

Solitude and Silence

The Cloister of the Heart

THOMAS À KEMPIS

Translated by
FR. ROBERT NIXON, OSB

TAN Books
Gastonia, North Carolina

CONTENTS

<i>Translator's Note</i>	<i>xi</i>
CHAPTER I: SOLITUDE.....	I
In Praise of Solitude.....	1
Mindfulness of the Goodness of God.....	1
True Humility before the Will of God	2
In Moments of Peace and Tranquility, It Is Useful to Remember Times of Stress and Struggle	4
Love of Solitude.....	6
The Special Privilege of Solitude.....	7
Disdain for External Consolations	8
The Value of Human Spiritual Support for Those Who Are Struggling.....	9
The Consolation of the Sacred Scriptures.....	10
Spiritual Delight in the Company of the Saints.....	11
Mindfulness of Those Who Have Passed Away.....	12
The Joys of the Person Who Is Content with Solitude.....	13
The Virtues and Value of Community Life.....	14
The Love of Solitude as a Sign of Devotion.....	16
The Trials and Temptations of Devout Souls	16
The Vanity and Insufficiency of All Earthly Consolations.....	17

A Commendation of the Delights of Heaven, Which Abides in Jesus Christ.....	18
Friendship with Jesus	19
The Different Ways in Which Jesus Is Present to Those Who Love Him	20
The Merits of Enduring Suffering in Union with Christ.....	21
The Solace and Support of the Presence of Christ	23
The Life of Christ and of the Saints Was Not of This World	24
The Peace and Tranquility of Those Who Choose the Contemplative Life	25
The Secret Ark of the Heart	26
CHAPTER 2: SILENCE	29
Silence: The Protector and Guardian of Piety.....	29
The Example of Silence in the Prophet David	29
The Recommendation of Silence by the Saints and Founders of Religious Orders.....	31
The Virtues of Silence	31
A Remedy against Excessive Talkativeness	32
The Spiritual Perils of Loquaciousness.....	33
When Is Speaking at Length Useful and Helpful?	34
A Word of Caution against Excessive Rigor or Singularity in the Observance of Silence.....	36
Silence and Speech for People in Different States of Life	37
Some Particular Spiritual Snares Associated with Prolonged Conversations	39
The Dangers of Speaking Late into the Night	40

Bad Experiences Springing from Late-Night Conversations ...	41
Some Advice on Avoiding Conversations Which	
Damage Virtue	42
Necessary Speech	43
On Turning to God Alone	43
A Consideration for the Wise.....	44
The Difficulties of People Who Are in the Habit of	
Unrestrained Speech	45
How an Excessively Talkative Person Can Correct Himself ...	45
The Multitude of Vices Which Appear in Speech	46
The Vice of Detraction.....	48
How Easy It Is to Sin in Our Words and Our Hearts.....	48
How a Person Can Be Deceived and Retracted from the	
Good Intention of Cultivating Restraint of Speech	49
Applying Discretion in Everything Which Has Been	
Recommended.....	51
As a Whole, We Need to Cultivate Silence	
More than Speech.....	51
Why We Sometimes Fail to Find Spiritual Consolations	52
How the Devil Often Strives to Impede Devotion to God	
through Sadness and Boredom.....	53
Strength and Courage Are Needed to	
Overcome the Enemy	54
<i>Appendix: Of the Love of Solitude and Silence.....</i>	<i>57</i>

SOLITUDE

IN PRAISE OF SOLITUDE

My dear friend in Christ, it is my earnest wish to provide you with a kind of small booklet to which you may turn whenever you have a few moments free from the external tasks and labors in which you are engaged. Rejoice and delight in such moments, for in them you may turn most fully to the Lord, in whom alone your true happiness and serenity is to be found!

I shall now humbly undertake to share with you some insights into the spiritual pleasures and benefits of solitude and silence, for these are ever the true friends and allies of the soul who seeks the peace and freedom which only Christ can give.

MINDFULNESS OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD

In your moments of solitude and leisure when you may relax quietly and without distractions, you should always take the opportunity to reflect on the infinite goodness of

God. Consider particularly the vastness of the benefits that the Lord has so generously bestowed upon you.

Whatever you experience in this life, whether it seems to be good or bad, easy or difficult, delightful or painful, may (and should) work for your spiritual progress. If you are attentive, you will experience and discover something new each and every day, and you may learn some new lesson thereby, gaining a fresh insight into the nature of God, your fellow human beings, and your own self. Every opportunity to enter into solitude is unique and different in some way from all other such occasions. In each of these moments, you have a privileged and wonderful opportunity to enter further into the infinite and inexhaustible mystery of the Divinity and to come to understand your own nature—including your strengths and weaknesses—more fully.

TRUE HUMILITY BEFORE THE WILL OF GOD

The circumstances and conditions of this earthly life are incessantly changing and fluctuating. Truly has it been said that nothing here remains the same. And these changes come about either through our own selves or through others or through nature itself. Yet amidst all this change and variation, this fluctuation and fluidity, we should constantly recognize the will of God unfolding itself according to

some mysterious and unseen divine plan. And we should humbly pray to the Lord that whatever He wishes should come about, saying to Him sincerely, “Thy will be done,” and trusting absolutely that it will ultimately assist in our own salvation and lead us to final peace and happiness.

Just as clay is molded and fashioned in the hands of the sculptor, so are we all being formed and shaped by the hands of God. The fact that God even deigns to work on us and to fashion us is itself a stupendous mark of honor and love, even when the process of being molded may be difficult to understand or unpleasant to accept. And whether God chooses to form us into some large and much-admired work of art or He makes of us something small and humble, we should not be particularly concerned or worried. For even if we seem to be the least amongst our brothers and sisters, we are still equally the work of God’s loving hands. We are no less esteemed by the only One whose esteem truly matters!

And we should trust and have confidence that God holds us all in special dignity and particular and unique value before Himself. For He is a loving Father to each of us, whatever we happen to be or possess, through nature or through grace. We should, therefore, not concern ourselves greatly over differences in external merits or talents, or the apparent importance of the particular roles which we (or others) are called to perform. Indeed, we should neither feel

discouraged nor dejected, nor elated and self-important. Nor should we never look down upon others who seem to be less important or virtuous than ourselves, nor should we envy others who seem greater and more gifted than we are.

Whatever the role or station in life you happen to find yourself, you may still engage fully in the most important and highest work which any human being may possibly do—which is contemplating God in love and serving Him in prayer, devotion, and charity. Whoever you are and whatever is your situation in life, we can all find some moments of solitude in which to devote ourselves to this exalted and noble calling of divine contemplation. This is the highest work of even the seraphim themselves! It is a holy vocation which is universal, and yet also most profoundly personal for each of us.

IN MOMENTS OF PEACE AND TRANQUILITY, IT IS USEFUL TO REMEMBER TIMES OF STRESS AND STRUGGLE

Whenever you are enjoying some time of peace and rest, it is useful to call to mind those times when you have been busy, overworked, or stressed. Whenever you are enjoying the calmness of solitude and silence, it is useful to reflect on those occasions when you have been assaulted with noise and activity. Indeed, calling such things to mind is a sure

and effective way of learning to love and value the peaceful tranquility of your times of solitude!

If you reflect upon how easily you can become anxious or worried, or how little it takes to perturb your soul, you will also realize that the achievement of true inner peace is not something which human efforts can ever achieve on their own. Left to yourself, how often you have fallen prey to anxiety, even when there is little or no real need to worry! How often, even when you are surrounded by exterior silence, your mind is still filled with the clamor of unruly and agitated thoughts and disturbed by your own worries!

Since this is an undeniable characteristic of our fragile human nature, to experience both exterior solitude and interior peace can only be a gift from God. And God generously gives such moments to all, as long as they do not resist Him or refuse His gift. It is at such times that you should turn yourself to divine contemplation. And to the soul which enters into such contemplation, all earthly worries, desires, and distractions will soon seem to be as nothing!

But the person who refuses to give himself over to solitude and occasional inactivity but compels himself instead to be constantly busy or constantly interacting with others, refuses and resists this great gift of God. And it is, alas, a very rare thing for such a compulsively busy person to come to know the delights of contemplation.

LOVE OF SOLITUDE

“Flee, my beloved!”¹ says the soul to its spouse. For Jesus, who is the true beloved spouse of the soul, is often read to have fled from the crowds and taken Himself off into the desert places to seek solitude.

You will surely be with Jesus if you, too, flee from the crowds and seek out the “desert places.” And when you find such a place in your soul, let it be as a secret garden of delight to you. Guard and protect it most carefully!

Saint Jerome compares the place in which one finds solitude and refuge from the crowd to a Garden of Eden, for he writes, “As long as you are away from your heavenly homeland, let your place of solitary refuge be as a Paradise to you.” In this spiritual Garden of Eden of solitude, you will indeed rejoice in the Lord. You will converse with God, and He shall speak to you. And His glorious light and truth shall be manifested and revealed to your heart with ever increasing radiance and clarity.

Just as when the sun first rises at dawn, its visible rays are soon multiplied more and more, even so, when Christ comes to you, the interior dwelling place of your heart shall become more and more illuminated. You will be purified by a new light, and in its glorious splendor, your interior being shall joyfully exult.

¹ Song of Songs 8:14.

And then you shall surely exclaim, “O Lord, to whom may I compare you?”² And you will experience firsthand the truth of that eloquent verse of Scripture in which it is written, “In your light, we see light.”³ And again, “The Lord is my light and my salvation.”⁴ And, “In your light, O Lord, I will walk, and I will exult in your name, for you are the glory of my virtue, and my delight!”⁵

THE SPECIAL PRIVILEGE OF SOLITUDE

Consider, my friend, the special privilege which you have received by virtue of your situation and status in life, and exercise care to live in such a manner that you take full advantage of this privileged vocation.⁶ For not all people are gifted with the opportunities to spend time in contemplation, as you are. As for yourself, you are blessed with a suitable place for prayer and chances to spend time in solitude which exceed those of most other people.

May the Spirit of Jesus be with you, for it is His Spirit alone which teaches and illuminates “all those entering the world.”⁷ When His Spirit is present, you shall surely

² Psalms 89:2.

³ Psalms 36:9.

⁴ Psalms 27:1.

⁵ See Psalms 89:15–17.

⁶ Thomas was writing this particular counsel for people in consecrated religious life of one form or another. Nevertheless, his comments here will still be found relevant for many Christians in other states of life.

⁷ John 1:9.

neither need nor desire the presence of other human beings to console you or entertain you.

But when you feel that His Spirit is absent from you, then be content to wait patiently. For He shall indeed come when He judges the moment to be opportune and will not delay.

DISDAIN FOR EXTERNAL CONSOLATIONS

It is wise advice to beware always that you do not fall into the habit of seeking consolation and diversions in the exterior things of this world. Rather, strive to find your consolation in interior silence. And when this consolation cannot be found, then call upon God with tears of sincere compunction and repentance, and He shall surely not fail to hear you and answer you in the way that is best.

It is useful, however, to speak to a human spiritual guide at times. You should honestly confess to such a guide any occasions or habits of negligence you currently have, and reveal any anxieties which you are experiencing. At certain times, such conversations are useful and helpful. For not all people receive the grace to be able to echo the words of the apostle Saint Paul, when he said, “I have been instructed by no human being, but through the revelation of Jesus Christ himself.”⁸

But to the one who finds himself to be free of the need for human guidance and companionship—he may count

⁸ Galatians 1:12.

himself as being specially blessed and should thank God sincerely for the particular strength and grace he has received from Him.

THE VALUE OF HUMAN SPIRITUAL SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO ARE STRUGGLING

But it must be acknowledged that there are many who struggle greatly with solitude and rely upon a human spiritual director to guide and accompany them. For such people, they should attentively listen to the words of their spiritual director as if they were not merely human words but the words of God communicated to them by means of a human agency.

God speaks to each of us in a way that is adapted to our needs and our state of development. Indeed, whenever necessary, He is willing even to speak to us as if we are little children, sometimes through other human beings and sometimes through the words of Sacred Scripture. We may be confident that whatever consolation, encouragement, correction, and guidance we most truly need, the Lord will never fail to provide it for us. But it behooves us to trust God's judgment in this matter and not give more weight to our own opinions and preferences.

MEDITATIONS
ON
DEATH
PREPARING FOR
ETERNITY

THOMAS À KEMPIS

Translated by
FR. ROBERT NIXON, OSB

TAN Books
Gastonia, North Carolina

Contents

Translator's Note..... ix

Part I: Reflections on the Last Things

- 1 Consideration of One's Own Death.....3
- 2 The Torments of Hell.....10
- 3 The Final Judgment20
- 4 The Joys of Heaven25

Part II: A Discourse in the Person of a Sinner about to Die

- 5 Mindfulness of Death:
 A Sure Remedy to the Vices.....33
- 6 A Lament over Time Wasted39
- 7 Regrets Concerning the Deferral of
 Repentance and Reformation.....43

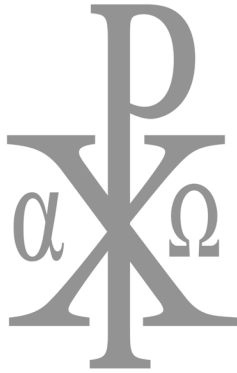
8	The Uncertainty of the Last-Minute Repentance and Conversion.....	49
9	The Unreliability of Human Assistance in the Hour of Death.....	53
10	A Final Exhortation to Those Who Still Live.....	57

Part III: Canticles to Heaven

11	A Canticle on the Joys of Heaven and the Choirs of Angels	65
12	A Canticle to the Angels and Saints in Heaven	68



PART I
REFLECTIONS ON
THE LAST THINGS



Consideration of One's Own Death

My friend, it is most useful for you to call to mind frequently and assiduously the reality of your own death. This, indeed, is the one universal reality of our human condition—for in this life, some are rich while others are poor, some are masters while others are servants, some learned while others are simple, and some are blessed by happiness and good fortune while others are struck down by misfortune and calamity. Yet all face death with equal certainty. And though death itself is a certainty, its time and manner of arrival are profoundly uncertain.

So consider firstly the uncertainty of the year, month, day, and hour of your death. Death often arrives with no or little warning, coming like a thief in the night or

descending upon us unexpectedly, like a falcon swooping upon a hapless dove. Often it arrives on the occasion you least expect it, and at the time when you are least prepared for it. Very often death comes to a person when he still expects to have much longer to live and looks forward to an abundance of time in which to repent for his sins, to amend his vices, and to improve his life and conduct.

My advice, therefore, is to live as if you could die at any moment and to live each day as if it could be your last. And be mindful that this is no idle or hypothetical speculation or a mere morally edifying imagining but a frighteningly real and imminent possibility at all times! In fact, it is not a possibility only, but it is a *certainty*. For while everything else in the future course of your life—your success or failure, your prosperity or poverty, your happiness or wretchedness—are unknown, hidden, and indeterminate, *death* is the one thing of which you may be absolutely sure.

Consider also, the severe weakness and debility which often precedes the actual event of death. This debility and weakness is truly nothing other than a herald of our mortality and the oblivion which will engulf our earthly being. The period of severe illness which precedes death for many is not, indeed, the ideal time for repentance.

Apart from its extreme uncertainty of duration, it is generally a time when the spirit and the mind are gravely weakened and strong resolutions have become virtually impossible. And if one is confined to bed, genuine emendation of one's life is hardly meaningfully possible at all. For the person confined to bed and in the throes of physical and spiritual dissolution can hardly undertake any real works of piety or penance.

Thus "deathbed repentance" is inherently uncertain in its efficacy since its sincerity is not demonstrated or supported by any works or reformation of life. It *may* be efficacious in some instances, but it cannot be relied upon since not even the person concerned can be certain of the genuineness of their contrition.

Consider next your own self in your dying moments, and reflect upon the stains on your conscience, your unatoned sins, and your unamended vices. These will all flood into your heart as a bitter torrent at that fateful time, like a river of regret or a stream of sorrow. And each unatoned crime and unconfessed sin will painfully prick your heart, like a sharp and uncomfortable thorn. How much you will then long for another year of life and health, or even another day or another hour, in which to atone and amend yourself!

O mortal, reflect carefully upon that unknown time when you will come to your final hour, and when the lethal hand of death will fall upon your shoulder, and when you will be compelled to cross that dark stream from which none have ever returned! When you enter into the realm of eternity, your whole past life will seem like a mere moment and appear to be like an insubstantial dream from which you are now awakening. Reflect upon the immense pain and torments which await so very many (countless multitudes, in fact), and often all for the sake of some passing, momentary pleasure, be it the gratification of the physical senses or the appeasement of pride and vanity. Reflect also upon the infinite joys and blessedness which those condemned will have lost forever. This irreparable and infinite loss is, indeed, perhaps more severe an affliction than any of the other torments which could be imagined.

Consider also how bitter will be the separation from all those you love, and the extreme and everlasting dishonor of eternal condemnation. In this world, human beings make enormous efforts to acquire honor for themselves and seek avidly to attain happiness in any form possible. Yet how few make any comparable effort to attain the glory which lasts forever and to secure for themselves the happiness which never ends!

Think also about the fate of your earthly body, this lump of clay out of which has been formed by the hand of God. For indeed it shall rot and decay, and grow black and putrid, withering away to nothing and eventually crumbling to dust. And at the point of death, a multitude of demons will appear before you, ready to seize upon each departed soul. With gaping jaws and grasping hands, these shall be like “roaring lions seeking whom they may devour.”¹

Next, consider how the condemned soul must pass to a region entirely unknown to it, where a multitude of cruel and vicious demons shall viciously await it. It shall then long to return to its body. But it will be entirely unable, for all the windows and portals of entrance and exit thereto are now forever closed. Yes, an unpassable abyss lies between the realms of the living and the dead!

Instead, the condemned soul will find itself in an immense cavern of utter and impenetrable darkness, fetid and heavy with all the charnel odors of the grave. And the various evil spirits of each of the vices shall seek it out to torment it. Thus the spirit of pride shall hunt down those who were proud during their lifetime, and

¹ See 1 Peter 5:8.

the spirit of lust shall seize upon those who were lustful. And so it will be for vices of every kind, each vice having its own particular tormenting spirits. And the nature of these tormenting spirits will correspond to the vice which they punish. Thus, the infernal spirit which punishes pride shall constantly mock and humiliate its victims, whereas the demon which punishes sloth will compel them to undertake incessant, arduous, and unending labor.

Finally, consider how after the moment of death, you shall have to stand before that most awesome tribunal of judgment to await your eternal sentence. This final sentence, once pronounced by the immortal Judge, can never, ever be revoked or changed. For indeed, it is written in Holy Scripture that “wherever the tree falls, there it will lie.”²

Consider also how your mortal body, upon which you have bestowed such care and love whilst you lived, will be enclosed in a cold and soon-to-be-forgotten tomb. Your very self will be consigned to perpetual oblivion, at least as far as this world is concerned. You will be just like a guest who has visited for one day and then left, and whom no one remembers!³

² Ecclesiastes 11:3.

³ See Wisdom 8:5–12.

But for those who have lived holy and upright lives, and who have prepared themselves diligently by prayer and penance, the situation will be very different indeed. For when they realize that they are about to pass from this world of sorrows, this valley of tears, they will not fear at all. On the contrary, they shall rejoice knowing that they are about to depart from their true native land of heaven, and there to enjoy unending and infinite bliss in the company of glorious angels and saints, illuminated by the magnificent and glorious radiance of the Holy Trinity Itself.

And the cause of this joy is nothing other than the fact that they carry with them the testimony of a clear and innocent conscience. Exultantly they shall ascend to the realm of everlasting happiness and peace, departing from the miseries of this present world without a single shadow of regret. For there shall be no bond of earthly concupiscence or carnal desire which enchains them to this lower realm, and they shall feel not a single pang of sorrow or regret to bid this world of time and space a final farewell.

The Paradise of the Soul

Forty-Two Virtues
to Reach Heaven

SAINT ALBERT THE GREAT

Translated by
Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB

TAN Books
Gastonia, North Carolina

Contents

<i>Translator's Note</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>The Life of Saint Albert the Great</i>	<i>xv</i>
Saint Albert's Prologue	1
1. Love.....	5
2. Humility.....	13
3. Obedience	19
4. Patience	27
5. Poverty of Spirit.....	33
6. Chastity	39
7. Abstinence	47
8. Prudence.....	55
9. Fortitude.....	61
10. Justice.....	67
11. Temperance	73
12. Compassion	79
13. Peacefulness.....	85
14. Mercy.....	91
15. Concord.....	97

16. Constancy	103
17. Generosity.....	109
18. Truthfulness	115
19. Gentleness.....	121
20. Faith.....	125
21. Hope.....	129
22. Holy Fear	135
23. Spiritual Joy	141
24. Holy Sadness.....	147
25. Gratitude.....	153
26. Zeal for Souls	159
27. Liberty	165
28. Spiritual Living.....	171
29. Gravity.....	179
30. Simplicity.....	185
31. Holy Silence.....	191
32. Solitude.....	199
33. Contemplation.....	205
34. Discretion	215
35. Sharing Joy.....	223
36. Confidence.....	227
37. Disdain for Worldly Things.....	237
38. Mortification of the Flesh.....	241

39. Contrition.....	247
40. Honest Confession.....	253
41. Penance.....	257
42. Perseverance.....	263
Saint Albert's Epilogue.....	267

LOVE

LOVE OF GOD

The love of God is perfect when the soul offers itself up to God ardently and completely, and seeks from God no transitory comfort, nor even any eternal reward in return. Rather, it loves God not for the sake of any recompense but solely on account of the goodness, sanctity, and perfection which is inherent in His divine nature. Indeed, the sensitive and holy soul is repelled by the very idea of loving God with any ulterior or mercenary motive, such as gaining some comfort or reward from Him.

For God loves us freely, and pours out His strength into our souls. He does not do this because He hopes to receive anything useful from us in return, but rather He desires only to share with us His own natural and infinite beatitude and blessedness. The person who loves God solely because of His goodness and blessedness, and from an earnest

desire to participate in the same goodness and blessedness of God, may be said to love God perfectly.

True knowledge of God leads the soul to this perfect love. For in the essence of God, all that is worthy of love is to be found—nobility, sanctity, power, wisdom, kindness, beauty, providence, and so forth. Similarly, the love that God has for us is eternal and boundless, not passing and contingent. A true perception of the nature of God's love for us leads the soul to love God with a similar type of love.

In the Gospel of John, God gives us a reliable indication of true love for Him, when He says, "The one who loves me keeps my commandments."¹ Saint Augustine echoes the same thought when he says, "We truly love God only to the extent that we keep His commandments." Keeping vows that we have made in the presence of God may also be seen as keeping His commandments, since we are bound to obey such vows just as much as we are bound to obey the divine mandates.

Saint Gregory the Great admonishes us, "Reflect carefully upon yourselves! And enquire diligently if you truly love God above all else." And no one should believe themselves to love God above all else if their actions do not bear this out. For perfect love of the Creator requires the testimony not only of our words, or even of our hearts, but also of our whole lives. The love of God is never inactive; rather, it

¹ John 14:21.

always manifests itself in works. If love does not show itself in action, then it is not really love at all.

Our obedience to the commandments and our performance of good works should be entirely pure in their intention. They should be done neither out of fear of punishment nor desire for any reward, as Saint Augustine testified. The one who loves God perfectly fulfills His commandments not out of dread of punishment or ambition to attain rewards. But rather, he obeys God because he knows that everything which God commands is perfect and good.

There are two reliable signs of true love towards God. The first is when a person rejoices in God in all things, regardless of what happens (whether it seems good or bad), in all times and all places. A purely natural love of God [that is, loving God when He sends obvious blessings and good fortune] does not merit any praise or credit from God. For such a love is motivated by self-interest and seeks only what is good for itself. Rather, it is only the free love of God—that is, loving God for His own goodness and not for the sake of oneself—which is truly perfect.

The second sign of true love for God is when a person is genuinely saddened by all things that displease God, whenever and wherever they occur, regardless of whether or not they affect him personally.

LOVE OF ONE'S NEIGHBOR

True love of one's neighbor is to love him just as one loves oneself, regardless of whether he is a friend or a foe. As Saint Augustine says, "To love one's neighbor as oneself means to love him in God and for the sake of God."

By loving him thus in God and for God, one does indeed truly love one's neighbor as oneself. For each person naturally desires good for himself and seeks to avoid what is bad. This same desire should extend equally to others. Each human being naturally seeks the well-being of his body and soul, and each human being naturally flees from whatever is detrimental to such well-being. And in the same manner should each Christian desire the good of others and seek to avert whatever is harmful to their well-being. This applies equally whether they are a friend or an enemy.

And while the commandment to love our neighbor requires us to love them in the same *way* that we love ourselves (that is, by desiring the good for them and wishing to minimize whatever is bad), it does not, of course, demand that we feel the same degree of ardor or expend the same level of effort in this love.

The natural affection for one's friends does not amount to true charity. For, as the Gospel declares, "even the pagans love those who love them." But to love one's enemies is *always* true charity, since it is never the result of natural

affections. To love those who love you is merely the work of nature, but to confer benefits on those who do *not* love you is a characteristic of perfect charity. Although, as has been noted, the commandment does not require us to love others with equal fervor or effort, nevertheless to love one's enemies and one's friends with equal intensity is a wonderful sign of perfect charity. This means exhibiting equal kindness to those who correct and reprimand as to those who praise and bless, and to show equal kindness to those who vituperate you as to those who applaud you.

For, as Saint John Chrysostom testifies, there is nothing which makes us so like God as treating those who are hostile to us and those who love us with equal kindness. Indeed, we certainly attain to greater grace and glory through sustaining persecution than we do by enjoying favor, provided we respond with charity and patience. Thus it was that the enemies of the martyrs contributed more to their glory than did their friends.

Nature itself ought to lead us to love our neighbor, for all creatures love those who are similar to themselves. Thus it is that all human beings owe each other a debt of love—for each of them similarly bears the image of God, as Scripture testifies.

Proof of true charity is to feel compassion for your enemies, and not only your friends, in times of adversity. It is also to feel truly happy for the sake of your enemy

whenever prosperity befalls him. This is indeed a very rare thing in this world!

In contrast, there are other feelings which are evidence of true hatred, which is the antithesis of love. This includes being struck with sadness and dejection whenever we see a certain person's face, or being filled with bitterness and gall whenever we hear him speak or even hear his name mentioned. To seek to impede whatever might bring him prosperity is similarly a sign of hatred, as is the disparagement and detraction of whatever good qualities he may possess.

Our Lord Jesus Christ exhibited none of these things in His treatment of Judas, even though He knew that he was to betray Him. On the contrary, He broke bread for him at the Last Supper, treating him in exactly the same manner as He treated all the other apostles. Even at the time of His betrayal, Christ did not deny a kiss to the traitor Judas but greeted Him with all kindness and civility. As Saint Jerome comments, Christ felt more sadness for the tragedy and shame that was about to strike Judas than He did for His own impending death.

For many people, it seems enough that they hope for their enemies' eternal salvation without wishing for their good or happiness in this present world. But eternal salvation is something which they are neither able to give them nor to take away from them! They seem to wish to forget that when Christ laid down His life for His enemies, He bound us not only to love our enemies but also to be ready

to make a sacrifice of our own resources and our own selves for the well-being of our brothers and sisters in times of need. This obligation applies above all to those charged with the pastoral care of souls.

Two things particularly help to nourish the virtue of love. Our love for God is nourished by carefully observing His commandments, as is stated in the verse: “If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love, just as I keep the commandments of My Father, and remain in His love.”² Our love for our neighbor is nourished by cultivating feelings of compassion towards him and sincere sympathy for his sufferings, as is stated in Ecclesiasticus: “Do not withhold your compassion from those who weep, and walk with those who mourn. Do not disdain to visit the sick. Through these actions, you shall be confirmed in your love.”³

PRAYER TO GOD FOR LOVE

O eternal Love and infinite goodness, in whom all the causes for all holy loves are contained! Through that immense and incomprehensible love by which You have bound Yourself to me, I beseech You to pour forth into my soul something of that same love. By means of this love, I pray that I may seek nothing of my own comfort or convenience but rather

² John 15:10.

³ Ecclesiasticus 7:38–39.

love all other things, even myself, in absolute purity and for Your sake alone.

O Lord, make me imitate Your superabundant and inestimable charity, which infinitely exceeds the brilliance of the sun! For just as the sun sends its rays freely without expecting to gain any benefit for itself in return, even so does Your love radiate forth to all the universe. Lord, make me obey Your most just and holy commandments with all reverence and solicitude; for to do so is a clear indication of Your grace and of love of You. May my soul rejoice and give thanks to You for all things which are pleasing to You, O Lord, and be saddened only by those things which offend You.

May I love my neighbor in You and for Your sake. Teach me to seek those things which I should desire, and to flee from those things which I should avoid. May I wish good things to those who wish bad things for me, for to do so is pleasing to You. May I overcome my enemies by no other means than kindness and goodwill!

May I accept adversity with patience, for it is often the source of greater spiritual benefits than prosperity. May I suffer with those who suffer, and rejoice with those who rejoice. For each of my neighbors has the same human nature as I do, and each bears Your image and likeness. For You confer immortal glory upon those who imitate Your divine love, and thus show themselves to be true sons and daughters of You, our heavenly Father. Amen.

THE BATTLE OF THE
VIRTUES
& VICES

DEFENDING THE INTERIOR
CASTLE OF THE SOUL

POPE SAINT LEO IX

TRANSLATED BY
FR. ROBERT NIXON, OSB

TAN Books
Gastonia, North Carolina

CONTENTS



<i>Translator's Note</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>The Life of Pope Saint Leo IX</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>Author's Introduction</i>	<i>xxiii</i>
1. Pride Is Put to Flight by Humility.....	1
2. Vainglory Is Rebuked by Fear of the Lord	5
3. Counterfeit Piety Is Exposed by True Holiness.....	9
4. Rebellion Is Subdued by Holy Obedience.....	13
5. Envy Is Rebuked by Fraternal Charity.....	17
6. Hatred Is Quelled by Love	21
7. Detraction Is Refuted by Just Correction	25
8. Wrath Is Calmed by Patience	29
9. Gentleness Disarms Severity	35
10. Self-Satisfaction Is Corrected and Reined In by Respect for Others' Feelings	39
11. Worldly Melancholy Is Put to Flight by Spiritual Joy.....	43
12. Sloth Is Reproved by Energetic Virtue.....	47

13. Dissolute Wandering Is Restrained by Firm Stability.....	51
14. Despair Is Banished by Faithful Hope.....	55
15. Avarice Is Corrected by Detachment.....	61
16. Stinginess Is Rebuked by Generosity.....	67
17. The Temptations of Theft and Fraud Are Dispelled by Innocence.....	71
18. Concealment and Deception Are Reprimanded by Truthfulness	75
19. Gluttony Is Restrained by Moderation.....	79
20. Inane Elation Is Brought Under Control by Holy Sorrow	83
21. Garrulity Is Silenced by Prudent Restraint	87
22. Fleshly Desire and Lust Are Put to Flight by Carnal Purity and Chastity	91
23. Spiritual Fornication Is Corrected by Purity of Heart	95
24. Worldly Attachment Is Tempered by Longing for Heaven	99
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>103</i>

PRIDE IS PUT TO FLIGHT BY HUMILITY



THE FIRST OF THE vices, Pride, arrives on the scene. He is clad in a brightly colored military uniform covered with golden medals and adorned with shiny epaulettes. A fiery gleam burns in his eyes, and an arrogant, disdainful smile (or rather, grimace) rests on his self-satisfied mouth. With a supercilious and haughty air, he says to the soul:

Listen to me, O Soul! Give heed to my words, for I will speak to you frankly.

You and I both know that you are undoubtedly better than almost everyone else, in respect to your words, your knowledge, your wealth, and your honors. In fact, you easily surpass most other people in virtually all talents and all gifts of the body, mind, and spirit! Why deny it? So you *should* look down on these others and honestly recognize yourself to be better since (if you look into your heart) you *know* that you actually are better than they!

Humility arrives in time to hear the speech of Pride. Humility wears a simple but clean and well-cut suit and carries himself with gentleness and quietness. Raising his wise and penetrating eyes with quiet and unostentatious authority, he responds thus:

O Soul, do not listen to the voice of Pride! For he seeks to deceive you—to puff you up only so that he may laugh when you fall down. He pretends to be your greatest supporter and most loyal advocate, but really he is the sworn enemy of your happiness and salvation.

Instead of hearing the voice of Pride, it behooves you to “remember that thou are but dust and ashes,”⁵ as Scripture puts it. And “you are fashioned by the earth, and no more than a worm.”⁶ Whatever you might be, however great you might be, ask yourself this question: “Am I greater than the one who was the most exalted of all the angels?” Indeed, was there anyone who was more splendid and magnificent than the angel known as Lucifer, the Prince of Light? But he, through his wicked pride, was cast down to the darkest depth of hell! Now will you, who are a mere mortal, dare to exalt yourself, just as he did? Do you wish to share his sin and so share his utterly wretched fate?

Remember that as long as you live this earthly life, your condition is one of extreme fragility and weakness. You

⁵ Genesis 3:19.

⁶ Job 25:6.

are burdened with more limitations than you know, as a wise man once wrote: “The mortal body weighs down the soul, and our earthly dwelling place constrains the spirit which aspires to many things.”⁷ How lethal and heavy is the darkness of pride! How easily can it drag down the soul of us human beings, who inhabit bodies fashioned from the earth! For it caused the fall even of that formerly radiant and mighty being, the angel once known as the “Morning Star” and the “Bearer of Light,” whom we still call “Lucifer.”⁸

Listen, therefore, to the words of the One who is Himself the immortal light and the source of all light, the One who is Truth itself. He tells us, “Whoever follows me shall not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”⁹ And on another occasion, He gave us this most prudent admonition: “Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.”¹⁰

Hear, O vain Pride, the voice of Christ, the Master of humility: “All who exalt themselves shall be humbled, but everyone who humbles themselves will be exalted.”¹¹

⁷ Wisdom 9:15.

⁸ *Lucifer* means “bearer of light” and was an appellation given to the morning star.

⁹ John 8:12.

¹⁰ Matthew 11:29.

¹¹ Luke 14:11.

And in the writings of the prophets, do we not read: “Upon whom will my Spirit rest, apart from the one who is humble and quiet, and who fears my words?”¹² Listen also to what the apostle Saint Paul said, speaking of Our Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Savior:

He was in the form of God,
Yet He did not cling to equality with God,
But emptied Himself, accepting the form of a
servant.
And having accepted our human condition,
He became humbler yet,
Even to accepting death, death on a cross.¹³

If the One who possessed all the fullness of Divine Majesty was prepared to humble Himself in this radical way, then surely it does not behoove us mere mortals, who are but weak and fragile creatures, to extoll ourselves with foolish pride! Take care, O Soul, and do not let this malicious fiend, Pride, who is the captain of all the vices, gain possession of you.

¹² Isaiah 66:2.

¹³ Philippians 2:6–11.

THE PASSION OF
CHRIST
THROUGH THE
EYES OF MARY

SAINT ANSELM OF CANTERBURY
AND OTHERS



COMPILED AND TRANSLATED BY
FR. ROBERT NIXON, OSB

TAN Books
Gastonia, North Carolina

CONTENTS



Translator's Note *xi*

**Dialogue of the Blessed Virgin Mary
and Saint Anselm on the Passion of Our Lord**

Introduction	3
1 The Betrayal of Christ and His Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane	4
2 The Arrest of Christ	8
3 Christ Is Led Before Ananias, and Peter Denies Him Three Times	12
4 Christ Is Led to Caiaphas	16
5 Christ Appears Before Pilate	19

6	Jesus Is Brought before Herod, then Returned to Pilate . . . . .	.22
7	The Scourging and the Crowning with Thorns . . . . .	.26
8	Jesus Is Sentenced to Death and Carries His Cross . . . . .	.30
9	The Sorrowful Meeting of Christ and His Mother . . . . .	.33
10	The Crucifixion and Raising Up of the Cross . . . . .	.35
11	The Insults Which Christ Suffered on the Cross . . . . .	.38
12	The Words of Christ from the Cross . . . . .	.40
13	The Death of Christ and the Miraculous Signs which Followed . . . . .	.43
14	The Lamentation of the Mother for Her Son . . . . .	.46
15	The Descent of the Soul of Christ into Limbo . . . . .	.48
16	Christ's Body Is Removed from the Cross and Placed in the Tomb . . . . .	.50

The Book of the Passion of Our Lord

1	. . . . .	.61
2	. . . . .	.65
3	. . . . .	.68
4	. . . . .	.71
5	. . . . .	.74
6	. . . . .	.77
7	. . . . .	.80
8	. . . . .	.83
9	. . . . .	.87

Our Lady's Lament

The Rosary of the Seven Sorrows of Mary

Introduction		111
Septet of the First Sorrow: The Circumcision of Christ and Simeon's Prophecy		115
Septet of the Second Sorrow: The Flight into Egypt		119

Septet of the Third Sorrow: When the Boy Jesus Was Lost for Three Days	124
Septet of the Fourth Sorrow: Jesus Carries His Cross to Calvary.	129
Septet of the Fifth Sorrow: The Death of Jesus upon the Cross.	133
Septet of the Sixth Sorrow: The Lifeless Body of Christ Is Placed in the Arms of His Mother	137
Septet of the Seventh and Final Sorrow: Christ Is Placed in His Tomb	141
Closing Prayers	146

DIALOGUE OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
AND SAINT ANSELM ON
THE PASSION OF OUR LORD



THE BETRAYAL OF CHRIST AND HIS PRAYER IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE



Anselm: TELL ME, MOST beloved Lady, how did the events of the passion of your Son first begin?

Mary: When my Son and His disciples had arisen from the table at His last supper, the perfidious traitor Judas Iscariot went forth alone to see the high priests of the temple. He received from them the sum of thirty denarii of silver and, in exchange, promised to betray Christ into their hands.

Anselm: What type of denarii was it which he received from the priests?

Mary: They were the denarii of the Ishmaelites. In fact, they were the very same coins which the brothers of Joseph had received from the Ishmaelites when they sold him into

slavery¹ some two thousand years previously.² Through succession and inheritance, these same thirty silver denarii had passed into the hands of the temple treasury. Each of these silver coins was ten times the size and weight of a usual denarius.³ Judas was so avaricious and filled with such a greed for earthly wealth that when he saw these coins, he immediately undertook to betray my Son to the temple priests. Indeed, Christ had foreseen this act of betrayal and had often spoken of it, but even this did not serve to deter Judas from his wicked purpose.

Anselm: My Lady, were you present at that last supper with your Son and His disciples?

Mary: No, I was not present when my Son partook of that last supper at which He washed the feet of His disciples and spoke to them loving words of encouragement. This was the great and holy supper in which He gave to them

¹ The source of this curious detail is not clear. It perhaps reflects legends in circulation at the time.

² The Latin text has “4,000 years” here, but this is almost certainly a simple scribal error. Traditional datings based on Scripture place the selling of Joseph into slavery as occurring about 2,000 years before the time of Christ.

³ The Latin text reads that each of the denarii “*valuit decem usuales*” (i.e., that each coin was of ten times the value of a usual coin). Yet since the value of coins in those days depended upon the actual amount of metal from which they were formed, the translation has been adjusted to reflect this. The source of this detail may again have been legends in circulation at the time.

His own Body and Blood through the sacramental signs of bread and wine. After this sacred meal, when Judas went to see the high priests to betray Jesus, Christ went on with His disciples to Mount Sion, passing through the gate by the Pool of Siloam. My Son then entered a garden. And while the disciples slept, He went forth to the foot of the Mount of Olives so that He was about a stone's throw from the sleeping disciples. And there, He poured out fervent prayers to His heavenly Father, saying:

“O Lord, hear my cry!

For thou art kind and full of compassion.

According to the abundance of thy mercy, look upon me now.

Turn not thy face from thy Child!

I am gravely afflicted; give ear to my supplications.

Look upon my soul, and free it from the tribulation and peril which surrounds it.

Rescue me, I implore thee, from the snares of my enemies;

Save me from the clutches of all those who seek to destroy my life!”⁴

Anselm: Most glorious Virgin, why was it that your Son—who was both Son of God and true God Himself—needed to pray at that time?

⁴ See Psalm 67:17–19.

Mary: Although He knew Himself to be the Son of God, still He needed to pray for three reasons: Firstly, He was of a delicate and refined constitution, as the child of an inviolate virgin, and born of royal blood. For it is a fact that those who are more noble suffer more deeply when they are harmed than those who are of coarse and common stock. Secondly, He experienced such an extremity of anguish that His sweat ran forth like great drops of blood. [Thirdly,] because, being God Himself, He knew perfectly in advance everything which He was to suffer and undergo. This included the contemptuous showering of Him with spittle, the blasphemies and insults of the soldiers and the crowds, the bloody scourging, the cruel crucifixion, and all the innumerable other torments He was to endure.

For a common thief may know that he has been sentenced to death, but he does not fully know in advance the exact nature of the pains of death which he shall experience until he is actually hanging from the noose by his neck. But my Son, being true God as well as true Man, knew what the future held so perfectly that He felt everything in advance. Accordingly, He prayed, “Father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass me by! But let not my will, but Thine, be done.”⁵ And when He had uttered this prayer, an angel appeared before Him and imbued Him with strength and courage, saying, “Be brave, my Lord, for now you are about to redeem the entire human race!”

⁵ Matthew 26:39.