

*The* IMITATION  
*of* CHRIST

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## CHAPTER ONE

### *Of the Imitation of Christ, and the Contempt of All the Vanities of the World*

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HE THAT followeth me, walketh not in darkness,” saith Our Lord. (*John* 8:12). These are the words of Christ, by which we are admonished, that we must imitate His life and manners, if we would be truly enlightened, and delivered from all blindness of heart.

Let it then be our chief study to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ.

2. The doctrine of Christ surpasseth all the doctrines of the saints, and whosoever hath the spirit will find therein a hidden manna. (*Apoc.* 2:17).

But it happeneth that many, by frequent hearing of the Gospel, are very little affected: because they have not the spirit of Christ.

But he who would fully and feelingly understand the words of Christ, must study to make his whole life conformable to that of Christ.

3. What doth it avail thee to discourse profoundly of the Trinity if thou be void of humility, and consequently, displeasing to the Trinity?

In truth, sublime words make not a man holy and just: but a virtuous life maketh him dear to God.

I would rather feel compunction, than know its definition.

If thou didst know the whole Bible by heart, and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would it all profit thee without the love of God and His grace?

“Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity” (*Eccles.* 1:2), besides loving God and serving Him alone.

This is the highest wisdom, by despising the world to tend to heavenly kingdoms.

4. It is vanity, therefore, to seek after riches which must perish, and to trust in them.

It is vanity also to be ambitious of honors, and to raise one’s self to a high station.

It is vanity to follow the lusts of the flesh, and to desire that for which thou must afterwards be grievously punished.

It is vanity to wish for a long life, and to take little care of leading a good life.

It is vanity also to mind this present life, and not to look forward unto those things which are to come.

It is vanity to love that which passeth with all speed, and not to hasten thither where everlasting joy remaineth.

5. Often remember that proverb: “The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing.” (*Eccles.* 1:8).

Study, therefore, to withdraw thy heart from the love of visible things, and to turn thyself to things invisible. For they that follow their sensuality, defile their conscience, and lose the grace of God.

### ***Practical Reflections***

If we would really honor Jesus Christ, we must apply ourselves to know Him, to love Him, and to follow Him in the practice of every Christian virtue. This is absolutely necessary for salvation, as we cannot become true Christians, but by knowing, loving, and following Christ. To pretend to please our Blessed Saviour by a profound knowledge of His divinity, without endeavoring to follow His example, without living as He lived, would be most dangerously to delude ourselves.

*Prayer*

What will it avail me, O Jesus, to study and to know in part Thy supreme greatness, and the most sublime of Thy mysteries, if I endeavor not to derive advantage and merit from them, by cherishing Thy disposition and copying Thy virtues, since, to save my soul, I must not only know, but practice what Thou hast taught me by Thy word, and manifested in Thy life for my imitation—I must know and practice my religion? This, my Saviour, is the grace which I now ask of Thee, with a firm hope that Thou wilt grant my petition. *Amen.*

TRUE DEVOTION  
*to* MARY  
*with* PREPARATION FOR  
TOTAL CONSECRATION

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## PRELIMINARY REMARKS

*by St. Louis De Montfort*



1. It was through the most holy Virgin Mary that Jesus came into the world, and it is also through her that He has to reign in the world.

2. Mary was singularly hidden during her life. It is on this account that the Holy Ghost and the Church call her *Alma Mater*—"Mother secret and hidden."<sup>1</sup> Her humility was so profound that she had no inclination on earth more powerful or more constant than that of hiding herself, from herself as well as from every other creature, so as to be known to God only.

3. He heard her prayers when she begged to be hidden, to be humbled and to be treated as in all respects poor and of no account. He took pleasure in hiding her from all human creatures, in her conception, in her birth, in her life, in her mysteries, and in her resurrection and Assumption. Even her parents did not know her, and the angels often asked one another: "Who is that?" (*Cant.* 3:6; 8:5) because the Most High either had hidden her from them, or if He did reveal anything, it was nothing compared to what He kept undisclosed.

4. God the Father consented that she should work no miracle, at least no public one, during her life, although He had given her the power to do so. God the Son consented that she should hardly ever speak, though He had communicated His wisdom to her. God the

Holy Ghost, though she was His faithful spouse, consented that His Apostles and Evangelists should speak very little of her, and no more than was necessary to make Jesus Christ known.

5. Mary is the excellent masterpiece of the Most High, the knowledge and possession of which He has reserved to Himself. Mary is the admirable Mother of the Son, who took pleasure in humbling and concealing her during her life in order to favor her humility, calling her by the name of “woman” (*Jn.* 2:4; 19:26), as if she were a stranger, although in His heart He esteemed and loved her above all angels and all men. Mary is the “sealed fountain” (*Cant.* 4:12), the faithful spouse of the Holy Ghost, to whom He alone has entrance. Mary is the sanctuary and the repose of the Holy Trinity, where God dwells more magnificently and more divinely than in any other place in the universe, not excepting His dwelling between the Cherubim and Seraphim. Nor is any creature, no matter how pure, allowed to enter into that sanctuary except by a great and special privilege.

6. I say with the Saints, the divine<sup>2</sup> Mary is the terrestrial paradise of the New Adam, where He was made flesh by the operation of the Holy Ghost, in order to work there incomprehensible marvels. She is the grand and divine world of God, where there are beauties and treasures unspeakable. She is the magnificence of the Most High, where He hid, as in her bosom, His only Son, and in Him all that is most excellent and most precious. Oh, what grand and hidden things that mighty God has wrought in this admirable creature, as she herself had to acknowledge, in spite of her profound humility: “He that is mighty hath done great things to me.” (*Lk.* 1:49). The world knows them not, because it is both incapable and unworthy of such knowledge.

7. The saints have said admirable things of this holy city of God; and, as they themselves avow, they were never more eloquent and more content than when they spoke of her. Yet, after all they have said, they cry out that the height of her merits, which she has raised up to the throne of the Divinity, cannot be fully seen; that the breadth of her charity, which is broader than the earth, is in truth immeasurable; that

the length of her power, which she exercises even over God Himself, is incomprehensible; and finally, that the depth of her humility, and of all her virtues and graces, is an abyss which never can be sounded. O height incomprehensible! O breadth unspeakable! O length immeasurable! O abyss impenetrable!

8. Every day, from one end of the earth to the other, in the highest heights of the heavens and in the profoundest depths of the abysses, everything preaches, everything publishes, the admirable Mary! The nine choirs of Angels, men of all ages, sexes, conditions and religions, the good and the bad, nay, even the devils themselves, willingly or unwillingly, are compelled by the force of truth to call her “Blessed.” St. Bonaventure tells us that all the Angels in Heaven cry out incessantly to her: “Holy, holy, holy Mary, Mother of God and Virgin”;<sup>3</sup> and that they offer to her, millions and millions of times a day, the Angelical Salutation, *Ave Maria*, prostrating themselves before her, and begging of her in her graciousness to honor them with some of her commands. Even St. Michael, as St. Augustine says, although the prince of the heavenly court, is the most zealous in honoring her and causing her to be honored, and is always anxiously awaiting the honor of going at her bidding to render service to some one of her servants.<sup>4</sup>

9. The whole earth is full of her glory, especially among Christians, by whom she is taken as the protectress of many kingdoms, provinces, dioceses and cities. Many cathedrals are consecrated to God under her name. There is not a church without an altar in her honor, not a country nor a canton where there are not some miraculous images where all sorts of evils are cured and all sorts of good gifts obtained. Who can count the confraternities and congregations in her honor? How many religious orders have been founded in her name and under her protection? How many members in these confraternities, and how many religious men and women in all these orders, who publish her praises and confess her mercies! There is not a little child who, as it lisps the Hail Mary, does not praise her. There is scarcely a sinner who, even in his obduracy, has not some spark of confidence in her. Nay, the very

devils in Hell respect her while they fear her.

10. After that, we must cry out with the saints: “*De Maria numquam satis*”—“Of Mary there is never enough.” We have not yet praised, exalted, honored, loved and served Mary as we ought. She deserves still more praise, still more respect, still more love, and still more service.

11. After that, we must say with the Holy Ghost: “All the glory of the King’s daughter is within.” (*Ps.* 44:14). The outward glory which Heaven and earth rival each other in laying at her feet is as nothing in comparison with that which she receives within from the Creator and which is not known by creatures, who in their littleness are unable to penetrate the secret of secrets of the King.

12. After that, we must cry out with the Apostle, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor man’s heart comprehended” (*1 Cor.* 2:9) the beauties, the grandeurs, the excellences of Mary—the miracle of the miracles<sup>5</sup> of grace, of nature and of glory. “If you wish to comprehend the Mother,” says a saint,<sup>6</sup> “comprehend the Son; for she is the worthy Mother of God.” “Here let every tongue be mute.”

13. It is with a particular joy that my heart has dictated what I have just written, in order to show that the divine Mary has been up to this time unknown,<sup>7</sup> and that this is one of the reasons that Jesus Christ is not known as He ought to be. If then, as is certain, the knowledge and the kingdom of Jesus Christ are to come into the world, they will be but a necessary consequence of the knowledge and the kingdom of the most holy Virgin Mary, who brought Him into the world for the first time, and will make His second advent full of splendor.

## NOTES

1. Antiphon to the Blessed Virgin for Advent; also the hymn, *Ave Maris Stella*.
2. “. . . the word ‘divine’ may be used without attributing the nature of divinity to the person or thing thus qualified. We speak of our own prayers, whether addressed to God or to His saints, as a ‘divine service.’ The Psalmist speaks of us all as being gods and sons of the Most High; and yet no one takes offense, because the sense given to the words uttered is understood. Mary may be called ‘divine’ because divinely chosen for the divine office

of Mother” of a divine Person, Jesus Christ. (Cardinal Vaughan, Preface to the English edition of *True Devotion*).

3. St. Bonaventure, *Psalt. majus B. V.*, *Hymn. instar Ambrosiani*.
4. Quoted by St. Bonaventure, *Speculum B. V.*, lect. III, no. 5.
5. St. John Damascene, *Oratio Ia de Nativ. B. V.*
6. St. Eucherius.
7. Meaning insufficiently known, as the immediate context shows: “Jesus Christ is not known as He ought to be.”





## CHAPTER ONE

### *Necessity of the Blessed Virgin And of Devotion to Her*



14. I avow, with all the Church, that Mary, being a mere creature that has come from the hands of the Most High, is in comparison with His Infinite Majesty less than an atom; or rather, she is nothing at all, because only He is “He who is” (*Exod.* 3:14); consequently that grand Lord, always independent and sufficient to Himself, never had, and has not now, any absolute need of the holy Virgin for the accomplishment of His will and for the manifestation of His glory. He has but to will in order to do everything.

15. Nevertheless, I say that, things being as they are now—that is, God having willed to commence and to complete His greatest works by the most holy Virgin ever since He created her—we may well think He will not change His conduct in the eternal ages; for He is God, and He changes not, either in His sentiments or in His conduct.



—ARTICLE ONE—

*Mary Was Necessary to God  
in the Incarnation of the Word*

16. It was only through Mary that God the Father gave His Only-begotten to the world. Whatever sighs the patriarchs may have sent forth, whatever prayers the prophets and the saints of the Old Law may have offered up to obtain this treasure for full four thousand years, it was only Mary who merited it and found grace before God (*Lk.* 1:30) by the force of her prayers and the eminence of her virtues. The world was unworthy, says St. Augustine, to receive the Son of God directly from the Father's hands. He gave Him to Mary in order that the world might receive Him through her.

The Son of God became man for our salvation; but it was in Mary and by Mary. God the Holy Ghost formed Jesus Christ in Mary; but it was only after having asked her consent by one of the first ministers of His court.

17. God the Father communicated to Mary His fruitfulness, inasmuch as a mere creature was capable of it, in order that He might give her the power to produce His Son and all the members of His Mystical Body.

18. God the Son descended into her virginal womb as the New Adam into His terrestrial paradise, to take His pleasure there, and to work in secret marvels of grace.

God made Man find His liberty in seeing Himself imprisoned in her womb. He made His omnipotence shine forth in letting Himself be carried by that humble maiden. He found His glory and His Father's in hiding His splendors from all creatures here below, and revealing them to Mary only. He glorified His independence and His majesty in depending on that sweet Virgin in His conception, in His birth, in His presentation in the temple, in His hidden life of thirty years, and even in His death, where she was to be present in order that He might make with her but one same sacrifice and be immolated to the Eternal Father

by her consent, just as Isaac of old was offered by Abraham's consent to the will of God. It is she who nourished Him, supported Him, brought Him up and then sacrificed Him for us.

Oh, admirable and incomprehensible dependence of God, which the Holy Ghost could not pass over in silence in the Gospel, although He has hidden from us nearly all the admirable things which the Incarnate Wisdom did in His hidden life—as if He would enable us, by His revelation of that at least, to understand something of its excellence and infinite glory! Jesus Christ gave more glory to God the Father by submission to His Mother during those thirty years than He would have given Him in converting the whole world by the working of the most stupendous miracles. Oh, how highly we glorify God when, to please Him, we submit ourselves to Mary, after the example of Jesus Christ, our sole Exemplar!

19. If we examine closely the rest of our Blessed Lord's life, we shall see that it was His will to begin His miracles by Mary. He sanctified St. John in the womb of his mother, St. Elizabeth, but it was by Mary's word. No sooner had she spoken than John was sanctified; and this was His first miracle of grace.

At the marriage of Cana He changed the water into wine, but it was at Mary's humble prayer; and this was His first miracle of nature. He began and continued His miracles by Mary, and He will continue them to the end of ages by Mary.

20. God the Holy Ghost, being barren in God—that is to say, not producing another Divine Person—is become fruitful by Mary, whom He has espoused. It was with her, in her, and of her that He produced His Masterpiece, which is God made Man, and that He goes on producing daily, to the end of the world, the predestinate and the members of the Body of that adorable Head. This is the reason why He, the Holy Ghost, the more He finds Mary, His dear and inseparable spouse,<sup>1</sup> in any soul, the more active and mighty He becomes in producing Jesus Christ in that soul, and that soul in Jesus Christ.

21. It is not that we mean that our Blessed Lady gives the Holy

Ghost His fruitfulness, as if He had it not Himself. For inasmuch as He is God, He has the same fruitfulness or capacity of producing as the Father and the Son; only He does not bring it into action, as He does not produce another Divine Person. But what we mean is that the Holy Ghost chose to make use of our Blessed Lady, though He had no absolute need of her, to bring His fruitfulness into action, by producing in her and by her Jesus Christ and His members—a mystery of grace unknown to even the wisest and most spiritual among Christians.

—ARTICLE TWO—

*Mary Is Necessary to God  
in the Sanctification of Souls*

22. The conduct which the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity have deigned to pursue in the Incarnation and the first coming of Jesus Christ, They still pursue daily, in an invisible manner, throughout the whole Church; and They will still pursue it even to the consummation of ages in the last coming of Jesus Christ.

23. God the Father made an assemblage of all the waters and He named it the sea (*mare*). He made an assemblage of all His graces and he called it Mary (*Maria*).<sup>2</sup> This great God has a most rich treasury in which He has laid up all that He has of beauty and splendor, of rarity and preciousness, including even His own Son: and this immense treasury is none other than Mary, whom the saints have named the Treasure of the Lord,<sup>3</sup> out of whose plenitude all men are made rich.

24. God the Son has communicated to His Mother all that He acquired by His life and His death, His infinite merits and His admirable virtues; and He has made her the treasurer of all that His Father gave Him for His inheritance. It is by her that He applies His merits to His members, and that He communicates His virtues, and distributes His graces. She is His mysterious canal; she is His aqueduct, through which He makes His mercies flow gently and abundantly.

25. To Mary, His faithful spouse, God the Holy Ghost has

communicated His unspeakable gifts; and He has chosen her to be the dispenser of all He possesses, in such wise that she distributes to whom she wills, as much as she wills, as she wills and when she wills, all His gifts and graces. The Holy Ghost gives no heavenly gift to men which He does not have pass through her virginal hands. Such has been the will of God, who has willed that we should have everything through Mary; so that she who, impoverished, humbled, and who hid herself even unto the abyss of nothingness by her profound humility her whole life long, should now be enriched and exalted and honored by the Most High. Such are the sentiments of the Church and the holy Fathers.<sup>4</sup>

26. If I were speaking to the freethinkers of these times, I would prove what I have said so simply here, drawing it out more at length, and confirming it by the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, quoting the original passages, and adducing various solid reasons, which may be seen at length in the book of Father Poiré, *La Triple Couronne de la Ste. Vierge*. But as I speak particularly to the poor and simple, who being of good will, and having more faith than the common run of scholars, believe more simply and more meritoriously, I content myself with stating the truth quite plainly, without stopping to quote the Latin passages, which they would not understand. Nevertheless, without making much research, I shall not fail to bring forward some of them from time to time. But now let us go on with our subject.

27. Inasmuch as grace perfects nature, and glory perfects grace, it is certain that Our Lord is still, in Heaven, as much the Son of Mary as He was on earth; and that, consequently, He has retained the obedience and submission of the most perfect Child toward the best of all mothers. But we must take great pains not to conceive this dependence as any abasement or imperfection in Jesus Christ. For Mary is infinitely below her Son, who is God, and therefore she does not command Him as a mother here below would command her child who is below her. Mary, being altogether transformed into God by grace and by the glory which transforms all the saints into Him, asks nothing, wishes nothing, does nothing contrary to the eternal and immutable will of God. When

we read then in the writings of Sts. Bernard, Bernardine, Bonaventure and others that in Heaven and on earth everything, even God Himself, is subject to the Blessed Virgin,<sup>5</sup> they mean that the authority which God has been well pleased to give her is so great that it seems as if she had the same power as God; and that her prayers and petitions are so powerful with God that they always pass for commandments with His Majesty, who never resists the prayer of His dear Mother, because she is always humble and conformed to His will.

If Moses, by the force of his prayer, stayed the anger of God against the Israelites in a manner so powerful that the most high and infinitely merciful Lord, being unable to resist him, told him to let Him alone that He might be angry with and punish that rebellious people, what must we not, with much greater reason, think of the prayer of the humble Mary, that worthy Mother of God, which is more powerful with His Majesty than the prayers and intercessions of all the Angels and Saints both in Heaven and on earth?<sup>6</sup>

28. In the Heavens Mary commands the Angels and the blessed. As a recompense for her profound humility, God has empowered her and commissioned her to fill with saints the empty thrones from which the apostate angels fell by pride.<sup>7</sup> The will of the Most High, who exalts the humble (*Lk.* 1:52), is that Heaven, earth and Hell bend, with good will or bad will, to the commandments of the humble Mary,<sup>8</sup> whom He has made sovereign of Heaven and earth, general of His armies, treasurer of His treasures, dispenser of His graces, worker of His greatest marvels, restorer of the human race, Mediatrix of men, the exterminator of the enemies of God, and the faithful companion of His grandeurs and triumphs.

29. God the Father wishes to have children by Mary till the consummation of the world; and He speaks to her these words: "Dwell in Jacob" (*Ecclus.* 24:13); that is to say: Make your dwelling and residence in My predestined children, prefigured by Jacob, and not in the reprobate children of the devil, prefigured by Esau.

30. Just as in the natural and corporal generation of children there

are a father and a mother, so in the supernatural and spiritual generation there are a Father, who is God, and a Mother, who is Mary. All the true children of God, the predestinate, have God for their Father and Mary for their Mother. He who has not Mary for his Mother has not God for his Father. This is the reason why the reprobate, such as heretics, schismatics and others, who hate our Blessed Lady or regard her with contempt and indifference, have not God for their Father, however much they boast of it, simply because they have not Mary for their Mother. For if they had her for their Mother, they would love and honor her as a true child naturally loves and honors the mother who has given him life.

The most infallible and indubitable sign by which we may distinguish a heretic, a man of bad doctrine, a reprobate, from one of the predestinate, is that the heretic and the reprobate have nothing but contempt and indifference for Our Lady, endeavoring by their words and examples to diminish the worship and love of her, openly or hiddenly, and sometimes by misrepresentation. Alas! God the Father has not told Mary to dwell in them, for they are Esaus.

31. God the Son wishes to form Himself, and, so to speak, to incarnate Himself in His members every day, by His dear Mother, and He says to her: "Take Israel for your inheritance." (*Ecclus.* 24:13). It is as if He had said: God the Father has given Me for an inheritance all the nations of the earth, all men, good and bad, predestinate and reprobate. The ones I will lead with a rod of gold, and the others with a rod of iron. Of the ones, I will be the Father and the Advocate; of the others, the Just Punisher; and of all, the Judge. But as for you, My dear Mother, you shall have for your heritage and possession only the predestinate, prefigured by Israel; and as their Mother, you shall bring them forth and take care of them; and as their sovereign, you shall conduct them, govern them and defend them.

32. "This man and that man is born in her" (*Ps.* 86:5), says the Holy Ghost through the Royal Psalmist. According to the explanation of some of the Fathers,<sup>9</sup> the first man that is born in Mary is the

Man-God, Jesus Christ; the second is a mere man, the child of God and Mary by adoption. If Jesus Christ, the Head of men, is born in her, then the predestinate, who are the members of that Head, ought also to be born in her, by a necessary consequence. One and the same mother does not bring forth into the world the head without the members, or the members without the head; for this would be a monster of nature. So in like manner, in the order of grace, the head and the members are born of one and the same Mother; and if a member of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ—that is to say, one of the predestinate—were born of any other mother than Mary, who has produced the Head, he would not be one of the predestinate, nor a member of Jesus Christ, but simply a monster in the order of grace.

33. Besides this, Jesus being at present as much as ever the fruit of Mary—as Heaven and earth repeat thousands and thousands of times a day, “and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus”—it is certain that Jesus Christ is, for each man in particular who possesses Him, as truly the fruit and the work of Mary as He is for the whole world in general; so that if any one of the faithful has Jesus Christ formed in his heart, he can say boldly, “All thanks be to Mary! What I possess is her effect and her fruit, and without her I should never have had it.” We can apply to her more than St. Paul applied to himself the words: “I am in labor again with all the children of God, until Jesus Christ my Son be formed in them in the fullness of His age.” (Cf. *Gal.* 4:19).

St. Augustine, surpassing himself, and going beyond all I have yet said, affirms that all the predestinate, in order to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, are in this world hidden in the womb of the most holy Virgin, where they are guarded, nourished, brought up and made to grow by that good Mother until she has brought them forth to glory after death, which is properly the day of their birth, as the Church calls the death of the just. O mystery of grace, unknown to the reprobate, and but little known even to the predestinate!

34. God the Holy Ghost wishes to form elect for Himself in her and by her, and He says to her: “Strike the roots,” My Well-beloved

and My Spouse, “of all your virtues in My elect” (*Ecclus.* 24:13), in order that they may grow from virtue to virtue and from grace to grace. I took so much complacence in you when you lived on earth in the practice of the most sublime virtues, that I desire still to find you on earth, without your ceasing to be in Heaven. For this end, reproduce yourself in My elect, that I may behold in them with complacence the roots of your invincible faith, of your profound humility, of your universal mortification, of your sublime prayer, of your ardent charity, of your firm hope and of all your virtues. You are always My spouse, as faithful, as pure and as fruitful as ever. Let your faith give Me My faithful, your purity, My virgins, and your fertility, My temples and My elect.

35. When Mary has struck her roots in a soul, she produces there marvels of grace, which she alone can produce, because she alone is the fruitful Virgin who never has had, and never will have, her equal in purity and in fruitfulness.

Mary has produced, together with the Holy Ghost, the greatest thing which has been or ever will be—a God-Man; and she will consequently produce the greatest saints that there will be in the end of time. The formation and the education of the great saints who shall come at the end of the world are reserved for her. For it is only that singular and miraculous Virgin who can produce, in union with the Holy Ghost, singular and extraordinary things.

36. When the Holy Ghost, her Spouse, has found Mary in a soul, He flies there. He enters there in His fullness; He communicates Himself to that soul abundantly, and to the full extent to which it makes room for His spouse. Nay, one of the greatest reasons why the Holy Ghost does not now do startling wonders in our souls is because He does not find there a sufficiently great union with His faithful and inseparable spouse. I say “inseparable” spouse, because since that Substantial Love of the Father and the Son has espoused Mary, in order to produce Jesus Christ, the Head of the elect, and Jesus Christ in the elect, He has never repudiated her, because she has always been fruitful and faithful.



## Consequences

*I. Mary Is Queen of All Hearts*

37. We may evidently conclude, then, from what I have said, first of all, that Mary has received from God a great domination over the souls of the elect; for she cannot make her residence in them as God the Father ordered her to do, and, as their mother, form, nourish and bring them forth to eternal life, and have them as her inheritance and portion, and form them in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ in them, and strike the roots of her virtues in their hearts and be the inseparable companion of the Holy Ghost in all His works of grace—she cannot, I say, do all these things unless she has a right and a domination over their souls by a singular grace of the Most High, who, having given her power over His only and natural Son, has given it also to her over His adopted children, not only as to their bodies, which would be but a small matter, but also as to their souls.

38. Mary is the Queen of Heaven and earth by grace, as Jesus is the King of them by nature and by conquest. Now, as the kingdom of Jesus Christ consists principally in the heart or the interior of man—according to the words, “The kingdom of God is within you” (*Lk.* 17:21)—in like manner the kingdom of our Blessed Lady is principally in the interior of man; that is to say, his soul. And it is principally in souls that she is more glorified with her Son than in all visible creatures, and so we can call her, as the saints do, the Queen of All Hearts.

*II. Mary Is Necessary to Men*

39. In the second place we must conclude that, the most holy Virgin being necessary to God by a necessity which we call “hypothetical,” in consequence of His will, she is far more necessary to men, in order that they may attain their last end. We must not confuse devotion to the Blessed Virgin with devotions to the other saints, as if devotion to her

were not far more necessary than devotion to them, and as if devotion to her were a matter of supererogation.

1. Necessary to all men to attain salvation.

40. The learned and pious Jesuit, Suarez, the erudite and devout Justus Lipsius, doctor of Louvain, and many others have proved invincibly, from the sentiments of the Fathers (among others, St. Augustine, St. Ephrem, deacon of Edessa, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Germanus of Constantinople, St. John Damascene, St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Bernardine, St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure), that devotion to our Blessed Lady is necessary to salvation, and that (even in the opinion of Oecolampadius and some other heretics) it is an infallible mark of reprobation to have no esteem and love for the holy Virgin; while on the other hand, it is an infallible mark of predestination to be entirely and truly devoted to her.<sup>10</sup>

41. The figures and words of the Old and New Testaments prove this. The sentiments and the examples of the saints confirm it. Reason and experience teach and demonstrate it. Even the devil and his crew, constrained by the force of truth, have often been obliged to avow it in spite of themselves. Among all the passages of the holy Fathers and Doctors, of which I have made an ample collection in order to prove this truth, I shall for brevity's sake quote but one: "To be devout to you, O holy Virgin," says St. John Damascene, "is an arm of salvation which God gives to those whom He wishes to save."

42. I could bring forward here many anecdotes which prove the same thing, and among others one which is related in the chronicles of St. Francis. This same saint saw in ecstasy a great ladder ascending into Heaven, at the top of which stood the Blessed Virgin and by which it was shown him he must ascend to reach Heaven. There is another related in the chronicles of St. Dominic. There was an unfortunate heretic near Carcassonne, where St. Dominic was preaching the Rosary, who was possessed by a legion of fifteen thousand devils. These

evil spirits were compelled, to their confusion, by the command of our Blessed Lady, to avow many great and consoling truths touching devotion to the Blessed Virgin; and they did this with so much force and so much clearness that it is impossible to read this authentic account and the eulogy which the devil made, in spite of himself, of devotion to the most holy Virgin Mary, without shedding tears of joy, however lukewarm we may be in our devotion to her.

2. Still more necessary to those called  
to a special perfection.

43. If devotion to the most holy Virgin Mary is necessary to all men simply for working out their salvation, it is still more so for those who are called to any special perfection; and I do not think anyone can acquire an intimate union with Our Lord and a perfect fidelity to the Holy Ghost without a very great union with the most holy Virgin, and a great dependence on her assistance.

44. It is Mary alone who has found grace before God (*Lk.* 1:30) without the aid of any other mere creature; it is only through her that all those who have since found grace before God have found it at all; and it is only through her that all those who shall come afterward shall find it. She was full of grace when she was greeted by the Archangel Gabriel (*Lk.* 1:28), and she was superabundantly filled with grace by the Holy Ghost when He covered her with His unspeakable shadow (*Lk.* 1:35); and she has so augmented this double plenitude from day to day and from moment to moment that she has reached a point of grace immense and inconceivable—in such wise that the Most High has made her the sole treasurer of His treasures and the sole dispenser of His graces to ennoble, to exalt and to enrich whom she wishes; to give entry to whom she wills into the narrow way of Heaven; to bring whom she wills, and in spite of all obstacles, through the narrow gate of life; and to give the throne, the scepter and the crown of king to whom she wills. Jesus is everywhere and always the Fruit and the Son of Mary;

and Mary is everywhere the veritable tree who bears the Fruit of life, and the true Mother who produces it.<sup>11</sup>

45. It is Mary alone to whom God has given the keys of the cellars (*Cant.* 1:3) of divine love and the power to enter into the most sublime and secret ways of perfection, and the power likewise to make others enter in there also. It is Mary alone who has given to the miserable children of Eve, the faithless, entry into the terrestrial paradise; that they may walk there agreeably with God, hide there securely against their enemies, feed themselves there deliciously, without further fear of death, on the fruit of the trees of life and of the knowledge of good and evil, and drink in long draughts the heavenly waters of that fair fountain which gushes forth there with abundance; or rather, since she is herself that terrestrial paradise, that virgin and blessed earth from which Adam and Eve, the sinners, have been driven, she gives no entry there except to those whom it is her pleasure to make saints.

46. All the rich among the people, to make use of an expression of the Holy Ghost (*Ps.* 44:13) according to the explanation of St. Bernard—all the rich among the people shall supplicate her face from age to age, and particularly at the end of the world; that is to say, the greatest saints, the souls richest in graces and virtues, shall be the most assiduous in praying to our Blessed Lady, and in having her always present as their perfect model for imitation and their powerful aid for help.

### 3. Especially necessary to the great saints of the latter times.

47. I have said that this would come to pass, particularly at the end of the world and indeed presently,<sup>12</sup> because the Most High with His holy Mother has to form for Himself great saints who shall surpass most of the other saints in sanctity as much as the cedars of Lebanon outgrow the little shrubs, as has been revealed to a holy soul whose life has been written by M. de Renty.

48. These great souls, full of grace and zeal, shall be chosen to match themselves against the enemies of God, who shall rage on all sides; and they shall be singularly devout to our Blessed Lady, illuminated by her light, strengthened with her nourishment, led by her spirit, supported by her arm and sheltered under her protection, so that they shall fight with one hand and build with the other. With the one hand they shall fight, overthrow and crush the heretics with their heresies, the schismatics with their schisms, the idolaters with their idolatries and the sinners with their impieties. With the other hand they shall build (*Esd.* 4:7) the temple of the true Solomon<sup>13</sup> and the mystical city of God,<sup>14</sup> that is to say, the most holy Virgin, called by the Fathers the “Temple of Solomon” and the “City of God.” By their words and their examples they shall draw the whole world to true devotion to Mary. This shall bring upon them many enemies, but shall also bring many victories and much glory for God alone. This is what God revealed to St. Vincent Ferrer, the great apostle of his age, as he has sufficiently noted in one of his works.

This is what the Holy Ghost seems to have prophesied in the Fifty-eighth Psalm: “And they shall know that God will rule Jacob and all the ends of the earth; they shall return at evening and shall suffer hunger like dogs and shall go round about the city.” (*Ps.* 58:14-15). This city which men shall find at the end of the world to convert themselves in, and to satisfy the hunger they have for justice, is the most holy Virgin, who is called by the Holy Ghost the “City of God.” (*Ps.* 86:3).

## —ARTICLE THREE—

*Providential Function of Mary in the Latter Times*

49. It was through Mary that the salvation of the world was begun, and it is through Mary that it must be consummated. Mary hardly appeared at all in the first coming of Jesus Christ, in order that men, as yet but little instructed and enlightened on the Person of her Son, should not remove themselves from Him in attaching themselves too strongly and too grossly to her. This would have apparently taken place if she had been known, because of the admirable charms which the Most High had bestowed even upon her exterior. This is so true that St. Denis the Areopagite tells us in his writings that when he saw our Blessed Lady he would have taken her for a divinity, because of her secret charms and incomparable beauty, had not the Faith in which he was well established taught him the contrary.<sup>15</sup> But in the second coming of Jesus Christ, Mary has to be made known and revealed by the Holy Ghost in order that, through her, Jesus Christ may be known, loved and served. The reasons which moved the Holy Ghost to hide His spouse during her life, and to reveal her but very little since the preaching of the Gospel, subsist no longer.

*I. Existence of This Function and Reasons for It*

50. God, then, wishes to reveal and make known Mary, the masterpiece of His hands, in these latter times:

§ 1. Because she hid herself in this world and put herself lower than the dust by her profound humility, having obtained from God and from His Apostles and Evangelists that she should not be made manifest.

§ 2. Because, as she is the masterpiece of the hands of God, as well here below by grace as in Heaven by glory, He wishes to be glorified and praised in her by those who are living upon the earth.

§ 3. As she is the dawn which precedes and reveals the Sun of Justice, who is Jesus Christ, she must be seen and recognized in order that Jesus Christ may also be.

§ 4. Being the way by which Jesus came to us the first time, she will also be the way by which He will come the second time, though not in the same manner.

§ 5. Being the sure means and the straight and immaculate way to go to Jesus Christ and to find Him perfectly, it is by her that the souls who are to shine forth especially in sanctity have to find Our Lord. He who shall find Mary shall find life (*Prov.* 8:35), that is, Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. (*Jn.* 14:6). But no one can find Mary who does not seek her; and no one can seek her who does not know her; for we cannot seek or desire an unknown object. It is necessary, then, for the greater knowledge and glory of the Most Holy Trinity, that Mary should be more than ever known.

§ 6. Mary must shine forth more than ever in mercy, in might and in grace, in these latter times: in mercy, to bring back and lovingly receive the poor strayed sinners who shall be converted and shall return to the Catholic Church; in might, against the enemies of God, idolaters, schismatics, Mahometans, Jews and souls hardened in impiety, who shall rise in terrible revolt against God to seduce all those who shall oppose them and to make them fall by promises and threats; and finally, she must shine forth in grace, in order to animate and sustain the valiant soldiers and faithful servants of Jesus Christ, who shall battle for His interests.

§ 7. And lastly, Mary must be terrible to the devil and his crew, as an army ranged in battle, principally in these latter times,<sup>16</sup> because the devil, knowing that he has but little time, and now less than ever, to destroy souls, will every day redouble his efforts and his combats. He will presently raise up cruel persecutions and will put terrible snares before the faithful servants and true children of Mary, whom it gives him more trouble to conquer than it does to conquer others.

*II. Exercise of This Function*

## 1. In the struggle against Satan.

51. It is principally of these last and cruel persecutions of the devil, which shall go on increasing daily till the reign of Antichrist, that we ought to understand that first and celebrated prediction and curse of God pronounced in the terrestrial paradise against the serpent. It is to our purpose to explain this here for the glory of the most holy Virgin, for the salvation of her children and for the confusion of the devil: “I will put enmities between thee and the woman and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.” (*Gen.* 3:15).

52. God has never made and formed but one enmity; but it is an irreconcilable one, which shall endure and grow even to the end. It is between Mary, His worthy Mother, and the devil—between the children and the servants of the Blessed Virgin, and the children and tools of Lucifer. The most terrible of all the enemies which God has set up against the devil is His holy Mother Mary. He has inspired her, even since the days of the earthly paradise—though she existed then only in His idea—with so much hatred against that cursed enemy of God, with so much ingenuity in unveiling the malice of that ancient serpent, with so much power to conquer, to overthrow and to crush that proud, impious rebel, that he fears her not only more than all angels and men, but in a sense more than God Himself. Not that the anger, the hatred and the power of God are not infinitely greater than those of the Blessed Virgin, for the perfections of Mary are limited; but first, because Satan, being proud, suffers infinitely more from being beaten and punished by a little and humble handmaid of God, and her humility humbles him more than the divine power; and secondly, because God has given Mary such great power against the devils that—as they have often been obliged to confess, in spite of themselves, by the mouths of the possessed—they fear one of her sighs for a soul more



than the prayers of all the saints, and one of her threats against them more than all other torments.

53. What Lucifer has lost by pride, Mary has gained by humility. What Eve has damned and lost by disobedience, Mary has saved by obedience. Eve, in obeying the serpent, has destroyed all her children together with herself, and has delivered them to him; Mary, in being perfectly faithful to God, has saved all her children and servants together with herself, and has consecrated them to His Majesty.

54. God has not only set an enmity, but enmities, not simply between Mary and the devil, but between the race of the holy Virgin and the race of the devil; that is to say, God has set enmities, antipathies and secret hatreds between the true children and servants of Mary and the children and slaves of the devil. They have no love for each other. They have no sympathy for each other. The children of Belial, the slaves of Satan, the friends of the world (for it is the same thing) have always up to this time persecuted those who belong to our Blessed Lady, and will in the future persecute them more than ever; just as Cain, of old, persecuted his brother Abel, and Esau his brother Jacob, who are the figures of the reprobate and the predestinate. But the humble Mary will always have the victory over that proud spirit, and so great a victory that she will go so far as to crush his head, where his pride dwells. She will always discover the malice of the serpent. She will always lay bare his infernal plots and dissipate his diabolical councils, and even to the end of time will guard her faithful servants from his cruel claw.

But the power of Mary over all the devils will especially shine forth in the latter times, when Satan will lay his snares against her heel: that is to say, her humble slaves and her poor children, whom she will raise up to make war against him. They shall be little and poor in the world's esteem, and abased before all like the heel, trodden underfoot and persecuted as the heel is by the other members of the body. But in return for this they shall be rich in the grace of God, which Mary shall distribute to them abundantly. They shall be great and exalted before God in sanctity, superior to all other creatures by their lively zeal, and so well

sustained with God's assistance that, with the humility of their heel, in union with Mary, they shall crush the head of the devil and cause Jesus Christ to triumph.

2. In the formation of the apostles  
of the latter times.

55. In a word, God wishes that His holy Mother should be at present more known, more loved, more honored than she has ever been. This, no doubt, will take place if the predestinate enter, with the grace and light of the Holy Ghost, into the interior and perfect practice which I will disclose to them shortly. Then they will see clearly, as far as faith allows, that beautiful Star of the Sea. They will arrive happily in harbor, following its guidance, in spite of the tempests and the pirates. They will know the grandeurs of that Queen, and will consecrate themselves entirely to her service as subjects and slaves of love. They will experience her sweetness and her maternal goodness, and they will love her tenderly like well-beloved children. They will know the mercies of which she is full, and the need they have of her help; and they will have recourse to her in all things, as to their dear advocate and Mediatrix with Jesus Christ. They will know what is the surest, the easiest, the shortest and the most perfect means of going to Jesus Christ; and they will give themselves to Mary, body and soul, without reserve, that they may thus belong entirely to Jesus Christ.

56. But who shall those servants, slaves and children of Mary be?

They shall be the ministers of the Lord who, like a burning fire, shall kindle the fire of divine love everywhere.

They shall be "like sharp arrows in the hand of the powerful" Mary to pierce her enemies. (*Ps.* 126:4).

They shall be the sons of Levi, well purified by the fire of great tribulation, and closely adhering to God (*1 Cor.* 6:17), who shall carry the gold of love in their heart, the incense of prayer in their spirit, and the myrrh of mortification in their body. They shall be everywhere the

good odor of Jesus Christ to the poor and to the little, while at the same time, they shall be an odor of death to the great, to the rich and to the proud worldlings.

57. They shall be clouds thundering and flying through the air at the least breath of the Holy Ghost; who, detaching themselves from everything and troubling themselves about nothing, shall shower forth the rain of the Word of God and of life eternal. They shall thunder against sin; they shall storm against the world; they shall strike the devil and his crew; and they shall pierce through and through, for life or for death, with their two-edged sword of the Word of God (*Eph.* 6:17), all those to whom they shall be sent on the part of the Most High.

58. They shall be the true apostles of the latter times, to whom the Lord of Hosts shall give the word and the might to work marvels and to carry off with glory the spoils of His enemies. They shall sleep without gold or silver, and, what is more, without care, in the midst of the other priests, ecclesiastics, and clerics (*Ps.* 67:14); and yet they shall have the silvered wings of the dove to go, with the pure intention of the glory of God and the salvation of souls, wheresoever the Holy Ghost shall call them. Nor shall they leave behind them, in the places where they have preached, anything but the gold of charity, which is the fulfillment of the whole law. (*Rom.* 13:10).

59. In a word, we know that they shall be true disciples of Jesus Christ, walking in the footsteps of His poverty, humility, contempt of the world, charity; teaching the narrow way of God in pure truth, according to the holy Gospel, and not according to the maxims of the world; troubling themselves about nothing; not accepting persons; sparing, fearing and listening to no mortal, however influential he may be. They shall have in their mouths the two-edged sword of the Word of God. They shall carry on their shoulders the bloody standard of the Cross, the Crucifix in their right hand and the Rosary in their left, the sacred Names of Jesus and Mary in their hearts, and the modesty and mortification of Jesus Christ in their own behaviour.<sup>17</sup>

These are the great men who are to come; but Mary is the one who, by order of the Most High, shall fashion them for the purpose of extending His empire over that of the impious, the idolaters and the Mahometans. But when and how shall this be? God alone knows.<sup>18</sup>

As for us, we have but to hold our tongues, to pray, to sigh and to wait: "With expectation I have waited." (*Ps.* 39:2).

## NOTES

1. "*Sponsa Spiritus Sancti*" (St. Ildephonsus, *Liber de Corona Virginis*, caput III); "*Sponsus ejus Spiritus veritatis*" (Bellarmin., *Concio 2 super Missus est*).
2. St. Antoninus, *Summa*, p. IV, Tit. 15, cap. 4, no. 5.
3. *Idiota* (*In contemplatione B.M. V.*).
4. Cf., among others, St. Bernard and St. Bernardine of Siena, whom St. Louis De Montfort quotes further on. (No. 141 and 142).
5. For their exact words cf. no. 76.
6. St. Augustine, *Sermo 208, in Assumptione*, no. 12 (*inter opera Sti. Aug.*).
7. St. Bonaventure, *Speculum B. V.*, lect. XI, no. 6.
8. St. Bonaventure, *Psalt. majus B. V., Cant. instar, can. Trium puerorum*.
9. For instance, Origen and St. Bonaventure; cf. no. 141.
10. In his classic work entitled *The Glories of Mary*, the great Doctor of the Church, St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787) states that "the intercession of Mary is even necessary to salvation; we say necessary—not absolutely, but morally. This necessity proceeds from the will itself of God, that all graces that He dispenses should pass by the hands of Mary, according to the opinion of St. Bernard, and which we may now with safety call the general opinion of theologians and learned men." (p. 129, TAN edition). St. Alphonsus quotes St. Bernardine of Siena's words to the Blessed Virgin Mary: "O Lady, since thou art the dispenser of all graces, and since the grace of salvation can only come through thy hands, our salvation depends on thee." (p. 144).
11. Cf. no. 33.
12. St. Louis De Montfort may have believed, as many people of his time did, that the end of the world was at hand; perhaps, however, all he meant was that this would take place particularly at the end of the world, but would begin soon or presently. As a matter of fact, the century following the one in which he lived was one of increased Marian study and devotion.
13. *Idiota, De B. V.*, pars XVI, contempl. 7. (*S.A.*, X, 367). (The abbreviation *S.A.* refers to the *Summa Aurea*).
14. St. Augustine, *Enarratio in Ps.* 142, no. 3 (*S.A.*, IX, 1012).
15. *S.A.*, 842 (*Epistola ad Paulum*). Unauthentic.
16. It is worthy of note that today the increased efforts of the forces of evil are being countered by a corresponding increase of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, as evidenced by the remarkable growth of the Legion of Mary and the renewed interest in the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin.

17. Cf. prayer of St. Louis De Montfort asking God for missionaries for his Company of Mary (Montfort Fathers).
18. These words show that St. Louis De Montfort himself did not know all the circumstances of his own prophecy concerning the latter times.

*The* STORY  
*of a* SOUL

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## CHAPTER ONE

### *Early Childhood*

---

MY DEAREST Mother, it is to you, to you who are in fact a mother twice over to me, that I now confide the Story of my Soul. The day you asked me to do it, I thought it might be a distraction to me, but afterwards, Jesus made me realize that simple obedience would please Him best. So I am going to begin singing what I shall sing forever, “*the mercies of the Lord.*” (*Ps.* 88:1).

Before taking up my pen, I knelt before the statue of Mary, the one which has given us so many proofs that the Queen of Heaven watches over us as a mother. I begged her to guide my hand so that I should write only what would please her; then, opening the Gospels, my eyes fell on these words: “*Jesus, going up into a mountain, called unto Him whom He would Himself.*” (*Mark* 3:13).

The mystery of my vocation, of my entire life, and above all, of the special graces Jesus has given me, stood revealed. He does not call those who are worthy, but those He chooses to call. As St. Paul says: “*God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy; so then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.*” (*Cf. Rom.* 9:15-16).

For a long time I had wondered why God had preferences, why He did not give the same degree of grace to everyone. I was rather surprised

that He should pour out such extraordinary graces on great sinners like St. Paul, St. Augustine and so many others, forcing His grace on them, so to speak. I was rather surprised, too, when reading the lives of the Saints, to find Our Lord treating certain privileged souls with the greatest tenderness from the cradle to the grave, removing all obstacles from their upward path to Him, and preserving the radiance of their baptismal robe from the stains of sin. Also, I wondered why so many poor savages die without even hearing Our Lord's name. Jesus chose to enlighten me on this mystery. He opened the book of nature before me, and I saw that every flower He has created has a beauty of its own, that the splendor of the rose and the lily's whiteness do not deprive the violet of its scent nor make less ravishing the daisy's charm. I saw that if every little flower wished to be a rose, Nature would lose her spring adornments, and the fields would be no longer enameled with their varied flowers.

So it is in the world of souls, the living garden of the Lord. It pleases Him to create great Saints, who may be compared with the lilies or the rose; but He has also created little ones, who must be content to be daisies or violets, nestling at His feet to delight His eyes when He should choose to look at them. The happier they are to be as He wills, the more perfect they are.

I saw something further: that Our Lord's love shines out just as much through a little soul who yields completely to His Grace as it does through the greatest. True love is shown in self-abasement, and if everyone were like the saintly doctors who adorn the Church, it would seem that God had not far enough to stoop when He came to them. But He has, in fact, created the child, who knows nothing and can only make feeble cries, and the poor savage, with only the Natural Law to guide him; and it is to hearts such as these that He stoops. What delights Him is the simplicity of these flowers of the field, and by stooping so low to them, He shows how infinitely great He is. Just as the sun shines equally on the cedar and the little flower, so the Divine Sun shines equally on everyone, great and small. Everything is ordered

for their good, just as in nature the seasons are so ordered that the smallest daisy comes to bloom at its appointed time.

I expect you will be wondering, Mother, where all this is supposed to be leading, for so far I have not given you anything that looks much like my life story—but you did tell me to write quite freely whatever came into my head! So you will not find my actual life in these pages so much as my thoughts on the graces Our Lord has given me.

I have reached the stage now where I can afford to look back; in the crucible of trials from within and without, my soul has been refined, and I can raise my head like a flower after a storm and see how the words of the Psalm have been fulfilled in my case: "*The Lord is my Shepherd and I shall want nothing. He hath made me to lie in pastures green and pleasant; He hath led me gently beside the waters; He hath led my soul without fatigue . . . Yea, though I should go down into the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou, O Lord, art with me.*" (Cf. Ps. 22:1, 4).

Yes, "*the Lord hath always been compassionate and gentle with me, slow to punish and full of mercy.*" (Cf. Ps. 102:8). I feel really happy just to be able to tell you, Mother, of all the wonderful things He has done for me. Remember, I am writing for you alone the story of the *little flower* gathered by Jesus, and so I can speak unreservedly, not bothering about the style, nor about the digressions I shall make; a mother's heart always understands, even when her child can do no more than lisp, so I am quite sure that you, who prepared my heart and offered it to Jesus, will certainly do so.

If a little flower could talk, it seems to me it would say what God has done for it quite simply and without concealment. It would not try to be humble by saying it was unattractive and without scent, that the sun had destroyed its freshness or the wind its stem, when all the time it knew it was quite the opposite.

This flower, in telling her story, is happy to make known all the gifts that Jesus has given her. She knows quite well that He could not have been attracted by anything she had of her own. Purely out of mercy He

gave these gifts. It was He who caused her to be born on soil which had been abundantly blessed, where eight radiant lilies already bloomed, and where the fragrance of purity was ever about her. In His love, He wished to preserve her from the world's foul breath, and her petals were scarcely open when He transplanted her to the mountain of Carmel, to Mary's garden of delight.

Having told you so briefly what God has done for me, I will tell you in detail of my childhood. It may seem rather a dull story here and there, I know; but as you shared it all as I grew up at your side, as we shared the same saintly parents and together enjoyed their tenderness and care, I am sure it will not be without charm to your maternal heart.

I only hope they will bless their youngest child now and help her to sing the divine mercies.

The story of my soul before I entered Carmel can be divided into three definite periods. The first, though a short one, is rich in memories and extends from the dawn of reason to Mother's death—or in other words, until I was four years and eight months old. God graced me with intelligence at a very early age, and He so engraved the events of my childhood on my memory that it seems they happened only yesterday. Jesus wished, no doubt, that I should know and appreciate what a wonderful mother He had given to me, but sad to say, it was not long before His divine hand took her from me to be with Him in Heaven. He has surrounded me with love all my life; the first things I can remember are tender smiles and caresses, and while surrounding me with all this love, He gave me a warm and sensitive heart to respond to it. No one can imagine how I loved Father and Mother; I showed my affection for them in thousands of ways, for I was very demonstrative, and I can't help smiling, even now, when I think of some of the means which I used.

You let me keep the letters which Mother sent you when you were a boarder at the Visitation Convent of Le Mans. I remember quite clearly the incidents they referred to, but it is much easier just to quote certain passages of these charming letters. Dictated by a mother's love, they are

often far too flattering to me. As an example of the way I used to show my affection for my parents, take this letter of Mother's:

"Baby is such a little imp. In the midst of caressing me, she wishes I were dead! 'Poor darling Mamma, I do wish you were dead!' She is quite astonished when I scold her, and excuses herself by saying, 'It's only because then you will go to Heaven; you told me that you have to die to go there!' In the same way, she wishes her Father were dead, when her love gets the better of her.

"The little darling never wants to leave me. She always keeps close by me and loves to follow me about, especially when I go out into the garden. She refuses to stay when I am not there and cries so much that she has to be brought in. Similarly, she will not go upstairs by herself without calling to me at each step, 'Mother! Mother!' As many 'Mothers' as there are steps! And if by chance I forget to answer even once, 'Yes, darling,' she stops just where she is and won't go up or down."

I was almost three when she wrote:

"Little Thérèse asked me the other day if she is going to Heaven. 'Yes, if you're good, Darling,' I replied. 'If I am not,' she said, 'I suppose I shall go to Hell. If so, I know what I will do. I will fly away to you, because you will be in Heaven—then you will hold me tight in your arms. God could not take me away then!' I could see by her face that she was quite sure God could not do anything to her if she were hidden in her mother's arms.

"Marie loves her little sister dearly. She is such a joy to all of us and so utterly sincere. It is charming to see her running after me to confess: 'Mother, I pushed Céline once, and smacked her once, but I won't do it again.'

"As soon as she has done the least thing wrong, everyone has to know about it. Yesterday, by accident, she tore a little corner off the wallpaper and got into a pitiful state. She wanted to tell her father about it as soon as possible. By the time he came home four hours later, everyone else had forgotten all about it, but she ran to Marie saying, 'Quick! Tell Father that I tore the paper.' She stood like a criminal awaiting

sentence, but she had gotten the idea into her little head that he would forgive her more easily if she accused herself.”

Father’s name naturally brings back certain very happy memories. When he came home, I always used to run up to him and seat myself on one of his boots; he would then walk about with me like this wherever I wished, about the house and out in the garden. Mother used to laugh and say he would do whatever I wanted. “That is as it should be,” he replied. “She is the queen.” Then he used to take me in his arms, lift me up high to sit on his shoulder and make a tremendous fuss over me.

But I can’t say he spoiled me. I remember one day very well. I was playing on the swing when he happened to be going by, and he called out to me: “Come and give me a kiss, my little queen.” I did not want to move and—what was quite unlike me—answered mischievously, “You will have to come over here for it, Father!” He was wise enough to take no notice. Marie was there. “You naughty little thing,” she said, “how can you be so rude to your father! Get off at once.” I did get off my swing at once; I had really learned my lesson, and the whole house echoed with my cries of contrition. I ran upstairs and this time I did not call Mother at every step. I thought only of finding Father and making everything up, and that did not take very long.

I couldn’t bear to think I had hurt my darling parents and used to admit my faults at once. The following account of Mother’s will show how true this was: “One morning I wanted to kiss little Thérèse before going downstairs, but she seemed to be sound asleep, and I did not want to wake her up, until Marie said: ‘Mother, I’m sure she is only pretending to be asleep.’ I stooped down close to kiss her, but she hid herself under the sheet and said with the air of a spoiled child: ‘I don’t want anyone to see me.’ I was far from being pleased, and let her know it. Not two minutes had gone by before I heard crying, and soon, to my surprise, there she was by me. She had gotten out of her bed by herself and stumbled all the way downstairs in her bare feet, wearing a nightgown far too long for her. Her little face was covered with tears, and burying her head in my lap, she cried: ‘O Mother, I’ve been very

bad; please forgive me.’ She was forgiven at once. I took my little angel into my arms, held her to my heart and showered kisses on her.”

I remember how very fond I was of my Godmother, who had just finished at the Visitation. Without showing it, I took in everything that was going on around me and all that was said; and I think I passed the same sort of judgment on things as I do now. I listened very carefully to everything she taught Céline and used to do whatever she told me, if only she would let me stay in the room while lessons were going on. In her turn, she was always giving me presents, and though they were not of much value, they gave me immense pleasure.

I was very proud of my two big sisters, but you seemed far away, so I used to dream of you from morning till night. When I was just beginning to talk, Mother used to ask me: “What are you thinking about?” and my answer was always the same, “Pauline.” Sometimes I heard it said that you were going to be a nun, and without quite knowing what that meant, I said to myself. “I shall be a nun too.” That is one of the first things I can remember, and I have never changed my mind since. So it was your example which drew me to the Spouse of Virgins when I was only two! I could tell you so much of what you have meant to me, Mother, only I am afraid I should never stop.

Darling Léonie had a big place in my heart too, and she loved me. When she came home from school in the evening, she used to take care of me while everyone else went for a walk. Even now I can almost hear the little songs she used to sing so sweetly to lull me to sleep. I can remember her First Communion very clearly, and I can remember her companion too; she was poor, and following the custom of the well-to-do families of Alençon, Mother had dressed her. This child did not leave Léonie’s side for a moment that wonderful day, and at the grand dinner in the evening she was given the place of honor. I was too young to stay up, unfortunately, but I was not left out of the feast altogether, for Father, out of the goodness of his heart, came up to me during the dessert to bring his *little queen* a piece of the First Communion cake.

Last of all, I must tell you about Céline, who shared my childhood.

I have so many memories of her that I do not know which to choose first. We both understood each other perfectly, but I was more lively and much less naïve than she was. Here is a letter which will remind you how good Céline was. It was when I was about three and Céline six and a half.

“Céline seems to be quite naturally good, but as for the other little monkey, I don’t know what is to become of her, she is such a little madcap. She is intelligent enough, but not nearly so docile as her sister. When she says ‘no,’ nothing can make her change, and she can be terribly obstinate. You could keep her down in the cellar all day without getting a ‘yes’ out of her; she would rather sleep there.”

I had one fault Mother does not mention in her letters. I was very proud, and here are only two examples of it:

One day, wishing to see just how far my pride would take me, she said to me laughingly: “If you will kiss the ground, Thérèse, I will give you a halfpenny.” A halfpenny was a fortune to me in those days, and I did not have to stoop far to get it; I was so small that the ground was quite near. All the same, my pride was up in arms, and drawing myself up to my full height, I replied: “No, Mother! I’d rather go without the halfpenny.” The other time was when we were going to visit some friends in the country. Mother told Marie to put on my nicest dress, but not to let me have my arms bare. I did not say a word and tried to seem as indifferent about it as I should have been at that age, but inwardly I was saying to myself: “Why? I should look so much prettier if I had my arms bare.”

With tendencies like these, had I not been brought up by such wonderful parents, I am quite sure I should have gone from bad to worse and probably ended up by losing my soul. But Jesus was watching over His little bride and drew good even out of her faults, for as they were corrected very early, they helped her to grow more and more perfect.

I had a love for virtue, but I was proud too, so I only had to be told once: “You mustn’t do that,” and I never wanted to do it again. I am glad to see from Mother’s letters that I became more of a consolation



to her as I grew older. With only good example about me, it was only natural that I should tend to follow it. This is how she wrote in 1876: “Even Thérèse wants to start making sacrifices now. Marie has given each of the little ones a chaplet on which they can keep count of their good deeds. They have real spiritual conferences together. It is most amusing. Céline asked the other day: ‘How can God get into such a little Host?’ Thérèse answered her: ‘It’s not surprising, since Our Lord is almighty.’ ‘What does almighty mean?’ ‘It means He can do whatever He wants.’ But the most charming thing of all is to see Thérèse slip her hand into her pocket time and time again and move a bead along as she makes some sacrifice.

“These two children are inseparable and quite happy to be alone together. Not so long ago, their nurse gave Thérèse a small bantam cock and hen. She gave the cock to her sister at once. After dinner every evening Céline goes and catches the two birds, and then they sit together in the corner of the fireplace and play for hours. One morning, Thérèse decided to climb out of her own little bed and go and sleep in Céline’s. When the maid, who was looking for her to dress her, found her there, she put her arms around her sister, and hugging her tight, said, ‘Let me stay here, Louise—can’t you see we are just like the little white chickens; we must always be together.’”

It was quite true; I could not bear to be parted from Céline and would rather leave the table before I had finished my dessert than let her go without me. I would fidget about in my high chair, wanting to get down at once, so that we could go and play together.

Because I was still too little to go to Sunday Mass, Mother used to stay and look after me. I was very good and quiet as a mouse, until I heard the door open; then, simply bursting with joy, I rushed over to my darling sister, saying, “Quickly, Céline! Give me the blessed bread!” One day she had not brought any—what could be done? I could not go without it, for this little feast was my “Mass.” I had a wonderful idea: “You haven’t any blessed bread? Very well, then, make some!” She took the bread out of the cupboard and cut off a little piece;

then having solemnly recited a Hail Mary over it, she presented it to me triumphantly. Making the Sign of the Cross, I ate it with great devotion and was quite sure it tasted like the real blessed bread. Another day, Léonie, who thought she had outgrown playing with dolls, came to look for us both, carrying a basketful of their dresses, little bits of material and other curiosities, with her doll laid on top. "Here, my dears," she said to us, "choose what you want." Céline examined them all and took a ball of silk braid. After a moment's thought, I put out my hand saying: "I choose everything," and carried off the basket, doll and all, without more ado.

I think this trait of my childhood characterizes the whole of my life; and when I began to think seriously of perfection, I knew that to become a Saint, one had to suffer much, always aim at perfection and forget oneself. I saw that one could be a Saint in varying degrees, for we are free to respond to Our Lord's invitation by doing much or little in our love for Him; to choose, that is, among the sacrifices He asks. Then, just as before, I cried: I choose everything; my God, I do not want to be a Saint by halves. I am not afraid to suffer for Your sake; I only fear doing my own will, so I give it to You and choose everything You will."

But I am forgetting, Mother! I am supposed to be only three or four, and here I am talking about my adolescence!

I remember a dream I had at that age, which left a very deep impression: I was walking alone in the garden when suddenly I saw two horrible little devils near the arbor, dancing on a barrel of lime with amazing agility, in spite of having heavy irons on their feet. They looked at me with flaming eyes, then, as if overcome by fear, threw themselves in the twinkling of an eye to the bottom of the barrel. They escaped in some mysterious way and ran off to hide in the linen room, which opens onto the garden. When I saw how cowardly they were, I put my fears aside and went over to the window to see what they were up to. There the little wretches were, running round and round the table, and not knowing how to escape my gaze. From time to time they came

nearer, still very agitated, to peep through the window; then, when they saw I was still there, they began racing about again in abject misery.

I do not suppose this dream was very extraordinary, but I do think God made use of it to show me that a soul in the state of grace need never be afraid of the devil, who is such a coward that even the gaze of a child will frighten him away.

I was so happy at this age, Mother, not only because I was beginning to enjoy life, but also because virtue had begun to appeal to me. I think my dispositions were the same then as they are now. I had acquired considerable self-control already, for I never complained when any of my things were taken away from me, and if ever I were unjustly accused, I would keep silent rather than excuse myself. There was no real virtue in this on my part, for it came naturally.

How swiftly these sunny years of childhood passed, yet what delightful memories they left behind! I love to think of the days Father used to take us to the pavilion, and most of all those Sunday walks, when Mother came with us. I can still feel the deep and poetic impression which the wheat fields made on me when I saw them all studded with poppies and cornflowers and daisies. Even then I loved far distances, wide spaces and the trees. The whole of nature, in fact, enchanted me and raised my soul toward Heaven. During these long walks we often met poor people, and much to her delight, it was always little Thérèse who was sent to give them alms. On the other hand, much to her disgust, she was often taken home when Father thought the walk too long for his “little queen.” However, Céline used to fill her little basket with daisies and bring them home to console her.

The whole world smiled on me; wherever I went my path was strewn with flowers, and my own happy nature helped to make life all the more delightful, but a new period was soon to begin. Since I was to become the Spouse of Jesus so young, I had to suffer from childhood. Spring flowers begin to grow beneath the snow before they open to the sun, and the little flower I am writing about had to pass through the winter of trial, and have her fragile calix watered with the dew of tears.

DARK NIGHT  
*of the* SOUL

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## CHAPTER ONE

### *Begins with the First Stanza and Treats of the Imperfections of Beginners*

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- 1. Three states: beginners, proficient and perfect. 2. Beginners encouraged  
by sweetness. 3. Continuation. 4. Selfish spirituality of beginners.  
Work proportioned to habit. 5. Imperfections.*

#### *In a Dark Night*

SOULS begin to enter the dark night when God is drawing them out of the state of beginners, which is that of those who meditate on the spiritual road, and is leading them into that of proficient, the state of contemplatives, that, having passed through it, they may arrive at the state of the perfect, which is that of the divine union with God. That we may the better understand and explain the nature of this night through which the soul has to pass, and why God leads men into it, it may be well to touch first upon certain peculiarities of beginners, which, though treated in the briefest possible way, it is well for them to know,<sup>1</sup> that they may perceive the weakness of the state they are in, take courage, and desire to be led of God into this night, where the soul is established in virtue and made strong for the inestimable

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1. Lo cual, aunque será con, la brevedad que pudiere, no dejará de servir también á los mismos principiantes.

delights of His love. Though I shall dwell at some length upon this point, I shall do so no longer than suffices for the immediate discussion of this dark night.

2. We are to keep in mind that a soul, when seriously converted to the service of God, is, in general, spiritually nursed and caressed, as an infant by its loving mother, who warms it in her bosom, nourishes it with her own sweet milk, feeds it with tender and delicate food, carries it in her arms, and fondles it. But as the child grows up the mother withholds her caresses, hides her breasts, and anoints them with the juice of bitter aloes; she carries the infant in her arms no longer, but makes it walk on the ground, so that, losing the habits of an infant, it may apply itself to greater and more substantial pursuits.

3. The grace of God,<sup>2</sup> like a loving mother, as soon as the soul is regenerated in the new fire and fervor of His service, treats it in the same way; for it enables it, without labor on its own part, to find its spiritual milk, sweet and delicious, in all the things of God, and in devotional exercises great sweetness; God giving it the breasts of His own tender love, as to a tender babe. Such souls, therefore, delight to spend many hours, and perhaps whole nights, in prayer; their pleasures are penances, their joy is fasting, and their consolations lie in the use of the sacraments and in speaking of divine things.

4. Now spiritual men generally, speaking spiritually, are extremely weak and imperfect here, though they apply themselves to devotion, and practice it with great resolution, earnestness, and care. For being drawn to these things and to their spiritual exercises by the comfort and satisfaction they find therein, and not yet confirmed in virtue by the struggle it demands, they fall into many errors and imperfections in their spiritual life; for every man's work corresponds to the habit of perfection which he has acquired. These souls, therefore, not having had time to acquire those habits of vigor, must, of necessity, perform their acts, like children, weakly.

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2. *Wisdom* 16:25. In omnia transfigurata omnium nutrici gratæ tuæ deserviebat.

5. To make this more clear, and to show how weak are beginners in virtue in those good works which they perform with so much ease and pleasure, I proceed to explain by reference to the seven capital sins, pointing out some of the imperfections into which beginners fall in the matter of each of them. This will show us plainly how like children they are in all they do, and also how great are the blessings of this dark night of which I am about to speak;<sup>3</sup> seeing that it cleanses and purifies the soul from all these imperfections.

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3. Ch. XII. 2.

THE DIALOGUE *of*  
ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

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## A TREATISE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

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*How a soul, elevated by desire of the honor of God,  
and of the salvation of her neighbors, exercising herself  
in humble prayer, after she had seen the union of the soul,  
through love, with God, asked of God four requests.*

THE SOUL, who is lifted by a very great and yearning desire for the honor of God and the salvation of souls, begins by exercising herself, for a certain space of time, in the ordinary virtues, remaining in the cell of self-knowledge, in order to know better the goodness of God towards her. This she does because knowledge must precede love, and only when she has attained love, can she strive to follow and to clothe herself with the truth. But, in no way, does the creature receive such a taste of the truth, or so brilliant a light therefrom, as by means of humble and continuous prayer, founded on knowledge of herself and of God; because prayer, exercising her in the above way, unites with God the soul that follows the footprints of Christ crucified, and thus, by desire and affection, and union of love, makes her another Himself. Christ would seem to have meant this, when He said: *To him who will love Me and will observe. My commandment, will I manifest Myself; and he shall be one thing with Me and I with him.* In several places we find similar words, by which we can see that it is, indeed, through the effect of love, that the soul becomes another Himself. That this may be seen more clearly, I will mention what I remember having heard from a handmaid of God, namely, that, when she was lifted up in prayer, with great elevation of mind, God was not wont to conceal, from the eye

of her intellect, the love which He had for His servants, but rather to manifest it; and, that among other things, He used to say: “Open the eye of thy intellect, and gaze into Me, and thou shalt see the beauty of My rational creature. And look at those creatures who, among the beauties which I have given to the soul, creating her in My image and similitude, are clothed with the nuptial garment (that is, the garment of love), adorned with many virtues, by which they are united with Me through love. And yet I tell thee, if thou shouldest ask Me, who these are, I should reply” (said the sweet and amorous Word of God) “they are another Myself, inasmuch as they have lost and denied their own will, and are clothed with Mine, are united to Mine, are conformed to Mine.” It is therefore true, indeed, that the soul unites herself with God by the affection of love.

So, that soul, wishing to know and follow the truth more manfully, and lifting her desires first for herself—for she considered that a soul could not be of use, whether in doctrine, example, or prayer, to her neighbor, if she did not first profit herself, that is, if she did not acquire virtue in herself—addressed four requests to the Supreme and Eternal Father. The first was for herself; the second for the reformation of the Holy Church; the third a general prayer for the whole world, and in particular for the peace of Christians who rebel, with much lewdness and persecution, against the Holy Church; in the fourth and last, she besought the Divine Providence to provide for things in general, and in particular, for a certain case with which she was concerned.

*How the desire of this soul grew when  
God showed her the neediness of the world.*

THIS desire was great and continuous, but grew much more, when the First Truth showed her the neediness of the world, and in what a tempest of offense against God it lay. And she had understood this the better from a letter, which she had received from the spiritual Father of her soul, in which he explained to her the penalties and

intolerable dolor caused by offenses against God, and the loss of souls, and the persecutions of Holy Church.

All this lighted the fire of her holy desire with grief for the offenses, and with the joy of the lively hope, with which she waited for God to provide against such great evils. And, since the soul seems, in such communion, sweetly to bind herself fast within herself and with God, and knows better His truth, inasmuch as the soul is then in God, and God in the soul, as the fish is in the sea, and the sea in the fish, she desired the arrival of the morning (for the morrow was a feast of Mary) in order to hear Mass. And, when the morning came, and the hour of the Mass, she sought with anxious desire her accustomed place; and, with a great knowledge of herself, being ashamed of her own imperfection, appearing to herself to be the cause of all the evil that was happening throughout the world, conceiving a hatred and displeasure against herself, and a feeling of holy justice, with which knowledge, hatred, and justice, she purified the stains which seemed to her to cover her guilty soul, she said: "O Eternal Father, I accuse myself before Thee, in order that Thou mayest punish me for my sins in this finite life, and, inasmuch as my sins are the cause of the sufferings which my neighbor must endure, I implore Thee, in Thy kindness, to punish them in my person."

*How finite works are not sufficient for punishment or recompense without the perpetual affection of love.*

THEN, the Eternal Truth seized and drew more strongly to Himself her desire, doing as He did in the Old Testament, for when the sacrifice was offered to God, a fire descended and drew to Him the sacrifice that was acceptable to Him; so did the sweet Truth to that soul, in sending down the fire of the clemency of the Holy Spirit, seizing the sacrifice of desire that she made of herself, saying: "Dost thou not know, dear daughter, that all the sufferings, which the soul endures, or can endure, in this life, are insufficient to punish one smallest fault, because the offense, being done to Me, who am the Infinite Good,



calls for an infinite satisfaction? However, I wish that thou shouldest know, that not all the pains that are given to men in this life are given as punishments, but as corrections, in order to chastise a son when he offends; though it is true that both the guilt and the penalty can be expiated by the desire of the soul, that is, by true contrition, not through the finite pain endured, but through the infinite desire; because God, who is infinite, wishes for infinite love and infinite grief. Infinite grief I wish from My creature in two ways: in one way, through her sorrow for her own sins, which she has committed against Me her Creator; in the other way, through her sorrow for the sins which she sees her neighbors commit against Me. Of such as these, inasmuch as they have infinite desire, that is, are joined to Me by an affection of love, and therefore grieve when they offend Me, or see Me offended, their every pain, whether spiritual or corporeal, from wherever it may come, receives infinite merit, and satisfies for a guilt which deserved an infinite penalty, although their works are finite and done in finite time; but, inasmuch as they possess the virtue of desire, and sustain their suffering with desire, and contrition, and infinite displeasure against their guilt, their pain is held worthy. Paul explained this when he said: *If I had the tongues of angels, and if I knew the things of the future and gave my body to be burned, and have not love, it would be worth nothing to me.* The glorious Apostle thus shows that finite works are not valid, either as punishment or recompense, without the condiment of the affection of love.”

*How desire and contrition of heart satisfies, both for the guilt and the penalty in oneself and in others; and how sometimes it satisfies for the guilt only, and not the penalty.*

“I HAVE shown thee, dearest daughter, that the guilt is not punished in this finite time by any pain which is sustained purely as such. And I say, that the guilt is punished by the pain which is endured through the desire, love, and contrition of the heart; not by

virtue of the pain, but by virtue of the desire of the soul; inasmuch as desire and every virtue is of value, and has life in itself, through Christ crucified, My Only-begotten Son, in so far as the soul has drawn her love from Him, and virtuously follows His virtues, that is, His foot-prints. In this way, and in no other, are virtues of value, and in this way, pains satisfy for the fault, by the sweet and intimate love acquired in the knowledge of My goodness, and in the bitterness and contrition of heart acquired by knowledge of oneself and one's own thoughts. And this knowledge generates a hatred and displeasure against sin, and against the soul's own sensuality, through which, she deems herself worthy of pains and unworthy of reward."

The sweet Truth continued: "See how, by contrition of the heart, together with love, with true patience, and with true humility, deeming themselves worthy of pain and unworthy of reward, such souls endure the patient humility in which consists the above-mentioned satisfaction. Thou askest me, then, for pains, so that I may receive satisfaction for the offenses, which are done against Me by My creatures, and thou further askest the will to know and love Me, who am the Supreme Truth. Wherefore I reply that this is the way, if thou wilt arrive at a perfect knowledge and enjoyment of Me, the Eternal Truth, that thou shouldest never go outside the knowledge of thyself, and, by humbling thyself in the valley of humility, thou wilt know Me and thyself, from which knowledge thou wilt draw all that is necessary. No virtue, my daughter, can have life in itself except through charity, and humility, which is the foster-mother and nurse of charity. In self-knowledge, then, thou wilt humble thyself, seeing that, in thyself, thou dost not even exist; for thy very being, as thou wilt learn, is derived from Me, since I have loved both thee and others before you were in existence; and that, through the ineffable love which I had for you, wishing to re-create you to Grace, I have washed you, and re-created you in the Blood of My Only-begotten Son, spilt with so great a fire of love. This Blood teaches the truth to him, who, by self-knowledge, dissipates the cloud of self-love, and in no other way can he learn. Then the soul will

inflamm herself in this knowledge of Me with an ineffable love, through which love she continues in constant pain; not, however, a pain which afflicts or dries up the soul, but one which rather fattens her; for since she has known My truth, and her own faults, and the ingratitude of men, she endures intolerable suffering, grieving because she loves Me; for, if she did not love Me, she would not be obliged to do so; whence it follows immediately, that it is right for thee, and My other servants who have learnt My truth in this way, to sustain, even unto death, many tribulations and injuries and insults in word and deed, for the glory and praise of My Name; thus wilt thou endure and suffer pains. Do thou, therefore, and My other servants, carry yourselves with true patience, with grief for your sins, and with love of virtue for the glory and praise of My Name. If thou attest thus, I will satisfy for thy sins, and for those of My other servants, inasmuch as the pains which thou wilt endure will be sufficient, through the virtue of love, for satisfaction and reward, both in thee and in others. In thyself thou wilt receive the fruit of life, when the stains of thy ignorance are effaced, and I shall not remember that thou ever didst offend Me. In others I will satisfy through the love and affection which thou hast to Me, and I will give to them according to the disposition with which they will receive My gifts. In particular, to those who dispose themselves, humbly and with reverence, to receive the doctrine of My servants, will I remit both guilt and penalty, since they will thus come to true knowledge and contrition for their sins. So that, by means of prayer, and their desire of serving Me, they receive the fruit of grace, receiving it humbly in greater or lesser degree, according to the extent of their exercise of virtue and grace in general. I say then, that, through thy desires, they will receive remission for their sins. See, however, the condition, namely, that their obstinacy should not be so great in their despair as to condemn them through contempt of the Blood, which, with such sweetness, has restored them.

“What fruit do they receive?

“The fruit which I destine for them, constrained by the prayers of My servants, is that I give them light, and that I wake up in them the

hound of conscience, and make them smell the odor of virtue, and take delight in the conversation of My servants.

“Sometimes I allow the world to show them what it is, so that, feeling its diverse and various passions, they may know how little stability it has, and may come to lift their desire beyond it, and seek their native country, which is the Eternal Life. And so I draw them by these, and by many other ways, for the eye cannot see, nor the tongue relate, nor the heart think, how many are the roads and ways which I use, through love alone, to lead them back to grace, so that My truth may be fulfilled in them. I am constrained to do so by that inestimable love of Mine, by which I created them, and by the love, desire, and grief of My servants, since I am no despiser of their tears, and sweat, and humble prayers; rather I accept them, inasmuch as I am He who gives them this love for the good of souls and grief for their loss. But I do not, in general, grant to these others, for whom they pray, satisfaction for the penalty due to them, but, only for their guilt, since they are not disposed, on their side, to receive, with perfect love, My love, and that of My servants. They do not receive their grief with bitterness, and perfect contrition for the sins they have committed, but with imperfect love and contrition, wherefore they have not, as others, remission of the penalty, but only of the guilt; because such complete satisfaction requires proper dispositions on both sides, both in him that gives and him that receives. Wherefore, since they are imperfect, they receive imperfectly the perfection of the desires of those who offer them to Me, for their sakes, with suffering; and, inasmuch as I told thee that they do receive remission, this is indeed the truth, that, by that way which I have told thee, that is, by the light of conscience, and by other things, satisfaction is made for their guilt; for, beginning to learn, they vomit forth the corruption of their sins, and so receive the gift of grace.

“These are they who are in a state of ordinary charity, wherefore, if they have trouble, they receive it in the guise of correction, and do not resist overmuch the clemency of the Holy Spirit, but, coming out of their sin, they receive the life of grace. But if, like fools, they are un-

grateful, and ignore Me and the labors of My servants done for them, that which was given them, through mercy, turns to their own ruin and judgment, not through defect of mercy, nor through defect of him who implored the mercy for the ingrate, but solely through the man's own wretchedness and hardness, with which, with the hands of his free will, he has covered his heart, as it were, with a diamond, which, if it be not broken by the Blood, can in no way be broken. And yet, I say to thee, that, in spite of his hardness of heart, he can use his free will while he has time, praying for the Blood of My Son, and let him with his own hand apply It to the diamond over his heart and shiver it, and he will receive the imprint of the Blood which has been paid for him. But, if he delays until the time be past, he has no remedy, because he has not used the dowry which I gave him, giving him memory, so as to remember My benefits; intellect, so as to see and know the truth; affection, so that he should love Me, the Eternal Truth, whom he would have known through the use of his intellect. This is the dowry which I have given you all, and which ought to render fruit to Me, the Father; but, if a man barter and sells it to the devil, the devil, if he choose, has a right to seize on everything that he has acquired in this life. And, filling his memory with the delights of sin, and with the recollection of shameful pride, avarice, self-love, hatred, and unkindness to his neighbors (being also a persecutor of My servants), with these miseries, he has obscured his intellect by his disordinate will. Let such as these receive the eternal pains, with their horrible stench, inasmuch as they have not satisfied for their sins with contrition and displeasure of their guilt. Now, therefore, thou hast understood how suffering satisfies for guilt by perfect contrition, not through the finite pain; and such as have this contrition in perfection satisfy not only for the guilt, but also for the penalty which follows the guilt, as I have already said when speaking in general; and if they satisfy for the guilt alone, that is, if, having abandoned mortal sin, they receive grace, and have not sufficient contrition and love to satisfy for the penalty also, they go to the pains of Purgatory, passing through the second and last means of satisfaction.

“So thou seest that satisfaction is made, through the desire of the soul united to Me, who am the Infinite Good, in greater or lesser degree, according to the measure of love, obtained by the desire and prayer of the recipient. Wherefore, with that very same measure with which a man measures to Me, dost he receive in himself the measure of My goodness. Labor, therefore, to increase the fire of thy desire, and let not a moment pass without crying to Me with humble voice, or without continual prayers before Me for thy neighbors. I say this to thee and to the father of thy soul, whom I have given thee on earth. Bear yourselves with manful courage, and make yourselves dead to all your own sensuality.”

*How very pleasing to God is the willing desire to suffer for Him.*

“VERY pleasing to Me, dearest daughter, is the willing desire to bear every pain and fatigue, even unto death, for the salvation of souls, for the more the soul endures, the more she shows that she loves Me; loving Me she comes to know more of My truth, and the more she knows, the more pain and intolerable grief she feels at the offenses committed against Me. Thou didst ask Me to sustain thee, and to punish the faults of others in thee, and thou didst not remark that thou wast really asking for love, light, and knowledge of the truth, since I have already told thee that, by the increase of love, grows grief and pain, wherefore he that grows in love grows in grief. Therefore, I say to you all, that you should ask, and it will be given you, for I deny nothing to him who asks of Me in truth. Consider that the love of divine charity is so closely joined in the soul with perfect patience, that neither can leave the soul without the other. For this reason (if the soul elect to love Me) she should elect to endure pains for Me in whatever mode or circumstance I may send them to her. Patience cannot be proved in any other way than by suffering, and patience is united with love as has been said. Therefore bear yourselves with manly courage, for, unless you do so, you will not prove yourselves to be spouses of My Truth, and

faithful children, nor of the company of those who relish the taste of My honor, and the salvation of souls.”

*How every virtue and every defect is  
obtained by means of our neighbor.*

“**I** WISH also that thou shouldest know that every virtue is obtained by means of thy neighbor, and likewise, every defect; he, therefore, who stands in hatred of Me, does an injury to his neighbor, and to himself, who is his own chief neighbor, and this injury is both general and particular. It is general because you are obliged to love your neighbor as yourself, and loving him, you ought to help him spiritually, with prayer, counselling him with words, and assisting him both spiritually and temporally, according to the need in which he may be, at least with your goodwill if you have nothing else. A man therefore, who does not love, does not help him, and thereby does himself an injury; for he cuts off from himself grace, and injures his neighbor, by depriving him of the benefit of the prayers and of the sweet desires that he is bound to offer for him to Me. Thus, every act of help that he performs should proceed from the charity which he has through love of Me. And every evil also, is done by means of his neighbor, for, if he does not love Me, he cannot be in charity with his neighbor; and thus, all evils derive from the soul’s deprivation of love of Me and her neighbor; whence, inasmuch as such a man does no good, it follows that he must do evil. To whom does he evil? First of all to himself, and then to his neighbor, not against Me, for no evil can touch Me, except insofar as I count done to Me that which he does to himself. To himself he does the injury of sin, which deprives him of grace, and worse than this he cannot do to his neighbor. Him he injures in not paying him the debt, which he owes him, of love, with which he ought to help him by means of prayer and holy desire offered to Me for him. This is an assistance which is owed in general to every rational creature; but its usefulness is more particular when it is done to those who are close at hand, under

your eyes, as to whom, I say, you are all obliged to help one another by word and doctrine, and the example of good works, and in every other respect in which your neighbor may be seen to be in need; counselling him exactly as you would yourselves, without any passion of self-love; and he (a man not loving God) does not do this, because he has no love towards his neighbor; and, by not doing it, he does him, as thou seest, a special injury. And he does him evil, not only by not doing him the good that he might do him, but by doing him a positive injury and a constant evil. In this way sin causes a physical and a mental injury. The mental injury is already done when the sinner has conceived pleasure in the idea of sin, and hatred of virtue, that is, pleasure from sensual self-love, which has deprived him of the affection of love which he ought to have towards Me, and his neighbor, as has been said. And, after he has conceived, he brings forth one sin after another against his neighbor, according to the diverse ways which may please his perverse sensual will. Sometimes it is seen that he brings forth cruelty, and that both in general and in particular.

“His general cruelty is to see himself and other creatures in danger of death and damnation through privation of grace, and so cruel is he that he reminds neither himself nor others of the love of virtue and hatred of vice. Being thus cruel he may wish to extend his cruelty still further, that is, not content with not giving an example of virtue, the villain also usurps the office of the demons, tempting, according to his power, his fellow-creatures to abandon virtue for vice; this is cruelty towards his neighbors, for he makes himself an instrument to destroy life and to give death. Cruelty towards the body has its origin in cupidity, which not only prevents a man from helping his neighbor, but causes him to seize the goods of others, robbing the poor creatures; sometimes this is done by the arbitrary use of power, and at other times by cheating and fraud, his neighbor being forced to redeem, to his own loss, his own goods, and often indeed his own person.

“Oh, miserable vice of cruelty, which will deprive the man who practices it of all mercy, unless he turn to kindness and benevolence



towards his neighbor!

“Sometimes the sinner brings forth insults on which often follows murder; sometimes also impurity against the person of his neighbor, by which he becomes a brute beast full of stench, and in this case he does not poison one only, but whoever approaches him, with love or in conversation, is poisoned.

“Against whom does pride bring forth evils? Against the neighbor, through love of one’s own reputation, whence comes hatred of the neighbor, reputing oneself to be greater than he; and in this way is injury done to him. And if a man be in a position of authority, he produces also injustice and cruelty and becomes a retailer of the flesh of men. Oh, dearest daughter, grieve for the offense against Me, and weep over these corpses, so that, by prayer, the bands of their death may be loosened!

“See now, that, in all places and in all kinds of people, sin is always produced against the neighbor, and through his medium; in no other way could sin ever be committed either secret or open. A secret sin is when you deprive your neighbor of that which you ought to give him; an open sin is where you perform positive acts of sin, as I have related to thee. It is, therefore, indeed the truth that every sin done against Me, is done through the medium of the neighbor.”

*How virtues are accomplished by means of our neighbor, and  
how it is that virtues differ to such an extent in creatures.*

“**I** HAVE told thee how all sins are accomplished by means of thy neighbor, through the principles which I exposed to thee, that is, because men are deprived of the affection of love, which gives light to every virtue, In the same way self-love, which destroys charity and affection towards the neighbor, is the principle and foundation of every evil. All scandals, hatred, cruelty, and every sort of trouble proceed from this perverse root of self-love, which has poisoned the entire world, and weakened the mystical body of the Holy Church, and the universal body of the believers in the Christian religion; and, therefore, I said to

thee, that it was in the neighbor, that is to say in the love of him, that all virtues were founded; and, truly indeed did I say to thee, that charity gives life to all the virtues, because no virtue can be obtained without charity, which is the pure love of Me.

“Wherefore, when the soul knows herself, as we have said above, she finds humility and hatred of her own sensual passion, for she learns the perverse law, which is bound up in her members, and which ever fights against the spirit. And, therefore, arising with hatred of her own sensuality, crushing it under the heel of reason, with great earnestness, she discovers in herself the bounty of My goodness, through the many benefits which she has received from Me, all of which she considers again in herself. She attributes to Me, through humility, the knowledge which she has obtained of herself, knowing that, by My grace, I have drawn her out of darkness and lifted her up into the light of true knowledge. When she has recognized My goodness, she loves it without any medium, and yet at the same time with a medium, that is to say, without the medium of herself or of any advantage accruing to herself, and with the medium of virtue, which she has conceived through love of Me, because she sees that, in no other way, can she become grateful and acceptable to Me, but by conceiving hatred of sin and love of virtue; and, when she has thus conceived by the affection of love, she immediately is delivered of fruit for her neighbor, because, in no other way, can she act out the truth she has conceived in herself, but, loving Me in truth, in the same truth she serves her neighbor.

“And it cannot be otherwise, because love of Me and of her neighbor are one and the same thing, and, so far as the soul loves Me, she loves her neighbor, because love towards him issues from Me. This is the means which I have given you, that you may exercise and prove your virtue therewith; because, inasmuch as you can do Me no profit, you should do it to your neighbor. This proves that you possess Me by grace in your soul, producing much fruit for your neighbor and making prayers to Me, seeking with sweet and amorous desire My honor and the salvation of souls. The soul, enamored of My truth, never ceases to serve the

whole world in general, and more or less in a particular case according to the disposition of the recipient and the ardent desire of the donor, as I have shown above, when I declared to thee that the endurance of suffering alone, without desire, was not sufficient to punish a fault.

“When she has discovered the advantage of this unitive love in Me, by means of which, she truly loves herself, extending her desire for the salvation of the whole world, thus coming to the aid of its neediness, she strives, inasmuch as she has done good to herself by the conception of virtue, from which she has drawn the life of grace, to fix her eye on the needs of her neighbor in particular. Wherefore, when she has discovered, through the affection of love, the state of all rational creatures in general, she helps those who are at hand, according to the various graces which I have entrusted to her to administer; one she helps with doctrine, that is, with words, giving sincere counsel without any respect of persons, another with the example of a good life, and this indeed all give to their neighbor, the edification of a holy and honorable life. These are the virtues, and many others, too many to enumerate, which are brought forth in the love of the neighbor; but, although I have given them in such a different way, that is to say not all to one, but to one, one virtue, and to another, another, it so happens that it is impossible to have one, without having them all, because all the virtues are bound together. Wherefore, learn, that, in many cases I give one virtue, to be as it were the chief of the others, that is to say, to one I will give principally love, to another justice, to another humility, to one a lively faith, to another prudence or temperance, or patience, to another fortitude. These, and many other virtues, I place, indifferently, in the souls of many creatures; it happens, therefore, that the particular one so placed in the soul becomes the principal object of its virtue; the soul disposing herself, for her chief conversation, to this rather than to other virtues, and, by the effect of this virtue, the soul draws to herself all the other virtues, which, as has been said, are all bound together in the affection of love; and so with many gifts and graces of virtue, and not only in the case of spiritual things but also of temporal. I use the word temporal for

the things necessary to the physical life of man; all these I have given indifferently, and I have not placed them all in one soul, in order that man should, perforce, have material for love of his fellow. I could easily have created men possessed of all that they should need both for body and soul, but I wish that one should have need of the other, and that they should be My ministers to administer the graces and the gifts that they have received from Me. Whether man will or no, he cannot help making an act of love. It is true, however, that that act, unless made through love of Me, profits him nothing so far as grace is concerned. See then, that I have made men My ministers, and placed them in diverse stations and various ranks, in order that they may make use of the virtue of love.

“Wherefore, I show you that in My house are many mansions, and that I wish for no other thing than love, for in the love of Me is fulfilled and completed the love of the neighbor, and the law observed. For he, only, can be of use in his state of life, who is bound to Me with this love.”

*How virtues are proved and fortified by their contraries.*

“UP TO the present, I have taught thee how a man may serve his neighbor, and manifest, by that service, the love which he has towards Me.

“Now I wish to tell thee further, that a man proves his patience on his neighbor, when he receives injuries from him.

“Similarly, he proves his humility on a proud man, his faith on an infidel, his true hope on one who despairs, his justice on the unjust, his kindness on the cruel, his gentleness and benignity on the irascible. Good men produce and prove all their virtues on their neighbor, just as perverse men all their vices; thus, if thou consider well, humility is proved on pride in this way. The humble man extinguishes pride, because a proud man can do no harm to a humble one; neither can the infidelity of a wicked man, who neither loves Me, nor hopes in Me, when brought forth against one who is faithful to Me, do him any harm; his infidelity does not diminish the faith or the hope of him who

has conceived his faith and hope through love of Me, it rather fortifies it, and proves it in the love he feels for his neighbor. For, he sees that the infidel is unfaithful, because he is without hope in Me, and in My servant, because he does not love Me, placing his faith and hope rather in his own sensuality, which is all that he loves. My faithful servant does not leave him because he does not faithfully love Me, or because he does not constantly seek, with hope in Me, for his salvation, inasmuch as he sees clearly the causes of his infidelity and lack of hope. The virtue of faith is proved in these and other ways. Wherefore, to those who need the proof of it, My servant proves his faith in himself and in his neighbor, and so, justice is not diminished by the wicked man's injustice, but is rather proved, that is to say, the justice of a just man. Similarly, the virtues of patience, benignity, and kindness manifest themselves in a time of wrath by the same sweet patience in My servants, and envy, vexation, and hatred demonstrate their love, and hunger and desire for the salvation of souls. I say, also, to thee, that, not only is virtue proved in those who render good for evil, but, that many times a good man gives back fiery coals of love, which dispel the hatred and rancor of heart of the angry, and so from hatred often comes benevolence, and that this is by virtue of the love and perfect patience which is in him, who sustains the anger of the wicked, bearing and supporting his defects. If thou wilt observe the virtues of fortitude and perseverance, these virtues are proved by the long endurance of the injuries and detractions of wicked men, who, whether by injuries or by flattery, constantly endeavor to turn a man aside from following the road and the doctrine of truth. Wherefore, in all these things, the virtue of fortitude conceived within the soul, perseveres with strength, and, in addition proves itself externally upon the neighbor, as I have said to thee; and, if fortitude were not able to make that good proof of itself, being tested by many contrarieties, it would not be a serious virtue founded in truth."

ABANDONMENT  
*to* DIVINE  
PROVIDENCE

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## CHAPTER ONE

*Sanctity Consists in Fidelity to the Order Established by  
God, and in Submission to All His Operations.*

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### SECTION I—HIDDEN OPERATIONS OF GOD.

*Fidelity to the order established by God comprehended the  
whole sanctity of the . . . righteous under the old law;  
even that of St. Joseph, and of Mary herself.*

GOD continues to speak today as He spoke in former times to our fathers when there were no directors as at present, nor any regular method of direction. Then all spirituality was comprised in fidelity to the designs of God, for there was no regular system of guidance in the spiritual life to explain it in detail, nor so many instructions, precepts and examples as there are now. Doubtless our present difficulties render this necessary, but it was not so in the first ages when souls were more simple and straightforward. Then, for those who led a spiritual life, each moment brought some duty to be faithfully accomplished. Their whole attention was thus concentrated consecutively like a hand that marks the hours which, at each moment, traverses the space allotted to it. Their minds, incessantly animated by the impulsion of divine grace, turned imperceptibly to each new duty that presented itself by the permission of God at different hours of the day. Such were the hidden springs by which the conduct of Mary was actuated. Mary was



the most simple of all creatures, and the most closely united to God. Her answer to the angel when she said, “Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum,” contained all the mystic theology of her ancestors to whom everything was reduced, as it is now, to the purest, simplest submission of the soul to the will of God, under whatever form it presents itself. This beautiful and exalted state, which was the basis of the spiritual life of Mary, shines conspicuously in these simple words, “Fiat mihi” (Luke 1:38). Take notice that they are in complete harmony with those which Our Lord desires that we should have always on our lips and in our hearts: “Fiat voluntas tua.” It is true that what was required of Mary at this great moment was for her very great glory, but the magnificence of this glory would have made no impression on her if she had not seen in it the fulfillment of the will of God. In all things was she ruled by the divine will. Were her occupations ordinary, or of an elevated nature, they were to her but the manifestation, sometimes obscure, sometimes clear, of the operations of the most High, in which she found alike subject matter for the glory of God. Her spirit, transported with joy, looked upon all that she had to do or to suffer at each moment as the gift of Him who fills with good things the hearts of those who hunger and thirst for Him alone, and have no desire for created things.

## SECTION II—THE DUTIES OF EACH MOMENT.

*The duties of each moment are the shadows beneath  
which hides the divine operation.*

THE power of the most High shall over-shadow thee” (Luke 1:35), said the angel to Mary. This shadow, beneath which is hidden the power of God for the purpose of bringing forth Jesus Christ in the soul, is the duty, the attraction, or the cross that is presented to us at each moment. These are, in fact, but shadows like those in the order of nature which, like a veil, cover sensible objects and hide them from us. Therefore in the moral and supernatural order the duties of each moment conceal, under the semblance of dark shadows, the truth of

their divine character which alone should rivet the attention. It was in this light that Mary beheld them. Also these shadows diffused over her faculties, far from creating illusion, did but increase her faith in Him who is unchanging and unchangeable. The archangel may depart. He has delivered his message, and his moment has passed. Mary advances without ceasing, and is already far beyond him. The Holy Spirit, who comes to take possession of her under the shadow of the angel's words, will never abandon her.

There are remarkably few extraordinary characteristics in the outward events of the life of the most holy Virgin, at least there are none recorded in Holy Scripture. Her exterior life is represented as very ordinary and simple. She did and suffered the same things that anyone in a similar state of life might do or suffer. She goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth as her other relatives did. She took shelter in a stable in consequence of her poverty. She returned to Nazareth from whence she had been driven by the persecution of Herod, and lived there with Jesus and Joseph, supporting themselves by the work of their hands. It was in this way that the holy family gained their daily bread. But what a divine nourishment Mary and Joseph received from this daily bread for the strengthening of their faith! It is like a sacrament to sanctify all their moments. What treasures of grace lie concealed in these moments filled, apparently, by the most ordinary events. That which is visible might happen to anyone, but the invisible, discerned by faith, is no less than God operating very great things. O Bread of Angels! heavenly manna! pearl of the Gospel! Sacrament of the present moment! thou givest God under as lowly a form as the manger, the hay, or the straw. And to whom dost thou give Him? "Esurientes implevit bonis" (Luke 1:53). God reveals Himself to the humble under the most lowly forms, but the proud, attaching themselves entirely to that which is extrinsic, do not discover Him hidden beneath, and are sent empty away.

## SECTION III—THE WORK OF OUR SANCTIFICATION.

*How much more easily sanctity appears when  
regarded from this point of view.*

IF THE work of our sanctification presents, apparently, the most insurmountable difficulties, it is because we do not know how to form a just idea of it. In reality sanctity can be reduced to one single practice, fidelity to the duties appointed by God. Now this fidelity is equally within each one's power whether in its active practice, or passive exercise.

The active practice of fidelity consists in accomplishing the duties which devolve upon us whether imposed by the general laws of God and of the Church, or by the particular state that we may have embraced. Its passive exercise consists in the loving acceptance of all that God sends us at each moment.

Are either of these practices of sanctity above our strength? Certainly not the active fidelity, since the duties it imposes cease to be duties when we have no longer the power to fulfill them. If the state of your health does not permit you to go to Mass you are not obliged to go. The same rule holds good for all the precepts laid down; that is to say for all those which prescribe certain duties. Only those which forbid things evil in themselves are absolute, because it is never allowable to commit sin. Can there, then, be anything more reasonable? What excuse can be made? Yet this is all that God requires of the soul for the work of its sanctification. He exacts it from both high and low, from the strong and the weak, in a word from all, always and everywhere. It is true then that He requires on our part only simple and easy things since it is only necessary to employ this simple method to attain to an eminent degree of sanctity. If, over and above the Commandments, He shows us the counsels as a more perfect aim, He always takes care to suit the practice of them to our position and character. He bestows on us, as the principal sign of our vocation to follow them, the attractions of grace which make them easy. He never impels anyone beyond his

strength, nor in any way beyond his aptitude. Again, what could be more just? All you who strive after perfection and who are tempted to discouragement at the remembrance of what you have read in the lives of the saints, and of what certain pious books prescribe; O you who are appalled by the terrible ideas of perfection that you have formed for yourselves; it is for your consolation that God has willed me to write this. Learn that of which you seem to be ignorant. This God of all goodness has made those things easy which are common and necessary in the order of nature, such as breathing, eating, and sleeping. No less necessary in the supernatural order are love and fidelity, therefore it must needs be that the difficulty of acquiring them is by no means so great as is generally represented. Review your life. Is it not composed of innumerable actions of very little importance? Well, God is quite satisfied with these. They are the share that the soul must take in the work of its perfection. This is so clearly explained in Holy Scripture that there can be no doubt about it: “Fear God and keep the commandments, this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13), that is to say—this is all that is required on the part of man, and it is in this that active fidelity consists. If man fulfills his part God will do the rest. Grace being bestowed only on this condition the marvels its effects are beyond the comprehension of man. For neither ear has heard nor eye seen, nor has it entered the mind what things God has planned in His omniscience, determined in His will, and carried out by His power in the souls given up entirely to Him. The passive part of sanctity is still more easy since it only consists in accepting that which we very often have no power to prevent, and in suffering lovingly, that is to say with sweetness and consolation, those things that too often cause weariness and disgust. Once more I repeat, in this consists sanctity. This is the grain of mustard seed which is the smallest of all the seeds, the fruits of which can neither be recognized nor gathered. It is the drachma of the Gospel, the treasure that none discover because they suppose it to be too far away to be sought. Do not ask me how this treasure can be found. It is no secret. The treasure is everywhere, it is offered to us at all

times and wherever we may be. All creatures, both friends and enemies, pour it out with prodigality, and it flows like a fountain through every faculty of body and soul even to the very center of our hearts. If we open our mouths they will be filled. The divine activity permeates the whole universe, it pervades every creature; wherever they are it is there; it goes before them, with them, and it follows them; all they have to do is to let the waves bear them on.

Would to God that kings, and their ministers, princes of the Church and of the world, priests and soldiers, the peasantry and laborers, in a word, all men could know how very easy it would be for them to arrive at a high degree of sanctity. They would only have to fulfill the simple duties of Christianity and of their state of life; to embrace with submission the crosses belonging to that state, and to submit with faith and love to the designs of Providence in all those things that have to be done or suffered without going out of their way to seek occasions for themselves. This is the spirit by which the patriarchs and prophets were animated and sanctified before there were so many systems of so many masters of the spiritual life.\* This is the spirituality of all ages and of every state. No state of life can, assuredly, be sanctified in a more exalted manner, nor in a more wonderful and easy way than by the simple use of the means that God, the sovereign director of souls, gives them to do or to suffer at each moment.

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\* It would be a mistaken idea of the meaning of the author to imagine that he would urge anyone to undertake to lead a spiritual life without the guidance of a director. He explains expressly elsewhere that in order to be able to do without a director one must have been habitually and for a long time under direction. Less still does he endeavor to bring into disrepute the means made use of by the Church for the extirpation of vice and the acquisition of virtue. His meaning, of which Christians cannot be too often reminded, is that of all direction the best is that of divine Providence and that the most necessary and the most sanctifying of all practices is that of fulfilling faithfully and accepting lovingly whatever this paternal Providence ordains that we should do or suffer.

## SECTION IV—IN WHAT PERFECTION CONSISTS.

*Perfection consists in doing the will of God,  
not in understanding His designs.*

THE designs of God, the good pleasure of God, the will of God, the operation of God and the gift of His grace are all one and the same thing in the spiritual life. It is God working in the soul to make it like unto Himself. Perfection is neither more nor less than the faithful co-operation of the soul with this work of God, and is begun, grows, and is consummated in the soul unperceived and in secret. The science of theology is full of theories and explanations of the wonders of this state in each soul according to its capacity. One may be conversant with all these speculations, speak and write about them admirably, instruct others and guide souls; yet, if these theories are only in the mind, one is, compared with those who, without any knowledge of these theories, receive the meaning of the designs of God and do His holy will, like a sick physician compared to simple people in perfect health. The designs of God and his divine will accepted by a faithful soul with simplicity produces this divine state in it without its knowledge, just as a medicine taken obediently will produce health, although the sick person neither knows nor wishes to know anything about medicine. As fire gives out heat, and not philosophical discussions about it, nor knowledge of its effects, so the designs of God and His holy will work in the soul for its sanctification, and not speculations of curiosity as to this principle and this state. When one is thirsty one quenches one's thirst by drinking, not by reading books which treat of this condition. The desire to know does but increase this thirst. Therefore when one thirsts after sanctity, the desire to know about it only drives it further away. Speculation must be laid aside, and everything arranged by God as regards actions and sufferings must be accepted with simplicity, for those things that happen at each moment by the divine command or permission are always the most holy, the best and the most divine for us.

## SECTION V—THE DIVINE INFLUENCE ALONE CAN SANCTIFY US.

*No reading, nor any other exercise can sanctify us except in so far as they are the channels of the divine influence.*

OUR whole science consists in recognizing the designs of God for the present moment. All reading not intended for us by God is dangerous. It is by doing the will of God and obeying His holy inspirations that we obtain grace, and this grace works in our hearts through our reading or any other employment. Apart from God reading is empty and vain and, being deprived for us of the life-giving power of the action of God, only succeeds in emptying the heart by the very fullness it gives to the mind.

This divine will, working in the soul of a simple ignorant girl by means of sufferings and actions of a very ordinary nature, produces a state of supernatural life without the mind being filled with self-exalting ideas; whereas the proud man who studies spiritual books merely out of curiosity receives no more than the dead letter into his mind, and the will of God having no connection with his reading his heart becomes ever harder and more withered.

The order established by God and His divine will are the life of the soul no matter in what way they work, or are obeyed. Whatever connection the divine will has with the mind, it nourishes the soul, and continually enlarges it by giving it what is best for it at every moment. It is neither one thing nor another which produces these happy effects, but what God has willed for each moment. What was best for the moment that has passed is so no longer because it is no longer the will of God which, becoming apparent through other circumstances, brings to light the duty of the present moment. It is this duty under whatever guise it presents itself which is precisely that which is the most sanctifying for the soul. If, by the divine will, it is a present duty to read, then reading will produce the destined effect in the soul. If it is the divine will that reading be relinquished for contemplation, then this

will perform the work of God in the soul and reading would become useless and prejudicial. Should the divine will withdraw the soul from contemplation for the hearing of confessions, etc., and that even for some considerable time, this duty becomes the means of uniting the soul with Jesus Christ and all the sweetness of contemplation would only serve to destroy this union. Our moments are made fruitful by our fulfillment of the will of God. This is presented to us in countless different ways by the present duty which forms, increases, and consummates in us the new man until we attain the plenitude destined for us by the divine wisdom. This mysterious attainment of the age of Jesus Christ in our souls is the end ordained by God and the fruit of His grace and of His divine goodness.

This fruit, as we have already said, is produced, nourished and increased by the performance of those duties which become successively present, and which are made fruitful by the same divine will.

In fulfilling these duties we are always sure of possessing the “better part” because this holy will is itself the better part, it only requires to be allowed to act and that we should abandon ourselves blindly to it with perfect confidence. It is infinitely wise, powerful and amiable to those who trust themselves unreservedly to it, who love and seek it alone, and who believe with an unshaken faith and confidence that what it arranges for each moment is best, without seeking elsewhere for more or less, and without pausing to consider the connection of these exterior works with the plans of God: this would be the refinement of self-love.

Nothing is essential, real, or of any value unless ordained by God who arranges all things and makes them useful to the soul. Apart from this divine will all is hollow, empty, null, there is nothing but falsehood, vanity, nothingness, death. The will of God is the salvation, health and life of body and soul, no matter to what subject it is applied. One must not, therefore, scrutinize too closely the suitability of things to mind or body in order to form a judgment of their value, because this is of little importance. It is the will of God which bestows through these things, no matter what they may be, an efficacious grace by which the image



of Jesus Christ is renewed in our souls. One must not lay down the law nor impose limits on this divine will since it is all-powerful.

Whatever ideas may fill the mind, whatever feelings afflict the body; even if the mind should be tormented with distractions and troubles, and the body with sickness and pain, nevertheless the divine will is ever for the present moment the life of the soul and of the body; in fact, neither the one nor the other, no matter in what condition it may be, can be sustained by any other power.

The divine influence alone can sanctify us. Without it bread may be poison, and poison a salutary remedy. Without it reading only darkens the mind; with it darkness is made light. It is everything that is good and true in all things, and in all things it unites us to God, who, being infinite in all perfections, leaves nothing to be desired by the soul that possesses Him.

## SECTION VI—ON THE USE OF MENTAL FACULTIES.

*The exercise of mental and other faculties is only useful  
when instrumental of the divine action.*

THE mind with all the consequences of its activity might take the foremost rank among the tools employed by God, but has to be deputed to the lowest as a dangerous slave. It might be of great service if made use of in a right manner, but is a danger if not kept in subjection. When the soul longs for outward help it is made to understand that the divine action is sufficient for it. When without reason it would disclaim this outward help, the divine action shows it that such help should be received and adapted with simplicity in obedience to the order established by God, and that we should use it as a tool, not for its own sake but as though we used it not, and when deprived of all help as though we wanted nothing.

The divine action although of infinite power can only take full possession of the soul in so far as it is void of all confidence in its own action; for this confidence, being founded on a false idea of its own

capacity, excludes the divine action. This is the obstacle most likely to arrest it, being in the soul itself; for, as regards obstacles that are exterior, God can change them if He so pleases into means for making progress. All is alike to Him, equally useful, or equally useless. Without the divine action all things are as nothing, and with it the veriest nothing can be turned to account.

Whether it be meditation, contemplation, vocal prayer, interior silence, or the active use of any of the faculties, either sensible and distinct, or almost imperceptible; quiet retreat, or active employment, whatever it may be in itself, even if very desirable, that which God wills for the present moment is best and all else must be regarded by the soul as being nothing at all. Thus, beholding God in all things it must take or leave them all as He pleases, and neither desire to live, nor to improve, nor to hope, except as He ordains, and never by the help of things which have neither power nor virtue except from Him. It ought, at every moment and on all occasions, to say with St. Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6) without choosing this thing or that, but "whatsoever You will. The mind prefers one thing, the body another, but, Lord, I desire nothing but to accomplish Your holy will. Work, contemplation or prayer whether vocal or mental, active or passive; the prayer of faith or of understanding; that which is distinguished in kind, or gifted with universal grace: it is all nothing Lord unless made real and useful by Your will. It is to Your holy will that I devote myself and not to any of these things, however high and sublime they may be, because it is the perfection of the heart for which grace is given, and not for that of the mind."

The presence of God which sanctifies our souls is the dwelling of the Holy Trinity in the depths of our hearts when they submit to His holy will. The act of the presence of God made in contemplation effects this intimate union only like other acts that are according to the order of God.

There is, therefore, nothing unlawful in the love and esteem we have for contemplation and other pious exercises, if this love and es-

teem are directed entirely to the God of all goodness who willingly makes use of these means to unite our souls to Himself.

In entertaining the suite of a prince, one entertains the prince himself, and he would consider any discourtesy shown to his officers under pretense of wishing for him alone as an insult to himself.

## SECTION VII—ON THE ATTAINMENT OF PEACE.

*There is no solid peace except in submission to the divine action.*

THE soul that does not attach itself solely to the will of God will find neither satisfaction nor sanctification in any other means however excellent by which it may attempt to gain them. If that which God Himself chooses for you does not content you, from whom do you expect to obtain what you desire? If you are disgusted with the meat prepared for you by the divine will itself, what food would not be insipid to so depraved a taste? No soul can be really nourished, fortified, purified, enriched, and sanctified except in fulfilling the duties of the present moment. What more would you have? As in this you can find all good, why seek it elsewhere? Do you know better than God? As he ordains it thus why do you desire it differently? Can His wisdom and goodness be deceived? When you find something to be in accordance with this divine wisdom and goodness ought you not to conclude that it must needs be excellent? Do you imagine you will find peace in resisting the Almighty? Is it not, on the contrary, this resistance which we too often continue without owning it even to ourselves which is the cause of all our troubles? It is only just, therefore, that the soul that is dissatisfied with the divine action for each present moment should be punished by being unable to find happiness in anything else. If books, the example of the saints, and spiritual conversations deprive the soul of peace; if they fill the mind without satisfying it; it is a sign that one has strayed from the path of pure abandonment to the divine action, and that one is only seeking to please oneself. To be employed in this way is to prevent God from finding an entrance. All this must

be got rid of because of being an obstacle to grace. But if the divine will ordains the use of these things the soul may receive them like the rest—that is to say—as the means ordained by God which it accepts simply to use, and leaves afterwards when their moment has passed for the duties of the moment that follows. There is, in fact, nothing really good that does not emanate from the ordinance of God, and nothing, however good in itself, can be better adapted for the sanctification of the soul and the attainment of peace.

### SECTION VIII—TO ESTIMATE DEGREES OF EXCELLENCE.

*The perfection of souls, and the degree of excellence  
to which they have attained can be gauged by their  
fidelity to the order established by God.*

THE will of God gives to all things a supernatural and divine value for the soul submitting to it. The duties it imposes, and those it contains, with all the matters over which it is diffused, become holy and perfect, because, being unlimited in power, everything it touches shares its divine character. But in order not to stray either to the right or to the left the soul should only attend to those inspirations which it believes it has received from God, by the fact that these inspirations do not withdraw it from the duties of its state. Those duties are the most clear manifestation of the will of God, and nothing should take their place; in them there is nothing to fear, nothing to exclude, nor anything to be chosen. The time occupied in the fulfillment of these duties is very precious and very salutary for the soul by the indubitable fact that it is spent in accomplishing this holy will. The entire virtue of all that is called holy is in its approximation to this order established by God; therefore nothing should be rejected, nothing sought after, but everything accepted that is ordained and nothing attempted contrary to the will of God.

Books and wise counsels, vocal prayer and interior affections if they are in accordance with the will of God are instructive, and all help

to guide and to unify. In contemning all sensible means to this end quietism is greatly to blame, for there are souls that are intended by God to keep always to this way. Their state of life and their attraction show this clearly enough. It is vain to picture any kind of abandonment from which all personal activity is excluded. When God requires action, sanctity is to be found in activity. Besides the duties imposed on everyone by their state of life God may require certain actions which are not included in these duties, although they may not be in any way opposed to them. An attraction and inspiration are then the signs of the divine approval. Souls conducted by God in this way will find a greater perfection in adding the things inspired to those that are commanded, taking the necessary precautions required in such cases, that the duties of their state may not clash with those things arranged by Providence.

God makes saints as He pleases, but they are made always according to His plan, and in submission to His will. This submission is true and most perfect abandonment.

Duties imposed by the state of life and by divine Providence are common to all the saints and are what God arranges for all in general. They live hidden from the world which is so evil that they are obliged to avoid its dangers: but it is not on this account that they are saints, but only on account of their submission to the will of God. The more absolute this submission becomes the higher becomes their sanctity. We must not imagine that those whose virtue is shown in wonderful and singular ways, and by unquestionable attractions and inspirations, advance less on that account in the way of abandonment. From the moment that these acts become duties by the will of God, then to be content only to fulfill the duties of a state of life, or the ordinary inspirations of Providence would be to resist God, whose holy will would no longer retain the mastery of the passing moments, and to cease practicing the virtue of abandonment. Our duties must be so arranged as to be commensurate with the designs of God, and to follow the path designated by our attraction. To carry out our inspirations will then

become a duty to which we must be faithful. As there are souls whose whole duty is defined by exterior laws, and who should not go beyond them because restricted by the will of God; so also there are others who, besides exterior duties, are obliged to carry out faithfully that interior rule imprinted on their hearts. It would be a foolish and frivolous curiosity to try to discover which is the most holy. Each has to follow the appointed path. Perfection consists in submitting unreservedly to the designs of God, and in fulfilling the duties of one's state in the most perfect manner possible. To compare the different states as they are in themselves can do nothing to improve us, since it is neither in the amount of work, nor in the sort of duties given to us that perfection is to be found. If self-love is the motive power of our acts, or if it be not immediately crushed when discovered, our supposed abundance will be in truth absolute poverty because it is not supplied by obedience to the will of God. However, to decide the question in some way, I think that holiness can be measured by the love one has for God, and the desire to please Him, and that the more His will is the guiding principle, and His plans conformed to and loved, the greater will be the holiness, no matter what may be the means made use of. It is this that we notice in Jesus, Mary and Joseph. In their separate lives there is more of love than of greatness, and more of the spirit than of the matter. It is not written that they sought holiness in things themselves, but only in the motive with which they used them. It must therefore be concluded that one way is not more perfect than another, but that the most perfect is that which is most closely in conformity with the order established by God, whether by the accomplishment of exterior duties, or by interior dispositions.

## SECTION IX—SANCTITY MADE EASY.

*Conclusion of the first chapter. How easy sanctity becomes  
when this doctrine is properly understood.*

I BELIEVE that if those souls that tend towards sanctity were instructed as to the conduct they ought to follow, they would be spared a good deal of trouble. I speak as much of people in the world as of others. If they could realize the merit concealed in the actions of each moment of the day: I mean in each of the daily duties of their state of life, and if they could be persuaded that sanctity is founded on that to which they give no heed as being altogether irrelevant, they would indeed be happy. If, besides, they understood that to attain the utmost height of perfection, the safest and surest way is to accept the crosses sent them by Providence at every moment, that the true philosopher's stone is submission to the will of God which changes into divine gold all their occupations, troubles, and sufferings, what consolation would be theirs! What courage would they not derive from the thought that to acquire the friendship of God, and to arrive at eternal glory, they had but to do what they were doing, but to suffer what they were suffering, and that what they wasted and counted as nothing would suffice to enable them to arrive at eminent sanctity: far more so than extraordinary states and wonderful works. O my God! how much I long to be the missionary of Your holy will, and to teach all men that there is nothing more easy, more attainable, more within reach, and in the power of everyone, than sanctity. How I wish that I could make them understand that just as the good and the bad thief had the same things to do and to suffer; so also two persons, one of whom is worldly and the other leading an interior and wholly spiritual life have, neither of them, anything different to do or to suffer; but that one is sanctified and attains eternal happiness by submission to Your holy will in those very things by which the other is damned because he does them to please himself, or endures them with reluctance and rebellion. This proves that it is only the heart that is different. Oh! all you that read

this, it will cost you no more than to do what you are doing, to suffer what you are suffering, only act and suffer in a holy manner. It is the heart that must be changed. When I say heart, I mean will. Sanctity, then, consists in willing all that God wills for us. Yes! sanctity of heart is a simple “fiat,” a conformity of will with the will of God.

What could be more easy, and who could refuse to love a will so kind and so good? Let us love it then, and this love alone will make everything in us divine.



*The* SPIRITUAL EXERCISES  
*of* SAINT IGNATIUS  
*or* MANRESA

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## INTRODUCTION

### ***Being Instructions for Persons Making a Retreat: Teaching Them What They Are About to Do and the Rules They Should Observe During the Exercises***



1. By *Spiritual Exercises* is understood certain operations of the mind and heart, such as the examination of conscience, meditation, contemplation, mental and vocal prayer, which are employed in order to free the soul from its irregular affections and so to put it in the way of knowing and embracing the will of God toward it.

2. As it is the soul that is to be exercised in making a retreat, we must seek from our spiritual guide only what is necessary to enable it to act with uprightness and certainty. We must not expect from him many words or long explanations, nor to hear long sermons or interesting lectures. It is not the quantity of food but a healthy digestion, which nourishes the body; so it is not the great amount of knowledge communicated but the manner in which the heart receives it, and is nourished by it, that satisfies the needs of the soul. Moreover, experience proves that the heart will receive with delight, and with greater real profit, what it discovers for itself, either by its own reflections or by the light shed upon it by Divine grace, than what is presented to its intelligence by lengthened discourses.

3. These Exercises engage both the understanding and the will of man. The understanding seeks by reasoning to obtain the full knowledge of the subject proposed to it; the will produces the various affections

that result from the knowledge acquired. In these acts of the heart, wherein it approaches God and converses with Him, the faithful soul ought to be careful never to forget the inward as well as the external respect that the presence of the Divinity requires.

4. Although St. Ignatius has divided the Exercises into four series or weeks, each consecrated to a special work of reform, or a distinct study of Our Lord Jesus Christ, it must not be supposed that these weeks are necessarily of seven days. Each one ends when its aim is attained: this happens soonest to the most diligent and those whom the grace of God influences most quickly; later to those who, notwithstanding their goodwill, are longer tried by contending feelings. Generally, the complete course of these Exercises requires about thirty days.

5. The person in retreat will find everything easy, and himself wonderfully assisted by grace, if from the beginning he brings to God a large and generous heart; if he abandons himself with all his wishes and all his liberty to the action of his Creator; if he is disposed to allow his Sovereign Lord to order him, and all that concerns him, according to His good pleasure.

6. The rules that are given for the discernment of spirits will assist the soldier of Jesus Christ—sometimes consoled by Heaven as he will be and sometimes a prey to desolation—to know and avoid the snares laid for him by his enemies. If he feels neither consolation, nor sadness, nor other movements of the heart, he must examine himself carefully on the manner in which he performs these Exercises. Does he perform them at the time prescribed and in the manner pointed out? Does he observe the methods and rules traced out for him? In moments of temptation and dryness let him encourage himself; let him reassure himself with the hope of soon being consoled; let him, moreover, have recourse to the counsels of his spiritual director.

7. It is well for the person in retreat to concentrate his thoughts on the subject presented to him at the moment, without preoccupying himself at all about the day or the week that is to follow. Let him give an hour to each of the Exercises of the day; and as the evil one uses

every means to make us shorten this time, let him take care to be able to reassure himself always with the thought that he has lengthened rather than shortened it. The time will appear short if it pass in the midst of consolation but very long in moments of desolation and dryness. It is at these times that it would be well to prolong the Exercise, to conquer ourselves and to show the enemy that his attacks are not only resisted but also turned to the advantage of our souls.

8. When consolation is abundant, no vow or promise should be made without having taken time to reflect and consult. When the soul, on the contrary, feels inclined toward things inferior or less perfect, every effort must be made to elevate it and give it a contrary direction. To obtain this grace from the God of all goodness, besides assiduous prayer, let other pious exercises be added; beg Our Lord not to allow us to obtain or keep anything, whether honors, riches or happiness, until our irregular inclination for these things has been reformed and rendered subordinate to the interests of His service and glory.

9. That the director may guide with certainty the soul placed under his care and judge of its spiritual progress, we must faithfully tell him, not precisely our own thoughts and opinions, or our sins (the latter will be told in confession) but the agitations and different movements that the Spirit of God, or the evil spirit, may produce in us.

10. In order that the number, the length and the nature of the Exercises may be suited to the age, capacity and inclination of the person in retreat and that no one may be overburdened and all may have what is suitable to their particular dispositions and wants at the time, each one will receive from his director, at the beginning, a rule fixing the hours of rising, of meditation, of meals and the other exercises and occupations of the day. His spiritual guide also will visit him as often as he thinks requisite, setting him the employment for each day as well as the directions, advice and encouragement that he judges to be suitable and useful. The author of the Exercises, like the Apostle, made himself all things to all men. To strong, able, generous-minded men and to those who are masters of their time and of their state of



life, he recommends four meditations a day of an hour each; another meditation of an hour in the middle of the night; an examination of conscience in the middle of the day and another before going to rest. Some relaxation will be allowed these persons, if required, during this laborious course. Persons who unite all these conditions, except the time, and who cannot give more than an hour or an hour and a half a day, the rest of their time being occupied in their ordinary avocations, will receive directions how to occupy themselves each day for an hour. By these means they will advance more slowly, but nevertheless in order, and will secure the continuity of the Exercises by one or two repetitions of each meditation. The Exercises of the first week are those that are suited to the capacity and devotion of the greater number. Such will come out of the retreat with a deeper fear of God having made a good general confession, knowing how to examine their consciences well and to approach the Sacraments more regularly. Others again must be satisfied with less. To these the commandments of God and the Church, and the method of examining their consciences and going to confession, will be explained; they will be instructed in the three methods of prayer that are mentioned further on. It is desirable that such persons should devote half an hour every morning to these Exercises and that they should approach the Sacraments every week or fortnight.

11. But those who have their time at their disposal and who wish to derive all the benefit possible from these Exercises must perform them exactly as they are laid down. They must place before their eyes, either written or printed, the principal points of the Meditations and the abridgment of the methods, that they may not escape their memory. Their progress in the spiritual life will be the more rapid according as they more completely separate themselves from their acquaintances and friends and from worldly thoughts and business. Therefore such must, if possible, leave their homes and retire to a more solitary room or house and only come out to assist at Mass and the Offices of the Church, so as not to meet with interruptions. This solitude will procure, among

others, three great advantages: first, in separating in this manner from friends, relations and worldly affairs, we shall obtain abundant grace from Heaven. Then, as the mind is less distracted during this voluntary retreat and not drawn off to other subjects, the thoughts are more easily fixed and concentrated on the one thing necessary—the service of God: and the will follows the subject that the understanding offers to it with all the liberty and energy of its nature. In fine, the more the soul is disengaged and separated from creatures, the more she is at liberty to follow and attain to her Creator and Master, who only approaches her to enrich her with the infinite gifts of His bounty.

12. That the relations between him who gives the retreat and those who make it may be as agreeable and as profitable as possible, neither must lose sight of this advice: every good and pious Christian must be disposed to receive in a favorable sense and to take in good part every word susceptible of being so received and understood, rather than to take it in a rigorous and objectionable sense. If it happen that the expression is not defensible, ask the person his intention in saying it; and if he is really in error, point it out to him in a charitable manner, that he may set himself right on the point.

## INTRODUCTION TO MEDITATION

*With the Recommendations of St. Ignatius,  
Called the “Ten Additions”*

Meditation consists in calling to mind some dogmatic or moral truth and reflecting on or discussing this truth according to each one’s capacity, so as to move the will and produce in us amendment.

Thus, if you have to meditate on the sin of the angels, you will call to mind how they, having disobeyed their Creator, forfeited grace and were cast out of heaven into hell. You will then reflect attentively on this subject, so as to feel confounded by and blush at the multitude of your sins, compared to this one single sin that ruined the rebel angels.

In fine, you will conclude that you have often merited the same punishment as they, since you too have so often sinned.

To meditate usefully, observe well the following rules:

### BEFORE MEDITATION

1. The subject should be divided into two or three points, that the meditation may be rendered easier by a division that is natural and easy to remember.

2. Before beginning, we must by a preparatory prayer beg of God by His grace to direct all the powers and operations of our souls to His service and glory alone.

3. The heart having taken this proper and generous resolution, the faithful soul must impress the subject proposed on the mind, the imagination and the will.

If the subject of the meditation is a history—for example, that of the Prodigal Son—the *memory* must recall the principal facts. This is the first prelude as generally used, particularly during the second and following weeks.

The *imagination* seizes its object by placing it in a certain spot that the mind represents to itself. This has caused the name of “composition of place” to be given to the second prelude. If the meditation is on some visible object, such as the birth of Jesus Christ, we must figure to ourselves the place where this mystery was accomplished—the stable at Bethlehem, the manger or elsewhere. If the mind is occupied by a truth purely intellectual—for example, the misery of sin—we may assist ourselves by a picture of a soul imprisoned in the body, banished among animals in this vale of tears. The object of this prelude is to give the soul the impression that would be produced upon it by the sight of a picture representing exactly the subject of meditation; or, still better, by the sight of the place where the mystery occurred. We must avoid in this, even more than in other points, all violent efforts of the mind, or loss of time. Since every person’s imagination is not sufficiently lively

and docile to succeed easily in this prelude, it must be set aside if it prove an embarrassment.

The *will* is exercised in soliciting a grace according to the mystery: for example, contrition, sorrow, joy and so on.

### DURING MEDITATION

1. We must endeavor to understand and feel inwardly the truth on which we meditate, rather than think much on it.

2. If facility and consolation are experienced, we must beware of vain satisfaction. We must never make a vow lightly or without advice. Our reflections and sentiments must always be directed toward our own amendment.

3. In times of dryness and desolation we must be patient and wait with resignation the return of consolation, putting our trust in the goodness of God. We must animate ourselves by the thought that God is always with us, that He only allows this trial for our greater good and that we have not necessarily lost His grace because we have lost the taste and feeling of it.

4. Meditations should be ended by one or several *Colloquies*. These are familiar conversations in which we speak to God like a son to a father, a servant to a master, one friend to another, a criminal to a judge; sometimes acknowledging our faults, sometimes exposing our wants, sometimes asking graces. These colloquies are addressed to the Blessed Virgin, to Our Saviour or to God the Father, sometimes to all three successfully. This is the part of the meditation requiring the most liberty and confidence but also the most respect. They must be concluded either by the "Ave Maria" the "Anima Christi," or the "Pater," according to the person to whom they are addressed. These colloquies may take place not only at the end but also at the beginning or in the course of the meditation, as devotion may inspire. When we address ourselves to Jesus Christ and beg Him to intercede for us before God, it

must be understood that we consider Him, not simply as God, but in His human nature as our Mediator and Advocate.

### AFTER MEDITATION

When two meditations have been made, it is customary to repeat them once or twice. This method is very useful, for it often happens that the first view of a mystery offers food chiefly to the *curiosity* of the mind; but, this desire of knowledge once satisfied, the soul returns calmly to its first impressions and can more easily give free course to its affections; for it is in the affections of the heart that the fruits of an exercise consist. In these repetitions, we must avoid all long reasonings and only replace before our eyes and run over, so to say, our first thoughts, dwelling on them with our will and heart. The use of the colloquies should be more frequent during the repetitions than during the Exercises.

### ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

*In the Form of Resolutions, Which Will Assist  
Us in Making the Exercises Well and Obtaining  
from God What We Ask of Him*

1. On lying down, before going to sleep, during the short time that will suffice for repeating the “Hail Mary,” I will fix the hour of my rising and review in my mind the points of my meditation.

2. On awakening, immediately excluding all other thoughts, I will apply my mind to the truth on which I am going to meditate; at the same time, I will excite in my heart suitable sentiments. For example, before the Exercise on the “triple sin,” I will say to myself while I dress, “And I, loaded with so many graces, the object of predilection to my Lord and King, I stand convicted of ingratitude, of treason, of rebellion, before His eyes and those of His whole court.” Before the Exercise on personal sins, “Behold me, a criminal deserving death, led before my

Judge loaded with chains.” These sentiments must accompany the act of rising and will vary according to the subject of meditation.

3. Standing a few paces from the spot where I am going to make my meditation, I must recollect myself, raise my mind above earthly things and consider Our Lord Jesus Christ as present and attentive to what I am about to do. Having given to this preparation the time required to say the “Our Father,” I will offer the homage of my soul and body to Our Saviour, assuming an attitude full of veneration and humble respect.

4. I will then begin my meditation, if I am alone in my chamber or elsewhere without witnesses, in the posture most suitable to the end I propose to myself, sometimes with my face bowed to the earth, sometimes standing, sometimes sitting; only observing that if I obtain what I seek kneeling, or in any other attitude, I ought to remain so without seeking anything better. In the same way, if any particular point causes me to experience the grace that I am seeking, I must remain there calmly until my devotion is satisfied, without caring for anything more.

5. After having finished the Exercise, I will either walk about or sit still and examine how it has succeeded. If it has not, I will ascertain the cause, sincerely repent and make firm resolutions for the future. If the success has been satisfactory, I will make acts of thanksgiving and resolve to follow the same method for the future.

6. I will lay aside during the first week all joyful thoughts, such, for instance, as the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. This thought would dry up the tears that I ought at this period to shed over my sins. I must rather call up thoughts of death and judgment, in order to assist my sorrow.

7. For the same purpose, I will shut out the daylight, only allowing sufficient light to enter my room to enable me to read and take my meals.

8. I will carefully avoid all laughter or anything that can lead to it.

9. I will not look at any one, unless obliged to salute them or say adieu.

10. The tenth “recommendation” will be found in the Second Part, under the title of “Rule of Penance.”<sup>1</sup>

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1. See p. 205.

## PREPARATORY EXERCISE

Veni Creator. Ave maris stella. *Invoke St. Joseph, your angel guardian and your patron saints. Then read attentively the subject of meditation that is to open the Exercises.*

## MEDITATION ON RETREAT

### FIRST CONSIDERATION

*What God has Prepared for You in Retreat*

God has prepared for you a superabundance of His graces in this retreat. It is the same in retreat as in the great solemnities of religion and in certain privileged sanctuaries of Mary. Jesus Christ has graces for every day; but He reserves His choicest ones for the days on which the Church celebrates the great mysteries of His life on earth. Mary is always our benefactress and our mother; but she has favorite sanctuaries, to which she attaches her greatest blessings and miracles. The privilege of a retreat is to draw down upon us all the graces of God in their greatest plenitude. "Behold, now is the acceptable time: behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

Consider, with St. Bernard, that it has been in retreat that God has always pleased to signalize His greatest mercies toward men. It was in retreat on Sinai that Moses received the tables of the law; it was in the retreat of Carmel that Elias received the double spirit that animated him; it was in the retreat of the desert that John the Baptist received the plenitude of the Spirit of God; it was in retreat that the Apostles received the gifts of the Holy Ghost; it was in retreat that God converted the most illustrious penitents, that He raised up the most fervent apostles of the new law, that He inspired the founders of religious societies; in fine, it was in the retreat of Nazareth that Mary became the mother of God; and it may be said that all the life of Jesus Christ was a retreat. "Solitude was witness of the vigils of Jesus; solitude heard the

prayers of Jesus; solitude saw Him come into the world, preach, be transfigured, die, rise from the dead, ascend into heaven” (P. de Celles).

Believe, then, and rest assured that all the graces of God await you in this retreat.

Who are you who this day begins these holy Exercises? *Who are you?* A soul established in virtue? You need renewing. The most solid virtue is a perfume that evaporates, a mirror that tarnishes, a water that becomes impure in the midst of the world. “Bless the Lord, O my soul . . . who satisfieth thy desire with good things; thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle’s” (*Ps.* 102:1, 5). To you the grace of a retreat will be one of renovation.

*Who are you?* A soul divided in the service of God? A soul embarrassed by a multitude of human affections? You have now to detach your heart from creatures. “How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow Him” (*3 Kings* 18:21). For you the grace of retreat will be a grace of detachment.

*Who are you?* A soul given to worldly pleasures? One who does not pray, or prays badly? You must return to yourself and to God. “Return, ye transgressors, to the heart” (*Is.* 46:8). “We ought always to pray” (*Luke* 18:1). For you the grace of retreat will be one of recollection and prayer.

*Who are you?* A soul struggling with long and violent temptations? You need strength to resist. “If you return and be quiet, you shall be saved: in silence and hope shall your strength be” (*Is.* 30:15). For you the grace of retreat will be one of firmness and perseverance.

*Who are you?* Lastly, are you a guilty soul? Perhaps a soul grown old in sin, perhaps an impenitent soul, perhaps a soul struck with blindness and hardness? And if this question alone does not make you tremble, certainly you are a hardened soul. Ah! You require nothing less than all the graces of God; and this retreat offers them to you—the grace of light on your state, on the enormity of your faults, on the greatness of your losses for eternity, on the judgments of God that menace you; the grace of compunction; the grace of firm resolution; the grace of a real and solid conversion.



## SECOND CONSIDERATION

*What God asks of you in this retreat*

God requires two things of you, on which depend all the graces of the retreat.

1. *Recollection of spirit.* You are in retreat to listen to God. “I will hear what the Lord God will speak within me” (*Ps.* 84:9). But the voice of God only makes itself heard in the repose and silence of the soul. It is true that the voice of God, having once fully penetrated the heart, becomes strong as the tempest and loud as the thunder; but before reaching the heart, it is weak as a light breath that scarcely agitates the air. It shrinks from noise and is silent amid agitation. “The Lord is not in the earthquake” (*3 Kings* 19:11). Retire into your heart with God, to meditate, to pray, to weep, to speak to the Lord and to listen to Him. You will not be alone when you are with Him. “How can he be alone who is always with God?” says St. Ambrose. If you are deprived of the conversation of men, you will enjoy that of the saints, of the angels, of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

2. *Perfect docility of heart.* This comprises three things: fidelity to rules; application to the exercises; obedience to all the movements of grace. Be afraid of refusing anything to God: however small the sacrifice may be, perhaps our conversion, our salvation, may depend on it. A single word of the Gospel converted St. Anthony; a word from a sermon converted St. Nicholas Tolentino; a fact of history, a reading, a conversation, began the conversion of St. Augustine, of St. Ignatius, of St. Francis Xavier. Can you tell to what sacrifice God may have attached the change of your heart? Enter, then, into the disposition of the prophet: “My heart, O Lord, is ready” (*Ps.* 56:8). Do not fear to be too generous with God, and do not be afraid of the sacrifices He may ask of you; this sweet experience will force you to cry out with

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2. “I call to me whom I will: I possess the society of saints; a troop of angels accompany me: I enjoy converse with Jesus Christ Himself” (St. Jerome).

St. Augustine, “How sweet has it been to me to be deprived of the miserable delights of a frivolous world! and what incomparable joy have I felt after a privation once so dreaded!” Cast yourself, therefore, at the feet of Jesus Christ, and say to Him, “Lord, Thou hast given me a soul capable of knowing and loving Thee; I return it to Thee, not adorned with the grace and virtue that Thou bestowedst on it in baptism, but covered with the scars and wounds of sin; cure it, O heavenly Physician, and restore to it its pristine life and beauty.”

“Lord, I offer Thee my understanding; enlighten it with Thy brightest light. ‘Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep in death’” (*Ps.* 12:4).

“Lord, I offer Thee my memory; blot out from it the remembrance of the world, and leave in it only the memory of Thy mercies to bless them, and of my sins to weep for them.”

“Lord, I offer Thee my heart; change it by Thy grace. ‘Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within me’” (*Ps.* 1:12).

“Lord, I offer to Thee the senses of my body, the powers of my soul, my whole being; dispose of them for my salvation and for Thy greater glory. ‘I have put my trust in Thee, O Lord; I have said Thou art my God; my lot is in Thy hand’” (*Ps.* 30:15).

*Pater. Ave.*

*The* INTERIOR  
CASTLE  
*or The* MANSIONS

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## THE INTERIOR CASTLE

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## CHAPTER ONE

*This Chapter Treats of the Beauty and Dignity of Our Souls  
and Makes a Comparison to Explain This. The Advantage  
of Knowing and Understanding This and the Favors God Grants  
to Us Is Shown, and How Prayer Is the Gate of the Spiritual Castle*

- 
1. Plan of this book. 2. The Interior Castle. 3. Our culpable selfignorance.  
4. God dwells in the center of the soul. 5. Why all souls do not receive certain favors.  
6. Reasons for speaking of these favors. 7. The entrance of the Castle.  
8. Entering into oneself. 9. Prayer. 10. Those who dwell in the first mansion.  
11. Entering. 12. Difficulties of the subject.

1. WHILE I was begging our Lord today to speak for me, since I knew not what to say nor how to commence this work which obedience has laid upon me, an idea occurred to me which I will explain, and which will serve as a foundation for that I am about to write.

2. I thought of the soul as resembling a castle,<sup>1</sup> formed of a single diamond or a very transparent crystal,<sup>2</sup> and containing many rooms, just as in Heaven there are many mansions.<sup>3</sup> If we reflect, sisters, we shall see that the soul of the just man is but a paradise, in which, God tells us, He takes His delight.<sup>4</sup>

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1. *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxviii, 9.

2. In her *Life* St. Teresa likened God to a diamond (ch. xl, 14); and elsewhere (ch. xi, 10) the soul to a garden wherein Our Lord takes His delight.

3. *John* 14:2: “*In domo Patris mei mansiones multae sunt.*” St. John of the Cross uses the same comparison: “If the soul shall overcome the devil in the first combat, it shall then pass on to the second; and if it shall be victorious there also, it shall then pass on to the third; and then through the seven mansions, the seven degrees of love, until the Bridegroom shall bring it to the ‘cellar of wine’ of perfect charity.” (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, bk. ii. ch. xi. 7.)

4. *Prov.* 8:31: “*Deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum.*”



What, do you imagine, must that dwelling be in which a King so mighty, so wise, and so pure, containing in Himself all good, can delight to rest? Nothing can be compared to the great beauty and capabilities of a soul; however keen our intellects may be, they are as unable to comprehend them as to comprehend God, for, as He has told us, He created us in His own image and likeness.<sup>5</sup>

3. As this is so, we need not tire ourselves by trying to realize all the beauty of this castle, although, being His creature, there is all the difference between the soul and God that there is between the creature and the Creator; the fact that it is made in God's image teaches us how great are its dignity and loveliness. It is no small misfortune and disgrace that, through our own fault, we neither understand our nature nor our origin. Would it not be gross ignorance, my daughters, if, when a man was questioned about his name, or country, or parents, he could not answer? Stupid as this would be, it is unspeakably more foolish to care to learn nothing of our nature except that we possess bodies, and only to realize vaguely that we have souls, because people say so and it is a doctrine of faith. Rarely do we reflect upon what gifts our souls may possess, Who dwells within them, or how extremely precious they are. Therefore we do little to preserve their beauty; all our care is concentrated on our bodies, which are but the coarse setting of the diamond, or the outer walls of the castle.<sup>6</sup>

4. Let us imagine, as I said, that there are many rooms in this castle, of which some are above, some below, others at the side; in the centre, in the very midst of them all, is the principal chamber in which God and the soul hold their most secret intercourse.<sup>7</sup> Think over this comparison very carefully; God grant it may enlighten you about the different kinds of graces

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5. Gen. 1:26: "*Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram.*"

6. *Way of Perf.* ch. xxviii. 5.

7. St. John of the Cross on the words of his stanza: "In the inner cellar of my Beloved have I drunk." "Here the soul speaks of that sovereign grace of God in taking it into the house of His love, which is the union or transformation of love in God . . . The cellar is the highest degree of love to which the soul can attain in this life, and is therefore said to be the inner. It follows from this that there are other cellars not so interior; that is, the degrees of love by which souls reach to this, the last.

He is pleased to bestow upon the soul. No one can know all about them, much less a person so ignorant as I am. The knowledge that such things are possible will console you greatly should Our Lord ever grant you any of these favors; people themselves deprived of them can then at least praise Him for His great goodness in bestowing them on others. The thought of Heaven and the happiness of the Saints does us no harm, but cheers and urges us to win this joy for ourselves, nor will it injure us to know that during this exile God can communicate Himself to us loathsome worms; it will rather make us love Him for such immense goodness and infinite mercy.

5. I feel sure that vexation at thinking that during our life on earth God can bestow these graces on the souls of others shows a want of humility and charity for one's neighbor, for why should we not feel glad at a brother's receiving divine favors which do not deprive us of our own share? Should we not rather rejoice at His Majesty's thus manifesting His greatness wherever He chooses?<sup>8</sup> Sometimes Our Lord acts thus solely for the sake of showing His power, as He declared when the Apostles questioned whether the blind man whom He cured had been suffering for his own or his parents' sins.<sup>9</sup> God does not bestow these favors on certain souls because they are more holy than others who do not receive them, but to manifest His greatness, as in the case of St. Paul and St. Mary Magdalen, and that we may glorify Him in His creatures.

6. People may say such things appear impossible and it is best not to scandalize the weak in faith by speaking about them. But it is better that the latter should disbelieve us, than that we should desist from enlightening souls which receive these graces, that they may rejoice and may endeavor to love God better for His favors, seeing He is so mighty and so great. There is no danger here of shocking those for whom I write by treat-

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These cellars are seven in number, and the soul has entered them all when it has in perfection the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, so far as it is possible for it. . . . Many souls reach and enter the first cellar, each according to the perfection of its love, but the last and inmost cellar is entered by few in this world, because therein is wrought the perfect union with God, the union of the spiritual marriage." *A Spiritual Cantic*, stanza xxvi. 13. Concept. ch. vi. (*Minor Works* of St. Teresa.)

8. Matt. 20:15: "*Aut non licet mihi quod volo, facere? an oculus tuus nequam est, quia ego bonus sum?*"

9. John 9:2: "*Quis peccavit, hic, aut parentes ejus, ut caecus nasceretur?*"

ing of such matters, for they know and believe that God gives even greater proofs of His love. I am certain that if any one of you doubts the truth of this, God will never allow her to learn it by experience, for He desires that no limits should be set to His work: therefore, never discredit them because you are not thus led yourselves.

7. Now let us return to our beautiful and charming castle and discover how to enter it. This appears incongruous: if this castle is the soul, clearly no one can have to enter it, for it is the person himself: one might as well tell someone to go into a room he is already in! There are, however, very different ways of being in this castle; many souls live in the courtyard of the building where the sentinels stand, neither caring to enter farther, nor to know who dwells in that most delightful place, what is in it and what rooms it contains.

8. Certain books on prayer that you have read advise the soul to enter into itself,<sup>10</sup> and this is what I mean. I was recently told by a great theologian that souls without prayer are like bodies, palsied and lame, having hands and feet they cannot use. Just so, there are souls so infirm and accustomed to think of nothing but earthly matters, that there seems no cure for them. It appears impossible for them to retire into their own hearts; accustomed as they are to be with the reptiles and other creatures which live outside the castle, they have come at last to imitate their habits. Though these souls are by their nature so richly endowed, capable of communion even with God Himself, yet their case seems hopeless. Unless they endeavor to understand and remedy their most miserable plight, their minds will become, as it were, bereft of movement, just as Lot's wife became a pillar of salt for looking backwards in disobedience to God's command.<sup>11</sup>

9. As far as I can understand, the gate by which to enter this castle is prayer and meditation. I do not allude more to mental than to vocal

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10. *Imitation*, bk. 11. ch. I: "*Regnum Dei intra vos est.*" Luke 17:21. The *Imitation* is one of the books which according to St. Teresa's *Constitutions*, (§ 7) every prioress was bound to provide for her convent.

11. Gen. 19:26: "*Respicensque uxor ejus post se, versa est in statuum salis.*"

prayer, for if it is prayer at all, the mind must take part in it. If a person neither considers to Whom he is addressing himself, what he asks, nor what he is who ventures to speak to God, although his lips may utter many words, I do not call it prayer.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes, indeed, one may pray devoutly without making all these considerations through having practiced them at other times. The custom of speaking to God Almighty as freely as with a slave—caring nothing whether the words are suitable or not, but simply saving the first thing that comes to mind from being learnt by rote by frequent repetition—cannot be called prayer: God grant that no Christian may address Him in this manner. I trust His Majesty will prevent any of you, sisters, from doing so. Our habit in this Order of conversing about spiritual matters is a good preservative against such evil ways.

10. Let us speak no more of these crippled souls, who are in a most miserable and dangerous state, unless Our Lord bid them rise, as He did the palsied man who had waited more than thirty years at the pool of Bethesda.<sup>13</sup> We will now think of the others who at last enter the precincts of the castle; they are still very worldly, yet have some desire to do right, and at times, though rarely, commend themselves to God's care. They think about their souls every now and then; although very busy, they pray a few times a month, with minds generally filled with a thousand other matters, for where their treasure is, there is their heart also.<sup>14</sup> Still, occasionally they cast aside these cares; it is a great boon for them to realize to some extent the state of their souls, and to see that they will never reach the gate by the road they are following.

11. At length they enter the first rooms in the basement of the castle, accompanied by numerous reptiles<sup>15</sup> which disturb their peace, and prevent their seeing the beauty of the building; still, it is a great gain that these

12. *Way of Perf.* ch. xxi. 6; xxix. 4. 13. *John* 5:5: "*Erat autem quidam homo ibi triginta et octo annos habens in infirmitate sua.*"

13. *John* 5:5: "*Erat autem quidam homo ibi triginta et octo annos habens in infirmitate sua.*"

14. *Matt.* 6:21: "*Ubi enim est thesaurus tuus ibi est et cor tuum.*"

15. Many an ancient castle was provided with a beargarden where rare animals were kept for the amusement of the inhabitants. This may have supplied the material for St. Teresa's comparison.

persons should have found their way in at all.

12. You may think, my daughters, that all this does not concern you, because, by God's grace, you are farther advanced; still, you must be patient with me, for I can explain myself on some spiritual matters concerning prayer in no other way. May Our Lord enable me to speak to the point; the subject is most difficult to understand without personal experience of such graces. Any one who has received them will know how impossible it is to avoid touching on subjects which, by the mercy of God, will never apply to us.

PHILOTHEA *or*  
*An* INTRODUCTION  
*to the* DEVOUT LIFE

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## CHAPTER ONE

### *True Devotion Described*

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YOU aim at true devotion, my dear Philothea, because, as a Christian, you know how acceptable it is to the Divine Majesty. But inasmuch as trifling errors at the outset of any undertaking are wont to increase rapidly as we advance, frequently becoming almost irreparable, it is needful that, first of all, you should ascertain wherein lies the virtue of devotion; for there are many counterfeits, but only one true devotion; and, therefore, if you do not find that which is real, you will but deceive yourself, and vainly pursue an idle, superstitious form.

Aurelius gave to all his works of art the countenance of the women he loved; and so every one colors his devotion according to his tastes and inclinations. One is given to fasting, and whilst he fasts he holds himself to be devout, although his heart is full of bitterness; and whilst he will not touch his lips with wine, nor even with water for abstinence' sake, he scruples not to sully them with his neighbor's blood in slander and calumny. Another would fain be devout because he daily repeats many prayers, although, at the same time, he gives way to angry, proud, and injurious language amongst his servants or associates. Another willingly opens his purse to give alms to the poor, but he cannot open his heart to forgive his enemies. Another forgives his enemies, but only

force obliges him to do justice to his creditors. Such men may pass for devout, but they are not really so.

When the messengers of Saul sought David, they found only an image in his bed, which, being dressed by Michol in David's garments, deceived them so that they imagined it to be David himself. Thus many persons clothe themselves with a garb of external devotion, and the world believes them to be really devout and spiritual, whilst in truth they are mere statues or phantasms of devotion.

True, living devotion, my Philothea, implies the love of God. Indeed it is itself a true love of Him in the highest form, for whereas divine love enlightening our soul is called Grace, and makes us pleasing in His sight; so giving us power to do good, it is called Charity; and when it reaches that point of perfection wherein it not only causes us to do good, but to do it earnestly, frequently, and readily, then it is called Devotion. The ostrich never flies, the common fowl flies but seldom, and then heavily and near the ground; but the swallow, the dove, and the eagle are ever on the wing, they fly far and easily. Even so sinners rise not to God, but always grovel on the earth in pursuing earthly things; well-meaning people who are as yet not truly devout, mount up to God in good works, but rarely, slowly, and heavily; whilst the devout fly to Him perpetually, soaring lightly. In short, devotion is spiritual agility and vivacity, by means of which charity works in us, or we in her, with love and readiness; and as charity leads us to obey and fulfill all God's commandments, so devotion leads us to obey them with promptitude and diligence. Therefore no one who fails to observe all these commandments can be truly virtuous or devout, since to that end he must have charity, and further, thorough readiness and eagerness to fulfill the laws of charity.

And as devotion consists in perfect charity, so it not only makes us active, ready, and diligent in keeping God's commandments, but furthermore it stimulates us to the eager and loving performance of all the good works we can attain unto, even such as are not enjoined us, but only suggested or counseled. Even as a man just recovered from an

illness walks on his journey only as far as is absolutely necessary, with pain and difficulty, so the repentant sinner treads in God's ways heavily and slowly until, having attained the grace of devotion, he resembles the healthy and light-hearted traveler, who not only proceeds on his way, but runs, and leaps with joy in the way of God's commandments, hastening into the paths of His heavenly counsels and inspirations. In truth, charity and devotion differ no further than flame and fire, for charity is a spiritual fire which when it flames brightly, becomes devotion; and devotion adds to the fire of charity a flame which renders it ready, active, and diligent, not only in keeping His commandments, but in carrying out His heavenly inspirations and counsels of perfection.

THE LIFE *of*  
ST. FRANCIS  
*of* ASSISI

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## CHAPTER ONE

### *Of the Manner of Life of St. Francis Whilst He Yet Wore the Secular Habit*

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IN THE city of Assisi there dwelt a man named Francis, whose memory is in benediction; for God in His mercy, preventing him with His divine blessing, vouchsafed to deliver him from the perils of this present life and filled him abundantly with the gifts of His heavenly grace. For although he was brought up in his youth among the vain children of worldly men in the vanities of the world, and was employed by his father, as soon as he had acquired some knowledge of letters, in the pursuit of worldly gain; yet, by the continual present help of God, he never suffered himself to be carried away, like the lawless youths around him, by sensual pleasure, albeit he was of a gay and joyous spirit; nor, although dwelling among covetous traders, was he intent upon gain, nor did he set his heart and hopes on money. For in the soul of this young man there dwelt, by the gift of God, a certain innate and natural love of the poor of Christ, which, growing up with him from his earliest childhood, filled his heart with such benignity that, in obedience to the words of the Gospel, he resolved within himself to give to everyone who should ask of him, and especially if the petitions were made in the Name of God. Now it happened one day, when Francis was wholly engrossed by the tumult of worldly

business, that a poor man asked an alms of him; contrary to his usual custom he passed him unheeded, and went on his way. But speedily recollecting himself, he ran after the poor man, charitably relieved his wants, and made a solemn promise to God that, from that day forth, he would never refuse an alms to any that should ask it of him for the love of God. And this promise he faithfully kept till the day of his death, meriting thereby an abundant increase of the grace and love of God. So that he was wont to say, after he had perfectly put on Christ, that even while he still wore the secular habit, he could never hear words expressing the love of God without his heart being deeply moved and affected. And certain it is, that in the sweetness and mildness of his bearing, the gentleness of his manners, his patience and docility—far beyond the ordinary custom of men, the munificence of his bounty, exceeding even the extent of his means—in all these things shone forth the beauty of this young man's soul, clearly betokening the abundant outpouring of the divine blessing reserved for him in days to come.

A certain man of great simplicity dwelt in those days at Assisi, who, by virtue of knowledge divinely infused, whenever he met Francis in the street, would take off his mantle, and spread it upon the ground before him, declaring that he did so because he was a man worthy of all honor and reverence, who should shortly perform great works and marvellous deeds, and was, therefore, to be highly honored and praised by all faithful Christians.

But Francis as yet knew not, neither understood, the great purposes of God towards him; for being by the will of his father engrossed by external affairs, and also by reason of the original corruption of our nature drawn down and depressed by earthly things, he had not learned to contemplate heavenly mysteries, neither did he yet know the sweetness of divine consolation. And, forasmuch as the Lord is wont, by afflictions and tribulations, to open the ears of the spirit, so, by the right hand of the Most High, he was suddenly changed, his body being afflicted with long and severe



sufferings, that so his soul might be prepared to receive the unction of the Holy Ghost. Now, when he had recovered his bodily health, going forth one day, as was his wont, in apparel suited to his state, he met a certain soldier of honor and courage, but poor and vilely clad; of whose poverty, feeling a tender and sorrowful compassion, he took off his new clothes and gave them to the poor man-at-arms, thus at once fulfilling two offices of piety, by covering the shame of a noble cavalier and relieving a poor man's penury.

On the following night, when he was asleep, the divine mercy showed him a spacious and beautiful palace filled with arms and military ensigns, all marked with the Cross of Christ, to make known to him that his charitable deed done to the poor soldier for the love of the great King of Heaven should receive an unspeakable reward. And when he asked for whom all these things were reserved, a divine voice answered him that they were for him and for his soldiers.

When Francis awoke, early in the morning, not being yet accustomed to understand and interpret divine mysteries, nor through visible signs to ascend to invisible truths, he thought that this strange vision betokened some great earthly prosperity. Therefore, being still ignorant of the Divine Will, he determined to go into Apulia, there to enter the household of a certain Count of great magnificence and liberality, who dwelt in that country, hoping in his service to acquire military honor and renown, according to what he supposed to be the meaning of the vision. When he had travelled for some days together, he came to a certain city, when the Lord spoke to him in the night with the familiar voice of a friend, saying, "Francis, who can do most for thee—the Lord or the servant, the rich man or the poor?" And when Francis replied that the Lord and the rich man could do more for him than the poor, "Wherefore, then," said the voice, "dost thou leave the Lord for the servant, and the God of infinite riches for a poor mortal?" Then said Francis, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And

the Lord answered: "Return home; for the vision which thou hast seen prefigured a spiritual work which thou shalt bring to pass, not by human counsel, but by divine disposition." So, when the day dawned, Francis set forth in great haste towards Assisi, full of joy and confidence; and from that time he awaited in obedience the revelation of the Will of God, and withdrawing from the tumult of worldly affairs, he most devoutly besought the divine clemency to vouchsafe to make manifest to him all that he was to do. And so, by the practice of frequent prayer, the vehement flame of heavenly desires increased daily within him, and already, for the love of his celestial country, he despised all earthly things, as if they existed not; for he knew that he had found the hidden treasure, and like a prudent merchant he considered within himself how to sell all that he had to make it his own. But he knew not yet how he was to purchase it, nor what he was to give for it; only it seemed to be made known to him that the spiritual merchant must begin with the contempt of the world, and that the soldier of Christ must begin by victory over himself.

Now, as he was riding one day over the plain of Assisi he met a leper, whose sudden appearance filled him with fear and horror; but forthwith calling to mind the resolution which he had made to follow after perfection, and remembering that if he would be a soldier of Christ he must first overcome himself, he dismounted from his horse and went to meet the leper, that he might embrace him: and when the poor man stretched out his hand to receive an alms, he kissed it and filled it with money. Having again mounted his horse, he looked around him over the wide and open plain, but nowhere could he see the leper; upon which, being filled with wonder and joy, he began devoutly to give thanks to God, purposing within himself to proceed to still greater things than this.

He sought continually for wild and solitary places, where, with tears and unutterable groans, he poured forth long and fervent prayers, until at last our Lord was pleased to hear him; for being

one day engaged in fervent prayer, according to his custom, in a lonely place, he became wholly absorbed in God, when Jesus Christ appeared to him under the form of a Crucifix, at which sight his whole soul seemed to melt away; and so deeply was the memory of Christ's Passion impressed on his heart, that it pierced even to the marrow of his bones. From that hour, whenever he thought upon the Passion of Christ, he could scarcely restrain his tears and sighs; for he then understood (as he made known to some of his familiar friends not long before his death) that these words of the Gospel were addressed to him: "If thou wilt come after Me, deny thyself, and take up thy cross and follow Me." And from that day forth he clothed himself with the spirit of poverty, the sense of humility, and the affection of interior piety. And inasmuch as heretofore he had greatly abhorred the company of lepers, and could not endure even the distant sight of them, now—for the love of Christ crucified, who, according to the Prophet's words, was despised as a leper—he, in contempt of himself, sought out and served lepers with great humility and piety, and aided them in all their necessities. For he often visited them in their houses, giving them bountiful alms, and with affectionate compassion he would kiss their hands and their faces; and he desired to bestow upon poor beggars not only his money, but even himself; oftentimes taking off his own clothes to cover them, tearing or cutting them in pieces for them when he had nothing else to give. With the greatest reverence and piety he was wont to supply the necessities of poor priests, especially by providing them with ornaments for the altar, that so he might at the same time bear his part in the divine worship and provide for the needs of the ministers of God. About this time, he was visiting with great reverence and devotion the holy temple of St. Peter, at Rome; he saw a great multitude of poor surrounding the church door; and partly induced by the love of poverty, partly by the delight which he took in the exercise of works of mercy, he gave his own clothes to the one who seemed most destitute; and

putting on the poor man's rags, he remained there all day amidst these poor people, in marvellous joy and gladness of heart, that so despising the glory of the world he might attain to evangelical perfection. He labored with all diligence at the mortification of the flesh, that thus the Cross of Christ, which he bore inwardly in his heart, might be impressed also outwardly on his body. And all these things were done by Francis, this servant of God, before he had taken the religious habit, or separated himself from the conversation of the world.

*The* SPIRITUAL COMBAT  
*and* A TREATISE ON  
PEACE OF SOUL

*Nihil Obstat:*

Edward A. Cerney, S.S.

Censor Deputatus

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Archbishop of Baltimore and Washington

June 16, 1945

*The* SPIRITUAL COMBAT  
*and* A TREATISE ON  
PEACE OF SOUL

DOM LORENZO SCUPOLI  
*Priest of the Congregation of the Theatines*

*A Translation, revised by*  
William Lester, M.A.  
*and*  
Robert Mohan, M.A.

*“Labor as a good soldier of Christ Jesus . . .  
For he also that striveth for the mastery,  
is not crowned, except he strive lawfully.”  
—2 Timothy 2:3,5*



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*“Therefore take unto you the armour of God,  
that you may be able to resist in the evil day,  
and to stand in all things perfect.  
Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,  
and having on the breastplate of justice,  
and your feet shod with the preparation  
of the gospel of peace:  
In all things taking the shield of faith,  
wherewith you may be able to extinguish all  
the fiery darts of the most wicked one.  
And take unto you the helmet of salvation,  
and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God).”  
—Ephesians 6:13-17*



## PREFACE

**T**he *Spiritual Combat* is known as one of the greatest classics in ascetic theology. It has this in common with the *Following of Christ* that the identity of its author still lies in mystery.

Several seventeenth-century editions were published under the name of the Spanish Benedictine John of Castanzia. Some writers of the Society of Jesus have ascribed the book to the Jesuit Achilles Gagliardi. Most critics however consider the Italian Theatine Lawrence Scupoli as the author of this famous treatise. In his *Spiritualité Chrétienne*, Father P. Pourrat, S.S., ventures the opinion that the *Spiritual Combat* may well be the work of a religious order rather than that of an individual writer; for it was not originally composed such as we now have it. The first edition published in Venice in 1589 contained only twenty-four chapters; then, successive editions appeared with respectively thirty-three, thirty-seven, forty, and finally sixty-six chapters. It can also be said, in favor of this view, that there is an apparent lack of logical sequence between chapters in several parts of the work, and that the style of the latest edition differs considerably from that of the first.

Whatever may be the solution of this problem, doubt concerning the authorship of the *Spiritual Combat* can take nothing away from the value and utility of this “golden book,” as St. Francis de Sales called it. It was “the favourite, the dear book” of this great master of the spiritual life who, for eighteen years, carried in his pocket a copy which he had received from Father Scupoli in Padua. The Saint read some pages of it

every day, entrusted to its supernatural and human wisdom the guidance of his soul, and recommended it to all under his direction as being most attractive and most practical.

The purpose of the *Spiritual Combat* is clearly stated in the First Chapter; it is to lead the soul to the summit of spiritual perfection. What is meant by spiritual perfection? We are told that it does not consist in external works and practices, but is all interior; it means knowing and loving God, despising and mastering in us all our evil inclinations, that we may be able to submit and abandon ourselves entirely to God, out of love for Him.

Such is the goal at which we must aim. How can we reach it? By means of constant and courageous struggle against our evil nature, which tends to keep us away from that goal. This accounts for the title of the book, the *Spiritual Combat*, for it is truly “a course of spiritual strategy” in which we learn how to conduct the fight against our evil tendencies, even the least of them, with the help of four essential weapons: 1) self-distrust; 2) confidence in God; 3) training in spiritual warfare through the proper use of our mental and physical powers; 4) prayer, both short or ejaculatory, and prolonged in the form of mental prayer. The detailed instructions given for a successful use of our faculties are especially characteristic of the *Spiritual Combat's* strategy.

The author's method is thorough, and, precisely because it goes deep into the roots of each subject, the reader would, at times, find it difficult to follow the trend of the thought, if the translation contained a certain number of involved sentences studded, here and there, with unfamiliar or abstract expressions.

The purpose of the present edition is to remove this difficulty. It is not a new translation from the Italian original; it is intended as a careful and thorough revision of the style and form of an already old English version. The revisers have broken up long paragraphs and sentences into shorter units, to relieve the attention of the reader. By sim-

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\* Pourrat. Vol. 3, p. 360.

plifying or modifying the grammatical structure, when it was thought advisable, by substituting clearer or more familiar terms for obscure or archaic words, they have efficiently contributed in making accessible to all the treasures of spiritual doctrine and of wise spiritual direction contained in this remarkable and unique book.



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## CHAPTER ONE

*Preliminary Words on Perfection.  
In What Does Christian Perfection Consist?  
We Must Fight in Order to Attain It.  
The Four Things Necessary for This Combat.*

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CHRISTIAN soul! If you seek to reach the loftiest peak of perfection, and to unite yourself so intimately with God that you become one in spirit with Him, you must first know the true nature and perfection of spirituality in order to succeed in the most sublime undertaking that can be expressed or imagined.

Some, who judge only by appearances, make it consist in penances, in hair shirts, austerities of the flesh, vigils, fasting, and similar bodily mortifications.

Others, particularly women, fancy themselves extremely virtuous when they indulge in long vocal prayers, hear several Masses, spend many hours in church, and frequently receive Communion.

Others, and this does not exclude some of the religious who have consecrated themselves to God, think that perfection consists in perfect attendance in choir, in observing silence and retirement, and in a strict observance of their rule.

Consequently, different people place perfection in different practices. It is certain that they all equally deceive themselves.

Since exterior works are nothing more than dispositions for achieving true piety, or the effects of real piety, it cannot be said that Christian perfection and true piety consist in them.



They are, without doubt, powerful means for becoming truly perfect and truly holy. When used with discretion they are of unique value in supporting our nature which is always indifferent to good and inclined to evil; in repelling the attacks and escaping the snares of our common enemy; in obtaining from the Father of Mercies those helps that are so necessary for the faithful, and especially for beginners.

They are, moreover, precious fruits of the consummate virtue achieved in truly holy persons. Such men chastise their bodies either in punishment for past offenses or for greater humiliation and subjection to their Creator. They seek solitude and observe silence that, withdrawn from the world, they may preserve themselves free from the least stain of sin, and speak only with Heaven and its angels. Their time is spent in works of piety and in the service of God. They pray and meditate on the life and Passion of our Redeemer, not through curiosity, nor for the sake of some sensible pleasure arising from this, but from a desire of knowing better, on one hand, the grandeur of the Divine Goodness, and on the other hand, the depth of their own ingratitude. They do this in order to increase their love of God and detestation of self, to follow their Lord in shouldering His Cross, and in renouncing their own will. They receive the sacraments for no other reason than the honor of God, a closer union with Him and greater security from the power of the devil.

The situation is much different with those who ignorantly place their devotion in external acts, which frequently are the cause of their own downfall, and are of far deeper consequence than open crime. In themselves they are not evil, but only when wrongly applied. They are so attached to these acts that they utterly neglect to watch the inner movements of their hearts; but giving them free rein, they leave them a prey to their own corruption and to the tricks of the devil. It is then that this destroyer, seeing them go astray, not only encourages them to go on their way, but fills their imagination with empty ideas, making them believe that they already taste the joys of Paradise, the delights of Angels, that they see God face to face! As decoys, he does not hesitate to suggest in their meditation sublime, surprising, and ravishing thoughts,

so that, forgetting the world and all earthly things, they are swept up to the third Heaven.

A very little reflection on their conduct discloses their error and the great distance between them and that perfection of which we are now in search.

In every circumstance they love to be shown preference over others. They know no guide but their own private judgment, no rule but their own will. They are blind in their own affairs, ferret-eyed in regard to those of their neighbors, always ready to find fault.

Touch the empty reputation they think they possess, and of which they are extremely jealous. Order them to stop some of the devotions to which they are accustomed. Their amazement and vexation can hardly be expressed.

If God Himself, in order to open their eyes and to show them the true path of perfection, should send them crosses, sickness, or severe persecutions, the surest trials of His servant's fidelity, which never happen unless by His plan and permission, then the degenerate condition of their hearts is laid bare through their own extravagant pride. In all the events of this life, whether happy or not, they know nothing of a proper conformity to the will of God. They do not know how to yield to His almighty power, to submit to His judgments which are as just as they are secret and impenetrable. They do not know how to imitate Christ Crucified, as He humbled Himself before all men; nor do they know how to love their enemies as the instruments used by God's goodness to train them to self-denial and to help not only in their future salvation, but in a greater sanctification of their daily life.

This is the very reason why they are in imminent danger of being lost. With eyes blinded by self-love, they examine themselves and their actions which are not otherwise blameworthy, and they are inflated with vanity. They conclude that they are far advanced towards God and they readily look down on their neighbor: in fact, their pride often will so increase their blindness, that their conversion cannot be effected without a miracle of grace.

Experience proves that acknowledged sinners are reformed with less difficulty than those who willfully hide themselves under the cloak of a false virtue.

From this you can easily understand that the spiritual life does not consist in the practices enumerated above, if they are considered only in their outward appearance.

It actually consists in knowing the infinite greatness and goodness of God, together with a true sense of our own weakness and tendency to evil, in loving God and hating ourselves, in humbling ourselves not only before Him, but, for His sake, before all men, in renouncing entirely our own will in order to follow His. It consists, finally, in doing all of this solely for the glory of His holy name, for only one purpose—to please Him, for only one motive—that He should be loved and served by all His creatures.

These are the dictates of that law of love which the Holy Ghost has written on the hearts of the faithful. This is the way we must practice that self-denial so earnestly recommended by our Saviour in the Gospel. This it is that renders His yoke so sweet, His burden so light. In short, the perfect obedience that our divine Master has enjoined by word and example consists in this.

Since, therefore, you seek the highest degree of perfection, you must wage continual warfare against yourself and employ your entire strength in demolishing each vicious inclination, however trivial. Consequently, in preparing for the combat you must summon up all your resolution and courage. No one shall be rewarded with a crown who has not fought courageously.

But remember that as no war can be carried on with greater fierceness, the forces, no other than ourselves, being equal on both sides, so the victory when gained is most pleasing to God and most glorious to the conqueror.

For whoever has the courage to conquer his passions, to subdue his appetites, and repulse even the least motions of his own will, performs an action more meritorious in the sight of God than if, without this,

he should tear his flesh with the sharpest disciplines, fast with greater austerity than the ancient Fathers of the Desert, or convert multitudes of sinners.

It is true, considering things in themselves, that the conversion of a soul is, without doubt, infinitely more acceptable to the divine Majesty than the mortification of a disorderly affection. Yet every person, in his own particular sphere, should begin with what is immediately required of him.

Now what God expects of us, above all else, is a serious application to conquering our passions; and this is more properly the accomplishment of our duty than if, with uncontrolled appetite, we should do Him a greater service.

Now that you know what Christian perfection is and that, in order to attain it, you must resolve on a perpetual war with yourself, begin by providing yourself with four weapons without which it is impossible to gain the victory in this spiritual combat. These four things are: distrust of one's self, confidence in God, proper use of the faculties of body and mind, and the duty of prayer.

With the help of God's grace, these will be treated clearly and concisely in the following chapters.

*The* FOUNDATIONS  
*of* WESTERN  
MONASTICISM

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## BOOK ONE

### *How Antony Trained Himself*

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#### CHAPTER ONE

##### *The Call of God*

ANTONY was of Egyptian race, his parents of good birth and good means—Christians too, so that he also was brought up in Christian wise. As a child he lived with his parents, knowing nothing but them and his home; and when he grew to be a boy and was advancing in age, he refused to learn letters, desiring to be away from the company of children. All his wish was, as is written of Jacob, to dwell unspoiled at home. (Cf. *Gen.* 25:27).

With his parents he frequented the church, not with a child's inattention, nor with the contempt of later years, but obeying his parents and listening to the lessons that were read and carefully keeping the fruits of them in his own life. Nor again, though he found himself in a fairly rich home, did he worry his parents for rich and varied food nor care for the enjoyment of it; he was satisfied with what was there and asked no more.

After his parents' death he was left alone with one very young sister. He was eighteen or twenty years old and had charge of the home and of his sister. Less than six months after the death of his parents he was

going out to church as usual, and collecting his thoughts, he pondered as he went how the Apostles, leaving all things, followed the Saviour; and the people in the *Acts* who sold their possessions and brought the price and laid it at the feet of the Apostles for distribution among the needy—what good and great hope was laid up in Heaven for these. With these thoughts in his mind, he entered the church; and it so fell that the Gospel was being read then, and he heard the Lord saying to the rich man, *If thou wilt be perfect, go sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come follow me and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.* (Cf. *Matt.* 19:21). Then, as though it was from God that his thoughts of the Saints had come and this reading had been for his sake, as soon as he went out of the church he gave to the villagers the property he had from his parents (it was 300 acres of land, fertile and very beautiful) that they might not interfere with him and his sister. And all else that they had in personal property he sold, and raised a fair sum of money, which he gave to the poor, keeping a little because of his sister.

But when, again entering the church, he heard the Lord saying in the Gospel, *Be not solicitous for the morrow* (cf. *Matt.* 6:34), he could not bear to wait longer, but went out and distributed this also to the poor. His sister he commended to known and trusty virgins, and put her with a Sisterhood to be brought up; and then he gave himself for the future to the religious life, minding himself and living a life of hardship, in front of his own house. For as yet monasteries were not so universal in Egypt, and no monk yet knew the great desert; but each who wished to attend to his soul exercised himself alone not far from his own village.

Now there was at the time in the neighboring village an old man who had practiced the solitary life from youth. Antony, seeing him, was eager to imitate him, so he too at first began to stay in the places near the village. From there, if he heard anywhere of an earnest soul, he went forth like a wise bee and sought him out; nor would he return to his own place till he had seen him and got from him what would help him on his way to virtue; then he went back. There, then, he made his



first steps, steadying his mind not to turn back to his inheritance nor to think of his kindred, but to give all its desire and all its energy to keeping up the religious life. He worked with his hands, having heard, *if any man will not work, neither let him eat* (cf. 2 Thess. 3:10), spending the money partly on bread, partly on the poor. He prayed constantly, having learned that in private we must pray without ceasing. (Cf. Luke 18:1). For he so listened to the reading that nothing of what is written escaped him, but he retained everything, and for the future his memory served him instead of books.

Living this manner of life, Antony was beloved by all. He made himself really subject to the devout men whom he visited and learned for himself the special religious virtues of each of them: the graciousness of one, the continual prayer of another; he observed the meekness of one, the charity of another; studied one in his long watchings, another in his love of reading; admired one for his steadfastness, another for his fasting and sleeping on the ground; watched one's mildness, another's patience; while in all alike he remarked the same reverence for Christ and the same love for each other. Having thus gathered his fill, he returned to his own place of discipline and thereafter pondered with himself what he had learned from each and strove to show in himself the virtues of all. He had no contentions with those of his own age, save only that he would not be found second to them in the better things; and this he did in such manner that none was grieved, but they too were glad on his account. Seeing him such, then, all the village people and the devout with whom he had intercourse called him a man of God and loved him as a son or as a brother.