strength will make me strong against my enemies. This I hope through Thy passion.

“The Lord is my delight and my salvation, whom shall I fear?” I fear not, O crucified Lord, to lose my possessions, my dear ones, or even my life; I fear only to lose Thy friendship and Thy love. I am afraid that I may displease Thee, and so may see myself deprived of Thy grace. I pray Thee to keep alive in me this holy love; help me to conquer all, that I may please Thee in everything.

Most sweet Jesus, never permit me to be separated from Thee. I am the work of Thy hands; I have been redeemed by Thy blood; do not abandon me to the misfortune of losing Thy love, and of separating myself from Thee. Assist me always in the dangers which shall befall me, and make me ever have recourse to Thee and live alone for Thee during the remainder of my life; do Thou give me the necessary strength. This I hope from Thee.

My Jesus, increase in me the fear of displeasing Thee. I am horrified at my former treachery to Thee. But Thy merits console me; and the many graces that Thou hast given me make me hope that Thou wilt not abandon me, now that I love Thee, since Thou hast shown me so much mercy while I thought not of loving Thee. I do not trust in my own strength—I know well how little it is worth. I confide altogether in Thy goodness, and I firmly hope nevermore to see myself separated from Thee.

Oh, that I could be assured that I should never lose Thee again, and that I should always love Thee! But I resign myself to Thy divine will,

which so disposes and ordains for my good that I should live always in this uncertainty till death, to make me strive after a closer union with Thee, and to pray always, "Permit me nevermore to be separated from Thee." Yes, my Jesus, I repeat it (and give me the grace always to repeat it): "Let me never be separated from Thee! Let me never be separated from Thee!"

My Redeemer, I will no more depart from Thee. If all men should leave Thee, I will not leave Thee, even if it should cost me my life. I protest that even if there was neither a heaven nor a hell, I would not leave off loving Thee, because Thou, my love, art worthy of infinite love, though there should be no reward for those who love Thee, nor any punishment for those who love Thee not.

Oh, if the years of my past life were to return, I would spend them all in loving Thee! But they will never return. I thank Thee for having waited for me, and for not having sent me to hell as I deserved. And since Thou hast waited for me, I consecrate the rest of my life to Thee; I wish that all my thoughts, my desires, and my affections should serve only to please Thee, and to fulfil Thy holy will.

My beloved Jesus, I will not wait to embrace Thee until Thou shalt be given to me at the hour of death. I embrace Thee now, and press myself closely to Thy pierced feet. My crucified love, to obtain for me a good death, Thou hast condescended to die most sorrowfully and painfully. At that hour, when every one will abandon me, do not Thou leave me, my Redeemer; permit me not to lose Thee, or to separate myself from Thee. Receive me into Thy sacred wounds, and may my soul there breathe itself out in loving sighs, that

it may come where Thou art, to love Thee forever.

PARTICULAR EXAMINATION

On Patience in Following the Holy Spirit

Do I realize:

That the knowledge of self is humiliating to my pride?

That it is distasteful to my self-love.

That Satan tries to depreciate its value?

That nature rebels against it?

That patience to learn it is therefore very necessary?

Have I generously subjected myself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

Have I courageously followed His impulse?

Have I patiently studied my interior?

Do I know my predominant passion?

Have I resolved to become a saint?

Say an act of contrition for faults, and one of thanksgiving for graces. Strive for patient resignation to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

THIRD MEDITATION

Jesus Our Guide

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

THE divine Saviour is that teacher who instructs man in all that is necessary in regard to his destiny, his future, his duties, and the way of perfection. Man should, therefore, hear Him and make His doctrine and admonitions the

foundation of his daily life, the principle of his thoughts, judgments, and actions. Many teachers and guides appear upon earth. Man's reason would guide him independently of divine revelation, but that in many things is fallible and liable to err. Man's heart, with its vain desires, would advise and direct him, but it, too, is a false prophet, a deceitful teacher, a guide that has ruined thousands. Finally, a godless world with its alluring maxims offers its service to man, and yet a worse guide could not be found. All these man can not consult if he wishes to find the true way. There is but one true guide—Jesus Christ, whom the Holy Ghost has given us. "One is your Master, Christ" (*Matt.* xxiii. 10).

This Teacher, this Guide, possesses all the qualities that captivate the heart of man. (1) He knows the way with infallible certainty. He can not err, He can not be deceived. Whoever follows His teachings has nothing to fear. (2) He is a teacher who looks only to man's welfare, whose only desire is to make man happy. (3) Finally, He is a master who knows how to imbue man more and more with His doctrine, and to make it continually more sweet to those who hold it. The principles and doctrines of this teacher at first seem difficult, but He understands how to fill man's life with heavenly consolation according to His principles.

It is required of every Christian that he look upon Christ as his model and exemplar. Whatever Our Saviour has laid down as a rule of life, He exemplifies and substantiates in His own life. This is, indeed, that true Shepherd, who, "when He hath led out His own sheep, He goeth before them; and the sheep follow Him, because they know His voice" (*John* x. 4).

My soul, thou art upon earth to honor, love, and serve almighty God. If, then, thou askest the Holy Spirit what guide to follow through life, if thou sayest, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" (*Acts ix. 6*) He will point to Jesus and say, "Hear ye Him." To hear Jesus, to make His teaching the principle of thy daily life, the rule of thy thoughts, judgments, and actions, to decide everything according to His teaching—this is the first thing that the Holy Ghost demands of thee if thou desirest to live the life of a Christian.

Reason alone can not guide thee to thy exalted destiny. "For there is a way which seemeth just to man; but the ends thereby lead to death" (*Prov. xiv. 12*). Thy heart with its foolish desires can not guide thee, "For the wisdom of the flesh is death . . . because the wisdom of the flesh is an enemy to God" (*Rom. viii. 6-7*). The world can not guide thee, for, as St. Paul says, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of the world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (*1 Cor. i. 19, 20*). And again, "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (*1 Cor. iii. 19*). Let Jesus be thy guide, my soul. He says, speaking of His Father: "The things I have heard of Him, these same I speak in the world" (*John viii. 26*). And again, "Heaven and earth shall pass, but My words shall not pass" (*Matt. xxiv. 35*). Indeed, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths" (*Ps. cxviii. 105*). If thou acceptest His guidance, my soul, "Then shalt thou walk confidently in thy way, and thy foot shall not stumble."

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

“I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to the little ones” (*Luke xi. 21*). “I know whom I have believed” (*2 Tim. i. 11*). I thank Thee, then, for having brought me to the knowledge of this true guide. I shall never be of the number of those who repel His teaching and exclaim: “This saying is hard, and who can hear it?” (*John vi. 61*.) I will endeavor to go deeper and deeper into the teaching of Jesus Christ. I will try to regulate my daily life in accordance with His teaching. His teaching shall suffice for me, no matter what others say. I will learn all virtues from this divine model. I will learn of Him to be meek and humble of heart, to love my enemies, to do good to them that revile and persecute me. I will gladly renounce all to become His disciple.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

“Man’s life upon earth is a warfare” (*Job vii. 1*). In this battle of life the Holy Spirit demands that Christians fight under the standard with the weapons of Christ. Man must fight the same enemies that Jesus vanquished. He must fight against the devil, the arch enemy of God. He must fight against the world, which ignores God in its maxims and draws souls from God by its gratifications. Man must fight against his own depraved nature, which is in league with the world and the devil, and is his own greatest foe, because it is an internal enemy. Does not the Saviour say: “Now is the judgment of the world; now shall the prince of this world be cast

out" (*John* xii. 31). "If a stronger than he come upon him and overcome him, he will take away all his armor wherein he trusted, and will distribute his spoils" (*Luke* xi. 22). "Have confidence, I have overcome the world" (*John* xvi. 33).

If man meet these enemies of his salvation with the sword of prayer and the shield of divine truth, having girt on the armor of poverty, humility, self-denial, patience, and generosity, God will fight his battles for him as He fought for the Israelites of old, and conquer all his enemies.

Behold, then, my soul, the great leader under whose experienced direction thou canst easily overcome any foe. He has given thee the benefit of His example, He has gone before Thee. He has triumphed over sin and death. He has conquered the flesh, the world, and the devil. Use the means that He employed and thou will be invincible. Christ overcame His enemies by prayer. This is the great, the universal remedy of every true follower of Jesus Christ. He conquered the world with its alluring riches by holy poverty. "He had not wherein to lay His head." He freely renounced the infinite riches of heaven to lead a life of absolute poverty on earth. He triumphed over the vain applause of the world by profound humility and despising all earthly things. He overcame its persecutions by silence and unconquerable patience. He triumphed over the pleasures of the world by leading a life of toil and labor. Behold, then, my soul, thy weapons. Use them as thy Master used them and thou wilt be sure of a triumphal entry and a crown of glory in heaven. Prayer, faith, detachment, humility, patience, penance, and self-denial, these are thy weapons.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God of goodness, I thank Thee with all my heart for the great blessings Thou hast conferred upon me. Especially do I thank Thee for having given me so exalted a model, so great a leader. No matter how my enemies attack me, I will not fear. In all my trials Thou wilt be my strength. In all attacks I will recall to mind that I am a soldier of Jesus Christ. I will look to my divine model and learn from Him to triumph over all my enemies. I regret that I have been so negligent, but in the future I shall be a true soldier of Jesus Christ. I serve under the greatest leader the world has ever seen. The King of kings is my lord. Him will I serve all the days of my life.

Resolution

Yes, my Jesus, I resolve to be faithful in Thy service unto my dying breath, to reproduce Thy actions in my daily life. "O my divine Master, I know that Thou art come a teacher from God" (*John* iii. 2). "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go" (*Matt.* viii. 19). "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths. I have sworn and am determined to keep the judgments of Thy justice" (*Ps.* cxviii. 105-6). My Jesus, assist a soul that ardently desires to follow Thy guidance. O great mother of God, Mary, beg of Jesus to make me belong entirely to Him.

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

On Confidence in Jesus Christ

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

Wonderfully great is the mercy of Jesus Christ to us, but for our greater good He desires that

we should put our trust in His mercy, with a lively confidence trusting in His merits and His promises. Therefore St. Paul recommends us to preserve this confidence, saying that it has a great reward from God. And therefore, when a fear of the divine judgment seems to diminish this confidence in us, we ought to drive it away, and say to ourselves, as Dr. Mattei writes, "My heart, dost thou tremble? Knowest thou not how to hope? Banish thy fear, and tremble not. Why wilt thou trouble me? Hope in the Lord, that we may one day sing His praise and glory."

The Lord revealed to St. Gertrude that our confidence so constrains Him that He can not possibly refuse to hear us in everything we seek of Him. The same thing was said by St. John Climacus: "Prayer exerts a holy violence upon God." Every prayer offered with confidence, as it were, forces God to hear, but this force is acceptable and pleasing to Him. Therefore St. Bernard writes that the divine mercy is like a vast fountain, to which he who brings a larger vessel of confidence will receive a larger abundance of graces. And this is according to what the Psalmist wrote, "Let Thy mercy be upon us, O Lord, according as we have put our trust in Thee."

God has declared that He protects and saves all who trust in Him. Let them, then, rejoice. David said, "All who hope in Thee, my God, shall be blessed forever, and Thou wilt ever dwell in them." The same prophet said, "Mercy is round about all who trust in God." He that trusts in God shall ever be so circled and guarded around, that he is safe from all danger of perishing. Oh, what great promises the Holy Scriptures make to those who trust in God! Do we feel lost through our sins? Behold the remedy at hand!

Let us go with confidence, says the Apostle, to the feet of Jesus Christ, and there we shall find pardon. Let us not wait to go to Jesus Christ until He sits upon His throne of judgment; let us hasten at once, while He sits on His throne of grace.

But, says the sinner, I do not deserve to be heard, if I beg for pardon. But I reply, though you do not deserve your confidence in the divine mercy will obtain grace for you; for this pardon is not dependent upon your merits, but upon the divine promise to pardon those who repent; and this it is which Jesus Christ says, "Every one that seeketh receiveth;" that is, "every one," whether just or unjust, if they pray with confidence. "Whatsoever things ye seek, when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and they shall be given to you."

Whosoever, then, fears that through infirmity he shall fall again into his old sins, let him trust in God, and he shall not fall; as the Prophet assures us, "All that hope in Him shall not fail." Isaias says that they who hope in the Lord renew their strength. Let us, then, be strong and unwavering in our confidence, because God had promised, as St. Paul says, to protect all who hope in Him, and when anything seems especially difficult to overcome, then let us say, "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (*Philipp.* iv. 13). Yet let us not go about seeking some constant sensible confidence, palpable to our feelings; it is enough if we have the will to trust. This is true confidence, the will to trust in God, because He is good, and desirous to help us, and powerful. He can help us. He is faithful, and has promised to help us. Above all, let us strengthen ourselves with the promise made by Jesus Christ: "Amen,

Amen, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you." Thus let us seek grace from God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, and we shall obtain what we desire.

O eternal God! I know that I am poor in all things; I can do nothing, I have nothing, save what comes to me from Thy hands; all I can say to Thee is, Lord, have mercy upon me. My misery is, that to my poverty I have added the sin of having answered Thy graces with the sins I have committed against Thee. But, notwithstanding, I would hope from Thy mercy this twofold blessing; first, that Thou wouldst pardon my sins; and then that Thou wouldst give me perseverance together with Thy holy love, with grace to pray to Thee constantly to help me even till death. I ask it all of Thee, I hope for it, through the merits of Thy Son Jesus, and the blessed Virgin Mary. O my chief advocate! help me with thy prayers.

OPTIONAL READING

The Peace God Gives to Good Religious

(From St. Alphonsus)

The promises of God can not fail. He has said: "Every one that hath left house or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or lands, for My name's sake shall receive a hundredfold and shall possess life everlasting." That is, the hundredfold on this earth, and life everlasting in heaven.

The peace of the soul is a good which is of greater value than all the kingdoms of the world. And what avails it to have the dominions of the whole world without interior peace? Better is it

to be the poorest villager, and to be content, than to be the lord of the whole world, and to live a discontented life. But who can give this peace? The unquiet world? Oh, no; peace is a good which is obtained only from God. "O God!" prays the Church, "give to Thy servants that peace which the world can not give." Therefore He is called the God of all consolation. But if God is the sole giver of peace, to whom shall we suppose will He rather give that peace than to those who leave all, and detach themselves from all creatures, in order to give themselves entirely to their creator? And therefore is it seen, that good Religious, shut up in their cells, though mortified, despised, and poor, live a more contented life than the great ones of the world, with all the riches, pomps, and amusements that they enjoy.

St. Scholasticus said that if men knew the peace which good Religious enjoy, the whole world would become a monastery; and St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi said that all, if they knew it, would scale the walls of the monasteries in order to enter them. The human heart, having been created for an infinite good, all creatures can not content it, they being finite, imperfect, and few; only God, who is an infinite good, can render it content. "Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the request of thy heart." Oh, no; a good Religious, united to God, envies none of the princes of the world who possess kingdoms, riches, and honors. "Let the rich," he will say with St. Paulinus, "have their riches, the kings their kingdoms; to me, Christ is my kingdom and my glory." He will see those of the world foolishly glory in their display and vanities; but he, seeking always to detach himself more from earthly things, always

to unite himself more closely to his God, will live content in this life and say: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God."

St. Teresa said that one drop of heavenly consolation is of greater value than all the pleasures of the world. Father Charles of Lorraine, having become a Religious, said that God by one moment of the happiness which He gave him to feel in religion, superabundantly repaid him for all he had left for God. Hence his delight was sometimes so great that when alone in his cell he could not help dancing for joy. The Blessed Seraphinus of Ascoli, a Capuchin lay-brother, said that he would not exchange a foot length of his cord for all the kingdoms of the world.

Oh, what content does he feel who, having left all for God, is able to say with St. Francis, "My God and my all!" and with that to see himself freed from the servitude of the world, from the thralldom of worldly fashion, and from all earthly affections. This is the liberty enjoyed by the children of God, which good Religious are. It is true that in the beginning the deprivations of the conversations and pastimes of the world, the observances of the Community, and the rules, seem thorns; but these thorns, as Our Lord said to St. Bridget, will all become flowers and delights to him who courageously bears their first stings, and he will taste on this earth that peace which, as St. Paul says, surpasses all the gratifications of the senses, and all the enjoyments of feasts, of banquets, and of the pleasures of the world: "The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding." And what greater peace can there be, than to know that one pleases God?

Prayer

O my Lord and my God, my all, I know that Thou alone canst make me contented in this life and in the next. But I will not love Thee for my own contentment; I will love Thee only to content Thy heart. I wish this to be my peace, my only satisfaction during my whole life, to unite my will to Thy holy will, even should I have to suffer every pain to do so. Thou art my God, I am Thy creature. And what can I hope for greater than to please Thee, my Lord, my God, who hast been so indulgent in Thy love toward me? Thou, my Jesus, hast left heaven to live a poor and mortified life for love of me. I leave all to live only for the love of Thee, my most blessed redeemer. I love Thee with my whole heart; if only Thou wilt give me the grace to love Thee, treat me as Thou pleasest.

O Mary, mother of my God, protect me and render me like to thee, not in thy glory, which I do not deserve, but in pleasing God, and obeying His holy will, as thou didst.

FOURTH MEDITATION

Mary, Our Model—The Value of Spiritual Things

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

To show man the true value of divine grace and to induce him to co-operate with that grace at all times, it will be useful for him to glance at her

whom the angel saluted as full of grace. The God-Man is indeed the crown of creation, the essence and model of perfection. But after her divine Son, Mary occupies the first place in the plan of creation, redemption, and sanctification, as carried out by the Holy Ghost. From all eternity the Holy Ghost loved that predestined virgin with a love that surpassed His affection for all other creatures. He therefore planned from all eternity how to endow her in a manner befitting her exalted dignity. What treasures, then, does He produce from the infinite riches of God to distinguish her before the entire world?

1. He does not bless this chosen soul with the goods of earth, with perishable riches. No, He wishes her to be born of poor parents and to be espoused to an humble workman. She is not to occupy a prominent position in society; she is lost in the multitude of the world. This virgin is not to enjoy the pleasures of the world; she travels the thorny path of life without any external advantage. The Holy Spirit bestows nothing upon her that the world esteems. For what the world esteems is but dust and ashes; it can not ennoble man, but it easily casts a shadow upon the higher goods.

2. The Holy Ghost grants Mary real treasures, valuable in the sight of Heaven. He gives her spiritual goods, immense treasures of grace and virtue. He exempts her from the law of original sin. In the beginning of her life He bestows a greater means of grace upon her than any other saint, yes, greater than all other saints have ever received. He gives her the fulness of His grace. To all this He adds special prerogatives, a sinless life, freedom from inordinate concupiscence, a constant influx of efficacious grace, the most

faithful co-operation with grace on her part, and a participation in the great work of redemption. He plants in her the riches of virtue which are quickly perfected by her charity and zeal. Thus Mary has become the most beautiful, the most perfect creature that we can even imagine.

Behold, my soul, the true value of grace, the real treasures which thou shouldst strive to accumulate. See how God values things. See what He bestows on Mary, who was elected and predestined to be the mother of the Redeemer of the world. The Holy Spirit does not bestow on her the goods of earth, though they were all at His disposal. He does not make her shine before man by her talents and accomplishments. But He distinguishes her from all the world by bestowing upon her the plenitude of spiritual riches. He unites her intimately to Himself by every grace, He makes her a perfect copy of the God-Man by the practice of every virtue in a heroic degree. Congratulate thy spiritual mother, then, on the graces and prerogatives which the Holy Spirit bestowed upon her. Thank the blessed Trinity all the days of thy life for so distinguishing thy heavenly queen. Ask the angels of heaven to unite with thee in thanking God for having thus lavished His choicest gifts upon a member of the human race. Thank God, also, for having pointed out to thee the true value of things. If all that the world prizes were of any true value, God would certainly have bestowed these things upon our blessed Lady. He loved her more than He loved all other human beings, and yet He did not bestow them upon her. They, therefore, are of no true value.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I thank Thee, for having pre-elected the blessed Virgin Mary and lavished Thy choicest blessings upon her. O Mary, my mother, I rejoice with thee on account of the prerogatives which the Holy Spirit bestowed upon thee. I unite my feeble voice to thine in praising God and I sing: "My soul doth magnify the Lord . . . Because He hath done great things to me, and holy is His name." O holy Spirit, I thank Thee for having adorned my blessed Lady above all creatures. O Mary, thou art full of grace. Teach me the true value of the riches which thou didst receive. Make me despise the transitory things of earth and strive only after supernatural grace and merit. Inflame my heart with the same love that ever burned in thy immaculate heart. Give me a share in the generosity, the zeal, the fervor, which thou didst have in God's service.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

The Holy Spirit wishes to teach man most salutary lessons by this treatment of the blessed Virgin Mary. He wishes to show man, when starting on the path of virtue, that he must despise the transitory goods of earth, and esteem the riches of grace, if he has seriously resolved to imitate Jesus Christ. The first step in the spiritual life is to despise the vanities of the world and eagerly strive after higher, supernatural riches. Here Mary shines as a model by her fidelity to grace and the practice of virtue.

1. In practical life it frequently happens that

persons direct their energies of mind and heart to the acquisition of goods that gratify the senses. Even under the religious garb often beats a heart filled with the desires of the world. Instructed by the Holy Ghost, Mary despised all earthly things, never sought them, never made any effort to acquire them.

2. In daily life most persons show little appreciation for spiritual goods, such as grace, virtue, and merit. But Mary treasured the riches of grace above all things. She was mindful of even the smallest grace and co-operated most faithfully with it. Well did Mary understand the words of Solomon: "Vanity of vanities and all is vanity." But of the things of God Mary was most desirous. "And Mary kept all these words in her heart" (*Luke ii. 51*).

Ah, my soul, thou hast but little desire for spiritual riches, because thou knowest not the price thereof. Let the example of the Blessed Virgin be thy rule of life. Take her as thy model. Dost thou desire to be a true disciple and follower of Jesus Christ according to the will of the Holy Spirit? Dost thou wish to lead a truly pious life? Despise, then, the world with all its transient splendor. In thy mind reduce earthly things to that subordinate rank which is their due. Place the highest value on those spiritual goods which are precious in the sight of the Holy Ghost, such as the truths of salvation, grace, virtue, and merit. Think more of the least action performed in God and for God than of all the treasures of the world, because it increases thy treasures in heaven. Only in this way canst thou profit by the life of thy heavenly queen. Thus alone will thy meditation on the example of Jesus Christ, and thy endeavor to imitate Him, bear

thee fruit a hundredfold with the assistance of the Holy Ghost.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O holy Spirit, Thou art love itself, for Thou laborest so diligently to apply the fruits of the redemption to the souls of men. I thank Thee with all my heart for the countless graces which Thou hast bestowed upon me. It is impossible for me to call to mind all that Thou hast already done for me. Thou hast breathed into me the breath of life. Of Thee I was born again in holy Baptism to that supernatural life which belongs to the children of God. Thou hast given me Jesus for my brother and Mary immaculate for my spiritual mother. Thou didst make me a living member of Christ's mystical body, a branch on the true vine that bears fruit for eternity. Thou didst erect Thy tabernacle in my soul and implant in my heart the seed of supernatural virtue and Thou dost water it continually with a flow of grace. O holy Spirit, Spirit of love and holiness, I thank Thee for having taken compassion on so miserable a creature as myself. When I now consider how ungrateful I have been I could almost die of shame. Yes, I repent sincerely of all my coldness, of all my indifference. Henceforth I will diligently imitate the holy Virgin Mary, my model, because she co-operated so generously with Thy grace. I desire to live henceforth only to love and serve that God who has been so good to me.

Resolution

I will never forget that the only true riches for man are the riches of grace. I will frequently, therefore, call to mind the words of my blessed

Saviour: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of man will give you" (*John* vi. 27).

O holy Spirit, teacher of wisdom, give me a true hunger and thirst for justice, that I may labor earnestly for the riches that have value in heaven. "Blessed is the man whom Thou shalt instruct, O Lord; and shalt teach him out of Thy law" (*Ps.* xciii. 12). "Conduct me, O Lord, in Thy way, and I will walk in Thy truth" (*Ps.* lxxxv. 11).

O Mary! I love thee as the most beautiful of the works of God, and I place my confidence in thee. Obtain for me the grace that I may always remember thee.

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

Mary a Model of Virtue

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

St. Augustine says, that in order to obtain more certainly and abundantly the favor of the saints, it is necessary to imitate them, for when they see us practising the virtues which they practised, then they are more moved to pray for us. The queen of the saints, and our first advocate, Mary, after she has rescued a soul from the grasp of Lucifer, and has united it to God, wishes it to begin to imitate her example, otherwise she will not be able to enrich it as she would wish with her graces, seeing it so opposed to her in conduct. Therefore Mary calls those blessed who diligently imitate her life. "Now, therefore, children, hear me; blessed are they that keep my ways." He

who loves is like, or seeks to make himself like, the person beloved, according to the proverb, "Love either finds or makes its like." Hence St. Jerome tells us that if we love Mary, we must seek to imitate her, for this is the greatest honor we can pay her. Richard says, "Those are and may call themselves true children of Mary, who strive to imitate her life." "Let the child, then, endeavor," concludes St. Bernard, "to imitate the mother if he desires her favor; for when Mary sees that he honors her as a mother she will treat and favor him as a child."

Although there is little recorded in the Scriptures of the virtues of Mary in particular, yet when they tell us that she was full of grace, it is given us to understand that she had all virtues, and in the heroic degree. So much so, that as St. Thomas says, "whereas the other saints have excelled, each in some one particular virtue, the Blessed Virgin has excelled in all, and in all has given us an example." And St. Ambrose also says, "Such was Mary, that her life alone is the example for all." And he adds: "Let the virginity and life of Mary be to you as an image, in which the form of virtue shines forth. From thence obtain the model of your life, what you should correct, what avoid, and what retain."

O mother of mercy, since thou art as compassionate, and hast so great a desire to do me good, and to satisfy my requests, I to-day have recourse to thy mercy, that thou mayest grant my petition. Let others ask what they will, health of body, wealth, or temporal advantages; I come to ask of thee, O Lady, those things which thou thyself dost most desire of me, and which are most conformable and most pleasing to the Sacred Heart. Thou who wast so humble, obtain for me humility and

love of contempt. Thou who wast so patient in the difficulties of this life, obtain for me patience in things contrary to my wishes. Thou who didst overflow with the love of God, obtain for me the gift of holy and pure love. Thou who wast all charity toward mankind, make me charitable to all, and especially toward those who are my enemies. Thou who wast wholly united to the divine will, obtain for me a perfect conformity with the will of God in all its dispositions concerning me. Thou, in a word, art the most holy of all creatures; O Mary, obtain for me the grace to become a saint. Thy love is unailing; thou canst and wilt obtain all things for me. Nothing, then, can hinder me from receiving thy graces but my neglect to invoke thee or my want of confidence in thy intercession. These two greatest gifts I ask from thee; from thee let me receive them; from thee do I confidently hope for them. O Mary, my mother, my hope, my love, my life, my refuge, my consolation!

EXAMINATION

Into Past Resolutions

The humble publican found favor with God, the proud pharisee did not. The publican appealed to God's mercy, the pharisee abused it. Have I followed the publican or the pharisee in the past? My conscience and the progress I have made will tell. Have I presumed on God's mercy? He is eternal and may yet punish me. Have I tried to serve two masters? Have I regarded heaven rather as a gift than a reward? Have my daily examinations been made through routine? Have my acts of contrition been a mere formality?

Have I even said with the pharisee, "I thank God that I am not like the rest"? Have I really been honest with God? Have I always had a good will to advance in recollection, prayer, penance, humility, patience, and charity? or have I found it easier to discover the mote in my neighbor's eye than the beam in my own? Will Jesus accept the excuse that I always forgot my good resolution? Have I left my purpose of amendment in the confessional? Have I been lacking in sincerity and good will? Have I been willing to triumph with Jesus but not to labor, suffer, and pray with Him? Have I practically sought more modern guides than Christ crucified? Have I allowed Satan to delude me, my passions to dominate me? Have I tried to harmonize the ways of the world and the spirit of Jesus Christ? Have I been more concerned about temporal than about spiritual treasures? Have I contented myself with being outwardly decorous, without striving after the perfection of the angelic virtue? Have I been obedient merely through human respect? How often did I consider Mary as a model of every virtue and a perfect copy of her divine Son? Is my faith more theoretical than practical? Is my virtue without the foundation of humility? without the safeguards of mortification? without the nourishment of solid piety?

Protestation for a Happy Death. (See p. 77.)

HYMN

The Love of Jesus for the Soul

(From St. Alphonsus)

Oh, it were joy and high reward,
 Transpierced with wounds of love, to die
 For that most lovely, loving God,
 For whom all hearts should sigh.

THE DAY OF RESOLUTION

Such is His beauty, such His grace,
That stars of heaven, or gems of earth,
Compared with that divinest face
Lose their loveliness and worth.

He seeks His prey with skill divine,
He draws His bow, the arrow flies;
The heart is pierced, and forced to pine
With love for Him for whom it dies.

To wound those souls He longs to gain,
The charm of varied guise He found,
And all to make those hearts remain
Close to His heart forever bound.

For this the Word Divine appears
On earth, a babe, so poor, so weak;
And from our hearts, with infant tears,
All love, He comes our love to seek.

In youth He next is seen again,
A lovely humble artisan,
And God's own Son does not disdain
The vilest services of man.

At last, a criminal in chains
Himself unto His spouse He shows;
And thus His life of varied pains
He ends amid the direst woes.

His love does move; in form of bread
To give Himself He yet desires;
There with Himself the soul is fed
That loves and to His love aspires.

His love knows every winning way;
He spares no toil, He fears no pain
To make another heart His prey,
Or truer love from it to gain.

Sometimes He loves to banish fear,
With all the sweetness of a spouse;
Anon He shows a look severe;
'Tis all fresh fervor to arouse.

Of old He deigned my heart to woo,
And bound me with love's fiery chains,
Then seized my heart His hostage true,
And jealous still His prey retains.

Then silence, wicked world! depart!
Seek not esteem or love of mine;
Another lover owns my heart,
His charms are sweeter far than thine.

THE FIFTH DAY

The Day of Faith

Dedicated to the Spirit of Counsel

Disposition.—Confidence.

Motto.—“Lo, the kingdom of God is within you” (*Luke xvii. 21*).

The Special End proposed to the soul to-day is to realize the teaching of faith, so necessary in following Jesus as the guide and Mary as the model in striving after the CHRISTIAN IDEAL in life.

Reading.—“Religious Obedience,” from your Rules and Constitutions.

PRAYER TO OBTAIN THE GIFT OF COUNSEL

Holy Spirit, divine consoler! I adore Thee as my true God, just as I adore God the Father and God the Son; I bless Thee by uniting myself to the blessings that Thou dost receive from the angels and seraphs. I offer Thee my whole heart, and I render Thee heartfelt thanks for all the benefits that Thou hast bestowed and dost unceasingly bestow upon the world. Thou who art the author of all supernatural gifts, and who didst enrich with immense favors the soul of the blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of God, I beseech Thee to visit me by Thy grace and Thy love, and to grant me the gift of Counsel, in order that I may be able to choose what is most suitable to my spiritual advancement, and to discover all the

snares and artifices of the evil spirit who tempts me.

One *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, *Glory be to the Father* three times.

THOUGHTS AND EJACULATIONS

When shall I see myself altogether Thine, my God?

Lord, who am I that Thou shouldst desire to be loved by me?

I desire all that Thou dost will and that alone.

Toward Thee, my God, oh, how ungrateful have I been!

I consecrate the remainder of my life to Thee.

O my Jesus, draw me entirely to Thyself.

Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me!

FIRST MEDITATION

The Birth of Jesus—The Inscrutable Ways of God

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

MARY brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger. My soul, enter the stable of Bethlehem in spirit and consider the scene before thee. All that thou seest bears the stamp of abject poverty. In the manger lies a little helpless being wrapped in swaddling clothes. Behold, this tiny babe is God Himself! All the universe is nothing compared to that frail being in the manger. Open now the eyes of faith and thou wilt see all the in-

habitants of heaven in this stable. The heavenly Father regards with great complacency and says: "This is my well-beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The Holy Ghost pours out on this child the fulness of His grace. The heavenly choirs bow low in adoration and sing: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of Sabaoth." "Glory be to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will." Of this child the Apostle wrote: "In Him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations, or principalities or powers; all things were created by Him and in Him. And He is before all, and by Him all things consist" (*Col. i. 16-17*). The eye of sense beholds only poverty and misery, but the eye of faith sees wonderful, exalted, divine treasures. How sublime were not the prophecies of the divine Saviour, and how seemingly poor and lowly His appearance. How different from what men expected! And yet God had done even more than He had foretold. But this could be grasped and understood only by those who humbly believed. Most of the Jews did not penetrate the appearances, and consequently did not find salvation in Jesus. Few then, however, looked at things with the eye of faith and found happiness for time and eternity through Christ.

O my soul, beg this infant for an increase of faith, that thou mayest see things at Bethlehem as the angels see them. Behold, God the center of all happiness, the source of all good, the mighty ruler of the universe, has become a weak, helpless, poor babe! O wonder of wonders! Prostrate thyself in adoration before this manifestation of God's boundless love for man and exclaim with the Apostle: "To the King of ages,

immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (1 *Tim.* i. 17). Indeed, my soul, how different are God's ways from man's ways! Impress this great truth indelibly upon thy mind. Thank God for teaching it to thee in so marvelous a manner. If God had not done it, who could have thought it possible for Him, by whom and in whom and through whom all things were made, to become humility, poverty, and suffering incarnated! And yet it has been done. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." Does not the Holy Spirit wish hereby to teach thee a great lesson? Certainly He does. He cries out to thee: If thou seekest God, if thou seekest only God, God alone in all thy actions, then stop not at appearances. Penetrate with the eye of faith the outer, unseemingly poor aspect, and thou shalt always and everywhere discover wonderful treasures in the ways of God, treasures of wisdom and grace and virtue which he can never discover who regards only the external semblances.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I thank Thee for the great lesson which Thou hast taught me by the incarnation of Thy divine Son. I thank Thee for initiating me into the secrets of Thy wonderful ways. I regret that I have not earlier sought to view things as Thou dost view them. It was on account of my pride that I was blind to the supernatural. It was owing to my want of faith that I was content to see things with bodily eyes and did not think of penetrating to the treasures of the interior. But henceforth I desire to look at things only with the eye of faith, to see things only as Thou seest them. Give me humility, which is the foundation

of the spiritual life, the first requisite for a lively faith. Enliven my faith, that I may in all things henceforth penetrate beyond that which my senses show me. I desire to live and think, to will and act, entirely in conformity with Thee.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

It is not sufficient for thee to view things in general with the eye of faith, in order to lead a spiritual life. Thou must go into detail. Whenever God approaches man to bestow a special grace upon him, He almost invariably chooses a form and manner that is not in accordance with man's natural expectations. His faith must, therefore, penetrate the humble appearances to find the golden kernel. "Blessed is he that is not scandalized in Me," said Our Saviour. The Holy Spirit says the same to thee in regard to all that He does for thy sanctification and perfection.

1. How unbecoming, according to human reason, was the birth of the God-Man upon earth? How lowly His hidden life at Nazareth? How commonplace most of His public life? What an apparent failure His passion and death? And yet what marvels, what abysses of wonders are concealed under this humble exterior? Ah, "Blessed is he that is not scandalized in Me."

2. What is more wonderful or sublime than the Church which Christ has established and which the Holy Ghost animates and directs? What treasures of truth, grace, and satisfaction are hidden in her? And yet how insignificant her external form? Peter, a poor fisherman, is the rock on which the Church is built.

Twelve humble apostles are the pillars of this Church. Humble and helpless is her external appearance. She is persecuted, reviled, hampered, treated like an outcast. And yet, "Blessed is he that is not scandalized in Me."

3. Think of the sacraments! Their matter is the simplest elements: water, olive oil, chrism, bread, and wine. But what treasures of grace, what heavenly riches do not these appearances conceal. Angels marvel at these words of divine compassion and love. But unfaithful men mock at the external, they consider the form ridiculous. Ah, "Blessed is he that is not scandalized in Me."

4. How sublime the dignity of the priesthood! How great the power of the priest! He stands as mediator between God and man. The Son of God obeys him in the Eucharist. He can daily renew the sacrifice of Calvary. He has power to loosen the bonds of sin. How sublime, how heavenly all this? But how mean, how poor, how defective after the external form, the human instrument! But still, "Blessed is he that is not scandalized in Me."

5. What more sublime in the Church than the religious state! What is grander than striving after perfection! than the practice of the evangelical counsels! What exalted idea hadst thou not of the religious life before thou didst enter! To live among saints, to witness heroic virtue, to be flooded with spiritual consolations, to lead in reality the life of an angel, such were thy expectations! But, alas, thou didst forget that an imperfect human heart beats under the religious habit. Then, thou wert scandalized at many things, thought the Superiors so human, even so worldly-minded at times, guided perhaps by igno-

ble principles. And yet the Saviour says again: "Blessed is he that is not scandalized in Me."

6. In fact, my soul, God always approaches us with His grace in a manner that we do not expect. "His ways are not our ways." This is true, as well, of the conduct of the Holy Ghost in regard to every soul. Were ever thy prayers heard in exactly the way thou didst expect? How often in time of unjust suspicion, misrepresentation, and persecution wert thou perhaps tempted to despair? And yet, "Blessed is he that is not scandalized in Me."

It is scarcely necessary for thee, my soul, to bring this truth more home to thee by a personal application. The Holy Spirit is bringing it home to thee daily, almost hourly. Thank Him for His goodness. Accustom thyself to look beyond the appearances, and thou wilt always detect the finger of God and not be scandalized in Him.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O holy Spirit, I thank Thee for this hint which Thou givest me in regard to the spiritual life. I grieve exceedingly for having so frequently been satisfied and deceived by the appearances, by the shell, and not sought the precious kernel of divine grace hidden within. O dear infant Jesus, write upon my heart the lesson Thou teachest me by Thy appearance upon earth! Make me grasp fully that God's ways are not as ours, that it is necessary for the just man to live by faith to co-operate with God's holy will, and thus receive plentifully the grace which the Holy Spirit prepares for him.

Resolution

As a child of faith I will endeavor to live in a spirit of faith. I will not listen to the voice of nature, but ask myself in all things, "What does faith teach me?" O God, who hast taught the hearts of men by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, grant that we may in the same spirit understand what is right and always enjoy His consolations. O good Jesus! never permit me to be separated from Thee. O Mary! look on me and draw me all to God.

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

II. Sentiments of a Lively Faith

(From St. Alphonsus)

O ye atheists, who believe not in God, fools that ye are; if you do not believe that there is a God, tell me who created you? How can you imagine that there are creatures existing, without a previous power having created them? This world which you admire, governed as it is in so beautiful and constant an order, could chance, which has neither order nor mind, ever have made it? Poor wretches! you try to persuade yourselves that the soul dies like the body; but, O God, what will you say, when in the next world you find that your souls are immortal, and that throughout eternity you will be unable to repair the ruin you have incurred?

But if you believe that there is a God, you must also believe that there is a true religion; and if you do not believe that the religion of the Roman Catholic Church is the true one, tell me which is the true one? Perhaps that of the Pa-

gans, who admit many gods, and so destroy and deny all of them. Perhaps that of the Mahometans, which is a mixture of fables, of follies, and of contradictions. Perhaps the religion of the Jews, who, indeed, had at one time the true faith, but because they rejected their expected redeemer, who taught the new law of grace, they have lost their faith, their country, and all. Perhaps that of those who, separating themselves from our Church, which was first founded by Jesus Christ, and to whom He promised that it should never fail, have confused all revealed dogmas in such a way that the belief of each one is contrary to that of his neighbor.

Ah! it is most evident that our faith is the only true one. Either there is faith, and then there can be no true religion but ours; or there is no faith, and then all religions are false. But this can not be; for if there is a God, there must be a true faith and a true religion.

But how much greater fools are those Christians who hold the true faith, and live as if they did not believe it! They believe that there is a God, a just judge, and that there is a paradise and an eternal hell; and yet they live as if there were no judgment, no heaven, no hell, no eternity, no God.

O God, how can Christians believe in Jesus Christ, believe in a God born in a stable, a God living obscurely in a carpenter's shop for thirty years, working for His livelihood every day as a simple carpenter; in fine, how can they believe in a God nailed on a cross, and dying consumed with grief; and not only not love Him, but even make a mockery of Him by their sins?

O holy faith, enlighten all those poor creatures who are running to eternal perdition! But this

light does ever shine forth and enlighten all men, both the faithful and the unbelievers; "the true light, which enlighteneth every man." How is it, then, that so many are lost? O cursed sin, thou dost blind the minds of so many poor souls, who open their eyes when they enter eternity; but then they can no more remedy their error!

How is it, my Jesus, that so many of Thy servants have shut themselves up in caves and deserts, to attend only to their salvation; so many have retired to closets, in order to live in poverty and unknown to the world, to make sure of their eternal salvation; so many martyrs have left all; so many tender virgins have renounced marriage, and have embraced such torments as the rack, have braved the ax, the coat of mail, the red-hot gridiron, and the most cruel deaths, rather than lose Thy grace; while so many others live in sin and far from Thee for months and years?

I thank Thee, my Jesus, for the light Thou givest me, by which Thou makest me know that the goods of this world are but smoke, vanity, and deceit, and that Thou art the true and only good.

My God, I thank Thee that Thou hast given me this faith, and that Thou hast made it so clear to me by the fulfilment of prophecies, by the truth of miracles, by the constancy of martyrs, by the sanctity of the doctrine, and by the wonderful propagation of the same throughout all the world; so that if it were not true, it would be impossible not to say that Thou hadst deceived me, in proving it to me by the numerous testimonies that Thou hast given me of it.

I believe all that the Church teaches me to believe, because Thou hast revealed all. Nor do

I pretend to comprehend intellectually those mysteries which are above my mind; it is enough that Thou hast said so. I pray Thee to increase Thy faith in me.

II. A Dart of Fire—The Love of God

(From St. Alphonsus)

“The Goodness and Kindness of God our Saviour Appeared” (Titus iii. 4).

God has loved man from all eternity. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love. But,” says St. Bernard, “before the Incarnation of the Word the divine power appeared in creating the world, and the divine wisdom in governing it; but when the Son of God became man, then was made manifest the love which God had for men.” And, in fact, after seeing Jesus Christ go through so afflicted a life and so painful a death, we should be offering Him an insult if we doubted the great love which He bears us. Yes, He does surely love us; and because He loves us He wishes to be loved by us. “And Christ died for all, that they also who now live may not now live to themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”

Ah, my Saviour, when shall I begin to understand the love which Thou hast had for me? Hitherto, instead of loving Thee, I have repaid Thee with offenses and contempt of Thy graces, but since Thou art infinite in goodness I will not lose confidence. Thou hast promised to pardon him who repents; for Thy mercy’s sake fulfil Thy promise to me. I have dishonored Thee by putting Thee aside to follow my own pleasures; but

now I grieve for it from the bottom of my heart, and there is no sorrow that afflicts me more than the remembrance of having offended Thee, my sovereign good; pardon me and unite me entirely to Thee by an eternal bond of love, that I may not leave Thee any more, and that I may only live to love and obey Thee, even as Thou didst obey Mary and Joseph during Thy hidden life. Yes, my Jesus, for Thee alone will I live, Thee only will I love. Once I left Thee for creatures, now I leave all to give myself wholly to Thee. I love Thee, O God of my soul, I love Thee more than myself. O Mary, mother of God, obtain for me the grace to be faithful to God till death.

OPTIONAL READING

II. *Mary, Model of Faith*

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

“Mary is justly called the mother of faith,” says St. Irenæus, “since she repaired by her faith that loss which Eve caused by her incredulity. Eve,” says Tertullian, “because she chose to believe the serpent rather than God, brought death into the world; but our Queen, believing the word of the angel, that she, remaining a virgin, was to become the Mother of the Lord, brought salvation to the world.” For St. Augustine says that Mary, giving her consent to the incarnation of the Word, by means of her faith opened paradise to men. Also Richard, commenting on the words of St. Basil, “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife,” says: “This is the believing woman by whose faith the unbelieving Adam and

all his posterity are saved." Hence, on account of her faith, Elizabeth called the Virgin blessed: "Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished in thee that were spoken by the Lord." And St. Augustine added: "Mary is more blessed by receiving the faith of Christ than by conceiving the flesh of Christ."

Father Suarez says that the holy Virgin had more faith than all men and all the angels. She saw her Son in the stable of Bethlehem, and believed Him the Creator of the world. She saw him flying from Herod, and yet believed that He was the King of kings. She saw Him born, and believed Him eternal. She saw Him poor and in need of food, and believed Him to be the Lord of the universe; laid on straw, and she believed Him omnipotent. She observed that He did not speak, and she believed Him to be the infinite wisdom. She heard Him weeping, and she believed Him to be the joy of paradise. Finally, she saw Him in death, despised and crucified, but although the faith of others might have wavered, Mary remained firm in the belief that He was God. St. Antoninus says, remarking on the words, "There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother:" "Mary stood supported by her faith, which she retained firm, in the divinity of Christ. And it is for this reason," says the saint, "that in the office of *Tenebrae* only one candle is left lighted." St. Leo, when treating on this subject, applies to the Blessed Virgin this passage of Proverbs: "Her lamp shall not be put out in the night." On the words of Isaias, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the Gentiles there was not a man with me," St. Thomas remarks: "He says a man, on account of

the Blessed Virgin, in whom faith never failed." Whence the blessed Albert the Great says that Mary practised a most perfect faith. She had faith in a most excellent degree; and even when the disciples were doubting she did not doubt. Mary, therefore, by her great faith merited to become "the light of all the faithful," as St. Methodius calls her. By St. Cyril of Alexandria she is called "the queen of the true faith"; and Holy Church herself attributes to the Blessed Virgin, by the merit of her faith, the destruction of all heresies, "Rejoice, O Virgin Mary, for thou alone hast destroyed all heresies throughout the world." St. Thomas of Villanova also says, explaining the words of the Holy Spirit, "Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, with one of thy eyes," that the eyes signify faith, by which the Virgin gave the greatest pleasure to the Son of God. St. Ildephonsus exhorts us to imitate the faith of Mary. But how are we to imitate this faith of Mary? Faith is at the same time a gift and a virtue. It is a gift of God, in so far as it is a light which God bestows on the soul, and it is also a virtue in so far as it is exercised by the soul. Hence faith is given us not only to serve as a rule of belief, but also of action. Therefore St. Gregory says: "He truly believes, who, by his works, practises what he believes." And St. Augustine: "Thou sayest, 'I believe;' do what thou sayest, and it is faith." And this is to have a lively faith, namely, to live according to our belief. My just man liveth by faith. It was thus the Blessed Virgin lived, very differently from those who do not live according to what they believe, whose faith is dead. Diogenes went about seeking a man upon earth; but God seems seeking a Christian among the many faith-

ful: For very few are they who have the works of faith, the greater part have only the name; but to those should be said what Alexander said to that cowardly soldier who was also named Alexander: "Change either your conduct or your name." But, as Father Avila used to say: "It were better that these miserable creatures were put in confinement as madmen, believing as they do that a happy eternity is prepared for him who lives well, and an unhappy eternity for him who lives ill, and yet living as if they did not believe it." St. Augustine therefore exhorts us to see things with Christian eyes, that is, to see according to faith. For St. Teresa was accustomed to say that all sins arise from a want of faith. Let us therefore implore the Blessed Virgin, that by the merit of her faith she may obtain for us a lively faith. O Lady, increase my faith.

II. The Object of Mental Prayer

(From St. Alphonsus)

In order to practise mental prayer or meditation well, and to make it truly profitable to the soul, we must well ascertain the ends for which we attempt it. First, we must meditate in order to unite ourselves more completely to God. It is not so much good thoughts in the intelligence, as good acts of the will, or holy desires, that unite us to God; and such are the acts that we perform in meditation, acts of humility, confidence, self-sacrifice, resignation, and especially of love and of repentance for our sins. "Acts of love," says St. Teresa, "are those that keep the soul inflamed with holy love."

Secondly, we must meditate in order to obtain from God by prayer the graces that are necessary in order to enable us to advance in the way of salvation, to avoid sin, and to take the means that will lead us to perfection. The best fruit, then, that comes from meditation is the exercise of prayer. Almighty God, ordinarily speaking, does not give grace to any but those who pray. St. Gregory writes, "God desires to be entreated, He desires to be constrained, He desires to be, as it were, conquered by importunity." Observe his words, "to be conquered by importunity." At times, in order to obtain graces of special value, it is not enough simply to pray; we must pray urgently, and, as it were, compel God by our prayers to give them. It is true that at all times the Lord is ready to hear us; but at the time of meditation, when we are most truly in converse with God, He is most bountiful in giving us His aid.

Above all we must have recourse to meditation, in order to obtain perseverance and the holy love of God. Final perseverance is not a single grace, but a chain of graces, to which must correspond the chain of our prayers; if we cease to pray, God will cease to give us His help, and we shall perish. He who does not practise meditation will find the greatest difficulty in persevering in grace till death.

Thus must we be urgent with prayers to obtain from God His holy love. St. Francis de Sales said that all virtues come in union with holy love. "All good things come to me together with her." Let our prayer for perseverance and love, therefore, be continual; and in order to pray with greater confidence, let us ever bear in mind the promise made us by Jesus Christ, that whatever

we seek from God through the merits of His Son, He will give it to us. Let us, then, pray, and pray always, if we would that God should make us rich in every blessing. Let us pray for ourselves, and, if we have zeal for the glory of God, let us pray also for others. It is a thing most pleasing to God to be entreated for unbelievers and heretics, and all sinners. "Let the people confess to Thee, O God, let all the people confess to Thee." Let us say, "O Lord! make them know Thee, make them love Thee." We read in the lives of St. Teresa and St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi how God inspired these holy women to pray for sinners. And to prayer for sinners let us also add prayers for the holy souls in purgatory.

Thirdly, we must apply ourselves to meditation, not for the sake of spiritual consolations, but chiefly in order to learn what is the will of God concerning us. "Speak, Lord," said Samuel to God, "Thy servant heareth." Lord, make me to know what Thou wilt, that I may do it. Some persons continue meditation as long as consolations continue; but when these cease, they leave off meditation. It is true that God is accustomed to comfort His beloved souls at the time of meditation, and to give them some foretaste of the delights He prepares in heaven for those who love Him. These are the things which the lovers of the world do not comprehend; they who have no taste except for earthly delights despise those that are celestial. Oh, if they were wise, how surely would they leave their pleasures to shut themselves up in retirement, to speak alone with God! Meditation is nothing more than a conversation between the soul and God; the soul pours forth to Him its affections, its desires, its fears, its requests, and God speaks to the

heart, causing it to know this goodness, and the love which He bears it, and what it must do to please Him. "I will lead her into solitude, and speak to her heart."

But these delights are not constant, and, for the most part, holy souls experience much dryness of spirit in meditation. "With dryness and temptations," says St. Teresa, "the Lord makes proof of those who love Him." And she adds: "Even if this dryness lasts through life, let not the soul leave off meditation; the time will come when all will be rewarded." The time of dryness is the time of gaining the greatest rewards; and when we find ourselves apparently without fervor, without good desires, and, as it were, unable to do a good act, let us humble ourselves, and resign ourselves, for this very meditation will be more fruitful than others. It is enough, then, to say, if we can say nothing more, "O Lord! help me, have mercy on me, abandon me not!" Let us also have recourse to our comforter, the most holy Mary. Happy he who does not leave off meditation in the hour of desolation. God will make him abound in graces; and therefore let him say:

O my God, how can I expect to be comforted by Thee! I, who until this hour have deserved to be in hell forever separated from Thee, and deprived of the power of loving Thee any more! I do not, therefore, grieve, O my God! that Thou deprivest me of Thy consolations; I do not deserve them; I do not pretend to them. It is enough for me to know that thou wilt never repel a soul that loves Thee. Deprive me not of the power of loving Thee, and then do with me what Thou wilt. If Thou wilt that I thus continue afflicted and desolate even till death, and through all eternity, I am content; it is enough that I

can say with truth, "O God, I love Thee, I love Thee!" Mary, Mother of God, have pity on me.

SECOND MEDITATION

The Flight into Egypt—Submission to God's Decrees

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

THE Holy Spirit in directing souls often conceals His instructions that they may honor and glorify Him by submitting absolutely and unreservedly to His inspirations. He demands a threefold homage, the sacrifice of mind, of heart, and of external conduct.

1. Behold Joseph and Mary fleeing with the divine child into Egypt. How perfectly do they sacrifice their understanding to the command of Heaven? According to the word of the angel, they are to depart instantly for a distant and hostile country. This journey takes them through a vast desert. They are without means of subsistence or defence, but they do not hesitate. They place themselves unreservedly in the hands of divine Providence. "And Joseph arose and took the child and his mother by night and retired into Egypt" (*Matt. ii. 14*). In like manner should we conform to the will of the Holy Ghost in the dark, trying hours of life. We must resolutely set aside every thought of criticism and useless reflection, conform our reason entirely to the dispensations of God, and with a lively faith and childlike confidence place ourselves entirely at

the disposal of the Holy Ghost. We must be convinced that whatever God does is done well.

Behold, my soul, a most perfect submission to the decrees of almighty God. Moses and Jeremias make humble protestations, but Joseph and Mary submit absolutely; not a word escapes their lips in regard to the difficult command. Without taking leave of their friends, without making any extraordinary preparation for the journey, they depart immediately. They trust implicitly in divine Providence. They had long accustomed themselves to submit absolutely to the will of God. My soul, the Holy Spirit demands the same of thee, if thou wishest to make progress on the path of perfection. Thou shouldst in all circumstances, even when things look dark and there is no human hope, unreservedly follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit with an unshaken faith. "Whatever God does He does well." In fact, God often conceals His designs on purpose that His servants may have an opportunity to follow Him blindly, and thus to glorify Him and gather a treasure of merit for themselves. Hold fast, then, to that truth of faith which teaches that the Holy Spirit, this director of souls, ordains and carries out everything for thy good.

It will profit thee little, my soul, to accept with a general faith the intervention of the Holy Spirit in the important affairs of thy life. Thou must apply it especially to the daily commonplace affairs of life to make real progress in spirituality. Thou wilt never lead a truly interior life until thou dost recognize and adore the will of God in even the most ordinary affairs. Thou must regard all things in the light of faith, as means which the Holy Spirit employs to further thy sanctification. Thou must, therefore, resolutely

repress all contradictory and criticizing thoughts, which easily arise, and subject thy understanding unreservedly to the wisdom of the Most High. Thou wilt then be able to say with thy Saviour: Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight." Such conduct is in reality an homage to God, an homage of the understanding made by faith which is more precious in proportion as thou dost not discover the finger of God in the daily affairs of life.

Now, my soul, must thou not confess that thou hast often failed in this regard? How little dost thou think of God! How little of the working of the Holy Spirit, who directs all the trivial affairs of daily life to thy sanctification! How often dost thou criticize in thought, even in word? How frequently art thou anxious about this or that, distressing thyself by disquieting thoughts instead of saying in a spirit of faith, "God wills it so!"

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, when I look back upon my past life I must confess that though I have believed in a general way in thy loving providence, I have frequently acted as though I did not believe. I have, in consequence, failed in that blind submission which Thou expectest of those who desire really to please Thee. O God, I regret my want of faith. I am sorry because I have lost so many opportunities of giving Thee honor and furthering my sanctification. Henceforth, I desire to subject my understanding entirely to the teaching of holy faith. I believe, Lord, help Thou my unbelief. Increase my faith, O Lord, that I may in all things, great and small, submit blindly to Thy guidance.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

My soul, the Holy Spirit demands not only the homage of thy mind but also the homage of thy heart and exterior conduct. Joseph and Mary made this submission when they readily and joyfully executed the angel's command. Joseph foresees full well the sacrifices that this long perilous journey will cost him. Mary fully comprehends that the journey and abode in Egypt will cost her much. But both desire only that the will of God may be entirely fulfilled in their regard. They not only sacrifice to Him their will; they are likewise perfectly satisfied with the command of Heaven and confide implicitly in the guidance of their heavenly father.

My soul, the Holy Spirit says to thee, "My son, give Me thy heart; and let thy eyes keep My ways" (*Prov.* xxiii. 26). Can it be said of thee, in fact, as it is said of Mary and Joseph, that thou hast but one thought, but one desire—that the will of God may be entirely accomplished in thee and by thee? Canst thou say in the words of the Psalmist: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready"? Think, my soul, on the various difficulties that come daily upon thee according to the will of God! Think of those that oppress and almost crush thee. Think of the petty vexations that so often annoy thee! Think of those that thy vocation brings with it! Think especially of the trials that others cause thee! How dost thou stand these trials? Dost thou glorify the Holy Spirit in them by an absolute submission of thy will and conduct? Dost thou never murmur and complain? Dost thou never permit impatience to arise in thy heart and even to mani-

fest itself in thy conduct? Dost thou never grow sad and despondent? Dost thou really think at all times, "My heart is ready"? Dost thou never torment thyself about the future? Art thou really convinced that the Holy Spirit arranges and ordains everything for thy good?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God of my soul, have mercy on me, a sinful creature! Alas, I who have received so many tokens of Thy love, so many graces and special blessings, I who have consecrated myself entirely to Thy service, have so repeatedly rebelled against it. I have consecrated my will to Thy service and behold I have sought to do my own. I pray daily, "Thy will be done," and am the first to murmur and complain! I have promised to seek Thy honor and glory in all things and at all times, and yet do not honor Thee by my daily conduct. How often, O holy Spirit, have I resisted Thy holy operations for my daily sanctification! How frequently have I acted contrary to Thy holy decrees. How often have I worried and fretted at the little trials of life which Thou didst send me! How easily did I grow impatient, murmur, and complain when Thou wast secretly trying to fill my soul with grace and heavenly sweetness! How willingly do I criticize every one, even my Superiors, when Thou art using them to make me advance in virtue! Alas, alas, how blind, how shortsighted I have been! How little glory I have given Thee! How little progress I have made? How little I have lived by faith and how much have I done from merely natural motives and even from passion!

O holy Spirit, Spirit of love and goodness, sanctifier of souls, have patience with me! I de-

test my past worldly conduct. I consecrate my heart entirely to Thee. Henceforth I desire to love Thee alone, to live only for Thee, only to give Thee pleasure. I desire to resign myself entirely into Thy hands. Now that I know what is meant by conformity to Thy holy will, I desire to pass every moment of my life in accordance with it. "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready" (*Ps. cvii. 2*).

Resolution

I will surrender myself with childlike confidence to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and think in all adversities: "Whatever God does is done well." He hath done all things well. "Shall not my soul be subject to God? for from Him is my salvation" (*Ps. lxi. 2*). "Blessed be the Lord day by day; the God of our salvation will make our journey prosperous to us" (*Ps. lxxvii. 20*). My Jesus, grant me Thy love, and I ask Thee for nothing more. O Virgin Mary, draw us wholly to God; thou canst do so; do so for the love that thou hast for thy Son, Jesus Christ.

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

Sentiments of Conformity to the Will of God

(From St. Alphonsus)

My Jesus, every time that I say "Blessed be God," or "May the divine will be done," I intend to accept all that Thou hast ordained for me both in time and eternity.

I desire no other office, no other habitation, no other clothing, no other food, no other health, but what it shall please Thee to send me.

I wish for no other employment, no other talent, no other fortune than that which Thou hast destined for me. If Thou dost will that I should not succeed in my affairs, that my undertakings should fail, that my possessions should be taken away from me—this also is my will.

If Thou wishest me to be despised, looked upon with ill-will, that others should be preferred to me, that I should be defamed and ill-treated even by my dearest friends—this is my will also.

If Thou dost will that I should be made poor in all things, that I should be an exile from my country, imprisoned in a dungeon, and should be forced to live in continual sorrow and affliction—this also is my will.

If Thou dost will that I should be always ill, in pain, and afflicted, obliged to remain in my bed abandoned by all—this I desire also.

May all be as Thou pleasest, and as long as Thou pleasest; I put my very life into Thy hands, and accept whatever death Thou hast destined for me; and I also accept the death of those dear to me, and all that Thou shalt ordain.

I also unite my will to Thine in all that regards my spiritual welfare. I desire to love Thee in this life with all my strength, and to attain paradise, that I may love Thee as the seraphim love Thee; but I am content with that which Thou dost will for me. If Thou dost will to give me but one single degree of love, of grace, of glory, I wish for no more, because it is Thy will. I value more the fulfilment of Thy will than anything that I could gain for myself.

In fine, my God, dispose of me and my affairs as it pleases Thee. Look not to my pleasure; for I desire nothing but what is in conformity to Thy will. Whether Thy treatment of me be severe or

gentle, pleasant or unpleasant to me, I accept and embrace it, because both the one and the other come to me from Thee.

My Jesus, I accept besides, in a special manner, my death, with all the pains that shall accompany it, according to Thy will, where Thou wilt, and at the time Thou wilt. I unite them, my Saviour, with Thy death; and I offer them to Thee in testimony of the love I bear Thee. I desire to die to please Thee, and to fulfil Thy holy will.

PARTICULAR EXAMINATION

On Confidence in Following the Holy Ghost

Do I realize:

That the Holy Spirit knows all things?

That He is most concerned about my welfare?

That I am unworthy of His favor?

That I ought therefore to confide in His guidance?

That my success depends on this confidence?

Have I implicitly confided in His teaching?

Have I implicitly followed His inspiration?

Am I prepared to live by faith alone?

Am I resolved to live entirely by faith?

Say an act of contrition for faults, and one of thanksgiving for success, and renew your sentiments of confidence in the Holy Spirit.

THIRD MEDITATION

The Hidden Life of Jesus—Perfect Obedience

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

MY SOUL, consider the motives that fill thee with a high idea of the virtue of Obedience and that ought to prompt thee to practise it with ever increasing fervor.

The example of the Son of God made man is the first motive. This God-Man the Holy Spirit proposes to thee as thy guide and exemplar. He places this model before thee as a living book of holiness. St. Luke records the long, hidden life of Jesus at Nazareth with these simple but significant words: "And He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them And He advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men" (*Luke* ii. 51-2). The Holy Spirit enlightened and directed St. Luke in writing, and he emphasizes holy obedience as the predominating virtue of the hidden life of Jesus. Go in spirit to the home at Nazareth and observe these three holy persons, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, living in great seclusion. Here our Saviour practises obedience in the most perfect degree. He is *subject* to His holy mother and His foster-father. He was, therefore, not only obedient, but so perfectly subject to them that He lived entirely according to their desires. Consider this life a little in detail so as to have a clear idea of this obedience.

1. Who was this child, living in perfect subjection? He was the only begotten Son of the

eternal Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, the creator of the universe.

2. Whom does He obey? He obeys His own creatures, who owe Him all they are and have.

3. In what does He obey? In all things without exception. He lives entirely according to the will of Mary and Joseph.

4. How does He obey? He obeys most punctually. He obeys willingly, even joyfully, no matter how difficult the task imposed upon Him.

Thou, my soul, hast voluntarily taken upon thyself special obligations in addition to the laws of God and His Church. Is this example of the Saviour obeying His creatures in all things not sufficient to inspire thee with a love for obedience? Should this example not move thee willingly to embrace all the trials and burdens of holy obedience and become like thy model and thus really please the Holy Spirit? If the example of thy Saviour would not move thee to practise holy obedience what is there that could induce thee? Look back upon thy past life a moment and see how thou hast practised this holy virtue. Thou art only a poor creature. Hast thou that punctuality, that whole-souledness, that joy in obeying which Jesus had? Dost thou never murmur or complain? Dost thou perhaps even dare to disobey in those very things that thou hast deliberately promised? Or dost thou even go so far in thy disobedience as to violate the laws of God and His Church? Hast thou not, alas, frequently underestimated this virtue, though Jesus was obedient even to the death of the cross? though He said of Himself, "my meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me"?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God of my soul, I humbly prostrate myself before Thee to acknowledge my many sins against holy obedience. It is true that I have freely taken upon myself the special obligation of this virtue. I did this to imitate my divine model and acquire perfection. Now, alas, I find that I have been so slow, so unwilling, so ill-humored in fulfilling my obligations. I detest this conduct with all my heart. I am sincerely sorry for having violated my sacred promises to Thee. But henceforth I desire to look upon my lawful superiors as Thy representatives. Impress this truth deeply on my mind, write it indelibly upon my heart, that it may become the main principle of my life. Then it may be said of me as of my divine model and saviour, "that I was subject in all things." Make the principle of holy obedience the daily bread of my soul, that I may promptly, joyfully, and willingly obey Thee, not only according to Thy precepts, but that I may anticipate even the slightest wish of Thy lawful representatives.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

My soul, the second motive that ought to inspire thee to practise obedience perfectly, is the thought that it is pleasing in the sight of God. Thou canst not please the Holy Spirit more than by obeying all thy lawful superiors with childlike submission out of love for Him. By obedience thou offerest to God the most precious thing thou dost possess, thy own will. It is, in fact, the only thing that thou canst give Him that He does not already possess. Thy health and life are in His

hands. He can do with them as best pleases Him. But He has given thee a free will, that thou mightest have something to sacrifice to Him. The sacrifice that He desires is the loving service of thy free will. Now, my soul, if thou dost sacrifice thy own will, even in things lawful, to the Holy Spirit, thou dost give Him the very best, the most precious gift that thou dost possess, and thou honorest Him exceedingly.

Consider, finally, my soul, the great spiritual advantages of obedience. They are a consequence of what has already been said. (a) Perfect obedience saves thee from self-deception, that great danger which causes the spiritual shipwreck of many souls. (b) Besides, if thou dost really obey for God's sake, that is, humbly submittest to thy lawful Superiors, precisely to honor God in them and to fulfil His will in their commands and desires, then God will certainly direct thee in such a way through thy Superiors as will be most conducive to thy eternal welfare. "To them that love God, all things work together unto good" (*Rom. viii. 28*), says St. Paul, and our divine Saviour Himself gives us a message when He says to our Superiors, "He that heareth you, heareth me" (*Luke x. 16*). (c) Moreover, perfect obedience is the best and most efficacious penance which man can offer to the justice of God for past sins and transgressions. (d) And finally, it stands to reason that on account of the special honor and homage which man gives to God by perfect obedience, the special blessing of Heaven also rests on all works performed through obedience.

Now, my soul, impress this truth indelibly upon thy mind, that thou art pleasing to the Holy Spirit only in so far as thou dost sacrifice thy will to

Him. Especially is thy service acceptable when thou willingly conformest thyself to His holy will in all things where that will is made known to thee by a poor human being like thyself. Oh, how foolishly have I acted, how blind have I been! How frequently have I not recognized the voice of my Superiors as the voice of God? I have wilfully deceived myself and preferred my own lights to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Instead of using this opportunity of doing penance, I have offended God anew by my disobedience. I know that God blesses those especially who are obedient and subject in all things. I realize that I can make but little progress without this special blessing, and yet how often have I hesitated, how often murmured and complained?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I have dedicated myself entirely to Thee; I have renounced my will to do Thine at all times, but, alas, how often have I taken back that which I have given Thee! I repent with all my heart of every disobedience that I have committed. I regret that I wasted so much time, that I have spent so many hours to please my own will. I deplore having shown Thee such a want of love and esteem by my disobedience to my lawful Superiors or to my holy Rule. I desire to live, henceforth, only to love Thee; I wish to love Thee perfectly by giving the homage of my own will to Thee at all times. Yes, I hope to live in entire conformity to Thy holy will by doing everything in a spirit of obedience. I will look upon my Superiors as the representatives of God, upon their will as Thy will, upon their pleasure as Thy pleasure.

Resolution

I resolve to call often to mind the words of the prophet Samuel: "Obedience is better than sacrifice" (1 *Kings* xv. 22). I will endeavor to practise holy obedience perfectly, both interiorly and exteriorly. O holy Spirit, who dost direct souls on the way of perfection by means of obedience, give me a docile mind and heart. Thy will be done, O my Jesus. I desire to live and die in conformity with Thy holy example. Mary, my mother, thou didst direct Jesus for many years; teach me obedience. Amen.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

I. The Friends of Jesus Hate the World

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

Whoever loves Jesus Christ with true love, let him greatly rejoice when he sees himself treated by the world as Jesus Christ was treated, who was hated, scorned, and persecuted by the world, even to an agonizing death upon a shameful cross. The world is all against Jesus Christ; and, therefore, hating Him, it hates all His servants. For this reason the Lord encouraged His disciples to suffer in peace all the persecutions of the world, saying to them that, having given up the world, they could not but be hated by the world. "Ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." And as the lovers of God are hateful to the world, the world ought to be hateful to him who loves God. St. Paul said, "God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto

me, and I unto the world." The Apostle was an odious thing to the world, as a man condemned and dead upon a cross is odious; and thus, in return, the world was odious to St. Paul. "The world is crucified unto me."

Jesus Christ chose to die upon the cross for our sins for this end, that He might deliver us from the evil world. Our Lord, having called us to love Him, desires that we should become superior to the promises and threats of the world. He desires that we should no longer take account of its censures and praises. We must pray God to make us utterly forget the world, and to make us rejoice when we see the world reject us. It is not enough, in order to belong wholly to God, that we should abandon the world; we must desire that the world should abandon us, and utterly forget us. Some people leave the world, but they do not cease to wish to be praised by it, at least for having abandoned it; in such persons the desire of worldly estimation causes the world still to live in them.

Thus, then, the world hates the servants of God, and therefore it hates their good example and holy maxims; and thus it is necessary that we should hate all the maxims of the world. "The wisdom of the flesh is an enemy to God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be." The Apostle says it can not be, for the reason that the world has no other object but its own interest or pleasure; and thus it can not agree with those who seek only to please God.

Yes, O my Jesus, who wast crucified, and died for me, Thee alone I desire to please. What is the world, what are riches, what are honors? I desire that Thou, my Redeemer, shouldst be all my treasure; to love Thee is my riches. If Thou

wilt have me in want, I desire to be in want; if Thou wilt have me humble and despised by all, I embrace all and receive it from Thy hands; Thy will shall ever be my comforter. This is the grace that I seek of Thee, that in every event I may not depart a moment from Thy holy will.

III. A Dart of Fire—The Obedience of Jesus

(From St. Alphonsus)

“He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death; even to the death of the cross” (Philipp. ii. 8).

What great thing is it that the martyrs have done in giving their lives for God, while this same God has humbled Himself to the death of the cross for their love? To render a just return for the death of our God, it would not be sufficient to sacrifice the lives of all men. Only God can compensate for what God has done. O my Jesus! allow me, a poor sinner, to say to Thee, with Thy true lover St. Francis of Assisi: “May I die, O Lord, for love of Thy love, as Thou didst deign to die.”

Is it true, my Redeemer, that in the past, for the love of my own pleasures, unhappy that I am! I once renounced Thy love? Would that I had died before I did so, and that I had never offended Thee! I thank Thee that Thou givest me time to love Thee in this life, that I may afterward love Thee throughout all eternity. Ah, remind me continually, my Jesus, of the ignominious death that Thou hast suffered for me, that I may never forget to love Thee in consideration of the love that Thou hast borne me. I love Thee, infinite

goodness; I love Thee, my supreme good; to Thee I give myself entirely, and by that love which caused Thee to die for me, do Thou accept my love, and let me die, destroy me, rather than ever permit me to leave off loving Thee. I will say to Thee, with St. Francis de Sales, "O eternal Love, my soul seeks Thee, and chooses Thee for all eternity. Come, O holy Spirit, inflame my heart with Thy love, either to love or to die, to die to all other affections, to live only to the love of Jesus.

OPTIONAL READING

I. *Mary the Model of Obedience*

(From St. Alphonsus)

It was through the affection which Mary bore to the virtue of obedience that when the Annunciation was made to her by St. Gabriel, she did not wish to call herself by any other name than that of handmaid: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." "Indeed," says St. Thomas of Villanova, "this faithful handmaid neither in act, word, nor thought ever disobeyed the Lord, but, divested of all self-will, she always and in all things lived obedient to the divine will." She herself declared that God was pleased with her obedience when she said: "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid;" for this is the humility of a servant, to be always prompt to obey. St. Augustine says that the mother of God remedied by her obedience the evil that Eve had caused by her disobedience. The obedience of Mary was far more perfect than that of all the other saints, for all men, being inclined to evil through original sin, feel difficulty in doing right; but not so the

Blessed Virgin; for, as St. Bernadine says: "Because she was free from original sin, there was in her no hindrance in obeying God, but she was like a wheel readily moved at every divine breath." Hence her only occupation on this earth, as the same saint expresses it, was to discover and to do what was pleasing to God. Of her it was said, "My soul melted when He spoke." Commenting on this passage, Richard says that the soul of Mary was like metal in a state of fusion, ready to take any form that was pleasing to God.

Mary indeed proved the readiness of her obedience in the first place, when, in order to please God, she was willing even to obey the Roman emperor, and made the journey of fifty miles to Bethlehem in winter, being near her delivery, and so poor that she was obliged to bring forth her Son in a stable. She was also ready at the word of St. Joseph to set out immediately on that very night upon the longer and more difficult journey into Egypt. And Silveria asks why the command to fly into Egypt was given to Joseph and not to the Blessed Virgin, who was to suffer most from the journey? And he answers: "Lest the Virgin be deprived of an opportunity for performing an act of obedience for which she was most ready." But above all she showed her heroic obedience, when, in order to obey the divine will, she offered her Son to death with so much firmness that, as St. Ildephonsus says, "she would have been ready to crucify Him, if executioners had been wanting." Hence Venerable Bede, commenting on these words of the Redeemer to the woman in the Gospel who exclaimed, "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee"—"Yea, rather blessed are they who hear the Word of God and

keep it," says that Mary was more happy through obedience to the divine will than in being the mother of God Himself.

For this reason it is, that those who love obedience are very pleasing to our Lady. She appeared once to a Religious, a Franciscan named Accorso, in his cell, who being called by obedience to go and hear the confession of a sick person, went out; but when he returned he found Mary waiting for him, and she greatly praised his obedience. As, on the other hand, she greatly blamed another Religious, who, when the bell had summoned him to the refectory, delayed in order to finish certain devotions. The Virgin, speaking to St. Bridget of the security found in obeying a spiritual father, said: "Obedience has brought all the saints to glory." St. Philip Neri also said, that "God requires no account of things done by obedience, having Himself declared: 'He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me.'" The Mother of God herself revealed to St. Bridget, that, through the merit of her obedience she had obtained from the Lord that all penitent sinners who have recourse to her should be pardoned. Oh, my queen and mother, pray to Jesus for me, obtain for me through the merits of thy obedience that I may be faithful in obeying His will, and the commands of my Superiors. Amen.

II. Fidelity in Adversity

(From St. Alphonsus)

The faithfulness of soldiers is tried not in repose, but in battle. This earth is our battlefield, where every one is placed to fight, and to conquer, in order to be saved; if he conquers not,

he is lost forever. Therefore said holy Job, "Every day I now fight; I wait until my change cometh." Job suffered in struggling with many a foe, but he comforted himself with the hope that, in conquering and rising from the dead, he should change all his state. Of this change St. Paul spoke, and rejoiced in speaking of it: "The dead shall be raised incorrupt, and we shall be changed." Our estate is changed in heaven, which is no place for toil, but for rest; not of fear, but of security; not of sorrow or weariness, but of gladness and eternal joy. With the hope, then, of so great joy, let us inspire ourselves and fight until death, and never give ourselves up conquered to our enemies "until our change comes," until the end of our struggle is attained, and we possess a blessed eternity.

"The patient man will endure for the time, and then shall gladness be restored to him." Blessed is he who suffers for God in this life; he suffers "for the time," but his joy will be eternal in the country of the blessed. This will end the persecutions, the temptations, the infirmities, the annoyances, and all the miseries of this life; and God will give us a life full of satisfaction, which will never end. Now is the time of pruning the vine, and for cutting off everything that hinders its growth toward the promised land of heaven. But the cutting off produces pain, so that we have need of patience, and then is the restoration of gladness, when the more we have suffered, the more shall we be filled with consolations. God is faithful; and to him who suffers on earth for His love's sake with resignation He promises that He Himself will be his reward; a reward infinitely greater than all suffering. "Behold, I am thy reward exceeding great."

Nevertheless, before we receive the crown of eternal life, Our Lord wills that we should be tried with sufferings. "Blessed is the man that suffereth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him." Blessed, then, is he who is faithful to God in adversity. Some people think they are beloved of God when all their affairs go prosperously, and they have no troubles; but they complain because God does not try the patience and faithfulness of His servants by prosperity, but by adversity, in order to give them that crown which does not fade away, as do all the crowns of this life. This will be a crown of eternal glory, as St. Peter writes: "Ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." To whom, then, is this crown promised? St. James says, "God has promised it to those who love Him." He has promised it again and again to those who love Him, because divine love makes us fight with courage and win the victory.

To the love of God we must also join humility. The Preacher says, "Gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of tribulation." It is in humiliation that saints are discovered, in which it is made known whether they are gold or lead. Such a one has been counted a saint; but when he receives an injury from another, he is all in an agitation; he complains of it to every one; he says he will make him repent of it. This is a sign of what he is; it is a sign that he is lead. The Lord said, "In thy humility have patience." The proud man, whatever humiliation he receives, considers it a great injustice, and, therefore, can not endure it; but the humble man, accounting himself deserving of every evil treat-

ment, suffers all with patience. Let him who has committed a mortal sin cast a glance upon the hell that he deserved, and thus he will suffer with patience every contempt and every pain.

Let us, then, love God, and be humble; and whatever we do, let us do it, not to please ourselves, but only to please God. O cursed self-love! which intrudes itself into all our works—even in our spiritual exercises, in meditation, in works of penance, and in all our pious works, it goes about seeking its own interests. Few are the devout souls who do not fall into this defect: “Who shall find a valiant woman? Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her.” Where shall we find a soul so brave that, despoiled of every passion and of every love for its own interests, goes on to love Jesus Christ in the midst of slights, pains, desolation of spirit, and weariness of life? Solomon said that these are gems of great price; they come from the ends of the world, and therefore are most rare.

O my crucified Jesus! I am one who, even in my devotions, have gone about seeking my own pleasure and my own satisfaction, all unlike to Thee, who through love for me hast passed a life of trouble, deprived of every alleviation. Give me Thy help, that henceforth I may seek only Thy pleasure and Thy glory. I would love Thee without any other reward; but I am weak, Thou must give me the strength to accomplish it. Behold me; I am Thine; dispose of me as it pleases Thee; make me love Thee, and I ask for nothing more. O Mary, my mother! obtain for me faithfulness to God, through thy intercession.

FOURTH MEDITATION

The Baptism of Jesus—Humility

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

CONSIDER the first public appearance of Jesus Christ. He came into this world to give testimony of the truth. Does He, then, begin His public life with an eloquent sermon, and “speak as one having power” (*Mark* i. 22)? His entrance into this world was an act of the deepest self-abasement. “And the Word was made flesh” (*John* i. 14). He “emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant” (*Philipp.* ii. 7). His first public appearance is likewise an act of profound humility. (a.) He approaches the Jordan and listens with great attention to John the Baptist. He is lost in the multitude of sinners as though He were one of them. (b.) He waits His turn, and enters the water to receive the baptism of penance. John protests, saying, “I ought to be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me?” But Jesus only replies, “Suffer it to be so now. For so it becometh us to fulfil all justice” (*Matt.* iii. 14–15). Consider the motives that prompt Jesus to give us this example.

1. Pride is the beginning, the root of all sin, and of all evil (*Ecclus.* x. 15). It caused the fall of the angels and the expulsion of our first parents from paradise. Humility alone can remedy pride. “A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.” But “every proud man is an abomination to the Lord” (*Prov.* xvi. 5). God resisteth the proud and giveth to the humble.

2. Pride deprives the heart of happiness. The Lord will destroy the house of the proud. But humility gives peace and happiness. Therefore the Saviour says to all, "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls."

3. Pride causes man to rebel against God and His designs. "Who is the Lord" the proud man asks with Pharaoh, "that I should hear His voice?" But humility subjects man to God in all things. "Where humility is there is wisdom" (*Prov. xi. 2*).

4. Pride dries up the fount of grace and causes God to depart from the soul. "Pride is hateful before God and men" (*Ecclus. x. 7*). Only by humility can man draw nigh to God. "He hath had regard to the prayer of the humble; and He hath not despised their petition" (*Ps. ci. 18*). "The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds" (*Ecclus. xxxv. 21*).

5. Pride deprives us of consolation from above in time of affliction. "The proud one shall fall, he shall fall down and there shall be none to lift him up" (*Jer. 1. 32*). "But God comforteth the humble" (*2 Cor. vii. 6*).

6. Pride renders man's works barren for eternity. Only by humility can man draw the blessing of Heaven upon his labors. "The Lord scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart . . . and hath exalted the humble" (*Luke i. 51, 52*).

7. Pride begets hatred and contention (*Prov. xiii. 10*), but humility cements and maintains the bond of fraternal charity. Hence St. Peter (1 v. 5) exhorts the faithful to practise humility toward one another.

Behold, my soul, thy Saviour wishes to empha-

size this virtue of humility. He insists upon it as the foundation of the spiritual life, as the key to the treasures of grace, as the only means of partaking in the fruits of the Redemption. "And he that will be first among you, shall be your servant" (*Matt. xx. 27*), He says. And again, "Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of Heaven" (*Matt. xviii. 4*). "Behold," He says, after washing the feet of the disciples, "I have given you an example that as I have done to you so you do also" (*John xiii. 15*).

Impress this example deeply in thy mind, O self-deceiving Religious! Thou wishest to be considered pious, virtuous, zealous, though thy conscience tells thee that thou art wanting in many things. Give God the credit of His grace. Say with St. Paul, if thou hast aught of virtue, "I am by the grace of God what I am." Thou wishest to be considered better than others, and dost feel offended when thy faults are discovered or criticized, and yet Jesus, thy model and exemplar, mingles with sinners and receives the baptism of penance. Thou dost fear continually that thy dignity be not regarded sufficiently, or that sufficient attention be not shown thee, and yet thy Saviour appears in public as a publican. How sensitive thou art when thou art humiliated by others, and yet thy Master humbles Himself before all the people on His entrance to His public life.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I am a sinner, have mercy on me. How often have I permitted pride to actuate me and closed my eyes to the humility of my Saviour. I have been most anxious to have people think and

Speak well of me and have thought little of Thy opinion of me. Cure my pride, make me "meek and humble of heart," so that I may deserve that peace which the world can not give. I desire to live in humility, according to the example of my divine Master. I desire to be humble, that I may receive the fulness of Thy grace and please Thee in all things. I desire to live without a thought for the opinion of men, without an act to gain the applause of men, but dear to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, who dwells within my heart.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Consider, my soul, how at the sight of this public self-abasement of thy Saviour the heavens rejoice and proclaim to the world how pleasing this humble conduct is in the sight of God. As Jesus is baptized before the people, behold the heavens open. The voice of the heavenly Father resounds from above: "This is my well-beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The Holy Spirit descends with the fulness of grace upon the humble God-Man in the form of a dove. And we can readily imagine the heavenly choirs invisibly descending and rendering homage and serving the Saviour of the world.

O my soul, may this example of humility be indelibly written on thy heart. Remember that the more humble thou art, the more will the heavenly Father exalt thee. The less thou thinkest of thyself, the more will He esteem thee. The more thou renoucest the goods, pleasures, and honors of the world, the richer will be the treasures of grace which the Holy Spirit will confer upon thee. Behold thy Saviour! The Son of

God out of love for humility sacrifices His honor to His heavenly Father and gives up what man prizes most, and lo, the heavens testify in the favor of Him, who humbly assumed the appearance of a sinner. The heavenly Father solemnly testifies: "This is not a common mortal, this is not a sinner; He is my well-beloved Son!" The Holy Spirit is so attracted by this humility that He hovers above the Saviour in the form of a dove: "And He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him" (*Matt.* iii. 16). The Saviour begins His public career by an act of humility, but heaven glorifies this act by a public exultation. O my soul, does it require more than this to inspire thee with a great esteem and love for humility? By humility thou becomest the well-beloved child of thy heavenly Father. By humility thou becomest not only a fit abode of the Holy Ghost, but also drawest His special graces upon thee. The very angels of heaven will come to minister to thee if thou imitatest faithfully this sublime example of the living Saviour. Hasten to learn the first lesson of the public life of thy divine Master.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I would almost say in the words of Peter, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." But to whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life? I detest my sins, especially my pride, which has led me into many transgressions. I detest that pride which has often saddened Thy heart and deprived me of Thy consolations. I detest that pride which caused me to rebel against Thee, and made me unworthy to receive Thy holy helps and inspirations. I detest that pride which has rendered so many of my

works barren of merit for eternity and caused me to offend my fellow-men. My Saviour appeared as a sinner, which He was not. I am a sinner and try to appear a saint. Have mercy on me, O God. Give me Thy grace. Do not turn a deaf ear to my petitions. I desire to imitate my Saviour in his humility. I desire to be the least of Thy servants in order to please Thee. I would not give Thy good will for the opinion and favor of all the world. I desire to conform myself entirely to the great Model, the divine Exemplar, who hesitated not to humble Himself publicly for my sake.

Resolution

I resolve always to bear in mind the saying of St. John Chrysostom: "The saint who gives way to pride is a miserable beggar." The proud man is a day-laborer of the devil. "A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." "I was humbled and He delivered me" (*Ps.* cxiv. 6). "It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy justifications" (*Ps.* cxviii. 71). "My sweetest Jesus, permit me not to separate myself from Thee." O my mother Mary, I have great confidence in thy intercession; obtain for me the grace to be meek and humble of heart.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

Meekness and Humility

(From St. Alphonsus)

Our most lovely Redeemer, Jesus, willed to be called a lamb for this very reason, that He might show us how meek and humble He was Him-

self. These were the virtues which He principally wished His followers to learn from Him: "Learn from Me because I am meek and humble of heart." And these virtues He principally requires of Religious who profess to imitate His most holy life.

He who lives a solitary life in a desert has not so much need of these virtues; but for him who lives in a Community it is impossible not to meet now and then with a reprimand from his Superiors or something disagreeable from his companions. In such cases a Religious who loves not meekness will commit a thousand faults every day, and live a restless life. He must be all sweetness with everybody, with strangers, with companions, and also with inferiors, if he should ever become a Superior; and if he is an inferior, he must consider that one act of meekness in bearing contempt and reproach is of greater value to him than many fasts and disciplines.

St. Francis said that many make their perfection consist in exterior mortifications, and after all are not able to bear one injurious word. "Not understanding," he added, "how much greater gain is made by patiently bearing injuries." How many persons, as St. Bernard remarks, are all sweetness when nothing is said or done contrary to their inclination, but show their want of meekness as soon as anything crosses them!

And if one should ever be Superior, let him believe that one reprimand made with meekness will profit his subjects more than a thousand made with severity. "The meek are useful to themselves and to others," as St. John Chrysostom teaches. In a word, as the same saint said, the greatest sign of a virtuous soul is to see it meek on occasions of contradiction. A meek heart is the pleasure of the heart of God. "That

which is agreeable to Him is faith and meekness" (*Ecclus.* i. 34, 35). It would be well for a Religious to represent to himself in his meditations all the crosses that may happen to him, and thus arm himself against them; and then when the occasion happens he should do violence to himself, that he may not be excited, and break out in impatience. Therefore he should refrain from speaking when his mind is disturbed, till he is certain that he has become calm again.

But to bear injuries quietly, it is, above all, necessary to have a great fund of humility. He who is truly humble is not only unmoved when he sees himself despised, but is even pleased and rejoices at it in spirit, however the flesh may resent it; for he sees himself treated as he deserves, and made conformable to Jesus Christ, who, worthy as He was of every honor, chose for the love of us to be satiated with contempt and injuries. Brother Juniper, a disciple of St. Francis, when an injury was done to him, held up his cowl, as if he expected to receive pearls falling from heaven. The saints have been more desirous of injuries than worldlings are covetous of applause and honor. And of what use is a Religious who does not know how to bear contempt for God's sake? He is always proud, and only humble in name, and a hypocrite whom divine grace will repulse, as St. Peter says: "God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace" (*1 Peter* v. 5).

Prayer

O my most humble Jesus, who for the love of me didst humble Thyself and become obedient unto the death of the cross! how have I the courage to appear before Thee, and call myself Thy follower? for I see myself to be such a sinner and

so proud that I can not bear a single injury without resenting it. Whence can come such pride in me, who for my sins have so many times deserved to be cast forever into hell with the devils? Ah, my despised Jesus, help me and make me conformable to Thee. I will change my life. Thou for love of me hast borne so much contempt; I for love of Thee will bear every injury. Thou, O my Redeemer! hast rendered contempt too honorable and desirable, since Thou hast embraced it with so much love during Thy life. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Gal.* vi. 14).

O my most humble queen, Mary, mother of God! thou who wast in all, and especially in suffering, the most conformed to thy Son, obtain for me the grace to bear in peace all injuries which henceforward shall be offered to me. Amen.

EXAMINATION

On Practical Faith

Do I believe with St. Paul that "the just man liveth by faith"? Do worldly ambition and self-love inspire me to act, or is it the glory of God? Is it vanity or the love of God which sustains me? Is it self-will or God's will which guides me? Am I anxious to see God or do I permit my mind and heart to be absorbed in earthly things? Am I striving solely after "the reward exceeding great" or am I influenced by human respect? Do I realize that whatever I do to the least of Christ's brethren I do it unto Him? Do I realize that it is human to love those who love us, but that it is divine to practise the corporal and spiritual works of mercy? Do I recognize the hand of Providence

in the affairs of daily life? Have I rebelled against it? Have I intrigued for my own selfish ends?

Do I realize that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"? Am I aware that God looks more to the loving heart than to a subtle mind? Do I acknowledge and pay the debt of gratitude I owe to God? Am I aware that Christ bought me at "an exceeding great price"? Can I honestly say with St. Peter, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee"? Or have I given Him the Judas kiss by professing love while gratifying selfish nature? Am I convinced that I must prefer God's will to mine? Do I realize that God's will is made known to me by holy obedience? Am I guided more by personal likes than by authority in obeying my Superiors? Am I convinced that God permits daily crosses to try me? Do I murmur and complain easily? Am I convinced that to become like unto Christ I must be humbled, misjudged, and even persecuted? Do I even rejoice in contradictions? Do I frequently resolve to do all for the greater glory of God? out of love for Jesus and Mary? according to God's holy will?

Protestation for a Happy Death. (See p. 77.)

HYMN

The Soul Sighing for Jesus

(From St. Alphonsus)

This heart of mine is sighing,
And yet I know not why;
Its sighs with love are laden,
But whither do they fly?

THE DAY OF FAITH

My trembling heart, oh, tell me,
Wherefore those burning sighs?
"I sigh for God, I languish
For Jesus," it replies.

Sigh on, my heart, and cease not
With sighs of love to swell;
Spend all thy life in loving
Him who loves thee so well.

Sigh on, and let thy Jesus
Alone possess thy breast,
And all thy hope in Mary
With childlike spirit rest.

Send forth thy sighs like arrows
To wound thy conqueror's heart,
Then hope for gifts the choicest
His goodness can impart.

My trembling sighs, ah, hasten,
To Jesus haste away;
Then at His feet take refuge,
And there forever stay.

Say that a heart all burning
With love has sent you there
And ask what it shall bid you,
For He will grant its prayer.

To love with all its being
Is all the gift it sues;
Ask; for to one that loves Him
No prayer can God refuse.

THE SIXTH DAY

A Day of Generosity

Dedicated to the Spirit of Understanding

Disposition.—Generosity.

Motto.—“Leave all, and follow me!”

The Special End of this day's exercises is to inspire the soul to follow Jesus, her guide, and to imitate Mary, her model, with generosity and fervor, so that she may realize the CHRISTIAN IDEAL in life.

Reading.—“Religious Poverty, Chastity, and Mortification” from your Rules and Constitutions.

PRAYER TO OBTAIN THE GIFT OF UNDERSTANDING

HOLY Spirit, divine consoler, I adore Thee as my true God, just as I adore God the Father and God the Son. I bless Thee by uniting myself to the blessings that Thou dost receive from the angels and seraphs. I offer Thee my heart, and I render Thee heartfelt thanks for all the benefits that Thou hast bestowed and dost unceasingly bestow upon the world. Thou who art the author of all supernatural gifts, and who didst enrich with immense favors the soul of the blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of God, I beseech Thee to visit me by Thy grace and Thy love, and to grant me the gift of Understanding, in order that I may be able to understand the divine mysteries, and by the contemplation of heavenly things detach

my thoughts and affections from this miserable world.

One *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, *Glory be to the Father*, three times.

THOUGHTS AND EJACULATIONS

My God, I desire Thee alone and nothing more.

Thou hast waited for me that I might love Thee. Yes, I will love Thee.

My Jesus, make me all Thine before I die.

Deign to accept the love of a sinner who has so often offended Thee.

Give me the love Thou requirest of me.

I give Thee my whole will; dispose of me as Thou pleasest.

O virgin Mother, draw me wholly to God.

FIRST MEDITATION

The First Disciples—Generous Resolve

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

ST. JOHN the Evangelist relates: "The next day again John stood, and two of His disciples. And beholding Jesus walking he saith: 'Behold the Lamb of God.' And the two disciples heard Him speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turning and seeing them following Him, saith to them, 'What seek you?' Who said to Him, 'Rabbi, . . . where dwellest thou?' He saith to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where He abode, and they stayed with Him that day" (*John* i. 35-39).

Consider the promptness with which these disciples followed Jesus. They are disciples of the Baptist and much attached to him. He points to Jesus passing by and tells them to follow Him. This required a sacrifice on their part. But they hesitate not a moment. They prove their honesty and sincerity by their conduct. They stay the whole day with Jesus, listen joyfully to his discourses, and share with Him the privations of the desert.

1. They generously leave John who had given them many instructions. They seemed to have heard in anticipation the words of the Saviour: "Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, can not be My disciple" (*Luke* xiv. 33).

2. They stay all day with the Saviour in the desert to hear His instructions. Filled with enthusiasm for their new master, they then set out to bring new disciples to the Saviour. "Andrew findeth first his brother Simon and saith to him, 'We have found the Messiah . . . and he brought him to Jesus'" (*John* i. 41, 42).

It was a great, a precious moment of grace for these disciples when Jesus was passing by. If they had not promptly availed themselves of it they would perhaps never have been apostles. The operations of grace, my soul, are often like the Saviour passing at a distance. The Holy Spirit calls, moves, and strengthens thee interiorly and then passes on. If thou dost not instantly set to work with great generosity thou wilt lament what is written in Job: "God speaketh once, and repeateth not the self-same thing the second time" (xxxiii. 14). Oh, how many times hast thou jeopardized thy welfare by thy negligence in obeying the inspirations of the Holy

Ghost! How many times has the Holy Ghost admonished thee during retreat, at prayer, in moments of recollection! Wilt thou continue to act thus after this retreat also? Behold the Saviour in the different events of His life is passing by during this retreat, and the divine Teacher, the Holy Spirit, is calling thy attention to many things. He points out to thee the faults and the harm of thy present conduct. He points out to thee what thou shouldst do especially to become more conformable to the divine Model. Wilt thou answer these inspirations promptly? Wilt thou form definite resolves, energetic resolutions? Wilt thou set to work immediately to carry them out as soon as possible?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O holy Spirit, who breathest where Thou wilt, how often hast Thou come to me with Thy holy inspirations, and how often have I turned a deaf ear to Thy gentle pleadings! O yes, I see, when I look back on my past life, that I might now be in reality a saint if I had followed Thy voice with the promptness and generosity of these disciples. How many graces have I thrown away, how many opportunities of gaining merit have I let pass by! And Thou hast not deserted me after all my coldness, all my indifference! I repent with all my heart of my past conduct. Would that I could undo the past by my promptness, my fidelity in the future. I now resign myself unreservedly into Thy hands. I wish to do Thy holy will in all things. I desire to love and serve Thee with all my strength. I consecrate myself entirely to Thy service. I desire to live and die always united to Thee.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

My soul, thou hast no doubt resolved to imitate thy divine Saviour, to follow in the footsteps of Him whom the Holy Spirit points out as thy model and exemplar. No doubt Thou art now in earnest. Thou hast certainly during these days renewed thy fervor and art now prepared instantly to obey every divine inspiration. But how wilt thou follow Jesus? in what way, in what frame of mind, with what courage, with what determination, under what inspiration from on High? John and Andrew followed Jesus not only to converse with Him, but, as it proved, to become His permanent disciples. But had they the right intention, the necessary courage and determination for such a life? The Saviour wished them to speak for themselves and asked them, "What seek ye?" That is, what motive have you in coming to Me? Is it for God's glory, for the good of your souls? What do you expect to find with me? A life of ease and comfort? A life without exertion or sacrifice, of worldly glory and renown? Do you wish to follow Me absolutely, entirely, unreservedly?

My soul, the Holy Spirit also addresses the self-same question to thee, "What seekest thou?" Dost thou really desire to be My pupil and keep thy gaze upon Him, whom I have placed before thy eyes as thy model and exemplar? But, consider what thou wishest to express with this resolution. Give an answer to thyself, an answer to this question of the Holy Spirit. Does this resolution of thine rest on a solid foundation? Does it arise solely from the desire of living solely for God and securing the eternal welfare of thy immortal

soul at any price? Bear in mind that whatever is not built on solid foundation, on bed-rock, will not last. How much courage, how much zeal, how much determination hast thou? Do not think that thou canst serve God and the world also. The Saviour has said: "No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will sustain the one and despise the other. You can not serve God and Mammon" (*Matt.* vi. 24). If thou art honest in the service of God and with the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, then thou wilt break with the world and take its scorn, hatred, and enmity upon thyself whenever the service of God requires it. Repeat the question, "What seekest thou?" Dost thou seek to follow only to a certain degree? "If any one will come after Me," says Christ, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (*Luke* ix. 23). "The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away" (*Matt.* xi. 12). "What seekest thou?" the Holy Spirit asks thee again. Perhaps thou art prepared to avoid mortal sin, but to go no further. Oh, do not be so cowardly! Do not place a limit to the operation of the Holy Spirit. Say, rather, "I will follow Thee, let it cost what it may." Canst thou say this with all honesty, with all sincerity? Then the Holy Spirit will also answer thee, "Come, therefore, and see. Follow Me, I accept thee as my child."

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I ought to be leading a life of perfection, but instead I am continually committing sin. There was a time when I followed Thee courageously like Thy first disciples, but I have not kept up my first fervor. My weak nature and the

example of others have caused me to relax my efforts. I regret and detest this weakness. Be Thou henceforth my strength. I desire to follow my divine Master perfectly in the future. I wish to do this for the glory of God and the good of my soul. Countless numbers have succeeded in this; why can not I, with the grace of God? I wish to serve Him not as I will but as Thou wilt, O holy Spirit. I desire to follow everywhere without any limitation or restriction. I desire to follow alike in agreeable and in unpleasant things. I will be Thine entirely; I consecrate myself to Thy service now and forever.

Resolution

I resolve often to call to mind the words of St. Augustine: "These ones have done it, such others have done it, why should not I do it?" "As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, either in death, or in life, there will Thy servant be" (2 *Kings* xv. 21). O Lord, give me a determined good will and the grace to fulfil it. "Confirm, O God! what Thou hast wrought in us" (*Pss.* lxxvii. 29). Give me light, give me strength, give me love. O Mary, who art the treasurer of graces, assist me, accept me for thy servant and pray for me. Through the merits of Jesus Christ first, and then through thy prayers, I hope to keep this resolution.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

I. Perfect Resignation to the Divine Will

(From St. Alphonsus)

"My meat is to do His will." So said Jesus Christ, speaking of Himself. In this mortal life,

meat or food is that which preserves our life; and, therefore, Our Lord said that it was His meat to do the will of the Father. This also ought to be the meat of all souls. "Life is in His will." Our life consists in doing the divine will; he that does not fulfil it is dead.

The Wise Man writes: "They that are faithful in love shall rest in Him." They who are little faithful in loving God will desire that He should agree with them, that He should conform Himself to their pleasure, and do whatever they desire; but they who love God agree with Him, and unite their wills to His will, and are satisfied with everything that God does with them, and with all their circumstances; and in every adversity that afflicts them, whether sickness, dishonor, weariness, loss of property or of kindred, they ever have on their lips and in their heart those words, "Thy will be done," which is the constant expression of saints.

God only desires that which is best for us, that which is for our sanctification. Let us take care, therefore, to quiet our own will, uniting it ever to the will of God; and thus we shall be able, also, to quiet our mind, recollecting that everything that God does is the best thing that can befall us. Whoever does not do this will never find true peace. All the perfection that can be attained in this world, which is a place of purification, and consequently a place of pains and troubles, consists in suffering patiently those things that are opposed to our self-love; and, in order to suffer with patience, there is no more efficacious means than a willingness to suffer in order to do the will of God. "Submit thyself, then to Him, and be at peace." He that agrees with the divine will in everything is always at peace, and nothing that

happens to him can make him miserable. "It will not make the just man sad, whatever shall befall him." But why is the just man never miserable under any circumstances? Because he knows well that whatever happens in the world, happens through the will of God.

The divine will, so to say, draws out all the thorns and bitterness of the tribulations that come upon us in this world. The hymn which speaks of the divine will thus sings: "Thou changest crosses into joys; Thou makest even death to be sweet; he that can unite himself to Thee knows neither cross nor fear. Oh, how worthy art Thou of love, O Thou will of God."

Behold the excellent counsel of St. Peter, in order to find a perfect peace in the midst of the toils of this present life: "Casting all your cares upon Him; for He has care for you." And if it is God who thus gives thought for our good, why should we weary ourselves with so many anxieties, as if our happiness depended on our own cares, and not rather abandon ourselves into the hands of God, upon whom all depends? "Cast thy care upon the Lord," says David, "and He shall nourish thee." Let us strive to obey God in everything He commands us and advises us, and then let us leave to Him the care of our salvation, and He will take care to give us all the means that are necessary in order that we may be saved: "Thy soul shall be saved, because thou hast had confidence in Me." Whosoever places his whole confidence in God is sure of eternal salvation. In a word, whoever does the will of God enters into paradise; and he that does it not, enters not. Some people trust their eternal salvation to certain devotions, or to certain outward works of piety, and yet do not the will of God. But Jesus

Christ says: "Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Thus, if we desire to be saved, and to acquire a perfect union with God, let us take care to be ever offering up the prayer of David: "Teach me, O Lord, to do Thy will." And for this purpose, let us strip ourselves of our own will, and give it wholly to God without reserve. Where we give our property in alms, our food in fastings, our blood in scourgings, we give Him what we possess; but when we give Him our will, we give Him ourselves entirely; wherefore he that gives to God all his will is able to say, "Lord, having given Thee all my will, I have nothing more to give Thee." The sacrifice of our own will is the most acceptable sacrifice we can make to God; and God pours forth His graces abundantly upon him who makes it.

This sacrifice, however, in order to be perfect, must have two conditions: it must be without reserve, and it must be constant. Some persons give to God their will, but with a certain reserve; and little does this gift please God. Others give Him their will, but speedily they take it back again; and such persons place themselves in great peril of being abandoned by God; so that it is necessary that all our strength, and desires, and prayers, should be directed to obtain from God perseverance in doing only what He wills. Let us, then, day by day, renew to God our total renunciations of our own will, and constantly take care to seek and ask for nothing which is not according to the will of God. And thus will cease within us passions, desires, fears, and all inordinate affections. The Barefooted Nun of St. Clare,

Sister Margaret of the Cross, a daughter of the Emperor Maximilian, when she became quite blind, was wont to say, "How can I desire to see, when God wills it not?"

Receive, O God of my soul! the sacrifice of my whole will and my whole liberty. I say that I have deserved that Thou shouldst turn Thy back upon me, and refuse this gift of mine, so often have I been unfaithful to Thee; but I learn that Thou dost again command me to love Thee with all my heart, and therefore I am sure Thou wilt receive it. I resign myself, then, wholly to Thy will; make me to know what Thou wilt, that I may be able to accomplish it all. Make me love Thee, and then dispose of me and all my affairs as it pleases Thee. I am in Thy hands; do what Thou knowest to be most expedient for my eternal salvation; while I declare that I desire Thee alone, and nothing more.

O Mother of God! do thou obtain for me the gift of holy perseverance.

II. A Dart of Fire—God Annihilated

(From St. Alphonsus)

"*He emptied Himself*" (Philipp. ii. 7).

Behold the only-begotten Son of God, omnipotent and true God, equal to the Father, born a little infant in a stable. "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made to the likeness of men." If any one would see God, as it were, reduced to nothingness, let him enter into the cave of Bethlehem, and he will find Him as a little infant, bound in swaddling clothes, so that He can not move, weeping and trembling with

cold. Ah, holy faith, whose son is this poor child? Faith answers, "He is the Son of God, and He is true God." And what has brought Him to so miserable a condition? It was the love He had for men. And yet there are men to be found who do not love this God!

Thou, then, my Jesus, hast spent all Thy life amidst sorrows to make me understand the love Thou dost bear me, and I have spent my life in displeasing Thee by my sins! Ah, make me know the evil I have committed, and the love which Thou desirest to have. But since Thou hast borne with me till now, permit me not to give Thee any more cause for sorrow. Inflammé me altogether with Thy love, and remind me always of all Thou hast suffered for me, that from this day forth I may forget every worldly thing, and think of nothing but loving and pleasing Thee. Thou didst come on earth to reign in our hearts; take, then, from my heart all that could prevent Thee from possessing it entirely! Make my will be wholly conformed to Thy will; may Thy will be mine, and may it be the rule of all my actions and desires.

OPTIONAL READINGS

II. *Mary, Model of Humility*

(From St. Alphonsus)

Humility, says St. Bernard, is the foundation and guardian of the virtues; and with reason, for without humility a soul can possess no other virtue. Let her possess all the virtues, they will all quickly depart when humility departs. On the other hand St. Francis de Sales said that God so loves humility that He instantly hastens to the

soul in which He sees it. This virtue, so lovely and so necessary, was unknown in the world; but the Son of God Himself came on earth to teach it by His example, and He desired that in this we should especially strive to imitate Him. "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." And Mary, as she was the first and most perfect disciple of Jesus Christ in all the virtues, was so in that of humility, by which she merited to be exalted above all creatures. It was revealed to St. Matilda that the virtue which the Blessed Virgin especially practised from childhood was humility.

The first act of humility of heart is to have an humble opinion of ourselves; and Mary always thought so lowly of herself, that although she saw so many more graces bestowed upon her than upon others, she preferred all others to herself. Not that the Blessed Virgin esteemed herself a sinner, for humility is truth, as St. Teresa says, and Mary knew that she had never offended God, nor that she did not confess having received greater graces from God than any other creature, for an humble heart always acknowledges the special favors of the Lord, that it may humble itself the more; but the divine mother, by the greater light she had to see the infinite goodness of her God, saw still more her own littleness, and therefore more than all others did she humble herself. "Approaching Him I find myself black," as St. Bernard explains it, "Yes," adds St. Bernardine, "for the Blessed Virgin had always present before her eyes the divine Majesty and her own nothingness." As a beggar clothed with costly garments which had been given to him is not made proud by it, but humbles himself more before the giver, because he is reminded then of his poverty;

thus Mary, the more she saw herself enriched, the more humble she became, remembering that all was the gift of God; whence she herself said to St. Elizabeth, a Benedictine nun: "Know for certain that I esteemed myself most abject, and unworthy of the grace of God." "And, therefore," says St. Bernadine, "no creature in the world has been more exalted, because no creature has ever humbled herself more than she."

Moreover, it is an act of humility to conceal the gifts of heaven. Mary wished to conceal from St. Joseph the grace of having been made the mother of God, although it seemed necessary to make it known to him, in order, at least, to remove from the mind of her poor spouse the suspicions he might have of her virtue, when he saw her with child; or at least his perplexity, for in fact St. Joseph, on the one side, unwilling to doubt the virtue of Mary, and, on the other, ignorant of the mystery, in order to free himself from perplexity was minded to put her away privately and if the angel had not revealed the mystery to him, he would really have left her.

Moreover, an humble soul also refuses praise and gives it all to God. Behold, Mary is disturbed at hearing herself praised by St. Gabriel. And when St. Elizabeth said to her, "Blessed art thou among women . . . and whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me. . . . Blessed art thou that hast believed, etc.," Mary, referring all these praises to God, answered with that humble canticle: "My soul doth magnify the Lord," as if she had said: "You praise me, O Elizabeth, but I praise the Lord, to whom all honor is due; you wonder that I come to you, and I wonder at the divine goodness in which alone my spirit exults. 'And my

spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.' You praise me because I have believed; I praise my God, because He has wished to exalt my nothingness, because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid." Hence Mary said to St. Bridget: "Why did I humble myself so far, or why have I merited so much grace, unless because I thought and knew that of myself and from myself I was nothing, and had nothing? therefore I would have no praise for myself, but only for the Giver and Creator." Wherefore, speaking of the humility of Mary, St. Augustine says: "O truly blessed humility, which has brought forth God to men, opened paradise, and liberated souls from her."

It is also a part of humility to serve others; and Mary did not refuse to go and serve Elizabeth for three months. Wherefore St. Bernard has said: "Elizabeth wondered that Mary should come to visit her, but she should wonder still more that she did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister." The humble retire and choose the lowest place; and therefore, as St. Bernard remarks, Mary, when her Son was preaching in a certain house, as St. Matthew relates, wished to speak with Him, but would not enter the house unbidden. Therefore, when she was in the "upper room" with the apostles she took the lowest place, as St. Luke has related. "All these were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus." Not that St. Luke did not know the merit of the divine mother, on account of which he should have given her the first place; but because she had taken the lowest, after the apostles and the other women, therefore St. Luke described all, as a certain author remarks, just in the order of their places. Hence St. Bernard says: "Justly has the last become first, who,

when she was first of all, became last." Finally, the humble love contempt; therefore we do not find that Mary appeared in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, when her Son was received with so much honor by the people; but, on the other hand, at the time of the death of her Son, she did not shrink from appearing in public on Calvary through fear of the disgrace of being known as the mother of one who was condemned as a criminal to die an infamous death. Therefore she said to St. Bridget: "What more contemptible than to be called a fool, to be in want of all things, to believe oneself the most unworthy of all? Such, O daughter, was my humility, this was my joy, this my entire will. I thought of nothing but to please my Son."

The venerable Sister Paula of Foligno was given to understand in an ecstasy how great was the humility of the holy Virgin. In relating what she had seen to her confessor, she said, scarcely able to utter the words through astonishment: "O the humility of the Blessed Virgin! O Father, O the humility of our Blessed Lady! In the world there is no humility, not even the lowest degree of humility, to be compared with the humility of Mary." And Our Lord, at another time, showed St. Bridget two females, one all pomp and vanity: "This one," He said, "is Pride; but the other whom you see with her head bent down, respectful to all, having God alone in her mind, and having no esteem for herself, is Humility, and she is called Mary." By this God wished to make known to us that His blessed mother was so humble that she was humility itself.

It is not to be doubted, as St. Gregory of Nyssa says, that for our nature, corrupted by sin, there is perhaps no virtue more difficult to practise than

humility. But there is no escape; we can never be true children of Mary if we are not humble. "If," says St. Bernard, "you can not imitate the virginity, imitate the humility of the humble Virgin. She abhors the proud, she invites none to come to her but the humble: 'Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me.' " "Mary," says Richard, "protects us under the mantle of humility." The Mother of God herself explained this to St. Bridget, saying, "Come, then, O my daughter, and hide thyself under my mantle; this mantle is my humility." And she then added, that the contemplation of her humility was a good mantle, that keeps us warm; but, as she afterward said: "The mantle only warms him who wears it, not only in thought but in fact; thus my humility does not profit unless every one strives to imitate it. Therefore, my daughter," she concludes, "clothe thyself with this humility." Oh, how dear to Mary is the humble soul! St. Bernard writes: "The Virgin recognizes and loves those who love her, and she is near to all who invoke her, especially to those whom she sees like herself in chastity and humility." Wherefore the saint then exhorts all those who love Mary to be humble: "Emulate this virtue if you love Mary." Martino Alberto of the Society of Jesus, through love of the Blessed Virgin, was accustomed to sweep the house and collect the dirt. The divine mother once appeared to him, as Father Nieremberg relates in his Life, and, as if thanking him, said: "How dear to me is this humble action done for love of me!" Then, O my queen, I shall never be a true child of thine, if I am not humble. But do you not see that my sins, after having rendered me ungrateful to my Lord, have also made me proud? Oh, my mother,

cure me; by thy merits obtain for me that I may be humble, and thus become a child of thine. Amen.

II. Mortification

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” This is all that any one who wishes to be a follower of Jesus Christ has to do. The denying of oneself is the mortification of self-love. Do we wish to be saved? We must, then, conquer all to make sure of all. How miserable is the soul that allows itself to be guided by self-love! Mortification is of two kinds—internal and external: by interior mortification we have to study to conquer our passions, and especially our predominant one. A person who does not overcome his predominant passion is in great danger of being lost; whereas he who has overcome that will easily conquer all the others. Some, however, allow one vice to predominate in themselves, and think that they are good, because they do not see in themselves vices which others have. “But what does it matter?” says St. Cyril; “one leak is sufficient to sink the ship.” Nor will it suffice to say, “I can not abstain from this vice”; a resolute will conquers all; that is, of course, with the assistance of God, who will never fail us.

External mortification has to do with conquering the sensual appetites. Worldly people call the saints cruel when they deny their bodies all satisfaction of the senses and chastize them with hair-shirts, disciplines, and other penances. “But,” says St. Bernard, “they are in reality much more cruel to themselves, who condemn themselves to burn forever in hell for the sake of the short and miserable pleasures of this life.” Others say

that all forbidden pleasures should be denied to the body; but they despise external mortifications, saying that interior mortification is what is required; that is, the mortification of the will. Yes, it is principally necessary to mortify the will, but the mortification of the flesh is also necessary, because, when the flesh is not mortified, it will be hard to be obedient to God. St. John of the Cross said, that any one who taught that external mortification was not necessary ought not to be believed even though he worked miracles. But let us come to the practice of it.

In the first place, the eyes must be mortified. The first arrows which wound the soul and often kill it, enter through the eyes. The eyes are, as it were, grappling-irons of hell, which drag souls, as if by main force, into sin. A certain pagan philosopher voluntarily put out his eyes to free himself from impurity. It is not lawful for us to pluck out our eyes, but we ought to make them blind by means of mortification; otherwise we shall find it difficult to keep ourselves chaste. St. Francis de Sales said: "You must close the gates, if you do not wish the enemy to enter into the citadel." We must, then, abstain from looking at any object that may give occasion to temptation; and when by chance our eyes light on some dangerous object, let us take care not to fix them on it." "It is not so much the mere seeing," said St. Francis de Sales, "but the inspecting and continuing to look, that is the cause of ruin." Let us, then, be very careful in mortifying our eyes; because many are now in hell on account of sins of sight.

In the second place, we must mortify the tongue, by abstaining from words of detraction, or of abuse or immodesty. An immodest word spoken

in conversation, even in jest, may prove a scandal to others, and be the cause of a thousand sins arising from it. And it should be observed, that sometimes a word of double meaning, said in a witty way, does more harm than a word openly impure.

In the third place, we must mortify the taste. St. Andrew Avellino said, that in order to begin to live a good Christian life, a man must begin to mortify his palate. And St. Francis de Sales said, "We must eat to live, not live to eat." Many seem to live only to eat, and thus they destroy the health both of their soul and body. But the worst is, that intemperance in eating and drinking is often the cause of many impure temptations. "But how is this?" says some one; "must I eat no more?" No, my good friend, we must eat to preserve our life, but like rational beings. Especially if you desire to be free from impure temptations, abstain from eating overmuch meat, and from overmuch wine. The Scripture says: "Give not wine to kings." By a king is meant one who brings his flesh under the dominion of reason. Regret not having sometimes to fast or to abstain, especially on a Saturday, in honor of the most holy Mary. Many do so on bread and water; what is the least you do on the vigils of the seven principal feasts of our Lady? I pray you to observe at least the fasts of obligation. Some make a meal out of their "collation" and say, "It is sufficient if I am not satisfied." That is not right. The most that can be taken on the evenings of fast days of obligation is eight ounces; and even that has grown up by custom; for in olden times food could be taken only once a day.

In the fourth place, we must mortify our hear-

ing and our touch: the hearing, by avoiding listening to uncharitable, disobedient, or dangerous conversations; the touch by using all possible caution, as well in regard to others as in regard to ourselves. Great reserve is a part of religious modesty.

SECOND MEDITATION

The Multiplication of Bread—Confidence in God

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

CONSIDER the wonderful multiplication of bread, as related by the four Evangelists, and impress deeply on thy mind and heart the lesson which the Holy Ghost teaches thee on this occasion.

See how the words of Our Lord, "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice and all these things shall be added unto you" (*Matt.* vi. 33), were fulfilled in a most wonderful manner in behalf of the multitude that followed Him into the desert. The people manifest a great zeal on this occasion. They interrupt their journey to the celebration in Jerusalem and follow the Saviour into the desert. They heed not the difficulty of the way nor the burning heat of the sun. They listen eagerly all day to the Saviour without thinking of their bodily wants. They hunger for the word of salvation which the great Prophet gives them, and are intent to lose no word. While the apostles worry about provisions, the multitude is absorbed in the Saviour and

His preaching. Such zeal can certainly not go unrewarded. The Saviour has compassion on the multitude in a wonderful way and provides for all. It has always been thus. God has never abandoned those who served Him with their whole heart and joyfully made sacrifices for love of Him. "I have been young and now am old," says the Psalmist, "and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread" (*Ps. xxxvi. 25*).

Behold, my soul, how pleasing zeal for God's word is to thy divine Saviour. See how bountifully he repays the confidence of the people. The Holy Spirit will do the same for thee if thou follow Christ generously according to His inspirations. If thou do not fear exertions and privation for God's sake, if thou treasure the truths of salvation and strive diligently to acquire virtue, thou need not fear. This is what thy Saviour wishes to bring home to thee. He has compassion on the sorrowful. He blesses the children. And He rewards the generosity of all who followed Him by performing a great miracle in their favor. This has at all times been the conduct of God toward those who were prepared to follow Him with true zeal in the practice of virtue. "Let them trust in Thee," therefore says the Psalmist, "Who know Thy name, for Thou hast not forsaken them that seek Thee, O Lord" (*Ps. ix. 11*).

Examine thyself, my soul, on this point; hast thou always had an unshaken confidence in God? Dost thou not find that whenever thou didst make a serious mistake in life it was owing to a want of this confidence? That whenever thou didst rely more on thy strength than on God's infinite goodness, thou didst suffer in consequence? Reanimate thy faith, therefore, my soul. Be generous with God. Be willing to make any sacrifice

for His sake. Then rest assured that if need be the Holy Spirit will perform a miracle to protect thee and keep thee from all harm.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God of love and goodness, is it possible that I should not confide implicitly in thee after Thou hast given me so many signs of Thy good will? I deplore my blindness, my shortsightedness, my want of confidence. I regret that I have thus given offence to Thy loving heart. Thou art, indeed, a tender father toward me; why, then, should I not confide implicitly in Thee? O give me a share in the confidence that the multitude manifested to my Redeemer in the desert. Make me anxious for my spiritual good. In flame my heart with a burning zeal for Thy honor and glory. Give me the grace necessary to attain my end, to practise every virtue perfectly. This is my wish, this my desire. Thou who art all to me wilt certainly assist me. I wish to be entirely Thine.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

My soul, almighty God has promised to assist thee at all times if thou strive energetically to serve Him and sanctify thyself, provided Thou hast recourse to Him in all thy wants: "For who hath continued in His commandment and hath been forsaken? or who hath called upon Him, and He despised him?" (*Ecclus.* ii 12.) He even commands that thou have confidence in Him. "The anger of God cometh upon the children of unbelief" (*Eph.* v. 6). There are three reasons why thou shouldst show this confidence in God.

1. To honor Him. Thou showest God a great honor and offerest Him most acceptable homage if thou dost cling to Him with a confidence so firm that it will not be shaken even when, humanly speaking, all is lost. That is practical faith.

2. A second reason why thou shouldst at all times cling to God with unshaken confidence is because it is of great benefit to thee. On account of the honor it gives the Almighty, it exercises a certain fascination over the paternal heart of thy heavenly Father, which induces Him to take a special interest in thee and daily bestow some special graces upon thee. "For, amen, I say to you," says our Saviour, "if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Remove from hence hither,' and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you" (*Matt.* xvii. 19).

3. Finally, without this confidence a true spiritual life, a perseverance in virtue, is impossible. "O thou of little faith," said Our Lord to St. Peter when His disciple lost confidence in Him and began to sink into the sea, on which He walked by faith.

The Gospel also hints at the causes of a want of confidence.

1. The first cause is a shortsightedness of faith. Listen to the apostles: "Master, this is a desert place, and the hour is now past; send away the multitudes, that going into the towns, they may buy themselves victuals" (*Matt.* xiv. 15). They never thought that Jesus could supply all.

2. The second cause is pride and self-conceit. Thou must say with St. Paul, "I am nothing of myself." But "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (*Philipp.* iv. 13). We should

listen to the Wise Man who says: "Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart and lean not upon thy own prudence" (*Prov.* iii. 5).

3. A great reason for a want of confidence is because thou art not really in earnest in serving God and sanctifying thyself. We wish to serve God in our own way; we are not honest with Him. We forget that, "In the fear of the Lord is confidence of strength" (*Prov.* xiv. 26).

O my soul, how often hast thou failed to show God that confidence which He demands! How often in consequence hast thou done harm to thy spiritual life! And yet thou knowest that this confidence is necessary to perseverance! Moses and Aaron doubted God's word and in consequence did not see the Promised Land. How many graces hast thou lost on account of thy lack of confidence? And why did this happen? On account of shortsightedness in thy faith? On account of pride? On account of a want of earnestness in God's service? Ah, how often has this been the case! Yes, I have not been honest with God. On account of my pride, my laziness, I have been willing to serve God only so far as it suited my own convenience. How, then, could I have confidence?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I see full well that Thy goodness to me is so great that I should confide in Thee implicitly at all times. But my pride and my want of good intention have at times prevented this confidence. I detest this miserable pride, this dishonesty, as the greatest misfortune of my life. Have pity on my infirmity. Give me humility; an upright intention, fervor, true zeal in Thy service; then I shall always confide in Thee.

Resolution

In all my trials and difficulties I will henceforth place unbounded confidence in the Holy Spirit. I will be mindful of the Psalmist's words: "Expect the Lord, do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord" (*Ps.* xxvi. 14). Yes, The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life: of whom shall I be afraid? If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. If a battle should arise up against me, in this will I be confident. "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; I shall never be confounded." Yes, my Redeemer, I hope all from the blood Thou hast shed for me. Help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy precious blood. O queen of heaven! O mother of God, our hope, and the refuge of sinners, have pity on me!

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

*Mary, Model of Hope**(From St. Alphonsus)*

From faith springs hope, for God enlightens us by faith with a knowledge of His goodness and His promises, that we may rise by hope to the desire of possessing Him. Mary, then, having the virtue of an extraordinary faith, had also the virtue of an extraordinary hope, which made her say with David: "But it is good for me to adhere to my God, and to put my hope in the Lord God." Mary was, indeed, that faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit, of whom it was said: "Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with de-

lights, leaning on her beloved?" For she was always perfectly detached from affection to the world, which to her appeared a desert; and placing no confidence either in creatures or her own merits, but relying entirely on divine grace, in which alone she trusted, she always advanced in the divine love; and thus Alquin said of her: "She ascended from the desert, that is from the world, which she deserted and esteemed such a desert, that she turned away from it all her affection; leaning upon her beloved, for she trusted not in her own merits, but in the grace of Him who bestows grace."

And the holy Virgin plainly showed how great was her confidence in God: first, when she saw the trouble of her holy spouse, Joseph, because he knew not the mode of her miraculous conception and thought of leaving her: "But Joseph . . . minded to put her away privately." It appeared, then, necessary that she should discover to Joseph the hidden mystery; but no, she would not herself reveal the grace she had received; she thought it better to abandon herself to divine Providence, trusting that God Himself would protect her purity and good name. Cornelius à Lapide makes the same remark: "The Blessed Virgin was unwilling to make known this secret to Joseph, lest she should seem to boast of her gifts, but resigned herself in perfect confidence to the care of God, trusting that He would protect her innocence and reputation." Moreover, she showed her confidence in God when, as the time of the birth of Christ approached, she saw herself in Bethlehem shut out from the lodgings, even of the poor, and obliged to bring forth her Son in a stable. "And she laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for Him in

the inn." She did not then utter a single word of complaint, but abandoning herself to God, trusted that He would assist her in her need. The holy mother also showed how much she trusted in divine Providence, when warned by Joseph that they were obliged to fly into Egypt, she set out the same night on so long a journey to a foreign and unknown country without preparation, without money, without any other company than that of her infant Jesus and her spouse, "Who arose and took the child and His mother by night and retired into Egypt." But much more did Mary make known her confidence when she asked from her Son the favor of the miracle at the marriage of Cana; for having said, "They have no wine," Jesus answered her: "Woman, what is it to thee and to Me? My hour has not yet come." But after this answer, by which it seemed clearly that He refused her request, she, trusting in the divine goodness, directed the people of the house to do as her Son would order, because the grace was secure; "Whatever He shall say to you, do ye." And Jesus Christ did, indeed, order that the vessels should be filled with water, which he changed into wine.

Let us learn, then, from Mary to trust in God as we ought, but principally as to what concerns our eternal salvation, in which, although our cooperation is necessary, yet we ought to hope from God alone the grace necessary for obtaining it, entirely distrusting our own strength, and saying with the Apostle: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me."

Oh, my most holy Lady, of thee Ecclesiasticus says, that thou art the mother of holy hope. The holy Church says of thee that thou art hope itself. Hail, our hope! What other hope, then, am I

seeking? Thou, after Christ, art all my hope; thus St. Bernard called thee, thus I also wish to call thee: "The whole reason of my hope;" and I will also say to thee with St. Bonaventure: "Oh, salvation of those who invoke thee, save me."

PARTICULAR EXAMINATION

On Generosity Toward the Holy Spirit

Do I realize:

That the Holy Spirit has been generous with me?

That I ought to be generous with Him?

That God loves the cheerful giver?

Do I labor generously at my spiritual progress?

Do I carry my cross with resignation?

Do I pray with fervor?

Do I employ all my time well? in a spirit of penance and self-denial? with purity of intention? out of love for Jesus and Mary? according to God's holy will? with confidence in the goodness of Jesus and Mary?

Am I resolved to continue in these dispositions through life? Say an act of contrition for faults, one of thanksgiving for graces, and renew your generous dispositions.

THIRD MEDITATION

Jesus and the Scribe—Poverty

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

ST. MATTHEW relates that when our divine Saviour attracted great multitudes by His teaching and miracles, "a certain scribe came and said to Him: Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go! And Jesus said to him 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head'" (*Matt.* viii. 20). Our Saviour, no doubt, declined to accept this scribe as His disciple, because he was actuated by love of earthly gain. Like many others, he was willing to follow Christ, but not by bearing all for love of Him. The Saviour then pointed to His own extreme poverty, saying: "The Son of man hath not where to lay His head." The poverty of most poor people is not their choice but a matter of necessity. Not so with Jesus Christ. He is the Master of heaven and earth. If He wished, He could have had a queen for His mother and a king for His foster father. Instead of being born in a stable, He could have been born in a magnificent palace. He might have been clothed in costly garments. Instead of lying in a rude manger, warmed by the breath of animals, he could have surrounded Himself with all kinds of comforts and luxuries. Of His own free choice He was born in exile. He has not even the necessaries of the very poor. He has contented Himself with the bare essentials. His poverty was so humiliating that He was despised

by the inhabitants of Bethlehem at His birth, by the people of Nazareth among whom He lived, and even by the executioners, who cast lots for the only garment He possessed.

O my soul, behold the lesson thy Saviour teaches thee! He is the God of infinite wisdom and certainly knows the true value of the goods of the earth. He left the splendor of His heavenly home to teach thee by word and by example. He began the Sermon on the Mount by saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (*Matt.* v. 3). He declared that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" (*Matt.* xix. 24). He holds out to thee the same rewards that He offered to that rich young man to whom He said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven" (*Matt.* xix. 21). In answer to this invitation thou didst finally renounce the goods of earth for the treasures of heaven. But, oh, how the Holy Spirit had to woo thee with the allurements of His grace before thou didst finally make up thy mind! And what regrets, perhaps, didst thou entertain when thou didst really make the sacrifice! It seemed so difficult for thee to sacrifice a little for love of Him who sacrificed all for love of thee. No doubt, if in His goodness He had not promised thee a mansion in the kingdom of heaven, thou wouldst never have made the sacrifice! And then, perhaps, like the Israelites in the desert, when thou didst experience the inconvenience of poverty, thou didst long again for the fleshpots of Egypt.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O my Jesus, what a poor worm of the earth am I! Indeed, "the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things" (*Wis.* ix. 15). I know that I have no lasting abode here below, that heaven is my true home! I appreciate the truth of Thy teaching. I admire Thy divine example. I have externally left the world to follow in Thy footsteps. But, alas, I have allowed the tendrils of my heart to cling to the goods of earth! I am sorry for my negligence. I detest my waywardness. I desire to be perfect. I wish to renounce all for love of Thee. O holy Spirit, strengthen me, give me an efficacious good will. I have vowed to be poor in spirit, that the kingdom of heaven may be mine. Never, never, in spite of all my miseries, will I be false to my vow. I want to follow in the footsteps of my Saviour. I desire no comforts in this life. I intend to use only the necessaries, and to use them not according to my will, but solely as prescribed by obedience. O Jesus, by Thy sacrifice lead me on to perfection.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

The scribe in the Gospel indeed said: "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go," but he had a far different idea from that expressed by our divine Saviour when He said to the rich young man: "Come and follow Me." The Saviour invited the young man to the perfection of evangelical poverty. The scribe only desired to accompany the Master in His public

life, share in His honors, and perhaps enrich himself with the voluntary offerings of the faithful.

Religious rarely enter the convent with such sordid motives, but they often neglect to follow Christ in the perfection of poverty after they have renounced all by their profession. The perfection of poverty includes the practice of the virtue of poverty as well as the observance of the vow. This virtue consists in that interior detachment of the goods of earth as our Saviour teaches by His word and example. Only those who practise this detachment are really poor in spirit. This spirit rejoices in being poor, takes nothing without permission, and, like our Saviour at Bethlehem, contents itself with bare essentials and even is at peace when necessaries are wanting. This spirit is content with everything, does not labor for transitory goods, but seeks to "lay up treasure in heaven; where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through and steal" (*Matt.* vi. 20).

My soul, was it to follow thy Saviour as the scribe wished to do that thou didst come to the convent? No. Thou didst wish to follow Him in spirit and in truth. But what progress hast thou made? Canst thou truly say with St. Francis of Assisi, "My God and my all," or with holy David, "What do I wish for in heaven or on earth but Thee, O my God?" Must thou not rather acknowledge that in thy heart thou hast not yet abandoned all temporal goods, that thy heart is still attached in a worldly way to the friends of earth? Dost thou not desire many things and disquiet thyself when thou canst not receive them? Instead of despising worldly goods, or at least contenting thyself with what is necessary, hast thou not surrounded thyself

with many conveniences and even with luxuries? And yet thou claimest to imitate the poverty of Jesus Christ who had not where to lay His head! Thou dost not love God with thy whole heart as long as thou hast attachment to the things of earth and reservest for them a share of thy affections. Thou art not yet really poor in spirit as long as thou dost not practise external privation and internal detachment perfectly. Thou dost not earnestly desire eternal riches as long as thou still takest pleasure in those of time. When wilt thou follow thy Saviour in real earnest? When wilt thou be able to say with St. Peter: "Behold, Lord, we have left all things, and have followed Thee" (*Matt. xix. 27*). Only then mayest thou calmly contemplate the Saviour's answer: "A hundredfold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting" (*Matt. xix. 29*).

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O my Jesus, I am sorry that I have devoted so little generosity and fervor to leaving all and following Thee. I am ashamed of my efforts after Thou hast given me so divine an example. I am not worthy to be classed among Thy followers. I deserve to be treated as the scribe whom Thou didst not permit to accompany Thee. The love alone which Thou didst show me encourages me still to hope in Thee. Yes, dear Jesus, in Thee I place all my confidence. I desire to love Thee, to follow Thee with my whole heart and soul. O holy Spirit, detach my heart from the goods of earth. Center all my affections in God, my only good. Help me to live only in and for God. Oh, that I could honestly say, "My God and my all!"

Resolution

For love of Thee, O my Jesus, I resolve to follow Thee in external privation and interior detachment so that I may merit with Thee the kingdom of heaven. I give myself entirely to Thee, and Thou hast already accepted me. I love Thee, and Thou dost also love me. Do not permit that this love between Thee and me should ever be interrupted. O my mother Mary! do thou obtain for me the grace that I may always love Jesus, and that I may always be loved by Him!

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

II. **In God Alone is Found True Peace**

(From St. Alphonsus)

He that seeks peace in creatures will never find it, because no creatures are fitted for giving satisfaction to the heart. God has created man for Himself, who is an infinite good; wherefore God alone can content him. Hence it comes that many persons, though loaded with riches, honors, and earthly pleasures, are never satisfied; they are ever seeking for more honors, more possessions, more amusements; and, however many they obtain, they are always restless, and never enjoy a day of true peace. "Delight thou in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart." When any person delights only in God, and seeks nothing but God, God Himself will take care to satisfy all the desires of his heart, and then he will attain the happy state of those souls who desire nothing but to please God.

Senseless are they who say, "Happy is he who can employ himself as he likes, who can command

others, who can take what pleasures he pleases." It is madness; he alone is happy who loves God, who says that God alone is sufficient for him. Experience shows clearly that multitudes of persons who are called fortunate by men of the world, because they are raised up to the possession of great riches and great dignities, live a miserable life, and never find rest.

But how is this, that so many of the rich and powerful in the midst of the abundance of the goods of the world, do not find peace? And, on the other hand, how is it that so many good Religious, who live retired in a cell, poor and hidden, pass their days so happily? How is it that so many solitaries, living in a desert or within a cave, suffering hunger and cold, yet rejoice with gladness? It is because they wait only on God and God comforts them.

"The peace of God surpasseth all understanding." Oh, how the peace which the Lord gives to those who love Him exceeds all the delights which the world can give! "Oh, taste and see how sweet the Lord is." O men of the world, cries the Prophet, why will you despise the life of the saints without having ever known it? Try it once; leave the world, leave it, and give yourself to God and you shall see that He well knows how to comfort you better than can all the greatness and delights of this world.

It is true that even the saints suffer great troubles in this life; but they, resigning themselves to the will of God, never lose their peace. The lovers of the world seem now at times joyful, at times sad, but, in truth, they are ever restless and in a state of turmoil. On the other hand, the lovers of God are superior to all adversity and to the changes of this world, and therefore they

live in uniform tranquillity. See how the celebrated Cardinal Petrucci describes a soul that is wholly given to God: "It beholds all creatures around change into a thousand various forms, while within, the depths of its heart, ever united with God, continue without change." But he who would live ever united to God, and would enjoy a continual peace, must drive from his heart everything that is not God, and live as if it were dead to earthly affections. O my God! give me strength to separate myself from all the snares that draw me to the world. Grant that I may think of nothing but to please Thee.

Happy are they for whom God alone is sufficient! O Lord! give me grace that I may seek nothing but Thee, and ask for nothing but to love Thee and give Thee pleasure. For love of Thee I now renounce all earthly pleasures, I renounce also all spiritual consolations; I desire nothing but to do Thy will, and to give Thee pleasure. O mother of God! recommend me to thy Son, who denies thee nothing.

II. Dart of Fire—The Sacrifice of Jesus

(From St. Alphonsus)

"Christ hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us" (Eph. v. 2).

God had conferred many blessings on men, thereby to draw them to love Him; but these ungrateful men not only did not love Him, but they would not even acknowledge Him as their Lord. Scarcely in one corner of Judea was He recognized as God by His chosen people; and by them He was more feared than loved. He, how-

ever, who wished to be more loved than feared by us, became man like us, chose a poor, suffering, and obscure life, and a painful and ignominious death; and why?—to draw our hearts to Himself. If the Son of God had not redeemed us, He would not have been less great or less happy than He has always been; but He determined to procure our salvation at the cost of many labors and sufferings, as if His happiness depended on ours. He might have redeemed us without suffering; but no! He willed to free us from eternal death by His own death; and though He was able to save us in a thousand ways, He chose the most humiliating and painful way of dying on the cross of pure suffering, to purchase the love of us ungrateful worms of the earth. And what, indeed, was the cause of His miserable birth and His most sorrowful death, if not the love He had for us?

Ah, my Jesus, may that love which made Thee die for me on Calvary destroy in me all earthly affections, and consume me in the fire which Thou art come to kindle on the earth. I reprobate a thousand times those shameful passions which cost Thee so much pain. I repent, my dear Redeemer, with all my heart for all the offences I have committed against Thee. For the future I will rather die than offend Thee, and I wish to do all that I can to please Thee. Thou hast spared nothing for my love; neither will I spare anything for Thy love. Thou hast loved me without reserve; I also without reserve will love Thee. I love Thee, my only good, my love, my all.

OPTIONAL READINGS

I. *Mary, the Model of Poverty*

(From St. Alphonsus)

Our loving Redeemer chose to be poor on this earth in order to teach us to despise the goods of this world. "Being rich," says St. Paul, "He became poor for your sake, that through His poverty you might be rich." For this reason Jesus Christ says to each one who wishes to be His disciple: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give it to the poor, and come, follow Me." Behold His most perfect disciple, Mary, who indeed imitated His example. Father Canisius proves that the holy Virgin could have lived in comfort on the inheritance left by her parents, but she was content to remain poor, reserving to herself a small portion, and giving the rest in alms to the temple and to the poor. Many are of opinion that Mary also made a vow of poverty, and it is known that she herself said to St. Bridget: "From the beginning I vowed in my heart never to possess anything in the world." The gifts received from the holy magi were certainly not of small value, but St. Bernard attests that she distributed them all to the poor. And we learn that the divine mother immediately gave to others the presents above mentioned, from the fact that when she went to the temple she did not offer the lamb, which was the oblation made by those who were able, as we read in Leviticus: "For a son she shall bring a lamb;" but she offered two turtle-doves and two young pigeons, the oblation of the poor. "And to offer a sacrifice according as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves or two young

pigeons." Mary herself said to St. Bridget: "All that I had I gave to the poor, and kept nothing for myself but poor food and clothing." Through love of poverty she did not disdain to marry a poor carpenter, like St. Joseph, and afterward, as St. Bonaventure relates, to support herself by the work of her hands, by sewing and spinning. An angel revealed to St. Bridget concerning Mary, that "worldly riches were in her eyes vile as dirt." In a word, she always lived in poverty, and she died in poverty; for, as Metaphrastes and Nicephorus relate, she left nothing behind her at her death but two poor garments to two women who had assisted her during life.

"He who loves riches," said St. Philip Neri, "will never become a saint"; and St. Teresa also said: "It justly follows that he who goes in search of things lost is also lost." On the other hand, the same saint said that this virtue of poverty is a good that comprises all other goods. I have said the virtue of poverty, which, according to St. Bernard, does not consist alone in being poor, but in loving poverty. Therefore Jesus Christ has said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Blessed, because they who wish for nothing but God, in God find every good, and find in poverty their paradise on earth, as St. Francis found it in saying, "My God and my all!" Let us, then, according to the exhortation of St. Augustine, love that only good in which is every good. And let us pray to Our Lord with St. Ignatius: "Give me only Thy love together with Thy grace, and I am rich enough." And when poverty afflicts us, let us console ourselves by the thought that Jesus and His mother have also been poor like us.

Ah, my most holy mother, thou hast in truth

reason to say, that in God was thy joy. "And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour;" for in this world thou didst not desire nor love any other good than God. Draw me after thee, O Lady! detach me from the world and draw me after thee to love that one who alone merits to be loved. Amen.

Resolution

The resolution to belong wholly to God is a great means of perfection. Many are called to perfection; they are urged on toward it by grace; they conceive a desire of it, but because they never really resolve to acquire it, they live and die in the bad odor of their tepid and imperfect life. The desire of perfection is not enough, if it be not followed by the stern resolve to attain it. How many souls feed themselves on desires alone, but never make withal one step in the way of God! It is of such desires that the Wise Man speaks when he says, "Desires kill the slothful." The slothful man is ever desiring, but never resolves to take the means suitable to his state of life to become a saint. He says, "Oh, if I were but in solitude, and not in this house! Oh, if I could but go and live in another monastery, I would give myself entirely to God!" And meanwhile he can not tolerate a certain companion; he can not put up with a word of contradiction; he is taken up with many useless cares; he commits a thousand faults of gluttony, of curiosity, and of pride; and yet he sighs to the wind, "Oh, if I had but!" or "Oh, if I could but!" etc. Such desires do more harm than good; because some feed themselves upon them, and in the meantime go on leading a life of imperfection. It was a saying of St. Francis de Sales: "I do not ap-

prove of a person who, being engaged in some duty or vocation, stops to sigh for some other kind of life than is compatible with his actual position, or for other exercises unfitted for his present state; for it merely serves to dissipate his heart, and makes him languish in his necessary duties."

We must, therefore, desire perfection, and resolutely take the means toward it. St. Teresa says, "God only looks for one resolution on our part, and will afterward do all the rest Himself; the devil has no fear of irresolute souls." For this reason mental prayer must be used, in order to take the means which lead to perfection. Some make much prayer but never come to a practical conclusion. The same saint said: "I would rather have a short prayer, which produces great fruits, than a prayer of many years, wherein a soul never gets further than mere resolving to do something worthy of almighty God." And elsewhere she says: "I have learned by experience that whoever, at the beginning, brings himself to the resolution of doing some great work, however difficult it may be, if he does so to please God he has no reason to be afraid."

The first resolution must be to make every effort, and to die rather than commit any deliberate sin whatever, however small it may be. It is true that all our endeavors, without the divine assistance, can not enable us to vanquish temptations; but God wishes us on our part frequently to use this violence with ourselves, because then He will afterward supply us with His grace, will help our weakness, and enable us to gain the victory. This resolution removes from us every obstacle to our going forward, and at the same time gives us great courage, because it affords us an assur-

ance of being in the grace of God. St. Francis de Sales writes: "The best security we can possess in this world, of being in the grace of God, consists not indeed in feeling that we have His love, but in a pure and irrevocable abandonment of our entire being into His hands, and in the firm resolution of never consenting to any sin, either great or small." This is what is meant by being of a delicate conscience. Be it observed, that it is one thing to be of a delicate conscience, and another to be of a scrupulous conscience. To be of a delicate conscience is requisite to become a saint, but to be scrupulous is a defect and does harm; and on this account we must obey our directors, and rise above scruples, which are nothing else but vain and unreasonable alarms.

Hence it is necessary to resolve on choosing the best, not only what is agreeable to God, but what is most agreeable to Him, without any reserve. St. Francis de Sales says, "We must start with a strong and constant resolution to give ourselves wholly to God, and protest to Him that for the future we wish to be His without any reserve, and then we must afterward often renew this same resolution." St. Andrew Avellino made a vow to advance daily in perfection. It is not necessary for every one who wishes to become a saint to make it the matter of a vow; but he must endeavor every day to make some steps forward in perfection. St. Laurence Justinian has written: "When a person is really making way, he feels in himself a continual desire of advancing; and the more he improves in perfection, the more this desire increases; because as his interior light increases each day more and more, he seems to himself always to be wanting in every virtue, and to be doing no good at all; and if, perchance, he

is aware of some good he does, it always appears to him very imperfect, and he makes small account of it. The consequence is, he is continually laboring to acquire perfection without ever feeling wearied."

And we must begin quickly, and not wait for the morrow. Who knows whether we shall afterward find time or not. Ecclesiastes counsels us: "Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly." What thou canst do, do it quickly, and defer it not; and he adduces the reason why: "For neither work, nor reason, nor wisdom, nor knowledge, shall be in the grave (Sheol), whither thou art hastening." Because in the next life there is no more time to work, nor free will to merit, for after death what is done is done. A nun of the convent of Torre de Specchi in Rome, whose name was Sister Bonaventura, led a very lukewarm life. There came a Religious, Father Lancicius, to give the spiritual exercises to the nuns, and Sister Bonaventura, feeling no inclination to shake off her tepidity, began to listen to the exercises with no good will. But at the very first sermon she was won by divine grace, so that she immediately went to the feet of the Father who preached, and said to him, with a tone of real determination: "Father, I wish to become a saint, and quickly a saint." And by the assistance of God, she did so; for she lived only eight months after that event, and during that short time lived as a saint, and then died as one.

David said: "And I said, now have I begun." So likewise exclaimed St. Charles Borromeo: "To-day I begin to serve God." And we should act in the same way, as if we had hitherto done no good whatever; for, indeed, all that we do for God is nothing, since we are bound to do it. Let

us therefore each day resolve to begin afresh to belong wholly to God. Neither let us stop to observe what or how others do. They who become truly saints are few. St. Bernard says, "We can not be perfect without being singular." If we would imitate the common run of men we should always remain imperfect, as for the most part they are. We must overcome all and renounce all, in order to gain all. St. Teresa said: "Because we do not come to the conclusion of giving all our affection to God, so neither does He give all His love to us." Oh, God, how little is all that is given to Jesus Christ, who has given His blood and His life for us. "However much we give," says the same saint, "is but dirt, in comparison of one single drop of blood shed for us by our blessed Lord." The saints know not how to spare themselves when there is a question of pleasing God, who gave Himself wholly, without reserve, to oblige us to deny nothing to Him. St. John Chrysostom wrote: "He gave all to thee, and kept nothing for Himself." God has bestowed His entire self upon thee; there is, then, no excuse for thee to behave reservedly with God. He has even died for us all, says the Apostle, in order that each one of us may live only for Him. "Christ died for all; that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them" (2 *Cor.* v. 15).

FOURTH MEDITATION

The Beloved Disciple—Chastity

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

ONE of the first disciples to leave all and follow Jesus was John the Evangelist. He was not only one of the three favored apostles, but was also the object of our Saviour's special love. In the Fourth Gospel he is called "the Beloved Disciple," or "the disciple whom Jesus loved." At the Last Supper this beloved disciple reclined next to his Master and was privileged to rest his head on our Saviour's breast. On Calvary he stood beneath the cross with Mary the mother of Jesus, and received her as his own from his Master. The foundation of this special love of Jesus for St. John was not only the bond of blood relationship or early friendship, but the virginal purity with which the Beloved Disciple followed his Master through life. He "was purchased from among men, the first-fruits to God and the Lamb" (*Apoc.* xiv. 4). He was therefore privileged to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," to fathom the mysteries of the Godhead, to make known things hidden from the foundation of the world, and to be specially beloved by Jesus and Mary while on earth. To Religious it is given to take this word (*Matt.* xix. 11), and keep it by their vow of chastity. They have promised God, in answer to His call and in the generosity of their hearts, to strive after the perfection of this angelic virtue. Like Mary, Joseph, and John, they, too, have resolved to "follow the

Lamb whithersoever He goeth," by the practice of purity of body and soul. In proportion to their fidelity will they also be "the beloved disciples" of Jesus on earth, and share in the tenderest love of Mary their mother.

Rejoice, my soul, that thy Saviour has singled thee out by His special love as He did St. John among the first disciples. This honor has been conferred upon thee without any merit on thy part. Many, whom thou didst know in thy childhood to be more pious than thee, did not receive it. But to thee the invitation was extended to "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." O thank Him, whose "delights are to be with the children of men," for His condescending love toward thee! Do not content thyself with this, however, but examine carefully how thou hast followed Him. See whether thou hast shown thyself a "beloved disciple." Hast thou observed all that the rules of modesty prescribe for thy holy state? Hast thou jealously watched over thy eyes and ears as becometh a true spouse of Christ? Hast thou always been as chaste in thy words and actions as if thou wert in the company of the angels of heaven? Hast thou had that horror for impurity which characterized St. Aloysius? Hast thou instantly repelled every impure suggestion to thy mind, and never permitted any unclean desire to enter thy heart? Or hast thou grown careless in thy vigilance, even given way to idle curiosity in thought or in look? Perhaps even harbored a semi-voluntary regret of the sacrifice thou hast made? Alas, then, for thee! Thy imprudence and negligence have classed thee among the foolish virgins!

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O my sweetest Jesus, I desire to belong entirely and unreservedly to Thee! To Thee have I consecrated my body, my heart, my soul! Thine I desire to be in life and in death. I know that I am not worthy to be Thy spouse, but since I have found favor in Thy sight, I care not for any human love. I sincerely regret if, even through inadvertence, I have failed to keep my holy vow in the least. I do not wish to be of the number of those foolish virgins who displease Thee with idle imaginations and unworthy regrets. I wish to have the lamp of faith ever filled with the oil of charity, so that I may be ever ready for the coming of the heavenly bridegroom. I know that I am weak, but I place all my confidence in Thee. Thou canst help me, dearest Jesus, to be ever Thy beloved disciple. I thank Thee for Thy grace, which has sustained me in the past. I hope to make myself worthy of Thy favors in the future. I will neglect none of the safeguards of this holy virtue. I will purify my heart by penance. I will fortify myself by a devout reception of the sacraments. I will place myself entirely under the protection of that mother who watched over Thee for thirty years.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

John merited to become "the beloved disciple" by following in the footsteps of his Master from the days of his youth. By vigilance, prayer, and application he kept his heart undefiled all the days of his life. Though Jesus, being God, could not sin, He disregarded none of the safeguards of

virtue. He never appeared in public unless the glory of His heavenly Father or the welfare of souls demanded it. It was thus that He led a hidden life for thirty years. During His public career He always surrounded Himself with His chosen disciples. Even when He retired to watch and pray after the fatiguing labors of the day, He made use of this safeguard and precaution. He followed this practice so consistently that even His apostles could not imagine Him acting otherwise. They were, therefore, a little surprised one day to find Him unattended talking alone to a Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob. "They wondered," relates St. John, "that He talked with a woman. Yet no man said: What seekest Thou? or, why talkest Thou with her?" (iv. 27.) Indeed, they rightly surmised that He must have a weighty reason for making this exception. This reason the Master communicated to them, saying: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work" (iv. 34). In fact, when we call to mind the diabolical malice which actuated His enemies, we wonder that they never ventured to make any insinuation about the purity of His life. Their silence on this subject in their bitter calumnies is the strongest proof of the vigilance and prudence which our Saviour exercised in His public and private life.

My soul, what dost thou think of thy indifference to many of the little safeguards of virtue when thou seest thy own Saviour take so great precaution? Do not consider thyself secure because by the grace of God thou hast not fallen into grievous sin. That security will be thy ruin. Bear in mind that the points of thy Rule relating to modesty were written under the guidance of

the Holy Spirit. Do not undervalue them and say, "They do not apply to our age and country." They apply to every age and country. They are based on the example of our Saviour Himself. They have the sanction of the saints, who like John, were beloved for their purity. They also have the sanction of many other holy men and women, who felt they could not sufficiently repair the faults of their youth by a life of austerity and penance. Rather look into thyself and see what use thou hast made of the safeguards of thy Rule. These are an indication of thy virtue and good will. They tell thee whether thou art a beloved disciple of Jesus or not. Dost thou love solitude, retirement, mortification of the senses and of the imagination? Dost thou live the life of an angel in the flesh? Art thou as modest in private as in public?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O Jesus, lover of purity, with more truth than St. Peter can I say: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (*Luke v. 8*). But what will become of me if thou dost depart? No, no! Do not leave me! Rather tell me to follow Thee, to take Thee as my model as the Beloved Disciple did. O my Jesus, I am covered with shame and confusion when I compare the conduct of the saints with mine. I have habitually dispensed myself from so many safeguards in daily life. I have been so negligent in using the means of persevering in the angelic virtue. I have almost given up striving after its perfection. Thy grace alone kept me from falling into mortal sin. I desire to love Thee, to follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest, into solitude, into prayer and self-denial, into perfect conformity with Thy holy will,

and perfect fidelity to the holy vow that I have made to Thee.

Resolution

I resolve to be pure in mind and heart, for Thou hast said, "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (*Matt.* v. 8). My Jesus, make me love Thee exceedingly and remain faithful to Thee until death. I ask of Thee this grace, together with that of always praying to Thee for it. Grant that I may die rather than ever prove unfaithful to Thee. O Mary, my mother, help me to be faithful to thy Son.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS .

Mary, the Model of Chastity

(From St. Alphonsus)

The flesh being rebellious against reason since the fall of Adam, the virtue of chastity is most difficult to practise. Of all combats, says St. Augustine, those of chastity are the most severe, for the battle is daily and the victory rare. But eternal praise to the Lord, who has given us in Mary a great example of this virtue. "With justice," says blessed Albert the Great, "is Mary called the Virgin of virgins, for she, being the first who offered her virginity to God, without the counsel or example of others, has brought to Him all virgins who imitate her." As David had already predicted: "After her virgins shall be brought to the temple of the king." "Without counsel or example;" yes, for St. Bernard exclaims: "O Virgin, who has taught thee to please God by virginity, and on earth to lead the

life of an angel?" "Ah!" answers Sophronius, "it is for this God has chosen this most pure virgin for His mother, that she may be an example of chastity to all." Hence St. Ambrose has called Mary "the standard-bearer of chastity."

By reason of her purity the Blessed Virgin was also called by the Holy Spirit beautiful as the turtle-dove: "Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle-dove's." "Mary," says St. Apollonius, "is a most chaste dove," and therefore she has also been called a lily: "As a lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters." Denis the Carthusian, commenting on this passage, says, "she has been called a lily among thorns because all other virgins were thorns either to themselves or others; but the Blessed Virgin has never been one to herself or others. For by her presence alone she infused into all thoughts and affections of purity." And this is confirmed by St. Thomas, who says, "the beauty of the Blessed Virgin encouraged chastity in all who beheld her." St. Jerome declares himself of the opinion that St. Joseph preserved his virginity by the society of Mary, for the saint thus writes against the heretic Helvidius, who denied the virginity of Mary: "Thou sayest that Mary did not remain a virgin; I take it upon myself to maintain more than that, even that Joseph himself preserved his virginity through Mary."

A certain author says that the Blessed Virgin so loved this virtue, that to preserve it she would have been ready to renounce even the dignity of mother of God. This we learn from her own answer to the Archangel: "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" and from the words she afterward added: "Be it done to me according to thy word;" signifying by this that

she gave her consent on the condition of which the angel had assured her, namely, that she should become a mother by means of the Holy Spirit alone.

St. Ambrose says: "He who has preserved chastity is an angel, he who has lost it is a devil; according to the words of Our Lord, 'They shall be as the angels of God in heaven.' But the unchaste become odious to God as the devils." And St. Remigius said that the greater number of adults are lost through this vice. The victory over this vice is rare, as St. Augustine says; but why is it rare? Because the means for conquering it are not put in use. The means are three, according to Bellarmine and the masters of the spiritual life: "Fasting, avoiding dangerous occasions, and prayer." By fasting is meant mortification, particularly of the eyes and of the appetite. The most holy Mary, although she was full of grace, was so observant of mortification of the eyes that she kept them always cast down, as St. Epiphanius and St. John Damascene inform us, and never fixed them on any one; they say that from her childhood she was so modest that she was the wonder of all. And hence St. Luke remarks that in going to visit St. Elizabeth, "She went with haste," that she might not be long seen in public. St. Gregory of Tours, asserts that during her whole life Mary fasted always; and St. Bonaventure adds, that Mary would never have found so much grace unless she had been temperate in food, for grace and gluttony can not subsist together. In a word, Mary practised mortification in everything, so that of her it was said: "My hands dropped with myrrh."

The second means is to fly the occasions of sin.

“He that is aware of the snares shall be secure.” Hence St. Philip Neri said that in this warfare cowards conquer; that is, those who avoid dangerous occasions. Mary shunned as much as possible the sight of men; and therefore St. Luke says that in her visit to St. Elizabeth, “she went with haste into the hill country.” And a certain author remarks that the Virgin left Elizabeth before the birth of the Baptist, as we learn from the Gospel itself, in which it is said that “Mary abode with her about three months; and she returned to her own house. Now Elizabeth’s full time of being delivered was come, and she brought forth a son.” And why did she not wait till his birth? In order to avoid the conversations and visits which would follow that event.

The third means is prayer. “And as I knew,” said the Wise Man, “that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it . . . I went to the Lord and besought Him.” And the Blessed Virgin revealed to St. Elizabeth, a Benedictine nun, that she had not acquired any virtue without effort and continual prayer. St. John Damascene says, “Mary is pure and a lover of purity,” and therefore she can not endure the impure. But whoever has recourse to her will certainly be delivered from this vice by only pronouncing her name with confidence. Venerable John of Avila says that many temptations against chastity have been overcome solely by devotion to the immaculate Virgin. O Mary, O most pure dove, how many are in hell through the vice of impurity! O Lady, obtain for us that always in our temptations we may have recourse to thee, and invoke thee, saying, “Mary, Mary, help us.” Amen.

EVENING EXAMINATION

Examination on the Spirit of Generosity

Am I discontented on account of the crosses that weighed upon me in the past, of the trials to which I was subjected, or the burdens I had to carry? Or do I regret the opportunities of doing good which I let pass by, or which I used so badly? Or perhaps regret not having had greater opportunities for work, suffering, and prayer in the service of God?

Do I desire to do great things for the glory of God, out of love for Jesus and Mary, for the sake of the reward in heaven? Have I resolved to become a saint; to become so now? Am I prepared to make any sacrifice which divine Providence may demand, to manifest my devotion to God? Am I resolved to do the most disagreeable work? to bear the heaviest burden? to be conformed to the will of God in every particular? While at prayer do I desire opportunities to do and to suffer great things for the glory of God? for the good of souls? for my own spiritual progress?

Do I promptly seize every opportunity of testifying my devotion to God? Do I seek such opportunities? Do I execute the work assigned to me with lively faith and great fervor? Do I prepare carefully? begin punctually? attend to all details conscientiously? renew my good intentions frequently? preserve my peace of mind in time of opposition? Do I persevere in fervor? Am I increasing in zeal for my spiritual progress? Do I love the cross for Christ's sake? Do I use my time conscientiously? Do I progress in recollection? Do I trust implicitly in divine

Providence? Do I seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in time of trial? Do I promptly subject my will and judgment to my Superiors? Am I watchful over my senses? Am I modest both when alone and with others? Have I guarded against undue familiarity? against all inordinate attachment to persons, places, things? Do I accept suffering in conformity with Jesus Christ?

Protestation for a Happy Death. (See p. 77.)

HYMN

To the Holy Ghost

(From *St. Alphonsus*)

THE SOUL ALL FOR GOD

Begone, ye vain hopes, ye attachments of earth.
Give your joys to such souls as no higher can soar;
Away, far away from my mem'ry begone,
For I seek you no longer, esteem you no more;
O God of my heart! make me love Thee alone.

Adieu, every creature; I leave you with joy.
I no longer am yours—nay, I am not my own;
I belong but to God, from all else I am free;
I am Thine, dearest Jesus—all Thine—Thine alone;
My best-belov'd good! let me cling but to Thee.

O amiable Lord! let Thy sweet, holy love
Now possess my whole being and reign over me;
Let Thy love in my heart every passion restrain
In that heart which was once so rebellious to Thee.
O amiable Lord! come, establish Thy reign.

O heavenly dew! that so sweetly dost fall,
Of passions unholy Thou calmest the glow:
Ah! make me forever enamor'd of Thee,
And live to seek only my God here below.
O heavenly dew! descend gently on me.

O fire all divine! who with heavenly flames
Dost those souls where Thou glowest make holy and blest,
Come Thou to my heart, make it worthy to burn
With Thy holiest ardors; inflame my breast,
O fire all divine! for Thy ardors I yearn.

O infinite love! Ah, how blessèd is he
Who beholds Thy sweet face there in heaven above!
Oh! when shall I, too, come Thy beauty to see,
And enjoy Thee forever in transports of love!
O infinite love! haste to draw me to Thee.

THE SEVENTH DAY

The Day of Practice

Dedicated to the Spirit of Wisdom

Disposition.—Abandonment.

Motto.—“Expect the Lord, do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord (*Ps.* xxvi. 14).”

The Special End of this day is to reduce the principles of faith and generosity to practice. In thus following Jesus, her guide, and copying Mary, her model, the soul will advance rapidly in realizing the CHRISTIAN IDEAL in daily life.

Reading.—“Interior and Exterior Mortification,” from your Rules and Constitutions.

PRAYER TO OBTAIN THE GIFT OF WISDOM

HOLY Spirit, divine consoler, I adore Thee as my God, just as I adore God the Father and God the Son. I bless Thee by uniting myself to the blessings that Thou dost receive from the angels and the seraphs. I offer Thee my whole heart, and I render Thee heartfelt thanks for all the benefits that Thou hast bestowed and dost unceasingly bestow upon the world. Thou, who art the author of all supernatural gifts, and who didst enrich with immense favors the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of God, I beseech Thee, visit me by Thy grace and Thy love, and grant me the gift of wisdom, in order that I may be able to direct all my actions by referring them

to God as my last end, so that, by loving and serving Thee in this life as I ought, I may have the happiness of eternally possessing Thee in the next.

One *Our Father*, one *Hail Mary*, *Glory be to the Father*, three times.

THOUGHTS AND EJACULATIONS

I love Thee, my Jesus, who didst die for me!

Give me Thy love, and then do with me what Thou pleasest!

I desire all that Thou dost will and that alone!

Thou hast given Thyself all to me; I give myself all to Thee.

I hope to love Thee for all eternity, O eternal God!

Thou art omnipotent; make me a saint.

Punish me in any way, but deprive me not of the power of loving Thee.

O my mother, make me always have recourse to thee; it is for thee to make me a saint; this is my hope.

FIRST MEDITATION

The Fear of the Lord

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

OUR divine Saviour was guided in all things by the Holy Ghost. In teaching man the way of salvation, He endeavored to cultivate especially in their hearts the fear of the Lord, the true fear of God. This fear is a result of a lively faith. It consists in a constant watchfulness, an eager

solicitude to do the will of God in all things, and to avoid all that could offend Him. "I will show you whom you shall fear," says the Saviour. "Fear ye Him, who after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell. Yes, I say to you, fear Him" (*Luke* xii. 5).

There are many reasons why thou shouldst fear God as a loving father, why thou shouldst ask this virtue from the Holy Spirit and practise it daily. (a.) The fear of God is a duty imposed by God Himself. "Fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him alone" (*Deut.* vi. 13). The Holy Ghost says: "Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is all man" (*Eccles.* xii. 13). "Let the earth fear the Lord" (*Ps.* xxxii. 8), says the Psalmist, and again he repeats: "Fear the Lord, all ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear Him" (*Ps.* xxxiii. 10). (b.) The fruits which the fear of God produces constitute another reason for thee to practise this virtue. "The fear of God," says the son of Sirach, "is honor and glory, and gladness, and a crown of joy. The fear of God shall delight the heart, and shall give joy, and gladness, and length of days" (*Ecclus.* i. 11-12). And Solomon adds: "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life" (*Prov.* xiv. 27). But consider these fruits in particular.

1. The fear of the Lord brings temporal blessings: "The fear of the Lord shall give joy, and gladness, and length of days" (*Ecclus.* i. 12).

2. Consider the spiritual fruits: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (*Ps.* cx. 10). "The fear of the Lord hateth evil" (*Prov.* viii. 13). The fear of the Lord prompted the chaste Susanna to say to the wicked accusers: "It is better for me to fall into your hands than to sin in the sight of the Lord" (*Dan.* xiii. 23).

3. The fear of the Lord keeps thee in humility. It prompts thee to say with the publican, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner" (*Luke* xviii. 13).

4. The fear of the Lord leads to wisdom. "Behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom" (*Job* xxviii. 28).

5. The fear of the Lord is an incentive to virtue. "The fear of the Lord is holy," says the Psalmist (xviii. 10).

6. The fear of the Lord leads to a happy death. "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord" (*Ps.* cxi. 1). "With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed" (*Ecclus.* i. 13).

Holy faith tells us, my soul, that thy creator, preserver, redeemer, and sanctifier has every claim on thy whole and undivided service. It tells thee that His infinite holiness is displeased with the least shadow of sin. It teaches that the infinite Justice must punish every unrepented sin. It tells thee that no one can escape or withstand His infinite power. Let these thoughts sink deep into thy heart. Think how frail, how changeable, thou art by nature. Rely implicitly on the Holy Spirit. Then a wholesome fear will take root in thy heart. This fear will teach thee to act with caution and reflection. It will lead thee to shrink from every sin, everything but what can give glory to almighty God. This true, filial fear of the Lord will give thee true wisdom to appreciate things at their true value. It will imbue thee with the principle: "Whatever is not eternal is nothing." It will impress the words of St. Augustine on thy mind in regard to the sinful pleasures of life: "The pleasure is momentary, the pain eternal." It will teach thee to bear thy

daily cross patiently and approve of the words of that holy man who exclaimed when suffering excruciating pain: "O these pains are light compared to the eternal pains of hell."

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, implant in my heart that true fear which will keep me from sin. Alas, how many faults have I committed because I have not feared Thee as I ought. I repent of my conduct. I regret that I have so often displeased Thee after all that Thou hast done for me. O give me a great love for Thee. Make me love Thee with all my heart and then I will never again displease Thee. I desire to love Thee with all my heart, I desire to live only to do Thy holy will. I desire to be entirely united to Thee. May the Holy Spirit, who lives in my heart, dispose of me entirely according to Thy good pleasure, that I may live faithfully in the fear of the Lord, with a perfect heart, and enjoy its fruits in time and eternity.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

The fear of the Lord, then, will only produce those wonderful results when it possesses the requisite qualities.

1. It must in the first place be a childlike, a filial love, and not the fear of a slave. "Be of good heart. It is I, fear ye not" (*Matt. xiv. 27*). It must be a fear that dreads the reproach of ingratitude more than the punishment that it may incur. It must fear God alone more than the ridicule or the power of the world. "In the world you shall have distress; but have confidence; I have overcome the world" (*John xvi.*

33). "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do" (*Luke* xii. 4). Our Saviour does not like an anxiety about the necessaries of life: "Be not solicitous therefore, saying, what shall we eat; or what shall we drink; or wherewith shall we be clothed" (*Matt.* vi. 31). Place an unbounded confidence in God alone. Fear only Him that hath power to cast into hell.

2. Another quality of the fear of the Lord is magnanimity. It must never degenerate into pusillanimity. With the assistance of the divine grace it must always be ready to say with St. Paul, "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (*Philipp.* iv. 13).

3. This fear of the Lord must finally be an active fear, a fear that seeks the will of God and does it in all things, as described by the son of Sirach. "They that fear the Lord," he says, "will seek after the things that are well pleasing to Him; and they that love Him shall be filled with His law" (*Ecclus.* ii. 19).

Examine, my soul, the qualities of thy fear. Dost thou at times not fear the evils of life more than the evil of sin? Or if thou hast not fallen so low, art thou always ready to co-operate with the grace of God to do great things for His holy name? Art thou really anxious to do great things for God and heaven like St. Paul? Dost thou always show this anxious zeal in thy daily life? in small things as well as in great things? in secret actions as well as by those that can gain for thee the applause of men? Does the fear of the Lord impel thee to guard over thy passions, to root up all inordinate inclinations? Does it influence thee to practise virtue by reminding thee of the account that thou must one

day render of thy time, thy talents, thy countless graces? Is this the case especially with thee, who art a Religious? Art thou mindful of that admonition of St. Paul wherein he says: "We exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain"? (2 *Cor.* vi. 1.)

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, how often have I failed to keep Thy holy law. I have served Thee rather as a slave than as Thy adopted child. I repent of my faults. I detest them with all my heart. Even when I was influenced by a salutary fear it did not suffice to move me to seek Thy honor and glory in all things. But, henceforth, I desire to make myself deserving of those blessings which Thou promisest to all that fear Thy holy name, that keep Thy holy law. I desire not so much temporal blessings, but rather those spiritual goods which will make me more agreeable in Thy sight. Give me that true wisdom which will enable me to estimate things at their true value. Give me a great dread of sin, so that I may avoid the least wilful transgression of Thy holy law. Reanimate my faith, so that I may see Thee and serve Thee with fidelity and generosity in all things.

Resolution

I will then fear the Lord all the days of my life, for if I fear Him I need not fear anything else.

"Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear, for I am afraid of Thy judgments . . . Thy justice is justice forever, and Thy law is the truth . . . My heart hath been in awe of Thy words . . . I have kept Thy commandments and Thy testi-

monies, because all my ways are in Thy sight'' (*Ps.* cxviii. 120-142-161-168). I now esteem Thy grace above all the kingdoms of the world. I love Thee, and for Thy love I accept every sorrow, together with death itself. And if I am not worthy to die for Thy glory by the hand of executioners, I accept at least willingly that death which Thou hast allotted to me; and I accept it in the manner and at the time that Thou shalt choose. My dear mother Mary, obtain for me the grace to live and to die loving Jesus.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

I. Purity of Intention

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

Purity of intention consists in doing everything from a simple desire to please God. Jesus Christ has said, that according to the intention, whether it be good or evil, is our work judged before God. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body is full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body is full of darkness." The single eye signifies a pure intention of pleasing God; the dark and evil eye signifies a want of such honest and holy intention, when our actions are done from a motive of vanity, or from a desire to please others.

Can any action be more noble than for man to give his life for the Faith? and yet St. Paul says, that he who dies from any motive but that of a pure desire to do God's will, gains nothing by his martyrdom.

If, then, martyrdom avails nothing unless it be endured for the sake of God alone, of what value will be all the preaching, all the labor of good

works, and also all the austerities of penitents, if they are done to obtain the praise of men, or to satisfy their own inclination?

The prophet Aggeus says, that works, however good in themselves, if not done for God, are nothing better than bags full of holes, which means that they are all lost directly, and that no good comes from them. On the contrary, every action done with an intention of pleasing God, of however little value in itself, is worth much more than many works done without such pure intention.

We read in St. Mark that the poor widow cast into the alms-box of the temple only two mites; but yet of her the Saviour said: "See, that poor widow hast cast in more than all." St. Cyprian remarks on this, that she put in more than all the others, because she gave those two little pieces of money with the pure intention of pleasing God.

One of the best signs by which we may know whether a person's work is done with a right intention is, that if the work has not the effect desired he will not be at all disturbed. Another good sign is, that when a person has completed any work, and then is spoken ill of for it, or is repaid with ingratitude, he nevertheless remains contented and tranquil. On the other hand, if it happens to any one to be praised for his work, he must not disquiet himself with the fear of being filled with vainglory; but should it come upon him, only let him despise it in his heart, and say, with St. Bernard, "I did not begin it for thee, nor because of thee will I leave it."

To work with an intention of acquiring more glory in heaven is good, but the most perfect is the desire to give glory to God. Let us be sure

that the more we divest ourselves of our earthly interests, so much the more will our Saviour increase our joy in paradise. Blessed is he who labors only to give glory to God, and to follow His holy will. Let us imitate the love of the blessed, who, in loving God, seek only to please Him. St. John Chrysostom says, "If we can attain to the fulfilment of God's pleasure, what more can we desire? If thou art worthy of doing anything that pleases God, dost thou ask any other reward?"

This is that single eye which pierces the heart of God with love toward us, as He says to the holy Spouse, "Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast wounded my heart with one of thine eyes." This single eye signifies the one end that holy souls have in all their actions, that of pleasing God. And this was the counsel that the Apostle gave to his disciples: "Therefore, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." The Venerable Beatrice of the Incarnation, the first daughter of St. Teresa, said, "No price can be put on anything, however small, that is done entirely for God." And with great reason she said this, for all works done for God are acts of divine love. Purity of intention makes the lowest actions become precious, such as eating, working, recreation, when they are done from obedience and from a desire to please God.

We must, then, in the morning, direct to God all the actions of the day; and it will be very useful to us to renew this intention at the beginning of every action, at least of the most important, such as meditation, communion, and spiritual reading; pausing a little in the beginning of these, like the holy hermit, who, before beginning any-

thing he had to do, lifted his eyes to heaven, and remained still; and when he was asked what he was then doing, replied, "I am making sure of my aim."

When, O my Jesus! shall I begin to love Thee truly? Miserable that I am! If I seek among my works for any that are good—for one work done only to please Thee, my Saviour — I shall not find it. Alas! then, have pity on me, and suffer not that I continue to serve Thee so poorly up to the time of my death. Grant me Thy help, that what remains of my life I may spend only in serving and loving Thee. Make me overcome all, that I may please Thee, and do all only to fulfil Thy holy pleasure; through the merits of Thy passion I ask it. O my great advocate, Mary, obtain for me this grace by thy prayers.

III. A Dart of Fire—The Love of God the Father for Us

(From St. Alphonsus)

"By this hath the charity of God appeared toward us, because God hath sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we may live by Him" (1 John iv. 9).

All men were dead in sin, and they would have remained dead if the eternal Father had not sent His Son to restore them to life by His death. But how? What is this? God to die for man! God! And who, then, is man? "Who am I?" says St. Bonaventure. "O Lord, why hast Thou loved me so much?" But it is in this that the infinite love of God shines forth. "By this hath the charity of God appeared." The Church exclaims on Holy Saturday, "O wonderful condescension of

Thy mercy toward us! O inestimable affection of charity! that Thou mightest redeem a slave, Thou didst deliver up Thy Son." O immense compassion! O prodigy! O excess of the love of God! to deliver a servant and a sinner from the death that he deserves, His innocent Son is condemned to die.

Thou, then, O my God, hast done this that we might live by Jesus Christ, "that we might live by Him." Yes, indeed, it is but meet that we should live by Him, who has given all His blood and His life for us. My dear Redeemer, if in the presence of Thy wounds and of the cross on which I see Thee dead for me, I consecrate to Thee my life and my whole will, ah, make me all Thine, for from this day forward I seek and desire none but Thee. I love Thee, infinite goodness; I love Thee, infinite love; while I live may I always repeat, "My God, I love Thee! I love Thee!" Let my last words in death be: "My God, I love Thee, I love Thee."

OPTIONAL READINGS

II. *Mary, Model of Prayer*

(From St. Alphonsus)

No soul on this earth has ever followed so perfectly as the Blessed Virgin that great precept of our Saviour: "We ought always to pray and not to faint." From no other, says St. Bonaventure, can we better take example, and learn the necessity of persevering in prayer, than from Mary. Mary is our model whom we ought to follow. For the blessed Albert the Great asserts, that after Jesus Christ, the divine mother was the

most perfect in the virtue of prayer, of all who ever lived or ever will live. First, because her prayer was continual and persevering. From the first moment in which she had life, and with life the perfect use of reason, she began to pray. And, in order that she might devote herself the more to prayer, she went when a child of only three years into retirement in the Temple; where in addition to other periods that she allotted to prayer, she was accustomed to rise at midnight and go to pray before the altar of the Temple. And later on, in order to meditate on the sufferings of Jesus, she also frequently visited the places of Our Lord's nativity, passion, and burial. Moreover, her prayer was wholly recollected, free from all distractions, and every irregular inclination. Therefore the Blessed Virgin, through her love of prayer, had so great a love for solitude, that, as she said to St. Bridget, when she lived in the Temple she even abstained from intercourse with her holy parents. St. Jerome, meditating on the words of Isaias, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel," says, that in Hebrew the word *virgin* properly signifies a retired virgin; so that Mary's love of solitude was already predicted by the prophet. Richard says that the angel addressed her in the words, "The Lord is with thee," on account of her great love of solitude. And St. Vincent Ferrer asserts that the blessed Mother never went from home, except to go to the Temple, and then she went entirely recollected, having her eyes always cast down. When going to visit St. Elizabeth, "she went with haste," and from this St. Ambrose says that virgins should learn to shun the public eye. St. Bernard teaches that Mary, through her love of prayer and soli-

tude, was always careful to avoid conversation with men. Hence she is called by the Holy Spirit the turtle-dove: "Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle-dove." Which words Vergellus thus explains: "The turtle-dove is a lover of solitude, and is an emblem of the unitive power of the soul." So the Virgin always lived solitary in this world, as in a desert, and therefore it was said of her, "Who is this that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke?" On which words St. Rupert the Abbot says, "Thus thou didst ascend by the desert, having a solitary soul."

Philo said that God speaks to souls only in solitude. And God Himself declared this by the prophet Osee, when He said, "I will lead her into the wilderness and I will speak to her heart." And hence St. Jerome exclaims: "O solitude, in which God familiarly converses with His servants!" "Yes," says St. Bernard, "because the quiet and the silence that is enjoyed in solitude force the soul to leave the earth in thought, and to meditate on the things of heaven." Oh, most holy Virgin, obtain for us a love of prayer and solitude, that detaching ourselves from the love of creatures, we may aspire only after God and heaven, where we hope one day to see thee, to praise and love with thee thy Son, Jesus, forever and ever. Amen. Come over to Me, all ye that desire Me, and be filled with My fruits. The fruits of Mary are her virtues.

None has appeared like unto thee, in all time before or after thee. Thou alone, O woman without equal, hast been pleasing to Christ.

II. *Ambition*

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

He that loves God does not desire to be esteemed and loved by his fellow-men: the single desire of his heart is to enjoy the favor of almighty God, who alone forms the object of his love. St. Hilary writes, that all honor paid by the world favors the work of the devil. And so it is; for the enemy traffics for hell, when he infects the soul with the desire of esteem; because when the soul lays aside humility, it runs great risk of plunging into every vice. St James writes, that while God confers His graces with open hands upon the humble, He closes them against the proud, whom He resists. "God resists the proud, and gives His grace to the humble." He says He *resists* the proud, signifying that He does not even listen to their prayers. And certainly, among the acts of pride we may reckon the desire to be honored by men, and self-exaltation at receiving honors from them.

We have a frightful example of this in the history of Brother Justin the Franciscan, who had even attained to a lofty state of contemplation; but, perhaps—and indeed it may be affirmed with certainty and without "perhaps"—because he nourished within himself a desire for human esteem, behold what befell him. One day Pope Eugenius IV sent for him; and on account of the great opinion he had of his sanctity, showed him peculiar marks of honor, embraced him, and made him sit by his side. Such high honors filled Brother Justin with self-conceit; on which St. John Capistran said to him, "Alas, Brother Justin, thou didst leave us as an angel, and thou returnest a devil!" And in fact, the hopeless monk,

becoming daily more and more puffed up with arrogance, and insisting on being treated according to his own estimate of himself, at length murdered a brother with a knife. He afterward became an apostate, and fled into the kingdom of Naples, where he perpetrated other atrocities; and there he died in prison, an apostate to the last.

Wherefore a certain great servant of God has wisely said, that when we hear or read of the fall of some towering cedars of Libanus, a Solomon, a Tertullian, who all had the reputation of saints—we may know that they were not given wholly to God; but nourished inwardly some spirit of pride and so fell away. Let us, therefore, tremble, when we feel an ambition arise within us to appear in public, and to be esteemed by the world; and when the world pays us some tribute of honor let us beware of taking complacency in it, as it might prove to be the cause of our utter ruin.

Let us especially be on our guard against all ambitious seeking of preference, and sensibility in points of honor. St. Teresa said, "Where punctiliousness prevails, there spirituality will never prevail." Many persons make professions of a spiritual life, but they are worshipers of self. They have the semblance of certain virtues, but they are ambitious of being praised in all their undertakings; and if nobody else praises them, they praise themselves; in short they strive to appear better than others; and if their honor be touched, they lose their peace, they leave off holy communion, they omit all their devotions, and find no rest till they imagine they have got back their former standing. The true lovers of God do not behave in this way. They not only carefully shun every word of self-esteem and all self-com-

placency, but, further, they are sorry at hearing themselves commended by others, and their gladness is to behold themselves held in small repute by the rest of men.

The saying of St. Francis of Assisi is most true: "What I am before God, that I am." Of what use is it to pass for great in the eyes of the world, if before God we be vile and worthless? And on the contrary, what matters it to be despised by the world, provided we are dear and acceptable to God? St. Augustine thus writes: "The approbation of him who praises neither heals a bad conscience nor does the reproach of one who blames wound a good conscience. As the man who praises us can not deliver us from the chastisement of our evil doings, so neither can he who blames us rob us of the merit of our good actions. "What does it matter," says St. Teresa, "though we be condemned and reviled by creatures, if before Thee, O God! we are great and without blame?" The saints had no other desire than to live unknown, and to pass for contemptible in the estimation of all. Thus writes St. Francis de Sales: "But what wrong do we suffer when people have a bad opinion of us, since we ought to have such of ourselves? Perhaps we know that we are bad, and yet wish to pass for good in the estimation of others."

Oh, what security is found in the hidden life for such as wish to love Jesus from their heart! Our Lord Himself set us the example, by living hidden and despised for thirty years in a workshop. And with the same view of escaping the esteem of men, the saints went and hid themselves in deserts and in caves. It was said by St. Vincent de Paul, that a love of appearing in public, and of being spoken of in terms of praise, and of hearing our

conduct commended, or that people should say that we succeed admirably and work wonders, is an evil which, while it makes us unmindful of God, contaminates our best actions, and proves the most fatal drawback to the spiritual life."

Whoever, therefore, would make progress in the love of God, must absolutely give a death blow to the love of self-esteem. But how shall we inflict this blow? Behold how St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi instructs us: "That which keeps alive the appetite for self-esteem is the occupying of a favorable position in the minds of all; consequently, the death of self-esteem is to keep oneself hidden, so as not to be known to any one. And till we learn to die in this manner, we shall never be true servants of God."

In order, then, to be pleasing in the sight of God, we must avoid all desire of making a parade in the eyes of men. And we must shun with still greater caution the ambition of governing others. Sooner than behold this accursed ambition set up in the convent, St. Teresa declared she would prefer to have the whole convent burned, and all the nuns with it! Hence she signified her wish, that if ever one of her Religious should be detected aiming at the Superiorship, she should be expelled from the community. St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi said, "The honor of a spiritual person consists in being put below all, and in abhorring all superiority over others. The ambition of a soul that loves God should be to excel all others in humility, according to the counsel of St. Paul: "In humility let each esteem others better than themselves." In a word, one who loves God must make the love of God the sole object of his ambition.

SECOND MEDITATION

The Public Life of Jesus—Intercourse
with the World

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

ST. MATTHEW tells us that, "Jesus went about all the cities and towns, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease, and every infirmity" (ix. 35). My soul, let us accompany our Saviour on His journey and learn a lesson for our exterior conduct. The exterior of Jesus, directed by the Holy Spirit, was always recollected. The key-note of His external behavior was calmness and reserve.

1. His eye was ever calm and mild. Even when aroused to just indignation, as by the buyers and sellers in the Temple, it was majestically calm and awe-inspiring.

2. Self-possession was visible on His countenance. His appearance, mien, and gestures were always well ordered. He was never influenced by passion or extravagance, sadness or severity. Of Him Isaias had said, "My elect, my soul, delighted in Him. He shall not be sad or troublesome."

3. The same must be said of His voice and manner of speaking. His voice was calm. When He began to preach all wondered at His grace and energy. "All gave testimony to Him: and they wondered at the words of grace that proceeded from His mouth" (*Luke iv. 22*). Even this was foretold by Isaias: "He shall not cry nor

have respect to person, neither shall His voice be heard abroad" (*Is.* xlii. 2).

4. Even His manner of talking was well-ordered. The Royal Prophet foretold this when he exclaimed, "Thou art beautiful above the sons of men; grace is poured abroad in Thy lips" (*Ps.* xliv. 3).

Behold, my soul, the model that the Holy Spirit proposes for thy imitation. Dost thou now comprehend why the saints, who permitted themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit and kept their eyes fixed on the example of Jesus Christ, took such great pains to regulate their exterior manner even in the minutest detail, to preserve that composure that flows from living in the presence of God? that recollection and reverence which is due to God present everywhere? The saints were not of the number of those who foolishly assert, "The exterior matters not. Whoever is particular concerning the exterior life acknowledges that he seeks holiness in accidental things." Holiness, as our Saviour told the Pharisees, must indeed spring from the interior. But it should not stop there. It should manifest itself exteriorly. Thou "shouldst let thy light shine before men, that they may glorify thy Father who is in heaven." Exterior decorum is a great protection, a true guard of the heart. Hence St. Basil writes, "Where Christ is, there also is modesty." A disordered exterior, moreover, leads to, and is, in a certain degree, an indication of an ill-regulated interior life. Examine thyself on thy past conduct. Compare it with that of thy divine guide. How much wilt thou find to correct in the use of thy eyes! How much in the use of thy voice! How much in thy manner of speaking and acting! Can it be said of thee that, "Grace is poured abroad in thy

lips?" Watch over thyself, therefore, and endeavor to regulate thy exterior manner according to thy divine model, that model which the Holy Spirit continually proposes for Thy imitation in the person of Jesus Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God, I am overwhelmed with confusion when I consider my daily conduct and compare it with that of my divine model. How much pain have I caused, how much scandal given by not controlling my eyes. How much offense have I given by sharp, cutting words. How much annoyance by ill humor, by disdainful and changeable ways! I repent of all such conduct and implore thy pardon. If virtue must come from within, then renew my spirit, increase my love, inflame my heart with holy desires, with good intentions. If our appearance is an indication of the state of our mind, then fill my mind with holy thoughts, burning with zeal for Thy glory and solicitude for the salvation of my soul, so that my aspect may bring others to love Thee. If exterior actions spring from a principle within, then implant Thy all-embracing love in my heart that it may prompt and direct all my actions. "O Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine."

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Consider, moreover, the conduct of Jesus toward His disciples and toward the people in general. Do this with care, my soul, and it will profit thee much for practical life.

1. Jesus did not grow disgusted with his disciples, but continued in their company to the last.

They were poor, rough, and rather ignorant men and certainly must have been naturally displeasing to Our Lord and they, no doubt, put His divine patience to the test. He loved them in spite of their many imperfections with all the ardor of His divine heart. They were the object of His special solicitude. In His intercourse with them He descends to their level, is ever ready to speak familiarly to them, to render them a service. He calls them His friends, His children, and provides for their daily wants. He accepts the slightest service with gratitude and protests that "the Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister" (*Matt.* xx. 28). "I am in the midst of you, as he that serveth" (*Luke* xxii. 27).

2. Our Saviour never had intercourse with the world except when it was the will of His heavenly Father. For thirty years He lived in obscurity. But when He appeared in public, He did so with as much caution and foresight as though, like an ordinary mortal, He feared the danger of sin. And yet He made no distinction of persons except in favor of the sinner and the little children. He declared that He came to convert sinners, rather than to preach to the just, if such there were. He said: "Suffer the little children to come to me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of Heaven" (*Mark* x. 14). By His zeal for the good of souls he made for Himself bitter enemies, though He gave them not the least shadow of scandal. He could, therefore, challenge them and say, "Which of you shall convince me of sin" (*John* viii. 46). He was meek when persecuted and ever returned good for evil.

Behold, my soul, the model the Holy Spirit proposes for thy imitation in thy intercourse with all mankind. Never become discouraged or dis-

contented with those who are near thee, no matter what their weakness may be. Never act as though they were a burden to thee. Treat them with unwavering patience and uniform meekness. Thy conformity to thy divine Model will be proportionate to thy patience, thy meekness, thy generosity toward others. Be solicitous for those dependent on thee with a love that is rooted in God. Consider thyself the representative of the heavenly Father in their regard, and treat them with the same solicitude that He would show them. For St. Paul says, "If any man have not care of his own . . . he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 *Tim.* v. 8).

Be humble, willing to render a service, and grateful for the least attention shown thee, like thy Saviour, who protested that He came not to be served! Examine thyself on thy conduct toward those of thy community. Where, alas, was thy meekness, thy humility, when thou didst grow impatient for a trival cause? Examine thyself, also, in regard to thy intercourse with the world. Hast thou acted in a way to resemble thy divine model?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

Alas, O God, I have imitated my divine model so poorly. I have, alas, been influenced often by passion or caprice, instead of by love. I have been impatient, I have been haughty. I have criticized and complained, when my Saviour would have burned with love. I am sorry for my conduct. I wish to reform myself, to conform my actions to the model that the Spirit of love has shown to me. Give me Thy grace, give me Thy love, Thy patience, I wish to be wholly Thine.

Resolution

I will impress deeply upon my mind these words of St. Paul: "Let your modesty be known to all men" (*Philipp.* iv. 5). "Put ye on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another" (*Col.* iii. 12, 13). "Perfect thou my goings in Thy paths: that my footsteps be not moved" (*Ps.* xvi. 5).

I resign myself wholly into Thy arms, O my Jesus; I will be wholly Thine; I will suffer everything for love of Thee; and I ask of Thee nothing but Thyself.

O holy Virgin and my Mother Mary, I love thee, and I rely on thee: succor me by thy powerful intercession!

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

Zeal for Souls

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

No Religious can be a true follower of Jesus and will never become a saint, if he has not zeal for the salvation of souls. Our Redeemer protests that, "the Spirit of the Lord . . . hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." Our Lord sought no other proof of Peter's love for Him than this, that he should procure the salvation of souls. "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? . . . feed my lambs" (*John* xxi. 16). Jesus did not impose on Peter penance, prayers, and the like, but only that he should strive to save His lambs. And He declares that He would look upon every benefit conferred on

the least of our neighbors as conferred on Himself: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (*Matt.* xxv. 40.)

Every Religious should, therefore, with the utmost care entertain within himself this zeal, and this spirit of helping souls. To this end every one should direct his studies, and when he shall be assigned to his work by his Superiors, he should give to it all his thoughts. He could not properly call himself a true Religious who, through the desire of attending only to himself and of leading a retired and solitary life, would not accept with all affection such an employment when imposed on him by obedience.

What greater glory can a man have, than to be, as St. Paul says, a co-operator with God in this great work of the salvation of souls? He who loves God ardently is not content to be alone in loving Him; he would draw all to His love, saying with David: "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us extol His name together." Hence St. Augustine exhorts all those who love God, "If you love God, draw all men to His love." That Religious has good ground of hope for salvation who, with true zeal, labors for the salvation of souls. "Have you saved a soul?" says St. Augustine, "then you have predestined your own."

The Holy Ghost promises us, "When thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry; and shalt satisfy the afflicted soul . . . and by thy labor shalt have filled him (with divine grace), the Lord will give thee rest continually, and will fill thy soul with brightness" (*Is.* lviii. 10-11); the Lord will fill thee with light and peace. St. Paul placed his hope of eternal salvation in procuring the salvation of others, when he said to His disciples

of Thessalonica: "For what is our hope or our joy, or crown of glory? Are not you in the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" (1 *Thess.* ii. 19).

Prayer

O my Lord Jesus Christ! how can I thank Thee enough, since Thou hast called me to the same work that Thou didst Thyself on earth, namely, by my exertions to help souls to their salvation. How have I deserved this honor and this reward, after having offended Thee so grievously, and been the cause of others offending Thee? Yes, O my Lord! Thou callest me to help Thee in this great undertaking. I will serve Thee with all my strength. Behold, I offer Thee all my labors, and even my life, in order to obey Thee. Nor do I by this aspire to satisfy my own inclination, or to gain applause and esteem from men; I desire nothing but to see Thee loved by all, as Thou deservest. I prize my happy lot, and call myself fortunate, that Thou hast chosen me for this great work, in which I protest that I will renounce all praises of men, and all self-satisfaction, and will only seek Thy glory. To Thee be all the honor and satisfaction, and to me only the discomforts, the blame, and the reproaches. Accept, O Lord! this offering, which I, a miserable sinner, who desires to love Thee and to see Thee loved by others, make of myself to Thee, and give me the strength to execute it.

Most holy Mary, my advocate, who lovest souls so much, help me.

PARTICULAR EXAMINATION

On Abandonment to the Holy Spirit

Do I realize:

That the Holy Spirit is infinite goodness and love?

That He desires to transform me into a true child of God?

That I can not follow Jesus or imitate Mary without Him?

That He deserves my boundless confidence?

Have I surrendered myself unreservedly to His guidance? Listened attentively to His holy inspiration? Co-operated promptly with His graces?

Am I resolved to renew this surrender daily? henceforth to be faithful to His guidance?

Say an act of contrition for faults, one of thanksgiving for favors, and renew your submission to the Holy Spirit.

THIRD MEDITATION

The Agony in the Garden—Dangers of Sadness

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

CONSIDER the agony of Jesus in the Garden, which is so great that He Himself says, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (*Matt.* xxvi. 38). He begins to tremble and to be afraid. His body sways, His knees give way, He falls prostrate to the ground. The terror of death seizes upon His soul. His sweat becomes as drops of blood. He groans and calls on His heavenly Father for help:

“Father if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” At last an angel descends from heaven and comforts Him.

Sadness is a consequence of sin. Our Saviour suffered this dereliction in the garden to make satisfaction for our sins and to earn for us the grace to escape the unhappy consequences of sadness.

Sadness, being a result of sin, can do no good. “Drive away sadness far from thee,” says the Holy Ghost, “for sadness hath killed many, and there is no profit in it” (*Ecclus.* xxx. 24, 25).

Consider the evil consequences of sadness, my soul, that thou mayest be moved to use the means of overcoming it.

1. The first effect of sadness is that it deprives the soul of all relish for prayer and spiritual exercises. Sadness directs all our thoughts into a melancholy channel. “By grief of mind,” says the Wise Man, “the spirit is cast down.”

2. Then sadness makes thee downhearted, and out of joint with thy surroundings. It causes thee to be a cross to others. “Sadness,” says St. Gregory the Great, “is always near to anger.”

3. Sadness, moreover, robs the will of all power and energy. “Grief in the heart of man shall bring him low.” “As a moth doth by a garment, and a worm by the wood: so the sadness of a man consumeth the heart” (*Prov.* xxv. 20). “For of sadness cometh death, and it overwhelmeth the strength, and the sorrow of the heart boweth down the neck” (*Ecclus.* xxxviii. 19).

4. Sadness is, finally, the cause and the root of many grievous temptations. “The devil is delighted,” says St. Francis, “when the heart of man is sad, for then he will easily conquer it.”

“Sadness,” says the Holy Ghost, “hath killed many and there is no profit in it” (*Ecclus.* xxx. 24, 25).

Behold, my soul, the cause and the effects of sadness, for which Thy loving Saviour willingly suffered that indescribable sorrow in the Garden of Gethsemani. Do not deceive thyself for a moment that thou couldst give way to sadness even for a day without harm. It will dry up thy spirit of piety and devotion. It will even anger thee to see others absorbed in prayer. Thou who lovest to criticize, how often hast thou given way to thoughts, words, and actions against charity when sadness oppressed thee? If thou givest way to sadness, thou by thy own fault makest thy way to heaven ever more tedious and more difficult, yea, almost impossible. Then the devil will tempt thee against thy vocation, against a life of virtue, and, alas, may induce thee to seek solace for thy woes in the pleasures and distractions of the world. If sadness has already taken possession of thee, go, my soul, to that Garden of Gethsemani, and see what thy Saviour has suffered for thee, that thou mayest have the strength to triumph over this temptation. Call also to mind the words of St. Magdalene of Pazzi to a Sister who gave way to sadness: “Rest assured, dear Sister,” said she, “that God can take no pleasure in a soul that is sad.”

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O dearest Jesus, for love of me thou didst suffer Thy bitter dereliction. To give me a token of Thy exceeding great love Thou didst wilfully suffer an agony that no human heart can ever comprehend. And I in return have been unwilling to suffer even a little for Thee. I detest

my conduct. I thank Thee for Thy goodness in showing me how to suffer mental agony with resignation. O how many faults have I committed by not following Thy example! I detest them from the bottom of my heart. I regret all the sins against fraternal charity that I have committed by yielding to sadness. I deplore the many opportunities of practising virtue that I have passed by on the same account. I do not wish Thy suffering to be in vain. I wish in all things to imitate Thy holy example. I, too, desire henceforth only God's holy will. Yes, in agreeable as well as in hard things, may Thy holy will be done, O Lord.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Consider, my soul, what thou must do in the time of sadness to suffer no spiritual loss. Thy loving Saviour shows thee four means to make use of when oppressed by sadness, no matter what may be its cause.

1. The first great means is prayer. In sadness thou feelest a repugnance, a disgust for spiritual things. But thou must resist and fortify thyself by prayer, "Watch ye and pray," said Our Lord to His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemani, "that you enter not into temptation" (*Matt.* xxvi. 41). Not only Jesus, but also the disciples were plunged into a sea of sorrow. Instead of praying, the disciples give way to sleep. They draw upon themselves this reproof, "Could you not watch one hour with Me?" (*Matt.* xxvi. 40.) Soon the disciples begin to doubt. They are filled with a great fear. They desert their Master. But Jesus, "being in an agony, prayed

the longer" (*Luke* xxii. 43). He is comforted by an angel and conquers every temptation.

2. The second remedy is not to seek consolation in worldly distractions and relaxations. Redouble, if possible, thy fidelity in the performance of thy duty. Sadness paralyzes the powers of the soul. Thou must therefore make special exertions to perform thy duty faithfully. "Give not up thy heart to sadness," says the Holy Ghost, "but drive it from thee; and remember the latter end" (*Ecclus.* xxxviii. 21).

3. Thou must, moreover, take particular care not to offend against charity. Sadness makes thee whimsical, downcast, and peevish. "Watch and pray," therefore, according to the example of Jesus, lest thou fall into temptation.

4. The final method of overcoming sadness is fidelity in performing the labors of thy calling. This is necessary in order to conquer that longing for change and diversion which arises in the soul in time of sadness.

Behold, my soul, the only true remedies for sadness. See how the Saviour applies them in His agony in the garden. He prayed, to teach thee to pray in the hour of trial. He knew that the will of His heavenly Father demanded that He shall suffer patiently, and He did it with perfect resignation. He does not find fault with His disciples, but lovingly, tenderly tells them, "Sleep ye now and take your rest, . . . for the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (*Matt.* xxvi. 45, 41). Do thou also endeavor to be friendly, mild, and loving toward every one when sadness darkens thy soul. Summon up all thy strength and act as thy duties require thee. Then sadness will become for thee a great source of merit.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O holy Spirit, who directest all in conformity with our divine model, I repent that so often I did not walk in the way of my Saviour. He prayed for me when suffering an agony of sadness. I have often neglected to pray when a little downcast. He sought comfort only in the will of His heavenly Father. I have sought consolation in relaxation and distractions. He watched and prayed and was gentle with His disciples. I grow peevish and uncharitable. He did the will of Him that sent Him, in all things. I have often sought consolation in following my own bad humor. I am ashamed of my conduct. I detest it. I desire to conform myself to that sublime model which Thou showest me in the Garden of Gethsemani, O holy Spirit, when sadness afflicts me. Help me to realize this desire. I am weak, but Thou wilt be my strength. "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (*Philipp.* iv. 13).

Resolution

I will often recall to mind the words of St. James: "Is any of you sad? let him pray" (*James* v. 13). Let the thought of the overwhelming sorrow of my Saviour in the Garden of Gethsemani sustain me! O my Jesus, I beg of Thee, and I hope to receive from Thee, the grace to execute what I now resolve.

"Bring my soul out of the prison that I may praise Thy name" (*Ps.* cxli. 8). My mother Mary, if thou wilt pray for me, I am safe. Oh, pray for me, pray; and cease not to pray till thou seest that I am changed, and made what God wishes me to be.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

II. Dryness of Spirit

(From St. Alphonsus)

St. Francis de Sales said that true devotion and the love of God do not consist in receiving spiritual consolations and devout exercises but in the possession of a resolute will to desire and to do nothing but what God wills. This is the one end for which we should apply ourselves to prayer, to communion, to mortification, and to every other thing that is pleasing to God; even though we experience in them no sweet flavor, and continue in the midst of temptations and in a desolateness of spirit. "With dryness of mind and temptation," says St. Teresa, "the Lord makes trial of those who love Him." Even if this dryness lasts for the whole of life, let the soul not leave off prayer; the time will come when all will be abundantly rewarded.

As all masters of the spiritual life recommend, in time of desolation we ought especially to exercise ourselves in acts of humility and resignation. There is no better time for learning our own helplessness and our own misery than when we are barren in prayer, wearied, distracted, desolate, without any perceptible fervor, even without love. At such times let the soul say: "Lord, have mercy upon me; behold how powerless I am to do a single good deed." We must, besides, resign ourselves to the will of God, and say, "O my God, it is Thy will to keep me thus in darkness, thus in affliction; may Thy holy will be ever done. I desire not to be comforted; it is enough for me to abide solitary to give Thee pleasure." And thus we ought to persevere in prayer during all its duration.

The greatest trouble, however, which one suffers in prayer is not so much a dryness as a darkness, in which he finds himself stripped of every good wish, and tempted to give up faith and hope. Sometimes, in addition, he experiences violent attacks of temptation, and such distrust that he continues in grievous fear of having even lost the grace of God, and that for his own sins God had driven him from Him, and had abandoned him; so that he looks upon himself as abhorred by God; and therefore at such times solitude torments him, and meditation seems to him like a kind of hell. Then must he take courage, and recollect that this dread of having yielded to temptation or to despair, is simply the dread and the torment of the soul, but not a voluntary act, and therefore he is free from sin. At such a time a person really resists temptation with his will, though, through the darkness which enshrouds him, he is not able distinctly to perceive it. And the proof of this is the experience which he has, that if he were to be tempted knowingly to commit a single venial sin, his soul, which loves God, would rather accept death itself.

On this account, we must not trouble ourselves at such times to attain to a certainty that we are in the grace of God, and that there is no sin in what we are doing. Thou wouldst then know and be sure that God loves thee; but at such a time God does not choose to let thee know it; He wills only that thou shouldst strive to humble thyself, and trust in His goodness, and resign thyself to His holy will. Thou wouldst see that God does not will that thou shouldst see. For the rest, St. Francis de Sales says that the resolution which thou hast (at least in thy will), to love God, and not to cause Him deliberately the slightest dis-

pleasure, is an assurance that thou art in the grace of God. Abandon thyself, therefore, at such times, to the divine mercy; declare to God that thou desirest nothing but Him and His will and fear not. Oh, how dear to the Lord are these acts of confidence and resignation, accomplished in the midst of this terrible darkness.

For forty-one years St. Jane Frances of Chantal suffered these internal pains, accompanied by terrible temptations, and by fears that she was in a state of sin, and was abandoned by God. Her pangs were so great that she was accustomed to say that the thought of death was the only thing that gave her relief. She was wont to say: "Sometimes it seems to me that my patience is exhausted, and that I am on the point of giving up everything, and of abandoning myself to perdition." For the last eight or nine years of her life, her temptations instead of diminishing became fiercer; so that whether she was praying or engaged in some other occupation, her inward martyrdom was such as to call forth the compassion of every one who associated with her. It seemed to her at times that God had driven her from Him, so that to gain relief she turned her thoughts away from God; but not finding the relief she sought, she turned again to the contemplation of God, even though He seemed to have cast her off. In meditations, in communions, and other devout exercises, she experienced nothing but weariness and torment. It seemed to her that she was like a sick person overwhelmed with complaints, unable to turn from side to side; dumb and powerless to explain her sufferings; blind, so that she could see no way of escaping from the depths. She seemed to have lost love, hope, and faith; for the rest, she kept her eyes fixed upon God,

resting upon the power of the divine will. In a word St. Francis de Sales used to say of her that that blessed soul was like a deaf musician who could sing most admirably, but had no pleasure in his voice, because he could not hear it.

The soul, therefore, which finds itself tried with dryness, no matter how it may be oppressed with gloom, must not lose courage, but must trust in the blood of Jesus Christ, and resign itself to the divine will and say: "O Jesus, my hope, and my soul's only love! I deserve no consolations; give them to those who have always loved Thee; I have deserved hell, and to be forever abandoned there by Thee, without hope of being able to love Thee. But no, my Saviour, I accept every pain; punish me as Thou wilt, but deprive me not of the power of loving Thee. Take from me everything, except Thyself. Miserable as I am, I love Thee more than myself, and I give myself wholly to Thee. I desire to live no more for myself. Give me strength to be faithful to Thee. O holy Virgin; hope of sinners! I trust in Thy intercession; make me love my God, who has created and redeemed me."

III. A Dart of Fire—The Sorrows of Jesus

(From St. Alphonsus)

"*My soul is sorrowful even unto death*" (Matt. xxvi. 38).

These were the words which proceeded from the sorrowful heart of Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemani, before He went to die. Alas, whence came this extreme grief of Our Lord, which was so great that it was enough to kill Him? Perhaps it was on account of the torments which He saw He should have to suffer? No; for He had

foreseen these torments from the time of His incarnation. He had foreseen them, and had accepted them of His own free will. "He was offered because it was His own will." His grief came from seeing the sins men would commit after His death. It was then, according to St. Bernadine of Sienna, that He saw clearly each particular sin of every one of us. He had regard to every particular sin.

It was not only, then, my Jesus, the sight of the scourges, of the thorns, and of the cross, which afflicted Thee in the Garden of Gethsemani, but it was the sight of my sins, each one of which so oppressed Thy heart with grief and sadness that it made Thee fall in an agony and sweat blood. This is the recompense I have made Thee for the love Thou hast shown me by dying for me. Ah, let me share the grief Thou didst feel in the garden for my sins, so that the remembrance of it may make me sorrowful for all my life. Ah, my sweet Redeemer, if I could but console Thee as much now by my grief and love as I then afflicted Thee! I repent, my love, with all my heart for having preferred my own miserable satisfaction to Thee. I am sorry, and I love Thee above all things. Although I have despised Thee, yet I hear Thee ask me for my love. Thou wouldst have me love Thee with all my heart: "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." Yes, my God, I love Thee with all my heart, I love Thee with all my soul. Do Thou give me the love Thou requirest of me. If I have hitherto sought myself, I will now seek none but Thee. And seeing that Thou hast loved me more than others, more than others will I love Thee. Draw me always more, my Jesus, to Thy love by the odor of Thy ointments, which are the loving attractions

of Thy grace. Finally, give me strength to correspond to that great love which Thou hast borne to an ungrateful worm and traitor. Mary, mother of mercy, help me by thy prayers.

OPTIONAL READINGS

II. *Mary, Model of Patience*

(From St. Alphonsus)

Since this earth is a place for gaining merit, it is justly called a valley of tears; for we are all placed here to suffer, and by patience to obtain for our souls eternal life: "In your patience you shall possess your souls," said Our Lord. God gave us the Blessed Virgin Mary as an example of all virtues, but especially as a model of patience. St. Francis de Sales, among other things, remarks, that at the nuptials of Cana Jesus Christ answers the most holy Virgin in such manner that He seemed to pay but little regard to her prayers. "Woman, what is that to thee and to Me?" He said precisely for this reason, that He might give us an example of the patience of His holy mother. Why seek further for other instances! For the whole life of Mary was a continual exercise of patience; for, as an angel revealed to St. Bridget, the Blessed Virgin lived always in the midst of sufferings. Her compassion for the sufferings of the Redeemer was alone enough to make her a martyr of patience; wherefore St. Bonaventure says: "The crucified conceived the crucified." In considering her dolours, we must bear in mind all that Mary suffered, as well in her journey and life in Egypt, as during the whole time she lived with her Son in the little

house of Nazareth. But the presence of Mary on Calvary with her dying Jesus is alone enough to show us how sublime was her patience: "There stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother." Then, by the merit of this her patience, as blessed Albert the Great remarks, she became our mother, and brought us forth to the life of grace.

If we desire, then, to be children of Mary, we must seek to imitate her patience. And what, says St. Cyprian, can enrich us with greater merit in this life, and glory in the next, than enduring sufferings with patience. God said by the mouth of the prophet Osee: "I will hedge up thy way with thorns." St. Gregory remarks on this passage, that "the ways of the elect are hedged in with thorns." For as a hedge of thorns protects the vine, so God encompasses His servants with tribulation, in order that they may not become attached to earth; therefore St. Cyprian concludes patience delivers us from sin and from hell. And it is patience that makes the saints, "Patience hath a perfect work," bearing in peace the crosses that come to us directly from God, sickness, poverty, etc., as well as those that come to us from men, persecutions, injuries, etc. St. John saw all the saints with palms, the emblem of martyrdom, in their hands. "After this I saw a great multitude . . . and palms were in their hands;" thus he signified that all men must be martyrs by the sword or by patience. "Be, then, joyful," exclaims St. Gregory, "we can be martyrs without blood, if we preserve patience." If we suffer the afflictions of this life, as St. Bernard says, patiently and joyfully, oh, how much every pain endured for God will obtain for us in heaven! Hence the Apostle encourages us in these words: "Our tribulation, which is mo-

mentary and light, worketh for us . . . an eternal weight of glory." Beautiful are the instructions of St. Teresa on this subject: "He who embraces the cross," she says, "does not feel it." And again, "When a person resolves to suffer, the pain is over." And if we feel our crosses heavy, let us have recourse to Mary, who is called by the Church, "the comforter of the afflicted"; and by St. John Damascene, "the remedy for all sorrows of the heart." Ah, my most sweet Lady, thou, though innocent, didst suffer with so much patience, and shall I, who am deserving of hell, refuse to suffer? My mother, to-day I ask of thee the grace not to be exempt from crosses, but to support them with patience. For the love of Jesus, I pray thee to obtain for me nothing less than this grace from God; through you I hope for it.

II. The Necessity of Banishing Melancholy

(From St. Alphonsus)

It is necessary to avoid melancholy, which is the pest of devotion, and a source of a thousand faults. As long as you are disturbed you will fall into continual defects. You will do no good and almost all your prayers, meditations, communions, spiritual readings, and other exercises will be unprofitable; because they will be performed badly and with a thousand distractions. Remember that all your inquietude and troubles arise from not accepting crosses with resignation from the hand of God. The will of God renders all tribulations sweet. You complain that you are infirm, despised, persecuted, and suffer from aridity in devotion; unite yourself to the divine

will, and these sufferings will be no longer painful to you.

If you tell me that you are not so much tormented by these external crosses as by interior scruples of conscience, and by fears of being at enmity with God, I answer that your confessor has, as I suppose, already ordered you to speak no more of your past life. By the grace of God you abhor your past sins; you are resolved to die rather than commit even a deliberate venial sin; you frequent the sacraments, and seek to belong entirely to God. All these are signs that you enjoy His grace and friendship. Why, then, are you disturbed? Why do you say: "Who knows how I stand before God? How shall I die? Have I confessed all my sins? Is my confessor deceived? The devil tells me that I shall be damned." Behold the usual tales of scrupulous persons! Ah! abandon yourself into the arms of divine mercy, and say in all tranquillity: "Lord, I obey Thy minister, and thus I hope in Thy blood to be saved, and never to lose Thy grace."

With regard to the present, I hope if you are troubled in mind, that you have no attachment to the venial faults that you daily commit, and that they are not fully deliberate; detest them as soon as you perceive them, and then remain tranquil.

But, Father, my greatest troubles arise from doubts of consenting to grievous sins when I am assailed by bad thoughts. I answer that a person of a timorous conscience, when he is not certain of having fallen into mortal sin, should remain certain of being in the state of grace, because it is impossible for him whose will is firmly set on doing good to revolt against God without having a clear knowledge of his consent. When your confessor tells you to disregard these fears,

and to go to communion without confession, obey him blindly, and do not listen to the devil, who seeks to disturb you with scruples in order to make you abandon the way of perfection. When you feel agitated, say to God: "O heavenly Father, I leave my soul in Thy hands: if it please Thee that this cross should continue till death, I am content; do not permit me to offend Thee; make me love Thee, and I do not refuse to suffer as much as Thou pleasest." St. Francis de Sales says that God loves with a tender love the souls that thus abandon themselves to be governed by His divine providence; for He will make all things co-operate to their good, helping those chosen souls to follow Him with their will, without any other support than that of His divine pleasure.

FOURTH MEDITATION

Jesus Carries His Cross—Perseverance in Virtue

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

CONSIDER the indescribable suffering of thy divine Saviour carrying His cross to Calvary! How great, how oppressive the burden, how extreme His weakness and fatigue! He trembles, and sways to and fro under the weight of the cross. The rough wood bruises His shoulder. The way is uneven. His body is torn and bleeding from head to foot. An infuriated mob surrounds Him, mocks and jeers at Him as He moves wearily on. Compassionate Thy loving Saviour;

adore Him in union with the invisible angels that surround Him. He is thy God. He is suffering all this wilfully, freely for love of thee. "He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins" (*Is.* liii. 5). Consider now, my soul, the truths the Holy Spirit wishes to bring home to thee by this pitiful scene, where thy God is going to die for love of thee.

The Way of the Cross is in a spiritual sense a true image of a devout, virtuous life. Yes, thy life is a continuous, unbroken journey over a rough, difficult, and steep way. Thy cross, which often presses hard on thee, is composed of the severe demands which thy state in life, thy vocation, make upon thee. It is composed of the work, the cares, the ill-health perhaps, the difficulties which daily fall to thy lot. It is made up of the unavoidable vexations and trials, the many sufferings that come upon thee. All this is naturally hard and burdensome for thee, and thou often feelest the weight of this burden, which thou canst not lay down if thou wilt follow thy Saviour to Calvary.

The way on which thou hast to carry this cross is the narrow and difficult path of the Counsels, which is clearly defined for thee by the Rules and Constitutions of thy Order and the holy vows which thou hast freely made. On this path, which is strewn with the sharp stones of difficulty that wound thy self-love, thou must drag on the burden of daily life with its various demands and labors. Thou thyself art weak and tired, and art covered with many bleeding wounds; thy enemies surround thee on all sides. Even abuse and ridicule may not be wanting to thee. Indeed the Holy Spirit wishes thee to be a faithful copy of thy divine model in all things.

O my soul, what gratitude, what compassion, what love dost thou not owe thy loving Saviour for all that He has done for thee? He is thy God, infinitely happy in Himself. He does not need thee or depend on thee, but He carries the heavy burden of the cross for love of thee, to make satisfaction for thy sins, to enrich thee with graces, to give thee an example that, as He has done, so thou mayest also do. Thou hast out of love for Him assumed many burdens that do not weigh on the ordinary Christian. Thou hast freely offered thyself to Him and consecrated thyself to Him in the religious life. Thou hast bound thyself to Him by the holy vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Does Jesus deserve this of thee? Oh, certainly He does! If His love deserves all this of thee, let me ask thee, hast thou daily, hourly, given thyself to Him? Hast thou everywhere, at all times followed thy Saviour on the Way of the Cross? Hast thou not at times given in to the inclination to lay down thy burden? Hast thou constantly pleased the Holy Spirit by copying faithfully this model which He has proposed to thee?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O my dear Saviour, I thank Thee for Thy exceeding great love in making the Way of the Cross for love of me. O Spirit of love, I thank Thee for having given me this model for my daily imitation. Alas, I have at times been unfaithful, but the thought of such love on the part of my God will encourage me to carry my daily cross through life. O Spirit of love, increase my love, that I may always be prepared to make the necessary sacrifices, that I may always walk on the narrow and rugged path on which my Saviour had gone

before me. I desire to live entirely in conformity with Thy holy will, I hope to live and die following in the bloodstained footprints of my Saviour, of my God, who has loved me with an exceeding love.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

There are yet other lessons, my soul, which the Holy Spirit wishes thee to learn from the Saviour carrying His cross. Thy Saviour fell several times on the difficult way of the cross. St. James says that "in many things we all offend" (*Jas.* iii. 2). And the Holy Spirit adds, "There is no man who sinneth not" (*3 Kings* viii. 46). "The just man shall fall seven times, and shall rise again" (*Prov.* xxiv. 16). Even the faithful disciples of the Lord, therefore, fall occasionally. The repeated falls of thy Saviour should remind thee of this and induce thee to seek in them the cause and the remedy for thy own repeated moral falls.

1. One of the most frequent causes is human infirmity. Our Lord was completely exhausted on His way to Calvary. Of the fervent Christian it can be said, as Jesus said of His disciples, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak" (*Matt.* xxvi. 41).

2. Another cause is scandal. The way to Calvary was rough and strewn with stones. Our Saviour, exhausted from the tortures that He had undergone, and laden with the cross, stumbled against these hard stones. The devout and fervent servants of God often stumble and fall over the stones of bad example, the scandal that others give them. "Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh" (*Matt.* xviii. 7).

3. A third cause is the malice of Satan and his friends. The enemies of Jesus treated Him most inhumanly and caused Him to fall. The enemies of man's salvation are continually plotting his ruin.

4. A fourth cause is self-confidence. In the sufferings of Jesus, His divine nature, according to the will of His heavenly Father, did not sustain His human nature, which in consequence became very weak. Man frequently relies too much on himself, instead of putting all his confidence in God, and often falls very low in consequence.

5. A last cause is neglect of the means of grace. Our Saviour since the previous evening had eaten nothing, and thus grew weak and fell exhausted. Many neglect the means of spiritual strength and consequently fall into sin.

My soul, consider also briefly the remedies for falls in the spiritual life. Jesus used them on His way to Calvary. (a) When He fell He rose immediately. He did not remain on the ground conquered by his weakness. (b) He was not disturbed by His fall. He continued patiently on the difficult way after He had risen.

The Holy Spirit has pointed out to thee, my soul, in thy Saviour's way to Calvary, the causes which may bring about thy fall. He has pointed them out to thee that thou mayest avoid them. It requires a most special grace indeed to keep thee from every sin. But an active good-will to use God's grace can keep thee from many faults. The Holy Spirit gives thee an abundance of grace. He is most anxious that thou do not sink under the weight of thy daily cross, or find a stumbling-block in the evil conduct of others. If thou hast the misfortune to fall into any sin, the Holy Spirit also points out in the bodily falls of thy Saviour on the

way to Calvary the remedy for thee. Thou must rise promptly. Thou must not lose courage, but take up thy cross anew and carry it with fresh fervor. Is it thus that thou hast always acted? Dost thou persevere like thy Saviour in carrying thy cross? If thou fallest, dost thou lose courage and lie down, or dost thou rise and pick up thy burden anew? Is the Holy Spirit pleased, think-est thou, with the way thou carriest thy cross? Art thou really becoming conformable to thy divine model?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

Yes, O God, there are, alas, many things in which I offend. There are many faults that I have committed in the past. I detest them with all my heart. What grieves me most is that I have not followed my Saviour in rising promptly and beginning life with new courage. I wish to carry my daily burden faithfully, in conformity with Thy holy will. I desire to keep my Rule, my holy vows. But I am weak. Help me. Give me the strength to follow Jesus to Calvary, to persevere to the end. Holy Spirit, guide me, direct me, sustain me. Be thou my strength.

Resolution

I will often call to mind the words of the Wise Man: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation. Humble thy heart, and endure . . . Wait on God with patience . . . Take all that shall be brought upon thee; and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience" (*Ecclus.* ii. 1-5). Eternal Father, I humbly adore and thank Thee for having, after the numberless sins I have committed, waited for

my repentance, and for having pardoned (as I humbly hope) all the offences which I have offered to Thee, and for which I am now sincerely sorry, because they have been displeasing to Thee, who art infinite goodness. I thank Thee for having preserved me from so many relapses, of which I should have been guilty if Thou hadst not protected me. But my enemies still continue, and will continue till death, to fight against me, and to endeavor to make me their slave. If Thou dost not constantly guard and help me with Thy aid, I, a miserable creature, shall return to sin, and shall certainly lose Thy grace. I beseech Thee, then, for the love of Jesus Christ, to grant me holy perseverance unto death. Jesus, Thy Son, has promised that Thou wilt grant whatsoever we ask in His name. Through the merits, then, of Jesus Christ, I beg, for myself and for all the just, the grace never again to be separated from Thy love, but to love Thee forever, in time and eternity. Mary, mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

Jesus Dies, and Triumphs Over Death

(From St. Alphonsus)

St. John writes that our Redeemer, before He breathed His last, bowed His head as a sign that He accepted death with full submission from the hands of His Father, and thus brought to fulfilment His humble obedience: "He humbled Himself, and was made obedient to death, even the death of the cross."

Jesus upon the cross, with His hands and feet nailed upon it, could move no part of His body

except His head. St. Athanasius says that death did not dare approach to take away life from the author of life; wherefore it was needed that He Himself, by bowing His head, should call death to approach and slay Him. St. Ambrose remarks, on St. Matthew's words, "Jesus again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost," that the Evangelist used the expression "yielded up" to show that Jesus did not die of necessity, or through the violence of the executioners, but because He voluntarily chose to die, He chose willingly to die, to save us from the eternal death to which we were condemned.

This was already foretold by the prophet Osee in the words, "I will deliver them from the hand of death, from death I will redeem them. O death, I will be thy death; O hell, I will be thy bite." St. Paul applies this prophecy literally to Jesus Christ, who, by His death delivered us from death, that is, from hell.

How, then, was Jesus Christ the death of death? "O death, I will be thy death!" Because by His death our Saviour conquered death, and destroyed the death which has resulted from sin. Therefore the Apostle writes, "Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is thy victory? Where, O death, is thy sting? The sting of death is sin." Jesus, the divine Lamb, by His death destroyed sin, which was the cause of our death; and this was the victory of Jesus, since by dying He banished sin from the world, and consequently delivered mankind from eternal death, to which all the human race was subjected.

To this corresponds that other text of the Apostle, "That through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." Jesus destroyed the devil, that is, the

power of the devil, who, through sin, had the power to inflict temporal and eternal death on all the sons of Adam who were corrupted with sin. This was the victory of the cross, on which Jesus, the author of life, dying, by His death acquired life for us. Whence the Church sings of the cross that by it, "Life endured death, and by death brought forth life."

And all this was the work of the divine love, which brought this Priest to sacrifice to the eternal Father His own life, the life of the only-begotten Son, for the salvation of men; for which reason the Church also sings, "The Priest, who is love, sacrifices the limbs of His tender body."

And therefore St. Francis de Sales cries out, "Let us look upon this divine Saviour stretched upon the cross, as upon the altar of His love, where He dies for love of us. Ah, why do we not cast ourselves in spirit upon the cross, that we may die upon it with Him who has been willing to die for love of us?"

Yes, O my sweet Redeemer, I embrace Thy cross; and holding it in my embrace, I would live and die ever lovingly kissing Thy feet, wounded and pierced for me.

EXAMINATION

On the Order of the Day

Do I rise promptly at the first sound of the bell? Do I habitually raise my mind and heart to God on awakening? Do I say my morning prayers with recollection and devotion? Do I dress modestly? Do I recall the subject of meditation? Do I make my meditation practical by cultivating affections? Do I conclude it with a practical resolution? Do I recall my resolution to mind in the

course of the day? Do I let my mind be occupied with some pious thought during the day? Do I practise ejaculatory prayer? Do I obey the bell promptly? Do I prepare for the work assigned to me? Do I perform it conscientiously? Do I preserve recollection during the hours of labor? Am I distinguished from persons of the world by modesty, humility, self-denial, patience, and charity? Am I zealous for my own spiritual progress? Do I avail myself eagerly of every opportunity to influence others to esteem religion and love God? Am I patient in trials, untiring in my work? Do I repeat acts of faith, hope, and charity during the day? Do I cultivate a great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, a tender love for Mary? Do I endeavor to acquire the virtues peculiar to my Institute? Am I always cheerful? Am I reverential, obedient, and grateful to my Superior? Do I respect my Rule as God's will? Do I obey it in small as well as in great matters? in private as well as in public? Do I practise daily mortification? Am I charitable in thought, word, and deed? Or do I give way to rash judgments, cutting words, uncharitable actions? Am I always neat and clean? Do I love poverty like St. Francis? Do I cherish holy purity like St. Aloysius and St. Agnes? Am I obedient like St. Gerard? Do I take for granted permissions which have not been given? Am I wanting in sincerity toward Superiors? In cordiality toward others of the Community? Have I any favorites? Do I cultivate a spirit of penance? Do I cherish an efficacious desire of perfection? Am I generous and fervent in God's service? Do I spend my whole life for His glory? out of love for Jesus and Mary? according to God's holy will?

Protestation for a Happy Death. (See p. 77.)

HYMN

To Jesus in His Passion

(From St. Alphonsus)

My Jesus! say what wretch has dared
Thy sacred hands to bind?
And who has dared to buffet so
Thy face so meek and kind?

'Tis I have thus ungrateful been,
Yet, Jesus, pity take!
Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord
For Thy sweet mercy's sake!

My Jesus! who with spittle vile
Profaned Thy sacred brow?
Or whose unpitying scourge has made
Thy precious blood to flow?

'Tis I have thus ungrateful been;
Yet, Jesus, pity take!
Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord,
For Thy sweet mercy's sake!

My Jesus! whose the hand that wove
That cruel thorny crown?
Who made that hard and heavy cross
That weighs Thy shoulders down?

'Tis I have thus ungrateful been,
Yet, Jesus, pity take;
Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord,
For Thy sweet mercy's sake!

My Jesus! who has mocked Thy thirst
With vinegar and gall?
Who held the nails that pierced Thy hands,
And made the hammer fall?

'Tis I have thus ungrateful been;
Yet, Jesus, pity take!
Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord
For Thy sweet mercy's sake!

My Jesus! say, who dared to nail
 Those tender feet of Thine?
 And whose the arm that raised the lance
 To pierce that heart divine?

'Tis I have thus ungrateful been
 Yet, Jesus, pity take!
 Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord,
 For Thy sweet mercy's sake!

And Mary, who has murdered thus
 Thy loved and only One?
 Canst thou forgive the blood-stained hand
 That robbed thee of thy Son?

'Tis I have thus ungrateful been
 To Jesus and to thee;
 Forgive Thou me for Jesus' sake,
 And pray to Him for me.

Prayer to Jesus Suffering

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

O my Jesus! by that humility which Thou didst practise in washing the feet of Thy disciples, I pray Thee to bestow upon me the grace of true humility, that I may humble myself to all, especially to such as treat me with contempt.

My Jesus, by that sorrow which Thou didst suffer in the garden, sufficient, as it was, to cause Thy death, I pray Thee to deliver me from the sorrow of hell, from living forevermore at a distance from Thee, and without the power of ever loving Thee.

My Jesus, by that horror which Thou hadst for my sins, which were then present to Thy sight, give me a true sorrow for all the offences which I have committed against Thee.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst experience at seeing Thyself betrayed by Judas with a kiss, give me the grace to be ever faithful to Thee, and nevermore to betray Thee, as I have done in times past.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst feel at seeing Thyself bound like a culprit to be taken before the judges, I pray Thee to bind me to Thyself by the sweet chain of holy love, that so I may nevermore see myself separated from Thee, my only good.

My Jesus, by all those insults, buffetings, and spittings which Thou didst suffer on that night in the house of Caiphas, give me the strength to suffer in peace, for love of Thee, all the affronts which I shall meet with from men.

My Jesus, by that ridicule which Thou didst receive from Herod when Thou wast treated as a madman, give me the grace to endure with patience all that men shall say of me, treating me as base, senseless, or wicked.

My Jesus, by that outrage which Thou didst receive from the Jews in seeing Thyself placed after Barabbas, give me the grace to suffer with patience the dishonor of seeing myself placed after others.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst suffer in Thy most holy body when Thou wast so cruelly scourged, give me the grace to suffer with patience all the pains of sickness.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst suffer in Thy most sacred head when it was pierced with thorns, give me grace never to consent to thoughts displeasing to Thee.

My Jesus, by that act of Thine by which Thou didst accept the death of the cross, to which Pilate condemned Thee, give me the grace to accept my

death with resignation, together with all the other pains which will accompany it.

My Jesus, by the pain which Thou didst suffer in carrying Thy cross on Thy journey to Calvary, give me the grace to suffer with patience all my crosses in this life.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst suffer in having the nails driven through Thy hands and Thy feet, I pray Thee to nail my will unto Thy feet, that I may will nothing save that which Thou dost will.

My Jesus, by that affliction which Thou didst suffer in having gall given Thee to drink, give me the grace not to offend Thee by intemperance in eating and drinking.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst experience in taking leave of Thy holy mother upon the cross, deliver me from an inordinate love for my relatives, or for any other creature, that so my heart may be wholly and always Thine.

My Jesus, by that desolation which Thou didst suffer in Thy death in seeing Thyself abandoned by Thy eternal Father, give me the grace to suffer all desolation with patience, without ever losing my confidence in Thy goodness.

My Jesus, by those three hours of affliction and agony which Thou didst suffer when dying upon the cross, give me the grace to suffer with resignation, for love of Thee, my agony at the hour of death.

My Jesus, by that great sorrow which Thou didst feel when Thy most holy soul, at the moment of death, separated itself from Thy most sacred body, give me the grace to breathe forth my soul in the hour of my death, offering up my sorrow then to Thee, together with an act of perfect love,

that so I may go to love Thee in heaven, face to face, with all my strength, and for all eternity.

And thee, most holy Virgin, and my mother Mary, by that sword which pierced thy heart when thou didst behold thy Son bow down His head and expire, do I pray to assist me in the hour of my death, that so I may come to praise thee and to thank thee in paradise for all the graces that thou hast obtained for me from God.

THE EIGHTH DAY

A Day of Union

Dedicated to the Spirit of Love

Disposition.—Love.

Motto.—“Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee” (*John* xxi. 15).

The Special End of all the exercises of this day is to unite the soul intimately with God and thus enable her to attain the realization of the CHRISTIAN IDEAL in daily life.

Reading.—“Religious Perfection” from your Rules and Constitutions.

PRAYER TO OBTAIN THE LOVE OF GOD

HOLY Spirit, divine consoler! I adore Thee as my true God, just as I adore God the Father and God the Son. I bless Thee in union with the blessings that Thou dost receive from the angels and seraphs. I offer Thee my whole heart, and I render Thee heartfelt thanks for all the benefits that Thou hast bestowed and dost unceasingly bestow upon the world. O holy Spirit, who art the author of all supernatural gifts, and who didst enrich with immense favors the soul of the blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of God, I beseech Thee to visit me by Thy grace and Thy love, and to grant me the plenitude of charity, that I may love the Lord my God with my whole heart, and with my whole soul, and with all my mind, and my neighbor as myself for the love of God, that know-

ing, loving, and serving God perfectly on earth, I may have the assurance of being united to Thee forever in heaven.

THOUGHTS AND EJACULATIONS

Thou wilt not leave me; I will not leave Thee. I hope that I may always be united to Thee, O God of my soul!

Thou hast done more than enough to oblige me to love Thee. I love Thee, I love Thee!

Thou lovest them that love Thee; I love Thee; do Thou also love me.

I will love Thee, my God, without reserve.

I would that all men loved Thee as Thou deservest.

I wish to do everything that I know to be Thy pleasure.

O loving heart of Jesus! inflame this poor heart of mine.

O Mary, my mother, make me all for Jesus.

FIRST MEDITATION

The Empty Cross—The Cross in Daily Life

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

RAISE thy eyes to that high cross on Calvary from which Joseph and Nicodemus took down the body of the Lord. It is still dyed with the blood of the Son of God. It is the most precious relic in the Church. It was once a sign of shame and execration, but it has now been sanctified by the death of the God-Man. To-day it is respected

throughout the world. It occupies the place of honor in every Catholic home; it graces the diadem of princes. On this wood of shame Our Lord redeemed the world and earned for mankind peace and blessing for time and eternity. Thus, the cross has indeed become the tree of life, from which an inexhaustible fount of grace comes forth for the sanctification of all mankind. The entire supernatural life of redeemed mankind has its source and support in the cross, in that cross of which St. Paul has said: "Making peace through the blood of His cross" (*Col. i. 20*). "He hath quickened (you) together with Him, forgiving you all offences. Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us . . . And He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross" (*Col. ii. 13-14*). Holy Church therefore exclaims in admiration on Good Friday, "*O crux ave, spes unica*," "Hail, O cross, our only hope." With the same faith we pray: "We adore Thee, O Christ, and praise Thee, because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world!"

Holy Church, enlightened and directed by the Holy Spirit, applies to us all the fruits of the redemption with the cross. With the sign of the cross every sacrament is administered, every blessing is conferred. When the Christian dies, the cross is erected over his remains, that he may sleep peacefully in its shade till the final resurrection. On his awakening he will again see that cross, now glorious and refulgent in the heavens, that cross, which had been his blessing during life, and which received his dying kiss.

Behold, then, my soul, the exalted significance of the cross. Often raise thy eyes to the wood of the cross! Consider the countless blessings that

thou owest to this sign of thy redemption! Cling to the cross in life and in death. Embrace it with a lively faith in Him who has shed His blood upon it, with an unshaken confidence in Him, who by the cross has conquered the world. Ask thyself, "How have I revered the cross in the past? Have I always treasured it as a sign and token of my redemption? As a pledge of God's undying love and mercy? as the foundation of my faith? as the ground of my hope? as a pledge of a glorious resurrection? as a symbol and a means of every blessing? Have I never been ashamed of it, never denied it? Do I always carry an image of my crucified Saviour with me? Do I always sign myself devoutly with the sign of the cross?"

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

Hail, O cross, my only hope, I salute thee as the source of all blessings. I embrace thee as the dearest token of God's love for me. I press thee to my heart, because my Saviour shed His blood for me upon thee. I pity all who do not love thee. I regret the day that I spent without thee. Through thee the graces which my Jesus earned for me are continually applied to me. O saving sign, be thou ever in my mind. Be thou ever the object of my love. O crucified Saviour, I detest every act of my life that has not been an act of love for Thee; I desire to live only for Thee. May the Sign of the Cross ever remind me of Thy exceeding great love for me. O holy Spirit, who appliest to me the fruits of the redemption by means of the cross in the sacraments and blessings of the Church, teach me to reverence the cross during life, that it may be my consolation at death.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

The cross is the foundation of the spiritual life. Upon the cross the Saviour of the world suffered every conceivable pain, privation, and insult that a mortal can undergo. By this voluntary, most meritorious suffering, He sanctified all human suffering and made it a fount of virtue. By watering the cross of tribulation with His precious blood He made of it a living olive-tree bearing fruit unto life eternal. Thus the cross has become the symbol of all human infirmity, especially of that suffering which is sanctified and supernaturalized by the merits of the Son of God.

Taken in this sense the cross still stands on Golgotha's heights and invites all loving hearts to draw nigh. The first precious fruit that ripened on this tree is Christ, "the first-fruits of them that sleep" (1 *Cor.* xv. 20). But the first fruit shall not be the last, "Come up hither" (*Apoc.* iv. 1). The empty cross calls out to all the faithful. Its arms are extended like fruit-bearing branches. It has been so thoroughly watered by the blood of the dying Saviour that it has borne fruit for centuries and will continue to bear until the end of time. Millions of holy martyrs, confessors, and virgins have already followed the "first-fruits" and millions more will ripen on this tree of life. The cross is the seal with which the Holy Ghost signs the elect. It is the fire in which He purifies the gold of virtue, the balance in which He weighs our good works. It is the school in which He teaches perfection; the instrument the Holy Ghost uses to transform man into a saint of God. The Holy Spirit uses

on man the cross of suffering to attain a three-fold end.

1. He makes use of sufferings, that were sanctified by the earthly life of Jesus, to satisfy divine justice for the temporal punishment of man's sins, which God requires even after he has remitted the guilt and eternal punishment.

2. He, moreover, makes use of the cross of suffering to sanctify and ennoble Christian souls. By suffering, the human heart is made a fit receptacle for the countless graces which the Holy Spirit bestows upon man. By suffering, our affections are involuntarily purified from earthly objects and united to our Saviour, who has said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (*John* xii. 32).

3. It is, finally, by means of the cross that the Holy Spirit makes all supernatural virtues flourish in the human heart. He who can not practise virtue in adversity has not mastered the first elements of the spiritual life. But they who act in conformity with God's holy will in all their tribulations, can say with the Apostle, "The Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God" (*Rom.* viii. 16). The words of Raphael the archangel to Tobias must be fulfilled: "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee" (*Tob.* xii. 13).

Behold, my soul, the cross on Calvary. Ascend it willingly as did thy Saviour. Make thyself conformable to Him who died upon the cross for love of thee. On this, the tree of life of the new covenant, thou must ripen as the second fruit of the redemption. With this seal thou must be signed by the Holy Ghost before He will claim thee as His own. In this fire He will purify thee

from the dross of sin. In this balance He will weigh thee to determine thy value. In this school He will teach the way of perfection. By means of the cross the Holy Spirit will transform thee into a saint of God. How didst thou regard the cross in the past? Didst thou, like St. Peter, try to escape it? Follow thy Saviour, then, to the cross as did St. Peter, for, remember, if thou dost wish to reign with Christ thou must die with Christ upon the cross.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O holy Spirit, I embrace the cross. I desire to follow my divine model even unto death. Let me suffer now to satisfy for my sins. "Here cut, burn, here spare not, that Thou mayest spare me in eternity." Draw my affections away from things of earth. Center them entirely in Him who alone is worthy of all love. Make me be a Christian not only in name, but a follower of Christ in reality. Make me ready to suffer with Christ and thus to enter into glory. I regret especially those actions of my life by which I tried to escape the cross in the past. Pardon the sins of my youth, the sins of ignorance. Give me the grace always to will what Thou willest, as Thou willest, when Thou willest, and because Thou willest. Put me on the cross, but give me strength to endure. Sign me with the cross, but keep me in Thy grace. Purify me with the cross, but make me persevere. Let me enter the school of the cross, but lead me on to perfection.

Resolution

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world" (*Gal.*

vi. 14). O cross of Jesus, fix thyself within my heart, and let the remembrance of Thee abide there always, to be continually wounding me and inflaming me with love. I love Thee, Jesus, infinite goodness. I love Thee, O infinite love; Thou art, and shalt ever be, my one and only love. O Mary, mother of love, do thou obtain love for me.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

I. Our Salvation Is in the Cross

(From St. Alphonsus)

“BEHOLD the wood of the cross, on which hung the salvation of the world!” So sings Holy Church on Good Friday. In the cross is our salvation, our strength against temptations, our detachment from earthly pleasures; in the cross is found the true love of God. We must, therefore, resolve to bear with patience that cross which Jesus Christ sends us, and to die upon it for the sake of Jesus Christ, as He died upon His cross for love of us. There is no other way to enter heaven but to resign ourselves until death to tribulation. And thus we may find peace, even in suffering. When the cross comes, where shall we find peace, except by uniting ourselves to the divine will? If we do not do so, go where we will, do what we may, we shall never fly from the weight of the cross. On the other hand, if we carry our cross with good-will, it will bear us to heaven, and give us peace on earth.

What does he gain who refuses the cross? He increases its weight. But he who embraces it, and bears it with patience, lightens its weight, and the weight itself becomes a consolation; for

God gives an abundance of grace to all those who carry the cross with good-will in order to please Him. By the law of nature there is no pleasure in suffering; but divine love, when it reigns in a heart, makes that heart take delight, or at least find peace in its sufferings.

Oh, that we would consider the happy condition which will be ours in paradise, if we be faithful to God in enduring toils without lamenting, if we do not complain against God, who commands us to suffer, but say with Job, "Let this be my comfort, that He should not spare in afflicting me, nor contradict the words of the Holy One." If we are sinners and have deserved hell, this should be our comfort in the tribulations which befall us, that we are chastised in this life; because this is the sure sign that God will deliver us from eternal chastisement. Miserable is that sinner who prospers in this world.

Whosoever suffers a bitter trial, let him cast a glance at the hell which he has deserved, and thus the pains which he endures will seem light. If, then, we have committed sins, this ought to be our continual prayer to God: "O Lord, spare me not suffering, but give me, I pray Thee, strength to endure it with patience, that I may not oppose myself to Thy holy will. I will not stand against the words of the Holy One; in everything I unite myself to that which Thou wilt appoint for me, saying always, with Jesus Christ, 'Even so, Father; for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight.'"

The soul which is governed by divine love seeks only God. "When a man has given all the substance of his house for love, he will despise it as nothing." He that loves God despises and renounces everything that does not help him to love

God; and in all the good works that he does, in his penitential acts and his labors for the glory of God, he does not seek consolations and sweetness of spirit; it is enough for him to know that he pleases God. In a word, he ever strives in all things to deny himself, renouncing every pleasure of his own; and then he boasts of nothing and is puffed up with nothing; but calls himself an unprofitable servant; and, setting himself in the lowest place, he abandons himself to the divine will and mercy.

We must change our tastes in order to become saints. If we do not arrive at a state in which bitter appears sweet, and sweet bitter, we shall never attain to a perfect union with God. In this consists all our security and perfection: in suffering with resignation all things that are contrary to our inclinations, as they happen to us day by day, whether they are small or great. And we must suffer them for those purposes for which Our Lord desires that we should endure them: to purify ourselves from the sins we have committed, to merit eternal life, to please God, which is the chief and most noble end at which we can aim in all our doings.

Let us, then, ever offer ourselves to God, to suffer every cross that He may send us; and let us take care to be always ready to endure every toil for the love of Him, in order that when it comes we may be ready to embrace it, saying, as Jesus Christ said to Peter when He was taken in the garden by the Jews to be led to death, "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" God hath given me this cross for my good, and shall I say to Him that I will not receive it?

And whenever the weight of any cross seems

very heavy, let us immediately have recourse to prayer, and God will give us strength to endure it meritoriously. And let us then recollect what St. Paul said, that no tribulation of this world, however grievous it may be, can be compared with the glory which God prepares for us in the world to come. Let us, therefore, reanimate our faith whenever tribulations afflict us; let us first cast our eyes upon the crucified One, who was in agony for us upon the cross, and let us look, also, at paradise, and on the blessings that God prepares for those who suffer for His love; and thus we shall not be fainthearted but shall thank Him for the sufferings he sends us, and shall even desire that He may oblige us to suffer greater things. Oh, how the saints rejoice in heaven, not that they have possessed honors and pleasures upon earth, but that they have suffered for Jesus Christ! Everything that passes is trifling; that only is great which is eternal, and never passes away.

O my Jesus! how comforting is that which Thou sayest to me, "Turn unto Me, and I will turn to you." For the sake of creatures, and of my own miserable tastes, I have left Thee; now I leave all, and turn to Thee; and I am confident that Thou wilt not reject me, if I desire to love Thee; for Thou hast told me that Thou art ready to embrace me. Receive me, then, into Thy grace; make me know the great good that Thou art, and the love that Thou hast borne for me, that I may nevermore leave Thee. O my Jesus, pardon me; O my beloved! pardon me the offences I have committed against Thee. Give me the love of Thee, and then do with me what Thou wilt. Chastise me as much as Thou wilt; deprive me of everything, but deprive me not of Thyself. Were the whole

world to come and offer me all its blessings, I declare that I desire Thee alone, and nothing more. O my mother! recommend me to thy Son; He gives thee whatever thou askest; in thee I trust.

II. A Dart of Fire—The Abandonment of Jesus

(From St. Alphonsus)

“*My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*” (Matt. xxvii. 46).

O God! who will not compassionate the Son of God, who, for love of men is dying in grief and agony upon the cross? He is tormented externally in His body by many wounds, and internally He is so afflicted and sad that He seeks solace for His great sorrow from the eternal Father; but His Father, in order to satisfy His divine justice, abandons Him, and leaves Him to die desolate and deprived of every consolation.

O desolate death of my Redeemer, thou art my hope! O my abandoned Jesus, Thy merits make me hope that I shall not remain abandoned and separated from Thee forever in hell. I do not ask to live in consolation on this earth; I embrace all the pains and desolations that Thou mayest send me. He is not worthy of consolation who by offending Thee has merited for himself eternal torments. It is enough for me to love Thee and to live in Thy grace. This alone do I beg of Thee; let me nevermore see myself deprived of Thy love. Let me be abandoned by all; do Thou not abandon me in my extremity. I love Thee, my Jesus, who didst die abandoned for me. I love Thee, my only good, my only hope, my only love.

OPTIONAL READINGS

II. *Mary, the Model of Love for God*

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

St. Anslem says that "where there is the greatest purity, there is the greatest charity." The purer a heart, the less there is of self within it, the more it will be filled with love for God. Most holy Mary, because she was all humility and utterly free from love of self, was entirely filled with divine love, so that she surpassed all men and all angels in love of God. Therefore St. Francis de Sales has justly called her, "the queen of love." The Lord indeed has given to men the precept to love Him with their whole heart; but, this precept will never be perfectly fulfilled by mankind on this earth; its fulfilment will come only in heaven. In a certain sense, however, it would be unbecoming for God to give a commandment which none could perfectly fulfil, if a blessed mother had not perfectly fulfilled it. And this is confirmed by Richard of St. Victor, who says: "The mother of our Emmanuel was perfect in all virtues. Who has ever fulfilled as she did that first commandment: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart'?" In our blessed Lady divine love was so ardent that there could be no defect of any kind in her. "Divine love," says St. Bernard, "so penetrated and pervaded the soul of Mary, that no part was left untouched by it, so that she loved with her whole heart, her whole soul, and her whole strength, and was full of grace." Wherefore Mary might well have said: "My beloved has given Himself wholly to me, and I give myself wholly to Him." "My beloved to me, and I to Him." Ah, well might even

the seraphim descend from heaven to learn from the heart of the Virgin how to love God.

God, who is love, came on earth to kindle in all men the fire of His holy love; but He inflamed no heart so much as the heart of His mother, who, being entirely pure and free from every earthly affection, was perfectly ready to be enkindled by this blessed flame. Hence the heart of Mary became all fire and flames, as we read of her in the sacred Canticles: "The lamps thereof are fire and flames;" fire burning within, through love, and flames shining forth upon all, by the practice of virtue; Mary, therefore, when she bore Jesus in her arms, might indeed have called herself, "Fire carrying fire." Yes, as fire heats iron, the Holy Spirit so wholly inflamed Mary that nothing was seen in her but the flame of the Holy Ghost, nothing was felt but the fire of the love of God. The bush which Moses saw entirely in flames without being consumed, was really a symbol of the heart of Mary. Wherefore with reason was she seen by St. John clothed with the sun; for she was so united to God by love that it seems as if no creature could be more united to Him. Mary, then, is justly described as clothed with the sun, for she has penetrated to an incredible depth the abyss of divine wisdom, so that, as far as it is permitted to a mere creature, she appears immersed in that inaccessible light.

Therefore the holy Virgin was never tempted by the spirits of hell. "For as flies are driven away by a great fire, so from the heart of Mary, which was one flame of love, the devils fled, and did not even dare approach her." The Virgin was terrible to the princes of darkness, so that they did not presume to approach and tempt her, for the flame of charity deterred them. Mary

herself revealed to St. Bridget that in this world she had no other thought, no other desire, no other joy, than God. So that her blessed soul being, as it were, on this earth in a continual contemplation of God, the acts of love she made were innumerable. Mary did not so much repeat the acts of love in order, as other saints do, but, by a singular privilege, always actually loved God with one continual act. Like the royal eagle, she kept her eye always fixed upon the divine Son, so that the actions of life did not prevent her from loving, nor did love prevent her from acting. Thus, Mary was prefigured by the altar of propitiation on which the fire was never extinguished by day or by night.

Neither did sleep interrupt Mary's love for God. For if such a privilege was given to our first parents in the state of innocence, it certainly could not be denied to our blessed Mother. Hence we may say of Mary, "While her body rested, her soul watched." Thus were verified in her the words of the Wise Man: "Her lamp shall not be put out in the night." Yes, for while her blessed body, with a light sleep, took its needed rest, her soul freely rose to God, so that at that time her contemplation was more perfect than is that of other persons when awake. Therefore could she well say with the spouse in the Canticles: "I sleep and my heart watcheth." "Happy in sleep as in waking." In a word, Mary, while she lived on earth, was continually loving God. And she never did anything that she did not know was pleasing to God; and she loved Him as much as she knew He ought to be loved. Hence Mary was filled with so great a charity that a greater was not possible in any pure creature on this earth. For this reason the Blessed Virgin, by her ardent charity, was made

so beautiful and so enamored her God, that captivated, as it were, by love of her, He descended into her womb to become man. Wherefore St. Bernardine exclaims: "Behold a Virgin who by her virtue has wounded and taken captive the heart of God."

But since Mary loves her God so much, she certainly requires from her servants nothing else so much as that they should love God to as great a degree as they can. And precisely this did she say to the blessed Angela de Foligno one day after communion. And to St. Bridget she said: "Daughter, if you wish to bind me to you, love my Son." Mary desires nothing more than to see her beloved, who is God, loved by all. Novarino asks why the holy Virgin, with the spouse in the Canticles, begged the angels to make known to her Lord the great love she bore Him. Did not God know how much she loved Him? Why does she desire to show the wound to her beloved who gave the wound? The same author answers, that the Blessed Mother did not wish by this to make known her love to God, but to us; that as she was wounded, she might be able to wound us also with divine love. And because she was wholly inflamed with the love of God, she inflames all those who love and approach her, and renders them like unto herself. For this reason St. Catherine of Sienna called Mary, "the bearer of the flame of divine love." If we, also, wish to burn with this blessed flame, let us always endeavor to draw near to our Mother with prayers and affections.

O queen of love, Mary, the most lovely, the most beloved, and the most loving of all creatures! Oh, my Mother, thou wert always wholly inflamed with love to God; deign to bestow on me at least one spark of it. Thou didst pray thy

Son for that family whose wine had failed, and wilt thou not pray for us, who are wanting in love to God, whom we are under such obligations to love? Say to Jesus, "They have no love." We ask of thee no other favor than this. O Mother, by the great love thou hadst for Jesus, graciously hear us and pray for us. Amen.

III. Happiness Obtained by Perfect Conformity to God's Will

(From St. Alphonsus)

He who acts in perfect conformity with God's will not only becomes a saint, but enjoys, even in this world, a perpetual peace. Alfonso the Great, king of Aragon, and a most wise prince, on being asked one day whom he considered the happiest man in the world, replied: "He who abandons himself to the will of God, and receives all things, whether prosperous or adverse, as from His hands."

"To those who love God, all things work unto good." Those who love God are ever content, because their whole pleasure lies in the accomplishment, even in things that run counter to themselves, of the divine will; and hence even afflictions bring to them contentment, through the thought that in their acceptance they are giving pleasure to God whom they love: "Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad." And, in truth, what greater contentment can a man experience than in seeing the accomplishment of all that he desires? For to one who desires nothing save what God desires, everything he wishes comes to pass, since all things in the world (sin only excepted), happen through

the will of God. There is a story in the lives of the Fathers, of a certain countryman whose land was more productive than that of others, and who, on being asked how it happened, replied that it was not a cause for surprise, because he always had just such weather as he desired. "And how so?" it was asked. "Because," he replied, "I desire no weather but that which God desires; and as I desire what God desires, He gives me the fruits of the earth as I desire them."

Souls that are truly resigned, if they are under humiliation, desire this; if they suffer poverty, they desire to be poor, in short, whatever happens to them that they desire, and therefore they are happy. They are in humble station, they wish for this; they are poor, they make poverty their delight; therefore we must say of them, "they are happy." When cold or heat, rain or wind, prevails, he who is in a state of union with the divine will says, I wish it to be cold, I wish it to be hot; I wish the wind to blow, the rain to fall, because God wishes it so. Does poverty, persecution, sickness, death, come upon me? I also wish (says such a one) to be poor, persecuted, sick; I wish even to die, because God wishes it thus.

This is the beautiful liberty which the children of God enjoy, worth more than all the domains and all the kingdoms of the world. This is the great peace that the saints experience, which "surpasseth all understanding," with which all the pleasures of the senses, all gaieties, festivities, distinctions, and all other worldly satisfactions, can not compete; for these, being, as they are, unsubstantial and transitory, although while they last they may be fascinating to the senses, nevertheless do not bring contentment, but affliction to

the spirit, wherein true contentment resides; so that Solomon, after having enjoyed such earthly pleasures to the full, cried out, in his affliction, "But this also is vanity and vexation of spirit."

"The fool" (says Holy Scripture), "is changed like the moon, the holy man continueth in wisdom like the sun." The fool—that is to say, the sinner—changes like the moon, which to-day waxes, to-morrow wanes. To-day you will see that sinner laughing, to-morrow weeping; to-day all gentleness, to-morrow furious with anger. And why so? because his contentment depends on the prosperity or the adversity he meets with; and therefore he varies as the circumstances which befall him vary. Whereas the just man is like the sun, ever uniform in his serenity under whatever circumstances may come to pass; because his contentment lies in his conformity to the divine will, and therefore he enjoys a peace which nothing can disturb. "And on earth peace to men of good will," said the angel to the shepherds. And who are these men of good will but the souls who are at all times in union with the will of God, which is supremely good and perfect? "The will of God is good, delightful, and perfect." Yes, because He wills only that which is good and perfect.

The saints, through their conformity to the divine will, have enjoyed in this world a paradise in anticipation. St. Dorotheus tells us that it was thus that the ancient Fathers kept themselves in profound peace, receiving all things as they did from the hands of God. When St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi heard mention only of the will of God, she used to experience such intense consolation that she fell into an ecstasy of love. And although, on the other hand, the sting of adverse

circumstances will not fail to make itself felt, yet its influence will not extend beyond the lower part of our nature; for in the higher part of the soul there will reign peace and tranquillity, while the will remains in union with that of God. "Your joy," said the Redeemer to the apostles, "no man shall take from you...that your joy may be full." He who is ever in conformity to the divine will possesses a full and perpetual joy; full, because he has all that he wishes; perpetual, because it is a joy of which no man can deprive him, while, at the same time, no one can prevent that which God wills from coming to pass.

Father John Tauler relates of himself, that after having for many years prayed God to send some one to instruct him in the spiritual life, he one day heard a voice saying to him, "Go to such a church, and you will find what you ask." On reaching the church, he found a beggar at the gate barefooted and scantily clothed. He saluted him with the greeting, "Good day, my friend." The poor man replied, "Sir, I do not remember ever to have had a bad day." The Father rejoined: "God grant you a happy life"; to which he answered, "But I have never been unhappy." And then he went on to say, "Listen, Father; it is not without reason that I have told you I have never had a bad day; because when I suffer hunger, I praise God; when it snows or rains, I bless Him; if I am treated with contempt, or repulsed by any, or if I experience misfortunes of any other kind, I always give glory to my God for it. I said, besides, that I have never been unhappy, and this also is true; because it is my habit to desire without reserve all that God desires; therefore all that happens to me, whether it be pleasant or painful, I receive from His hands with joy, as

being what is best for me; and herein lies my happiness." "And if it should ever happen," said Tauler, "that God willed you to be damned, what would you say then?" "If God were to will this," replied the beggar, "I would, with all humility and love, lock myself so fast in my Lord's embrace, and hold Him so tight, that if it were to be His will to cast me down into hell, He would be obliged to come along with me, and thus, with Him, it would be sweeter to me to be in hell than to possess without Him all the enjoyments of heaven." "Where was it that you found God?" said the Father. "I found Him when I took leave of creatures," was the reply. "Who are you?" The poor man replied, "I am a king." "And where is your kingdom?" "It is within my soul, where I keep everything in due order; the passions are subjected to reason, and reason to God." In conclusion Tauler asked him what it was that had led him on to such a high degree of perfection. "It has been silence," he said, "observing silence with man, in order to hold converse with God; and also the union which I have maintained with my Lord, in whom I have found, and still do find, all my peace." Such, in short, had this poor man become through his union with the divine will; and certainly he was, in all his poverty, more wealthy than all the monarchs of the earth, and in his sufferings more happy than all the men of the world with their earthly pleasures.

SECOND MEDITATION

**Our Glorious Saviour in the Blessed
Sacrament**

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

THE Holy Spirit points to the incarnate Son of God not only as our model in daily life but also as our glorious reward, if we are attentive to His inspirations and follow in His footsteps. Our Lord rose glorious and immortal on Easter Sunday. The day of suffering and humiliation had passed forever. The time of triumph, the time of glory, the time of indescribable and unending happiness had arrived. Now He can exclaim in the words of the Psalmist: "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul" (*Ps.* xciv. 19). Now are fulfilled the words of St. Paul: "God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names: That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (*Philipp.* ii. 9-10). "He hath on His garment, and on His thigh written, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords'" (*Apoc.* xix. 16). If Jesus had appeared to the apostles in the fulness of His glory, the apostles would have been unable to bear such happiness and would have died of joy. Yes, for the glory of the Son of God is exceedingly great. His triumph over death is the foundation of our hope. If we follow Him courageously on the way of humiliation, suffering, and conformity to God's holy will, we may confidently look to the future. "If we suffer with Him, that

we may also be glorified with Him" (*Rom.* viii. 17).

At present we can not see the Saviour in the splendor of His majesty ruling heaven and earth. His words to the apostle Thomas are applicable to us: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed" (*John* xx. 29). But whether we see Him or not, the conqueror of sin and death, the finisher of our redemption, the foundation of our hope, is present in the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist. "I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world" (*Matt.* xxviii, 20). Jesus is on our altars as he came triumphant from the grave, refulgent with glory, surrounded by choirs of heavenly angels. He conceals His glory under the accidents of bread and wine. A lively faith discerns Him there. With hope we cling to Him. With docile hearts we listen to His words. "Work diligently at thy own glorification. I am thy strength, thy joy, thy sweetness, thy pledge, thy glorious resurrection."

Ah, my soul, behold thy Lord, behold thy model. He is no longer on the tree of life; He is life itself. He is risen from the grave. He has triumphed over sin and death. He has taken possession of His kingdom. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords! He rules heaven and earth. He loves thee. He has exhausted His infinite wisdom and omnipotence to manifest His love for thee. For thy sake He is present on the altar. He conceals His majesty so as not to overwhelm thee. He manifests His love to win thy love. He exhorts thee to patience, to perseverance on thy way to Calvary, to conformity to the will of the heavenly Father while thou art on thy cross. Art thou weak? He is strong. "Come to Me,"

He says, "all ye that labor and are heavily burdened and I will refresh you." He encourages thee to fidelity and perseverance. "My burden is sweet and my yoke is light." "Be thou faithful until death and I will give thee the crown of life." "I will be thy reward exceeding great."

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O my Jesus, my Lord and my God, I adore Thee present in the Blessed Sacrament. I thank Thee with all my heart for all the favors Thou hast bestowed upon me, but especially for Thy real presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Here Thou abidest for my sake, to win my love. I desire to love Thee with all my heart, with all the powers of my soul. My whole life shall henceforth be an act of love, an act of gratitude to my loving Saviour in the sacrament of His love. If Thou, my Jesus, hast done so much for me, I certainly ought to give myself entirely to Thee, to live entirely in conformity to Thy holy will. Would that I could love and serve Thee with the hearts of all holy souls, with the affection of all the angels and saints of heaven.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Consider, my soul, what thy glorious Saviour is doing in the Blessed Sacrament. He is present in the tabernacle for thy sake. He is preparing thee for a glorious resurrection. He is adorning thee with heavenly beauty, preparing for thee a crown of glory, making thee worthy to reign with Him in heaven.

1. From the tabernacle He blesses thy daily work, thy prayers, thy sacrifices, and makes them

fruitful for heaven. He is the vine and thou art the branches. Here He desires to become incarnate in thee, thus to transform thee into a true child of God. Thy daily actions are defective in themselves in many ways. But Jesus adds His perfection to them when thou laborest in union with Him. Thus He prays with thee, He meditates with thee, He works with thee, He suffers with thee and makes sacrifices with thee and covers thy imperfections by His abundance.

2. He confers upon thee, especially in holy communion, the special grace to do great things for God and to progress rapidly in the path of virtue.

3. He imparts to thee a heavenly sweetness, and gives Himself to thee as a pledge of thy own future resurrection.

Take courage, my soul. Do not be anxious about the imperfection of thy past actions or about thy future glory. The Holy Spirit, who has made thee a member of Christ's mystical body, and who resides in thee, has provided for all. He is the soul of the mystical body of Christ, the Church. He has united thee intimately with thy divine Saviour. If then, thou hast an earnest good-will to please God in all things, to do His holy will at all times, then Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the vine of which thou art a branch, supplies thy deficiency by communicating to thee of His perfection. He possesses a home in heaven and has already prepared a mansion there for thee. Though concealed under the appearances of bread and wine, He is always near. In the tabernacle He unites a life of divine contemplation to a life of all-embracing charity. He is active there for thy sake as well as for all others who are united to Him by sancti-

fying grace, as the branch is united to the living vine. If thou art resolved to avoid every deliberate sin, to belong entirely to Him, to follow the voice of the Holy Spirit in all things, then He unites His prayers to thine, His meditations to thy meditations and religious exercises, His labors to thy labors. He unites to thy sufferings and sacrifices His mysterious sufferings in the sacrament of His love, which He must daily endure and one time felt most keenly.

Here the Good Samaritan resides day and night to heal the wounds of thy soul, to pour oil and wine upon them whenever thou approachest Him with a suppliant heart. Here He resides ever ready to give thee strength to do great things for God's honor and glory, that thou mayest work and labor and suffer even with joy.

“What shall I render to the Lord for all that He hath done for me?” Indeed, O God, thou art good to them that love Thee. What greater manifestation can I have of Thy love for me than the Holy Eucharist. Here, my loving Saviour, Thou lovest to dispense to me Thy graces, to apply to my soul the fruits of the redemption. Thy only thought, Thy only desire is to be more and more intimately united to me, to prepare me more and more for a glorious resurrection. I prostrate myself in humble adoration before Thee. I thank Thee for all that Thou hast done for me, but especially do I feel grateful to Thee for having given me this proof of Thy love. I wish to show my gratitude especially by resigning myself entirely into Thy hands. If Thou hast instituted this sacrament for my sake, to unite Thyself to me, I will co-operate in Thy loving designs. I desire to live and die wholly united to Thee. I give Thee my heart with all its affections. I give

Thee my mind and will with all their powers. I desire to act only in union with Thee, to co-operate in all things with that grace which the Holy Spirit transmits to me from Thee, to live only in Thee, as the branch lives on the vine.

Resolution

I will make the blessed Sacrament of the Altar the main object of my devotions. I will recommend all my affairs to my sacramental Lord, and prepare myself well to receive Him with a loving heart in holy communion. O Jesus, do Thou inflame me with Thy holy love, so that from this forth I may live only to love and to please Thee. Thou deservest the love of all hearts. If at one time I have done Thee dishonor I now desire nothing but to love Thee. O my Jesus, Thou art my love and my only good, my God, and my all. Most holy Virgin Mary, obtain for me, I pray thee, a great love for the Most Holy Sacrament.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

II. The Loving Heart of Jesus

(From St. Alphonsus)

Oh, if we could but understand the love that burns in the heart of Jesus for us! He has loved us so much, that if all men, all the angels, and all the saints were to unite, with all their energies, they could not arrive at the thousandth part of the love that Jesus bears to us. He loves us infinitely more than we love ourselves.

He has loved us even to excess: "They spoke of His decease (excess) which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem." And what greater ex-

cess of love could there be than for God to die for His creatures? He has loved us to the greatest degree: "Having loved His own . . . He loved them unto the end"; since, after having loved us from eternity, for there never was a moment from eternity when God did not think of us and did not love each of us—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love"—for the love of us He made Himself man, and chose a life of sufferings and the death of the cross for our sake. Therefore He has loved us more than His honor, more than His repose, and more than His life; for He has sacrificed everything to show us the love that He bears us. And is not this an excess of love sufficient to amaze the angels of paradise for all eternity?

This love has induced Him also to remain with us in the Most Holy Sacrament as on a throne of love; for He is there under the appearance of a small piece of bread, shut up in a ciborium, where He seems to remain in a perfect annihilation of His majesty, without movement, and without the use of His senses; so that it seems that He performs no other office than that of loving men. Love makes us desire the constant presence of the object of our love. It is this love and this desire that makes Jesus Christ reside with us in the Most Holy Sacrament. It seems too short a time to this loving Saviour to have been only thirty-three years with men on earth; therefore, in order to show His desire of being constantly with us, He deigned to perform the greatest of all miracles, in the institution of the Holy Eucharist. But the work of the redemption was already completed, man had already become reconciled to God; for what purpose, then, did Jesus remain on earth in this sacrament? He remains there

because He can not bear to separate Himself from us. His delight is to be with the children of men.

Again, this love has induced Him even to become the food of our souls, so as to unite Himself to us and to make His heart and ours as one: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him." O wonder! O excess of divine love! It was said by a servant of God, "If anything could shake my faith in the Eucharist, it would not be the doubt as to how the bread could become flesh, or how Jesus could be in several places and confined into so small a space, because I would answer that God can do anything; but if I were asked how He could love men so much as to make Himself their food, I have nothing else to answer but that this is a mystery of faith above my comprehension, and that the love of Jesus can not be understood." O love of Jesus, do Thou make Thyself known by men, do Thou make Thyself loved!

O adorable heart of Jesus, heart inflamed with the love of men, heart created on purpose to love them, how is it possible that Thou canst be despised, and Thy love so ill reciprocated by men? Oh, miserable that I am, I also have been one of those ungrateful ones that have not loved Thee. Forgive me, my Jesus, this great sin of not having loved Thee, who art so lovable, and who hast loved me so much that Thou canst do nothing more to oblige me to love Thee. I feel that I deserve to be condemned that I am not able to love Thee, for having renounced Thy love as I have hitherto done. But no, my dearest Saviour, give me any chastisement, but do not inflict this one on me. Grant me the grace to love Thee, and then give me any affliction Thou pleasest. But how

can I fear such a chastisement, while I feel that Thou continuest to give me the sweet, the pleasing precept of loving Thee, my Lord and my God? "Love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart." Yes, O my God, Thou wouldst be loved by me, and I will love Thee; indeed I will love none but Thee, who hast loved me so much. O love of my Jesus, thou art my love. O burning heart of my Jesus, do thou inflame my heart also. Do not permit me in future, O Jesus, even for a single moment, to live without Thy love. Rather kill me, destroy me; do not let the world behold the spectacle of such horrid ingratitude as that I, who have been so beloved by Thee, and received so many favors and lights from Thee, should begin again to despise Thy love. No, my Jesus, do not permit this. I trust in the blood which Thou hast shed for me, that I shall always love Thee, and that Thou wilt always love me and that this love between Thee and me wilt not be broken off for eternity.

O Mary, mother of fair love, thou who desirest so much to see Jesus loved, bind me, unite me to thy Son; but bind me to Him; so that we may never be separated again.

III. Affections of Love Toward the Sacred Heart

(From St. Alphonsus)

O amiable Heart of my Saviour! Thou art the seat of all virtues, the source of all graces, the burning furnace in which are inflamed all holy souls. Thou art the object of all God's love; thou art the refuge of the afflicted, and the abode of souls that love Thee. O Heart, worthy of reign-

ing over all hearts, and of possessing the affection of all hearts! O Heart that was wounded for me on the cross by the lance of my sins, and that remainest afterward continually wounded for me on the altar in the Blessed Sacrament, but not by any other lance than that of the love which thou entertainest for me! O loving Heart, that loves men with so much tenderness, and that is so little loved by men! do Thou apply a remedy to so great an ingratitude; inflame Thou our hearts with a true love for Thee. Ah, why can I not go all the world over to make known the graces, the sweetness, the treasures which Thou dispensest to those who truly love Thee? Accept the desire that I have of seeing all hearts burning with love for Thee. O divine Heart! be thou my consolation in trials, my repose in labors, my solace in anxieties, my haven in tempests. I consecrate to thee my body and my soul, my heart and my life, together with all that I am; I unite to Thine all my thoughts, all my affections, all my desires. O eternal Father! I offer Thee the purest affections of the heart of Jesus. If Thou dost reject mine, Thou canst not reject those of Thy Son, who is sanctity itself; may they supply what is wanting in me, and may they render me pleasing in Thy eyes.

PARTICULAR EXAMINATION

On the Love of the Holy Spirit

Do I realize:

That the Holy Spirit is love?

That He loves me with an infinite and an eternal love?

That He is worthy of all love?

That He desires my love?

That He commands me to love Him?

That I owe Him an infinite debt of love?

That my happiness consists in loving Him?

Have I remained in His love?

Have I acted solely for the love of God?

Say an act of sorrow for defects, one of gratitude for favors, and resolve to love God with your whole heart and soul.

THIRD MEDITATION

Behold Thy Mother—Mary Our Mother

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

ST. JOHN records the dying request of our divine Saviour in these simple words. "When Jesus therefore had seen His mother and the disciple standing, whom He loved, He saith to his mother, Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to the disciple, Behold thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own" (*John* xix. 26, 27). In the person of St. John, the Saviour confided all His beloved disciples in ages to come to the loving care of His own mother. He besought her to watch over them with the same solicitude which she manifested toward Him in His childhood days. When meditating on this solemn but consoling scene, we may at first imagine that with His dying breath Jesus left us to Mary's care and begged her to adopt us as her children. This thought is indeed encouraging. But a great mystery is emphasized here. Mary

is not only our mother by adoption; she is the real mother of our spiritual life. That life to which we were born again of water and the Holy Ghost in Baptism, Mary gave to us. When "she brought forth her first-born" (*Luke* ii. 7), Mary suffered no pain. But when she gave us spiritual life, she became the queen of martyrs. Mary had a mother's right over her first-born. She loved Him more than ever a human mother loved her child. He was not only her obedient Son, but her Lord, her God, her all. She knew that if Jesus lived, we should die, die eternally. She therefore sacrificed her Son and gave us life. To nourish this divine life in our souls is the dying request of her first-born Son, our elder Brother.

My soul, "behold thy mother." Behold the sacrifice Mary made while she "stood by the cross of Jesus" (*John* xix. 25.)! With the prophet she can exclaim: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow" (*Lam.* i. 12). But, to give thee life, to open to thee the way to heaven, Mary made this sacrifice generously. Indeed, as Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son for love of God, so the Fathers of the Church say Mary was willing to sacrifice her dearest Jesus with her own hands, if need be, to give thee life. Rejoice, therefore, that thou hadst so good a mother. Rejoice that thou now hast life and hope and salvation. Thank God for His mercies. But "forget not the sorrows of thy mother" (*Ecclus.* vii. 29). Forget not the sacrifice that Mary made for thee when she brought thee forth to the spiritual life. Behold thy mother! "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee" (*Ex.* xx. 12). Esteem Mary as "our tainted nature's

solitary boast." Esteem her as the greatest heroine of the world. Esteem her as the one who next to God wrought your salvation. She cooperated in your redemption by giving Jesus that body in which He suffered and died. But personally she has earned your love by giving up her maternal right, by sacrificing her dearest Jesus for thy sake. Love her, then, with the love of a child worthy of such love. Love her by meditating on her generosity and fervor in the service of God and her neighbor. Love her especially by taking her for thy mother, as St. John did. Love her, above all, by imitating her example. Hast thou always been a worthy child of so good a mother?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

How can I thank thee, O Mary, my mother, for all thou hast done for me! When I was an enemy of God, thou wert mindful of me. Though Thou didst love Jesus more than all else, thou didst not hesitate to sacrifice Him for my sake. While the sword of sorrow pierced thy heart, thou didst give me life. Before I could show any appreciation, thou didst show thy exceeding great love for me. O Mary, I am not worthy to be called thy child. I am so vile, so selfish. Thou art so noble and so generous. Even after my dying Saviour said, "Behold thy mother," I have frequently increased the sorrows of thy heart. I grieve over the pain that I have caused thee. I love thee, at last; I desire to love thee. I desire to be thy most grateful child. Wilt thou pardon me? Ah, thou art so good, thou didst love me when I was an enemy of God. I trust that thou dost love me, now that I have been born to the spiritual life, and desire to love thee. Ah, Mary,

“Behold thy Son!” Behold thy child. I consecrate myself entirely to thee. I am thine. I desire to live only to show myself thy most loving though unworthy child.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

“Behold thy mother.” These words of the dying Saviour emphasize another truth. It is this: As the world received Jesus Christ through Mary, so is it God’s will that men should become His children through Mary. The saints tell us that “all true children of God have God for their father and Mary for their mother.” “He who has Mary for his mother has God for his father,” says the blessed Louis de Montfort. Jesus Christ has bought us at a great price. We belong to Him. We can not approach God except through Him. He is our mediator with the Father. He is the ultimate end of all human devotion. But Mary is our intercessor with Jesus, even as “He is ever making intercession” for us with the Father. She is all powerful by her intercession. Through Mary perseverance is therefore easy; without her it is very difficult; yes, to those who despise her aid it is morally impossible.

As a reward for her co-operation in the work of our redemption, Mary was crowned by God the Father as the queen of heaven and earth, by God the Son as the treasure of His infinite merits, by God the Holy Ghost as the dispenser of grace and mercy to mankind. If Mary sacrificed her divine Son to give us spiritual life when she was only the humble “handmaid of the Lord,” what will she do to aid us in the spiritual life, now that

she is queen of heaven and dispenser of grace and mercy, and we her children? She sits at the right hand of the Son and makes intercession for us. She is still the mother of Jesus, and has a mother's right. Jesus honors her as His mother. To all her petitions, He answers: "My mother, ask; for I must not turn away thy face" (*3 Kings* ii. 20). Hence St. Bernard could truly say: "It has never been heard of in any age, that any one had recourse to Mary and was not helped and heard by her." This is also the reason why devotion to Mary is universally considered as a sign of predestination.

Rejoice, my soul, that thou art a child of Mary! Indeed, Jesus, has in more than one sense fulfilled His promise "not to leave us orphans" (*John* xiv. 18). With His dying breath He recommended thee to Mary's care, and besought her to provide for thee. If Mary loved thee even when thou wert her enemy, how solicitous must she be for thee, now that thou art consecrated to her? If she did so much to give thee life, what will she not do to bring thee to the perfection of the spiritual life? "Can a mother forget her own child?" Mary will certainly not forget thee. She will always show herself a mother to thee. Dost thou, however, always show thyself her child? Hast thou that interior, tender, holy, constant, and disinterested devotion to her which flows from a true esteem of her greatness and a love for her goodness? Dost thou confide in her with the affection of a child? Does thy devotion to her lead thee to avoid all deliberate imperfections and imitate her virtues? Call on Mary in all thy trials; no one has ever had recourse to her in vain. She can remove all natural changeableness, irritability,

scrupulosity, and timidity from thy mind. She can enable thee to serve God with a generous, fervent love.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O Mary, my mother, I love thee, I love thee, I love thee! I place myself entirely in thy care. I behold in thee my mother. I thank thee for thy great love for me. I know I am unworthy of thy love. Thou art so near to God; I am a poor sinner, entirely unworthy of thee. But thou desirest to help me. Thou canst make me a true child of God. I place all my confidence in thee. I repent of my past negligence and indifference. I desire to love and serve thee. Through thee I desire to love and serve God with my whole heart and soul. It is God's will that I should serve Him through thee. Bring me, then, to Jesus as thou didst give Jesus to me. O holy Spirit, I thank Thee for having given me so good a mother. O Jesus, I will never forget that Thou hast recommended me to Thy mother with Thy dying breath. Thou hast deigned to call Thyself my brother. Through Mary I hope to become worthy of Thee.

Resolution

I resolve to be a true child of Mary by consecrating myself entirely to her, by invoking her in all my needs and by imitating her virtues. Mary, my hope, thou must save me.

Act of Consecration

(By Blessed Louis de Montfort)

O eternal and incarnate Wisdom! O sweetest and most adorable Jesus! True God and true

man, only Son of the eternal Father, and of Mary ever virgin! I adore Thee profoundly in the bosom and splendors of Thy Father during eternity; and I adore Thee also in the virginal bosom of Mary, Thy most worthy mother, in the time of Thine incarnation.

I give Thee thanks that Thou hast annihilated Thyself, in taking the form of a slave in order to rescue me from the cruel slavery of the devil. I praise and glorify Thee that Thou hast been pleased to submit Thyself to Mary, Thy holy Mother, in all things, in order to make me Thy faithful slave through her. But, alas! ungrateful and faithless as I have been, I have not kept the promises which I made so solemnly to Thee in my Baptism. I have not fulfilled my obligations; I do not deserve to be called Thy child, nor yet Thy slave; and as there is nothing in me which does not merit Thine anger and Thy repulse, I dare no more come by myself before Thy most holy and august majesty. It is on this account that I have recourse to the intercession of Thy most holy Mother, whom Thou hast given me as a mediator with Thee. It is by her means that I hope to obtain contrition and pardon for my sins, and the acquisition and preservation of wisdom. I salute thee, then, O immaculate Mary, living tabernacle of the divinity, where eternal Wisdom willed to be hidden, and to be adored by angels and by men. I hail thee, O queen of heaven and earth, to whose empire everything is subject which is under God. I salute thee, O sure refuge of sinners, whose mercy fails to no one. Hear my desires and receive the aspirations and offerings which I, in my lowness, present to thee. I am a faithless sinner. I renew and

ratify to-day in thy hands the vows of my Baptism; I renounce forever Satan, his pomps, and works; and I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ, the incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after Him all the days of my life, and to be more faithful to Him than I have ever been before.

In the presence of all the heavenly court I choose thee this day for my mother. I deliver and consecrate to thee, as thy slave, my body and soul, my goods, both interior and exterior, and even the value of all my good actions, past, present, and future; leaving to thee the entire and full right of disposing of me, and all that belongs to me, without exception, according to thy good pleasure, to the greatest glory of God, in time and in eternity.

Receive, O benignant Virgin, this little offering of my homage, in honor of, and in union with, that subjection which eternal Wisdom deigned to have to thy maternity, in acknowledgment of the power which both of you have over this little worm and miserable sinner, and in thanksgiving for the privileges with which the Holy Trinity hath favored thee. I protest that I wish henceforth, as thy true devoted servant, to seek thy honor and to obey thee in all things.

O admirable Mother, present me to thy dear Son as His eternal slave, so that as He hath redeemed me by thee, by thee He may receive me. O Mother of mercy, obtain for me the grace of the true wisdom of God; and for that end put me in the number of those whom thou lovest, whom thou teachest, whom thou guidest, and whom thou nourishest and protectest, as thy children.

O faithful Virgin, make me in all things so perfect a disciple, imitator, and slave of the incarnate Wisdom, Jesus Christ thy Son, that I may attain,

by thy intercession, and by thy example, to the fulness of His age on earth, and to a share of His glory in heaven. Amen.

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

II. Acclamations in Praise of Mary

(From St. Alphonsus)

O most holy Virgin Mary! O queen of angels! How complete and perfect heaven has created thee! Oh, that I might appear in the eyes of God, as thou dost appear to me! Thou art so beautiful and lovely that with thy beauty thou dost ravish hearts. When thou dost appear, all else appears deformed, every beauty is eclipsed, every grace disappears, precisely as the stars disappear at the rising of the sun.

Thy great servant, St. John Damascene, contemplated thee; and when he saw thee so lovely it appeared to him thou hadst taken, as it were, the flower and the best of every creature, and therefore he called thee, "the comeliness of nature"; the grace and comeliness of all creatures. St. Augustine, the brightest light of the Doctors, gazed on thee, and thou didst appear to him so beautiful and lovely that he called thee the form and countenance of God, and it did not seem adulation to him to say, "Thou art worthy of being called the form of God." "*Si formam Dei te appellem digna existis.*" Thy devout servant, Albert the Great, contemplated thee, and it seemed to him that all the graces and gifts that were found in the most celebrated women of the ancient dispensation were all surpassed in thee. The golden mouth of Sara, when with thy smile thou

makest heaven and earth joyful; the tender and sweet glance of the faithful Lia, with which thou dost soften the heart of God, inexorable to sinners; the splendor of the countenance of the beautiful Rachel, as thou dost obscure the sun by thy radiant beauty; the grace and the comeliness of the discreet Abigail, with which thou dost appease the wrath of an angry God; the fire and strength of the brave Judith, when thou dost powerfully and graciously subdue the proudest hearts.

In a word, sovereign princess, from the vast ocean of thy beauty flowed forth, like streams, the beauty and graces of all creatures. The sea ripples its waves in imitation of the golden locks of thy head,* which, curling gracefully, floated upon thy shoulders and ivory neck. The clear depths of the crystal fountains took their quiet and steady flow from the serenity of thy beautiful brow and thy placid countenance. The graceful rainbow, when it is most beautiful, has carefully copied from thy eyebrow to arch itself gracefully, that it may better dart forth its rays of light. The calm Dian and the gentle Hesperus are reflections from thy radiant eyes. The white lily and the ruddy rose have stolen their colors from thy cheeks. The envious purple and coral sigh for the ruby of thy lips. The purest milk and sweetest honey are distillations from the sweet honeycomb of thy mouth. The odorous jasmine and the fragrant rose of Damascus have stolen their perfumes from thy breath. The loftiest cedar and the finest and most erect cypress esteem themselves happy when they see that they are the image of thy straight and lofty neck, and the palm-tree enviously, and in emulation, imitates thy stately stature. And thus, O Lady, every created beauty is the shadow and copy of thyself.

Therefore I do not wonder, O sovereign princess, that heaven and earth are placed under thee, for planets and continents are so small and thou so great that when thy feet but rest upon them they are enriched, and deem themselves happy and blessed if thou but touch them, as the moon when St. John the Evangelist saw her at thy feet. The splendor of the sun was increased when thou didst clothe thyself with his rays. The Evangelist, blinded by the greatness of thy light, was lost in wonder, and beside himself at the sight of so stupendous a miracle of loveliness, in which the beauty of heaven and earth was contained, he said, "And there appeared a great sign in heaven"—*Signum magnum apparuit in coelo*—a great wonder in heaven—that amazed the angels and terrified the earth. And that miracle was a woman clothed from head to foot with light and splendor, whom the effulgent sun chose for his mother, placing himself in her womb; to whom the fair moon serves as a robe encircled with silver, and the innumerable emulous constellations garland her temples, encircle her locks, and adorn her head with wreaths of precious gems; and on her head is placed a crown of twelve stars: "*Et in capite ejus corona duodecim stellarum.*"

And thus the saints, O most sacred Virgin, marveling at such great splendor, which surpasses the brightness of the sun, and the graceful loveliness of the moon, though these be the perfect flower and ideal of all beauty, never cease to admire thy loveliness, and considering the hosannas that burst forth from the heavens, can do nothing but exclaim and extol thee in like manner, with acclamations of wonder and amazement. St. Peter Damian, paying to thee his homage, says: "O holy, and most holy of all saints, and the richest

treasure of all sanctity!" And St. Bernard: "O admirable Virgin! O woman, the glory of all other women! The best and greatest that the world has ever possessed!" St. Epiphanius: "O heaven more vast and extended than the empyrean! Virgin, truly full of grace!" And the Catholic Church, in the name of all, sings: "O most clement, most merciful, most sweet Virgin Mary!"

And I also, O heavenly princess, with thy leave, although I am the least of thy servants, I also wish to make my acclamations of wonder and amazement. O gracious and beautiful heaven, more vast than the empyrean, since in the latter the immensity of God is not contained, but in thy womb He was concealed! O richest treasure, in which was deposited the priceless jewel of our redemption! O mother of sinners, beneath thy mantle we are protected! O consolation of the world, in whom all the afflicted, infirm, and desolate find comfort! O beautiful eyes that ravish hearts! O coral lips that take souls captive! O beneficent hands, filled with hyacinths, that are always dispensing graces! O pure creature, who dost appear as like God, and whom I should have esteemed as such, if faith had not taught me that thou art not God, although thou hast the splendor—and I know not what—of supreme Deity! O great Lady, empress of heaven, enjoy for a thousand eternities the grandeur of thy state, the immensity of thy graces, and the felicity of thy glory! Only I supplicate thee, O compassionate mother, that thou wilt not forget us, who beg to be thy servants and children. And because thou art the depository of all graces, and the best and most privileged of all created things, obtain for us, thy servants, O Lady, that we may

be favored far more than any others in the world. And may all the world know that the dear children of Mary are the elect of heaven and earth, the beloved children who are tenderly cared for and enjoy the best that such a mother has to give; the well-beloved, who are caressed by the queen of heaven, and are doubly favored and doubly caressed by thy majesty. Thus I hope, O most beautiful Rachel! and thus I trust thou wilt do, O sovereign princess! In the name of what thou art, do it; for all heaven, prostrate at thy feet, is supplicating and praying thee for this. Consent, utter but one loving word, "*Fiat*—Be it done." Oh, man, what art thou doing? How dost thou love the creatures of earth—deceitful and lying creatures, who betray and make thee lose thy soul, thy body, paradise, and God? And why not love Mary, the most loving, the most lovable, and the most faithful, who, after enriching thee with consolations and graces in this life, will obtain for thee, from her divine Son, the eternal glory of paradise? O Mary, Mary, beautiful above all creatures! lovely, next to Jesus, above all loves! dearer than all created things! more graceful than all graces! have pity on my miserable heart. Miserable, because it ought to love thee and does not love thee. Thou canst kindle it with thy holy love. Turn, O Mary, thy loving eyes upon me, look on me, draw me to thyself, and obtain that, next to God, I may love none but thee, O most gracious, most amiable Mary, mother of Jesus, and my mother.

III. A Dart of Fire—Invitation of Jesus

(From St. Alphonsus)

“Come to Me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you” (Matt. xi. 28).

Let us listen to Jesus Christ, who from the cross on which He is nailed, and from the altar where He dwells under the sacramental species, calls us poor afflicted sinners, to console us and enrich us with His graces. Oh, what two great mysteries of hope and love to us are the passion of Jesus Christ and the sacrament of the Eucharist! Mysteries which, if faith did not make us certain of them, would be incredible. That God should deign to shed even the very last drop of His blood! “This is My blood, which shall be shed for many.” And why? To atone for our sins. But then to will to give His own body as food for our souls, that body which had already been sacrificed on the cross for our salvation! These sublime mysteries must surely soften the hardest hearts, and reclaim the most desperate sinners. Finally, the Apostle says that in Jesus Christ we are enriched with every good, so that no grace is wanting to us: “In all things you are made rich in Him . . . so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace.” It is enough that we invoke our God for Him to have mercy on us; and He will abound in grace to all who pray to Him, as the same Apostle assures us: “Rich unto all who call upon Him.”

If then, my Saviour, I have reason to despair of pardon, for the offences and treacheries that I have been guilty of toward Thee, I have still greater reason to trust in Thy goodness. My

Father, I have forsaken Thee, like an ungrateful son; but now I have returned to Thy feet, full of sorrow and covered with confusion for the many mercies which Thou hast shown me; and I say with shame, "Father, I am not worthy to be called Thy son." Thou hast said that there is rejoicing in heaven when a sinner is converted. "There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance." Behold, I have left all and turned to Thee, my crucified Lord. I repent with my whole heart for having treated Thee with so much contempt as to turn my back upon Thee. Thou hast graciously received me into Thy grace; inflame me now with Thy holy love, so that I may never leave Thee again. Thou hast said, "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly." Wherefore I hope to receive from Thee, not only Thy grace as I enjoyed it before I offended Thee, but a grace more abundant, which shall make me become all on fire with Thy love. Oh, that I could love Thee, my God, as Thou dost deserve to be loved! I love Thee above all things. I love Thee more than myself. I love Thee with all my heart; and I sigh after heaven, where I shall love Thee for all eternity. "What is there to me in heaven, and besides Thee what have I desired on earth? O God, God of my heart and my portion forever." Ah, God of my heart, take and keep possession of all my heart, and drive from it every affection which does not belong to Thee. Thou art my only treasure, my only love. I wish for Thee alone, and nothing more. O Mary, my hope, by thy prayers draw me all to God.

OPTIONAL READINGS

II. *Mary, Model of Fraternal Charity*

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

Love of God and our neighbor is commanded by the same precept: "And this command we have from God, that he who loveth God, loveth his neighbor also." St. Thomas gives as a reason for this that he who loves God loves all things which God loves. St. Catherine of Genoa one day said to God: "O Lord, it is Thy will that I love my neighbor, and I can love none but Thee." God answered her in these words: "He who loves Me, loves all things I love." But as there never has been and never will be one who loves God more than Mary; so there never has been and never will be one who loves his neighbor more than Mary. Cornelius á Lapide, remarking on these words: "King Solomon hath made him a litter of the wood of Libanus, the midst he covered with charity for the daughters of Jerusalem," says, that this litter was Mary, in which the incarnate Word dwelt, filling the Mother with charity, that she might succor all who had recourse to her. Mary was so full of charity when she was on earth, that she assisted unasked those who were in need, just as she did at the marriage of Cana, when she told her Son of the trouble of the family—"They have no wine"—and begged Him to give them wine through a miracle. Oh, how she hastened to the relief of her neighbor, when she went to the house of Elizabeth on an errand of charity. "She went into the hill country with haste." She could in no way show greater charity than by offering her Son for our salvation; so that St. Bonaventure says, "Mary

so loved the world as to give her only-begotten Son." Therefore St. Anselm addresses her in these words: "Oh, blessed among women, who dost excel the angels in purity, and the saints in pity." Nor does the charity of Mary for us fail, now that she is in heaven; but it is much increased there, because now she sees more clearly the miseries of men. And the angel said to St. Bridget, that there is no one who prays who does not receive graces through the charity of the Blessed Virgin. Miserable should we be were Mary not to pray for us. Jesus Christ Himself also said to the same saint: "If the prayers of My Mother did not interpose, there would be no hope of mercy."

Blessed is he, says the blessed Mother, who hears my teachings and considers my charity, in order to practise this charity toward others in imitation of me. "Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors." St. Gregory Nazianzen says that there is nothing by which we may more easily gain the love of Mary, than by the practice of charity toward our neighbor. It is certain that God and Mary will show mercy to us, according to the charity we practise toward our neighbor. "Give, and it shall be given to you." "For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." St. Methodius said, "Give to the poor and receive paradise;" for, according to the Apostle, charity toward our neighbor renders us happy in this life and in the next. "But piety is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that is now, and of that which is to come." St. John Chrysostom, remarking on the words of Proverbs, "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord,"

says that he who assists the needy makes God his debtor. O Mother of mercy, thou art full of charity for all. Do not forget my miseries. Thou dost even now see them. Recommend me to that God who denies thee nothing. Obtain for me the grace of being able to imitate thee in holy charity toward God and toward my neighbor. Amen.

III. Means of Acquiring the Love of Jesus Christ

(From St. Alphonsus)

Jesus Christ ought to be our whole love. He is worthy of it, both because He is a God of infinite goodness, and because He has loved us to such an excess that He died for us. Oh, how great are our obligations to Jesus Christ! All the good we enjoy, all our inspirations, calls, pardons, helps, hopes, consolations, sweetness, and loving affections come to us through Jesus Christ. Let us see by what means we are to acquire this love of Jesus Christ.

In the first place, we must desire to have this love, and we must, therefore, often ask Him to give it to us, especially in our prayers, in our communions, and in visits to the Blessed Sacrament. And this grace must also be sought for at the hands of the ever-blessed Mary, from our guardian angel and our holy patrons, that they may enable us to love Jesus Christ. St. Francis de Sales says that the grace of loving Jesus Christ contains all other graces in itself; because he who truly loves Him can not be wanting in any virtue.

In the second place, if we wish to acquire this love we must detach our hearts from all earthly

affections; divine love will find no place in a heart that is full of this world. St. Philip Neri used to say: "The love we give to creatures is all so much taken from God."

In the third place, we must often exercise ourselves, especially when we pray, in making acts of the love of Our Lord. Acts of love are the fuel with which we keep alive the fire of holy charity. Let us make acts of love and complacency, saying: "My Jesus, I rejoice that Thou art infinitely happy, and that Thy eternal Father loves Thee as much as Himself!" Of benevolence: "I wish, my Jesus, that all could know and love Thee!" Of predilection: "My Jesus, I love Thee more than all things! I love Thee more than myself!" Let us also often make acts of contrition, which are called acts of sorrowful love.

In the fourth place, if any one wishes to make sure of being inflamed with love toward Jesus Christ, let him often try to meditate on the passion. It was revealed to a holy solitary, that no exercise was more efficacious in enkindling love, than the consideration of the sufferings and ignominy which Our Lord endured for love of us. I say it is impossible that a soul, meditating often on the passion of Christ, should be able to resist His love. It was for this that, although He could have saved us by one drop of His blood, nay, even by a single prayer, He chose to suffer so much, and to shed all His blood, that He might attract all hearts to love Him; therefore, he who meditates on His passion does what is very agreeable to Him. Do you, then, often make your meditation on the passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ? Do so at least every Friday, the day on which He died for love of us.

III. Aspirations of Love to Jesus Christ

(From *St. Alphonsus*)

My Jesus, Thou alone art sufficient for me.

My Love, do not permit me to separate myself from Thee.

When shall I be able to say, "My God, I can not lose Thee any more?"

Lord, who am I that Thou shouldst desire so much to be loved by me?

Whom shall I love if I love not Thee, my Jesus?

Here am I, Lord; dispose of me as Thou pleasest.

Give me Thy love; I ask nothing more.

Make me all Thine before I die.

Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus Christ, have pity on me.

My God, I wish for Thee alone, and nothing more.

O my Jesus! would that I could be entirely spent for Thee, as Thou didst spend Thyself entirely for me.

If I had died while I was in sin, I could no more have loved Thee; now that I can love Thee, I will love Thee as much as I can.

To Thee do I consecrate the remainder of my life.

I wish only, and I wish in all things, that which Thou dost desire.

When I see Thee for the first time, my Jesus, may it be with a look of mercy!

May I die rather than ever offend Thee again!

Thou wilt not leave me; I will not leave Thee; so shall our love endure in this world and in the next.

I should be too ungrateful, O my Jesus! if I loved Thee but little, after so many graces.

Thou didst give Thyself all to me; I give myself all to Thee.

Thou lovest those that love Thee. I love Thee; do Thou also love me.

If I love Thee but little, give Thou me the love Thou requirest of me.

What hast Thou not done to oblige me to love Thee? Make me overcome every defect to please Thee.

Accept the love of a soul that has offended Thee so deeply.

Show me the immense good Thou art, that I may love Thee exceedingly.

I desire to love Thee exceedingly in this life, that I may love Thee exceedingly in the next.

I hope to love Thee for all eternity, O eternal God!

Oh, that I had always loved Thee! Oh, that I had died rather than have offended Thee!

I give Thee my will, my liberty; dispose of me as Thou pleasest.

May my only happiness be to please Thee, O infinite goodness.

O my God! I rejoice in that Thou art infinitely happy.

Thou art omnipotent; make me a saint.

Thou hast sought me while I was fleeing from Thee; Thou didst love me when I despised Thy love; abandon me not, now that I seek Thee and love Thee.

May I this day give myself wholly to Thee!

Send me any chastisement, but deprive me not of the power of loving Thee.

I thank Thee that Thou givest me time to love Thee. I love Thee, my Jesus, I love Thee; and I hope to die repeating, "I love Thee, I love Thee."

I desire to love Thee without reserve, and to do all that I know to be pleasing to Thee.

I love Thy good pleasure more than all the pleasures of the world.

I accept all the troubles that may come to me, provided I love Thee, O my God. O my Jesus, that I could die for Thee, as Thou didst die for me.

Oh, that I could make all men love Thee as Thou deservest!

O will of God! thou art my love.

O God of love! give me love.

O my Mother! make me always have recourse to Thee. It is for thee to make me a saint. This is my hope.

FOURTH MEDITATION

The Love of God

POINT I

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

THE love of God consists in embracing God with the powers of the will as the greatest possible good and preferring Him to all earthly things. He is in reality that final end to which man should direct all his endeavors while upon earth. St. Paul therefore wrote: "The end of the commandment is charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith" (1 *Tim.* i. 5). "Love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law" (*Rom.* xiii. 10). There are many reasons why man should love God.

1. Man should love God because He is the

most lovable being in existence. Man naturally loves everything that is good and beautiful. But God is the eternal, uncreated beauty Himself. Man should, therefore, love Him at all times with all the powers of his soul.

2. Gratitude demands that thou love God. Hence St. John says: "Let us therefore love God, because God first hath loved us" (1 *John* iv. 19). "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love," says God through His prophet Jeremias (*Jer.* xxxi. 3).

3. But God also demands our love, commands us to love Him. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength. This is the first commandment" (*Mark* xii. 30). God is not in need of us. He wishes us to love Him for our own sake, for our welfare. He commands it because it is in accordance with our nature. "This commandment is not above thee, nor far from thee . . . it is in thy heart that thou mayest do it" (*Deut.* xxx. 11, 14).

4. Lastly, man should strive after divine charity because it alone is the greatest, the most perfect virtue. Charity alone will suffice until life eternal, but all other virtues without charity will profit man nothing. "Love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law."

My soul, Thomas à Kempis says that "love is an excellent thing." He might also have said, "a necessary thing." For the good God has given thee a heart to love. This is in thy very nature. Thou must love in general whatever is good. Thou hast, indeed, the use of thy free will and canst determine thy love; thou canst center thy affections on this object or on that, but if thou lovest according to right reason, according to holy

faith, then thou must love God above all things. He is the one true good, the uncreated beauty. Whatever else is good and beautiful is only a production, a faint copy of the one great Good, who is so good, so perfect, so beautiful in Himself and deserving of all love. The object of this whole retreat, of all these meditations, was to bring thee to a knowledge of this one great Good, and induce thee to love Him, to direct all thy thoughts and works and actions as acts of love to Him, who has loved thee first, who has loved thee with an everlasting love.

But God also commands thee to love Him. He wishes to force thee as it were, to work for heaven. Thus, in the excess of His great love for thee, He desires that thou shouldst love Him with all thy strength. Besides, my soul, thou art bound to strive after perfection. Thou wishest to be perfect in heaven. Thou shouldst, therefore, imitate that model which the Holy Spirit proposes to thee. "God is love," says St. John. If thou wishest to be like Him thou must love—love God much, love God continually, love God with all thy strength. Love is the one thing necessary in the supernatural life.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O God of love, O love of my soul, I count those moments as lost in which I did not love Thee. Thou art truly the one real good, the great ineffable, uncreated beauty. How blind have I been not to see Thy beauty when all creation sings Thy praises. If Thou wilt permit a poor creature to love, to consecrate himself entirely to Thee, behold, I now give myself entirely to Thee. I wish to love Thee as the angels and saints love Thee. I desire to love Thee with the love which Thou

deservest, with a love that is proportionate to Thy beauty, to Thy infinite perfections. O God of love, give me Thy love. Take full possession of me. I desire to live and die in conformity with Thy holy will. O holy Spirit, Spirit of love, inflame my heart with love. Make me walk in the footsteps of my loving model even unto death, that I may follow Him beyond the grave.

POINT II

CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

The Holy Spirit is not only love itself, He is also the cause of the love of God taking root in the human heart. The special operation of the Holy Spirit consists in this; that He conducts rational creatures to God, their final end, by means of love. "The charity of God," says St. Paul, "is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us" (*Rom. v. 5*). "Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you?" (*1 Cor. vi. 19.*) In this holy temple He kindles the sacred fire of love that should burn continually to the honor of the Most High. Our dear Saviour one day said: "I came to cast fire upon earth and what will I but that it be kindled" (*Luke xii. 49*). The divine Saviour furnished the material for this fire of love. By word and example He gave man the strongest motive to practise it. In His daily life He showed us how; in the sacraments He has left us means of maintaining it in our hearts. He then ascended to heaven and left to the care of the Holy Spirit that divine fire of charity. The Holy Spirit not only inflames our hearts with love, but He also increases and perfects it in us. If, then, thou wishest to love God, to make progress in the

science of the saints, thou must learn it in the school of the Holy Spirit. He is the great teacher of love, because He is Love itself.

1. The first great means He employs to advance us in charity is prayer and meditation. Prayer is intercourse with God, and no one can draw nigh to God without increasing in love.

2. Another means the Holy Spirit employs is the sacraments.

3. A third means is self-denial. As self-denial increases, the love of God increases. These two contrary powers are fighting for mastery over our souls—love of self and love of God.

4. The Holy Spirit also uses the sufferings and trials of life to increase in us the love of God. These are the furnaces in which the gold of charity is purified.

5. Finally, the Holy Spirit employs acts of love to perfect us in the virtues. We learn to speak by speaking; we learn to write by writing; so we also acquire proficiency in that one great virtue by constantly repeating acts of that virtue, by multiplying them and by intensifying their fervor.

Behold, my soul, what the Holy Spirit does in thy heart. Thy divine Saviour has given thee so many virtues, so many examples of love. He gave thee prayer and the sacraments as means of growing in love. Now the Holy Spirit has come down and animates Christ's mystical body. He renders every willing member more Christ-like day by day. In His school thou wilt learn the science of the saints, for He is Love itself. Exercise thyself in self-denial. Bear patiently the sufferings and trials of life, for St. Francis de Sales says, that "love which suffers not, does not deserve the name of love."

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

O holy Spirit, Thou who art called the Sanctifier of mankind, because Thou incessantly laborest to kindle and feed the fire of divine love in the hearts of men, take full possession of my heart. I desire it to be Thine forever. Let not the example of my Saviour be in vain for me. Let His motives become active principles within me. May His means of grace be ever fruitful, and advance me in virtue. I desire to love God more and more. I desire that every breath that I breathe, every pulsation of my heart, every exercise of any of my faculties may be an act of love for my God, who is so good, so infinitely perfect and deserving of all love.

Resolution

With the aid of the Holy Spirit, I resolve to perform my devotions with great fervor, to practise daily self-denial for love of God, to be resigned to God's holy will in time of tribulation, and daily to make acts of love. I will think of God's goodness and the many reasons I have for loving Him. Come, O holy Spirit, and destroy in me by Thy sacred fire every affection which has not God for its object. Grant that I may be all Thine, and that through Thee I may conquer everything to please God. O Mary, my mother and advocate, do thou help me by thy prayer!

OPTIONAL REFLECTIONS

II. The Means of Loving God and of Becoming a Saint

(From *St. Alphonsus*)

The more we love God, the more holy do we become. St. Francis Borgia says that it is prayer that introduces divine love into the human heart; and it is mortification that withdraws the heart from the earth, and renders it capable of receiving this holy fire. The more there is of the earth in the heart, the less room there is for holy love. "Wisdom is not to be found in the land of them that live in delights." Hence the saints have always sought to mortify as much as possible their self-love and their senses. The saints are few; but we must live with the few, if we will be saved with the few. "Live with the few," writes St. John Climacus, "if you would reign with the few." And St. Bernard says, "That can not be perfect which is not singular." He who would lead a perfect life must lead a singular life.

But before all, in order to become saints, it is necessary to have the desire to be saints; we must have the desire and the resolution. Some are always desiring, but they never begin to put their hands to the work. "Of these irresolute souls," says St. Teresa, "the devil has no fear." On the other hand, the saint said, "God is a friend of generous souls." The devil tries to make it appear to us to be pride to think of doing great things for God. It would, indeed, be pride in us, if we thought of doing them, trusting in our own strength; but it is not pride to resolve to become a saint, trusting in God, and saying, "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me."

We must therefore be of good courage, make strong resolutions, and begin. Prayer can do anything. What we can not do by our own strength, we shall easily do by the help of God, who has promised to give us whatever we ask of Him. "You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you."

My dearest Redeemer, Thou desirest my love, and commandest me to love Thee with my whole heart. O my God, I will say to Thee, trusting in Thy mercy, my past sins do not make me fear, because I now hate and detest them above every other evil; and I know that Thou dost forget the offences of a soul that is penitent and loves Thee. Indeed, because I have offended Thee more than others, I will also love Thee more than others, with the help that I hope to obtain from Thee. O my Lord, Thou desirest that I should be a saint; and I desire to become a saint to please Thee. I love Thee, O infinite goodness. To Thee do I give myself entirely. Thou art my only good and my only love. Accept me, O my beloved, and make me entirely Thine, and suffer me not to offend Thee any more. Grant that I may be wholly consumed for Thee, as Thou hast wholly consumed Thyself for me. O Mary, the most loving and most beloved spouse of the Holy Spirit, obtain for me love and fidelity.

II. Signs of Love Toward God

(From St. Alphonsus)

I

Lord, who am I, that Thou hast loved me so much, and that Thou shouldst so much desire to be loved by me?

O my God, worthy of infinite love! I love Thee, or rather, I would that I loved Thee.

I love Thee above all things; more than my life, more than myself; but still I see that I love Thee too little.

O King of heaven! make Thyself also King of my heart; possess me entirely.

II

I leave all and turn to Thee. I embrace Thee, I press Thee to my soul; despise me not, immeasurable good, I love Thee.

Now that Thou hast united me to Thee, O my Jesus, how can I see myself separated from Thee? I love Thee, and will never cease to love Thee.

Unite Thyself to me, Lord; let not the corruption of my sins drive Thee away from me.

III

O God, O God! whom shall I love, if I love not Thee, my life, my love, my all?

“Chosen among thousands.” My God, Thee only, Thee alone do I choose for my love.

My Redeemer, I desire no other but Thee.

Oh, that I might be wholly consumed for Thee, who wast entirely consumed for me!

Take possession, Lord, of my whole will, and do with me what Thou pleasest.

IV

O God not known! O God not loved! he is indeed mad who loves Thee not.

O my God! when I sinned I well knew that I was greatly displeasing Thee. Oh, how could I do so!

If I had died then, I should no longer have been

able to love Thee. Now that I can, I will love Thee.

Lord, after having given me so many graces, permit me not to betray Thee again. Let me rather die.

Thou hast borne with me, that I might love Thee. Yes, I will love Thee.

My God, Thou hast conquered me; I will withstand Thee no longer. I surrender myself to Thee.

V

O God! how many years have I not lost when I might have been loving Thee!

I consecrate to Thee, my God, the remainder of my life, whether its days be many or few.

VI

What are riches? what are honors? what are pleasures? My God, my God, I desire Thee alone.

O King of hearts, reign in my heart. Ah, draw me all to Thee!

Bind me, O God, to Thee, in such a way that I shall never be able to loose myself from Thee.

Thou wilt not leave me, I will not leave Thee. Then we shall always love each other, O my God.

VII

Ah, make me all Thine before I die, my Jesus, my love, my life, my treasure, my all.

Ah, my Jesus and my judge, the first time I see Thee may it be with a propitious countenance!

When shall I be able to say, "My God, my God, I can not lose Thee any more?"

When, Lord, shall I see Thee as Thou art, and contemplate Thee face to face for all eternity with my whole strength?

Ah, my infinite good, as long as I live, I stand in danger of losing Thee!

My Jesus, what hast Thou not done to oblige me to love Thee? Yes, I will love Thee. I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee!

VIII

O eternal Father! for the love of Jesus give me Thy love.

Permit one of the most ungrateful creatures who has ever lived on earth to love Thee.

My God, I will love Thee exceedingly in this life, that I may love Thee exceedingly in the next.

IX

O my Jesus, Thou hast given Thyself all to me; I will give myself entirely to Thee.

What greater pleasure can I have than to please Thee, my God?

My beloved Jesus, I desire to love Thee as much as I have offended Thee.

X

I love Thee, infinite goodness; make me know the great good that I love.

My Jesus, Thou art the vine, I am one of the branches; keep me always united to Thee; never let me detach myself from Thee.

O my God, how much do I rejoice that Thou art infinitely happy!

XI

Ah, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee; I love Thee more than myself.

Give me, my Jesus, that love which Thou requirest of me.

Oh, that I had always loved Thee!

Oh, if I did but love Thee, my God, if I did but love Thee! I love Thee, but I love Thee too little.

Help me, Lord, to love Thee much, and to overcome all things to please Thee.

XII

I give Thee my will. I desire nothing but that which Thou desirest.

I seek not consolations from Thee; I desire only to please Thee, my God, my love, my all.

O infinite God! I am not worthy to love Thee; suffer me to love Thee.

I hope to love Thee forever, O eternal God!

O my dear Jesus! Thou hast suffered so much for me; I desire to suffer for Thee as much as it shall please Thee.

O God of my soul! I can trust myself no longer to live without loving Thee.

O will of God, Thou art my only love!

XIII

O omnipotent God! make me a saint.

It will be for Thy glory, Lord, to make one who was Thine enemy become Thy loving servant.

Thou didst seek me, my God, while I was yet flying from Thee; Thou wilt not repel me, now that I seek Thee.

My most loving Jesus, in order to pardon me Thou hast not pardoned Thyself.

I thank Thee for giving me time to love Thee. Yes, my God, I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee, and I will always love Thee.

O God, worthy of infinite love, may I this day be entirely converted to Thee, my love, my all.

Chastise me as Thou wilt; but deprive me not of the power of loving Thee.

XIV

Divine Father, Thou hast given me Thy Son; I, a miserable creature, give myself to Thee. Accept me, for Thy mercy's sake.

I desire, Lord, to atone for the offences I have committed against Thee, by doing all that I can to please Thee.

I desire to love Thee, my God, without interest, without ceasing, and without reserve.

XV

My Jesus, despised for me, may I be despised for Thee!

My Jesus, tormented for love of us, grant that I may suffer all the pains of this life for love of Thee.

I wish, O my Redeemer, to die for Thee, who didst die for me.

I resolve this day to give myself all to Thee.

Oh, that I would love Thee as Thou deservest!

Grant, Lord, that I may leave nothing undone which I know to be pleasing to Thee.

Happy shall I be if I lose all to gain Thee, my God, my all.

My Jesus, sacrificed for me, I sacrifice to Thee my whole will.

O my God! when shall I be all Thine?

XVI

“Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?”

“I will sing forever the mercies of the Lord.”

“Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?”

“O good Jesus! never permit me to be separated from Thee, never permit me to be separated from Thee!”

“What have I in heaven? and, besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever.”

XVII

May I die for the love of Thy love, who for the love of my love didst not disdain to die!

“My love is crucified.”

“Give me but Thy love and Thy grace, and I am rich enough.”—ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA.

“Let me die, Lord, that I may see Thee.”—ST. AUGUSTINE.

XVIII

Ah, my Jesus, they who love Thee not, do not know Thee.

I love Thy pleasure, Lord, more than all the pleasures of the world.

My crucified Jesus, how is it that not all are captivated by Thee?

Thou hast died for me; oh, that I could die for Thee, my Jesus, my love, my treasure, my all!

Lord, what shall I render to Thee for all that Thou hast suffered for me?

XIX

Infinite Goodness, I esteem Thee above all things; I love Thee with all my heart; I give myself entirely to Thee. Accept my poor love, and give me more love. May I forget all, that I may remember only Thee, my love, my all!

I would wish to love Thee worthily. Accept, O God, this my desire, and give me Thy love!

XX

I have offended Thee enough; now I desire to love Thee.

O God! O God! I am Thine, and Thou art mine.

May all be lost; but let not God be lost.

Let it cost what it will to gain God; He can never be dearly bought.

Thou alone, my Jesus, Thou alone art sufficient for me.

XXI.

O Mary! look on me, and draw me all to God.

Most amiable Mother, I love thee exceedingly.

O Mother! give me confidence in thee, and make me always have recourse to thee.

O Mary! it is for thee to save me. Thou canst make me holy; this is my hope. Have pity on me.

EVENING EXAMINATION

On Union with God

Am I convinced that sanctity and perfection consists in living in union with God? Do I ardently desire this union? Have I firmly resolved to attain it? Do I mistrust myself and place all my confidence in God? Is my mind united to God by the possession of His truth? by frequent renewal of my good intentions? by meditation on the eternal truths? Or am I suffering from delusions regarding the end, the motives, or the means of perfection? Do these delusions result from a want of reflection on the tendency of human nature, or the workings of grace? from pride? from a want of examination of my actions, my intentions, my motives, or of the means I have

employed? Have I in the past been influenced by secret self-love? by the flattery of friends? Am I faithful in the practice of mental prayer? Do I ask God to let me see myself as He sees me? Have I closed my eyes to my imperfections? Have I been severe with others instead of with myself?

Have I kept my heart united to God by disinterested love? frequently renewed my motive of action, "*ex amore Jesu et Mariæ*"? Have I practised ejaculatory prayer? interior and exterior mortification? Have I kept a watchful eye on the promptings of my predominant passion? made frequent acts of love? prayed God to strengthen my resolution and render it efficacious? Have I been faithful in the practice of penance? of humility? of patience? of fraternal charity? of detachment? Or has worldly ambition, vanity, love of pleasure, ease, and comfort, vitiated my motives and retarded my spiritual progress?

Have I sought the will of God in all things? Have I recognized the will of God in my holy Rule? in the wish of my Superiors? in the inspirations of the Holy Spirit? in the dispensations of divine Providence? Do I do God's will cheerfully in disagreeable as well as in agreeable things? Or have I grumbled and complained in time of temptations and trials? Do I persevere in my devout exercises even when I do not relish them? Do I make frequent acts of resignation and conformity to God's holy will? Am I zealous for the glory of God? for my own spiritual progress? for the temporal and eternal happiness of my neighbor? Do I see Jesus in the lowliest of my neighbors? Can I honestly say, "I will will what God wills, when God wills, as God wills, because God wills, and only what God wills"?

Protestation for a Happy Death. (See p. 77.)

Renewal of Religious Profession. (According to your Rule.)

HYMN

Aspirations to Jesus

(From St. Alphonsus)

Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
 Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
 My Good, my Spouse adored!

My God, O goodness infinite,
 My life's true life art Thou;
 Flame of my heart, my Spouse most sweet,
 My love to Thee I vow.

Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
 Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
 My Good, my Spouse adored!

Jesus, for Thee I pine away,
 My love, and my desire;
 And more enamored day by day,
 I burn with heavenly fire.

Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
 Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
 My Good, my Spouse adored!

Ah, Jesus, I would ever weep
 That I offended Thee;
 Mine was ingratitude too deep,
 And basest treachery.

Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
 Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
 My Good, my Spouse adored!

My Jesus, when I call to mind
That such a wretch as I
Have crucified a God so kind,
I fain of grief would die.

Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
My Good, my Spouse adored!

O Thou, my hope, make me remain
Faithful forevermore;
Better to die than be again
As I have been before.

Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
My Good, my Spouse adored!

While night and day my foes allure,
In Thee do I confide;
Take Thou and place my heart secure
Within Thy piercèd side.

Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
My Good, my Spouse adored!

With Thy sweet chains, O Jesus, bind
My rebel heart to Thee
Till death; my safety I will find
In such captivity.

Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
Jesus, my sweetest Lord!
My Good, my Spouse adored!

Conclusion

I. Examination

Ask yourself: (a) How have I made the Retreat? (b) What lights have I received? (c) What resolutions have I formed?

Ask pardon for want of good will during Retreat.

Thank the Holy Spirit for His light and grace.

Read the following summaries of religious virtues, maxims, and aspirations.

Emphasize those which apply particularly to yourself.

Renew your good resolutions and your consecration.

Ask God's blessing on your resolutions.

Reduce your resolutions to practice.

II. Summary of Virtues that Make a Religious a Saint

(From St. Alphonsus)

1. To desire always to advance in the love of Jesus Christ. Holy desires are the wings with which souls fly to God. Hence it is necessary to meditate frequently on the passion of Our Lord. To make frequent acts of the love of Jesus Christ during the day, beginning as soon as you awake in the morning, and endeavoring to fall asleep making an act of love; and always to ask of Jesus Christ His holy love.

2. To go to holy communion daily, with the permission of your director. And during the day to make many spiritual communions.

3. To visit the Most Holy Sacrament at least once a day; and during the visit to ask perseverance and holy love, after the acts of faith, thanksgiving, and love. And when you meet with troubles, losses, affronts, or any other cross, have recourse to the Blessed Sacrament, no matter where you find yourself at the time.

4. Every morning, at rising, to offer yourself to suffer in peace all the crosses that will come to you during the day, and when they come always to say: "Lord, Thy will be always done!"

5. To rejoice in the infinite happiness of God. A soul that loves God more than itself ought to rejoice in His felicity more than its own.

6. To desire paradise, and therefore to desire death in order to be delivered from the danger of losing God, and to go to love Him for eternity, and with all your strength.

7. To desire and to labor that all may love Jesus Christ; and therefore to speak frequently to others of the love of Jesus Christ.

8. To treat God without reserve, not refusing Him anything that you know to be pleasing to Him; and even to choose what is most pleasing to Him.

9. To pray every day for the souls in purgatory; and for poor sinners.

10. To perform all your actions through the sole motive of giving pleasure to Jesus Christ, saying, at the beginning of each action: "Lord, may this be entirely for Thee!"

11. To offer yourself several times in the day to suffer every pain for His sake, saying: "My

Jesus, I give myself entirely to Thee. Here I am; do with me whatsoever Thou pleasest."

12. To resolve to die rather than to commit even a deliberate venial sin.

13. To abstain from even lawful gratifications, at least two or three times a day.

14. To spend two hours, or at least an hour every day in mental prayer.

15. To love solitude and silence, in order to converse alone with God; hence it is necessary to love the choir and the cell, and to shun the parlor and the hall.

16. To perform all the exterior mortifications that you are allowed by obedience, but to attend particularly to interior mortifications; such as not to indulge curiosity, to be silent when you receive an affront, and never to do anything through self-love.

17. To perform every spiritual exercise as if it were the last time you were to perform it; and on that account to think frequently on death in your meditations. And when you are in bed, consider that there you will probably one day breathe your last.

18. Not to abandon your usual devotions, or any other good work, through human respect, through aridity or tediousness.

19. Not to complain, in sickness, of the inattention of the physicians or of the other Religious; and to make light of your pains, except when it is necessary to mention them to the physician.

20. To banish melancholy, preserving tranquillity, and a uniform serenity of countenance in all cases. He that wishes what God wishes should never be afflicted.

21. In temptations, to have recourse immedi-

ately and with confidence to Jesus and Mary, and to continue constantly to repeat the names of Jesus and Mary as long as the temptation lasts.

22. To place all your confidence, first, in the passion of Jesus Christ, and then in the intercession of Mary and to ask every day this confidence from God.

23. After a fault, never to give way to disturbance of mind or to diffidence, even though you should relapse several times into the same fault; but instantly to repent of it, and trusting in God, to renew your resolution to correct it.

24. To render good to all who treat you badly, at least by praying to God for them.

25. To answer with meekness all those who offend you by acts or words, and thus to gain them to God.

26. When you are vexed you will do well to remain silent until your mind is composed; otherwise you will commit a thousand faults without perceiving them.

27. If you have to correct another, endeavor to select a time when neither you nor the person to be corrected is agitated; otherwise the correction will do more harm than good.

28. Always to speak well of others and to try to excuse the intention when you can not excuse the action.

29. To assist others to the best of your ability, and particularly those who are opposed to you.

30. Neither to say nor to do anything disagreeable to others, when it is more pleasing to God that you should say or do it. And when you sometimes fail in charity to your neighbor, to ask pardon, or at least to speak to the person with kindness; and always to speak with meekness and in a low tone.

31. To offer to God the affronts which you receive, and not to complain of them to others.

32. To observe punctually the rules of the monastery. St. Francis de Sales used to say that the most austere penance of a Religious is to deny self-will, and to be content that the observance of the Rule be the priest that every moment offers such a sacrifice to God. He would frequently say that the predestination of Religious is closely connected with the love of their Rule. And to Superiors he used to say, that to fulfil their office they should observe the Rule, and see that it be observed by others.

33. To regard even Superiors as the person of Jesus Christ, and therefore to obey them punctually and without delay.

34. To love the most lowly offices. To select the poorest things. To humble yourself even to inferiors. Not to speak of yourself either well or ill; for speaking ill of yourself sometimes foments pride. Not to excuse yourself when reproved, nor even when you are calumniated, unless it is absolutely necessary to prevent scandal to others.

35. To visit the sick, and to assist them according to the best of your ability, particularly those who are abandoned.

36. To say frequently to yourself: I have come to the convent, not to indulge in pleasure, but to suffer; not to lead a life of comfort, but of poverty; not to be honored, but to be despised, not to do my own will, but the will of others.

37. To renew always the purpose to become a saint, and not to lose courage in any state of tepidity in which you may find yourself.

38. To renew every day the vows of your profession.

39. To conform yourself to the divine will in all things opposed to the senses, in sorrows, infirmities, affronts, contradictions, losses of property, death of relatives or of other persons who are dear to you, and to direct all your actions, communions, and other prayers to that end, always asking God to make you love Him, and to fulfil His holy will in all things.

40. To recommend yourself to the prayers of other devout persons; but to recommend yourself more to the saints in heaven, and particularly to the Blessed Virgin, setting a great value on the devotion to the blessed Mother, and endeavoring to infuse it into others.

III. Spiritual Maxims for a Religious

(*From St. Alphonsus*)

Of what use will it be to gain the whole world and to lose one's own soul?

Everything here has an end: but eternity has no end.

All may be lost provided God be not lost.

No sin, however small, is a light evil.

If we desire to please God, we must deny ourselves.

That which is done for our own satisfaction is all loss.

In order to save ourselves we must be in constant fear of falling.

Let me die so that I may please God.

The only evil that we ought to fear is sin. All that God wills is good, and therefore to be desired.

He who desires nothing but God is happy, and contented with everything that happens.

I ought to imagine to myself that there are no others in the world but God and myself.

The whole world can not satisfy our heart; God alone can satisfy it.

All good consists in loving God, and loving God consists in doing His will.

All our riches are in prayer. He who prays obtains everything that he can desire.

Let us consider that day on which we omit our mental prayer. "He who leaves off praying," says St. Teresa, "casts himself into hell of his own accord."

Let us not pass a day without reading some spiritual book.

Points of honor are the plague of spirituality.

To be humble of heart, and not merely in word, it is not sufficient to say that we are deserving of all contempt, but we must also be glad when we are despised. And what has a Christian learned to do, if he can not suffer an affront for God's sake? When you are insulted, take it all cheerfully.

He, who thinks of the hell which he has deserved, finds every trouble easy to bear.

He who loves poverty possesses all things. In the things of this world we must choose the worst; in the things of God we must choose the best.

An obedient soul is the delight of God.

True charity consists in doing good to those who do us evil, and in thus gaining them over.

Of what use are the riches and honors of this world at the hour of death?

It is a great grace of God to be called to His holy love.

God does not leave a single good desire unrewarded.

All inordinate attachment, even to good things, is bad.

Let us be grateful, and first of all to God. Let us, therefore, resolve to deny Him nothing, making choice of those things which are most pleasing to Him.

The most beautiful prayer when in sickness is to unite ourselves to the will of God.

A holy life and pleasures of the senses can not agree.

He who trusts in himself is lost; he who trusts in God can do all things.

What greater delight can a soul have than to know that it is pleasing to God.

God is ready to give Himself to those who leave all for His love.

The only way by which we can become saints is the way of suffering.

It is by aridity and temptations that God tries those who love Him.

No one can be lost who loves God and trusts in Him.

Let us beg of God to give us a tender devotion to His blessed Mother.

He who looks on Jesus crucified suffers everything in peace.

He who loves God most in this world is happiest. All that is not done for God, turns to pain.

No kind of disquietude, although for a good end, comes from God.

It is enough that we do not stand still; we shall arrive in the end.

He who desires only God is rich and happy; he is in want of nothing, and may laugh at the whole world.

Nothing can satisfy one whom God does not satisfy.

God, God, and nothing more.

We must overcome all to gain all.

IV. Maxims for Attaining Perfection

(From St. Alphonsus)

1. Desire ardently to increase in the love of Jesus.
2. Make frequent acts of love toward Jesus.
3. Often meditate on His passion.
4. Always ask Jesus Christ for His love.
5. Communicate often and make frequent spiritual communions during the day.
6. Often visit the Most Holy Sacrament.
7. Receive your own cross from the hands of Jesus every morning.
8. Desire heaven that you may love Jesus Christ perfectly for all eternity.
9. Often speak of the love of Jesus.
10. Accept contradictions for the sake of Jesus.
11. Rejoice in the happiness of God.
12. Seek to do what is most pleasing to Jesus.
13. Desire and endeavor to bring all to the love of Jesus.
14. Pray daily for the conversion of sinners and for the souls in purgatory.
15. Drive from your heart every affection that is not for Jesus.
16. Beg Mary daily to obtain for you the love of Jesus.
17. Honor Mary to please Jesus.
18. Seek to please Jesus in all your actions.
19. Offer to suffer any pain for love of Jesus.

20. Rather die than commit a deliberate venial sin.
21. Suffer crosses patiently, saying, "Thus it pleases Jesus."
22. Renounce your own pleasures for love of Jesus.
23. Pray always.
24. Practise all the mortifications that obedience permits.
25. Perform your spiritual exercises as if it were for the last time.
26. Persevere in good works in time of aridity.
27. Do not act through human respect.
28. Do not complain in sickness.
29. Love solitude, that you may converse alone with Jesus.
30. Drive away melancholy.
31. Frequently recommend yourself to those who love Jesus.
32. In temptations have recourse to Jesus crucified and to Mary sorrowing.
33. Trust entirely in the passion of Jesus.
34. After committing a fault, do not be discouraged, but repent and resolve to amend.
35. Do good to those who do evil.
36. Speak well of all, and excuse if you can, the intention when you can not defend the action.
37. Help your neighbor as much as you can.
38. Never vex your neighbor intentionally. And if you have been wanting in charity, ask his pardon or at least speak kindly to him.
39. Always speak with mildness and in a low tone.
40. Offer to Jesus all the contempts and persecutions you meet with.
41. Consider your Superiors the representatives of God.

42. Obey simply to do God's will.
43. Like the lowest employments.
44. Like the poorest things.
45. Speak neither good nor evil of yourself.
46. Humble yourself even toward inferiors.
47. Remain silent when reprov'd.
48. Do not defend yourself when found fault with.
49. Be silent when disquieted.
50. Frequently renew your determination to become a saint, saying, "My Jesus, I desire to be all Thine, and Thou must be all mine."

V. Devout Aspirations

(From *St. Alphonsus*)

O loving Heart of Jesus! inflame this poor heart of mine.

My Jesus, when shall I begin to love Thee as Thou hast loved me?

My God, when shall I die to everything, to live to Thee alone?

My beloved One, make me love Thee even in sufferings.

Thou hast loved me without reserve; I also will love Thee without reserve.

My Jesus, make Thyself known and loved by all.

My Jesus, grant that I may die, saying, I love Thee, I love Thee.

My God, suffer me not to lose Thee forever. Give me the grace to love Thee, and then do with me what Thou wilt.

At this hour I might have been in hell; but now I love Thee, and hope always to love Thee.

And what else do I wish, O my God! but Thee, who art my chief, my only good?

My Jesus, on the Day of Judgment do not separate me from Thee.

My Jesus, how lovely art Thou, but by how few art Thou loved!

Oh, that I could die of grief every time that I think of having voluntarily lost Thee!

My Jesus, grant me Thy love, and I ask Thee for nothing more.

Thou hast died for me; I wish also to die for Thee.

O death of Jesus, from thee I hope for a good death.

O blood of Jesus, from thee I hope for the pardon of all my sins.

O wounds of Jesus, from you I hope to love Jesus forever.

O agony of Jesus, from thee I hope to bear peacefully the agony of my death.

O sorrows of Jesus, from you I hope for patience in all contradictions.

O scourges of Jesus, deliver me from everlasting despair.

O tears of Mary, obtain for me sorrow for my sins.

My own St. Joseph, by thy happy death obtain for me a good death.

O ye holy apostles! by your blessed death obtain for me the grace to die in the love of God.

And what wish I, either in this life or in the next, but Thee alone, my God?

My Jesus, had I died in sin, I could no more love Thee; now I desire to love Thee, and Thee alone.

My God, I love Thee, and I will love none but Thee.

St. Teresa, St. Philip Neri, my advocates, make me burn with love for Jesus, as you yourself did burn.

My Jesus, by the pain Thou didst endure when Thy left hand was pierced with the nail, give me true sorrow for my sins.

My Jesus, by the pain Thou didst endure when Thy right hand was pierced with the nail, give me perseverance in Thy grace.

My Jesus, by the pain Thou didst endure when Thy left foot was pierced with the nail, deliver me from the pains of hell.

My Jesus, by the pain Thou didst endure when Thy right foot was pierced with the nail, give me the grace to love Thee eternally in heaven.

My Jesus, by the wound that was made in Thy sacred Heart, give me the grace to love Thee always in this life and in the next.

Live, Jesus, our love, and Mary our hope.

HYMN

Mary, Our Hope

(From St. Alphonsus)

Mary, thou art hope the brightest,
 Love most pure and sweet ;
 Life and peace I find reposing
 At thy blessed feet !

When I call on thee, O Mary !
 When I think on thee,
 Joy and pleasure all entrancing
 Fill my heart with glee.

If, anon, the clouds of sadness
 Rise within my heart,
 When they hear thy name, O Mary !
 Straightway they depart.

Like a star on life's dark ocean,
 Shining o'er the wave,
 Thou canst guide my bark to harbor,
 Thou my soul canst save.

Under thy protecting mantle,
 Queen belov'd I fly;
 There I wish to live securely,
 There I hope to die.

If I chance my life to finish
 Mary, loving thee,
 Then I also know, dear Lady,
 Heaven is for me.

Cast thy gentle bonds around me,
 And my heart enchain;
 Prisoner of love forever,
 Safe will I remain.

Thus my heart, O sweetest Mary!
 Is not mine, but thine;
 Take it; give it all to Jesus;
 Ne'er shall it be mine.

Exhortation to Religious to Advance in Perfection

From St. Alphonsus)

God has specially chosen Religious from among the men and women of the world, that they may spread His glory and love Him with a love more particular and pure than that which those bear to Him who live in the world and are occupied in its affairs. To this end has the Lord, by a special vocation, drawn His chosen servants out of the darkness of Egypt, and freed them from the love of the world; and so moved by divine grace, they have consecrated themselves to God by their holy vows, renouncing all the goods that

this world promises and gives to its followers. And therefore it is that any convent of Religious should be considered as a community of individuals, who, detached from every earthly thought, are mindful of nothing but to live only for God, so that God may glory in them and say: "These are all Mine, they are My delight."

But, I ask, can the Lord nowadays say of all Religious, "they are My delight"? Alas! the Church laments, because she sees in many Religious a relaxation of spirit, united with coldness in the service of God. It can not be denied, that amongst so many there are some who live as good Religious, free from worldly attachments, intent on becoming saints and bringing souls to God. There are such, whom I call judges, who shall one day, in the Valley of Josaphat, judge their brethren; but these good Religious, these judges, are, alas, too few!

It is not becoming to my littleness to talk here as a censor, and to note down the defects into which Religious nowadays are inclined to fall; whereby, instead of giving edification by their example, they become the objects of adverse criticism, and give scandal to others. But some one will say: "You who set up as a reformer, tell us what those common defects are. Tell us what we have to do to be good Religious." I answer, I do not pretend to reform the world, and therefore will not undertake to declare in particular the faults which have become common. To you who ask me this, I say only that you know full well what you have to do in order to be good Religious; in your novitiate you were fully instructed by good masters in the practice of the virtues which you had afterward to exercise in religion; that is, obedience, detachment for earthly af-

fections, the love of poverty, the abnegation of yourself, the desire of being humbled, and those other virtues which are necessary to live as a good Religious. But where tepidity and relaxation have crept in, Religious pay less attention to the obligations of their state, and care little about mending their defects.

Oh, would to God that all Religious might preserve at least the half of that good life they began to lead in their novitiate! For the most part, the novices who persevere to make their profession, live in fervor of spirit and give edification; but the evil is, that, after having made their vows, and applied themselves to their labors, they are prone to grow lukewarm, and neglect to preserve the spirit they acquired, and fail to put into execution the good resolutions which they made as novices; so that, as time goes on, they are apt to fall more and more away from it every day, and multiply their faults. When afterward they are appointed to teach others, this relaxation is apt to increase so that they are less solicitous to do anything for the glory of God, but think more of advancing their own interests by pressing on to higher stations, so as then to be able to live a life of less subjection and greater comfort. It was with the best intentions that Religious Orders established the degrees, through which the Religious must advance, in order to promote the good of souls by instructing the ignorant and arousing the lukewarm to fervor. But the misfortune is, that with many Religious the means easily become the end, for as time goes on they are inclined to think less of the good of religion and of souls and more of their own temporal advantage. I protest again that I do not pretend to play the reformer; but I see that from this spirit spring up in the

Religious Orders all kinds of ambition, and in consequence every species of spiritual decay. Hence, I conclude, that it would be much better were the members, after having finished their course, to remain in the same humble degree in which they were when they came out of the novitiate. For then each one would think of fulfilling the duties of his office, not for private ends, but only to accomplish the will of God, and to obey his Superiors. But on becoming teachers they get better quarters and other comforts and gain a certain pre-eminence, and this is the reason why so few Religious make progress in spirit and give to others the edification that they should. Where shall we, generally speaking, nowadays find in Religious the spirit of obedience, of poverty, of mortification, of interior abnegation? where the love of solitude, of a hidden life, the desire of being despised, which we find in the saints?

What would be a remedy for so great an evil? What shall I say? The remedy has to come from heaven, and therefore, we should pray to the Lord that He may in His mercy correct it by His power; because, as the good spirit of Religious communicates itself to seculars, so do they also participate in their relaxation. I for my part, believe that decay in the Religious Orders comes for the most part from the neglect of mental prayer, and this arises from the want of retirement and recollection. Experience shows too well that the more intercourse some persons have with people of the world, the less they desire to have intercourse with God; and the more familiar they become with the world, the more God retires from them. "Willingly would I," said the Lord one day to St. Teresa, "speak to many souls, but the world makes so much noise in their hearts, that my voice

can not be heard." Immersed, as many Religious are, in the affairs of the world, they think little of uniting themselves more closely to God. They would like to get out of the mire of their tepidity, and free themselves from the earthly attachments in which they find themselves entangled; but their passions, which they make no effort to overcome, always draw them downward, and thus they lose the love of mental prayer.

The monks of old gave much time to mental prayer, and in this way they became saints; and, by the edification which they gave, they also sanctified others. But, nowadays, many fail, because they are wanting in the spirit of prayer. Hence Religious are without humility, without detachment from the world, and without love of God; and the love of God being wanting, as a consequence other virtues are wanting also. Let us, then, beseech Jesus Christ, who alone is able to remedy so great an evil; let us beseech Him to infuse into Religious His holy love, and the desire of becoming saints. Let us pray daily in the words of King David: "Turn again, O God of hosts, look down from heaven, and see, and visit this vineyard: and perfect the same which thy right hand hath planted." Amen.

STANDARD CATHOLIC BOOKS

PUBLISHED BY

BENZIGER BROTHERS,

CINCINNATI:
343 MAIN ST.

NEW YORK:
36-38 BARCLAY ST.

CHICAGO:
211-213 MADISON ST.

Books marked *net* are such where ten per cent. must be added for postage. Thus a book advertised at *net* \$1 00 will be sent postpaid on receipt of \$1.10. Books not marked *net* will be sent postpaid on receipt of advertised price.

DOCTRINE, INSTRUCTION, DEVOTION.

ABANDONMENT. CAUSSADE, S.J.	<i>net</i> , 0 50
ADORATION OF BLESSED SACRAMENT. TESNIERE.	<i>net</i> , 1 25
ALPHONSUS LIGUORI, WORKS OF, ST. 22 vols. Each,	<i>net</i> , 1 50
ANECDOTES ILLUSTRATING THE CATECHISM. SPIRAGO.	<i>net</i> , 1 50
ANGLICAN ORDINATIONS. SEMPLE.	<i>net</i> , 0 35
ART OF PROFITING BY OUR FAULTS. TISSOT.	<i>net</i> , 0 50
BIBLE HISTORY.	0 50
BIBLE HISTORY, EXPLANATION. NASH.	<i>net</i> , 1 60
BIBLE STORIES. Paper, 0.10; cloth,	0 20
BIBLE, THE HOLY.	1 00
BOOK OF THE PROFESSED. Vol. I, II & III. Each,	<i>net</i> , 0 75
BOYS' AND GIRLS' MISSION BOOK. By the Redemptorist Fathers.	0 35
BREAD OF LIFE, THE. Complete Communion Book.	<i>net</i> , 0 75
CATECHISM EXPLAINED, THE. SPIRAGO-CLARKE.	<i>net</i> , 2 50
CATHOLIC BELIEF. FAA DI BRUNO. Paper, <i>net</i> , 0.15; cloth,	<i>net</i> , 0 35
CATHOLIC CEREMONIES. DURAND. Paper, <i>net</i> , 0.15; cloth,	<i>net</i> , 0 35
CATHOLIC GIRLS' GUIDE. LASANCE.	<i>net</i> , 1 00
CATHOLIC PRACTICE AT CHURCH AND AT HOME. KLAUDER.	<i>net</i> , 0 40
Paper, <i>net</i> , 0.20; cloth,	0 40
CATHOLIC TEACHING FOR CHILDREN. WRAY.	0 30
CATHOLIC WORSHIP. BRENNAN, LL.D. Paper, 0.20; cloth,	<i>net</i> , 0 35
CEREMONIAL FOR ALTAR BOYS. BRITT, O.S.B.	<i>net</i> , 0 75
CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE DEVOTION. GROU, S.J.	0 60
CHILD OF MARY. Prayer-Book for Children.	<i>net</i> , 2 00
CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS. DEVIVIER.	<i>net</i> , 1 50
CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, SPIRAGO'S METHOD OF.	<i>net</i> , 0 60
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION. O'CONNELL.	<i>net</i> , 0 25
CHRISTIAN FATHER. CRAMER. Paper, <i>net</i> , 0.13; cloth,	<i>net</i> , 0 25
CHRISTIAN MOTHER. CRAMER. Paper, <i>net</i> , 0.13; cloth,	<i>net</i> , 0 10
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL. McFAUL. Paper,	0 05
CONFESSION. Paper,	0 25
CONFESSION AND ITS BENEFITS. GIRARDEY.	0 05
CONFIRMATION. Paper,	<i>net</i> , 0 25
COUNSELS OF ST. ANGELA.	2 00
DEFENCE OF THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS, HENRY VIII.	<i>net</i> , 1 25
O'DONOVAN.	<i>net</i> , 1 25
DEVOTION TO SACRED HEART OF JESUS. NOLDIN, S.J.	<i>net</i> , 1 25
DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR THE SICK-ROOM. KREBS,	<i>net</i> , 1 25
C.S.S.R. Cloth,	<i>net</i> , 1 25
DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS OF ST. ALPHONSUS.	<i>net</i> , 0 40
DEVOTIONS FOR FIRST FRIDAY. HUGUET.	<i>net</i> , 1 50
DIGNITY AND DUTIES OF THE PRIEST. LIGUORI.	<i>net</i> , 1 60
DIVINE GRACE. WIRTH.	<i>net</i> , 1 50
DIVINE OFFICE. LIGUORI.	<i>net</i> , 1 00
EDUCATION OF OUR GIRLS. SHIELDS.	<i>net</i> , 0 25
EPISTLES AND GOSPELS. Large print.	

EUCCHARISTIC CHRIST. TESNIERE.	net, 1 25
EUCCHARISTIC SOUL ELEVATIONS. STADELMAN.	net, 0 50
EXPLANATION OF THE BALTIMORE CATECHISM. KINKEAD.	net, 1 00
EXPLANATION OF THE GOSPELS. LAMBERT. Paper, cloth,	net, 0 35
EXPLANATION OF THE HOLY SACRAMENTS. ILLUSTR.	net, 1 00
EXPLANATION OF THE MASS. COCHEM.	net, 1 25
EXPLANATION OF THE OUR FATHER AND THE HAIL MARY. BRENNAN, LL.D.	net, 0 75
EXPLANATION OF THE PRAYERS AND CEREMONIES OF THE MASS, ILLUSTRATED. LANSLOTS, O.S.B.	net, 1 25
EXPLANATION OF THE SALVE REGINA. LIGUORI.	net, 0 75
EXTREME UNCTION. Paper,	0 10
FIRST COMMUNICANT'S MANUAL.	0 50
FLOWERS OF THE PASSION. TH. DE JESUS-AGONISANT.	0 50
FOLLOWING OF CHRIST. KEMPIS.	
With Reflections,	0 50
Without Reflections,	0 45
Edition de Luxe,	1 25
FOUR LAST THINGS, THE. Meditations. COCHEM.	net, 0 75
GARLAND OF PRAYER. With Nuptial Mass. Leather.	0 90
GENERAL CONFESSION MADE EASY. KONINGS, C.S.S.R. Flexible.	0 15
GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS LIFE. VERHEYEN, O.S.B.	0 30
GIFT OF THE KING.	0 60
GLORIES OF DIVINE GRACE. SCHEEBEN.	net, 1 60
GLORIES OF MARY. LIGUORI. 2 vols.	net, 3 00
Popular ed. 1 vol.	net, 1 25
GLORIES OF THE SACRED HEART. HAUSHERR, S.J.	net, 1 25
GOFFINE'S DEVOUT INSTRUCTIONS. 140 Illustrations. Cloth,	1 00
GOLDEN SANDS. Little Counsels for the Sanctification and Happiness of Daily Life. Third, Fourth and Fifth Series. Each,	net, 0 50
GREAT ENCYCLICAL LETTERS OF POPE LEO XIII.	net, 2 25
GREAT MEANS OF SALVATION. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
GREAT SUPPER OF GOD. THE. COUBE, S.J.	net, 1 25
GREETINGS OF THE CHRIST-CHILD—Poems.	0 60
GUIDE FOR SACRISTANS.	net, 0 85
GUIDE TO CONFESSION AND COMMUNION.	net, 0 50
HANDBOOK OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. WILMERS, S.J.	net, 1 50
HARMONY OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. HEUSER.	net, 1 25
HELP FOR THE POOR SOULS IN PURGATORY.	net, 0 50
HELPS TO A SPIRITUAL LIFE. SCHNEIDER, S.J.	net, 1 25
HIDDEN TREASURE. St. LEONARD of Port Maurice.	net, 0 50
HISTORY OF ECONOMICS. DEWE.	net, 1 50
HISTORY OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN THE U. S. BURNS.	net, 1 25
HISTORY OF THE MASS. O'BRIEN.	net, 1 25
HOLY EUCHARIST. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
HOLY HOUR OF ADORATION. STANG.	net, 0 50
HOLY MASS. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
HOW TO COMFORT THE SICK. KREBS, C.S.S.R.	net, 1 25
HOW TO MAKE THE MISSION. By a Dominican Father. Paper,	0 10
ILLUSTRATED PRAYER-BOOK FOR CHILDREN.	0 35
IMITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY. BENNETT-GLADSTONE.	
Plain Edition.	net, 0 50
Edition de luxe,	net, 1 50
IMITATION OF THE SACRED HEART. ARNOUDT, S.J.	net, 1 25
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, THE. LAMMING, LL.D.	0 35
INCARNATION, BIRTH, AND INFANCY OF CHRIST. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
INDULGENCES. A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO. BERNAD, O.M.I.	net, 0 75
IN HEAVEN WE KNOW OUR OWN. BLOT, S.J.	net, 0 60
INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CATHOLIC FATHER. EGGER.	net, 0 50
INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CATHOLIC MOTHER. EGGER.	net, 0 50
INSTRUCTIONS FOR CATHOLIC YOUTH.	net, 0 50
INSTRUCTIONS FOR FIRST COMMUNICANTS. SCHMITT.	net, 0 60
INSTRUCTIONS ON COMMANDMENTS AND SACRAMENTS. LIGUORI. Paper, cloth,	net, 0 25
INTERIOR OF JESUS AND MARY. GROU. 2 vols.	net, 2 00
INTRODUCTION TO A DEVOUT LIFE. St. FRANCIS DE SALES.	net, 0 50
LESSONS OF THE KING.	0 60
LETTERS OF ST. ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI. 4 vols., each vol.,	net, 1 50

LIGHT FOR NEW TIMES. FLETCHER.	net,	0 60
LITTLE ALTAR BOYS' MANUAL.		0 25
LITTLE BOOK OF SUPERIORS.	net,	0 75
LITTLE CHILD OF MARY. A Small Prayer-Book.		0 35
LITTLE MANUAL OF ST. ANTHONY. LASANCE. Illustrated.		0 25
LITTLE MANUAL OF ST. JOSEPH. LINGS.		0 25
LITTLE MONTH OF MAY. McMAHON. Flexible.	net,	0 25
LITTLE MONTH OF THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.	net,	0 25
LITTLE OFFICE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.		0 05
LITTLE PICTORIAL LIVES OF THE SAINTS. New cheap edition.		1 25
LOVER OF SOULS, THE. BRINKMEYER.	net,	1 00
MANUAL OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST. LASANCE.	net,	0 75
MANUAL OF THE HOLY FAMILY.	net,	0 60
MANUAL OF THE HOLY NAME.		0 50
MANUAL OF THE SACRED HEART, NEW.		0 50
MANUAL OF ST. ANTHONY, NEW.	net,	0 50
MANUAL OF THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY. GEIERMANN.		
Paper, net, 0.20; cloth,	net,	0 40
MARIAE COROLLA. Poems. HILL.	net,	1 25
MARY THE QUEEN.		0 60
MASS DEVOTIONS AND READINGS ON THE MASS. LASANCE.	net,	0 75
MEDITATIONS FOR ALL DAYS OF YEAR. HAMON, S.S. 5 vols.	net,	5 00
MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY. BAXTER.	net,	1 50
MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY. VERCROYSSSE, S.J. 2 vols.	net,	3 50
MEDITATIONS FOR MONTHLY RETREATS.	net,	1 25
MEDITATIONS FOR USE OF SECULAR CLERGY. CHAIGNON.	net,	4 50
MEDITATIONS FOR THE USE OF SEMINARIANS AND PRIESTS. Vol. I. BRANCHEREAU.	net,	1 00
MEDITATIONS FOR RETREATS. ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.	net,	0 75
MEDITATIONS ON THE LIFE, THE TEACHINGS, AND THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST. ILG-CLARKE. 2 vols.	net,	3 50
MEDITATIONS ON THE MONTH OF OUR LADY.	net,	0 75
MEDITATIONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD.	net,	0 50
METHOD OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, SPIRAGO'S. MESSMER.	net,	1 50
MIRACLES OF OUR LORD.		0 60
MISCELLANY. LIGUORI.	net,	1 50
MISSION BOOK FOR THE MARRIED. GIRARDEY, C.S.S.R.		0 50
MISSION BOOK FOR THE SINGLE. GIRARDEY, C.S.S.R.		0 50
MISSION BOOK OF REDEMPTORIST FATHERS. LIGUORI.		0 50
MOMENTS BEFORE THE TABERNACLE. RUSSELL, S.J.	net,	0 50
MONTH, NEW, OF THE HOLY ANGELS. ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.	net,	0 25
MONTH OF MAY. DEBUSSI, S.J.	net,	0 50
MONTH OF THE SOULS IN PURGATORY, The Little "Golden Sands."	net,	0 25
MORAL BRIEFS. STAPLETON.	net,	1 25
MORES CATHOLICI; or, Ages of Faith. DIGBY. 4 vols.		25 00
(Easy payment plan, \$1.00 down; \$2.00 a month.)		
MOST HOLY ROSARY. CRAMER, D.D.	net,	0 50
MY FIRST COMMUNION, the Happiest Day of My Life. BRENNAN.	net,	0 75
MY LITTLE PRAYER-BOOK. Illustrated.		0 12
NEW MONTH OF THE HOLY ANGELS.	net,	0 25
NEW SUNDAY-SCHOOL COMPANION.		0 25
NEW TESTAMENT. Cheap Edition.		
32mo, flexible cloth,	net,	0 15
NEW TESTAMENT. Illustrated Edition.		
16mo, printed in two colors, with 100 full-page illustrations,	net,	0 60
NEW TESTAMENT. India Paper Edition.		
American Seal, limp, round corners, gilt edges,	net,	0 90
NEW TESTAMENT. Large Print Edition.		
12mo, large,	net,	0 75
NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES. CONATY, D.D.		0 60
OFF TO JERUSALEM. BENZIGER.	net,	1 00
OFFICE, COMPLETE, OF HOLY WEEK.		0 45
Cheap Edition, cloth, cut flush,		0 20
OUR FAVORITE DEVOTIONS. LINGS.	net,	0 75
OUR FAVORITE NOVENAS. LINGS.	net,	0 75
OUR MONTHLY DEVOTIONS. LINGS.	net,	1 25
OUR OWN WILL. ALLEN, D.D.	net,	0 75
PARADISE ON EARTH OPENED TO ALL. NATALE, S.J.	net,	0 50

PARISH PRIEST ON DUTY, THE. HEUSER.	net, 0 60
PASSION, A FEW SIMPLE AND BUSINESS-LIKE WAYS OF DEVOTION TO THE. HILL, C.P.	0 25
PASSION AND DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
PASSION FLOWERS. Poems. HILL.	net, 1 25
PASSION, THOUGHTS AND AFFECTIONS ON, FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR. BERGAMO.	net, 2 00
PEARLS FROM FABER. BRUNOWE.	net, 0 50
PEARLS OF PRAYER.	0 35
PERFECT RELIGIOUS, THE. DE LA MOTTE.	net, 1 00
PIOUS PREPARATION FOR FIRST HOLY COMMUNION. LASANCE. Cloth,	net, 0 75
POCKET MANUAL. A Vest-Pocket Prayer-Book in very large type. POPULAR INSTRUCTIONS ON MARRIAGE. GIRARDEY, C.S.S.R.	0 25
Paper, net, 0.13; cloth,	net, 0 25
POPULAR INSTRUCTIONS ON PRAYER. GIRARDEY, C.S.S.R.	net, 0 25
Paper, net, 0.13; cloth,	net, 0 25
POPULAR INSTRUCTIONS TO PARENTS. GIRARDEY, C.S.S.R.	net, 0 25
Paper, net, 0.13; cloth,	net, 0 25
PRAYER-BOOK FOR RELIGIOUS. LASANCE.	net, 1 50
PREACHING. Vol. XV. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
PREPARATION FOR DEATH. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
QUEEN'S FESTIVALS.	0 60
RELIGION OF SOCIALISM, THE CHARACTERISTICS AND. MING, S.J.	net, 1 50
RELIGIOUS STATE, THE. LIGUORI.	net, 0 50
ROSARY, THE CROWN OF MARY. By a Dominican Father.	0 10
ROSARY, THE. Scenes and Thoughts. GARESCHÉ, S.J.	net, 0 50
ROSARY, THE MOST HOLY. Meditations. CRAMER.	net, 0 50
SACRAMENTALS. LAMBING, D.D. Paper, net, 0.15; cloth,	net, 0 35
SACRAMENTALS—Prayer, etc. MÜLLER, C.S.S.R.	net, 1 00
SACRED HEART BOOK, THE. LASANCE.	net, 0 75
SACRED HEART, DEVOTION TO, FOR FIRST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH. By PERE HUGUET.	net, 0 40
SACRED HEART, NEW MANUAL OF.	0 50
SACRIFICE OF MASS WORTHILY CELEBRATED. CHAIGNON, S.J.	net, 1 50
ST. ANTHONY. KELLER.	net, 0 75
ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI. Social Reformer. DUBOIS, S.M.	net, 1 00
SECRET OF SANCTITY. St. FRANCIS DE SALES.	net, 1 00
SERAPHIC GUIDE, THE. A Manual for the Members of the Third Order of St. Francis. By a Franciscan Father.	0 60
SHORT CONFERENCES ON THE LITTLE OFFICE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION. RAINER.	net, 0 50
SHORT STORIES ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. From the French by McMAHON.	net, 1 00
SHORT VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT. LASANCE.	0 25
SICK CALLS. MULLIGAN.	net, 1 00
SOCIALISM AND CHRISTIANITY. STANG, D.D.	net, 1 00
SOCIALISM. CATHREIN, S.J.	net, 1 50
SODALIST'S VADE MECUM.	0 50
SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE, THE. GIRAUD.	net, 2 00
SPIRITUAL DESPONDENCY AND TEMPTATIONS. MICHEL, S.J.	net, 1 25
SPIRITUAL EXERCISES FOR TEN DAYS' RETREAT. SMETANA.	net, 1 00
SPIRITUAL PEPPER AND SALT. STANG. Paper, net, 0.20; cloth,	net, 0 40
ST. ANTHONY. KELLER.	net, 0 75
ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI. Social Reformer. DUBOIS, S.M.	net, 1 50
STORY OF THE FRIENDS OF JESUS.	0 60
STORIES FOR FIRST COMMUNICANTS. KELLER, D.D.	0 50
STRIVING AFTER PERFECTION. BAYMA, S.J.	net, 1 00
SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS.	net, 0 75
SURE WAY TO A HAPPY MARRIAGE. TAYLOR. Paper, net, 0.13; cloth,	net, 0 25
TALKS WITH LITTLE ONES ABOUT APOSTLES' CREED.	0 60
THOUGHTS ON THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. LASANCE.	net, 1 50
TRUE POLITENESS. DEMORE.	net, 0 75
TRUE SPOUSE OF JESUS CHRIST. LIGUORI. 2 vols.	net, 3 00
The same, one-volume edition,	net, 1 25

VENERATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN. ROHNER, O.S.B.	net, 1 25
VEST-POCKET GEMS OF DEVOTION.	0 20
VICTORIES OF THE MARTYRS. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
VISITS, SHORT, TO BLESSED SACRAMENT. LASANCE.	0 25
VISITS TO JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT. LASANCE.	net, 0 50
VISITS TO JESUS IN THE TABERNACLE. LASANCE.	net, 1 25
VISITS TO THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT and to the Blessed Virgin Mary. LIGUORI.	net, 0 50
VOCATIONS EXPLAINED.	0 10
WAY OF INTERIOR PEACE. DE LEHEN, S.J.	net, 1 50
WAY OF SALVATION AND PERFECTION. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
WAY OF THE CROSS. Paper,	0 05
WAY OF THE CROSS. By a Jesuit Father.	net, 0 15
WAY OF THE CROSS. According to Method of St. Francis Assisi.	net, 0 15
WAY OF THE CROSS. According to Eucharistic Method.	net, 0 15
WAY OF THE CROSS. According to Method of St. Alphonsus Liguori.	net, 0 15
WHAT THE CHURCH TEACHES. DRURY. Paper, net, 0.20; cloth,	net, 0 40

JUVENILES.

ADVENTURE WITH THE APACHES. FERRY.	0 45
ARMORER OF SOLINGEN. HERCHENBACH.	0 45
AS TRUE AS GOLD. MANNIX.	0 45
BELL FOUNDRY, THE. VON SCHACHING.	0 45
BERKELEYS, THE. WIGHT.	0 45
BEARNE, REV. DAVID, S.J.	
SHEER PLUCK.	0 85
MELOR OF THE SILVER HAND.	0 85
THE GUILD BOYS' PLAY AT RIDINGDALE.	0 85
NEW BOYS AT RIDINGDALE.	0 85
THE WITCH OF RIDINGDALE.	0 85
RIDINGDALE FLOWER SHOW.	0 85
CHARLIE CHITTYWICK.	0 85
BISTOURI. By A. MELANDRI.	0 45
BLACK LADY AND ROBIN RED BREAST. By CANON SCHMID.	0 25
BLISSYLVANIA POST-OFFICE. By MARION AMES TAGGART.	0 45
BOB O'LINK. WAGGAMAN.	0 45
BOYS IN THE BLOCK. By MAURICE F. EGAN.	0 25
BUNT AND BILL. CLARA MULHOLLAND.	0 45
BUZZER'S CHRISTMAS. By MARY T. WAGGAMAN.	0 25
BY BRANSCOMBE RIVER. By MARION AMES TAGGART.	0 45
CAKE AND THE EASTER EGGS. By CANON SCHMID.	0 25
CANARY BIRD. By CANON SCHMID.	0 45
CARROLL DARE. By MARY T. WAGGAMAN.	1 25
THE CHILDREN OF CUPA. MANNIX.	0 45
COLLEGE BOY, A. By ANTHONY YORKE.	0 85
COPUS, REV. J. E., S.J.:	
HARRY RUSSELL.	0 85
SHADOWS LIFTED.	0 85
ST. CUTHBERT'S.	0 85
TOM LOSELY: Boy.	0 85
DADDY DAN. WAGGAMAN.	0 45
DAUGHTER OF KINGS, A. HINKSON.	1 25
DIMPLING'S SUCCESS. By CLARA MULHOLLAND.	0 45
DOLLAR HUNT, THE. MARTIN.	0 45
DOUBLE KNOT AND OTHER STORIES, A. WAGGAMAN AND OTHERS.	1 25
EVERY-DAY GIRL, AN. By MARY C. CROWLEY.	0 45
FATAL DIAMONDS. By E. C. DONNELLY.	0 25
FINN, REV. F. J., S.J.	
HIS FIRST AND LAST APPEARANCE. Illustrated.	1 00
THE BEST FOOT FORWARD.	0 85
THAT FOOTBALL GAME.	0 85
ETHELRED PRESTON.	0 85
CLAUDE LIGHTFOOT.	0 85
HARRY DEE.	0 85
TOM PLAYFAIR.	0 85

FINN, REV. F. J., S.J. (Cont'd.)	
PERCY WYNN.	0 85
MOSTLY BOYS.	0 85
"BUT THY LOVE AND THY GRACE."	1 00
MY STRANGE FRIEND.	0 25
FIVE O'CLOCK STORIES; or, The Old Tales Told Again.	0 75
FLOWER OF THE FLOCK, THE, and the Badgers of Belmont. EGAN.	0 85
FOR THE WHITE ROSE. HINKSON.	0 45
FRED'S LITTLE DAUGHTER. SMITH.	0 45
GODFREY THE HERMIT. SCHMID.	0 25
GOLDEN LILY, THE. HINKSON.	0 45
GREAT CAPTAIN, THE. HINKSON.	0 45
HALDEMAN CHILDREN, THE. MANNIX.	0 45
HARMONY FLATS. WHITMIRE.	0 85
HEIR OF DREAMS, AN. O'MALLEY.	0 45
HOP BLOSSOMS. SCHMID.	0 25
HOSTAGE OF WAR, A. BONESTEEL.	0 45
HOW THEY WORKED THEIR WAY. EGAN.	0 75
INUNDATION, THE. SCHMID.	0 45
"JACK." By a Religious of The Society of The Holy Child Jesus.	0 45
JACK HILDRETH AMONG THE INDIANS. 2 vols., each,	0 85
JACK HILDRETH ON THE NILE. TAGGART. Cloth,	0 85
JACK O'LANTERN. WAGGAMAN.	0 45
JUVENILE ROUND TABLE. First, Second, Third Series. Each,	1 00
KLONDIKE PICNIC. DONNELLY.	0 85
LAMP OF THE SANCTUARY. WISEMAN.	0 25
LEGENDS OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS from Many Lands. Lutz.	0 75
LITTLE MISSY. WAGGAMAN.	0 45
LOYAL BLUE AND ROYAL SCARLET. TAGGART.	0 85
MADCAP SET AT ST. ANNE'S. BRUNOWE.	0 45
MARY TRACY'S FORTUNE. SADLIER.	0 45
MASTER FRIDOLIN. GIEHRL.	0 25
MILLY AVELING. SMITH. Cloth,	0 85
MORE FIVE O'CLOCK STORIES. In Prose and Verse. By a Religious of The Society of The Holy Child Jesus.	0 75
MYSTERIOUS DOORWAY. SADLIER.	0 45
MYSTERY OF CLEVERLY. BARTON.	0 85
MYSTERY OF HORNBY HALL. SADLIER.	0 85
MY STRANGE FRIEND. FINN.	0 25
NAN NOBODY. WAGGAMAN.	0 45
OLD CHARLMONT'S SEED-BED. SMITH.	0 45
OLD ROBBER'S CASTLE. SCHMID.	0 25
ONE AFTERNOON AND OTHER STORIES. TAGGART.	1 25
OUR BOYS' AND GIRLS' LIBRARY. 14 vols., each,	0 25
OVERSEER OF MAHLBOURG. SCHMID.	0 25
PANCHO AND PANCHITA. MANNIX.	0 45
PAULINE ARCHER. SADLIER.	0 45
PETRONILLA. DONNELLY.	0 85
PICKLE AND PEPPER. DORSEY.	0 85
PILGRIM FROM IRELAND. CARNOT.	0 45
PLAYWATER PLOT, THE. WAGGAMAN.	0 60
QUEEN'S PAGE. HINKSON.	0 45
RECRUIT TOMMY COLLINS. BONESTEEL.	0 45
ROSE BUSH. SCHMID.	0 25
ROUND THE WORLD. Vols. I, II, III, IV. Each,	0 85
SEA-GULL'S ROCK. SANDEAU.	0 45
SHADOWS LIFTED. COPUS, S.J.	0 85
SPALDING, REV. H., S.J.:	
THE MARKS OF THE BEAR CLAWS.	0 85
CAVE BY THE BEECH FORK.	0 85
THE SHERIFF OF THE BEECH FORK.	0 85
THE RACE FOR COPPER ISLAND.	0 85
STRONG-ARM OF AVALON. WAGGAMAN.	0 85
SUMMER AT WOODVILLE. SADLIER.	0 45
TALES AND LEGENDS OF THE MIDDLE AGES. DE CAPELLA.	0 75
TALISMAN, THE. SADLIER.	0 60
TAMING OF POLLY. DORSEY.	0 85
THREE GIRLS AND ESPECIALLY ONE. TAGGART.	0 45
THREE LITTLE KINGS. GIEHRL.	0 25

TOM'S LUCKPOT. WAGGAMAN.	0 45
TOORALLADY. WALSH.	0 45
TRANSPLANTING OF TESSIE. WAGGAMAN.	0 60
TREASURE OF NUGGET MOUNTAIN. TAGGART.	0 85
TWO LITTLE GIRLS. MACK.	0 45
VIOLIN MAKER, THE. SMITH.	0 45
WAGER OF GERALD O'ROURKE, THE. FINN-THIELE.	<i>net</i> , 0 35
WAYWARD WINIFRED. SADLIER.	0 85
WHERE THE ROAD LED AND OTHER STORIES. SADLIER and others.	1 25
WINNETOU, THE APACHE KNIGHT. TAGGART.	0 85
WRONGFULLY ACCUSED. HERCHENBACH.	0 45
YOUNG COLOR GUARD, THE. BONESTEEL.	0 45

NOVELS AND STORIES.

"BUT THY LOVE AND THY GRACE." FINN, S.J.	1 00
CARROLL DARE. WAGGAMAN.	1 25
CIRCUS RIDER'S DAUGHTER, THE. BRACKEL.	1 25
CONNOR D'ARCY'S STRUGGLES. BERTHOLDS.	1 25
CORINNE'S VOW. WAGGAMAN.	1 25
DION AND THE SIBYLS. KEON.	1 25
FABIOLA. WISEMAN. Illustrated.	0 90
FABIOLA'S SISTER. CLARKE.	1 25
FATAL BEACON, THE. BRACKEL.	1 25
HEARTS OF GOLD. EDHOR.	1 25
HEIRESS OF CRONENSTEIN, THE. Countess HAHN-HAHN.	1 25
HER BLIND FOLLY. HOLT.	1 25
HER FATHER'S DAUGHTER. HINKSON.	<i>net</i> , 1 25
IDOLS; or, The Secrets of the Rue Chaussee d'Antin. DE NAVERY.	1 25
IN THE DAYS OF KING HAL. TAGGART.	<i>net</i> , 1 25
IN GOD'S GOOD TIME. ROSS.	1 25
"KIND HEARTS AND CORONETS." HARRISON.	1 25
LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER. MARIÉ.	1 00
LINKED LIVES. DOUGLAS.	1 50
MARCELLA GRACE. MULHOLLAND. Illustrated Edition.	1 25
MIRROR OF SHALOTT. BENSON.	<i>net</i> , 1 25
MISS ERIN. FRANCIS.	1 25
MONK'S PARDON, THE. DE NAVERY.	1 25
MR. BILLY BUTTONS. LECKY.	1 25
"NOT A JUDGMENT." KEON.	1 25
OTHER MISS LISLE, THE. MARTIN.	1 25
OUT OF BONDAGE. HOLT.	1 25
OUTLAW OF CAMARGUE, THE. LAMOTHE.	1 25
PASSING SHADOWS. YORKE.	1 25
PERE MONNIER'S WARD. LECKY.	1 25
PILKINGTON HEIR, THE. SADLIER.	1 25
PRODIGAL'S DAUGHTER, THE. By LELIA HARDIN BUGG.	1 00
RED INN OF ST. LYPHAR, THE. A Romance of La Vendée. SADLIER.	1 25
ROMANCE OF A PLAYWRIGHT. By Vte. HENRI DE BORNIER.	1 00
ROSE OF THE WORLD. MARTIN.	1 25
ROUND TABLE OF AMERICAN CATHOLIC NOVELISTS. Complete Stories, with Biographies, Portraits, etc.	1 50
ROUND TABLE OF FRENCH CATHOLIC NOVELISTS. Complete Stories, with Biographies, Portraits, etc.	1 50
ROUND TABLE OF GERMAN CATHOLIC NOVELISTS. Illustrated.	1 50
ROUND TABLE OF IRISH AND ENGLISH CATHOLIC NOVELISTS. Complete Stories, Biographies, Portraits, etc. Cloth,	1 50
RULER OF THE KINGDOM, THE, and other Phases of Life and Character. KEON.	1 25
SECRET OF THE GREEN VASE. COOKE.	1 25
SENIOR LIEUTENANT'S WAGER.	1 25
SOGGARTH AROON. GUINAN, C.C.	1 25
THAT MAN'S DAUGHTER. ROSS.	1 25
TRAIL OF THE DRAGON.	1 25
TRAINING OF SILAS, THE. DEVINE, S.J.	1 25
TRUE STORY OF MASTER GERARD, THE. SADLIER.	1 25
UNRAVELING OF A TANGLE, THE. TAGGART.	1 25
VOCATION OF EDWARD CONWAY. EGAN.	1 26

WAY THAT LED BEYOND. By J. HARRISON.	1 25
WHEN LOVE IS STRONG. KEON.	1 25
WOMAN OF FORTUNE, A. By CHRISTIAN REID.	1 25
WORLD WELL LOST. By ESTHER ROBERTSON.	0 75

LIVES AND HISTORIES.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA. Edited by O'CONNOR, S.J.	net, 1 25
ANGLICAN ORDINATIONS. SEMPLE, S.J.	net, 0 35
BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIANITY. SHAHAN.	net, 2 00
CHURCH HISTORY. BUSINGER.	0 75
GOLDEN BELLS IN CONVENT TOWERS.	net, 1 00
HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. BRUECK. 2 vols.,	net, 3 00
HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. SHEA.	net, 1 50
HISTORY OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION. COBBETT.	net, 0 75
LIFE OF BLESSED VIRGIN. Illustrated. ROHNER.	net, 1 25
LIFE OF CHRIST. Illustrated. COCHEM.	net, 1 25
LIFE OF POPE PIUS X.	2 00
LIFE OF MOST REV. JOHN HUGHES. BRANN.	net, 0 75
LIFE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST AND OF HIS VIRGIN MOTHER MARY. BRENNAN. 4to.	net, 10 00
(Easy payment plan, \$1.00 down, \$1.00 a month.)	
LIFE OF SISTER ANNE KATHERINE EMMERICH. WEGENER, O.S.A.	net, 1 75
LIFE OF VEN. MARY CRESCENTIA HOESS. DEGMAN, O.S.F.	net, 1 25
LITTLE LIVES OF SAINTS FOR CHILDREN. BERTHOLD. Ill. Cloth,	0 60
LITTLE PICTORIAL LIVES OF SAINTS. New, cheap edition.	1 25
LOURDES. CLARKE, S.J.	1 00
MIDDLE AGES, THE. SHAHAN.	net, 2 00
PATRON SAINTS FOR CATHOLIC YOUTH. 3 vols. Each,	0 60
PICTORIAL LIVES OF THE SAINTS.	net, 2 00
ST. ANTHONY, THE SAINT OF THE WHOLE WORLD. Ward. Cloth,	net, 0 75
STORY OF JESUS. Illustrated.	net, 0 60
STORY OF THE DIVINE CHILD. LINGS.	0 60
VICTORIES OF THE MARTYRS. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50

THEOLOGY, LITURGY, SERMONS, SCIENCE, AND PHILOSOPHY.

ANGLICAN ORDINATIONS. SEMPLE, S.J.	0 35
BENEDICENDA. SCHULTE.	net, 1 50
BREVE COMPENDIUM THEOLOGIAE. BERTHIER.	net, 2 50
BUSINESS GUIDE FOR PRIESTS. STANG.	net, 1 00
CANONICAL PROCEDURE. DOSTE.	net, 1 50
CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS. DEVIVIER.	net, 2 00
CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY: God. DRISCOLL.	net, 1 50
CHRIST IN TYPE AND PROPHECY. MAAS, S.J. 2 vols.,	net, 4 00
CHURCH TREASURER'S PEW COLLECTION AND RECEIPT BOOK.	net, 1 00
COMPENDIUM JURIS CANONICI. SMITH.	net, 2 00
COMPENDIUM JURIS REGULARIUM. BACHOFEN.	net, 2 50
COMPENDIUM SACRAE LITURGIAE. WAPELHORST.	net, 2 50
CONSECRANDA. SCHULTE.	net, 1 50
DATA OF MODERN ETHICS EXAMINED. MING, S.J.	2 00
DIARY, ORDO AND NOTE-BOOK. Cloth, net, 1.00; flexible leather,	net, 1 50
ELEMENTS OF ECCLESIASTICAL LAW. SMITH, D.D. 3 vols., each,	net, 2 50
GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF HOLY SCRIPTURES. GIGOT, S.S.	net, 2 50
GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF HOLY SCRIPTURES. Abridged Edition. GIGOT, S.S.	net, 1 50
GOD KNOWABLE AND KNOWN. RONAYNE, S.J.	net, 1 50
GOOD CHRISTIAN, THE. ALLEN, D.D. 2 vols.	net, 5 00

HISTORY OF THE MASS AND ITS CEREMONIES IN THE EASTERN AND WESTERN CHURCH. O'BRIEN.	net, 1 25
HUNOLT'S SERMONS. 12 vols.,	net, 25 00
INTRODUCTION TO STUDY OF OLD TESTAMENT. Vol. I and II. GIGOT. Each,	net, 1 50
JESUS LIVING IN THE PRIEST. MILLET-BYRNE.	net, 2 00
LIBER STATUS ANIMARUM; or Parish Census Book. Pocket Edition, net, 0.25; Large Edition, half-leather,	net, 3 00
MARRIAGE PROCESS IN THE UNITED STATES. SMITH.	net, 2 50
MANUAL OF THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY. GEIERMANN.	net, 0 40
Paper, net, 0.20; cloth,	net, 1 00
MEDULLA FUNDAMENTALIS THEOLOGIAE MORALIS. STANG.	net, 1 00
MORAL PRINCIPLES AND MEDICAL PRACTICE. COPPENS, S.J.	net, 1 00
NATURAL LAW AND LEGAL PRACTICE. HOLAIND, S.J.	net, 2 00
OUTLINES OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY. HUNTER, S.J. 3 vols.,	net, 1 50
OUTLINES OF NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY. GIGOT. Cloth.	net, 1 50
OUTLINES OF SERMONS. SCHUEN.	net, 2 00
PASTORAL THEOLOGY. STANG, D.D.	net, 1 50
PHILOSOPHIA MORALI, DE. RUSSO.	net, 2 00
POLITICAL AND MORAL ESSAYS. RICKABY, S.J.	net, 1 50
PRAXIS SYNODALIS.	net, 0 75
PRIEST IN THE PULPIT. SCHUECH-LUEBBERMANN.	net, 1 50
REGISTRUM BAPTISMORUM.	net, 3 50
REGISTRUM MATRIMONIORUM.	net, 3 00
RELATION OF EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY TO PHILOSOPHY. DE MERCIER.	net, 0 35
RIGHTS OF OUR LITTLE ONES. CONWAY, S.J. Paper,	0 10
RITUALE COMPENDIOSUM.	net, 0 90
SANCTUARY BOYS' ILLUSTRATED MANUAL. MCCALLEN, S.S.	net, 0 50
SERMONS, ABRIDGED, FOR SUNDAYS. LIGUORI.	net, 1 25
SERMONS FOR CHILDREN OF MARY. CALLERIO.	net, 1 50
SERMONS FOR CHILDREN'S MASSES. FRASSINETTI-LINGS.	net, 1 50
SERMONS FOR THE SUNDAYS AND CHIEF FESTIVALS OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR. POTTGEISSER, S.J. 2 vols.	net, 2 50
SERMONS FROM THE LATIN. BAXTER.	net, 2 00
SERMONS ON DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART. BIERRBAUM.	net, 0 75
SERMONS ON THE BLESSED SACRAMENT. SCHEUER-LASANCE.	net, 1 50
SERMONS ON THE ROSARY. FRINGS.	net, 1 00
SHORT SERMONS FOR LOW MASSES. SCHOUPPE, S.J.	net, 1 25
THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THE CONFESSIONAL. SHIELER.	3 50
VADE MECUM SACERDOTUM. Cloth, net, 0.25; Morocco,	net, 0 50

MISCELLANEOUS.

ACROSS WIDEST AMERICA. DEVINE, S.J.	net, 1 50
BENZIGER'S MAGAZINE. The Popular Catholic Family Magazine.	2 00
Subscription per year,	0 50
BONE RULES; or, Skeleton of English Grammar. TABB.	0 25
CATHOLIC HOME ANNUAL. Stories by Best Writers.	net, 0 75
CORRECT THING FOR CATHOLICS. BUGG.	net, 0 50
ELOCUTION CLASS. O'GRADY.	net, 0 75
GENTLEMAN, A. EGAN.	net, 1 00
HOW TO GET ON. FEENEY.	0 35
HYMN-BOOK.	net, 0 75
LADY, A. Manners and Usages. BUGG.	0 10
LITTLE FOLKS' ANNUAL.	net, 0 50
READINGS AND RECITATIONS FOR JUNIORS. O'GRADY.	3.00, 4.00, 6 00
RECORD OF BAPTISMS. 14x10 inches, 3 styles.	3.00, 4.00, 6 00
RECORD OF MARRIAGES. 14x10 inches. 3 styles.	3.00, 4.00, 6 00
SELECT RECITATIONS FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES. O'GRADY.	1 00
SONGS AND SONNETS. EGAN.	1 00
SURSUM CORDA. Hymns. Paper, 0.15; cloth,	0 25

SURSUM CORDA. With English and German Text. 0 45
 VISIT TO EUROPE AND THE HOLY LAND. FAIRBANKS. 1 50
 WHAT CATHOLICS HAVE DONE FOR SCIENCE. BRENNAN. *net*, 1 25
 PRAYER BOOKS.

Benziger Brothers publish the most complete line of prayer-books in this country, embracing Prayer-books for Children; Prayer-books for First Communicants; Prayer-books for Special Devotions; Prayer-books for General Use. Catalogue will be sent free on application.

SCHOOL-BOOKS.

Benziger Brothers' school text-books are considered to be the finest published. They embrace New Century Catholic Readers (Illustrations in Colors); Catholic National Readers; Catechisms; History; Grammars; Spellers; Elocution; Charts.

A HOME LIBRARY FOR \$1 DOWN.

*Original American Stories for the Young, by the
 Very Best Catholic Authors.*

20 COPYRIGHTED BOOKS and a YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION to
 BENZIGER'S MAGAZINE (in itself a library of good reading.)

Regular Price of Books, . . .	\$11.70	} Regular Price,	\$13.70
Regular Price of Benziger's Magazine, <u>2.00</u>			

Special Net Price, \$10.00 \$1.00 Down. \$1.00 a Month.

You get the books at once, and have the use of them, while making easy payments. Send us only \$1.00, and we will forward the books at once. \$1.00 entitles you to immediate possession. No further payment need be made for a month. Afterward you pay \$1.00 a month.

THIS IS THE EASY WAY TO GET A LIBRARY.

*And remember these are the Best Books that can be placed in the hands of
 Catholic Youth AT ANY PRICE.*

ANOTHER EASY WAY OF GETTING BOOKS.

Each year we publish four New Novels by the best Catholic authors. These novels are interesting beyond the ordinary; not strictly religious, but Catholic in tone and feeling.

We ask you to give us a Standing Order for these novels. The price is \$1.25 a volume postpaid. The \$5.00 is not to be paid at one time, but \$1.25 each time a volume is published.

As a Special Inducement for giving us a standing order for these novels, we will give you *free* a subscription to Benziger's Magazine. This Magazine is recognized as the best and handsomest Catholic magazine published. The regular price of the Magazine is \$2.00 a year.

Thus for \$5.00 a year—paid \$1.25 at a time—you will get four good books and receive in addition *free* a year's subscription to Benziger's Magazine. The Magazine will be continued from year to year, as long as the standing order for the novels is in force, which will be till countermanded.

Send \$1.25 for the first novel and get your name placed on the subscription list of Benziger's Magazine.

THE BEST STORIES AND ARTICLES

1000 ILLUSTRATIONS A YEAR

BENZIGER'S MAGAZINE

The Popular Catholic Family Monthly

RECOMMENDED BY 70 ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS

Subscription, \$2.00 a Year

What Benziger's Magazine Gives its Readers:

Three complete novels of absorbing interest—equal to three books selling at \$1.25 each.

Fifty complete stories by the best writers—equal to a book of 300 pages selling at \$1.25.

One thousand beautiful illustrations.

Forty large reproductions of celebrated paintings.

Twenty articles—equal to a book of 150 pages—on travel and adventure; on the manners, customs and home-life of peoples; on the haunts and habits of animals.

Twenty articles—equal to a book of 150 pages—on historic events, times, places, important industries.

Twenty articles—equal to a book of 150 pages—on the fine arts; celebrated artists and their paintings, sculpture, music, etc., and nature studies.

Twelve pages of games and amusements for in-doors and out-of-doors.

Seventy-two pages of fashions, fads, and fancies, gathered at home and abroad, helpful hints for home workers, household column, cooking recipes, etc.

“Current Events,” the important happenings over the whole world, described with pen and pictures.

Twelve prize competitions, with valuable prizes.

JUN 22 1909

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Feb. 2006

Preservation Technologies

A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 017 429 961 4

