TO MARY
MOTHER OF CARMEL
ON THE SEVENTH CENTENARY
OF THE BROWN SCAPULAR

THE CARMELITE DIRECTORY OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

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PREFACE

Since Father General himself has sufficiently commended this *Directory,* there remains little for us to do other than to explain its use.

The entire book has been divided into four parts.

We have assigned the first part to the dogmatic essentials of the spiritual life. For it is quite important that the disciple in the spiritual life know and understand how closely interwoven are the spiritual life and the doctrines of our faith. Certainly the spiritual life is nothing else than faith that is lived or "that worketh through charity" (Gal. 5, 6). Indeed, "the just man liveth by faith" (Rom. 1, 17). This first part contains most weighty motives for embracing the spiritual life with confidence and for developing it as perfectly as possible. Therefore, under no conditions is this first part to be slighted, lest the structure of the spiritual life be built upon sand or lest we expect fruit of a tree lacking strong roots.

The second part includes the principles of the religious life itself, or the religious life taken objectively. In it, not only the three religious vows are treated, but also, those things required for entering the religious state, and the debt of a religious to his Order. For, unless we come to the point where we cling to our Order with our whole soul and spirit, and unless we feel so united and incorporated with it, that we are convinced our whole life rises and falls with it, we will hardly fulfill our religious vows perfectly, nor will we ever fully rejoice in our religious state as we ought to rejoice.

With these things having been set forth and understood, we are ready to begin the study of perfection, which has no other aim, than that these known truths be put into practice, and that the obligations undertaken through the vows be fulfilled to the letter. The method employed in our Order will be shown in the third and fourth parts.

Anyone who has paged through only a few compendiums of spiritual theology will immediately understand how difficult it is to divide the entire subject correctly and to treat it in such a way that no question of any importance will be omitted, nor any repetitions become necessary.

We are, however, of the opinion that nothing would be of greater advantage in our explanation of the Carmelite life, than following the Rule of John 44, as it is called, and establishing two parts—one, by which we show the way to perfect purity of heart; the other, by which we explain prayer, although we are not unaware that no one

can attain purity of heart without prayer. Therefore, we repeat the warning, not to separate one part from the other. Nevertheless, we have introduced the separate treatment of prayer, so that the esteem in which it is held in our Order, may be apparent to all.

We do not intend this *Directory* to discharge the role of Novice-Master so as to become a substitute for his teaching and effort. It is his task to adapt to the understanding of his charges and to the circumstances of the various places the matters offered in the *Directory,* and if need be, to explain them more fully. We have no other purpose than to help him.

We suggest the following in the use of the *Directory:*

Before all, the novices are to be taught the exercises they are to perform every day. Therefore, the Novice-Master should show briefly and explain how they are to make meditation, spiritual reading, the general and particular examination of conscience, how they should receive the Sacraments devoutly and recite the Divine Office correctly. For this purpose he will find sufficient matter in the fourth part of the *Directory.*

From the first part, however, he will be able to draw matter for their meditations. Thus, after he has explained a paragraph, he should recommend it to his novices for meditation, so that they will not only understand the doctrine, but also embrace it with their whole heart and strive to put it into practice. In this way they will better understand the worth of these instructions and establish their whole life upon a solid foundation. For the intellect and the will, harmoniously trained as they should be, will support and assist each other.

As for the second part: the first and second sections will best be treated as an introduction to the entire religious life, and especially to the study of the Rule and Constitutions. And the third part will be of use in explaining the chapters of the Rule and the Constitutions which concern the vows.

For the remaining parts the Novice-Master will be able to follow the *Directory* itself in giving a fuller explanation of the things he has already proposed. In this way the novices will better understand the whole organism of the spiritual life, and will see the inter-relation of parts, a matter which is of great importance in the pursuit of perfection.

We have been careful not to teach a new doctrine, but rather to establish the genuine Carmelite tradition. Therefore, as far as we could, we have adduced the testimony of our own authors, or explained and proved our teaching by the examples and the words of our own

Saints and Venerables. However, we have not neglected to consult other authors as will be evident.

Since the particular aim of this *Directory* would allow of no annotations at the bottom of the page, or of longer citations within the text, we have restricted quotations as much as we could, and frequently have used abbreviations, which, however, are easily understood or which will be explained in the index at the end of the book.

For the same reason we have listed such books and passages, which might be within easy reach of our readers. Therefore, we have taken the sayings of the Holy Fathers for the most part from the Carmelite Breviary or from M. J. Rouet De Journel, S. J., and J. Dutilleul, S. J., *Enchiridium Asceticum* (Freiburg, Breisgau, 1930). For the other texts we have referred in as far as possible to the *Analecta Ordinis Carmelitarum.* If anyone should wish to consult the texts more carefully, he will find the necessary directions in the passages quoted.

By this *Directory* we do not wish to render superfluous the work *Vita Carmelitana,* published in Rome in 1933. For this reason, in so far as was permissible, we have omitted examples given there. Furthermore, in the second part of the *Vita* are contained many counsels and grave admonitions, which could not be repeated in the *Directory* because of its different purpose. But since the *Directory* itself would not produce its desired fruit if these counsels were neglected, it is highly desirable that the study of the *Vita* be not omitted.

We have done our best. May God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, our most beloved Mother, to whom we dedicate and commend this our effort, supply whatever may be lacking.

Rome, Feast of Saint Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, 1940.

COMPILER

THE MOST REV. FATHER GENERAL'S LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

If we have not yielded to discouragement under the present calamities and financial worries; indeed, if we even went on our way joyfully, despite the instant threat of war, it was due in large part to the fact that we were buoyed by a hope of soon being able to place in the hands of each member of the Order a book that would bring authentic, lucid and comprehensive information concerning the Carmelite life. Nothing could be more pleasing to loyal Carmelites than the opportunity of securing for themselves such knowledge. Hence, we profess we have never experienced a deeper feeling of joy than we do on this occasion when we are able to deliver to you a new book which bears the title, *Directorium Carmelitarum Vitae Spiritualis*. We beg of you that you keep this book, by day and by night, ever ready at hand for consultation.

The character and general plan of our Order radiate from the Holy Rule. The Rule is adapted to present-day conditions by the Constitutions. It is the function of the Rule and the Constitutions to guide us by precepts; but the function of the *Directory* is to teach us and to be a guide to us on the paths that lead to the summits of perfection. Let us illustrate this point by examples of these mutually integrating services. The Constitutions speak as follows regarding meditation: "It is our will, therefore, that . . . twice each day mental prayer be made by all, assembled in the choir or in some other convenient room to be chosen by the Superior. When it is possible these prayer periods should total one hour each day" (Const., Art. 149). The Constitutions ordain that meditation is to be made twice each day, but they are silent with regard to the method of meditation. Now, the *Directory* gives detailed instructions regarding the beginnings of the exercise of meditation, its development and its termination.

Our forefathers who lived in seclusion from the world and gave themselves wholly for many years to the study of God and divine things, have bequeathed to us certain formulas which they followed in their successful ascent to the summit of Carmel. These instructions truly constitute a treasury of things divine. It is of paramount importance for us to know that there is such a treasury in the Order, and that it is not necessary for us to seek in other store-houses for the secrets of growth in the interior life. "I brought you into the land of

Carmel to eat the fruit thereof, and the best things thereof" (Jer. 2, 7).

The essence of the Order is the radiating center of the spirit that motivates the members' lives and actions. As the Order is the same in essence in all parts of the world, it is important that an identical spirit should prevail throughout all the Provinces. Since, therefore, besides having the same Rule and the same Constitutions, we now also have the same *Directory,* it should be easily possible to develop the same spirit in the lives and strivings of the members throughout the whole extent of our Institute. For indeed, it is not an alien spirit that speaks and breathes in the pages of the *Directory,* but the same spirit that animated and enlightened our forefathers. This is abundantly apparent from many passages in the book that were quoted from the writings of Carmelites of the Ancient Observance. In this book too will be found fully explained those key principles of Carmel: to give our whole selves to God—to strive for purity of conscience—to foster intimate union with God.

"It must be borne in mind that meditation is only the road to contemplation. Hence the soul must not delay indefinitely in meditation, but rather hasten eagerly over this road (the more speedily the better) till it arrives at its true terminus, the contemplative life, the mystic sleep. For the truth is that in this way the soul lives more quickly and more perfectly in Christ and by living in Christ is transformed into Him" (Father Michael of St. Augustine, O. Carm., *Inst. Myst.* 1, Tr. 4, c. 16).

The Order of Mount Carmel and its devotion to the ever Blessed Virgin are so inseparable that the former cannot be conceived without the latter. The mystery of the Incarnate Word, the greatest fact in all history, has been impressed vividly on the minds and memories of Carmelites who are devoted to the practice of contemplation. The more fully each one grasps what it means, that the omnipotent and eternal God assumed human nature and was born of the Virgin Mary, the more clearly will he perceive how exalted a station the most Blessed Virgin holds in the divine plan of Redemption.

"I cannot longer refrain from striving with all means at my disposal to commend unreservedly a cordial devotion, a filial reverence and a tender affection for our lovable Mother, Mary, as the sole and efficacious means of developing the perfection of life in Christ" (ibid., 1, Tr. 1, c. 18).

He who professes to be a philosopher will direct all his studies to matters philosophical; he who enters on the practice of medicine will assiduously study matters medical. He who professes to be a Carmelite,

to what will he direct his strivings? Who of us would wish to pose as something which he is not?

"It would take many words to describe the many benefits and blessings that the (Carmelite) Order has bestowed upon the Catholic world by its exercises of prayer and the very purpose of its life, which consists both in meditation and the contemplation of divine things, as well as in the exercise of the sacred ministry" (Pius XI, Ep. *Dilaudandi profecto,* Nov. 15, 1925; cf. *Anal.* V, 545).

Therefore, let the Masters of Novices, Masters of the Professed, and the Priors draw from the *Directory* as from a fountain an intimate acquaintance with the characteristic Carmelite life: the Masters, that they may duly teach the novices and the clerics; the Priors, that they may give suitable instructions to their communities, particularly in conventual chapters.

Lastly, let all our brethren in the Order draw instruction from this same fountain that they may be able to adjust their interior and active life to the standards of Carmel. For truly, no orator will capture the hearts of his hearers with greater ease, no master will fashion and shape the minds of students more skillfully, no priest will be more successful in leading souls to virtue, than the Carmelite who has drunk deep of the doctrine contained in this *Directory* and has so developed his spiritual powers in the training-school of the Order that all his deeds spring from this culture of his mind as naturally and as spontaneously as fruit from a tree.

May God grant, through the intercession of Mary, that such may be the *Directory's* career!

Lastly, we profess our deep indebtedness to all who gave of their time and effort in the compiling of this work. We cherish the hope that in this book their loyalty and fidelity will have a monument more lasting than stone or bronze.

HILARY M. DOSWALD, *O. Carm.,*
Prior General

From St. Albert's, Rome,
Feast of Bl. Baptist of Mantua, 1940

PART ONE
DOGMATIC FUNDAMENTALS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

SECTION ONE
GOD

CHAPTER ONE

The Nature of God

1. Necessity of Knowing God

"Lord, let me know myself; let me know Thee," was the prayer of St. Augustine. The ancient philosophers themselves taught the necessity of self-knowledge. But no one will know himself perfectly without the knowledge of God, his beginning and end, in Whom he will see himself as in a mirror. Whoever intends, therefore, to enter upon the spiritual life, must before all else strive to form a perfect image of God; gazing on that image, he will reach the goal without danger of erring, and will be transformed into it. The novice in the spiritual life must realize to Whom he has entrusted and dedicated himself; then, when difficulties arise, he will not look back regretfully to the things he has left nor will he withdraw his hand from the plow. He must be eager to hear and read and meditate about God and the things of God; then, filled with the fear of God and captivated by His love, he will wholeheartedly despise the things of earth and strive after the things of Heaven.

The novice in the spiritual life should remember, however, that God is apprehended and known not so much through study and understanding, as by love and interior communion with Him. Love itself is knowledge, say the masters of the spiritual life. He who has not sought God in his heart, will not come to know Him through books. Further, the more one dies to himself by detachment from sin and all creatures, the more will he love and know God, since God will manifest Himself to a holy heart free from every sin. Finally, knowledge of God without love of God profits nothing. Indeed, we ought to learn to know God for no other purpose than to love Him above all things. On the other hand, it is also true that he who does not desire to know God is without the love of God. Ignorance is the bitterest enemy of love.

Summing up, let the novice diligently learn the spiritual teachings about God and about those things which pertain to the service of God; thus possessed of clear ideas, he can hope to pursue courageously to the end the life he has begun, until at last he is permitted to see God face to face and to repose forever in the God of his love.

2. The God of Infinite Majesty

It is of the greatest importance to the soul that desires to reach the

summit of the spiritual life, to be filled from the beginning with a holy fear and a most profound reverence toward the infinite Majesty of God. Holy Scripture itself says: "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord" (Ps. 110, 10), and "Fear of the Lord is the fount of life" (Prov. 14, 27). A holy fear of God is the firmest foundation of the spiritual life, just as the love of God is its crown.

Hence, the novice should frequently reflect upon the Majesty and Greatness of God. "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands" (Ps. 18, 2); "The invisble things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom. 1, 20). Nevertheless, the things that appear to our eyes in the universe are not sufficient to give a true concept of the image of God. For "Who shall see Him and declare Him? And who shall magnify Him as He is from the beginning? There are many things hidden from us that are greater than these (which are seen); for we have seen but a few of His works" (Ecclus. 43,35,36).

(a) Although we cannot penetrate to the ends of the universe, even with our most powerful telescopes, and even the genius of the learned cannot measure the immensity of space, all these things are reckoned before God "as a drop in a bucket" and "as the smallest grain of a balance" (Isa. 40, 15). By one word He created all these things; and if He were to create new worlds, each more excellent than the preceding, still the proportion between the last world created and the Infinity of God would never be changed. So great is God. He infinitely exceeds all things; He is not contained within limits.

(b) Just as God transcends all space, so also He transcends all time. The heavens "shall perish, but Thou remainest; and all of them shall grow old like a garment; and as vesture Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed. But Thou art always the self-same, and Thy years shall not fail" (Ps. 101, 27, 28). "Before the mountains were made, or the earth and the world were formed; from eternity and to eternity Thou art God." (Ps. 89, 2). God, therefore, is eternal. But here we must note that the word eternity, as we understand it, does not sufficiently express the things which are in God. In God eternity affirms not merely that He is without beginning and without end, but also that He lives a life that is essentially different from ours beyond every concept of time, a life in which all things, whether future, present or past are possessed simultaneously, since time is nothing but a condition of creatures.

(c) For the rest, we must attribute to God whatever is most beautiful, great and excellent among men on earth and angels in Heaven; but we must extol and stretch all to the infinite. Even then we are finally forced to confess that we have not said enough about God or understood Him. This is true of His Omnipotence, Wisdom and Knowledge, as well as of all the other divine attributes or perfections, which because of our weakness we are accustomed to distinguish in God. In truth, there is no such distinction, but only perfect unity and the fullness of all things. God is simply incomprehensible and ineffable, not only in this life but also in the next. Hence, St. John of the Cross teaches: "To understand and to experience that God is so immense that He cannot be sufficiently understood, is the most excellent knowledge" (CS. 7, 4-5).

(d) This immense and incomprehensible God is essentially holy or Holiness itself, and "There is none holy as the Lord is" (1 Kings, 2,2). Creatures are holy because and insofar as they are united to Him by grace and love and are consecrated to His service. God is holy because He is the fullness of life and does not depend on anything outside of Himself; He is holy because He loves Himself most perfectly; He is holy because "He is light, and there is not any darkness in Him" (1 John 1, 5); He is holy, because He is Truth, and error or lying have no place in Him; He is holy because He is "jealous" (Deut. 4,24) and wishes all to be referred to Him. He has and must have the greatest hatred for sin, because sin is opposition to God, to life, to light, to truth, to order and to wisdom. Sin is death and darkness. There can never be agreement between sin and God.

(e) For the same reason God is faithful and just, fulfilling what He has promised, carrying out what He has threatened. "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right (Ps. 118, 137). As a just judge He will give a crown of justice to the just on the last day (Cf. 2 Tim. 4,8), but also "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebr. 10, 31). For he "searcheth hearts" (Rom. 8,27) and "He can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10, 28).

(f) Nor should we forget that this God of immense majesty is more intimately present to us than any other being, since "He is not far from every one of us. For in Him we live and move and are" (Acts 17,28). He is present in our innermost heart. We are always and ever within His sight.

"Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and magnify Thy name? For Thou only art Holy; for all nations shall come and shall adore in Thy sight, because Thy judgments are manifest" (Apos. 15,4). Is it

not proper and just, right and salutary to cling to the God of such great majesty with our whole heart and always and ever to serve Him alone? "Blessed is the man to whom it is given to have the fear of God: he that holdeth it, to whom shall he be likened?" (Ecclus. 25, 15). To fear God and keep His commandments: "This is all man" (Eccles. 12, 13).

3. God, the Highest Good

"The fear of God is the beginning of His love" says Holy Scripture (Ecclus. 25, 16). Once His Infinite Majesty is known, the more man fears God, the more fervently will he devote himself to Him, and the more joyfully will he serve Him. For he will not fear God as a servant fears, but rather as a son. His fear and reverence will grow, little by little, to perfect love, the more so when he is convinced that this ineffable Majesty, Whom no one can resist, is the highest and infinite Good.

In the following instructions we shall see that God is the fountain of all life and goodness, and that He has poured forth His blessings superabundantly upon His creatures. But God is good, in fact Goodness itself, not merely in the sense that He is good in our respect, but that He is good in Himself and infinitely includes in Himself all things worthy of love. The things in Heaven or on earth that excite our love are good and lovable only because God, Who is Supreme Goodness, made them so; they are good because of God, whereas God is essentially good in Himself and because of Himself. They are good only in part, filled with many imperfections; God, however, is all Good and the sum total of perfection. They are constantly changing and passing away; but with the Father of lights, from whom every best gift and every perfect gift comes, there is no change, nor shadow of alteration (Cf. James 1, 17).

God is Goodness, supreme Goodness; therefore, He has a supreme hatred of sin, which is the only evil. To sinners, indeed, He is merciful and quick to forgive; but for this very reason He wishes to abolish and destroy sin in the sinner, and demands that the sinner himself earnestly co-operate. Thus we read in the Prophet, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezech. 33, 11). Because He is good and desires to lead rational creatures to a most intimate union with Himself, God wishes also that they tend seriously toward perfection and sanctity. "Be holy, because I am Holy" (Lev. 11, 44). Without sanctity and perfection, perfect union with God cannot be accomplished.

Consequently, whoever desires to work out his salvation and aspires to the perfection of the spiritual life, must think repeatedly upon God's goodness and love, and deeply impress upon his mind that only the fool will exchange goodness for an apparent and worthless advantage. God in His goodness warns us through the prophet, "Know thou and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee, to have left the Lord Thy God, and that My fear is not with thee" (Jer. 2, 19). Let us not be among those to whom the following words are spoken for their shame: "They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that hold no water" (Jer. 2, 13). Rather, let us say and confess in word and deed, "But it is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God" (Ps. 72, 28).

4. The Holy Trinity

By faith we hold that there is only one God. He is the fullness of all perfections and, as there cannot be anything independent of Him, there is no room for another God. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6, 4).

Still, though there is but one God and only one Divine Nature, this nature is possessed by Three Divine Persons. We do not say that this nature is divided among three persons, so that each person has its own part. The Divine Nature, since it is one in itself, and most simple because of its Infinite Perfection, cannot be divided. But we hold that the same Divine Nature subsists in three persons distinct from one another. "For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is but one, the glory equal, and the majesty co-eternal" (*Athanasian Creed*). These Three Persons are not separable one from the other. Wherever the Father is, there is both the Son and the Holy Spirit, penetrating each the other.

The Father is not greater than the Son or Holy Spirit, because there is the same nature and essence in the three Persons. All the highest perfection of which we spoke in the preceding instructions is found in each. Each of the Three Persons is without beginning and without end.

Nevertheless, the Father alone is unbegotten and does not proceed from any other. "The Father is made of none; neither created nor begotten (*ibid*). The Son, however, proceeds eternally and necessarily from the Father, sharing in the same complete Divine Nature without diminution. For the Father, knowing Himself perfectly from

eternity, produces a likeness equal to Himself in every way, a most perfect expression of Himself, which is the Son or the Word of the Father. Since the Father cannot and could not be without the knowledge of Himself, He cannot and could not be without the Son. "The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten" (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, the Father and Son love each other from eternity, penetrating each other with such power and perfection, that from both a Third Person proceeds by spiration, Whom, according to Holy Scripture, we call the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit is of the Father and the Son, not made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding" (*ibid.*).

Therefore, "In this Trinity nothing is before or after, nothing is greater or less; but all three persons are co-eternal together and co-equal, so that unity is to be worshipped in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity" (*ibid.*).

Man could never know this mystery by the investigation of reason alone; he is able to know it only by divine revelation. And even after revelation the mystery remains impervious and impenetrable to every created mind without exception. We can never understand it. All we are able to know is that nothing contrary to reason is expressed in it. For we by no means affirm that unity and trinity are the same, but only that one and the same divine nature subsists in three persons. The nature is one, and the persons three; yet the nature does not exist separately from the persons.

For the rest, since God is immense and infinite, it is no wonder that our intellect, because of its weakness, does not understand what is in God. It is sufficient that God, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has revealed it to us by His Holy Spirit. "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2, 10).

Nothing else remains but to adore this great mystery, the summit of our faith, with the greatest admiration and joy, to thank God for His great glory and to dedicate our whole life to the most Holy Trinity, which, as we shall see later, dwells in us as in a temple.

We may conclude then, that in God there is the most abundant life and the highest activity, and that when we have passed to the next life and have entered in unto God we shall behold and enjoy wonders upon wonders; never will our intellect tire in knowing, nor our will in loving and rejoicing. "It is not a useless exchange, to abandon all things for Him Who is above all things" (St. Bernard, *Sermo de bonis deserendis*).

CHAPTER TWO

GOD OUR CREATOR AND PRESERVER

5. God the Creator

God of Himself has life and all perfections. No one has given Him anything. "Who hath first given to Him, and recompense shall be made him?" says the Apostle (Rom. 11, 35). God does not depend upon any person or any thing. Hence the Psalmist confesses, "I have said to the Lord: Thou art my God, for Thou hast no need of my goods" (Ps. 15, 2). God *is,* because he is *God.*

All things outside of God, the greatest as well as the least, can have no beginning except for Him. For really nothing was outside of God, since God is all. His life did not begin with the world, but is from eternity, because God is life—life, we say, infinite and ineffably abundant, as we know from the mystery of the most Holy Trinity revealed to us. Compared to the life of the most Holy Trinity, the life of all creatures taken together is nothing.

The foregoing must be remembered, in order that we may have a right understanding of what is to be said about the creation of the world.

God, to whose Omnipotence no word is impossible, "In the beginning created heaven and earth" (Gen. 1, 31). "For He spoke and they were made; He commanded and they were created" (Ps. 32, 9). He did nothing else than will. His will is the cause of everything, and everything has been made as He willed it, and it was good. "God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good" (Gen. 1, 31). God can create nothing except what is good.

God was not forced in any way to create the world. Outside of Him, there existed no one by whom He could be forced or influenced. Nor was there any necessity for creation in Himself, since in Himself, as we have again and again affirmed, He is most happy and blessed. Indeed, because of His Infinite perfection and immutability, He cannot suffer growth or increase. Hence He created all things with absolute liberty, without any coercion or necessity. "Whatsoever the Lord pleased He hath done, in heaven, in earth, in the sea and in all the deeps" (Ps. 134, 6).

The true reason for creation was, therefore, nothing else than the Infinite Goodness of God. For goodness is diffusive of itself, i. e., it desires to communicate to others what it itself contains. God, however, is Charity, as the Apostle says (Cf. 1 John 4, 8). He did not wish

to enjoy His happiness alone, but wished to make creatures, endowed with reason, sharers of His happiness and riches.

To this end He created the universe and prepared the earth abounding with plants and animals. Then He created man, who, gifted with intellect and free will, would be capable of knowing and enjoying heavenly and divine things.

Besides the visible world He created angels, pure spirits, able in a more sublime way to contemplate and enjoy the divine greatness and beauty.

Accordingly, we are commanded to confess, "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible." Filled with gratitude and reverence, like the twenty-four ancients whom St. John saw (Cf. Apoc. 4, 10), we go in spirit "before Him that sitteth on the throne"; we adore "Him that liveth forever and ever," saying meanwhile: "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, because Thou hast created all things; and for Thy will they were and have been created" (Apoc. 4, 11).

6. God the Preserver

As the all-powerful will of God alone could call from nothing to life all the things that are, so the Divine Will alone keeps them in life and existence. Unless they were sustained by God, they would immediately fall back to nothing, as if they never had existed. "And how could anything endure, if Thou wouldst not? Or be preserved if not called by Thee?" (Wisd. 11, 26). Thus every moment of life, no less than the first, makes its demand on the Omnipotence and Goodness of God.

It follows that we and all men and all animals and all creatures always, everywhere and continuously depend upon God. In fact, we cannot move a finger nor take a step nor utter a word, neither think nor wish, without the will and help of God. Nor do we know whether the next moment will find us among the living or the dead. Neither does our health, or our own prudence, or the advice and help of others offer any security to us. "In the midst of life we are in death." Truly, we must confess, "It is Thou, O Lord, Who hast power of life and death, and leadest down to the gates of death and bringest back again" (Wisd. 16, 13).

Would that we might always be mindful of this truth! How much greater will be our reverence for the Majesty of God, how much more profound the knowledge of our nothingness, how much more diligent

our watchfulness to be ready to render an account! And our gratitude, too, will increase exceedingly, when we have convinced ourselves that we receive all things from the hand of God.

Besides, we shall become stronger and freer. Stronger, we say, to run the way of God's commandments, since we know that the souls of the just are in the hand of God. Freer, from the fear of men, lest we depart from the right path because of human respect. Why, in truth, should we fear him whose days pass more swiftly than the web is cut by the weaver (Cf. Job 7, 6)? Goliath, confident of victory because of the greatness and strength of his body, met the boy David and suddenly fell to the ground, struck by a small stone cast in the Lord's name. And the dying Mathathias admonished his sons, "Fear not the words of sinful man, for his glory is dung and worms: today he is lifted up, and tomorrow he shall not be found, because he is returned into his earth, and his thought is come to nothing" (1 Mach. 2, 62-63).

Again, we are admonished not to place our hope in frail man. They also can die unexpectedly, or at least can become incapable of protecting or helping us. Only "The Lord is the everlasting God, Who hath created the ends of the earth: He shall not faint or labor, neither is there any searching out of His wisdom. It is He that giveth strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not. Youths shall faint and labor and young men shall fall by infirmity, but they that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isa. 40, 28-31).

7. God the Ruler

Very often men foolishly say that things, the causes of which are unknown, have happened by chance. But whether we do or do not know the proximate causes, nothing happens without purpose or by chance; all things are arranged and governed by God.

We have learned that all things without exception were created by God and are preserved by Him and depend upon Him. But God is not like children at play, or like men frittering away their time, not knowing what to do next. God always has full knowledge of what He wishes. Hence it is that nothing happens without His knowledge, will, or permission. Nowhere does chance rule; but all things, even the least are governed by Divine Providence. Thus we read in the Old Testament, "Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches are from God" (Ecclus. 11, 14). And our Lord says, "Are not

two sparrows sold for a farthing? And not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father" (Matt. 10, 29). Wherefore, we must believe, "Lots are cast into the lap, but they are disposed by the Lord" (Prov. 16, 33).

If we firmly believe these things and keep them ever before our eyes, it will not be difficult to conduct ourselves in all circumstances as is proper and useful.

For God governs all things most wisely. His wisdom "reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly" (Wisd. 8, 1). He discerns all things, their essence and their powers; nor are the things of the past and of the future less known to Him than those of the present. Yes, "The eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts" (Ecclus. 23, 28). He cannot be deceived by anything or anybody. All things shall attain the end which He intended. God permits evil and sin to happen for no other reason than that He can easily draw good out of everything. Thus Joseph of old explained to his brothers, "Be not afraid and let it not seem to you a hard case that you sold me into these countries: for God sent me before you into Egypt for your preservation . . . not by your counsel was I sent hither, but by the will of God" (Gen. 45, 5-8). No one can act more wisely or more prudently than to subject himself perfectly to God's plans.

God governs all things with consummate goodness. He always provides and procures whatever is for our good. "Thou lovest all things that are, hatest none of the things which Thou has made; for Thou didst not appoint or make anything hating it" (Wisd. 11, 25). Often indeed it will happen that Divine Providence forbids the things we plan and desire, and sends the things we do not desire. But this so happens because God knows better than we, who are so worldly-wise, what is profitable for us. If we refrain from disturbing the plans of God, His word will also become manifest in us: "To them that love God, all things work together unto good" (Rom. 8, 28). Thence we will draw that wonderful peace of mind, which is so necessary for the spiritual life.

CHAPTER THREE

GOD OUR FINAL END

8. The Glory of God, the End of Creatures

We have learned that God cannot do anything without a plan. Hence we must now ask ourselves for what end God has created the whole world and for what purpose He preserves and governs it. There is no other answer than this: All things that are, have been made for the glory of God. For "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Prov. 16, 4).

It cannot be otherwise. Just as all creatures have their origin from God, so too, they cannot preserve their life and existence unless they remain in union with God, and are directed toward Him. If creatures were to tend elsewhere, they would be tending towards death and darkness, just as the earth would lose its light and life, the moment it would cease to move about the sun.

No one should think that God wrongly wishes all things to be referred to Himself. He cannot do otherwise than refer all things to Himself. In this matter let us not confuse the Creator with His creatures. When men seek their honor and glory, they fail against truth; for of themselves they are nothing, and have nothing that merits praise. They indeed are a work of God. But if God would give His glory to another and were not zealous for His own name (Cf. Ezech. 39, 25) He would be a liar, since in reality all things are His and derive from Him. Truth itself demands that all things be referred and directed to God and that all rational creatures always and everywhere sing the praises of God and propagate His glory.

We did not contradict ourselves when we stated above that divine Goodness is the cause of all things. God has no need of this praise of His creatures, nor has He now any need of it; neither does He gain any increase or advantage from it, since, because of His own infinite perfection, He is incapable of increase. It is man, therefore, who is enriched when he praises, reverences, and serves God; and this is the more true, since God through His own infinite goodness and mercy, as we shall see more clearly later, has destined man for a supernatural end and for heavenly union, provided that he faithfully fulfills the divine will in this life. God directs all to Himself, not to acquire new glory, but to communicate His glory. Thus we confess, "We give thanks to Thee because of Thy great glory."

All creatures, therefore, were made for the praise and glory of

God, although not all to the same degree. Irrational creatures can only indirectly sing the praise of God, insofar as they make known the perfections of God—namely, His Wisdom, Omnipotence, Goodness, Justice and so forth—to rational creatures, and are useful to these for rendering service and worship to God.

But rational creatures, or men, must recognize God in His works and when they know Him, praise, reverence, serve and obey Him. In this way they are directed toward God and are united to Him spiritually. The more they do this, the greater and more abundant will be the life they draw from God. And what is more glorious than to praise the highest Beauty and Goodness? What more noble work can they accomplish than to serve God, the highest Majesty, most faithfully?

When man lives for God therefore, he lives for himself—the most noble and most profitable life!

9. The All-Sufficiency of God

"Vanity of vanities," said Ecclesiastes, "vanity of vanities and all is vanity" (Eccles. 1, 2). It is vanity, therefore, to put our hope in creatures and to seek peace in them. For man cannot have them or enjoy them freely. Their possession does not depend upon his own will or effort, but upon the disposition of God who governs all things. A man who pursues things so uncertain, is like one who tries to grasp the air. The more he closes his hand, the less air he holds.

Moreover, the other creatures, like himself, will pass away. We never know how long we shall be permitted to enjoy them. The Apostle reminds us that we have brought nothing into this world, and certainly can carry nothing out (Cf. 1 Tim. 6, 7). Hence, "It is vanity to love what is passing away with all speed, and not to hasten thither where endless joy abideth" (*Imitation of Christ,* 1, 1).

Finally, our heart was not created for creatures. It will never be satisfied with them. "The eye is not filled with seeing, neither is the ear filled with hearing" (Eccles. 1, 8). Our heart is too great for created things. It was fashioned not for the material things, but for the spiritual and the divine. Indeed, it usually happens that the heart is filled with the greatest disgust and wretchedness, the more it has enjoyed created things and the longer it has clung to them. For we are far from our fatherland and dwelling in exile.

In truth, our heart was created for God, nor will it ever rest except in God. God alone can fill it so effectually that it will have no further desire, since in Him it will possess all it desires. The

Psalmist seems to proclaim in the name of us all, "For Thee my soul hath thirsted; for Thee my flesh, O how many ways" (Ps. 62, 2).

How well did St. Theresa of Jesus exclaim, *God alone suffices!* Let us understand these words well! Accordingly, no man or created thing is sufficient for us, except God alone. In fact, should we gain the whole world, it would not satisfy us. God alone is sufficient for us, but on the sole condition that we renounce creatures. Any compromise will deprive our heart of peace and tranquility, since our heart is too small to admit of division. Besides, God will not give Himself, unless He finds our heart free from the love of creatures. Hence, it is not permitted "to halt between two sides" (Cf. 3 Kings, 18, 21). It is necessary to cling either to God or to creatures. The Saints were so happy in this life because they sought God alone. God really suffices; and we need nothing else, if only we possess God. For cannot He, who is all in all, fill the human heart? Let us believe the words and experiences of the Saints, who superabounded with joy in every tribulation, because they were filled with God. "O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments: thy peace had been as a river and thy justice as the waves of the sea" (Isa. 48, 18).

Thus "vanity of vanities and all is vanity, but to love God and serve Him alone" (*Im. Chr.* 1, 1).

SECTION TWO

MAN

CHAPTER ONE

THE CREATION AND ELEVATION OF MAN

10. The Origin of Man

After God by His Omnipotence had created the whole world and had so furnished the earth that it was a paradise of pleasure, He said, "Let us create man to Our image and likeness" (Gen. 1, 26). In fact, "God created man to His own image; to the image of God He created him: male and female He created them" (Gen. 1, 27). Holy Scripture goes on to explain this more fully. "The Lord formed man of the slime of the earth; and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2, 7).

If Holy Scripture so solemnly and explicitly describes the creation of man, it is to impress upon us with what care and love God proceeded to create him. For, though God called all other things into existence by His Omnipotent Word or produced them by secondary causes already created, He applied His own hands, as it were, to the creation of man.

At the same time we are warned not to forget our lowly origin. We were made from the dust of the earth. And after the fall it was said to man, "Dust thou art and into dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3, 19). For what lies beneath all human beauty, even the greatest, except dust and ashes? We were dust, we shall be dust. And what does it profit to serve this dust? What foolishness to lose eternal life because of dust! How wisely, therefore, does St. Bernard commend the example of our Savior and exhort us, "Learn, O man, to submit; learn, O earth, to be subject; learn, O dust, to obey" (Hom. I *super Missus est,* n. 8). And the Church calls and encourages us to do penance, saying, "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return."

Into this dust of the earth, fashioned to the figure of a man, God breathed "the breath of life, and man was made a living soul" (Gen. 2, 7). The soul was (as it still is) created immediately by God and infused into the body; it is evident that man is the work of God, and does not draw life from any other source than God. Although originally God formed the human body from the dust of the earth

and subsequently creates the human body through the instrumentality of human parents, the soul is always created from nothing, without the intervention of a secondary cause.

The body and soul are joined in such intimacy that one man and one human nature results. Hence, in eternity, the body and the soul will find the same lot, either eternal glory or eternal punishment.

The body receives its whole life from the soul. For the soul is the single principle of a threefold life: the vegetative, which the plants also possess; the sensitive, which we find also in the brute animals; and finally, the intellectual, by which man is distinguished from the rest of visible creatures and belongs to the order of spirits.

But the soul also, to a certain degree, depends on the body; at least in this life. It can acquire no knowledge without the use of the internal and the external senses. Hence the ancient counsel: "We should pray for a sound mind in a sound body." It is also desirable that the members and the senses of the body be so developed as to enable them to render perfect service to the soul; and in so far as this depends upon us we should strive to bring it about. It is not lawful to inflict serious injury on the body, or without serious reason to mutilate its members. Injury to the body reflects on the soul; besides, God and not man has the dominion over life and body.

Much less is it allowable to inflict injuries on the soul because of the body. For the soul is much more precious than the body, and if the soul is damned the body cannot be saved. Therefore, the body is to be the apt instrument of the soul in its fulfillment of the will of the Creator. For this purpose it should be nourished and trained and used; then both the body and the soul will flourish.

11. The Image and Likeness of God

Between man and the rest of visible creatures there is so great a difference, that it is absurd to affirm that man has descended from them. Holy Scripture, itself, as we have seen, begins the description of the creation of man in such a serious tone, in order that it may impress man with this difference. It clearly indicates also that man is the crown of God's work. For he was made to the image and likeness of God; and he was made so that "he might have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1, 26).

This image is expressed in man's very body, since man alone among the animals walks erect. This fact seems to signify that he, though

taken from the earth, is destined for the things that are above and should rule all things by his intelligence. He is destined, therefore, for higher things than grovelling on the earth.

But man is an image of God much more by his soul. For the soul is endowed with three gifts, through which it is a mirror of the divine essence.

First of all, the soul is spiritual. Although it is bound to the body and ordinarily cannot act in this life without the help of the body, there is nothing of the material order to be found in it. Even though the soul animates the body, it suffers no loss by this action, so that it can transcend the body by thought and is able to pursue purely spiritual and even divine things.

Secondly, the soul is immortal. Since the body is composed of material parts, it is, by its very nature, subject to dissolution and perishes sooner or later. But the soul, since it is simple and not composed of physical parts, cannot be broken up or consumed by labor. Once it is created, it remains forever, unless the Creator Himself should reduce it to nothing. And even if it is forced to leave the body, it will not perish, as Holy Scripture itself testifies: "The dust shall return into the earth, from whence it was, and the spirit shall return to God Who gave it" (Eccles. 12, 7). But the soul will never be destroyed by God; it is really immortal and reflects the divine immortality, whereas all else passes away.

In the third place, since the soul is spiritual, it enjoys free will. Man was created for freedom, not indeed in the sense that he may freely follow the concupiscences of the flesh (then indeed he would be reduced to slavery of the flesh); nor in the sense that he may choose his own way independently of God, his Creator and Lord (for then he would abandon the fount of life, as we have seen, and would necessarily plunge into darkness and death); but he was created rather that he might knowingly and willingly cling to God, and devote his whole life to Him. If he does this, he will truly and perfectly express in himself the image of God, imitating the divine perfections.

The more the spirit, and not the flesh, rules in man, the more does he display the image and likeness of God; the more too will he be able to subject all else to himself, according to the command, "Increase and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth" (Gen. 1, 28).

For this has God created man, that being made king and priest of the entire earth, he might subdue all things and then use them in the

service and worship of God; in this way continuously praise his Creator, sanctify himself and prepare himself for higher things.

12. The Preternatural Gifts

God created man to be happy even in this life. By no means did He destine him to sadness and misery. Wherefore, before He formed man God had already planted a paradise of pleasure. And when man was placed in it, he found there in abundance all things necessary for life (cf. Gen. 2, 8), so that he was completely ignorant of any care in finding his daily bread.

God, by reason of His goodness and generosity, endowed man with most excellent gifts, which were not based *per se* upon human nature, nor demanded by it. And yet, man was not elevated by them to the divine order. Therefore, they are called preternatural gifts.

(a) The first gift man obtained was that of immunity from the necessity of dying, or the gift of immortality. As long as he observed the conditions laid down by God, death could offer no threat to him.

We have seen that the body of its very nature tends to dissolution. The soul, although united closely to the body, must leave the body, as soon as the body is reduced to such a state by sickness, wounds or old age that it ceases to be a fit dwelling place and instrument of the soul. Moreover, the body under the influence of the elements is afflicted with many pains and sicknesses, and is fatigued and worn out with labors. The soul, because of its intimate union with the body, cannot remain unaffected under such conditions, but is greatly afflicted because of them. "For a corruptible body is a load upon the soul," says Holy Scripture (Wisd. 9, 15).

From all these imperfections, the first man, by a singular gift of God, was immune. Not being subject to the law of death, he knew neither pain nor disease. His life was never to be interrupted, provided he observed the command given him by God.

(b) Secondly, he was honored with the gift of integrity, or immunity from concupiscence. Our spirit indeed cannot be satisfied except by God and, for that reason, of its very nature tends upward. The body, however, has its own kind of material and particular goods. The eye delights in the sight of sensible things, the ear in harmony, the taste in pleasing foods, etc. Hence, there frequently arises in man violent dissension, because his sensitive appetite forestalls reason or even rebels against its dictates. Since the law of the body opposes the law of the mind (Cf. Rom. 7, 23), the peace and tranquility of the soul is now frequently drawn into jeopardy. But in paradise this

danger was not present. God had so bound concupiscence in man and had so strengthened his rational will that the rational man enjoyed perfect dominion over the sensitive man, and temptations were not suffered to arise. Perfect harmony and concord reigned in man, and the body was always a fit instrument of the soul in the exercise of virtue. Man's mind could turn to God without hindrance and occupy itself with divine things.

(c) Finally, the first man was immune from ignorance, i. e., he enjoyed the gift of knowledge. The most prolific source of error was shut off by the very fact that there was no rebellion of the flesh. Evil concupiscence very often impedes the calm deliberation of man and frequently so blinds his mind that he confuses evil with good; but this could not happen in paradise, because of the gift of innocence. Endowed with extraordinary keenness of intellect, man then clearly discerned the true and the good. Moreover, God gifted him with singular knowledge, so that he might be not only the physical principle of the human race, but also its teacher. This knowledge was to be increased daily through experience.

God indeed had made splendid provision for man, since "He took him and placed him in a paradise of pleasure to dress it and to keep it." (Gen. 2, 15). Certainly, man had to work; but he was not on that account affected by vexation or sadness, since for this very purpose he had obtained sufficient strength, and nothing is more agreeable and more suited to the nature of man than the use of his powers and faculties. From their use he drew fresh delights. Thus at that time man was truly happy upon the earth.

13. The Supernatural State

It could have been sufficient for man to know God from His works by the natural powers of reason, to love Him, and faithfully to fulfill His will, as this will was manifested by the voice of conscience and the necessities of life. In doing so man could have found a certain natural happiness.

But God gave man far more in placing him in the paradise of pleasure and endowing him with the preternatural gifts which we have explained. Man did not even suspect that greater and higher gifts could be granted him.

Nevertheless, God had decreed to shower man with the most excellent blessings. He had created him for an end infinitely beyond the limits of human nature, an end which man could never have known without special revelation. God called man to union with Himself.

He established an entirely supernatural and divine life for him, to be begun in the earthly paradise and to be consummated in Heaven. He wished that man after living without suffering in the earthly paradise should, without dying, enter Heaven, compared with which the earthly paradise, beautiful as it was, would appear like a peasant's hut. He wished man to be a partaker of the happiness of the Creator Himself. God Himself wished to be man's reward exceedingly great.

Because of so lofty an end, man was already in this life elevated above his nature and placed in the supernatural order. From the beginning he was clothed with sanctifying grace, and being made a sharer of the divine nature, lived in wonderful friendship and familiarity with God, although filled with great reverence for the Divine Majesty.

Likewise, that man might attain his supernatural end, he was endowed with powers suited to this end. That he might know and love God not only naturally, but might cling to God supernaturally, he was given the infused virtues of faith, hope and charity. That he might live a life worthy of eternal reward, God continually impelled and helped man by His actual grace. By this internal disposition and external operation man expressed in himself an image and likeness of God ineffably more perfect than he could have done if he had been left in the purely natural order. Thus he lived a truly divine life.

These matters will be more fully treated later, when we come to speak of the fruits of the Redemption. But even now it is evident with what great love the Creator attended His creature, and to what great dignity man, made from the dust of the earth, was elevated by the goodness and design of God. Truly is it written, "God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good" (Gen. 1, 31).

14. The Choirs of Angels

Besides man, God in His omnipotence and wisdom called from nothing other creatures endowed with intellect and will, namely, the holy angels. They are very numerous, as is testified by the vision of the prophet Daniel, "Thousands of thousands ministered to Him and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him" (Dan. 7, 10).

By nature, the holy angels are pure spirits, i. e., they have no relation whatever to a body, nor is there anything material in them. For this reason they are immortal and are not subject to material changes. They are gifted with superior intellect and free will, and by their powers are superior to man.

There is rank among the angels, with some superior to others. Usually they are divided into choirs, nine in number, which in Holy Scripture are called: Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Dominations, Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim.

Three of the holy angels are known to us by name: St. Michael, under whose leadership the rebel angels were defeated; St. Raphael, who accompanied the young Tobias; St. Gabriel, who announced the birth of John the Baptist and the coming of the Divine Redeemer.

The holy angels fulfill a threefold end: first, they sing the praises of God; second, they execute God's particular orders; third, they watch over Holy Church, nations, and individuals, especially the faithful. For, as St. Paul says, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" (Hebr. 1, 14). At least all the faithful have individual guardian angels, whose watchfulness is beautifully described by the Psalmist, who says, "He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Ps. 90, 11. 12). The protection of the holy angels is far more powerful than that of princes and the most powerful men. Being spirits, they know more and can do more. The angels, just as men, were from the beginning clothed with sanctifying grace and raised to the supernatural order. But before they were admitted to the beatific vision and confirmed in grace, they were tried by God. The greater part of the angels survived the test, but the rest under the leadership of the angel, whom we are accustomed to call Lucifer and who seems to have been one of the greatest, refused to obey, and in frenzied blindness presumed to rise up against God. Our Lord Himself revealed the outcome when He said, "I saw satan like lightning falling from Heaven" (Luke 10, 18). With satan there were also other angels, his followers "who kept not their principality but forsook their own habitation," and whom God, "reserved under darkness in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 1, 6). For, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but delivered them drawn down by internal ropes to the lower hell unto torments" (2 Pet. 2, 4).

From this we can draw two conclusions: that we should imitate the holy angels by faith, devoutly venerate especially our guardian angels and place all our trust in them. Let the renowned Judith be our example, who, after killing Holofernes, proclaimed before the people, "As the same Lord liveth, His angel has been my keeper, both going hence, and abiding there, and returning from thence hither" (Judith 13, 20).

But let us also fear the judgments of God and beware of the snares of the devil. St. Peter warns us, "Be sober and watch; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist ye, strong in faith" (1 Pet. 5, 8). But we should never lose courage; "there are more with us than with them" (4 Kings 6, 16).

CHAPTER TWO

THE FALL OF MAN

15. Satan the Seducer

The rebel angels did not obtain even a moment to repent and return. Being hardened in their wickedness, they were deprived of every grace and immediately suffered eternal damnation, whence there is no hope of escape. Eternal fire, said the Lord, was prepared for the devil and his angels (Cf. Matt. 25, 41).

But until the last day they are permitted by God to roam about the earth to tempt man, as we have learned from St. Peter. St. Paul also warns us: "Put you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6, 11. 12).

The devil tempts man to rebel against God and having deprived him of divine grace draws him into the torments of hell. But it is God's intention that man, after being tried by various temptations, should become worthy of the eternal kingdom. Thus has arisen that unceasing struggle between the mystery of love and the mystery of iniquity concerning man's immortal soul.

This struggle had its beginning in paradise itself. Goaded on by envy, because men were to attain the great things that he himself had lost, the devil crept into paradise, and by the fall of the first man the whole human race perished. Since man's adversary, deprived of all his supernatural gifts, has retained his spiritual nature, he was greatly to be feared because of his power and cunning, and as experience teaches, is still greatly to be feared.

Satan, who, as St. Paul teaches, "transforms himself into an angel of light" when occasion demands (2 Cor. 11, 14), on that occasion employed a serpent to ensnare man. Therefore, St. John, speaking of

the rebellion of the angels in Heaven says, "That great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and satan, who seduceth the whole world" (Apoc. 12, 9). Thus, according to Holy Scripture, was born every evil upon earth. "For God created man incorruptible, and to the image of His own likeness He made him. But by the envy of the devil, death came into the world: and they follow him that are of his side" (Wisd. 2, 23, 24).

16. The Sin of Man

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, why hath God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree in paradise? And the woman answered saying: Of the fruit of the trees that are in paradise we do eat: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not eat. And that we should not touch it lest perhaps we die. And the serpent said to the woman: No, you shall not die the death. For God doth know that what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened; and you shall be as gods knowing good and evil. And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes and delightful to behold: and she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave to her husband who did eat" (Gen. 3, 1-6).

In these simple words Holy Scripture tells us of an event than which nothing more fatal has happened since the creation of man. To understand the crime of our first parents, we should consider the following:

God had given to Adam and Eve a clear command that was easy to understand and easy to observe. For nothing was wanting to them in paradise. Moreover, as we have seen, they enjoyed the greatest delights. When the devil whispered that God had given an unjust command, Eve, herself gave the honest reply, "Of the fruit of the trees in paradise we do eat." Only one tree was excepted. And our first parents were not seduced or deceived by concupiscence, because it had been bound by a unique gift of God. Hence, that precept was given for no other purpose than to try the faith and obedience of the first man. God, moreover, had sanctioned His command with a threat of grave punishment, so that Adam and Eve could not be ignorant of how greatly he urged its observance, the more so since they had been gifted with keen intelligence.

Then, too, God had heaped His benefits upon our first parents, and always had conversed most familiarly with them as a true father

and friend. How then could they ever doubt His word? The devil on the other hand, began with a manifest lie, when he pretended that God had forbidden the use of all the trees of paradise.

Finally, they had been clearly taught by God that they carried in their hands the fate of the entire human race, so that if they violated the divine command, they would bring punishment not only on themselves.

Nevertheless, they believed the devil rather than God and, led on by a fateful ambition, ate of the forbidden fruit. The devil seemed to have obtained what he wanted. For immediately it was evident how great was the ruin that Adam and Eve had brought upon themselves and upon all men.

17. The Punishment of Sin

Punishment followed the sin. At once "The eyes of them both were opened" (Gen. 3, 7). The devil had promised them that when they had tasted the forbidden fruit they would be "knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3, 5). Now, indeed, they knew good and evil by experience; but they knew, too, that they had done evil in violating the command of the Lord, and that their sin was the greatest of all evils. Before, they had known that the fruit was "beautiful to the eyes and delightful to behold"; but now they learned by experience that it is an evil and bitter thing to leave the Lord their God (Cf. Jer. 2, 19), and that the end of sin is bitter as wormwood (Cf. Prov. 5, 4). Their consciences began to be so troubled with remorse, that they, who had before conversed so familiarly with God and had so perfect a knowledge of Him, now hid themselves "from the face of the Lord God amidst the trees of paradise" (Gen. 3, 8) and completely forgot that God is everywhere and knows all things. To such blindness did one sin lead them.

They also experienced evil concupiscence, which had been held in check by the gift of integrity. Because they had risen up against God, their flesh began to rebel against the spirit, overthrowing peace and tranquility of soul. Reason ceased to exercise perfect mastery over the lower part, and there entered the necessity of struggle unto the end.

And then judgment manifested itself. God drove our parents from the garden which He had planted for them into a land of misery and tribulation, which, placed under the curse of God and sown with thorns and thistles, would hardly give man food to eat. "Cursed is the earth," He said, "in thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring

forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3, 17. 18).

After a life filled with miseries death was to follow. The way to the tree of life remained closed (Cf. Gen. 2, 24). Every man thenceforth had to return to the earth whence he was taken. God made good his threat, "Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat, for in what day soever thou shalt eat it, thou shalt die the death" (Gen. 2, 17).

But greater than all these punishments was the loss of the grace and friendship of God. Man fell from the supernatural order and lost his participation in the divine nature. For this reason, too, was Heaven closed and hell opened. After suffering so many great miseries and calamities upon earth, man could expect only eternal damnation. Cast off from the sight of God, nothing remained for him but despair.

"How is the gold become dim, the finest color is changed!" (Lam. 4, 1). Light is turned into darkness, paradise into exile; beautiful hope has degenerated into bleak despair. The plans of divine goodness seemed to have failed, the snares of the devil seemed to have succeeded. Behold the effects of that sin!

18. Original Sin

Our first parents, in transgressing the command of God, committed a personal sin.

But Adam, as we have seen, was not only the physical, but also the moral head, of the whole human race. In keeping or violating a precept of God, Adam acted not only in his own name but in the name of all men to come.

Likewise, he had received the preternatural and supernatural gifts not only for himself, but for all his posterity, that through natural generation they might pass to all men as an inheritance. If Adam had not sinned, father and mother would have transmitted to their children, together with natural life, also supernatural life and the preternatural gifts. All men would have entered into life clothed with sanctifying grace. Although cognizant of this, Adam, seduced by the woman, proved himself unfaithful and committed sin.

This sin, however, has passed to all posterity not as a personal sin, but as a sin inherent in human nature. All men were to be affected by it, not because of some personal act, but because of their origin from Adam. Hence the name original sin. Accordingly St. Paul says, "For all have sinned and do need the glory of God" (Rom. 3, 23). According to the eternal plans of God all men were to be born estab-

lished in grace, a thing which could not happen after the sin of Adam, by which that precious heritage was squandered. Thus it is that God is offended by the state of our souls and we are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2, 3) and "vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction" (Rom. 9, 22).

It is evident that, together with the sin, all men have inherited its punishments and consequences. Not only is Heaven closed, but even in this life sufferings and sorrows, numerous struggles and great cares abound, and death awaits the body. No trace of paradise seems to have remained.

Moreover, men are tortured with evil concupiscence and are drawn to personal sin; ignorance and error deceive them. Their intellect has been blinded, and concupiscence waxes strong; even the will appears weakened, so that St. Paul exclaims in the name of all, "I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I work, I understand not. For I do not that good which I will; but the evil which I hate, that I do. . . . Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. . . . For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man: but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7, 14-24).

Furthermore, it seems that even the irrational world has risen against men. Creation, which "was made subject to vanity" and "groaneth and travaileth in pain even until now" (Rom. 8, 20, 22), fights in many ways against men, by whose sin it is under a curse. Many of the animals are hostile to man, and the elements inflict injury and death upon him. Yes, it very often happens, that when he has discovered new forces in nature and he thinks he has made them his allies, he is again forced to admit that he has prepared new dangers for himself.

But the worst of all evils is that men, inflamed by envy and hate, fight against men, just as was proved in the example of the brothers Cain and Abel and confirmed by the words of our Lord, "A man's enemies shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10, 36).

Even the devil has acquired singular power over men, so that he is called the prince of this world by our Lord Himself.

No one, who ignores or denies original sin, will understand the history of the human race. Nor will anyone, who has forgotten that we have been infected by original sin, understand the meaning of the spiritual life. Our first effort must be to eliminate sin. For we cannot

hope to be freed from evil, unless the root of all evil has been plucked out. Already at this point we affirm and proclaim: The foundation of the spiritual life is the fight against sin. By sin we have been reduced to the slavery of the flesh; by the spiritual life we are to regain our liberty of spirit.

19. Weakness of Man

We have heard St. Paul lament, "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7, 24). As a matter of fact, no individual has been able to free himself nor has the whole human race been able to rise from its fall. It could surrender to the slavery of sin, but could not redeem itself.

For it had fallen from the supernatural order. In order to return, it needed those very supernatural forces and graces which it had squandered. If it was true before the fall that man could do nothing without God, it was much more true after the fall, since, as the theologians tell us, he was "deprived of the supernatural and wounded in the natural."

Furthermore, he had made God, upon whose help and grace he was continually dependent, his enemy. Nor was he able of his own strength to make reparation for the injury done to God through sin. Since it was inflicted upon Infinite Majesty, and since man by nature is infinitely distant from God, the injury was infinite, for the reparation of which infinite powers and means were necessary. How, therefore, could man, a bit of vile dust, make worthy satisfaction to God?

God could not be reconciled with man, unless God Himself of His own accord renounced the satisfaction that was due. By reason of His justice and sanctity, He refused to renounce it.

Accordingly, man would have had no ray of hope for bettering his condition, unless God in His infinite mercy and wisdom had offered the means by which Divine Justice might be satisfied and the human race saved. No one except God Himself could again save man. And this He did, by sending His Son, as a victim for us.

Thus we now come to speak of the work of Redemption.

CHAPTER THREE

Redemption of Man

Article I—THE WORK OF REDEMPTION

20. Christ, our Redeemer

Because man had not the strength to rise again, God promised His aid before the very gate of paradise, when He announced to our first parents, now severely punished and touched by sorrow, the proto-Gospel, i. e., the first joyful message, saying to 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). The devil, who seemed to have conquered, was himself to be conquered and his power destroyed, through the son of a certain woman. That Woman and her Son are Mary and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Who, then, is this Savior? Isaias the prophet will answer, "God Himself will come and will save you" (Isa. 35, 4). For, "When the fullness of time was come, God sent His Son" (Gal. 4, 4) and "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us" (John 1, 14). The Athanasian Creed in clear words describes our Redeemer: "The right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man. God of the substance of His Father, begotten before all ages, and man of the substance of His mother, born in the world. Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasoning soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, less than the Father as touching His manhood." In Christ our Lord there is one Person, a Divine Person; but there are two natures, divine and human, inseparably united without confusion or mixture. "One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. For as the reasoning soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ" (*ibid*). Our Redeemer certainly had to be both God and man. If he had not been God,. He could not have given full satisfaction to God. If He had not been man, He could not have acted in a human way, suffered or died, and He could not have acted in man's name. Therefore, the Son of God, Himself, consubstantial with the Father and Holy Spirit, assumed flesh or true human nature from the Virgin Mary, and became like to us in all things, but without sin (Cf. Hebr. 4, 15).

Jesus Christ, consequently, is the most perfect of all men. A more

perfect creature cannot be made. From the first moment of His conception He uninterruptedly enjoys the intuitive vision of the Divinity. His knowledge is exceedingly great, ineffably excelling the knowledge of all men and angels, comprehending all things, present, past and future. Moreover, He is the abyss of all virtues, perfection and sanctity itself.

In Jesus Christ the most perfect harmony and concord reigns in all His faculties and powers, much more than in the first man before the fall. Our Lord indeed possessed what are called passions, insofar as they are natural and good forces; but these passions never forestalled reason or rose up against it. Moreover, the will of our Lord was always and most perfectly in harmony with the will of His Father, just as He professed on entering the world: "Behold, I come to do Thy Will, O God" (Hebr. 10, 9). Indeed, He was "made obedient unto death, the death of the cross" (Phil. 2, 8).

As Adam was the head of the human race, Jesus Christ is the new head of all mankind, although not by corporal generation, but by spiritual incorporation. Just as Adam in the name of all men by sin deceived them unto their ruin, so Christ in the name of all men expiated that sin unto their salvation. Hence, for all men, "there is no other name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4, 12). Whoever does not belong to Christ cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

Therefore, let us now establish the following principle for our spiritual life: If we desire to attain perfection and sanctity, we must unite ourselves most intimately to Christ, our spiritual head. The closer and more intimate this union, the higher will be our perfection. This must be our motto, "I will follow thee withersoever thou goest" (Luke 9, 57).

Nor should we forget always to give thanks to God, the Father Almighty, Who has given us so excellent and so great a Redeemer!

21. Christ, Our Teacher

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me; wherefore He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor" (Luke 4, 18), saith the Lord.

Indeed, mankind needed a teacher. From the fate of our first parents we can learn how greatly man's intellect was blinded by sin. And the blight of sin constantly increased the darkness of man's mind.

Undoubtedly, even after the loss of supernatural grace, men, equipped with only natural powers, were able to arrive at a knowledge of God from His works, as the Apostle testifies, "For the invisible

things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; His eternal power also, and divinity; so that they are inexcusable" (Rom. 1, 20). But the human heart, infected by sin and disturbed by passions and vices, deceived the intellect. Thus "they became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things" (Rom. 1, 21-23).

In fact, the chosen people themselves, to whom God spoke in many and divers ways through the prophets (Cf. Hebr. 1, 1), did not always have the right idea about God, and very often chose to follow false gods; nor did they relish heavenly things, but the things of earth.

Therefore, "in these days (God) hath spoken to us by His Son" (Hebr. 1, 2). Appointing Him teacher to all peoples and to the entire world He said, "This is My beloved Son: hear Him" (Luke 9, 35). He is absolute truth, as He Himself said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14, 16). And He promised those who would believe in Him, "If you continue in My words, you shall be My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8, 31-32). He did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it and to teach men its perfect observance according to spirit and truth (Cf. Matt. 5, 17). He taught us to control not only our outward actions, but also our thoughts and hidden desires; and even to aspire to perfection and interior and exterior sanctity.

Accordingly, "He went through the cities and towns teaching" (Luke 13, 22), "as one having power" (Matt. 7, 29). He taught both by example and by word; in fact, first by example and then by word. For, entering into this world, He already taught, when He emptied Himself and became poor for our sake. Throughout His entire life He taught by His poverty, by His entire obedience to His Father, by supreme love toward His brethren, until finally, He immolated Himself upon the cross.

No other teacher of the spiritual life has such authority, since He came into the world, having been sent by the Father to give testimony to the truth (Cf. John 18, 37); no one has such qualifications to teach, for He is the only-begotten Son, Who since He is in the bosom of the Father, sees God Himself (Cf. John 1, 18); and He taught nothing of Himself, but as the Father taught Him; and what He saw with the Father, these things He spoke (Cf. John 8, 28. 38). No one showed such love and gentleness toward his disciples, for

whom He even gave His life. Hence He invites us, "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. 11, 29). And Thomas a Kempis appropriately writes, "The teaching of Christ surpasseth all the teachings of the Saints; and he that hath His Spirit will find therein a hidden manna" (*Im. of Chr.* 1, 1).

He who desires to live the spiritual life and to arrive at perfection must attend the school of our Lord, the more so, since His teaching is illustrated by His most holy example. "Let it then be our chief study to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ" (*ibid*).

But it is necessary that we accept the teaching of Christ in the way proposed to us by our Lord, without destroying or changing anything. Let us not close our ears, when our Lord says, "if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16, 24).

Again, "So likewise everyone of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14, 33). Let us persuade ourselves that He has the words of eternal life (Cf. John 6, 69), and also, that the fullness of life is found in His words about the practice of abnegation.

22. Christ, Our High Priest

It was foretold of Christ, "Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech" (Ps. 109, 4). Indeed, He is our high priest, Who is unique in that He is priest and victim.

He was sent to be a priest. St. Paul says, "Neither doth any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was. So Christ also did not glorify Himself, that He might be made a high priest: but He said unto Him: Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Hebr. 5, 4-5). Therefore, "when He cometh into the world He saith: sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not; but a body Thou hast fitted to Me: holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I: Behold I come . . . that I should do Thy will, O God" (Hebr. 10, 5-7). For He came to offer His body for a holocaust.

Christ, the priest, received the highest ordination or consecration. In Him, since human nature was united with the Divine Word in one person, "there dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead corporally" (Col. 2, 9). And therefore, "Christ (is) God's" (1 Cor. 3, 23).

Christ exercised the highest priesthood. He made an offering of Himself—the most sublime and divinely acceptable sacrifice there is—and He did this with the greatest love and reverence possible. After

suffering unspeakable torments from Mt. Olivet to Calvary, He was raised upon the cross, that He might offer for us and in our place a holocaust to God the Father and, by expiating our sins, effect peace between God and man.

He had said, "The Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life as a redemption for many" (Matt. 20, 28). Each one of us must confess, "He has loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. 2, 20).

Moreover, Christ as high priest, prayed for us, and continues to pray for us. Here let us recall Christ's sacerdotal prayer, as it is called, which He made before His apostles in the supper-room, after He had instituted the Sacrifice of the Mass and before He went out to offer Himself (Cf. John 17).

The priesthood of Christ endures forever. It is true He died and offered a bloody sacrifice only once; His triumph followed in His resurrection and ascension into Heaven, without which Redemption would not be perfect. But in the Sacrifice of the Mass the sacrifice of the cross is renewed daily in an unbloody manner hundreds of times, and still endures. The effect of the sacrifice still remains, the Victim remains, the dignity of the Priest remains, the love and zeal with which He offered the holocaust remain. He forever retains His glorified wounds, and always lives to make intercession for us (Cf. Hebr. 7, 25). Even when, after the last day, all men will have either entered into eternal life or descended into eternal damnation and no one will stand in need of Christ's prayer or will derive fruit from it, He will continue adoring the Infinite Divine Majesty in the name of all the blessed and give thanks in union with all men for the beatitude received; thus will be fulfilled the purpose of the creation: God will be all in all and will receive from His creatures through Christ, our Lord, the praise which He deserves.

Through this high priest we come to God. For Jesus has affirmed, "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me" (John 14, 6). And "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the just: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (I John 2, 1-2). "Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid" (Hebr. 4, 16). We should never despair, nor lose spirit, because of the difficulties of the spiritual life. He assists our weakness.

But we should be mindful too that we are also called through Jesus

Christ to "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2, 5). The entire spiritual life, that it may be really spiritual, must be a priesthood in this sense. Unless we have noted this, we do not understand what this spiritual life is, nor do we have true communion with the high priest, Who alone is able to lead us to the true interior life and perfect sanctity.

23. Christ, Our King

The archangel Gabriel, announcing the coming of the Redeemer promised: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His Father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1, 32, 33). Our Lord, questioned by Pilate whether He was king, answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king" (John 18, 37). The same had been proclaimed in the Old Testament. We read in Daniel, "The God of Heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, and His kingdom shall not be delivered up to another people; and it shall break in pieces and shall consume all these kingdoms, and itself shall stand forever" (Dan. 2, 44).

The Israelites, misunderstanding these words and blinded by worldly desires, expected an earthly kingdom and crucified our Lord because He would not fulfill their desires. Indeed, even the disciples asked the Lord at the very moment He was about to ascend into Heaven: "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" (Acts 1, 6).

There is no doubt that Christ the Lord, not only as God and Creator of all things, but also as man, is King—indeed, the King of kings, and Lord of lords (Cf. 1 Tim. 6, 15). For, as we have seen, He is the head of the entire human race and, because of His hypostatic union, infinitely excels all creatures. Moreover, with His own blood He has redeemed us from the slavery of sin, so that we are His very own. Hence, without presumption He could lay claim to the crowns and kingdoms of all rulers.

But He emptied Himself of all and because of His love for us, He chose for Himself humility and poverty; and when the people, admiring His miracles, wished to make Him king, He withdrew. His sole intention was to found a spiritual kingdom. For this reason He declared before Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world . . . and for this did I come into the world, that I might give testimony to the truth"

(John 18, 36. 37). For the same reason He called Himself the Good Shepherd and affirmed, "The Son of man is come to save that which is lost" (Matt. 18, 11).

Since He is king, He is also the lawgiver of mankind, Whose laws everyone, without exception, must obey. Nor can any law of man detract from the law of Christ. We ought, therefore, to obey Christ rather than men, and to confess Him openly before all.

Since He is king, He is also the supreme Judge of all men. "For neither doth the Father judge any man, but hath given all judgment to the Son, that all men may honor the Son, as they honor the Father," said our Lord (John 5, 22. 23). From Him all men will receive reward or punishment on the day of judgment. "Wonder not at this: for the hour cometh, wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5, 28. 29). For, "the Son of man" will come "in His Majesty, and all the Angels with Him; then shall He sit upon the seat of His Majesty" (Matt. 25, 31). And after He has separated the just from the unjust, He will invite the just to the eternal kingdom prepared for them from the creation of the world; but the wicked He will condemn to eternal fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels (Cf. Matt. 25, 34, 41).

Since all power had been given to our Lord in Heaven and on earth (Cf. Matt. 28, 18), He commanded His apostles by the same royal authority: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28, 19. 20). No earthly ruler has the right to withstand such a command.

Through holy Baptism we have been received into the kingdom of Christ and by holy chrism have been appointed His soldiers. Therefore, we must follow the standard of Christ and fight "as a good soldier of Jesus" (2. Tim. 2, 3). First and foremost, we must build up in ourselves this kingdom by waging war with our earthly desires. For, "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences" (Gal. 5, 24). We are commanded to surrender our intellect to His truth, our will to His love, and to follow Him wherever He goes. For this we have entered religious life, that we might live *in obsequio Jesu Christi* (Cf. *Carm. Rule, Prologue*). Christ ought to reign in us in such a way that, being dead to ourselves, we may live—now not we, but Christ in us.

The more we do this, the more spiritual we shall be and the more fit we shall become to labor in spreading Christ's kingdom among others.

We ought never to forget that "They who wish to live godly in Christ, suffer persecution" (*Carm. Rule,* XIV; Cf. 2 Tim. 3, 12). We have a king crowned with thorns and filled with opprobrium. If we follow Him along the way of the cross, the crown of thorns will be changed into a crown of glory and of life, "which the Lord, the just judge, will render to us in that day" (2 Tim. 4, 8).

24. Mary, Co-Redemptrix and Mediatrix

Adam alone ruined the human race by his sin; Christ alone redeemed us from our ruin. But because Eve had also sinned with Adam and co-operated in our destruction, God, in His wisdom and goodness, associated a woman with our Redeemer, her, of whom He spoke in the beginning to the devil, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman" (Gen. 3, 15). And so, just as Christ is to Adam, so Mary, the second Eve, is to the first Eve, to join forces in the work of our redemption.

Mary is blest among women. After Christ, our Lord, neither heaven nor earth has beheld or will behold anyone holier than her.

From her very conception she was preserved immune from every taint of sin, nor did she ever experience even the slightest inclination to sin; indeed, from the very beginning, she was full of grace, although she increased in grace day by day unto the end. Since she had been chosen by God Himself to be the mother and spouse of Christ, she always belonged completely to God by her perfect and perpetual virginity.

She gave life to the whole world in giving us the Author of life, by freely consenting to accept the dignity of the divine motherhood. In doing so she declared herself ready to undertake all the burdens and sacrifices which were necessary for the redemption of the human race; she fed and protected the victim who was to be offered to God for our sins, and accompanied Him to the altar of sacrifice. Yes, standing beside the cross she, like the second Eve with the second Adam, accomplished the sacrifice by which salvation was restored to the human race. Relinquishing her maternal rights over her Son, she suffered the most frightful cruelties in her heart and, being obedient as a true handmaid of the Lord, all but died with Him. She offered her own Son to God as the price of salvation, and united her sufferings with His. Therefore, we rightly hail her as our Co-Redemptrix; not

that her work was absolutely necessary for our redemption, since all our sufficiency is from Christ, but that having been freely called by God, she also contributed her share to so great a work.

Her co-operation toward our salvation did not cease even after Christ had sacrificed Himself. After our Lord returned to Heaven, she remained on earth several years and helped the newly established Church by her prayers and counsels. Then she was taken up to Heaven in body and soul, not only to receive immediately the full fruits of the Redemption, but also that she might become the Mediatrix of all graces and might share in the saving of mankind, since the perfect victory over the devil, which was announced at the gate of paradise, has not been fully won, as long as the Church on earth is forced to wage battle against the enemy.

Thus do all graces come to us through Mary, in whose hands the Lord has placed all the treasures of the Redemption. And we shall not arrive at a happy end, unless it be through her maternal protection. She is our mother, especially since we are the brothers of Christ, our Lord, and since Christ Himself, dying on the cross, proclaimed, "Behold thy mother!" (John 19, 27). She is most powerful, since she is not only Co-Redemptrix, but also Mediatrix. We look with so much more satisfaction upon the immense treasures of the Redemption in her hands because she is our mother, immeasurably excelling every other mother in maternal affection.

Mary, therefore, far surpasses in dignity all the angels and saints; she is not merely called, but is, by right and authority, their Queen. Hence, no one can fail to see how important filial love for such a mother is for our spiritual life. We shall make so much more progress in it, the more we imitate our mother in virtue, call upon her in our prayers and honor her by our worship. Let us heed the Church who places in the mouth of the Blessed Virgin Mary these words of Holy Scripture: "Blessed are they that keep my ways . . . He that shall find me shall find life; and shall have salvation from the Lord" (Prov. 8, 32. 35).

ARTICLE II—THE FRUITS OF THE REDEMPTION

25. Superabundant Grace

Great was the ruin caused by the first Adam. By him the entire human race was not only deprived of the earthly paradise, but also prohibited from entering the heavenly paradise. We have already

considered these punishments among the disastrous effects of the first sin.

But what the first Adam had lost by sin, the second Adam, i. e., Christ, infinitely higher in dignity, restored in superabundance, as St. Paul teaches: "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound. That as sin hath reigned to death; so also grace might reign by justice unto life everlasting, through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Rom. 5, 20. 21).

It is true that our Lord by His passion and death did not lead us back into the earthly paradise; nor did He destroy the thorns and thistles from the face of the earth; nor did He free us from the necessity of bodily death, nor remove from us the strife between the carnal and the spiritual man; in other words, He did not restore the preternatural gifts which had been freely given to our first parents by the Creator.

But He has the more abundantly poured forth upon us supernatural gifts. Supernatural graces flow more abundantly; our union through Christ with God, the Father, has become closer; we look forward to greater glory in Heaven. Consequently, even though we continue to groan under the burden of our cross, our present condition, compared with that before the fall, is improved, and the Church does not hesitate to sing, "O happy fault, which has merited so wonderful and so great a Redeemer!"

26. Sanctifying Grace

Although our exterior life after the redemption does not differ much from life before the Redemption, since the preternatural gifts have not been restored, our interior life has been all the more changed and transformed by it.

Before all, we must mention that we have been restored to the supernatural order by the work of our Redeemer, and that this order, under certain aspects, is higher than that in which Adam and Eve were before the fall. The supernatural order does not destroy the natural order, but ennobles and surpasses it, as much as Heaven surpasses earth. We enter the very realm of the divine; we become partakers of the divine nature, according to the testimony of St. Peter (Cf. 2 Pet. 1, 4). Without ceasing to be men, we are made a "new creature and the old things are passed away" (2 Cor. 5, 17). As our Lord taught Nicodemus, we must be born again "of water and the Holy Ghost," in order that we may be able to see the kingdom of God (Cf. John 3, 5).

This, then, is sanctifying grace: a permanent supernatural quality, by which the soul is permanently sanctified in its essence and substance. Sanctifying grace is received in Baptism and is lost through mortal sin. Through it we are elevated to the life and sanctity of God Himself, although it is limited in us, because every creature is limited. Similarly, although the sea is immense, we are able to draw from it only a limited quantity of water, according to the capacity of our vessel. The creature does not cease to be a creature and the infinite distance from God is not diminished in any way.

By sanctifying grace also we are admitted to a singular likeness to God. Just as man is far more truly represented by an image reflected in a brilliant mirror than by a foot-print in the sand, or even by a picture painted in colors, so the divine image shines forth infinitely more truly and fittingly from the soul in which God dwells by sanctifying grace, than it does from irrational creatures, which can be compared to the foot-print, or even from the pure nature of man alone. In this sense St. Basil writes, "Just as bright and shining bodies, touched by the rays of the sun, become exceedingly bright and in turn give forth their own splendor, so also souls touched and enlightened by the Spirit become spiritual and bestow graces upon others" (*De Spiritu Sancto,* c. 9).

Unless God Himself grants us the experience, we can never understand or even suspect how great a gift He has conferred upon us by grace. Thus it is evident that this divine life can be of a higher degree in one soul than in another, even though it is essentially the same in all. How far is the Blessed Virgin Mary from every other creature justified by grace! How greatly can this grace be developed and increased in one and the same soul from the moment of regeneration until its passing into the next life!

Would that we strove to preserve and increase this supernatural life with at least the same care as we do our natural life! Let us ever be mindful that we have entered the religious state principally for this purpose, and that zeal for the spiritual life consists essentially in this, that we carefully guard and constantly increase sanctifying grace within us, and develop it according to the powers God has given us. We live spiritually, when we live the divine life fervently.

27. Sons of God

The more profoundly we examine the divine life which we have regained through the Redemption, the greater will be the marvels that will be revealed to us.

Thus, we are taught that, clothed with sanctifying grace, we are called and really are the sons of God. Such charity has the Father bestowed upon us (Cf. 1 John 3, 1) that "as many as received Him, He (Christ) gave them power to be made the sons of God" (John 1, 12).

It would have been a great privilege indeed, if we had been admitted only to the friendship of God, as our Lord said to the Apostles, "You are My friends, if you do the things that I command you. I will not now call you My servants: for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends: because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known to you" (John 15, 14. 15). St. Cyril of Alexandria beautifully says: "What greater and more illustrious word can be uttered than to be and to be called a friend of Christ. Note how greatly this dignity transcends the limits of human nature. For all things serve their Creator . . . and there is no creature which is not subject to the yoke of slavery, if we consider the relationship of Creator and creature. For no creature is in any way equal to its Maker" (*In Joannem* 1, X).

Nevertheless, God has exalted us still more: we belong to the family of God, we are the sons of God. Being made brothers of Christ through Redemption, we have also become sons of the eternal Father. Of course, there exists an essential difference between the sonship of Christ and our own; He is the Son of the Father by nature, consubstantial and coequal, while we are but adopted sons by grace. Still, it remains true that "When the fullness of time was come, God sent His Son . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4, 4. 5). And "You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father). For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God" (Rom. 8, 15. 16).

Although we are filled with the greatest reverence towards God, as is becoming, He wishes us to fulfill the Divine will not so much out of fear as out of love, and that we should pray with all confidence, "Our Father Who art in Heaven." Our Lord Himself taught this and admonished us not to be solicitous for the necessary things of life, since our Father in Heaven knows what we need. By the very fact that He wishes to be called our Father, He has obligated Himself to take care of us as His children.

Indeed, on account of this adoption as sons, He not only nourishes our natural life, but, far more powerfully, strengthens our supernatural life with the bread that has come down from Heaven, i. e.

the Eucharistic Bread. This Bread is no other than the only-begotten Son of the Father, to Whom we are conformed in a wonderful way through the adoption of sons. God has predestined us "to be made conformable to the image of his Son; that He might be the first born amongst many brethren" (Rom. 8, 29).

Moreover, since we are the sons of God, our goal is Heaven. We have not here a lasting city, but we look for one to come. So speaks the Apostle: "If sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8, 17). Hence our Lord prayed in the supper-room before He suffered, "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me" (John 17, 24).

Would that we always remembered this and would never forget what we owe to the Father and to Christ, by Whose merits we have been raised to such great dignity. May we never follow the example of that son, who abandoned his father's house and wasted his substance in riotous living; rather, yearning for our fatherland with our whole heart and soul, may we never cease to be eagerly zealous for the honor of our eternal Father and His only-begotten Son, as we pray, "Hallowed be Thy name!"

28. Temples of the Most Holy Trinity

God in His goodness, and through the merits of Christ our Redeemer, has not only raised us up to Himself by giving us sanctifying grace and granting a participation in His divine nature, but He Himself has come down to us and has united Himself to us in a wonderful way—so wonderful that man could never conceive it or understand the greatness of the mystery of love contained in it. After God gave all things to us in His Son Who was immolated for us, He now gives Himself to us in this ineffable way.

It is true that God is present everywhere by his essence, power and knowledge. For He sustains all things by His powerful word, and all things would immediately fall back into nothingness if He were to withdraw from them. Thus the Psalmist so admirably sings, "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into Heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art present" (Ps. 138, 7. 8). For the same reason St. Augustine teaches, "He (God) is to be feared in public, He is to be feared in secret. You go out, you are seen; you enter, you are seen; a light burns, He sees you; the light is extinguished, He sees you; you go into your bedroom, He sees you; you are occupied with yourself, He sees you. Fear Him whose interest it is to see you; only fear, and

you will be pure. Or if you wish to sin, seek out a place where He will not see you, and do what you will" (*Sermon* 132, 2, 2).

In this sense He is present to all things, even to the lost souls, to whom this presence is not a solace but a torment. But God, as we have said, wished in His goodness to be present to us through grace, a way by far more excellent. Sanctifying grace is a necessary condition and disposition for this presence. For when sanctifying grace is infused into the soul, the entire Trinity mysteriously unites Itself to the soul and establishes Its dwelling there.

Our Lord Himself affirmed this when He promised, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make Our abode with him" (John 14, 23). St. Paul is constantly trying to inculcate this truth. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3, 16). "Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, Who is in you, Whom you have from God?" (1 Cor. 6, 19). "You are the temples of the living God" (2 Cor. 6, 16).

Thus our hearts, enriched by sanctifying grace, are the tabernacles of the Most High, of the entire Trinity. This temple is rightly called Heaven upon earth. Indeed, the same God dwells in Heaven as in the just soul, the same God renders those in Heaven happy by His presence and desires by that same presence to console and refresh those still struggling on earth. The life of grace is essentially the same as the life of glory, and this latter flowers forth from the first as from a root or a seed.

It is in this wise that our relations with each of the Divine Persons are so wonderfully characterized: The Father, Whose adopted sons we are and Who has made us partakers of His divine nature, comes to us. The only-begotten Son of God, Who has assumed our flesh and has redeemed us by His death that we might be His brothers and co-heirs and that, by our adopted sonship, we might show forth His eternal sonship, comes to us also. So, too, the Holy Spirit, through Whom charity is poured forth in our hearts so that we, freed from the slavery of the material, may also be rendered spiritual, comes to us.

We must, therefore, firmly believe in this great mystery and, as far as possible, keep it in memory and consciousness. Through it let us be drawn to interior things and, since we are elevated to so high a dignity, let us not yearn for the empty satisfactions of creatures. We must take very great care not to destroy the temple that was not

made with hands, but was built by God. "If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which you are" (1 Cor. 3, 17). Rather, we should put forth every effort and not spare ourselves to cleanse this temple from every stain and to embellish it with the precious stones of solid virtues, in order that the incense of our prayers may unceasingly rise from it. This is the end both of the spiritual life in general and of the religious life in particular.

May our eyes always be directed toward the highest and may our hearts always yearn for it! For it is written, "I have said: you are gods" (John 10, 34) and "you are sons of the Most High" (Luke 6, 35).

29. The Infused Virtues

A. We have received a new life and we find ourselves in a new order and in a new state; we have ceased to creep through the marshes of natural life and are placed upon the summits of the supernatural.

Necessity demands that we act according to this new life. For life without activity is death. This new life must be preserved, developed, and perfected. Every tree, indeed, which does not bear fruit, will be cut down and cast into the fire, as our Lord said (Cf. Matt. 7, 19).

But can we produce good fruits to correspond with this new life? It is certain that natural powers are not sufficient for this purpose, since they have no proportion to that sublime life. Raise a beggar to the rank of the nobility and tell him that he must dress and support himself according to his new state of life and that he must conduct himself in all things as a noble. What does it profit him if he does not receive the means to do so? He remains a noble beggar who bears only the name of nobility.

Hence our Father Who is in Heaven, Who has adopted us as His sons and always does all things well, never neglecting anything, has given us not only the state of grace, but also the power to act in conformity with this state and to acquire merits for eternal life. Together with sanctifying grace, He has also infused supernatural virtues.

It is possible for a man to live virtuously even without the infused virtues; he can indeed be chaste, temperate, obedient, faithful, etc. He can also arrive at a certain facility and constancy in the practice of these virtues. But these are only natural virtues which bear no proportion to the eternal life to which we are called, nor do they procure for us eternal merits. We stand in need of supernatural powers.

B. God first infused into us the virtues which are called theological, or divine, so called because God Himself is their formal and direct object.

As explained above, we can indeed know God from His works by natural reason. But this is not sufficient for the sons of God. Such knowledge, especially after the fall, is not so easy, is not perfect, and does not represent God to us as our supernatural end. Therefore God Himself came to our aid by supernatural revelation. This began in paradise and was continued through the patriarchs and prophets until finally, in the fullness of time, God spoke to us through His only-begotten Son. With the death of the Apostles, this offical revelation, which was to be received by all men, ceased because it was now complete. In order that we may receive and believe it as we should, neither reason nor good will is sufficient; there is need also of the supernatural virtue of faith—faith by which because of the authority of God Himself Who reveals, we assent firmly to all that God has revealed and has proposed for our belief through His Church. By this faith we are taught that we are the sons of God and that God dwells in us by grace. How could we know these things otherwise, since they do not fall under the senses?

By faith we are taught what an excellent heritage the Father has prepared in Heaven for His sons. But "how narrow is the gate, and strait the way that leadeth to life!" (Matt. 7, 14). It is necessary in this life to pass through many tribulations. Certainly, we shall never arrive at our goal unless the Father helps us. In order that we may firmly hope for this aid and may never lose spirit, or despair amidst the difficulties of this life, our Father infuses the virtue of hope into our souls; and by this hope we firmly desire our fatherland and firmly expect from the goodness and fidelity of God all that is necessary to obtain it, because of the merits of Christ our Redeemer. In this hope the darkness of this life is illuminated, so that we can exultingly proclaim with St. Lawrence burning on the gridiron, "My night has no darkness, but all things grow bright in light for me." Strengthened by this hope, we will confess with St. Paul, "I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4, 13). Fortified with this hope, we will keep our hands from forbidden fruit and will seek the things that are above.

The crown of all virtues is divine charity. Since we are taught by faith that God is charity, and that he who remains in charity remains in God and God in him, by the infusion of this virtue we are made worthy of loving God above all things, not only because He is

the highest good in our regard, but because He is infinitely good and lovable in Himself. By this virtue we are strengthened, so that, forgetful of ourselves, we may cling to God with our whole heart and soul and seek only the things of God. This is the highest manifestation of the supernatural life; without this charity we cannot be in God's grace. "If I should have all faith, so that I could move mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. 13, 2. 3). Divine charity includes charity for our neighbor; hence, because of God, we also love our neighbor as ourselves. To further enkindle this double charity in us day by day is the proper end of the spiritual and religious life; towards this end all our exercises are to be directed. If we love rightly, we shall be holy. For charity never falls away and it excels all other gifts.

Besides the divine virtues, by which we are united directly with God, the highest truth and goodness, there are also infused in us the moral virtues by which we are disposed to the right use of creatures in respect to our ultimate end. Chief among these are the cardinal virtues, i. e. prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance. These will be treated more fully elsewhere.

It is our duty with the help of divine grace to put these wonderful powers to use and, by their constant exercise, to expand and increase them so that they may bear abundant fruit. They grow as sanctifying grace grows.

30. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

We possess all the virtues necessary to rise to our heavenly home, since God has enriched us with them in great abundance.

Nevertheless, our Heavenly Father has added other gifts by which the attainment of this end is made more secure, and even greater and more sublime things can be attempted and obtained. Besides the virtues He has also infused into our hearts the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as they are called. Seven are usually enumerated: The gift of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord. For in Isaias we read this prophecy about our Lord, "There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord" (Isa. 11, 1-3).

Through these gifts we are placed under the peculiar direction of the Holy Spirit. They are not active habits, as are the virtues; nor are they new powers, as it were, for exercising a new faith, hope or charity. But they are passive dispositions, i. e., they are given us to enable us to receive the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and to obey them promptly.

It is evident that under so great and so wonderful a direction we not only ascend the mount of perfection more securely, but we also are able to desire and to attempt much greater and more sublime undertakings, since the Holy Spirit knows our way and our strength better than we and He never impels us to anything impossible or erroneous. Under the influence of these gifts or under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we shall exercise the virtues, especially the theological virtues, far more perfectly than under the mere light of reason. Thus the virtues remain the same, but they are activated by a higher direction.

Hence it happens that the Saints frequently seem to act more imprudently and more boldly than others. They acted thus, not at the suggestion of their own reason, but at the urging of the Holy Spirit. Even in natural things, he who has a good teacher usually learns an art more perfectly than he who is left to his own efforts; and he who has an experienced guide can leave the beaten path in the mountains and venture on unfamiliar ground.

These gifts of the Holy Spirit are infused together with sanctifying grace and the supernatural virtues, and grow in the same proportion. Therefore, the more they grow, the more ready we become to receive and to follow the inspirations and directions of the Holy Spirit; and this again avails for the further increase of grace and virtue.

The Holy Spirit does not work in all men in the same manner, or move all to the same deeds, but He divides to each according as He wills (Cf. 1 Cor. 12, 11). Hence the wonderful variety in the lives and works of the Saints! However, He does lead all to sanctity, provided they obey promptly.

Consequently, we ought to make every effort to subject ourselves to the gentle sway of the Holy Spirit so that, as our interior life is cultivated, the entire supernatural organism may be developed. It is not right to hide the talents which God has given us.

31. Actual Grace

The bestowal of the full supernatural organism, which we have been describing, is called justification, because man, clothed in this

nuptial garment, appears before God a just man. This is grace *par excellence.* Whosoever possesses it at the moment of death will be saved; whoever does not possess it will be cast into "exterior darkness" (Matt. 22, 13).

Before man arrives at justification, he has nothing by which he can work in the supernatural order. Indeed, infected with the curse of original sin, he is astonishingly inclined to evil, and is impelled more and more to withdraw from God.

Wherefore, in order that man may be disposed to receive justification—whether he has never before possessed it or has lost it through mortal sin—God must come to his assistance by actual grace, as it is called, by which man is for the moment enabled to elicit supernatural acts.

But even when he is justified by the bestowal of that wonderful supernatural organism, he has need of the divine help for every good act. Otherwise the infused virtues cannot pass into acts.

Our Lord taught this very clearly when He said, "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15, 5). And St. Paul in his own name, and in the name of all, confessed, "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. 3, 5). "For it is God Who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will" (Phil. 2, 13). Hence the Church daily commands us to pray at the Hour of Prime, "We beseech Thee, O Lord, to anticipate all our actions by Thy inspiration, and to accompany them by Thy help: so that our every prayer and work may begin by Thee, and so begun, may by Thee be accomplished."

Actual grace, therefore, must excite or dispose us to do good; and when we are disposed, it must accompany us to the end of every good work.

Actual grace not only enlightens the mind to know what is right but moves the will to wish and to accomplish the good so known. Accordingly, we distinguish between the grace of illumination and the grace of inspiration.

It very often happens that God at first does not move our internal powers directly, but rather indirectly through certain external facts; these He so providentially disposes that, in keeping with the laws of psychology, they may arouse attention and instruct our mind. This is called external grace. Graces of this kind are, for instance, the example of Christ, the reading of Holy Scripture or some other good book, a devout sermon, the admonitions of superiors or the corrections of our brethren, the example of others, our Holy Rule and Constitutions, by which we are taught the way to perfection; misfortunes and hardships by which we experience the vanity of creatures and are led to do penance; sicknesses and the like; also great blessings, by which we are drawn to God; and many other things.

But internal grace must accompany external grace, in order that the intended effect may be really produced and that the intellect may know and the will choose. That this internal grace can be given even without external grace is easily understood. For God can always speak directly to our heart.

Since, therefore, we can do nothing without grace, we must frequently ask for it, according to the words, "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you" (Matt. 7, 7).

Since all our actions are performed under the stimulation and assistance of divine grace, we ought always gratefully acknowledge, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory!" (Ps. 113, 9).

If we do so, necessary grace — yes, even abundant grace — will always be at our command, in the degree of our faithful correspondence with the graces received.

32. Life Eternal

Why did God assume our flesh, suffer the inhuman, and undergo the most cruel death of the Cross? Why has God, in His justification of man, heaped upon him so great a treasure of graces and virtues? Why does He assist and help man from beginning to end with innumerable actual graces? Our Lord gives us the answer, "I am come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10, 10). "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live: and every one that liveth and believeth in Me, shall not die for ever" (John 11, 25, 26).

Our Lord did not come to restore the earthly paradise, but to reopen Heaven. He did not come to found an earthly kingdom, but to receive us into the Heavenly kingdom. The life of grace is the seed of eternal life.

What, therefore, shall we find in Heaven, since the Lord paid so great a price? St. Peter exhorts us, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold and silver . . . but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb, unspotted and undefiled" (1 Pet. 1, 18, 19). St. Paul confirms this, "You are bought with a great price" (1 Cor. 6, 20). What then shall we find in Heaven?

First, we shall find God. This word explains everything. For God is the fullness of life and happiness, and God alone is sufficient.

We shall find God, the Infinite Light, than which there is nothing more beautiful in reality or in thought. We shall see Him "face to face" and no longer "through a glass in a dark manner." "Now we know in part: but then we shall know, even as we are known" (Cf. 1 Cor. 13, 12). "We are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3, 2).

In Heaven we shall see the essence and nature of God, the mysteries of the most Holy Trinity, of the Incarnation and of the Hypostatic Union, of the most Holy Eucharist, and all else that we are taught in this life by faith. All will lie open before us, even though we shall not comprehend God in His Infinity, since our intellect, though it be strengthened by the light of glory and wonderfully elevated, can never equal God. We are assured that we shall be satisfied, but that we shall never grow tired of our satisfaction. For, we shall never, for all eternity, exhaust so immense an ocean of Divinity.

Because of our perfect knowledge, we shall love God with the greatest love, without difficulty, without interruption, without ceasing, without weariness.

We shall enjoy God, the highest and infinite Good, and shall taste His Beatitude, so that there will be nothing else to desire.

Indeed, we shall then perfectly live and move and be in God. Nothing will hide us or separate us from Him. We shall be entirely God's and God will be entirely ours. Every barrier, even the slightest, will be removed. He will be our reward exceeding great. "He Himself," says St. Augustine, "Who is seen without end, loved without disgust, and praised without fatigue, will be the end of our desires" (*City of God,* 22, 30, 1).

Then our heart, created for God, will rest in God without sluggishness or idleness. Indeed, in contemplating, loving and praising God, we shall live the true life and shall be engaged in the sublimest occupations. Then we shall be perfectly happy, engaged with God alone.

No evil will any longer disturb our soul. We shall be safe from every danger of sin, from every temptation, from every doubt and fear. Hidden in God we shall walk securely. For, when we shall be inebriated with the plenty of the house of God, and shall drink of the torrent of His pleasure (Cf. Ps. 35, 9), how shall we be allured

and distracted by what is unlawful? Confirmed in the friendship and grace of God, we shall have been freed from the possibility of sinning. Surely, a great source of joy! And so, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away" (Apoc. 21, 4).

This happiness, flowing from the immediate vision of God is called essential happiness.

There is also an accidental happiness, which is the complement of essential happiness and flows from it.

For in God we shall see and know many things which we were unable to see and know in this life, even though they were lawful. We shall also see how wonderfully Divine Providence directs all and how Divine Wisdom reaches from end to end mightily and orders all things sweetly. We shall be delighted with the miracles which God works in souls, as well as with the triumphs which God prepares for His Church. All things will be clear to us in the Divine Light.

We shall likewise enjoy the society and friendship of Christ and of our tender heavenly Mother, and of all the holy Angels and Saints. We shall also be united with our parents, relatives and friends who have gone before us with the sign of faith or will follow us, as St. Cyprian so beautifully exclaims, "Why do we not hasten and run to behold our fatherland, in order to greet our parents? There a generous group of our dear ones awaits us; a numerous and swelling company of our parents, brothers, and children desires us. They are already sure of their own well-being, but are still solicitous about our own" (*De Mortalitate,* 22).

Finally, on the last day, our body will also be raised up, that, united again to the soul, it may share its glory. Like the glorious body of our Lord rising from the sepulchre, it will be adorned with four wonderful qualities:

1. Impassibility, by which sickness and infirmity and even death are excluded. "For this corruptible body must put on incorruption; and mortal body must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15, 53).

2. Brilliancy, by which "The just will shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13, 43). The more the body has endured for our Lord, the more will it be resplendent with light.

3. Agility, by which the body, placed under the absolute dominion of the spirit, is not bound by the limitations and burdens of nature.

4. Spirituality or subtility. Our body, indeed, will not cease to be a body; nor will it become a spirit. It will be able to be touched as

the glorious body of the Lord after the resurrection, but there will no longer be any disagreement between the body and the soul. The spirit will have triumphed, and will not depend any longer upon the body or be weighed down by it. "It is sown a natural body, it will rise a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15, 44).

Those who have gained special victories during life, over the flesh by virginity, over the world by martyrdom, over the devil by sacred learning, will receive a special reward and joy, which is called an aureola.

And all these joys will last forever. The very joy, which we shall taste when we enter into Heaven and behold God for the first time, will last forever, and will never be diminished or changed. Such is the precious fruit of Redemption.

The more we sacrifice ourselves in religious life, the greater and the more wonderful rewards shall we obtain. "One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars; for star differeth from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15, 41, 42). God is just in His recompense.

Let us listen to St. Gregory, who tells us, "Let the greatness of the reward delight the mind: but let not the laborious struggle deter it" (*Hom. 37, in Evangelia*). It is a holy ambition to desire as intimate a union with God as possible. May love for God and gratitude toward our Redeemer impel and urge us toward it!

"Therefore, brethren, labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election. For doing these things, you shall not sin at any time. For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1, 10. 11).

ARTICLE III

THE APPLICATION OF THE FRUITS OF THE REDEMPTION

33. The Church of Christ

All the good we desire and hope for in this life and in the next, we expect through the merits of Christ, our Redeemer, Who by His passion and cruel death superabundantly restored what the first Adam had lost by sin. All things, therefore, are prepared. It remains that the graces acquired for us by the Lord be applied to each one. For this, also, God in his goodness has made excellent provision.

First of all, Christ founded His Church. He founded only one Church. Therefore, there is only one true Church of Christ; and it is the Church that is one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

This is the Church of which our Lord said to St. Peter, "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16, 18). To it He promised that He and the Holy Spirit would always assist it by their presence. The rock, however, is St. Peter and his successors, who take Christ's place on earth; those who do not obey them are not in the true Church of Christ.

The true Church includes all the faithful on earth, the Saints in Heaven and the souls in Purgatory, and unites them in a wonderful way in one body. For the Church is a body, i.e., Christ's Mystical Body, whose members we are, as St. Paul teaches: "Now you are the Body of Christ, and members of member" (1 Cor. 12, 27), "which (body) is the Church" (Col. 1, 24).

The Church is called and is the Spouse of Christ, whom Christ loved exceedingly, "And delivered Himself up for it: that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life: that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish" (Eph. 5, 25-27).

Outside this Church there is no salvation, i.e., he, who in this life has not belonged at least to the soul of the Church, as they say, cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven. The Church is another Christ; "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4, 12).

Thus it is that the Church shares the duties of Christ and continues them upon earth.

1. The Church is the teacher of nations, commanded by our Lord Himself to teach them. For this purpose our Lord gave it the gift of infallibility, so that it cannot err in matters of faith or morals. When the Sovereign Pontiff alone or united with the bishops in an ecumenical council, solemnly declares that a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals has been revealed by God, and must, therefore, be held by all the faithful, then all must be convinced and must believe that he has spoken the truth. But even in its ordinary teaching the Church, aided by the Holy Spirit, cannot lead its children into error. Therefore, whosoever follows the Church, does not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. The Church, just as Christ, has the words of life. Hence he "Who does not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican" (Matt. 18, 17).

2. It is the duty of the Church to feed the flock of Christ and to lead it to its fatherland (Cf. John 21, 15 - 17; Acts 20, 28). Therefore, it must give precepts and make laws, by which the faithful may be defended against the onslaughts of the powers of darkness and advance in the spiritual life, as our Lord commanded, "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations . . . to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28, 19. 20). The Church also has the power to punish those who fail, and to cut off, as being unworthy of membership, those who refuse to repent. For the Lord gave St. Peter the keys of the kingdom of Heaven and said, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven" (Matt. 16, 19).

3. Finally, the Lord continues His eternal priesthood upon earth in and through the Church. For the Church, through its priests, who can be lawfully and rightly appointed by it alone, celebrates every day and in innumerable places throughout the whole world the Divine Sacrifice, whose chief Priest and Victim is Christ, and in which the Bloody Sacrifice, offered on the altar of the Cross, is renewed in an unbloody way. In this way is fulfilled the prophecy of Malachy, "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation: for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord God of Hosts" (Mal. 1, 11). Thus it is that every kind of grace flows upon us in superabundance, and the fruit of the Redemption is applied to us.

Accordingly, we shall have to persuade ourselves that the more intimately we are united to Christ through His Church, the more our spiritual life will flourish and grow. Therefore, the foundation and root of the spiritual life is obedience to the Church and its hierarchy. When the laws and commands of the Church are neglected, no religious order will make progress nor will its members live as religious. This should be deeply impressed upon the minds of the novices.

Again, we must pray and offer sacrifice with the Church. Let us be zealous then for the sacred liturgy in which, together with the Spouse of Christ, in fact, with Christ Himself, we pray and offer the highest sacrifice to God the Father. It is immediately evident how important is the daily celebration of the Divine Office in every monastery, according to the laws of the Church and the Order.

Then we should be of one mind with the Church. If the Apostle

teaches us that we should rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep (Cf. Rom. 12, 15), this certainly holds good especially in regard to the Church, our loving mother, who has begotten us unto Christ through the laver of water in the word of life. We cannot be indifferent, when the Church rejoices or weeps, when it triumphs or suffers defeat.

Finally, we should pray and work for the Church. Neither we nor our Order can be exempted from this duty. It is never permitted to prefer our own affairs or those of our Order to those of the Church. The Church does not exist for religious Orders, but religious Orders for the Church, which is the Body of Christ. There is no doubt that our Order will make progress and grow strong spiritually, in proportion as we observe these things. Let us rejoice, therefore, that we are children of the Church, and whole-heartedly proclaim, "I believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, and to it I cheerfully dedicate my soul and my body forever."

34. The Seven Sacraments

The graces, which Christ merited by His passion and death and committed to the Church to be administered and distributed, come to us through those mysterious channels called the seven sacraments.

These holy sacraments are sensible signs instituted by Christ our Lord, which, when rightly applied, produce in the soul the graces which they signify.

Three of them imprint upon the soul an indelible character, which will remain forever and will show the particular relation one has had to Christ—for the blessed unto glory and honor, and for the damned unto ignominy and shame. That is why Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders can be received only once.

By Baptism we are washed from original sin and the transgressions of our past life; we are united to Christ and the Church, so that we can be admitted to the other Sacraments and can become partakers of life eternal. To the baptized St. Paul says, "You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6, 11).

By Confirmation we are admitted into the number of the soldiers of Christ, and are strengthened by the Holy Spirit to undergo bravely the struggle concerning which we are warned, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3, 12). For this struggle the Apostle likewise encourages us, "Labor as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2, 3).

By Holy Orders a man is so united to Christ, that in some way he shares the power of our Lord for the communication of divine grace and the salvation of souls. Those marked with Holy Orders are the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God (Cf. 1 Cor. 4, 1). This sacrament is not conferred primarily for the sanctification of the individual, but for the sanctification of others, although he who strenuously works for the sanctification of others will also make great progress in sanctity himself.

The most Holy Sacrament of the Altar is the precious fruit of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and is given to us that our union with Christ our Lord may grow more intimate day by day, and that our eternal resurrection may be assured according to the promise of our Lord, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day . . . He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him" (John 6,55.57). Nourished by this divine food, we must realize more clearly day by day what Christ expects of us and what is becoming to the elect members of Christ.

The Sacrament of Penance is given to us, that after we have suffered shipwreck we may be saved and not perish in our sins. For God wishes no one to perish, but rather that the sinner may be converted and live. Therefore He extends His saving hand, as a means of renewed salvation to those who, after Baptism, have returned to their former ways.

By the Sacrament of Extreme Unction the Good Samaritan will heal our remaining wounds, so that we may be able to appear without fear before the Eternal Judge. As St. James counsels, "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5, 14. 15).

Finally, the Sacrament of Matrimony was instituted to sanctify the matrimonial union between man and woman, so that it might be the image of the Mystical Union of Christ with His Church and that the kingdom of God might receive new and holy members. God, therefore, with infinite generosity, has provided for all the circumstances and conditions of life, so that man, helpless as he is, may be able to work out his salvation, and that the work of Redemption may not perish in him. It is our duty to draw from the fountains of the

Savior with joy and gratitude, so that we may have life and have it more abundantly.

35. The Communion of Saints

The Church of Christ, as we have said, includes three classes: the faithful living on earth, the Saints enjoying God in Heaven, and the souls undergoing punishment in Purgatory. Thus we distinguish the Church Militant, the Church Triumphant, and the Church Suffering. However, they form only one Church, and are included in that wonderful union which is called the Communion of Saints.

1. The Church Militant is in exile far from home and the Lord. It has not yet attained its desires. Not yet sharing the glory of its Founder and not yet glorified, it is more like her Spouse when He suffered upon earth. He openly foretold that His chosen ones would travel with Him by the way of the Cross: "If you had been of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember My word that I said to you: the servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you . . . Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John 15, 19; 16, 20).

In fact, we see the Church suffering persecution and battling against the powers of darkness from its beginning to our own times. So it will continue to the last day. This is characteristic of the true Church of Christ. Hence our Lord has consoled us, "Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom" (Luke 12, 32). The more loyal sons of the Church we are, the more we shall grieve over this persecution and suffering, and the more certainly we shall share it. Especially priests and religious cannot expect anything else, since it is their wish to be the chosen soldiers of the Church.

2. The Church Triumphant has obtained its desires. It already enjoys in peace the fruit of the Redemption, as we have explained above. United to Christ, to Mary and to all the Angels, the Saints cry out in joy, "The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever" (Ps. 88, 2).

They have not forgotten their brethren still struggling and tossed about on earth. Since they are the chosen friends of God and are

very powerful with Him, they do not cease to pray for us, that having overcome the storms of this life, we may reach the haven of safety and rest. It is our duty frequently to invoke them, and also to imitate them diligently. They admonish us, as did the Apostle, "Be followers of me, brethren, and observe them who walk so as you have our model" (Phil. 3, 17). "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 4, 16). But if we are struck with the fear of dangers and difficulties, we must courageously remind ourselves, "These men and women could do it: why not I?" For Christ died no less for us than for them.

3. The Church Suffering comprises all those unhappy yet most happy souls who, because of the stains and temporal punishments which they bore with them as they left this world, are not yet able to enter into eternal rest. They suffer intensely because of their separation from God, and because of their other torments. Nevertheless, they are also happy, because they dwell in the friendship of God, with no fear for their salvation.

They implore us with suppliant voice, "Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, at least you, my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me" (Job 19, 21). And Holy Scripture confirms this, "It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins" (2 Mach. 12, 46).

If we do this, we too shall find mercy, and shall make friends for ourselves that when we have failed we may be received into the everlasting dwellings (Cf. Luke 16, 9). For they also will pray for us. Thus the frequent thought of Purgatory will preserve us from levity and will excite us to fervor.

"If one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it," says the Apostle (1 Cor. 12, 26). For this reason, since we are one body, we should rejoice with the Saints in Heaven, and sympathize with the suffering in Purgatory. But let us also be mindful that because of the Communion of Saints we are sharers of all merits stored up in the treasury of the Church, as it is called. Unbounded are the graces merited for us by Christ, innumerable those merited by the Queen of Saints and the other Saints. It is from this treasury that the Church draws when it offers indulgences (n. 137). Let us, therefore, draw from this treasury as much as we please. But we should endeavor, too, as much as possible, always to increase this spiritual treasury by our zeal for virtue and sanctity, bearing humbly whatever God sends us, following the example of St. Paul, who says, "Who now rejoice

in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His body, which is the Church" (Col. 1, 24).

Therefore, let us not, I beseech you, be dead members in the body of Christ and in so holy a company; but let us make every effort to live, and to live perfectly the life which Christ has procured for us by His death. In striving after sanctity we shall be a source of profit to all the faithful and a joy to all the Saints. Let nothing sordid enter into our soul, lest we bring disgrace to the Church, for which Christ offered Himself that it might be holy and without blemish (Cf. Eph. 5, 25).

CHAPTER FOUR

MAN'S CO-OPERATION IN THE REDEMPTION

ARTICLE I — THE LOSS OF REDEMPTION

36. Free Will

God has done great and stupendous things for us, even after the fall. In fact, after the fall of man, He has shown still more how much He has the salvation of man at heart. "God commendeth His charity towards us; because, when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5, 8).

The Divine Redeemer sacrificed everything for us, even to the last drop of His most Precious Blood. Even after His ascension into Heaven, He dwells amongst us, directs us through His Church in the way of salvation, strengthens us with the food of Angels and invites us, "Come to Me, all ye that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. 11, 28).

What, therefore, could He do for His vineyard that He has not done? Behold the work of God! What then should man do? He should draw with good will from the fountains of the Savior and co-operate with His Divine grace. For God Who created us without ourselves, will not save us without our co-operation.

Man indeed enjoys free will. God gave us this free will that, being more like to Him, we might freely work out our salvation and be able to obtain eternal life as a reward. Although eternal beatitude will really be a gift of the immense generosity and the infinite bounty of our heavenly Father, still it also has the nature of a reward, in order that it may be more our own and that we may the more rejoice

in it. God, therefore, says to us, "Behold I set forth in your sight this day a blessing and a curse: a blessing, if you obey the Commandments of the Lord your God . . . a curse, if you do not obey the Commandments of the Lord your God" (Deut. 11, 26-28). Provided we consider everything rightly, there can be no doubt as to which we should choose. We will follow the example of St. Paul, who says "I count all things to be but loss, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him" (Phil. 3, 8-9). In truth, "Vanity of vanities and all is vanity, but to love God and serve Him alone" (*Im. Chr.* 1, 1).

First, then, we must have the will. The gate of eternal paradise will not open to him who does not wish it. We must will, and will sincerely and efficaciously. For "Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that doth the will of My Father Who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 7, 21). Many, indeed, desire it, but they do not will it. They never put their desires into practice; they do not wish to pay the price. To themselves and to others they seem to will; but they lie. If they so willed, they would have the power, because God does not deny His grace to him who does what in him lies. He is always ready to help us.

For this reason we must also pray to God to strengthen our will, that we may truly will, and will perseveringly. All things depend on this.

But, since the will in itself is blind, and usually follows the motives proposed to it, we must also, by meditations and considerations, provide it with good and reasonable motives, and see that it chooses these in preference to all other incitements and insinuations, whether of our passions and cravings, or of the world and our infernal adversary.

Good training and practice are also to be provided, so that, when concupiscence has been subjugated through continual watchfulness and self-denial, the will may more easily embrace and seek what is right.

Finally, we should persuade ourselves that we have the power if only we have the will; not that we may trust in our own power, but that God most certainly will come to our assistance. Let us never lose courage, however great the difficulties may be. We can do all things in Him Who strengthens us. But the will is necessary.

Therefore, we must have the will that the work of the Redemption produce in us the most abundant fruit. Or shall we allow our Lord's

death to be useless in our regard? On that last and terrible day, when we behold the glorious wounds of our Lord, are we going to accuse ourselves saying: "So then, these wounds have been useless in my regard!" If the Lord has willed my salvation, and willed it at so great a price, why should I not will it?

That we may the more strongly will our salvation, let us consider what is opposed to it.

37. Mortal Sin

Mortal sin is a deliberate and free transgression of the divine law in a serious matter. Its malice consists in the fact that the sinner turns away from God entirely and turns toward a creature. Not only does he not tend toward God, his ultimate end, but he tends directly to the opposite, having exchanged God for the creature; the heart, which was created for God and to rest in God, spurns God and seeks its rest in a creature which is nothing in itself. Hence, the consequences of mortal sin are evident.

To state them briefly: Mortal sin is directly opposed to the life of grace. And if sanctifying grace is the seed and the beginning of eternal life, mortal sin is the seed and the beginning of eternal death. It completely destroys the wonderful work which God has wrought in the justified soul with such great goodness and bounty.

Sanctifying grace is lost, so that unhappy man falls from the supernatural order and the words of Holy Scripture may well be applied to him, "How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer!" (Isa. 14, 12). If one of the princes of the earth, despoiled of his kingdom, has fallen into beggary and servitude, all understand the greatness of his calamity. But such a calamity is in no way comparable to the misery and loss of him who has fallen into mortal sin. For he has lost life, supernatural and eternal life, compared to which the most sublime and the most agreeable condition of this life is of no value. Indeed he is dead before God for all eternity.

The infused virtues are lost, except the virtues of faith and hope, provided the sin is not directly opposed to them. Therefore man has ceased to be able to acquire supernatural merit and to gather treasures for Heaven; the time spent in the state of mortal sin is not reckoned for eternity, and it can be that he who has lived a hundred years may in the end be found to be a man of one year or even of no age at all.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are lost. Direction from above ceases; and so it happens that the soul, abandoned to itself, lacks fervor and zeal and, not understanding the things of the Spirit, disregards good

advice and the most evident signs of the times. The spiritual sense, by which these things are perceived, is lacking. There is no hope for betterment, unless God in His mercy persists in knocking at so hard a heart with His actual graces.

The temple of the most Holy Trinity has collapsed. That admirable Heaven has fallen in ruins. God was cast aside because of something useless and vain. No one can imagine the greatness of the contumely with which the Divine Majesty is treated. Let us consider the words of St. Paul, "If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy" (1 Cor. 3, 17). Sinful man has become an enemy of God, and God is compelled to cast him off.

The adoption as sons of God is forfeited. Let us listen to God complaining of the ungrateful Israelites: "I have brought up children and exalted them: but they have despised Me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel hath not known Me, and My people hath not understood" (Isa. 1, 2-3). Foolish sons have abandoned their paternal home and renounced their heavenly heritage. Therefore Heaven has been closed and, if death should overtake the sinner, will remain closed for eternity. He is lost forever.

The more beautiful and rich the justified soul was, the more base and wretched it becomes when infected by mortal sin. The more a soul, enriched with sanctifying grace, is loved by God, the more it is abominated by Him when deprived of it. For the sinner, in as far as he can, strives to overthrow the natural and the supernatural order and to deprive God of His kingdom, that he himself may obtain it. Although those who commit grave sin may not wish this, nor even think of it, still this is the essence and nature of mortal sin, which man cannot change. If he really did not wish it, he would abstain from sin and would say with Mathathias, the father of the Machabees: "God be merciful to us: it is not profitable for us to forsake the law and the justices of God" (1 Mach. 2, 21). Let him not, therefore, reach out his hand to forbidden fruit. Adam did not wish his own destruction, but rather his happiness and advancement. Nevertheless, he not only did not obtain his desires, but, rejected by God, he and his posterity rushed headlong into ruin.

This, then, is certain, and each one should convince himself thoroughly of it, that man cannot commit a greater crime than to dishonor God by mortal sin. Nor can anything worse happen to anyone, than to fall into mortal sin. "For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the

whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul" (Matt. 16, 26).

Consequently it is of the greatest importance for beginners in the spiritual life to conceive the greatest hatred for mortal sin, and for that purpose to meditate frequently on its nature and effects. Many seem to be exceedingly delighted with the heights of the spiritual life, yet are filled with only a small horror for sin. Little can be expected from them; for "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 1, 7). Fear of sin is the beginning of the spiritual life, because nothing is more opposed to God than sin. The more one loves God, the greater must be his hatred for sin.

Let us, therefore, frequently pray, "Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear; for I am afraid of Thy judgments" (Ps. 118, 120). And let us consider it a great grace to fear and to hate sin, so that we may flee from all things that may lead us into it.

38. Eternal Damnation

He who dies in mortal sin will be damned for eternity. It cannot be otherwise. For he who has of his own will become an enemy of God, cannot enter the eternal dwellings of God and live in the most blessed intimacy with Him. Because the seed of eternal life is dead, eternal life cannot spring up. On the contrary, the seed of eternal damnation, placed in the soul through mortal sin, now produces its horrible fruit.

The work of redemption perishes in that most unhappy soul. In vain was the only-begotten Son of God made man; in vain has He taught the way of life; in vain has He fasted and prayed; in vain has He suffered and died; in vain has He risen from the dead, and ascended to Heaven to prepare a mansion for that soul; in vain has He founded His Church and enriched it with the Sacraments; in vain has He beckoned, aroused and shaken that soul to its very depths with His actual graces; in vain has the Holy Spirit attempted to guide it. All this was useless. Do not the words of our Lord weeping over Jerusalem come into our mind, "How often would I have gathered together My children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not" (Matt. 23, 37). The soul would not. It despised the riches of the goodness, the patience and the long-suffering of God (Cf. Rom. 2, 4); for a vile pleasure it sold the precious pearl of sanctifying grace, as did Esau the right of the firstborn for the pottage of lentils (Cf. Gen. 25, 34); it has destroyed the temple of the most Holy Trinity; for the sake of creatures it has turned from God, its ultimate

end. It has found what it wished, "He loved cursing, and it shall come unto him; and he would not have blessing, and it shall be far from him" (Ps. 108, 18).

It is separated from and rejected by God. Although now it is tortured by an intense desire of possessing God, it will never be satisfied. Now, indeed, it realizes that its whole life and happiness is in God, and that outside of God nothing but death can be found, a truth it neglected on earth. But it is too late. Without interruption it thinks and dwells upon how much it has lost, nor will it ever be distracted from its loss and its misery by those occupations and delights which were the cause of its forgetting God while alive on earth. It constantly upbraids itself, "O most foolish and most wretched me! Thus have I erred and the truth was not in me!" This worm will never die.

To this pain of loss, as it is called, is added the pain of sense. Even before the soul is again united to the body, the soul is tortured, "in wonderful but real ways" (St. Augustine), by a certain fire whose nature we do not know, but which is kindled through the Divine Omnipotence for no other purpose than to torture.

But since the body will again be united to the soul on the last day, the body will also share these torments. The fire will penetrate the entire body, as we read in Holy Scripture, "Every one shall be salted with fire: and every victim shall be salted with salt" (Mark 9, 48). No imagination can adequately describe this pain. The body becomes a living torch and glows with fire. All the rest of the senses will be tormented according to their individual nature in an indescribable way. Moreover, nothing will be more frightful than such a body, especially since it is the reflection of a damned soul deformed by vice.

All sufferings will be eternal, without abatement, without rest, without hope. Nor will the company of so many of the damned alleviate their torments; in fact, it will increase them, since it is a mob of outcast men and demons, from whose mouth no blessing issues or consolation flows. Nothing can be heard except "weeping and gnashing of teeth," cursing and despair. This is the exterior darkness, into which are cast those who on that last, great and bitter day will not be clothed with the nuptial garment of divine grace. Every tree which does not bear fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire.

We must meditate frequently and most attentively upon these things, in order to understand mortal sin and its effects. Hell was created for sin. How can an evil greater than sin happen to us? It frustrates the whole work of redemption.

We should meditate upon these things in order to convince ourselves

that we must renounce everything, rather than commit sin. Let us listen to our Lord when He warns us, "If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life everlasting maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire: where their worm dieth not and the fire is not extinguished. And if thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter lame into life everlasting, than having two feet, to be cast into the hell of unquenchable fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee with one eye to enter into the kingdom of God, than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished" (Mark 9, 43-47).

With good reason all masters of the spiritual life advise that we should frequently, during life, visit hell in our meditations. Thus it will happen that, filled and struck with the holy fear which is the beginning of wisdom and of love, we will flee sin, and after death we shall not be cast into that horrible lake, where "the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever: neither have they rest day nor night" (Apoc. 14, 11); where full of despair "men shall seek death, and shall not find it; and they shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them" (Apoc. 9, 6). Out of hell there is no redemption, because they have neglected and spurned the Redemption of the Son of God.

39. Venial Sin

There is an essential difference between mortal and venial sin. The former consists in this, that man turns away from his true end and chooses the opposite direction; he neglects God and prefers a creature; he seeks not the enjoyment of God, but the enjoyment of the creature.

Venial sin, however, consists not in choosing a false end, but in the inordinate use of those things which were given to man to attain his true end.

Hence the friendship between God and man is not broken by venial sin, nor is the life of grace destroyed. Venial sin does not render void the work of redemption. Nevertheless, venial sin, although it is spoken of lightly in its relationship to grave or mortal sin, is not something small, something to be neglected or lightly esteemed.

1. God because of his infinite sanctity can in no way tolerate any stain or indordinate inclination, so that He is forced to hate every sin, no matter how slight. Because of Himself and His Infinite Majesty, He must ask and demand that everything without exception

be referred to Himself. He cannot permit any division or hesitation between two sides. He cannot approve any disagreement with His will. All creatures, therefore, must be employed for the end for which the Lord of all gave them to us.

It is true, among irrational creatures there can be found no deviation from the holy will of God. Very beautifully the prophet sings, "He sendeth forth light, and it goeth; and hath called it, and it obeyeth Him with trembling. And the stars have given light in their watches, and rejoiced; they were called, and they said: here we are: and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to Him that made them" (Bar. 3, 33-35). Man alone proves himself slothful, negligent and hesitating in the service of the Omnipotent and Infinite God, compared to Whom the whole world is but a little dust.

On the other hand, the Divine Redeemer has paid such a great price to regain men for God and eternal happiness for men. What great powers has God conferred upon man, that he might share the divine nature, perfectly fulfill God's will and rejoice as a giant to run his way! How strongly has God admonished us to love Him with our whole heart, with our whole soul and with all our strength! What has he not also promised to the good and faithful servant! "Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25, 21). And again, "Good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom" (Luke 6, 38).

2. Accordingly, God must, of necessity, seriously punish venial sin, here on earth by calamities, sicknesses, losses and the like, and after this life by the fires of Purgatory.

Souls, burdened with venial sin, will be kept in Purgatory and will expiate by separation from God and terrible sufferings all sins not yet atoned for. Cruelly wounded, they cry out to God from their inmost heart and soul, "As the stag panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul thirsts after Thee, the great and living God. And woe to me because my dwelling is prolonged!" Let us not minimize such sufferings, since the Saints tell us that there is no suffering on earth equal to the sufferings of Purgatory. Truly a venial sin may not be considered slight.

3. Moreover, venial sins can lead to mortal sin and they pave the way to it. St. Thomas indeed says (I-II q. 88, a. 4): "All the venial sins of the world cannot have as much guilt as one mortal sin." Venial sins *per se* do not coalesce; therefore, they can never merit the pain of hell. Nevertheless, St. Thomas also teaches that venial sins dispose to mortal sin (I-II, q. 88, a. 3).

The more frequently we use a creature inordinately, the more does the danger become imminent, that little by little we may cling to it to such an extent that on its account we turn away from God and place our end in it; it very often happens, for example, that he who is accustomed to committing small thefts will also perpetrate great ones, thereby contracting mortal sin. Moreover, the will which does not flee small, inordinate inclinations will not recoil even from greater ones. In turn, fervor will grow cool, conscience will be relaxed, grace will be offered less abundantly, temptations will increase, and so it will happen that man will more easily succumb and also take the final step to mortal sin.

It is clear, therefore, that although the work of redemption is not immediately destroyed by venial sin, still its full effects are hindered, and danger arises that it may be gradually frustrated. Surely our Redeemer has the right to expect more love and fervor for such immense love and sacrifice.

When we leave this world, we shall clearly learn the nature and seriousness of venial sin. As a matter of fact, if one excepts mortal sin, no greater evil can befall man than venial sin. Yes, spiritual writers are right in saying that it would not be permissible to commit a venial sin even to avoid the greatest evil or to obtain the greatest good. For sin is always an evil in itself and an abomination before the Lord, as we expressly read: "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 12, 22).

Hence it follows that we must most earnestly flee venial sin and always be on the alert, not to ignore slight sins. The occasions of committing them are many: in prayer and divine worship, through distractions and neglect of ceremonies; in conversation with our neighbor, through a breach of charity; in fulfilling our duties, through laziness and negligence; in recreations, by exceeding proper measure; in the use of senses, especially of the eyes, ears, and tongue; also through thoughts against charity, chastity, obedience, or reverence, etc. Let each one therefore prove himself, and watch and pray.

40. Tepidity

Since we must make every endeavor not to deprive ourselves of the fruits of divine Redemption, we must avoid, as far as possible, every venial sin, and especially that state which spiritual authors are accustomed to call tepidity.

(a) Tepidity is not to be confused with the state of aridity, desolation or abandonment, which can indeed be the effect of tepidity, but can also come from other causes, as we shall see.

It is not yet a mark of tepidity if one falls repeatedly or frequently into the same venial sins, as long as he is sorry for them and strives to eliminate them.

Tepidity has many degrees, since even the saints were wont to accuse themselves of tepidity. The state of mortal sin is also sometimes called tepidity, when the sinner makes no effort to leave his state.

But here we call tepidity that state of soul in which one intends to preserve sanctifying grace, but does not intend, as it were on principle, to avoid venial sin, and neglects serious and sincere amendment. He desires, it is true, to flee mortal sin, but drinks in venial sin like water.

Tepidity is not yet the state of mortal sin, but tends toward it; the tepid man does not wish to be caught by the fire, yet is indifferent about it; he does not wish to be cast into prison, from which no one comes forth until the last farthing is paid, yet does not cease to contract debts; he wants to rejoice in Heaven, and at the same time have a good time here upon earth; yes, he flees mortal sin not so much from a desire of the kingdom of Heaven, as for fear of hell. In everything he seeks himself and his own convenience.

There is no doubt that such a soul is very seriously ill, and there is imminent danger that this illness may be unto death. For among the spiritual authors this proverb is common, that it is easier to convert a public sinner, than a tepid soul. The former cannot conceal his wretchedness, whereas the other imagines there is nothing wrong with him.

(b) St. Bernard points out the following as some signs of tepidity among religious *(Sermon V, Feast of the Ascension)*, "Men are to be found cowardly and weak, failing under their burden, who need the rod and spurs . . . whose compunction is brief and rare, whose thoughts are animal and conversation tepid; whose obedience is without devotion, speech without circumspection, prayer without direction of heart, reading without edification; whom finally the fear of hell scarcely restrains, shame hardly checks, reason hardly governs, and discipline hardly bridles."

But tepidity is especially manifested in certain axioms and sayings which are often proclaimed before all as the acme of wisdom and the height of discretion; for example: God, they say, is not concerned with details; this is only a slight sin; it is useless to be worried about little things; one must not overdo things; there is need of discretion; the Constitutions do not oblige under sin; it is necessary to consider our strength; we must follow the example of others; and other like excuses, which are the more dangerous, as error is mixed with truth.

(c) The effects of tepidity are serious: numerous defects and venial

sins are committed in course of the day; much time is lost; the soul is not pleased, but rather disgusted with the spiritual life; the few good works which are performed are done with repugnance and negligence. It can also happen that the soul is in a state of mortal sin before it realizes. St. Bernard, commenting on the words of the Canticle of Canticles (2, 15), "Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines," clearly describes the effects of tepidity: "A wise man's life, a wise man's soul, a wise man's conscience is the vineyard. The wise man will leave nothing uncultivated or neglected in himself. Not so the fool. There you will find everything neglected, disorderly, uncared for and filthy. The fool has no vineyard. For how can there be a vineyard, where nothing is planted, nothing tilled? His whole life is overgrown with thorns and thistles; and is this a vineyard? And even if it was, it is so no longer, reduced as it is to a wilderness . . . 'I passed by the field of the slothful man, and by the vineyard of the foolish man. And behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down' (Prov. 24, 30. 31) . . . Finally, there can be no vineyard where there is no life. For, although the fool lives, I consider his life death rather than life" *(Sermon 63, Canticle of Canticles).*

"He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little" (Ecclus. 19, 1). And in the Apocalypse (3, 16.17) God threatens, "Because thou are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest: I am rich, and made wealthy, and have need of nothing: and knowest not thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Therefore, do not neglect venial sin, do not become a victim of tepidity. Begin fervently and continue fervently. Resist the beginnings: too late is the remedy prepared. Guard your ears very carefully in the presence of those who, since they themselves are tepid, lead others to tepidity. Imitate the Saints and those who are fervent, for Heaven is the reward of your labor!

ARTICLE II—THE PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

41. The Reasons for Striving after Perfection

We have seen what is in store for those who are careless about sin or who yield to tepidity. Those who have carefully considered this and have conceived a holy hatred of sin, cannot be unaware of the fact that they must tend to the opposite. We must withdraw as far as possible

from the danger of sin. He, however, who strives with all his might for spiritual perfection, has the greatest security.

Moreover, we must impress deeply on our minds the following principles:

1. We must apply ourselves to the pursuit of perfection for the sake of God Himself, in fact, primarily on account of God. Very properly we began our considerations of the spiritual life with the idea of God. For God Himself, we repeat, is the beginning and the end of every creature. Thus God commanded us, "Be holy, because I am holy" (Lev. 11, 44). There can be no union with God by any other way than by holiness. For the same reason He tells us, "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with thy whole heart" (Matt. 22, 37). God, accordingly, is not only the highest model, but also the highest motive of our holiness and perfection.

Moreover, God has left nothing undone that we may arrive at perfection. He restored fallen man by giving him His only Son and by superabundantly showering the treasures of His grace upon him whom His Son had redeemed.

But Christ, Who is the image of His Father's holiness, expects us to follow Him as closely as possible. He gave us an example that we might do as He has done. He likewise taught us, "Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5, 48). Besides, since He is so good to us, how can we deny Him whatever He asks of us, and why should we wish to be unlike Him? Indeed, our heavenly Father has called us and predestined us, "to be made conformable to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8, 29).

Provided we fear God and love Him as is right and necessary, we must seek nothing so much as our own spiritual perfection. This is the greatest glorification of God, without which, whatever we pretend to do for the glory of God, will be spurned by Him.

2. To arrive at perfection is our greatest concern. We can desire or obtain no greater good in this life, because the degree of our glory and eternal happiness will be measured by the degree of perfection which we have attained. The more perfect one is, the more closely will he be united to God for all eternity. When all else must be abandoned, this union will be our only treasure. "Say to the just man that it is well, for he shall eat the fruit of his doings" (Isa. 3, 10).

But even upon earth there is nothing more precious or more desirable than sanctity and perfection. By perfection we possess that true and permanent peace which the world can neither give nor take away, that peace of Christ, we repeat, "which surpasseth all understanding"

(Phil. 4, 7). Further, no one is richer than the perfect and holy, who possessing God possess all things and, united with God, have no fear of the onslaughts of hell. Perfection is the wisdom of which we read, "All good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands (Wisd. 7, 11). Where there is perfection, there is true joy and true happiness, so that we may apply to it this praise of wisdom, "When I go into my house, I shall repose myself with her: for her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness" (ibid. 8, 16).

3. It is fitting to strive after perfection for the sake of our neighbor; indeed, we belong to the Communion of Saints and to the Mystical Body of Christ. Therefore, neither vice nor virtue can be without some effect, either good or bad, upon others. Sin will be a source of scandal, virtues and perfection a source of good example. Further, one who is perfect is a very great help and aid to the rest, since the imperfect usually seek only their own interests.

We should not pass over the fact that because of the perfect God graciously showers down His blessings upon the entire human race, just as the wicked and the unjust bring down curses and misfortunes. Would not Sodom and Gomorrha have been saved because of ten just? (Cf. Gen. 18, 32).

Therefore, it is not the learned that confer the greatest benefits upon mankind, it is not great kings or leaders of armies, not those who build and destroy kingdoms and empires, not even orators or preachers, but it is the perfect, even though they lead a hidden life and are not known or recognized by the world. But the last day will bring all to light. It is not necessary that the world know and acknowledge its benefactors, nor is it necessary that the Saints place themselves upon a candlestick or that they be placed there by others; it is sufficient that God knows them and blesses the world on their account. "For the Lord knoweth the way of the just" (Ps. 1, 6). Let the Blessed Virgin, who has brought forth life for us and repaired the curse of Eve, be an example to us. The perfect are those branches who, because they were perfectly united to the divine vine, bear much fruit, and whose fruit remains unto eternal life and unto the salvation of nations (Cf. John 15, 5).

Accordingly, we must desire nothing more than perfection, we must pray for nothing more earnestly than perfection, we must give ourselves to nothing more fervently than to perfection, and this for the sake of God, ourselves, and our brethren.

Oh, that we may be among those of whom it was said, "But they

that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isa. 40, 31)! Oh, that our path, as a shining light, may go forward and grow even unto the perfect day (Cf. Prov. 4, 18)!

42. The Nature of Perfection

We all seem, in a general and vague way, to know what perfection is. But to strive after perfection we must know it clearly, lest we pursue the wrong goal or employ false and unsuitable means. For the means are determined by the end. Many lose time and energy and do not ever attain their end, because they are kept back by serious errors concerning the essence of perfection.

(a) Perfection does *not* consist in exterior practices, no matter how numerous, whether they are prayers, corporal mortifications or labors. All these indeed are good and very useful, even necessary, to obtain perfection, as long as they are used with discretion. But they are the means to the end, not the end.

Perfection does *not* consist in a certain sensible devotion or in pious affections, in which especially beginners, according to the wise provision of God, usually abound, and of which they are afterward deprived for the attainment of perfection.

It does *not* consist in the religious habit or in the religious state. The religious state is indeed the best means of attaining perfection, and a great grace, which carries with it a new and special obligation of striving for perfection. But not all who are clothed with the religious habit are found to be perfect. Therefore, the religious state is not the end, but the means to the end. Of itself perfection can be acquired and, in fact, is acquired by many outside the religious state.

Perfection does *not* consist in the mere external observance of the Rules and the Constitutions. Such observance is necessary for religious, yet is not itself perfection.

(b) To speak positively, perfection consists in perfect union with God, our last end. As St. Thomas teaches, "Something is said to be perfect, insofar as it attains its proper end, which is the final perfection of that thing" (II-II q. 184, a. 1). But since God is a spirit, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (I Cor. 6, 17). Hence it is evident that our perfection is something spiritual and interior, and is not founded on anything exterior or corporeal. For union with God can be accomplished only in the spirit. Our aim, therefore, must be to hold our spirit perfectly subject to the Divine Spirit, that it may keep our body in complete control and may employ it readily in the practice of

virtue. All ascetical practices must be arranged accordingly, inasmuch as they have value only in so far as they contribute to the attainment of this perfect harmony.

All things, therefore, that hinder this perfect union with God are to be removed, and all things that favor it are to be promoted, so that finally there will be nothing to separate us from God.

(c) From what has been said, there is no doubt that Christian perfection coincides with divine charity, since really it is charity which unites us to God. By charity two souls are united and in a certain way are made one; and we cannot enter into God by any other way than by charity, as the Apostle says, "God is charity: and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him" (I John 4, 16).

It is charity that directs and offers to our Beloved all our works and exercises of virtue and accomplishes them for His sake. Thus all works and exercises are without merit before God, as long as charity is lacking; they are dead, because they are not animated by charity. For this reason St. Augustine does not hesitate to say, "Love and do what you will." For love makes no mistake and can do nothing that would displease the Beloved. God himself impresses this on us, when He commands before all else, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first Commandment" (Matt. 22, 37). The Apostle calls charity "the bond of perfection" (Col. 3, 14), upon which St. John Chrysostom comments, "Even if there should be large bones in the body, but no ligaments, it is useless. For whatever kind of good works and good deeds one possesses, all vanish unless there is charity" *(Comm. on Colossians* 8, 22).

We have already insisted above that love of one's neighbor is contained in charity (no. 29 B, 3). This is evident from the fact that our Lord said, "The second (Commandment) is like to this: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22, 39), affirming that whatever we have done to our neighbor, we have done to Him (Cf. Matt. 25, 40).

(d) Practically, perfection can also be defined as the perfect service of God, or entire conformity with the will of God. Our Lord has declared, "He that hath My Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (John 14, 21); nor did God intend anything else by His commands than to lead us to perfection or to the closest union with Him. Therefore, the more accurately and the more promptly we obey God in even the least things, the more perfect we shall be.

(e) It remains to be said that perfection in man cannot be restricted

to only one part of man. No one will call a body perfect, which has no eyes, although the rest of the senses may be more than usually developed. The spiritual life is likewise an organism in which part helps part perfectly, so that the whole may be perfect. Thus it is rightly said, *Bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quolibet defectu.* It follows that we are commanded to develop as much as we can every aptitude given us by God, natural as well as supernatural, always in conformity with right order and with the good of the whole organism. Let no talent perish! Let neither the interior nor the exterior be neglected, so that the whole man may serve God with particular regard to his proper state.

Let us, therefore, courageously begin the work of our perfection, so that, overcoming all difficulties, we may arrive at the end for which we were created and called, and for the sake of which the Son of God Himself did not hesitate to undergo death.

43. The Degrees of Perfection

That there are many degrees of perfection is evident to anyone who has carefully considered that perfection is the spiritual life. Life is not always and everywhere the same, and even in a given individual it is always growing stronger or weaker. There is no one who does not see how greatly the life of a boy differs from that of a man, how greatly the life of a sinner differs from that of a man perfectly united to God.

A. Because perfection coincides with perfect charity, as we have explained, its degrees necessarily are measured by charity.

Now it is evident that God alone can love Himself as much as He deserves. Therefore, only the love by which God loves Himself is absolutely perfect and infinite, as is the divine essence.

According to this principle, the love by which the soul of Christ loves God the Father, holds the highest place. Then follows the Queen of all the angels and saints, whose love of God will never be equalled by another creature.

But if we consider our own love of God, there can be no doubt that we can never attain the highest degree possible to us, before we enter eternal life. Then only shall we have arrived at our end; seeing God face to face, we shall love Him without any difficulty and from our whole heart.

Thus the perfection we possess in this life is always and only relative, and is subject to development, so that our spiritual life is always under the law of constant progress.

If one looks at a high mountain, he may easily entertain the hope

that he will quickly reach its peak. But when he begins to climb, he will realize more and more that the summit is very far away. Almost the same thing is to be said of the mountain of perfection, except that its peak touches Heaven and cannot be reached in this life. For this very reason, we must persevere unto the end in our striving after perfection.

We may not waste time, because, according to the teaching of the Apostle, time is short. We know not when the Lord will come and demand a reckoning.

B. Since ancient times, three degrees of perfection are usually distinguished: the degree of beginners, or the purgative way; the degree of the progressives, or the illuminative way; the degree of the perfect, or the unitive way. St. Thomas illustrates the matter in this way, "The various degrees of charity are distinguished by the various aims toward which man is led by the increase of charity. In the first place, the principal effort of man is to avoid sin and to resist his concupiscences, which draw him away from charity. And this belongs to beginners, in whom charity must be nourished and fostered, so as not to be destroyed. Now follows the second aim, in which man's chief concern is to advance in good. This endeavor belongs to those who are advancing, their chief care being that charity may be strengthened in them by this increase of charity. The third aim, however, is to concern himself chiefly with clinging to God and with enjoying Him. This belongs to the perfect, who desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ" (II-II, q. 24, a. 9).

Beginners, therefore, have indeed rejected mortal sin, and are seriously desirous of perfection; but because of strong inclinations to evil, there is still the danger that they may again lose the life of grace. Hence they must rid themselves of these inclinations and evil passions, so that the very root of the spiritual life may be strengthened.

The progressives are strong enough not to fall back easily into mortal sin. Therefore they can apply their time and energy to acquiring solid virtues by the teaching and light of the truths of faith and the mysteries of Redemption. The spiritual life is developed and produces its effects.

The perfect have conquered not only mortal sin, but quite effectually also venial sin; they have adorned their souls with virtues, and now try to overcome their imperfections more and more. Habitually united to God by means of sanctifying grace, they also strive to cling to Him actually through acts of the intellect and the will, and by thought and eager desire to dwell in their eternal home.

C. It is clear that the degrees of perfection cannot be perfectly distinguished from one another. Even beginners tend to union with God, and try to acquire the practice of the divine presence; and by the very fact that they uproot sins and vices, they exercise virtue. And the perfect also continue to watch and pray, lest, overcome by temptation, they fall again.

Nevertheless, each degree has its own proper aim, as St. Thomas explained, which must be chiefly emphasized.

The foregoing evolution of the spiritual life is the ordinary one. It is known to all that God, by conferring extraordinary graces, can shorten or change the way, as we see in the case of St. Paul. But it is not lawful for anyone, pretending extraordinary graces, to dream of higher gifts than his state of soul warrants. It is prudent to faithfully consult an experienced spiritual director and to follow his advice.

We shall see this better afterwards, when we treat of the exercises of the spiritual life. It is sufficient here to have indicated the way and to admonish all that, filled with the desire for perfection, they should courageously and promptly enter upon the way of perfection and continue on it bravely to the very end, "Hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good" (Rom. 12, 9). They should constantly remind themselves of the motto of our Father Dominic of St. Albert, *Plus ultra!* To each one are addressed the words addressed to our Holy Father Elias, "Arise and eat, for thou hast yet a great way to go" (3 Kings 19, 7).

44. The Essential Conditions of Perfection

What is required to attain perfection? Let us briefly point out the essential conditions.

(a) First, a true and sincere desire of perfection is required, a desire that rises spontaneously from the consideration of the reasons for striving for perfection. Wherever this desire is lacking, there can be no hope of perfection. Wherever this desire is strong and efficacious, all things may be hoped for.

We have said that this desire must be sincere and efficacious. It must be united to a firm and strong will of doing all things necessary and useful for attaining perfection. A certain pious frame of mind for perfection which anyone can arouse in himself without any difficulty, is not sufficient (Cf. no. 36).

Therefore this desire must be universal, i.e., it must extend to total perfection, not only to a part. Since perfection is something organic, as has been explained above, it cannot be acquired in one department

only, e.g., in prayer or in mortification or in work. Otherwise, it proves to be imperfection.

It must be prudent, lest one use untimely and unsuitable means. In all humility, one must seek the advice of experts.

It must be constant, since perfection may be obtained only by overcoming great difficulties both interior and exterior.

The reply of St. Thomas Aquinas to his sisters, when they asked him what they must do to attain perfection, is well known. Only to will it.

(b) The second condition is a firm trust in God. Even though the pursuit of perfection meets with powerful enemies, and even though, relying on our own powers, we can expect nothing good, we must nevertheless courageously enter the way of perfection because God will supply for our weakness. God wishes our perfection more than we oursevles, and He will not deny this help, as long as we humbly place our hope in Him. We shall conquer if we will the victory, because God will give us victory.

Moreover, we must suppress and overcome every temptation of faintheartedness as soon as it appears. There is nothing more harmful than to lose spirit and despair of victory. On this point St. Theresa writes, "We must have great confidence; because it is very necessary for us not to limit our desires, but to put our trust in God; for if we do violence to ourselves, we shall by little and little, though not at once, reach that height which many Saints by His grace have reached. If they had never resolved and had never begun to do, they could never have ascended so high. God seeks and loves courageous souls if they walk with humility and do not trust in themselves . . . I am often astonished how profitable it is to venture great things on this road; even if the soul does not immediately have the strength, it flies and accomplishes much, although like a little bird, whose wings are weak, it grows weary and rests" (Life, c. 13, n. 2-3).

(c) Finally, the third condition is patience. We do not mean here that patience which is necessary for all to bear the burdens of this life; but we speak of that patience which is required for the pursuit of perfection. For, let us repeat, we shall not acquire perfection in one day or in one attempt. Nor shall we gain the victory without many setbacks. So patience is necessary to arrive at our end.

It will happen, that when we seem to have made some progress, we shall discover in ourselves many more and greater imperfections than before—yes, even sins. If, after examining our conscience we learn that this comes from our own negligence, nothing remains than to do penance and to go forward more bravely. But it can also be that we

find a greater fervor in ourselves. Then there seems to be some sign of progress. There is no doubt that these imperfections and sins were in us long before; but we did not see them or did not wish to see them, whereas now our eyes are opened and our conscience is more tender. Hence this new experience, which is so bitter, arises. Therefore, let us not lose heart, nor stand still, lamenting our misery; but rather let us humble ourselves before God, and courageously, but peacefully, pursue our way. God has planned all this that we might before all become firmly rooted and strengthened in humility. This is our first step forward, since the stronger the foundations, the higher the edifice that can be erected. Once more, we repeat, there is need of patience.

45. Our Triple Adversary

There are three enemies who oppose our perfection, as there are three who endanger our salvation: the devil, the world, and our corrupt nature.

(a) Even after the redemption, the devil, by whose envy sin entered into the world and through sin death, does not cease going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He lies in wait for those especially who are most eager for perfection. Therefore Holy Scripture warns us, "Son, when thou comest into the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation" (Ecclus. 2, 1).

To obtain his purpose, the devil frequently changes himself into an angel of light (Cf. 2 Cor. 11, 14), and attacks us under the pretext of a more perfect life and a greater good. Many have been deceived. We must resist him in faith, as the Apostle admonishes (Cf. I Peter 5, 9); in faith, we say, to teach us true humility and docility, lest we reject the counsels and admonitions of our spiritual director. Let us not forget to ask and to follow the direction and guidance of our Guardian Angel. He is stronger than the fallen angel.

(b) The second enemy is the world, the ally of satan, i.e., those men who follow the principles and doctrines of the prince of darkness, and strive to propogate them among others by word, writing and example. Of this world St. John affirms, "The whole world is seated in wickedness" (I John 5, 19). This world did not receive Christ, but crucified Him and again crucifies Him. It is this world that our Lord threatened, "Woe to the world because of scandals" (Matt. 18, 7).

Let us not think that the spirit of the world cannot enter into monasteries. Therefore, let us watch and pray! Let us not imitate those who

are seduced by the worldly spirit and live in laxity; but let us rather imitate those who, moved by the Spirit of the Lord, strive after true and strict observance.

Although inordinate human respect is a serious obstacle to perfection, many, out of negligence or fear, are subject to the spirit of the world. Even in the monastery we must carefully guard against this danger. We ought always and everywhere to confess Christ.

(c) The third enemy is our nature corrupted by sin. "For the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth" (Gen. 8, 21). This is the most dangerous enemy of all. The first two can do nothing, unless they have won over our corrupted nature. Brother John of St. Samson says, "We are not injured by men nor by demons, but by our own selves, that is, by our pride and the violence of our passions." This third enemy is the traitor who opens the gate of our heart for the others.

For the devil uses our untamed passions and evil inclinations, that he may draw us into his snares. The world also flatters them that we may abandon the standard of the Cross, and follow in its ranks. But if we overcome our inclinations and gain command of our passions, the devil and the world will struggle in vain. They will not find any means by which to attack us. However, let us not imagine that we will easily and immediately carry off the victory. Sometimes our passions seem subdued, but unexpectedly rise up against us with violence.

We must never overlook or neglect these enemies. We must ever be vigilant lest they deceive us. Otherwise, we are lost and our perfection is ruined. However, we should not lose courage. The more numerous our enemies are, the more glorious will be the victory and the crown which we, supported and strengthened by the help of God, will acquire.

PART TWO

PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

Section One

The Nature of Religious Life

CHAPTER ONE

The Purpose of Religious Life

46. Perfect Service of God

From our previous considerations we believe that for the human race as well as for the individual the most perfect worship and service of God is the first and most important duty. For this the entire race no less than the individual has been created.

1. After our first parents had sinned against this duty, the Son of God himself came down to earth to inculcate it anew and to illustrate it by His example. For He never sought anything else than the honor and glory of His Heavenly Father and He did not hesitate to give Himself over to unbelievers to be crucified for this end.

In Heaven the Holy Angels and the Blessed sing the praises of God without intermission, without fatigue or weariness, since praise and thanksgiving spontaneously burst forth from hearts filled and satisfied with love and admiration.

2. Here on earth, most men are occupied with far other things than the glory of God. They do not honor God or thank Him as befits God, but they "became vain in their thoughts and their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. 1, 21). They are such slaves to their desires that they have become like senseless animals. They do not cease offending God by their vices and crimes.

Others, however, who do not refuse to serve God with a good will and to offer Him due service, are hindered by so great temporal cares, that even though they wish to serve Him, they have little time or energy to fulfill this duty.

3. To expiate the malice and negligence of the former and to take the place of the latter, it is only right that there be some who are occupied solely with the praise and glory of God and who are always and everywhere at His service. They must fill a courtier's service, just as the Angels and the Blessed in Heaven surround the throne of God. Yes, like the Angels they must bear the commands of God to their brethren with great zeal and must help them, lest, deceived by the snares of the devil or the example of the world, their brethren be deprived of the fruits of eternal redemption. Furthermore, there should be some who, like the salt of the earth, preserve the world from corruption; and as shining lights placed upon a candlestick, illuminate for the others the way to their heavenly country. By so doing, they defend the cause of God.

For this reason God chose the tribe of Levi in the Old Testament to serve Him in the sanctuary, and to offer gifts and sacrifices in the name of the others. This tribe did not have its own territory like the others, but only certain towns scattered through the land where they might live. But God carefully provided the means of livelihood for the Levites. "And I have given to the sons of Levi all the tithes of Israel for a possession for the ministry wherewith they serve Me in the tabernacle of the covenant: that the children of Israel may not approach any more to the tabernacle, nor commit deadly sin, but only the sons of Levi may serve Me in the tabernacle, and bear the sins of the people. It shall be an everlasting ordinance in your generations. They shall not possess any other thing" (Num. 18, 21-23).

Besides, the sons of the Prophets, as they were called, and others also, separated themselves from the rest of men so that they might keep their conscience unspotted and serve God more purely and perfectly, as can easily be seen in the life of our Holy Father, Elias, and of his disciple, Eliseus.

On a greater scale did God raise up for Himself in the New Testament men and women who, divesting themselves of all things, should occupy themselves solely in singing God's praises and in considering His mysteries, or in carrying His name to the people.

4. It is for this purpose that the religious state is sanctioned and consecrated. For it is the state in which man, freed from the world and from all that the world offers or promises, strives to live solely for God.

This is the primary and principal aim of the religious state and of every religious: to procure the greater glory of God and to adore Him in spirit and in truth. From this aim the religious state draws its glory and its sublimity. Religious will the more easily be fervent and will esteem their state more highly, if they will always be mindful of its aim. For nothing more sublime or blessed can be imagined than to be engaged with God and to live solely for Him. The Angels and Saints in heaven do nothing else.

47. Delivery from Bondage

The second purpose of the religious state is our own salvation and happiness which are marvelously safeguarded by the religious state.

We saw before what powerful adversaries oppose our salvation and perfection. There is no doubt about the serious difficulty of our task on this account, and many souls actually have been lost. The religious state renders these enemies harmless, since it breaks the bonds by which all men are more or less held captive. These three bonds are

the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh and the pride of life (Cf. 1 John 2, 16). When these bonds are broken there is no reason to fear these enemies.

(a) The concupiscence of the eyes is nothing else than the cursed hunger for gold or that avarice and desire for riches, concerning which the Apostle says: "The desire of money is the root of all evils, which some coveting have erred from faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6, 10). Our Lord gives the warning: "Take heed, and beware of all covetousness" (Luke 12, 15). "For they that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6, 9). That is why our Lord exclaims, "Woe to you that are rich!" (Luke 6, 24).

Consequently, the religious, in order to break this powerful chain, not only refuses to be rich, but, through the vow of holy poverty, freely renounces all things. He wishes to possess nothing as his own, not even the slightest thing, and, following the example and teaching of our Lord, to require as few things as possible for life. To tear the shackles of that terrible vice of avarice, he binds himself with the vow of holy poverty, and provided he truly wills what his vow demands and imposes, there is no reason for further fear on this score.

(b) The second chain is the concupiscence of the flesh. Surely every one knows that those who go down to hell on account of this vice are innumerable. For fornicators, according to the Apostle, shall not possess the Kingdom of God (Cf. 1 Cor. 6, 9). Therefore, in order that we may not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, we pronounce the vow of perfect and perpetual chastity in the religious state so that when this chain is broken we may the more easily and perfectly cling to God.

Since, in the midst of the world, it is so difficult "to keep one's self unspotted from this world," (James 1, 27), we enter the religious state so that, overcoming the desires of the flesh we may bring our wedding garment unspotted to the tribunal of God. Not without reason the Apostle wished that all might be as himself, freed from all bonds of the flesh, since those living in marriage, he says, shall have tribulation of the flesh (Cf. 1 Cor. 7, 28).

(c) The third chain is the pride of life, or self-will. This is the most powerful and the most dangerous of all. Unless this one is broken, it is useless to break the others. The devil, therefore, gladly allows us to live chaste and poor provided we keep our own will and provided, in the practice of virtue, we allow ourselves to be led by our own and not by God's will. Thus all other sacrifices, no matter how

heavy, are of no value before God if the holocaust of our own will is lacking. If, however, this last bond is broken by the vow of holy obedience, then the devil is outwitted, all our affairs are at peace, and our service of God is perfect.

Thus, then, divesting ourselves by means of the religious vows of temporal goods, of carnal pleasures and of our own will, we break the bonds by which we are held in the slavery of the devil and of the world. With the Psalmist we may cry out in joy: "Our soul hath been delivered as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken and we are delivered" (Ps. 123, 7). Nothing henceforth will hinder us from clinging to God and serving Him perfectly. Then we shall appreciate the saying of St. Paul: "You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father)" (Rom. 8, 15).

48. Freedom From Care

1. The security which we have acquired through the breaking of our bonds is wonderfully increased by the holy company in which we shall in future live.

Scripture itself proclaims: "Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth he hath none to lift him up" (Eccles. 4, 10). One living in the world, even though he is surrounded by many, is usually alone in the pursuit of salvation and perfection. In fact, he finds not a few enemies, so that the Psalmist rightly laments: "I looked on my right hand and beheld, and there was no one that would know me" (Ps. 141, 5), and "I am become as a man without help" (Ps. 87, 5). The more one desires his salvation and perfection, the more will he be alone and misunderstood, even by his neighbors.

Even the eremitical life, as experience shows and all authors agree, abounds in dangers, and few are they who arrive at true perfection in it. Thus even in the earliest times only those monks who had been sufficiently tried in the common life, were allowed to pass over to the eremitical life.

2. It is agreed amongst all that the community life is a true and relatively easy school of holiness. Whoever follows it faithfully and uses its advantages prudently and diligently cannot fail to reach his goal.

(a) For in community life we find an effectual protection and defense against our adversaries. Even the world has for a long time recognized that the strength of individuals is increased by joining the company of those who are striving for the same goal, and that many

who would have perished miserably standing alone, accomplish miracles when they pool resources. Even the weakest become strong when they join forces with others.

The same holds in the spiritual life and in the pursuit of perfection. Holy Scripture itself extols holy friendship to the highest,—"It is better, therefore, that two should be together than one: for they have the advantage of their society: If one fall, he shall be supported by the other" (Eccles. 4, 9, 10). These words are to be affirmed of a religious community with so much greater force, since in it one member lives for the other and aspires to the same ideals as the others. Such a holy company effectually fortifies its members against the attacks of the devil and the snares of the world.

(b) Next, community life is a constant and living exhortation to seek perfection, and so a strong defense against one's own fickleness. For superiors are exhorted to point out the right way, to forewarn against dangers, and to stimulate the wholehearted pursuit of God, since they are obliged by their office and in conscience to admonish each of their subjects about his faults. They shall render an account of such matters on the day of judgment. Who takes the like care of the salvation and perfection of seculars?

The rest of our brethren, too, will not omit to correct us fraternally for our good and especially they will edify us by their example and entice us to sanctity in holy rivalry.

Moreover, the entire regular observance hinders us from abandoning our holy resolution and from falling into tepidity. As long as strict discipline flourishes in a religious house—a thing we suppose—it is impossible for us to become cold or to yield ourselves to negligence. Should we wish to do so, we would have, as it were, to swim against the current.

(c) Finally, in community life, we find most efficacious means for progress in virtue. While seculars who are desirous of perfection often deliberate with great difficulty and anxiety on what way they should walk to make progress and to attain the desired end, religious have a well-paved road through their rules and constitutions approved by ecclesiastical authority and through community exercises proved by long experience. They have nothing to do but faithfully to follow them. If they do, they will not stray from the right path nor faint in the way. For many have gone before them on the same road and many are at their side.

3. We cannot, therefore, be thankful enough to God that He has invited us to a state of such security. Of course, we must bear in mind

that this security is found only in those communities where a true religious observance flourishes. For the community in which this is lacking is like a leaking ship. Who would wish to entrust his safety to it or recommend another to do so?

Accordingly, it is not only of supreme importance for those striving after perfection to have found an Order strictly adhering to its rules and the principles of the spiritual life, but also there rests upon them the strict obligation of guarding, as far as they are concerned, by word and example against the relaxation of regular discipline. It is, indeed, the greatest crime and the deepest ingratitude to jeopardize this discipline by words or deeds. Should one dare to do so, he would be like the man who with a saw cuts of the limb on which he is seated. Beware, my brother, against doing so; it will not profit you in the least; but rather be a strenuous defender of the most perfect observance.

For the rest, let us confess with the Psalmist: "Blessed be the Lord, for He hath shown His wonderful mercy to me in a fortified city" (Ps. 30, 22).

49. Abundant Blessings

1. From the same community which confers such security, abundant graces flow upon us by which our souls are strengthened and become fit to accomplish great deeds.

(a) Our brothers and sisters who are clothed in the same habit and pursue the same goal, pray for us and offer sacrifices for us according to the Apostle: "Pray for one another, that you may be saved. For the continued prayer of a just man availeth much" (James 5, 16). In fact, we participate in all their prayers and good works. Where can the like be found in this world?

(b) Even after death, when we are so easily forgotten, our brethren will not fail us. More prayers are prescribed in the Order and said for deceased brethren than the richest in the world are wont to obtain. Even after those who have known us have departed from this life we shall not be forsaken. The Order will continue to pray and offer sacrifices for us and yearly will celebrate the commemoration of all its deceased brothers and sisters. Frequently during the day the *Fidelium animae* and other prayers will be said for us by the community.

(c) Moreover, how easy it is to approach the sources of grace—the Sacraments, for instance, and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Very many of the faithful in the world, even though they are most anxious, cannot enjoy such graces every day; and others enjoy them only at a great price, that is, with many sacrifices, and frequently, not without

ridicule and insults, even from their own families. We, however, do not ordinarily have to go out of the house; we are not exposed to the inclemencies of the weather; nor are we compelled to shorten the time of recreation or sleep, since provision is made for these in our daily schedule. We are certainly blind if we do not esteem these advantages.

It is evident that such advantages are at our disposal only in well-established houses. Therefore, not only should superiors beware of multiplication of small houses, but all religious should consider it a great boon to live in well-established communities, even though there seems to be greater freedom in other houses. For we have come to religious life not to seek freedom but rather perfection.

(d) Since God never does things by halves, we may also hope to obtain many special graces from Him, especially on account of our holy Brothers and Sisters who already behold the face of God in heaven and pray for us without ceasing. After calling us to the religious state, He does not cease to overwhelm us with actual graces so that, when sin has been gradually eliminated and virtue sown, He may complete the work He has begun.

2. On no account may we pass over temporal advantages. Certainly, it is highly unbecoming to choose the religious life on their account. Such would not be a true religious vocation, nor would the unfortunate man who has sought these advantages find the peace of soul that he expected. Nevertheless, it is not just to slight this grace and to neglect gratitude for it. For by this grace God's promise is fulfilled: "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6, 33), or as we read in Isaias: "For her merchandise shall be for them that shall dwell before the Lord, that they may eat of the fulness, and be clothed for a continuance" (Isa. 23, 18).

But if the Lord takes such solicitous care of us, it is clear that we before all others must truly and fervently seek the kingdom of God and its justice by perfectly keeping the vow of poverty.

3. When finally we shall have been faithful unto death, a great glory and a bright crown will be ready for us. To us also it will be said: "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven" (Matt. 5, 12), for we, indeed, who have left all things for the Lord, will receive a hundredfold and possess eternal life.

It is true, we cannot sufficiently thank God in heaven or on earth for the religious state. No wonder "that St. Mary Magdalen always highly esteemed her Order and religious life and was accustomed to call it the pupil of God's eye, a paradise of delights, an earthly para-

dise, and sometimes also, a heavenly home . . . She highly valued the grace of her vocation and exhorted her daughters to try to understand its greatness and to correspond with it by seeking perfection. She was accustomed to say that after Baptism the grace of a vocation was the greatest God could confer upon a soul" (AA.SS., May 5, 743).

It remains, therefore, to apply to ourselves the words of St. Paul: "Let us consider one another, to provoke unto charity and to good works. Not forsaking our assembly, as some are accustomed; but comforting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching" (Hebr. 10, 24, 25).

CHAPTER TWO

THE VARIETY OF RELIGIOUS ORDERS

50. Diversity Among Orders Described

A. History and experience show that there have been and still are many Orders in the Catholic Church. There can be no doubt that Divine Providence has so arranged. Surely a number of Orders were founded at the command of God, Himself. Some Orders have become extinct in the course of time to yield their place to others; some have endured many ages up to our day and daily produce new and more abundant fruits.

1. Every one knows that usually there is a great difference of life among these Orders. In the first ages after Christ the monks sought especially to withdraw far from the world and to separate themselves from it as completely as possible, in order to save their souls by meditating day and night on the law of the Lord and singing His praises. Little by little the Orders added another feature, viz., to help the Church according to their ability in spreading the Gospel and saving souls. Thus it happened that the active life was added to prayer and contemplation.

"For," as Pius XI writes: "although the nature of religious life is one and indivisible, it clothes itself in many forms, since some of the Orders serve God in one way and some in another; some by their purpose follow one work of charity and benevolence for the honor of God and the advantage of their neighbors, some follow another. Thus from this great variety of religious Orders, there springs up and flourishes a great variety of fruits for the salvation of nations as from so many trees planted in the field of the Lord. Nothing is more beautiful and delightful to behold than the collection and assembly of Orders which though ultimately tending to the same end, have nevertheless their own individual field of action and work in some way distinct from all the rest" (Apostolic Letter of March 19, 1924).

2. Thus three classes of religious Orders are usually distinguished. First there are Orders of the purely contemplative life. Among them are numbered the Carthusians, the Camaldoli and the Reformed Cistercians or Trappists. Their sole aim is to be alone with God in prayer and meditation and in this way to cooperate in the saving of souls.

A second class is made up of Orders of the purely active life; e.g., the Orders of knights in the middle ages and the hospital Orders in our day. In addition to their own salvation they intend to serve their neighbor for God's sake, especially by means of the corporal works of mercy.

A third class is formed by Orders of the mixed life, which propose to commune with God and to exercise the apostolate directly and so try to combine the active and the contemplative life in proper proportion. The mendicant Orders especially and the Orders of regular clerics belong to this class.

3. It need cause no wonder if we cannot easily or accurately determine to what class a certain Order belongs. There are many shades of difference and these sometimes are very fine. Especially among the mixed Orders, contemplation predominates in one, external activity in another. Therefore, each Order must live according to its own statutes and must not imitate others except in those matters which are common to all.

B. God seems to have arranged for so great a variety chiefly for two reasons.

1. Our holy Church has many tasks to accomplish. The more widely it spread in the course of ages and reached more varied nations, the greater and the more numerous were the tasks it had to perform. Thus the Church's need for more and more laborers and co-operators grew from day to day, and the existing Orders were not equal to the work to be done. Now, however, "it usually happened according to the plan of Divine Providence, that whenever a new need had to be met, new religious Orders were established and now flourish" (Pius XI, ibid.).

2. The second reason is the pronounced difference and variety among men. Not all have the same temperament, the same talents or inclinations. In order that all might find a place for saving their souls

and laboring usefully for God's kingdom, God has provided so many religious Orders.

C. It is, therefore, the duty of every one who feels himself called to the state of perfection, to prove himself and to choose the Order he finds most suitable for himself. Here St. Paul's word also applies: "Now there are diversities of graces, but the same spirit; and there are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but the same God, Who worketh all in all. And the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit . . . But all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as he will" (1 Cor. 12, 4-11).

He, who promptly follows the lead of the Holy Spirit in choosing the religious state, acts very wisely and will accomplish much for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi was reluctant to receive for the Order those young women who did not appear to be drawn by the Holy Spirit (AA. SS., May 5, 743).

51. The Three Classes of Orders

A. We shall now briefly describe the three classes of orders, so that we may better understand the spirit of our own.

1. We have said that the purely contemplative orders endeavor to live solely for God in prayer and contemplation. Their right to live so is proved by the fact that man was primarily created for the glory and honor of God, than which nothing more sublime can be imagined. This life is a foretaste of our heavenly life. Moreover, it seems to offer the greatest security. That these orders are by no means useless for the salvation of others the Sovereign Pontiff Pius XI, has more than once solemnly proclaimed (Cf. Const. Apost., *Umbratilem,* July 8, 1924, and the Encycl. *Rerum Ecclesias,* Feb. 18, 1926). However, a special vocation and temperament are required for such a life. Only the few are adapted to it. For it is not sweet leisure, as some falsely assert, but the severest austerity; and interior struggles are many. Not all are able to bear such solitude and almost continuous silence. The higher the life of contemplation rises, the more severe must be the self-denial and mortification.

Those who aspire to such a life must be strong in body and mind, of brave will, of great prudence and ready to undertake the heaviest interior and exterior sacrifices. Neither the melancholic nor the phlegmatic seem fitted for this kind of life.

2. The orders of the active life are as varied as the active life itself.

They are justified by the many needs of daily life and by the precept of charity. Seculars themselves easily approve them because every one recognizes how useful they are for the world. The intellectual, physical and moral qualifications of the candidate must be equal to the work to which the various orders chiefly devote themselves.

It is well known to every one that in these orders the spiritual life and prayer must not be neglected. Otherwise, they would not be religious orders and would be of no help in acquiring perfection. In fact their active work would lack the blessing of heaven.

3. The orders of the mixed life strive to combine both elements in in due proportion so that both they themselves and others also may profit. Their activity consists chiefly in preaching, teaching and exercising the priestly ministry. They desire so to converse with God that by means of a holy apostolate they may communicate to others what they themselves have drawn from the fountains of God's truth and love by prayer and contemplation, and in this way, to promote God's kingdom and glory and to save souls.

We have already said that in some orders the contemplative element predominates, and in others the active. Therefore, candidates must ask themselves which element they prefer and then choose the order which, after all has been considered, is most suitable to them.

Spiritual writers usually teach that the mixed life is *per se* the most perfect, since, according to St. Thomas, it is a greater thing to preach and teach what one has contemplated than merely to contemplate, just as it is more perfect to enlighten than merely to shine (II-II, q. 188, a. 6). But that the mixed life may be worthy of such praise, the following must be realized:

(a) On account of external activity in general the active life as well as the mixed life cannot embrace austerities in the same measure as the purely contemplative life, especially since external activity itself, provided it is undertaken in due measure and with true apostolic fervor, usually accomplishes the same end as the austerities of the contemplative life, viz., that the soul dead to itself lives entirely for God. Nevertheless, all austerity cannot be excluded from these, especially from the mixed life, lest one unconsciously become a self-seeker, and so be deprived of heaven's blessing. So the Saints have taught us by word and example.

(b) Certainly prayer and the interior life should be most intensively cultivated in the orders of the mixed life, and provision made that all, before they are permitted to undertake the active life, be sufficiently imbued with the love and practice of prayer and the interior life, lest

among the dangers and distractions of the active life, their spiritual life may ere long collapse. Unless such caution is taken, the foundations collapse, and those apostolic laborers will seek not God or souls but themselves, although they may not be aware of this defect or wish to confess it (Cf. no. 208).

B. It is only proper to add the following advice. Every man certainly is free to choose the religious life as well as a particular religious order. But once he has entered an order, he may not choose his own manner of life, but must adapt himself as closely as possible to the mode of life he has found and chosen, and he may not presume to demand that the order conform itself to him. This would be the ruin of all religious orders. For this reason St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi quite openly declared to some postulants who were somewhat reluctant to conform themselves to the usages of her monastery, "If this manner of life does not suit you, you may choose some other place. We intend to keep the manner of life which you see" (AA.SS., May 5, 738). This spirit is the salvation of religious orders, and the safeguard of the progress of the religious themselves

52. The Spirit Of The Carmelite Order

Our novices anxiously inquire what the spirit of our Order is and to what class it belongs. To give a complete answer to this question a distinction must be made at once.

1. Of old, when our fathers led an eremitical life, each one independent of the others, their life like that of all hermits, was purely contemplative. They lived solely for God. They continued in the eremitical life during the first ages after they had been united into some kind of a community and had received the Holy Rule from St. Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem. For they still lived in widely separated cells, meditating day and night on the law of the Lord and watching in prayer. For this eremitical life was written the Rule of John 44 or the book called *De Institutione primorum monachorum in Lege veteri exortorum et in nova perseverantium,* "The Training of the First Monks Who Sprang Up in the Old Law and Still Continue in the New Law."

Nevertheless, at the call of necessity or charity our fathers did not hesitate sometimes to exercise a fervent apostolate and courageously to preach the word of God, as is told in the lives of St. Brocard, St. Cyril of Constantinople and St. Angelus. Moreover, they did not hesitate to undergo death to win souls for God.

Carmelites are convinced that this double spirit has been left them

as an inheritance by St. Elias the Prophet, whom they strive to imitate as their Father and Guide.

2. When they were compelled by necessity to migrate to Europe and to adapt themselves to new environments and when they had been aligned among the mendicant orders which had just before sprung up and were then most flourishing, it was inevitable that the active life, or preaching and the sacerdotal ministry, should be added to the contemplative life. This arrangement has not been changed in the course of time, although here and there eremitical convents for the purely contemplative life were founded (Cf. no. 208).

Thus it is that today only our nuns who by the law of enclosure are separated completely from the world and who live solely with God, lead the purely contemplative life. Nevertheless, even today, the contemplative life is the essential and chief feature of the Carmelite life in a more distinctive sense than in other orders of the mixed life. For we propose not only to cultivate prayer and the interior life, but also, to aspire to such contemplation as we can attain with the assistance of grace and to dispose ourselves as far as possible for the higher contemplation which can be infused only by God's special grace. It is our purpose not only to give others, as they say, the results of our contemplation, but rather contemplation itself: i.e., to teach others the way of prayer and interior conversation with God. Therefore, Pope Pius XI in the letter he directed to the Superiors General of the Carmelite Order on the seventh centenary of the approbation of the Carmelite Rule, explicitly desired "that the Carmelite Order attract and conform the faithful to the mystical doctrines of Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross" (Cf. Anal. V, 545). We must tend to an intimate union with God that is not merely habitual but actual, so that we may accomplish in ourselves the word of our Holy Father, Elias, "As the Lord liveth the God of Israel in whose sight I stand" (3 Kings 17, 1). The first to follow him was his son and heir, St. Eliseus the Prophet, whom all Carmelites must also follow (4 Kings 3, 14).

3. This most precious legacy has been faithfully transmitted by our forefathers and has produced most beautiful flowers among the mystics of Carmel: e.g., St. Theresa, St. John of the Cross, the Mystical Doctor, St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, Venerable John of St. Samson and many others. This legacy is commended to us by our writers, as Father Michael of St. Augustine, who did not hesitate to affirm, "We should realize that meditation is only a step to contemplation. The soul must never rest in meditation, but on the contrary must hasten diligently to complete this way—the sooner, the better—and to reach

its end, i.e., the contemplative life, the mystic sleep, in order that it may more quickly live perfectly in Christ, and living in Him be transformed into Him" *(Inst. Myst.* 1, tr. 4, c. 16).

Every Carmelite will try to guard this legacy with all diligence and with all his might to defend it against every assault, not merely that he himself may progress in it but also that he may be able to transmit it, unweakened, to posterity.

A Carmelite, whether he exercises his zeal indirectly by prayer and penance in the contemplative life, or whether he applies himself directly to the priestly ministry should never lose sight of that apostolic zeal that bears the stamp of the spirit of our Holy Father Elias, who in most difficult times preserved faith in the true God for the chosen people. From the abundance of contemplation zeal for God's glory and the salvation of souls must of necessity spontaneously spring forth. The contemplative should never be solicitous about himself alone, nor should he seek his own rest in God, but he should bring home to himself the majesty of God and the great work of Redemption with such intensity that, unmindful of himself and dead to himself, he will be ready for every sacrifice to save souls. He will not hesitate to leave God in order to find God, as the mystical authors advise.

For one acting thus, interior conversation with God and contemplation are not disturbed or weakened by the active life, but they are strengthened and purified. On account of this very activity he will gladly, so far as he can, give himself to prayer and contemplation in silence and solitude. And thus he will be perfect.

Having this consideration before him, Pope Pius XI uttered the following words of praise: "It would take a long time to tell what advantage and profit the Carmelite Order bestows upon the Catholic cause by its official prayers, by its manner of life consisting in meditation and contemplation as well as in the exercise of the sacred ministry" (ibid.).

All that has so far been said is climaxed and illustrated by the fact that the Carmelite Order is in a special way dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother and Ornament of Carmel. From her, Carmelites will learn to keep all the words of the Lord in their hearts and ponder over them, and to love solitude and silence. From her who stood beneath the cross they will learn to undergo suffering and to bear all difficulties for God and souls. To this most sweet Mother they will flee in all difficulties of the interior and the exterior life. By the hands of the most pure Virgin they will offer to God their prayers,

labors and crosses to be purified from defects and impurities. In the arms of the Mediatrix of all graces they will tranquilly breathe forth their soul, finally to behold Him unveiled in the light of glory Whom they contemplated in this life veiled in faith.

This is the Carmelite life only briefly outlined. How it is to be established and perfected in us, we shall see later in greater detail.

From all this it is clear that only those can tread the way of Carmel who are allured by an outstanding love of prayer and mortification, and who desire to bring this love to perfection. Some never climb to the top of Carmel, but wretchedly creep along the foot of the mountain; they never taste the sweetness of contemplation. It is imperative that the novices make a fervent beginning.

CHAPTER THREE

VOCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS STATE

53. The Call, God's Prerogative

A. Although the religious state is in itself most beautiful and desirable and, although the Lord so strongly advised following Him in perfect poverty and chastity, still He also said: "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given . . . He that can take, let him take it" (Matt. 19, 11, 12). He also declared to the Apostles, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John 15, 16). Thus a call and a special grace are required for embracing the religious state. The reasons are obvious.

1. The religious state makes many demands upon its members. They must forsake earthly riches and live in poverty, they must give up their own will, they must follow God alone in perfect and perpetual chastity. This last, as the Lord explicitly shows in the words we have quoted above, is not only difficult, but for many quite impossible, because the concupiscence of the flesh is so powerful in them.

Those who intend to enter the Order as clerics should, moreover, not neglect to take thought and carefully consider the obligations of clerics and priests that they are about to assume. In their case profession is made in view of forthcoming sacred ordination. On that account the obligations will be heavier, greater graces will be needed and a divine vocation is most certainly necessary.

These obligations can be faithfully borne only by a special grace of

God, and only he who is called by God may justly and rightfully expect to receive that grace. It is presumption to push one's self into the religious state without this vocation.

2. If, as is evident, the will of God is to be consulted and ascertained in all matters, how much more so in the choosing of a state of life, especially, since in taking so important a step one determines the whole series that follows! As the first step is, so will the rest be. If the first step has been taken against God's will, how can the rest be in conformity with God's will? A tragic and long drawn-out series of errors will follow.

3. Is it any wonder then that postulants who have been received without a vocation are not happy or contented, as daily experience everywhere confirms. For they find themselves in a place for which they are unfitted by temperament, inclination or liking. They are like the boy, David, who was unable to walk dressed in Saul's armor, and did not dare meet the giant Goliath until he had laid aside his armor and again taken up his sling and the familiar pebbles. And so they will not be a gain to the Order, but on the contrary, a great loss, if not a complete one. For whence come those apostates who are so great a scandal to the faithful, a deep affliction to the Church and a prolific source of disgrace to the Order? Are they not to a great extent men without a true vocation who led on by unholy motives, have broken into the sanctuary like thieves entering not by the door but by the windows?

If nothing worse, they are usually a serious obstacle to religious discipline, murmurers and disturbers of peace. Just as it is much more difficult to erect a structure than to destroy it by fire, so ten of the most perfect religious can scarcely restore what one evil religious has ruined. Religious lacking a vocation, just like those having a contagious disease, usually infect and contaminate everything and everybody.

Moreover, in the world itself there is no one more unhappy tban the man who is bound to occupations and conditions of life from which he shrinks completely because of his character and dispositions.

B. Thus superiors who ignore the wisest laws of the Church and admit and keep candidates who lack a vocation act very foolishly and do serious wrong. And those who have made their profession without a positive vocation, must be charged with rashness and impiety. From such a root only an evil tree can spring forth to produce only evil fruit. Accordingly, the things narrated in 1 Mach. 5, 56ff. can very properly be applied to those who have entered an Order without a vocation.

When Joseph the son of Zacharias and Azarias, captain of the soldiers, heard of the good success of the Machabees they also desired to fight against the enemies and to get themselves a name. But they were miserably put to flight and 2,000 of the Israelites were slaughtered, even though, after they had gone out to battle against the advice of Juda, they thought they would do manfully. "But they were not," says Scripture, "of the seed of those men by whom salvation was brought to Israel."

Has not our Lord also said: "For which of you having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down, and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it? Lest, after he hath laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all that see it begin to mock him saying: 'This man began to build, and was not able to finish,'" (Luke 14, 28-30).

Let those who are not called by God to the religious life be assured that they will better attain eternal salvation by another way. To this end God, who wishes all men to be saved, will not refuse His grace, provided they obey Him.

54. The Signs of a Vocation

I. After we realize the necessity of grace and a vocation, the question now presents itself, how do we recognize a vocation? The Church itself tells us the three signs, in Canon 538 of the Code, "Any Catholic, not hindered by a legal impediment who is impelled by a good intention and who is fit to bear the obligations of religious life may be admitted to the religious life."

Let us briefly explain each condition.

(a) The first requirement is freedom from those impediments by which, according to the laws of the Church (Can. 542) or of the Order (Const. 36-37) admission to the habit or profession is explicitly invalid or at least illicit. If a person is hindered by such obstacles he has no religious vocation, unless dispensation can be and actually is given by competent authority. We must be convinced that God's will is made known to us by the command of lawful authority.

(b) The second requirement is a right intention. In what does this consist? Our Constitutions indicate some proper motives when they demand that the candidate be asked: "Whether he is impelled solely by the motives of his own salvation and of avoiding the pitfalls of the world?" (Art. 26). Certainly these are not the only, nor are they the highest motives, but they are excellent and practical. It would be better if one were drawn by the pure love of God and with the

desire of devoting one's self solely to God and of assisting others to reach their eternal salvation. To flee the material difficulties of the world, to find support and ease of life and the like are false and unworthy motives of entering the religious state. The admission or profession of one who enters religious life induced by violence, grave fear or fraud, is *ipso facto* invalid. The Church has explicitly ordered so. It is true, indeed, that God sometimes uses external calamities and misfortunes to unite certain souls more closely to Him in religious life. He sends such misfortunes that these souls, brought into the haven of religious life may there begin to deliberate more seriously concerning their eternal salvation and the service of God. But from such natural motives they must immediately pass over to supernatural motives. Unless the latter dominate the former, there is no true vocation. In such cases, therefore, more careful testing is necessary. It is better and more tolerable to bear trials and want in the world than to live in the religious life without a true vocation and there await eternal damnation.

(c) The final requirement is fitness to bear the burdens of religious life. Many, indeed, allured by the dignity and advantages of religious life are drawn with the strongest desire to embrace it and that also with a right intention. But they are by no means adapted to bear the burdens of this state and therefore, cannot be said to have a vocation. This fitness is threefold: intellectual, moral and physical.

1. Intellectual fitness includes the ability to understand well the obligations of this state and what is meant by the spiritual life. He who is so stubborn as never to give up his opinion and who cannot be taught to correct his faults does not seem to be fit, especially if he is imbued with false principles concerning the religious and spiritual life. Also the lay brothers must be able to learn Christian doctrine.

It is evident that much more is required of the clerics. Unless they have sufficient talent to master properly the classical and philosophical studies prescribed by the Church, they cannot be judged to be called to this group. This requires no demonstration, since the Church itself has quite clearly spoken on this matter. A certain adaptability for learning and for properly executing the sacred ceremonies is also demanded, lest later on the cleric be a scandal in the sacred ministry rather than an edification.

2. Moral fitness demands that the former life and present morals of the candidate give assurance that he is going to persevere in the practice of virtue. He "who in a special way shows himself prone to the enticement of sensuality and does not by long trial give proof

that he can avoid its defilements," (Pius XI Encycl. *"De Sacerdotio Catholico,"* Dec. 20, 1935) should not dare seek the religious habit.

But even those who have not committed grave sins should not pronounce the vows if they are by nature seriously inclined to sensuality, or if they are continually harassed by grievous temptations. Perhaps, the only reason they have not yet fallen seriously is that they were restrained by outward circumstances, or they were specially shielded from danger.

Unfit are those who are fickle or changeable, melancholic, lying, talkative, quarrelsome, insolent; those who are strangers to discipline and obedience, who have no inclination to piety, who are not sufficiently industrious, who show little zeal for souls (ibid.). Either they will not sufficiently understand religious life or they will even pervert it.

Positive elements of moral fitness are a sincere love for prayer and self-denial, great charity toward the neighbor, apostolic zeal, and, in our Order, love for solitude and silence, without which prayer and contemplation cannot flourish (Cf. nn. 151-153).

3. Physical fitness consists in such bodily health as will suffice for the burdens to be assumed. For we do not enter religious life for leisure or rest, but to work and to lead a life useful to others. He who is able to live in religious life only by frequent dispensations, has no vocation; for a dispensation is an injury to the law. We do not choose religious life relying on dispensations, but to fulfill what is there commanded. It would be better for such a one to stay in the world. For this reason our Constitution prescribes "a certificate of mental and bodily health" (Art. 27). Whoever fraudulently conceals a sickness from the superiors in order to be admitted to the habit or to profession inflicts a great injustice on the Order and can be dismissed even after simple profession. There is no advantage in being insincere.

II. If we said before that the desire to enter religious life was not sufficient unless a three-fold fitness accompanied it, now we add that not even objective fitness suffices unless there is also a certain inclination toward the perfect religious life and a firm will to fulfill faithfully everything the religious life imposes; just as it is not sufficient for the acquisition of the sciences that one should have sufficient talent, if he does not wish to apply his talent in the right way.

However, we must note that we are not speaking of an inclination of the sensible nature, but of an inclination which springs from well-considered and well-weighed supernatural motives. For nature always more or less shrinks from religious life because of its austerity, although sometimes God gives a sensible devotion so powerful that nature ap-

pears to be completely subdued or even seems to assent gladly. This is not necessary for a true vocation, according to the teaching of St. Theresa who tore herself away from her paternal home only with the greatest difficulty (*Life,* c. 4).

However, a courageous will is certainly necessary to direct nature when the latter objects. A brave will usually overcomes many great difficulties and repugnances, whereas a weak will is broken by every trifle. To one who is fit, nothing is more necessary than a firm will or a sincere readiness to undergo any sacrifice and to embrace the whole and the entire religious life.

55. The Need of Probation

I. After we have set forth the necessity and the signs of a vocation, the necessity of probation is easily understood.

(a) Before the candidate may seek admission from the religious superiors he must ask himself seriously whether or not he is called to the religious state. If he fails to do this, he acts wrongly and wastes time. Therefore, he must examine himself in the view of death and judgment whether he is gifted with the signs of a true vocation and what on his death-bed he would wish to have done. It is superfluous to say that he should consult an expert director so that he may not take a false step.

(b) What particular order to enter is a still more serious question. Even though the religious vocation is clear, the candidate may not neglect to consider to what order he should dedicate himself. For though all orders propose the salvation and perfection of their members, still some endeavor to attain their goal in one way, some in another. Moreover, some follow one secondary aim, and some another. Thus not all are equally suitable, e.g., no one doubts that a very special temperament is necessary for nursing or teaching. Every one must therefore take his inclinations and capabilities into consideration.

(c) Likewise it is a matter of serious consequence whether one enters a house or an order where perfect religious discipline and the striving after perfection flourish, or an order where religious observance is lacking, and where the spirit of tepidity retards almost everyone (Cf. no. 48, 3).

In the former case the candidate will find much help in striving for perfection, in the latter the greatest obstacles. Just as it is difficult to swim against the current, so it is difficult to strive for perfection in a relaxed community. In fact it is more difficult than in the world,

where one is less dependent upon others. As we most earnestly recommend prompt obedience to the divine call, so now we voice a serious warning against entering a relaxed order. For he who wishes to climb the mountain does not entrust himself to an inexperienced and negligent guide, nor does anyone dare cross the ocean in a battered ship.

II. In order, therefore, that no one may make his vows without due consideration, the Church herself prescribes several years of probation before one may be admitted to perpetual vows.

(a) First, a novitiate is to be made for at least a year. During this year the novice will wear the religious habit and will learn by experience whether he is fit to bear the burdens of religious life. Thus it will be to his own interest if he will conduct himself as if he already had the vows and not spare himself or postpone the pursuit of perfection. If even during the novitiate he will not or cannot live religiously according to the Constitutions and customs of the Order, when will he begin to do so or when will he be able to do so? How will he be able to decide whether he is fit to take the vows or not at the end of the novitiate?

But the Order also has the opportunity and the obligation of testing the candidate and seeing whether he is suitable. For when the vows are once made the Order has, as it were, tied its hands and cannot at will dismiss the professed. Profession is a mutual tie. Moreover, the candidate obtains a greater security about his vocation after mature men, experts in religious life, have passed on his vocation.

Therefore, it is a loss both to the Order as well as to the candidate if the year of probation is made too easy, lest the candidate leave. This is not testing a vocation but making a mockery of it. For the novices must learn and experience what is required of them and what they will be called upon to do and endure after the vows are made so that afterward they may not be driven to the conclusion that they have acted rashly. St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, "attentively considered when young ladies were received in the monastery on trial, whether they were suitable for the Order and how genuine and solid their vocation was. She tried them and tested them in various ways and showed them the routine of the monastery and the difficulties of religious life so that they could not complain of ignorance or, if they remained, be a source of harm" (AA.SS., May 5, 738).

Thus novices not only expect, but also desire, that perfect religious discipline prevail in the house of the novitiate, as the Church prescribes, and that superiors do not spare them. In this way many future temptations against their vocations will be avoided. The Order must not yield

to the novices, but the novices to the Order, as we have already heard from St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi. If they cannot, or do not wish to yield, nothing remains for them but to leave.

(b) The Church, influenced by very wise considerations and by long experience, has in our day ordered that the time of probation be extended at least three years after the novitiate is finished and the first profession made, before perpetual vows may be made. For it wishes the edifice to be built upon as strong a foundation as possible, to be able to resist every assault and tempest. Care must, therefore, be taken that the spirit of the novitiate continue to thrive and grow, as our Constitutions teach: "It is of little benefit for religious orders to acquire new plants through profession unless they strive diligently to water them and to cultivate them" (Art. 60).

III. However, it should not be thought that the novitiate year and the subsequent years are intended only for probation and are suitable only for that purpose. Much more are they a time for the exercise of virtue and for the acquiring of those habits that are necessary to live afterward as a religious. Accordingly, the Church commands: "The purpose of the novitiate is to train the novices under the direction of the Master in the knowledge and observance of the Rule and Constitutions, in the practice of devout meditation and assiduous prayer and in the study of all that pertains to the vows and virtues; likewise, through appropriate exercises, in the practice of self-control, and in the uprooting of vice and the implanting of virtue" (Can. 565, 1). The years that follow the novitiate, however, are intended by our Constitutions as a period in which the newly-professed "may more deeply drink in the spirit of our Holy Order and implant new virtues in their souls so that they may progress in the interior life according to each one's ability" (Art. 60).

All this is the more necessary as the virtues acquired during the novitiate are tender plants that easily break when the breeze becomes strong. Most appropriately the *Methodus* thus addresses the young professed: "Never has it been seen that a lax and tepid novice became fervent after his profession. But (alas!) only too frequently one may see the contrary: fervent and recollected novices losing much of their religious discipline and recollection after their profession. For, already, in our age the prediction made by our Savior concerning the end of the world is coming to fulfillment, 'The charity of many shall grow cold' (Matt. 24, 12). It is true that when our Lord declared that only constancy in good had a claim to the crown of immortality, it applied to His day, but the saying also applies to our day, 'He that perseveres

until the end, he shall be saved' (Matt. 10, 22). Indeed, the young religious who after his profession drops even a little of his fervor and religious discipline is far from such perseverance to the end" *(Methodus II,* 595f.; Cf. also *Life in Carmel,* II, c. 2).

If these recommendations are observed, each one may tranquilly bind himself by the vows until death. The rest of his religious life which depends on those first years after profession (Const. 60) will have an excellent foundation. Besides, God will grant abundant blessing.

Section Two

THE OBLIGATIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

56. Foreword

Now we shall see what obligations we are to assume by our profession, so that later we may explain how we can perfectly fulfill those obligations and so reach perfection. First, however, a few preliminaries must be noted.

(a) First and foremost we ought to be filled with a sincere desire of learning each and every one of our obligations and of understanding them thoroughly. For ignorance of these matters is a serious loss both to religious discipline and to the spiritual life of the individual religious. Affected ignorance, however, is an abominable fraud. For why do we enter the Order except to assume its obligations in all sincerity and therefore, also to know them? The more thoroughly we understand them, the more easily and the more perfectly we shall acquit ourselves of them. We must learn them for the very same reason: faithfully to fulfill what we have learned. This matter is of the greatest importance.

(b) Then we should always consider these obligations with a view to striving for perfection and to giving God perfect service. For they are necessary or at least most useful means to attain this end. Therefore, it is to our interest to study and use them. Who would not wish to be shown a straight, easy, and short way to arrive at a necessary and desired goal? Those who do not observe this precaution see nothing in their religious obligations but bitter burdens to be borne for life. They will never be anything more than hirelings longing for the evening and rest, and avoiding, as far as they can, labor and self-denial.

(c) Finally, we may not separate one obligation from another. We may not fulfill one and neglect another. For religious life is an organism which suffers loss even if only a part or a section is injured. We must be convinced that only then can we enjoy religious life and have peace when we embrace and practice all the requirements of religious life without irresolution or hesitation. If we take a lax view and work negligently, we shall never complete our edifice and shall never dwell there in happiness.

The novices, therefore, should begin diligently to learn and to do, bearing in mind what we know well by experience, "that a work well begun is half done." Let them frequently while studying these instruc-

tions implore God in the words of the Psalmist, "Teach me they justifications" (Ps. 118, 12).

In this chapter we should treat of the obligations of religious life in general, but we will explain them in particular as we meet them in our Order, so that we may not speak in the abstract or lose time or be compelled to repeat the same matter.

CHAPTER ONE

LOVE FOR THE ORDER

57. The Order, Our Mother

A. Our first duty in consequence of our joining the Order is a fervent, sincere, and manly love for it.

1. At the outset we must be convinced and we must impress deeply on our minds that we do not confer a favor upon the Order by joining it, but the Order confers a very great favor upon us by receiving us. And the Order is taking no small chance in the matter. For it cannot foresee whether we are going to be a source of advantage or disadvantage. Of how much hope has not the Order been cheated on this score in the course of centuries since so many who began well ended wretchedly, to the great sorrow of the Order and to its disgrace.

Undoubtedly, we come equipped with the best intention of using every bit of strength for the good of the Order, but we do not know whether later on we shall be able to execute what we intend and promise. Our circumstances, our intentions and our strength are in God's hands and do not depend upon us. Thus we may be struck down early in life by sickness and can no longer work and need much attention from our brethren. Nevertheless, when once we have made profession, the Order will not dismiss us on account of sickness and the like, and obliges itself to provide, as far as possible, all that is necessary as long as we live. Thus not only do we assume serious obligations, but the Order also assumes them.

2. Moreover, the Order is endowing us with a new life. For not without reason do spiritual authors liken profession, especially solemn profession, to a second baptism in which in a mysterious way a man is born anew. Again the Order will do everything to nourish and strengthen this life and to bring it to perfection.

Has not the Order, therefore, the right to call itself our spiritual mother to whom we are bound by ties of filial love and piety? Or shall she lament, "I have brought up children, and exalted them; but they have despised me" (Isa. 1, 2)? Therefore, as soon as we are clothed with the habit, it is our first duty to love our Order with a fervent love and to consider the Order as our mother to whom we ought to devote our whole life, our physical strength and mental powers in order to serve God perfectly.

3. Such devotion will be very easy in our Order because it is in a way one with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Carmel. It is her

Order; she has placed it under her special protection. We are clothed in her own sacred garb of which she spoke thus to St. Simon, "This shall be a privilege to thee and to all Carmelites. He who dies in it shall not suffer eternal fire." We enjoy her most powerful protection in life and after death. Therefore, whatever we receive from our Order comes to us from our heavenly Mother. Whatever we confer upon our Order, we confer upon our Blessed Mother. That is why in Carmel we make the promises of the three vows to the Blessed Virgin Mary also. For Mary's, our most loving Mother's sake, we must love our Order as we love her, because to a Carmelite his Order and Mary are one and the same.

B. To these remarks we add the following counsels and words of advice:

1. We should beg this love from God frequently and earnestly as a special and necessary grace. This love is the soul of religious life. For as long as we do not love our Order from our heart, we cannot live happily and joyfully in it. We urge, therefore, that frequently, indeed every day, we say the following little prayer, "O my God, Who hast called me to the holy Order of Carmel, grant that through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, I may love the Order more day by day, and that I may grow zealous and ardent for the truly Carmelite life."

2. This love does not require that we think less of other orders or that we envy them. Nor does it require that we exaggerate our own affairs or that we speak of them in season and out of season. Such is forbidden by the Constitutions themselves, "They should everywhere avoid bragging and excessive boasting about our affairs. They should always speak well of religious orders; and if they should hear anything unfavorable of them, they should modestly and becomingly excuse them." (Art. 185).

3. Likewise, we should never weaken this love in our brethren by murmurings, detractions, etc. On this point our Constitutions very wisely give this admonition, "In order that the regard for the religious vocation may impel our brethren to good deeds, the sanctity of our Carmelite Institute and of our Observance should be deeply impressed on their minds, and let each one always think and speak with deepest reverence concerning all things pertaining to it" (Art. 154). We can scarcely afflict our brethren or our Order with a greater evil than stealing away their love and esteem for their Order.

4. This love should be tested and strengthened by deeds and sacrifices. It should be strengthened and increased, we insist, by sacrifices.

Just as a poor man clings to a plot of ground with love and affection, because he has acquired it by labor and toil, so shall our love for our Order increase the more we have spent ourselves and sacrificed ourselves for it. Thus shall the saying of our Lord be realized, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12, 34). What we attain by labor and toil we cannot help but love with our whole heart.

Let us, therefore, encourage ourselves to the love of our Order in these words of the Psalmist, "Let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I do not remember thee; if I make not Jerusalem the beginning of my joy" (Ps. 136, 6).

58. Appreciation of the Order

We do not desire that which we do not know. How can we love the Order when we do not know it? Therefore, we must strive to know it. By our very love for our Order we are impelled to understand better day by day everything which pertains to our beloved Mother, since surely a son does not neglect the heritage and history of his family.

Thus, the desire and effort of knowing our Order more thoroughly from day to day are a mark and a proof of our love and affection for it. The novices should be convinced of this from the start, as it is of greatest importance for their future religious and spiritual life. To be ignorant of some worldly matters is frequently no loss; in fact, acquaintance with them can be an obstacle and a temptation. But to be acquainted with what pertains to the Order is of the greatest advantage. Such matters pertain to our own lives.

1. Before all we must study all books which prescribe the manner of life in Carmel, we mean the Holy Rule and the Constitutions. Not only should we learn the Rule by heart (Const. 50), but we should meditate on and weigh each word that we may drink in its spirit. We ought to read the Constitutions repeatedly and interpret them in the spirit of the Rule itself, whose doctrine they wish to apply to modern life, because they are an appendix to the Rule.

2. With no less zeal should we try to learn our ceremonies and rubrics from the respective books, i.e., the Ceremonial and Ritual, so that we may faithfully keep the rite of our Order consecrated by antiquity and so contemplate the majesty of God and sing His praises according to the spirit of Carmel.

3. Then we should read such writings as sincerely and clearly teach us the spirit of our Order, viz., the writings of the spiritual authors of

our Order, especially our Saints. It is a crime to remain ignorant of the writings of St. Theresa, St. John of the Cross, St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, Father Michael of St. Augustine, Father Michael de la Fuente, John of St. Samson, Marie Theresa Petit, and others of their kind. We should read their books time and again, and should not beg our spirituality from foreign authors. After we have found our Holy Rule applied and the true Carmelite tradition explained in the authors just cited, we shall set aside our anxious queries as to what is the spirit and purpose of our Order. The same holds good of the lives of the Saints and Venerables of our Order. Guided by such masters, we shall understand the Holy Rule and Constitutions more profoundly.

4. It remains, therefore, to apply ourselves to the history of our Order, that from our knowledge of its history we may rejoice the more concerning our vocation. If some times we discover facts of which we cannot approve, let us realize that they occurred through a loss of the spirit of the Order, and that they are an exhortation to us never to grow lax in the true Carmelite life. History instructs us, and provided it is rightly studied, can become a valuable school of holiness. Therefore, all should eagerly join forces to unearth the treasures of our history and to make them known.

5. Finally, everyone of us should be greatly interested in what is going on in the whole Order in our own day. For we belong, not merely to one monastery, or to one Province, but to the whole Order. This does not mean that we may curiously inquire, as seculars do, into the lives and actions of our brethren, but it becomes us to rejoice with those that rejoice, and to weep with those that weep. For we are brothers and sons of the same sweet Mother. If the occasion so demands, we should promptly aid others, if in no other way, at least by praying fervently for all.

All must resolve to know and to study the Order and all that concerns it. We must do this as soon as we enter the Order and persevere in our resolutions until our last day. Hardly one of us will deny that this will be of supreme interest for the religious life of all. Should not religious joyfully confess of their order, "I know whom I have believed,"—*"Scio enim cui credidi"* (2 Tim. 1, 12)?

59. Service of the Order

Love, provided it is love, desires to be of service and not merely to live for itself. Therefore, love for the Order must strive to do as much as possible for the Order. Religious must strive to imitate the immense love of Christ for His Church, His Mystical Spouse, which St. Paul glorifies in the following words already quoted above, "Christ

loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5, 25-27).

1. Thus, as we have stated in the foregoing, religious should share in the joys and sorrows of their Order, and all things that affect the Order should affect them as something personal. Religious cannot remain indifferent to the successes and failures of their monastery, Province, or Order. They should not be like those who are unmoved by world events, as long as their own rest is not disturbed and they have enough to eat. Nor is it becoming for religious to be overflowing with kindness and politeness toward seculars and to be unbearable toward their own brethren. No one, not even brethren or kindred, should be as close to a religious as his own religious community. There can be no doubt of this.

2. Then we must pray for our Order. If it prospers, we should thank God; if adversity befalls it, or if dangers threaten, we should ask God's help. Before everything else we should pray that the true spirit of religious life be preserved, strengthened and advanced. The more we love our Order, the more earnestly will we do this and even strive to make our prayers more efficacious by means of mortifications; for many difficulties will not be overcome except by prayer and fasting. The preservation of the true spirit and of a fervent discipline in the Order is of the highest concern to all. In our Order we have received as an inheritance from a great Saint, St. Simon Stock, two very beautiful prayers, viz., the antiphons *Ave Stella Matutina* and the *Flos Carmeli,* composed and very frequently recited by him, which we frequently recite in common. May we always do it in the spirit of this Saint!

St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, while ravished in ecstasy, was taught to frequently ask the following from God: (1) that charity and union with God and the neighbor be always preserved in the Order; (2) that the vow of holy obedience be always perfectly observed in it; (3) that God grant each community a superior who (as is said of David) is a man according to the heart of God, so that the simplicity of a holy observance might never fail under him; (4) that a rigid observance of holy poverty might continue in its perfection; (5) that the Holy Spirit be constantly petitioned to grant the grace to every religious who comes to His service to see clearly and to comprehend perfectly how important is the denial of one's own will and the observance of even the smallest rule (Cf. AA.SS., May 5, 755).

(3) Religious, as far as they can, must work and spend themselves

for the Order; but they must apply themselves to such labors as holy obedience requires and in the manner that holy obedience dictates. What good is it, if they are always busy and prematurely consume their strength, but are always and everywhere following their own whims and are paying more attention to their own pleasure than to the Order's gain! For a religious cannot help but recognize that justice obliges him to work for the one who supports him. It would be a crying injustice to serve one master and to be supported by another. Whatever is done outside of obedience or against it is always a loss, never a gain. If these remarks are observed, the Order will be able to undertake and accomplish many great things for God and His Kingdom. Therefore, to serve the Order properly is to serve God and the Church.

From these considerations it is clear that religious should strive to develop their powers and talents as completely as possible, and to acquire as much learning as they can. They will be so much more useful to their Order. In every religious community the wants of all should, as far as possible, be supplied by the religious themselves, and seculars should not be hired beyond strict necessity. This principle ought to be deeply impressed upon the minds of all religious. The seraphic Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi may serve as an example. Although she was obliged to choir duty, they say she did as much work as four lay sisters, and if she found herself unskilled in any particular art, she immediately tried to acquire it so that her convent might not need to call in seculars (Cf. AA.SS., May 5, 752). Is it not a great joy to be useful to one's Order and to accomplish much for it?

It follows from this that religious must fulfill most carefully and diligently the charges entrusted to them. If anyone considers himself unequal to the duties committed to him, he should freely, but modestly, make it known to his superiors. But if the superiors insist, he should obey and should make every effort to make himself equal to his duties. Armed with a good will we can accomplish and learn many things which at first sight seem impossible. Everything else must make way for the duty entrusted to us. It is never lawful to prefer our own satisfaction to duty.

4. Love for our Order should impel us to zeal for regular observance and the common life, since the whole Order rests upon this foundation. One who is not zealous or enthusiastic for regularity is not a lover of his Order. Much less he who, by word or example, brings regular observance into jeopardy. Would that such a one had never come into the Order!

5. Inflamed with love for our Order we should labor to extend the Order in the right way. We say "in the right way" for a certain kind of extension is so harmful that it injures the Order and hinders true progress. For this purpose the teachings found in Chapters XVI and XVII of our Constitutions should be especially observed. There we explicitly read: "Just as the internal perfection of our Holy Order consists in most fervent charity, so its external honor and adornment consists in modest and becoming relationship with seculars" (Art. 151). Therefore, whoever truly loves his Order, will for the sake of his Order, learn the rules of modest and becoming conduct and put them into practice when he can. For they are of greater importance than many realize.

6. Out of love for our Order we should strive to protect it from every harm. Thus we shall defend its rights as far as common sense and charity demand. So Father Michael of St. Augustine admonishes perfectly mortified religious to bear injuries and insults tranquilly, but he adds: "I said in those things which concern their own person; for when something affects the office of a mortified soul by virtue of which he is obliged to defend and maintain the common good, then and there, even against his inborn inclinations, he must bravely oppose aggressors, yes, even go to law to avoid injury to the common cause or to promote the common good; always in a way, however, that is at once gentle and courageous. Gentle, i.e., without passion, abuse, bitterness, disparagement, or contempt of those whom it is opposing. Courageous, i.e., with a solid foundation of certain proofs, with mature counsel and deliberation, without deceit or fraud, in an honorable way and by lawful means. Better still, by seeking the common good with zeal and a right intention, not seeking self, but acting only nut of a desire for justice or of protecting the innocent or checking the wicked and of procuring and increasing the good of the community according to one's obligation" (*Inst. Myst.* IV, tr. 1, c. 36). Moreover, we shall oppose the evils which threaten our religious, our goods and especially our good name. Therefore, let us not be unmindful of fraternal correction, or of a report to superiors, if we ourselves are not able to make fraternal correction, as is inculcated in Art. 126 of our Constitution, "But if such word or deed might bring scandal to the Order, whoever should come to know of it, shall report it immediately to the superior so that he may in good time make provision both for the salvation of his brother and the honor of the Order."

As for the rest, love itself, which is said to be ingenious, will discover and offer means for displaying itself effectually. Let us, therefore,

seriously strive for religious perfection, for then we are promoting the best interests both of the Order and of ourselves since nothing conduces more effectively to the greater glory and to the welfare both of the Order and of ourselves than sanctity and perfection.

Love your Order and you will live happily in it, even though you may have sometimes to find your cross in it; but love it sincerely and truthfully so that you may serve it with all your strength!

CHAPTER TWO

THE DUTY OF STRIVING AFTER PERFECTION

60. The Obligation to Strive for Perfection

We have explained above (No. 41) why we must strive for perfection. Pius XI repeatedly taught that all Christians are bound to a certain extent to seek perfection, affirming "that sanctity of life is not an exclusive benefit granted to some to the neglect of others, but the common portion and obligation of all; and that the attainment of virtue, even though accompanied by suffering, (which suffering is compensated by joy and consolations of soul of every kind), is with the help of divine grace denied to no one, but is obtainable by all" (Encycl. *Rerum omnium,* Jan. 26, 1923).

1. Everyone knows that the obligation of striving for perfection rests especially on religious, since the Code of Canon Law, Can. 593, explicitly states: "Each and every religious, superiors as well as subjects, must not only faithfully and perfectly observe the vows he has made, but he must also dispose his life according to the rules and constitutions of his respective order and so strive for the perfection of his state" (Cf. Const. 103).

It is for this purpose we have entered religious life. No doubt we could have effected our salvation in the world; we could even have arrived at perfection. But to attain this end with more certainty, with greater speed and ease and completeness, we left the world and with God's help chose religious life. Therefore, the religious state is called the state of perfection, not because all religious are *ipso facto* perfect or because those entering it must already be perfect, but because all religious are obliged to strive for perfection and because in religious life they find most efficacious means to attain this goal. Therefore, the religious life is called *status perfectionis acquirendae,* "the state of perfection to be striven for," to distinguish it from the *status perfectionis acquisitae,* "the state of perfection already acquired," in which bishops are classed.

If therefore, a religious should of set purpose withdraw from the pursuit of perfection and should purposely neglect the means of perfection, he would hardly be free from mortal sin, as spiritual writers teach. For he would then place himself directly in opposition to his state and to its obligations. Furthermore, those religious who in their actions and omissions are not directly or indirectly impelled by the purpose and desire to become better, to come nearer to God, to reach as great a perfection as God's grace allows them,—those religious, we repeat, who are not impelled by such aims and desires, will never become what they should be, and will never taste the sweetness of divine consolation.

2. Therefore, religious will not wonder that so many and such varied sacrifices are demanded of them on account of their vows, their Rule and Constitutions, the orders of their superiors or the common life. For whoever would expect to attain perfection without sacrifices and continual self-denial, would not know human nature and would be a stranger to our Lord's explicit teaching: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast . . . and come, follow Me" (Matt. 19, 21) and, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16, 24). Other conditions being equal, we can say, "The greater sacrifices one makes, the more quickly will he attain a high perfection." For in truth, "they advance most of all others in virtue, who strive manfully to overcome those things which they find more troublesome or contrary to them" (*Im. Chr.* 1, 25). He who seeks a goal, must of necessity seek the means toward that goal. If he does not seek them, either he does not care for the goal, or he suffers from error and ignorance.

3. However, it is not necessary that religious do extraordinary things in order to satisfy their obligations of striving after perfection. It is sufficient that they keep their vows according to their Rule and Constitutions. Then they are really striving for perfection and will surely attain it. The pursuit of perfection and the observance of their rules is one and the same thing for religious. Thus it is again of importance to all that perfect observance flourish in every order and in every house, because by it, the pursuit of perfection is wonderfully helped in the individual, whereas the relaxation of discipline is the greatest obstacle to those striving for perfection. The strict observance of the Holy Rule and of the Constitutions is, therefore, the way of perfection.

61. The Observance of the Rule and Constitutions

A. The Holy Rule comprises the fundamental laws and norms by which the more general means of regulating life in the true spirit of the Order and of reaching perfection according to this spirit are proposed. Our Holy Rule was explicitly given by St. Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, to St. Brocard and his brethren dwelling on Carmel, that, in accordance with their aim, they might have a pattern of life which they were to observe thereafter.

The Constitutions, however, are as it were an appendix or commentary on the Rule, by which we are taught how to observe in our own time the norms laid down by the Rule. They make sure "that the same mode of life and the same effort to keep the Rule are maintained throughout the world" (Const. 1930, p. x). "They are the bonds of claustral discipline, frequently and strongly bound in our Order, that the Order itself might be more firmly established" (Const. 1904, 21).

The Rule, therefore, and the Constitutions establish on a safe basis the life which perfectly corresponds to the spirit and aims of the Order, and they effectually provide for the faithful keeping of the religious vows, the proper adoration of God through prayer and the Divine Office, a just relationship between superior and subject and between subject and superior, an active charity among the brethren, a becoming conduct of religious with seculars. They also offer many counsels to each one for his spiritual life.

B. The Rules and Constitutions must be observed in conscience. For certainly we are explicitly taught: "The Rule of itself obliges under venial sin, excepting the vows and the Divine Office. The Constitutions do not bind under sin but only under punishment, unless there is contempt present, or the contrary of what is prescribed is a sin from its very nature or from some other source, or the superior expressly wishes to bind under sin" (Const. 122). Moreover, if we are obliged to strive for perfection, we cannot neglect the Rule and Constitutions which point out the way to perfection. Whoever wilfully or out of neglect, without necessity or legitimate dispensation departs from them, departs more or less from the pursuit of perfection, especially since frequently the religious vows themselves are broken at the same time. A faithful observance of the Rule and Constitutions are a condition *sine qua non* for striving after perfection. One who imagines that he will arrive at perfection while he neglects the Rule and Constitutions deceives himself and the truth is not in him.

Therefore, we must hold the following:

1. The will of God is clearly revealed to us by the Rule and Constitutions; for God intends to lead us to perfection and to Heaven by this way.

2. We receive special graces from God to observe the Rule and Constitutions, and having shown our fidelity, we shall receive greater graces day by day. "For, since the divine Goodness," says Father Michael of St. Augustine, "has ordained all the observances of the vows, Rules and Constitutions, even of the smallest, as apt means to attain their supernatural end, it is certain that an actual grace has been prepared for each act of such observance" (*Inst. Myst.* 3, tr. 2, c. 19).

3. Thus we become fit to observe them and on this fitness rests our vocation. We must not omit that many things at first sight seem difficult, even impossible, which after a thorough examination are not only possible, but easy for us when we have a good will. For nature is cunning and continually invents difficulties for us so that, frightened and discouraged, we may desert the way of perfection and seek our comfort.

4. Since we should love our vocation and our Order, we should always think and speak with greatest reverence about our Rule and Constitutions. If we do otherwise we shall increase the difficulties for ourselves and others.

All these statements are solemnly confirmed by the letter of Pius XI cited above, in which he states: "From the very nature of things and from daily experience it is clearly evident that orders and associations of religious of both sexes flourish most vigorously when they inviolably embrace and follow their Rule, for them the source and fountain of sanctity and the cause of every blessing." "From this law," he says, "you know all ancient and recent Carmelite success has sprung" (Cf. *Anal.* V, 544).

The Prior General, Gregory Canali, fittingly introduced the Constitutions edited in 1626 with these words: "Consider that by this way you must enter the narrow gate of heaven and walk the straight path of paradise. Place upon your shoulders the sweet yoke and light burden of our Lord. Be convinced that by this path you will reach the height of the perfection to which your profession obliges you. Do not doubt that these laws will be salutary for you, fitting for the whole Order, profitable to the Church, productive of honor and glory to God. We now say to you what Moses once said to the people of God: 'Fulfill all that is written in this law, for they are not commanded you in vain, but that every one should live in them'" (Cf. Deut. 32, 46, 47).

CHAPTER THREE

The Observance of the Vows

62. Vows

I. (a) The three vows of obedience, chastity and poverty necessarily belong to the religious state, as is said in Canon 487 of the Code of Canon Law, "The religious state, i.e., that stable mode of life in common in which the faithful undertake to observe not only the commandments binding upon all, but also the evangelical counsels of obedience, chastity and poverty, is to be held in honor by all."

Therefore, the pursuit of perfection among religious consists to a great extent in faithfully keeping their vows, as we again read in Canon 488 of the Code: an order is "a society, approved by legitimate ecclesiastical authority, in which the members pronounce public vows according to the special laws of their society and thus tend to evangelical perfection."

It is necessary, therefore, that all religious be perfectly acquainted with the nature and demands of their vows, lest through ignorance they fail in so serious a matter and inflict serious harm on themselves and their Order. Accordingly, we shall here explain the general concepts, so that afterwards we may treat more at length of each religious vow.

(b) In general, a vow is a free and deliberate promise made to God of some possible and better good, to be fulfilled with a religious motive (Cf. Can. 1307, 1). Accordingly, a vow is:

(1) A free and deliberate act by which we undertake a certain obligation before God and acknowledge Him as our God and supreme Lord. Therefore, a vow belongs to the cult of *latria* and can be made solely to God, although we can pronounce vows to honor some saint or to ask his intercession.

(2) A vow is a formal promise by which one obligates himself in conscience either under slight or grievous sin.* Note that no one can oblige himself under grievous sin when the matter of the vow is in itself and in all its circumstances only slight. If one does not intend an obligation under sin, then there is no question of a vow, but at most of a simple resolution.

(3) The promise must be deliberate and free. A forced promise, extorted by others through fear or violence cannot honor God and

*Note that the author is speaking of private vows. Religious vows, being public vows, are always of serious obligation.—Tr.

will not be accepted by Him. A promise that is not deliberate is not a human act and does not induce an obligation. For this reason the Church so insistently and strictly prescribes that before profession a true probation be held, so that no one may thoughtlessly and inconsiderately take upon himself that which afterward he cannot fulfill.

(4) The object of the vow must be a matter or a good action at least better than its omission. Otherwise, there would be no reason for offering a vow to God. However, we can oblige ourselves by vow to that which we are already obliged for another reason, e.g., to keep chastity. In this case we are obliged to the same thing under two sins, one because of the law in force and the other because of the vow taken.

II. (a) Vows can be private or public. They are public when they are accepted in the name of the Church by a lawful ecclesiastical superior; otherwise, they are private. Private vows made before religious profession are suspended as long as he who has made them remains in the Order. Therefore, they do not oblige as long as the religious vows last. But should the latter expire, they again begin to oblige. Private vows made after religious profession are valid and oblige insofar as they are not opposed to the obligations assumed through religious profession. But the religious superior can invalidate them, so that their obligation will cease once and for all.

(b) Vows may be temporary, when the obligation is taken for a determined time, or perpetual, when the obligation is to last for life. In every religious order temporary vows must always precede perpetual vows.

(c) Vows, as well as religious profession, can be simple or solemn. Only such are solemn as are recognized as such by the Church. They are always public and perpetual, whereas simple vows are either perpetual or temporary. But they also produce different effects. Thus—

(1) Solemn Profession or the making of solemn vows renders acts contrary to the vow not only illicit, as does simple profession, but also, if they can be voided, invalid. Thus marriage attempted by a solemnly professed religious is invalid, and a contract made without the lawful permission of superiors is null.

(2) Through solemn profession a religious loses not only the administration, use and enjoyment of income, as he does by simple profession, but he loses the very goods themselves and he cannot acquire or possess as his own any temporal goods, unless the Holy See on account of special reasons has made other dispositions for certain countries.

(3) Solemn profession *ipso jure* dissolves marriage contracted but not yet consummated.

(4) Solemn profession removes irregularity arising from birth insofar as the reception of Orders is concerned, but not insofar as the disqualification for major superiorship is concerned.

(5) The professed of solemn vows *ipso jure* loses the diocese he had in the world.

III. A vow is an act of the virtue of religion or of the worship of God; it is an offering made to God and, provided the necessary conditions are present, is very pleasing to Him. This holds so much more in the case of religious vows, since by them we follow what are called the Evangelical Counsels, and consecrate our whole life to God. But Sacred Scripture warns: "If thou hast vowed anything to God, defer not to pay it: for an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth Him; but whatsoever thou hast vowed, pay it. And it is much better not to vow, than after a vow not to perform the things promised" (Eccles. 5, 3, 4).

63. The Religious Vows

We have already spoken above (No. 47) about the aim or effect of the religious vows when we spoke about *Delivery from Bondage*. Now we shall more fully explain the nature of the religious vows. Without doubt such explanation is of the greatest importance for the proper observance of the vows.

(1) When a person makes a private vow he promises God some particular thing or action or some particular privation. When one pronounces the vows of religion, he gives his whole life and his entire person to God. This holds especially of the solemn vows, such as are made in our Order. A religious, therefore, withdraws as far as possible from the world and its goods, in order that he may attend entirely to the service of God and in this way attain perfection. On this account a new state of life is established by the religious vows. The religious is a person consecrated to God.

2. At once it becomes evident that the religious vows cannot be separated one from the other. For one completes and sustains the other; so that when one is injured, the rest also are injured or at least endangered. Their purpose is to remove simultaneously all the obstacles to perfection and eternal salvation, and to render him who makes them fit for the perfect service of God. Therefore, by the vow of poverty we renounce external goods in order to seek everlasting ones; by the vow of chastity we renounce the delights of the flesh, in order to cling to God spiritually; by the vow of obedience we crown our work by giving and submitting even our own will, and so everything, to God. Thus is the holocaust made perfect.

Consequently, let no one imagine that if he should neglect only one vow, he will perfectly observe the rest. In this matter also the word of St. James is verified: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all" (James 2, 10). This holds in a special way when the vow of obedience is violated. For religious life, no less than the spiritual life in general, is a kind of living organism, the sum-total of whose vitality suffers harm when only one part is injured. Therefore, our desire must be to fulfill all the vows together as faithfully as possible.

3. Usually three degrees are recognized in the fulfilling of the vows. This distinction is not made to offer an excuse to remain on the lowest step, but to point out how one may gradually rise to the highest. Otherwise one would be guilty of missing the true idea of the religious life. When we enter the Order, nothing else is proposed to us than to follow the saying of Father Dominic of St. Albert, *Plus ultra!* In considering and observing the vows, we should not indulge too much in the art of casuistry, as it is called, but should always have the true idea of the religious vows in mind. For we chose this state of our own free will, and we shall find no peace in it except by generosity. Those religious who are careful to avoid only serious sins will never experience what it means to be united to God.

4. Furthermore, he who observes his vows negligently will never attain the Carmelite goal,—contemplation; since he will never attain that degree of purity and of freedom from creatures which contemplaplation supposes. Nor do we bestow on our most beloved Mother, whose chosen sons we boast to be, a perfect service, when we strive to limit our obligations to the minimum in everything. Wherefore, having a clear understanding of our vows we must most faithfully and accurately fulfill them, for the sake of our Mother and Queen, lest we unworthily arrogate to ourselves so holy a name as her chosen sons.

64. The Vows And Corresponding Virtues

In order that we may properly understand the doctrine of the religious vows, it is necessary to distinguish between the vows and the respective virtues. We must hold the following principles:

(1) The object of the virtue is more extensive than that of the vows, because the nature of the virtue is different from that of the vow. For the vow, as we explained in the foregoing paragraph, is the promise of a determined thing, action or renunciation. Thus, the object of the vow is necessarily contained within well-defined limits. The virtue, on the other hand, tends to properly regulate the will and direct it toward God and in this sense it cannot be held within limits;

it does not merely regard only the external action or renunciation, but also the regulation of the interior affections. There is, however, this relation between the vow and the virtue, that the vow disposes toward the virtue, develops it and itself is made on account of the virtue. The vow, therefore, is the means; the virtue, the end. Without the pursuit of the virtue, the vow made by a religious is of little or no value.

(2) Thence it follows that the virtue extends also to those matters that are merely of counsel. He, who observes the vow accurately and carefully, will easily attain the height of the virtue.

(3) The virtue can be injured without injury of the vow; e.g., he who being bound by the vow of poverty cherishes voluntary affections for superfluities or for worldly riches, fails against the virtue of poverty. He does not, however, commit a sin against the vow of poverty so long as he does not retain such riches or dispose of anything of pecuniary value without permission. But we should know that the vow of perfect chastity is co-extensive with the virtue of chastity; for thoughts and desires are also forbidden by the vow, since the precept of chastity already forbids these. Therefore, whoever in any way sins against the virtue or precept of chastity, also sins against his vows and so commits two sins.

(4) Although the vow is a means toward obtaining the virtue, yet it is also true, that unless we also strive after the virtue we shall not long persevere in fulfilling the vow. Because, when our inordinate affections are not under control, we are in constant danger of putting forth our hands also to those things which are forbidden by the vows and hence are unlawful for us. Therefore, if you wish to safeguard the vows, expend the greatest care possible upon the virtues. It is for the virtue that you will make the vows if you have not already made them.

65. The Religious Vows and the Religious Community

(1) The religious vows, as we have heard, are public vows and are made in a religious community so that one professing the vows, by that very fact, becomes a lawful member of the community. By the religious vows a man gives himself to a religious family and in turn is received by it, so that, thereafter, he shares in its material and spiritual goods. Of what kind and of what value these goods are, we have explained before. They are the more abundant in proportion to to the fervor of religious spirit that flourishes, along with strict discipline and observance, in the religious family.

Thereafter, the religious who has made the vows, ceases to be free and independent, since he has surrendered himself and all his actions to the religious order that it may freely dispose of them for the service of God. The manner and purpose for which the Order is to employ the powers and labors of the religious is clearly set forth in the rule and constitutions.

The religious, therefore, must keep his vows as the religious community or its superior wishes, according to the rule and constitutions. The religious in turn is directed and aided by the community in keeping them. Thus he is safeguarded at once against imprudence or indiscretion, and against negligence or inconstancy. If he will in all things follow the orders of his superiors and the lawful customs of his community, he will not fail against his vows or withdraw from the pursuit of virtue.

(2) By the very fact that he is received into the community by means of the vows the religious is freed and separated from his family and from his relatives. He may not, henceforth, live for his former family or be governed by it directly or indirectly; he must now live for his religious family. He should be mindful of what our Lord once said to His disciple: "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. 8, 22). For, "no man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9, 62). Whatever service he withdraws from his community in order to attend to his own family, constitutes an injustice to his order and an unfaithfulness to God to Whom he has consecrated himself. His relations, therefore, toward his own family must be entirely subordinated to the needs of his new religious family according to the prescriptions and counsels of the Constitutions. These forbid in our Order the granting of permission to the clerics to visit their parents before solemn vows, except for a few days in the case of a truly grave necessity (Art. 61); they also admonish the Provincial to "prevent the frequent visting of parents" (Art. 455). Lawful affection for parents is not extinguished in this way, but is ennobled and spiritualized and by that very fact becomes purer and stronger.

(3) Furthermore, a religious must wholeheartedly and lovingly embrace not only his Order, but each and every one of his brethren whom he acquired when entering the Order. He must love them as himself, even though they are of different age, nationality, education, etc. For all natural differences must be overcome by supernatural charity. Our charity toward our brothers in religion will be in proportion to our separation from parents, relatives and secular friends.

On the contrary, an inordinate affection toward one's own, will frequently provoke grave discords among the members of a religious community.

(4) A religious, therefore, should not forget that he becomes the greatest asset to his religious family by diligently keeping his vows, and that he becomes the gravest detriment by neglecting them. Whether he violates poverty, or chastity, or obedience, he always inflicts an injustice upon his community, because the whole religious community is established upon the foundation of the vows. When they are observed, it grows; when they are neglected, it begins to decline and to collapse. We may paraphrase the words of our Lord: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" (Matt. 16, 26), and say: What does it profit the Order, if its members are renowned for great learning or accomplish great deeds, if the observance of the vows is wanting among them? Surely the vows well kept are the soul of the Order. Therefore, religious who are animated with real love for the Order, strive in very truth to keep the vows they have made, lest they be guilty of being destroyers rather than promoters of their Order.

SECTION THREE

THE RELIGIOUS VOWS

CHAPTER ONE

HOLY POVERTY

66. The Vow of Poverty

A. By the vow of poverty, or as it is called by our Holy Rule, the vow of surrender of ownership (Rule No. 1), we surrender the right of owning anything of money value, or at least, of freely and independently disposing of it.

At once we must distinguish between the simple and the solemn vow. We pronounce the simple vow right after the novitiate. By the simple vow we do not renounce ownership of those temporal goods we already have, nor the right of acquiring more goods by inheritance or gift. We retain, therefore, the radical ownership, as it is called (Const. 63). However, thereafter we cannot dispose of these goods or of any other goods independently of the superior. Therefore, "before the profession of simple vows the novice must cede to whomsoever he pleases and for the whole time in which he will be bound by simple vows, the administration of his goods, and must dispose of their use and income" (ibid. 53). When simple profession has been made he cannot alter this disposition or cession without permission from the General (ibid. 64). In fact, "whatever he acquires by his own effort or in view of the Order, he acquires for the monastery of which he may be a member" (ibid. 63). By the solemn vow we renounce the radical dominion also, so that we can no longer be owners of anything, much less freely and independently dispose of it.

Therefore, our Constitutions following Canon Law define: "The professed of simple vows . . . must within sixty days before solemn profession, excepting special indults granted by the Holy See, renounce, in favor of anyone he pleases, all goods he actually has, under the condition that profession will follow" (ibid. 65).

From this it follows "that after solemn profession, unless there is a special indult of the Holy See, all goods that the religious acquires through inheritance go to the Province and the rest to the monastery of which he is a member" (ibid. 65). In general, therefore, the rule holds "Whatever a religious acquires, he acquires for his monastery."

B. From the foregoing principles the following conclusions are to be drawn:

(1) "None of the brethren shall say that anything is his own, but all things shall be common among you" (Rule, IX), although this holds fully, as explained, only after solemn profession.

(2) Although all things are common, no one may take any of the property of the monastery on his own authority. For everything is to be asked for from the superior and distributed by him, i.e., by the respective brother deputed for this duty, as the Holy Rule (IX) prescribes and the Constitutions confirm (Art. 127, 129, 130). Nor may he keep longer than necessary or his permission allows, the things given for his use (Art. 129).

(3) We may not accept for ourselves, from seculars, whether parents or friends, gifts or remuneration for our labors (Art. 131). But "all donations under whatsoever title bestowed, shall be at once handed over to the superior or procurator to be deposited in the common account" (Art. 132). For our Constitutions explicitly state, "We order, moreover, that our religious may not accept anything from seculars without at least the presumed permission of the superior" (Art. 131).

(4) We may not keep what we might have lawfully spent, say on a trip, but did not, according to the following: "Whatever remains over and above their expenses they must immediately hand in to the superior or the procurator, nor should anyone dare to keep any part of such money for his own use" (Art. 133).

(5) It is not lawful to employ for other purposes than were granted or determined, what has been given for our use. "Let no one presume to keep as his own or to exchange anything that has been granted to him for his use, without permission of the superior" (Art. 130). If we were to do so, we would be acting as proprietors. It is evident that we licitly use up such things as are given for consumption or wear, e.g. food and clothing. Whatever, however, is not intended to be consumed must be used and guarded in such a way that at the proper time it may be returned intact, just as we must do when we have borrowed something. To ruin an article through negligence is a sin. Concerning books our Constitutions expressly state: "Let no one make permanent marks in the books or fold the leaves, or keep more books in his room than he is using" (Art. 355). Therefore, especially those who by their office have the duty of caring for material goods, must guard them with greatest diligence, so that they may not perish or wear out before time.

We are poor men, therefore, and to live up to our vow we must remain poor. And though we do not usually suffer such great want as so many poor of the world, still in one sense we are poorer than they; because they can freely accept, possess and spend whatever is given them, whereas we have not the right of freely accepting, keeping or disposing of anything. We sacrificed all this by the vow of poverty, which we must carefully guard in order to keep it in its purity.

67. The Virtue of Poverty

As we have already said above (nn. 47, 64), we make the religious vows so that having broken the bonds we may attain the corresponding virtue.

(a) Therefore, the true end of the vow of poverty is the virtue of poverty. Its essence is that the soul be free from every inordinate affection toward temporal goods. The vow indeed is established on external separation from temporal goods, but the effect of the virtue is to make this external separation praiseworthy and acceptable to God, by withdrawing our affections from such goods and directing them to eternal goods. The virtue, therefore, is the soul, as it were, of the vow of poverty, since indeed, according to St. Bernard's teaching, "desire for worldly goods is more harmful than possession; and the chief reason for spurning riches is that they can seldom, if ever, be possessed without attachment" (Sermon *De bonis deserendis*).

(b) But it is also true that the vow, provided it is made out of love for poverty, is an act, in fact an excellent act, of the virtue of poverty, and the making of the vow wonderfully helps and promotes the virtue. For even the poor of this world find it easier to detach their hearts from the goods of this world of which they are deprived through necessity than the rich who are surrounded by earthly goods. Therefore, our Lord, before He would admit to discipleship those who wished to follow Him, always invited them first to voluntary poverty.

(c) Consequently, religious in observing their vow should always be mindful of the virtue of poverty, i.e., of interior renunciation of all things. Then only do they show that they know the meaning of the vow of poverty, then only can they fulfill it perfectly. Then only will they keep the vow itself in its purity. The novices should strive to impress this on their minds from the very beginning.

Without pursuing this virtue religious will be found inferior to many seculars, who, even though they have not made the vow of poverty, are poorer in spirit than religious and apply the property

which they have kept for higher motives, only to the glory of God and the exercise of charity. Such will obtain from the Lord the reward of poverty, whereas religious neglecting the virtue of poverty will be punished by the same Judge for the ill fulfillment of their vow.

For only slight and mean objects are sufficient to bind the souls of men, as it not infrequently happens that religious who have renounced many great possessions, become ensnared by inordinate affections toward objects of hardly any value, such as eatables, clothing, books, holy cards and other such things. To guard against such an evil, St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi was wont to make her novices exchange among themselves the things granted for their use (AA. SS., May 5, 743).

(d) One who is suffering from inordinate affections is easily recognized by the following signs:

(1) He hankers after superfluities. Thus our Constitutions warn: "Subjects should guard against using money granted for travelling by Superiors or otherwise obtained, for enjoying or buying superfluities or curiosities" (Art. 133). In fact, they set forth that permissions for accepting gifts can be given by Superiors or presumed only on condition "that the things allowed our religious for use be not too choice, but simple and of moderate price" (Art. 131). Furthermore, "the furnishing in the brethren's cells should be simple, uniform, and entirely in conformity with religious poverty. Therefore, we forbid our brethren to keep superfluous things in their cells, especially such as smack of a worldly, rather than of a religious atmosphere" (Art. 135).

(2) He frequently, and as it were, unconsciously, thinks of certain objects. "Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also" (Matt. 6, 21), and thither thy thoughts and dreams are wont to turn. We easily and spontaneously think of the things we wish for, even though the wish is hidden and unconscious.

(3) He purposely hides certain things from his superiors lest they be taken away, in violation of this rule, "Each one shall display openly to the view of the superior, whenever he chooses to visit, books and all other objects of common use" (Art. 173). Likewise, he employs deceit, fraud or lying and importunity to wring permission from superiors.

(4) He is filled with disquiet and sadness through the loss of some object or because of its withdrawal by superiors. He is angry at superiors and murmurs when they deny a permission he asks.

(5) When one is deprived of something, the inordinate affection he may have for it becomes clearly apparent. He who is strong in the

virtue of poverty, confesses in tranquility of soul with the patient Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord so it is done. Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1, 21).

68. Poverty of Spirit

The virtue of poverty receives its culmination in poverty of spirit as it is called.

(a) It consists in this, that the soul is ready not only to avoid every inordinate affection for temporal goods, but unless a higher motive hinders, always to choose the inferior and cheaper things. Thus, without doubt, the heart stands completely despoiled of worldly things, and perfectly imitates the example of our Lord, who when He was rich was made poor for our sake, and did not have whereon to rest His head. Such poverty Brother John of St. Samson teaches when he says: "To leave temporal goods in the world is naught else than to approach the poverty of our Lord. It consists in this that a man freely divests himself of even necessary things and suffers their lack in peace and calm of soul. He who suffers disgust in this practice is not truly poor. No one is truly a religious except by continual practice of poverty of spirit which consists in a constant abandonment and divesting of self and creatures just as though they did not exist" (*Theoremata,* p. 24, nn. 5. 6).

Father Dominic Lucchesi, filled with this spirit, exchanged a new tunic which he had unwillingly received from his Prior for a journey, with the worn-out tunic of a lay-brother, saying that such things did not become him. This poverty of spirit Father Dominic of St. Albert described in these words: "To describe this poverty briefly! Carmelite or perfect poverty is nothing else than a voluntary renunciation of all things which are not God; it excludes every affection toward creatures which is not God-like" (*Introductio in Terram Carmeli,* I, c. 63).

(b) This poverty is so much more necessary in Carmel since a requirement to obtain perfect prayer, — our vocation — is that we completely withdraw our heart from all creatures, our own selves included. "Oh foolish folly of insensate religious," exclaims Brother John of St. Samson, "who presume to enjoy divine beatitude without imitating Christ on His cross, in His sufferings, in poverty of spirit and in other virtues" (ibid. n. 7).

It conducts us to true perfection and therefore, to a perfect union with God, and obtains for us the richest graces in prayer, since God shows Himself so much more generous when He finds a human heart despoiled of creatures.

(c) Such poverty of spirit or love for true and perfect poverty should be sought by meditation on Christ's life and death and that of His most holy Mother. It should be asked with fervent prayer, and practised on every occasion.

69. The Common Life

(a) A matter of great importance in the observance of the vow of poverty is the common life on which the Church itself insists so strongly. For the Church prescribes: "In every order the common life shall be exactly observed by all, in those things also that pertain to food, clothing, and furnishings" (Can. 594, 1). "In houses of study perfect common life shall prevail; otherwise, the students cannot be promoted to Orders" (Can. 587, 2). "Religious who in a notable manner violate the law of common life prescribed by the Constitutions shall be gravely admonished, and if betterment does not follow, shall be punished by the privation of active and passive voice, and if superiors, also of office" (Can. 2389).

We have already seen that the Rule insists on the common life and the Constitutions do likewise. The latter not only repeat the prescriptions of Canon Law, (Cf. Art. 202, 103) but moreover, set forth that "all the brethren, including superiors, shall partake of the same food at the common table, unless an illness known to the superiors, should excuse" (Art. 164). This agrees perfectly with the change which was introduced into our primitive Rule by Innocent IV, to the effect that the individuals should no longer eat in their cells what was distributed to them, but should take it in common in the common refectory (Rule IV).

Therefore, it is squarely opposed to the mind of the Rule and to the law of common life to eat or keep food and drink in one's cell, except in case of illness. Moreover, our Constitutions explicitly command: "Neither food nor drink shall be served to anyone outside the ordinary meals, except with the permission of the superior" (Art. 171). Besides, "The cell is a holy place" (Art. 172), which without the slightest doubt, is intended for other purposes than eating or drinking.

(b) The purpose of the common life is (1) that each religious truly depend on the community in his needs that so the vow of poverty may be safeguarded; (2) that equality be preserved as far as possible among the religious, although the individual is provided for as may be necessary in consideration of his age and needs (Rule IX). Otherwise, peace and harmony would constantly be endangered; (3) that the individual religious be free as much as possible from the care of

procuring food for themselves and may, therefore, be able to engage in prayer and the works enjoined by holy obedience; (4) that in this way religious may have an opportunity for practising holy poverty and acquiring its merit. Indeed, when the common life is carefully kept, it is a practical school not only of holy poverty, but also of many other virtues.

Therefore, let no one by word or deed dare infringe on common life; let no one without true necessity seek exemptions or privileges which usually are a source of no small harm both to the community and to the individual himself.

(c) The wall of the common life is completely undermined by the *peculium,* or private allowance, which "signifies a small sum of money or property left in the disposition of one who, because of his condition, is disqualified from disposing of greater amounts. Thus we speak of the allowance of children, servants, etc." (Fanfani, O. P. *De Jure Religiosorum,* Turin-Rome, 1925, p. 249).

The use and the disposition of the *peculium* or its retention independently of the superiors, is directly opposed to the vow of poverty and entirely unlawful; if under the superiors, it is not directly against the vow, though it is forbidden by the laws of the Church and our Constitutions, which enjoin the common life. Besides, experience testifies that it entails the greatest harm to religious discipline.

The object of the vow of poverty is completely nullified by the *peculium;* we mean the interior renunciation from earthly goods, especially, since even trvialities, as we have heard (No. 67, c), are sufficient to enmesh the human heart to such an extent that it may cease to aspire and strive after heavenly things. In reality by means of the *peculium* religious frequently become wealthier than many seculars, who are said to live in comfortable circumstances. For their *necessities* are freely supplied by the community so that the religious are not annoyed by the least care. Their *personal* and *particular whims* are taken care of by their *peculium.* This is the more easily done as usually, after the *peculium* is granted, the limits between greater and smaller quantity are usually disregarded. Only the strict observance of the law of poverty can offer a remedy. Moreover, even though in the beginning the use of the *peculium* may depend on the superiors, it quickly becomes independent, since one can not stop his course while on the downward grade. The vow will be nominal not real, and the pursuit of perfection will be to a great extent destroyed. Interior prayer will be hindered. Fraternal charity will be brought into danger. Seculars will be scandalized.

Consequently, superiors are obliged in conscience to watch that

such an abuse may not creep in, and if it already exists, to see that it is removed. The General Chapter of 1937 explicitly orders: "We must insist that the *peculium* be abolished, if it should be found in any way whatsoever" (Resolution 30).

(d) It is not in accord with holy poverty and the perfect common life, when the religious with permission of their superior receive money as a gift from their parents or other sources and then deposit it with the superior himself or the procurator to be used only for the religious in question. Such deposits, as they are called, make no light attack on the genuine observance of the vow of poverty. We shall have to repeat more or less what we have said about the *peculium*. For these deposits hinder perfect interior renunciation and injure fraternal charity. Two classes are easily formed among the religious, the rich and the poor; those occupations are usually preferred to which more friendship with seculars is attached, whereas those occupations within the monasteries are spurned and neglected. Accordingly, we read in our old Constitutions: "In order that every occasion or appearance of ownership may be radically excluded from our monasteries, we strictly forbid that any common place be established in them which they call the Depository, in which moneys or anything else may be kept with the mark or name of a private religious and for his personal use" (Const. *Strict. Observ.*, 1, C. 10, n. 13).

By all such means human nature is planning nothing else than the fulfillment of its concupiscences under the guise of observing poverty. Woe to those religious, who neglecting to watch are deceived by such snares and cunning, and withdraw with their left hand what they have given with their right!

Let us be on our guard, therefore, that common life and holy poverty suffer no harm.

(e) Then too, religious should beware lest on account of the common life, i.e., because they receive necessary things so easily from the community and all things are said to be common to all, they fail in the following:

(1) They should not on their own authority appropriate any of the community goods, nor should they give anything to parents or friends without the knowledge or against the wish of their superior. This is stealing and contrary to the vow of poverty and of justice. It is not even lawful to send food or drink out of the monastery without express permission of the superior (Const. 170).

(2) They should not fail in the matter of economy. If seculars are forced to save by necessity and want, much more must religious do

the same on account of their vow and on account of their love for holy poverty, particularly since we live so largely from the alms of the poor. They should freely bestow the gifts received from parents or friends for the common good, in faithful obedience to the prescription of our Constitutions (Art. 132).

(3) They should not be less willing to work than seculars who are frequently compelled to undergo very severe, prolonged and dangerous hardships in order to support themselves. Each one should cheerfully and gladly serve the community as far as he is able by his efforts or labor, especially since we are admonished by our Holy Rule to avoid idleness (Rule XV).

We should serve God and our brethren, and not ourselves! If all would follow this rule, holy poverty and the common life would be safe and the richest blessing of our heavenly Father would not be lacking. For God will abide by His promises, provided we try to observe in deed and in truth what we have promised.

70. Permissions and Customs

A. Since the vow of poverty does not forbid every use of things of money value, but only the independent use, there is no sin against the vow when a religious has obtained from his lawful superior permission sufficient for this use. Various kinds of permissions, however, are usually distinguished:

(1) Valid and Invalid Permission. Permission is valid when it is freely granted by a lawful superior within the limits of his power. Permission is invalid when the superior lacks the power of granting it, or when it has been wrung from him by deceit or fraud. The superior who in full knowledge grants an invalid permission commits sin, as does the religious who knowingly uses it.

(2) Lawful and Unlawful Permission. Permission is unlawful, but valid, when the superior really has the power of granting it, but is forbidden to do so because of the virtue of poverty or for some other reason. Thus permission for superfluous or worldly things is certainly unlawful, if not invalid. It can happen that a superior sins in giving permission, yet the religious may in good conscience use it. But it can also happen that the religious has greater guilt than his superior, because the latter has unwillingly granted permission to avoid excessive importunities or greater evils.

(3) Express and Tacit Permission. The former is clearly given by a superior through word or sign; the latter is inferred from his silence according to the saying: "Silence gives consent." But it is supposed

that the superior is actually acquainted with facts and could object if he wished. Tacit permission, under such suppositions, is true permission. But one must be on his guard not to interpret the silence of the superior falsely in certain cases. It can happen for instance, that the superior sees a religious receiving a gift, but, out of respect for the donor or for some other reason, he cannot raise an objection, though in reality, he does not wish the religious to receive or keep the gift. Or perhaps he does not object, because he thinks the religious in question has obtained sufficient permission from a higher superior.

(4) Explicit and Implicit Permission. The former is given by the superior in words or signs for a determined case, the latter is contained in some other permission or action. If the superior gives or allows a religious to accept more holy pictures or rosaries than the religious himself can use, he seems to indicate that he is giving permission to distribute them among others. Similarly, the permission for making a trip includes the necessary permission for expenses, in fact, even for giving a small alms while travelling.

(5) Particular and General Permission. Particular permission is given for single and determined cases; general permission is given to several religious at once or to one religious for a number of cases. General permissions may endanger the true and genuine dependence of subjects and may cause the relaxation of regular discipline. For this reason it should be used with caution.

(6) Presumed Permission. Presumed permission is admitted by our Constitutions (Art. 131). But it is necessary to understand it well, lest illusions arise and pave the way for introducing abuses. Presumed permission, therefore, is not given explicitly or implicitly. But in case the superior cannot be reached, we suppose he would really grant permission if he were asked.

In order that one may use such presumed permission in good conscience, it is necessary: (a) that the superior can really not be reached; (b) that the action or the acceptance of a gift cannot be postponed; (c) that the superior can reasonably be supposed to agree, e.g., because he has given permission in similar circumstances, or because the acceptance of the gift would be to the advantage of the community, etc.

Under these suppositions we act with a good conscience and commit no sin, even if afterward we discover that the superior was actually unwilling. But if it is a question of accepting things which are not used or consumed on the spot, permission of the superior must be explicitly asked later, if they are to be retained. Even in other cases

it is advisable to inform the superior of the permission presumed, because in this way the mind of the superior becomes more apparent, and greater security and peace of mind may be acquired for future cases. However, religious of tender conscience are accustomed to presume permissions only rarely, and in case of real necessity and great usefulness, lest they slip into error or be the cause of relaxing regular discipline. It can happen though, that we may be obliged to presume permission, as when the religious community would suffer harm from the refusal of a gift.

B. Custom. Custom is the best interpreter of the law and shows how the vow of poverty is observed in a religious order. Through custom also general permissions can be granted.

But that such a custom may be lawful, the following are required: (1) It should be reasonable. A custom, however, cannot be reasonable if it is opposed to the aim of the order, disturbs regular discipline, or is explicitly rejected by law; (2) that the greater and graver portion of the community follow it, and not only a few of lax conscience; (3) that it has prevailed for forty years or from time immemorial without objection from superiors. However, the agreement of one superior of a particular house is not sufficient, especially since among us the Prior is explicitly warned to observe exactly the customs sanctioned and approved by the Provincial, and to introduce no new ones without his express authorization. (Const. 305).

Finally, all should be on their guard against customs which only serve convenience. For we have not entered the Order merely for convenience, but to deny ourselves. Blessed the community in which this one custom prevails, that all zealously aspire to the virtue of poverty by the exact fulfillment of the vow of poverty.

71. Sins Against Poverty

I. Against the Vow.

(a) From the explanations we gave above of the obligations inherent in the vow, we can easily ascertain when a sin is against the vow of poverty or against the virtue. For, since by means of the vow we renounced our right of ownership or at least the right of freely disposing of anything of value, we sin against the vow, whenever we again arrogate this right to ourselves and do not have the due permission.

Therefore, we commit sin:

(1) When we dispose of our goods, (if we still possess such), independently and without the superior's permission.

(2) When we give or receive a gift from a religious or a secular, or when we buy or sell, offer or accept as a loan or exchange anything with another brother without the superior's permission (Cf. Const. 130, 131).

(3) When we use a thing for a purpose other than that granted to us.

(4) When we destroy anything or allow it to perish through our negligence, especially when the duty of caring for such things has been entrusted to us.

(5) When we transfer anything from one house to another without due permission.

(6) When we go beyond the limits of our authorization in the administration of the property of the monastery or of the Order.

If in an act contrary to the vow there is also comprised an act of injustice against the community or against outsiders, e.g., when one unjustly appropriates the goods of the monastery or of someone else, then, to the breaking of the vow there is added the violation of the virtue of justice or of the seventh commandment of God, and so a double sin is committed. Here we may note that the unjust appropriation of the goods of the monastery also bears the mark of a sacrilege.

(b) It is difficult to say when a mortal sin is committed, since individual circumstances must be taken into consideration, and authors are not unanimous.

(1) When theft or unjust damage is committed, the sin is to be judged according to the principles which are usually set forth in Moral Theology for similar sins. If it is a question of the goods of the monastery, the matter is to be judged as for the children of a family, by the norm of "double the amount." In this respect small thefts can coalesce according to the usual rules, and can turn out to be a grave matter. However, if it is a matter of food and drink, (unless they are taken in large quantity, and unless the quality is extraordinary or they are given to outsiders), a mortal sin is hardly ever committed except for other reasons like scandal, etc.

(2) If the sin is only against the vow, that quantity is considered grave which is considered unconditionally grave (*absolute gravis*) in thefts. But in this case, small sins do not coalesce, except the intention was from the very beginning directed toward a sum unconditionally grave.

(3) Finally, if it is a matter of mere use and the object itself remains intact, to judge the gravity of the sin it will be necessary to consider not the value of the object but the value of its use, the unwillingness of the superior, and the degree of disturbance to discipline.

(4) For the rest, fervent religious will carefully avoid not only serious sins but also slight ones, especially since very often the limits between mortal and venial sin can hardly be noticed, so that errors in this matter not infrequently creep in. Besides, regular discipline can be seriously injured even by minor transgressions frequently repeated.

II. Against the Virtue.

Since only external acts are to be considered in the breaking of the vow of poverty, the virtue of poverty is injured even by interior desires, although interior sins against the tenth commandment are also sins against the vow.

We have already said that the virtue of poverty extends farther than the vow. Therefore, all sins committed against the vow are also sins against the virtue, but not vice versa. We sin especially against the virtue of poverty:

(1) By voluntary desires for such material goods of the world as are not permitted to religious to possess, and by inordinate affections for them. It makes no difference whether they are great or small.

(2) By disgust and murmuring on account of the rigor of religious poverty.

(3) By use of superfluities and luxuries.

Grave sins are not usually committed in this way; although unless these failings are repressed, they might inflict no slight harm on spiritual life and perhaps, also on religious discipline. Nor will the heart ever enjoy that peace which is true happiness, and which is so necessary for interior prayer. Frequently they also lead to a formal violation of the vow and disturb harmony in the religious community. Religious who indulge in such failings can hardly apply to themselves the words of our Lord: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 5, 3). For in truth they are not poor in spirit, but rather they should be classed among those whom the Apostle describes: "They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which plunge men into destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6, 9).

72. Helps toward Perfect Poverty

(1) In order to bear the burdens of holy poverty more easily and more cheerfully, it will be advantageous to meditate some times, not only on its supernatural motives, but also on the hard lot of the poor in the world. For if we consider everything truthfully and dispassion-

ately, it will readily be obvious that the poor in the world very frequently are burdened by a graver want than we who have professed holy poverty. If we should deny this, we would show ourselves quite ungrateful to God Who is accustomed to render in this life a hundredfold of those very things we have given up for His sake. If, therefore, we weigh the manifold worries of seculars, the sacrifices holy poverty imposes upon us will appear very small.

(2) With such considerations in mind, it immediately becomes clear that we must conscientiously observe the vow of poverty in its purity. Otherwise, we shall easily be put to shame before the whole world on the day of judgment. We must, therefore, be content and saving, we must abstain from superfluities, avoid unnecessary expenses, cooperate for the common good of the Church and the Order, with industry and diligence perform all our duties that we may not eat our bread in idleness and unjustly ask the alms of the faithful. The religious forgetful of holy poverty and hankering for the goods of this world not infrequently gives serious scandal to seculars.

(3) It can happen that one or the other wish, lawful in itself, is not fulfilled or a just request is denied by our superiors. It can also be very difficult occasionally to ask the necessary permission, especially when the superior is very severe or sometimes roughly refuses a permission asked. But are we not all mendicants? When do the poor immediately obtain what they desire? Are they not frequently deprived of even necessary food and drink? Are the beggars of the world always treated kindly and generously?

Besides, religious subjects should consider that while it is indeed the duty of superiors to supply their subjects with necessary things, it is at the same time, their duty to provide for the common good and for the strict observance of holy poverty. Therefore, they cannot arbitrarily grant permissions; nor can they consider only those who are asking, but must consider the common good and then decide what is to be done in conscience and before God. Let religious never forget that while they are indeed freed to a great extent by the vow of poverty from the worries of this life, their superiors are burdened more heavily in their stead by these same worries. So let them not murmur against their superiors; rather, let them assist their superiors piously and conscientiously by their diligent observance of the vow of poverty.

(4) We should not imagine that every modern invention intended to render life more convenient and pleasant, must be introduced at once into our monasteries. For some austerity of life is needful to us, if we sincerely wish to arrive at perfection. Not even the plea of

saving or of economy, as it is called, is always sufficient reason, because higher reasons can dictate otherwise, as for instance, the spirit of poverty which must be fostered in every religious; or the particular aim of the order. For example, without doubt it would be much more economical, as they say, to have large common rooms for study and sleep than to have individual cells for each religious, but this latter feature is more adapted to nourish the spirit of prayer and contemplation.

(5) We shall the more easily fulfill the vow of poverty and make the greater progress in the virtue, the more accustomed we are to a frugal life and the fewer desires we cultivate according to the saying of St. Paul: "Having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content" (1 Tim. 6, 8). They who ask more than these, and indulge in practices in themselves not necessary for life, will always find greater difficulties in observing strict poverty. Thus self-denial is the sister and guardian of holy poverty.

73. The Reward of Poverty

A. If we can truly say with St. Peter: "Behold, we have left all things, and have followed Thee" (Matt. 19, 27), we shall hear the same reply from our Lord: "Every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My Name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting" (Matt. 19, 29). Likewise, there will be fulfilled in us this beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 5, 3).

(1) Usually men think that the more riches they acquire the happier they will be. For the rich do not seem to need to worry about making a living, they appear to be free from work, to enjoy all the delights of the world, to stand in high regard, to find many devoted servants, etc., according to the following: "I made me great works, I built me houses, and planted vineyards . . . I got me menservants and maidservants, and had a great family . . . and whatsoever my eyes desired, I refused them not; and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure, and delighting itself in the things which I had prepared; and I esteemed this my portion, to make use of my own labor" (Eccles. 2, 4-10). These are the things the human heart and concupiscence crave. But the same inspired writer also confesses: "I saw in all things vanity, and vexation of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun" (Eccles. 2, 11). Such a man is not a ruler, but a slave, and he never enjoys true peace and tranquillity of mind.

(2) The man, however, who is independent of creatures is truly free and can confidently pray: "Our Father, Who art in heaven" (Matt. 6, 9). Nor will he be abandoned in his necessities by his heavenly Father, Who clothes the lillies of the field so magnificently and feeds the birds of the air so abundantly. At the end he will confess with the Lord's disciples when they returned from their first preaching expedition, that nothing had been wanting to them (Cf. Luke 22, 35, 36).

(3) Of such peace and liberty he becomes worthy who approaches closer and closer to our Lord, and from the riches of His heart draws grace for grace and who experiences what St. Bernard describes: "It is not an unprofitable exchange to forsake everything for the sake of Him who is above everything. For not only are all things granted together with Him, but when you have obtained Him, He alone will be all things to those who have left all for Him" (Sermon *De bonis deserendis*). He will find out that all the pleasures of the world are compensated by one hour of interior prayer.

(4) Not without reason is holy poverty called by our Constitutions, the foundation of religious perfection, because the greater the freedom from creatures, the more perfect becomes the union of the soul with God, and the more abundant, the graces received. Holy poverty makes us seek and enjoy the things which are above, not the things which are on the earth.

B. Therefore, after we have diligently kept the vow of poverty, we should endeavor to rise through the degrees of holy poverty, i.e.:

(1) Let us really renounce material goods and not dispose of anything independently of our superiors.

(2) Let us be satisfied with necessaries, restricting our necessities as much as we can, and laying aside every inordinate affection for material goods.

(3) Let us seek for ourselves the more common things and the less expensive in food, clothing and dwelling, insofar as reasons of a higher order do not interfere.

(4) Let us love privations even of those things which seem necessary; let us be glad that along with our Lord Who was poor, we really experience the poverty we have promised.

How tranquilly we shall pass from this world, if on our deathbed we can confess with St. Joseph of Cupertino that we have nothing to dispose of! Then we can truthfully say: "The Lord is my portion," now and forevermore. We shall possess eternal life because we have left all for God.

74. Saintly Models of Poverty

The examples of our Saints abundantly show in what honor holy poverty has always been held in Carmel.

Our Holy Father Elias lived for a long time on the few things ministered to him by the raven and by the widow of Sarephta. St. Berthold, "living on herbs and roots, was content with only one meal a day." St. Brocard on his deathbed gave this exhortation to his brethren: "My sons, execrate riches." St. Peter Thomas merited the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the poverty that oppressed him and his brethren.

St. Andrew Corsini, "one day most earnestly asked his Father Provincial for the very great favor of being allowed to visit the cross every Friday. The Provincial, however, was under the impression that he wished to take the discipline, and said: 'I am satisfied, son, but let it be done prudently and moderately so that you may not be deceived by the devil.' Andrew, however, took the discipline unto blood right after Mass and afterward for the love of Christ put a basket on his shoulders, and going out on Main Street among the nobility and his relatives begged for bread and alms. His relatives thought it was done for their shame, and became indignant and saw to it that he was derided by all and greeted with ignominy. Then he went the more cheerfully and gladly, saying within himself: 'When my Lord Jesus Christ was reviled He did not revile; and when He suffered, He threatened not. This is my profession, because I belong to a mendicant order; for it is my crown and my profession to beg,' and so he convinced all" (AA. SS., Jan. 7, 1066). After our Saint became bishop, he was the father of the poor.

St. Theresa wished to be without necessaries and to live in a truly poor convent in which life would be sustained only by alms, because she said: "Poor convents receive greater graces." St. John of the Cross preached and practised a perfect detachment from all creatures. Our Venerable John of St. Samson gloried and reveled in his poverty and proclaimed: "To own nothing and to wish for nothing is to abound exceedingly in goods and riches, and is to be elevated above all things" (*Theoremata,* p. 23, n. 1). They tell of St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi: "A new Francis of Assisi seems to have returned to the world in her person; so great a lover of poverty was she" (AA. SS., May 5, 760, where several detailed examples are told). Venerable Angelus Paoli deprived himself of necessaries in order to refresh the poor (Cf. *Anal.* 1, 103).

The example of our cleric Frater Arnold of St. Charles can hardly be omitted. "Although he had wealthy parents, he spurned all the riches of the world, so that he might be able to say: 'I have despised the kingdom of the world and all the ornaments of the world for the love of my Lord Jesus Christ' . . . In the things which were for common use, he was accustomed to seek out what was inferior, half worn out, broken or cast aside by others. He begged for this on his knees as though these inferior things were his due. Once two new blankets were given to him, but he returned them, looking for worn ones. When he had these, he joyfully carried them to his room. Thus in the use of everything there was evident in him a certain anxiety for practising and experiencing poverty, and he would not accept, give, or use the slightest trifle without the permission of his superiors" (*Anal.* III, 24).

In this way our Saints followed the example of our Lord, Who when He was rich was made poor, as well as the example of His Blessed Mother, who offered for us even her Son after she had for so many years lived a poor and frugal life with Him and St. Joseph in the house at Nazareth.

If we follow these examples we shall not stray from the way of perfection but without fail reach the summit of Carmel, the mountain of prayer.

CHAPTER TWO

HOLY CHASTITY

75. The Vow and Virtue of Chastity

A. God in His infinite Goodness and Wisdom wished that man, the chief and crown of creation, should increase and multiply over the whole earth, cooperating with divine creative power by means of the powers and faculties implanted in him. For this reason He created man male and female from the beginning, and blessing him He said, "Increase and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. 1, 28). Therefore, the union of man and woman in itself is good and holy, since God Himself willed it. But by original sin concupiscence, hitherto bound by divine grace, was set loose, and by continually opposing right reason, now attempts to pervert what God has so well established, so that man no longer uses his powers for good, but abuses them for evil.

Our Lord has, it is true, restored the sanctity of marriage, even

raising it to the dignity of a Sacrament and of a symbol of His own mystic union with the Church, His holy and spotless Spouse. But the concupiscence of the flesh remains, so that man still sees another law in his members fighting against the law of his spirit. (Cf. Rom. 7, 23).

It is the office of the virtue of chastity, therefore, to curb the flesh so that what has been implanted in the human body for a good end, may serve only this end, and that every pleasure not according to the Divine Law, be suppressed. In other words, chastity is the virtue which so restrains the pleasures of the flesh that the body may not be contaminated nor the mind polluted by impurities.

B. This virtue is threefold: Chastity of the married, of widows, and of virgins.

1) The chastity of the married moderates the use of marriage that God's will may always be done and nothing unlawful creep in.

2) The chastity of widowhood after the lawful use of marriage and the death of the other partner, refrains from all things unlawful outside of marriage until death or at least until a new marriage.

3) The chastity of virgins, the highest degree of chastity, keeps the body pure, refrains from marriage and preserves itself from all internal and external sins against chastity. However, formal virginity is present only with the intention of remaining in this state. It ceases, therefore, through sin committed against chastity, or also, through the intention of contracting marriage.

C. The vow of perfect chastity made in an order, includes three things:

1) The obligation of not marrying and of not considering marriage. Marriage contracted after the simple vow, is valid but illicit. Marriage attempted after the solemn vow is also invalid, and one attempting it incurs excommunication *latae sententiae,* reserved in simple form to the Apostolic See.

2) The obligation of avoiding all internal and external sins against chastity.

3) The obligation of avoiding everything which may endanger chastity unless there is a proportionately grave reason and precaution is taken against sin.

The vow of chastity made in an Order is as extensive as the virtue, so that all that injures the virtue is also opposed to the vow.

76. Reasons for Vowing Perfect Chastity

I. By our vow of perfect chastity, as we have heard, we renounce the right of contracting marriage and of family life.

a) However, we renounce marriage not because it is to be despised. For we are taught by faith and are obliged by gratitude toward our parents, to esteem marriage. Thus, St. Jerome says, "We approve marriage only that we may prefer virginity, which is born of it. Is not silver silver, even though gold is more precious than silver? Or is it a disgrace to a tree or to the growing grain if the fruits and the corn are preferred to the roots and the leaves, to the stalk and the ear? As the fruit comes from the tree, the grain from the stalk, so virginity comes from marriage" *(Adv. Jovinianum,* L. 1, n. 3).

b) Nor do we renounce it because we wish to escape the sacrifices of married and family life, although according to the Apostle we know that "such will have tribulation of the flesh" (1 Cor. 7, 28).

c) But we renounce marriage that by breaking the bonds of the world we may serve God and cling to Him more freely and more perfectly, according to the teaching of St. Paul, "He that is without wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided" (1 Cor. 7, 32, 33). Likewise, the Apostle counsels the choice of virginity, because "it may give power to attend the Lord, without impediment" (1 Cor. 7, 35). Therefore, the Lord Himself said, "He that can take, let him take" (Matt. 19, 12). Since St. Paul supposes that even the married may voluntarily abstain for a time from the enjoyment of marriage, in order to give themselves to prayer (Cf. 1 Cor. 7, 5), we abstain entirely in order that we may always, as far as it is possible, dedicate ourselves to God in prayer.

d) Finally, we renounce marriage to attain greater purity of heart, so as to arrive even in this life at a higher degree of union with God. For if we have subdued the flesh, our entire spiritual life must inevitably thrive and wax strong. The will so strengthened will the more easily overcome the other obstacles, and a pure heart will daily draw fresh graces. Thus the Lord has promised, "Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God" (Matt. 5, 8).

Therefore, the purpose of this vow is not the avoidance of certain sins, but perfect consecration to the service of God. On the other hand, only he who strives to render this consecration really perfect will perfectly fulfill the vow of chastity.

II. It will not escape any of us that this vow of perfect chastity is in our Constitutions properly called the characteristic of the children of God's Mother, and essential to internal purity by which we are joined to God (Art. 123). Indeed, the vow of chastity is evidently

of special importance in Carmel. For we are called to this intimate union with God only through prayer and contemplation which are not possible without perfect chastity and purity of heart. Likewise, we glory in being Mary's children of predilection. How dare we do this, except we strive to imitate as closely as possible the spotless virginity of our sweetest Mother?

Our Rule also warns us, "Let your loins be girt with the cincture of chastity" (XIV), and when we were first clothed in the habit of the Order, we received the white cloak with the following words: "They who follow the Lamb without spot, shall walk with Him in white garments. Therefore, let your garments always be shining as a sign of your internal purity."

77. The Protection of Chastity

1. In order to preserve the virtue of chastity, the help and protection of certain other virtues are necessary, such as shame, modesty, self-restraint, mortification.

Shame fills us with a holy bashfulness which makes us unwilling to admit any thought or action by which we may deserve the contempt of respectable people. "Since all of us," says Tertullian, "are temples of God by the outpouring and consecration of the Holy Spirit, shame is the guardian and priestess of His temple, since it permits nothing unclean or profane to be brought in, lest God, Who dwells there, be offended and forsake His defiled dwelling" *(De cultu feminarum, L. 2, c. 1)*. Therefore, shame most carefully shuns all looks, touches, words, etc., by which the concupiscence of the flesh may be excited. Modesty regulates all exterior actions according to right reason and the demands of one's state in life. Self-restraint strengthens the will power that it may not be forced to unbecoming things by the inordinate affections of the heart. Mortification is the medium and instrument, by which the body is reduced to the service of the soul and all rebellion is duly curbed.

II. With these premises we recommend the following counsels to preserve holy purity:

(a) We should not be occupied more than is necessary or useful with our own body whether in thoughts, looks or touches. Care for cleanliness and health is not only not an obstacle to chastity, but rather a help. But whatever care is used, it should be done with a good intention, mechanically, i.e., as far as possible abstractedly and in the presence of God.

(b) The senses should be strictly guarded. Very wisely our Consti-

tutions remind us: "We establish in the first place that all should accustom themselves to the mortification of the senses, . . . Since death enters by the windows" (Art. 123).

In particular they insist:

(1) That we restrain our eyes. In this matter writers usually quote Job: "I made a covenant with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin" (Job 31, 1). With good reason we pray with the Psalmist: "Turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity" (Ps. 118, 37).

Therefore, our eyes are to be averted not only from persons of the opposite sex,—i.e., we must not stare at them,—but also from dangerous representations, even though represented with great art. Our Constitutions explicitly warn us: "Let not (the brethren) assist at shows, dances and secular pageants, especially in public theatres, whenever such amusements are unbecoming them or where the presence of clerics may give scandal" (Art. 196). This admonition is surely to be applied in our day to the moving pictures. Not only must we abstain from lascivious and obscene books, but also from such as, depicting earthly loves, enervate the mind. Indeed, we are called to higher things.

(2) That we stop our ears. We should not listen to words which betray excessive love or affection even under the guise of spiritual friendship. Nor should we take enjoyment out of stories or jokes which, though not obscene, still speak of nature in such a way as easily to provoke impure thoughts, or which are rejected by respectable and refined people. We repeat that we are called to higher things.

(3) That we check our tongue. It is not lawful to tell or repeat what it is unbecoming to hear, lest we suggest to others the thoughts and desires from which we ourselves desire to be free. For "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15, 33). We must never in word or deed manifest a sensible love or ardent affection for any person whether one of our brethren, or a secular, lest a fatal passion be excited in either.

(4) The most dangerous sense is touch. Therefore, we are admonished that "all our gestures and actions be modest and so send forth the fragrance of the most delicate chastity" (Art. 123). Nearly all religious societies strongly insist that no one unnecessarily touch another. If our own body is to be treated only with caution, as we urged above, the body of another must be treated with greater caution, even though there is no intent of impurity. In order that holy purity may be preserved in all its splendor, a certain severity is necessary and

the novices and clerics should not wonder when their masters and prefects seem to be rather strict in this matter. For such severity is of profit to all, and entirely in conformity with the teaching of spiritual authors and of the Saints.

(c) The avoidance of occasions is very necessary. For "he that loveth danger shall perish in it" (Ecclus. 3, 27). Our Constitutions expressly set forth the following:

(1) "Let familiarity with women, even with the devout, be avoided; and when it becomes necessary to converse with them let it be done briefly, religiously, and modestly. Rarely and only with the greatest discretion and with the express permission of the local superior should our priests undertake the direction of outsiders, especially women, even though it be in spiritual matters only" (Art. 124). We can hardly comment on these matters better than in the words of Father Lawrence Scupoli: "Be not too trustful of yourself, even though you do not now feel the stings of the flesh and have not felt it for all the years you have enjoyed the friendships of so many. For this accursed vice can in one hour wrest from us what it has not obtained in many years. Frequently there is cause for greater fear (as experience has taught and daily teaches), when a friendship is cultivated under plausible reasons, e.g., relationship, duty, or the virtue of one's friend . . . Again I say, flee. You are as tinder, and are not to be trusted even though you are saturated and filled with the moisture of will power, and are more ready to die than to offend God. When the fire of concupiscence unnoticed dries up the water of our strong will by cherishing such friendship it will flare up so wildly, that it will regard neither relative nor friend. God will not be feared. Reputation, life, the punishments of hell, however numerous, will be disregarded. Therefore, flee, flee; unless perchance you wish to be overtaken, seized and slain" *(Spiritual Combat,* c. 19).

Therefore, as our Constitutions wish, when it is necessary to address women, "let the brethren do it briefly, religiously and modestly," and "let them not become familiar with any women about their diseases, pains and matrimonial and domestic affairs, under the pretext of offering them a remedy or of teaching them" (Art. 125).

Whatever is done in relation to women, let it be done so that it can be seen by everyone; whatever is said, let it be so said that it can be heard by everyone. Circumstances of time and place should always be so chosen that a religious is never *solus cum sola.* For we must always bear in mind: "Providing good things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12, 17).

(2) On the other hand: "there should be no excessive familiarity among our religious and no particular friendships" (Art. 179). In addition to other serious injuries to common life and to peace among brethren, such excessive familiarities and particular friendships, against which the rules and constitutions of all Orders are accustomed to inveigh, can become a source of grave danger to chastity. For the same reasons our Constitutions insist: "It is not lawful for anyone of whatever condition he may be, even if he is a guest, to enter the cell of another, especially during strict silence, without the permission of the superior . . . Outsiders, however, may never be admitted to the cells without the express permission of the superior" (Art. 174). And "if it ever becomes necessary to converse in the cells it may never be done with the doors closed, without the permission of the superior (Art. 175). And let no one think that such precautions are superfluous or useless in our day. Although they may not be laid down solely or primarily to safeguard chastity, yet they are also imposed to preserve chastity in full splendor.

(d) Since attack is the best defense, the flower of chastity is so much more safeguarded when we, under the guidance of prudence, practice mortification. Therefore, our Constitutions explicitly recommend: "In addition to the prescribed mortifications of the senses, we urge our brethren to perform others also, so that they may the more easily bring the impulses of sensuality into submission to the spirit, and the soul may the more easily cling to God" (Art. 108). Our brethren should notice that the aim of mortification and chastity are identical: "that the soul may the more easily cling to God!" Spiritual authors are here accustomed to quote those famous words of Deuteronomy: "The beloved grew fat and kicked; he grew fat and thick and gross, he forsook God who made him, and departed from God, his Savior" (Deut. 32, 15). We cannot indulge the body without encouraging impurity. We must grant the body what it needs that it may be a fit instrument for the soul in the practice of virtue. But let superfluities be curtailed, that it may not burden the soul in its striving after perfection. A certain degree of austerity in food, drink, clothing, rest and sleep are quite necessary in the defense of chastity. St. Paul, who says of himself: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection," (1 Cor. 9, 27) may serve as an example. We should, however, use prudence, because otherwise a contrary effect may be produced. In mortifications therefore of greater moment our spiritual director should always be consulted.

The best mortification and the best protection of chastity is industry

which our Rule highly recommends when it says: "You should always do some work that the devil may always find you occupied, lest in your idleness he find an avenue of approach to your soul" (XV). An occupation which holy obedience has imposed upon us should be preferred, because then greater profit and blessing from God will be found in our work.

(e) We should have recourse to God, so that through His help we may conquer our adversary. If we must lament and weep with the holy Apostle: "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" we should accept and appreciate his immediate answer: "The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7, 24. 25). Since we of ourselves are unable to reject so many and so great temptations, still the grace of God will suffice, and it will not be denied those who ask for it. Most efficacious are the frequenting of the Sacraments and continuous prayer by means of the exercise of the presence of God according to the words of our Rule: "In all things take hold of the shield of faith in which you are enabled to extinguish the fiery darts of the most wicked one . . . You must fortify your breast, with holy thoughts. For it is written: 'A holy thought will save thee'" (Rule, XIV).

(f) We should be perfectly open with our confessor or spiritual director. We should tell him not only sins committed, but also temptations, occasions and inclinations, that he may be able to provide suitable remedies. The proverb which says that the devil flees as soon as he sees he is detected, is an old one. Whoever faithfully follows these counsels and bravely employs the means, can tranquilly hope to preserve chastity unspotted, even in necessary occasions, especially if he has frequently recommended himself to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

78. Sins against the Vow of Chastity

A. Since the vow of perfect chastity is as wide as the virtue of chastity, every sin against the sixt and ninth commandment also violates the vow. Sin is therefore committed against the vow not only by conversations and external acts, but also by interior desires and evil thoughts, if they are freely and deliberately encouraged.

Moreover, every sin which directly violates the virtue of chastity, and whatever is done to exicte lust, is a grave sin. It can be venial only when full attention or full consent is lacking, so that the act is not perfectly human. Since in sleep there is no liberty, sin is never committed in sleep; and in half-sleep, at least no mortal sin.

Sins which do not directly violate the virtue of chastity, but other

virtues intended to protect chastity such as decency or modesty are slight or serious, depending on whether they contain slight or serious danger of lust or of consent to pleasure that may arise; and whether at the same time there is a proportionately serious reason for allowing the action which is not directly lustful, but dangerous. Therefore, in each case we must find out what influence an action, word, thought or reading, etc., has in exciting passion, and what danger there is to consent to passion that may by chance arise, and what reason there is for placing such an action. Here we should note that all are not equally affected nor is there the same danger for all. Whoever is weak must walk more cautiously, although as we have heard from Lawrence Scupoli, no one can trust himself very far. For we are all flesh, and "the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth" (Gen. 8, 21).

B. We must also have the right idea about temptations against chastity. We must hold the following principles:

1. We can hardly ever become perfectly free from them. For "the life of man upon earth is a warfare. Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (Rule, XIV). All this holds also of chastity. Without a struggle more or less severe and lasting this virtue cannot be preserved. "The life of the chaste," says John of St. Samson, "is a real martyrdom; for since the cultivation of chastity does not mean the attainment of chastity, most violent battles must be fought in its cultivation" *(Theoremata,* p. 24, n. 2). We should not be astonished, if we too must experience such things nor should we lose heart. Even though we may have served God faithfully for many years and should have kept the angelic virtue unspotted, we shall not yet be immune from every temptation.

2. Temptations, no matter how serious, are not sins, as long as our consent is lacking. In fact, when they are overcome, they strengthen virtue and increase merit, so that even temptations co-operate unto good for them that love God.

3. For that reason we must with all solicitude put on the armor of God, so that we may be able to stand against the snares of the enemy (Rule, XIV). In other words, we must resist faithfully and walk cautiously, lest we provoke temptations through our own fault. It is of greatest importance to withstand beginnings, and, as soon as we are conscious of the temptations, to turn our thoughts to something else, to suppress at once inordinate inclinations and affections, and to break off dangerous relationships without delay. It does no good to be disturbed by impure thoughts that have risen through no fault of ours.

Because by disturbance the danger is increased rather than decreased. It is best after a short ejaculatory prayer tranquilly to turn our mind and imagination to something else, to some pious or even indifferent object, and to continue without fear the occupation in which one is engaged.

It is of no advantage, in fact it is harmful to make an extensive inquiry whether we have consented to a temptation, unless we can immediately decide. For a lengthy examination provokes new temptations. If we ordinarily and seriously cultivate chastity and have done nothing externally against it, we can rightly conclude that we have not consented, unless we are immediately certain that consent has been given.

We should conceive a great horror for every impurity however small, since it is a devouring fire by which our spiritual life is totally destroyed. We should excite our soul to a great love of the angelic virtue, and we should not shun the sacrifices that promote and strengthen it. Humbly distrusting ourselves, we should put our whole trust in God, who always gives His grace to the humble and resists only the proud. Then we need have no fear.

79. Attractiveness and Reward of Chastity

The Holy Fathers are untiring in their praises of chastity, and especially of virginity. "No one, therefore," says St. Ambrose, "should wonder if they who are joined to the Lord of angels are compared to angels. Who, therefore, will deny the heavenly origin of the virginal life, which is hardly seen upon earth except after God came down into the members of an earthly body. For then a Virgin conceived in her womb, and the Word became flesh that the flesh might become God" *(De virginibus,* L. 1, c. 3).

We must not wonder that Carmelite authors are in full agreement with these statements. Thus Father Michael of St. Augustine, who has sung so beautifully in praise of chastity, calls this virtue the pearl of the Gospel and the pledge of the Heavenly Spouse and says: "Indeed, if the dignity and value of chastity were known to all, very many, without doubt, would struggle bravely for it by strong self-control, by abstaining from all things and by assiduous mortification of the senses" *(Inst. Myst.* III, tr. 1, c. 21).

Brother John of St. Samson affirms: "We can hardly imagine how much the angels love the truly chaste. So openly do they take them under their protection, that the demons can harm themy only with the greatest difficulty and only from afar" *(Theoremata,* p. 24, n. 1).

Very beautifully and very fittingly Father John of Jesus-Mary, D. C. introduces Christ as saying: "Surely the beauty and excellence of this virtue are so well known that, even though they who practice it are only a few, still every one, even unbelievers, admire it. For even though they are overcome by the passion of the opposite vice, they are compelled to acknowledge that this virtue is most excellent, and that the man who with the aid of divine grace checks the assault of the flesh, is a heavenly being, an ark of wisdom, the sharer and depositary of divine secrets" *(Epistola Christi ad hominem,* P. II, c. 4).

But the Holy Spirit Himself has written the highest encomium in these words: "He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God" (1 Cor. 7, 32). Nothing greater or more sublime can be imagined than to cling perfectly to God and to be concerned only with the things of God.

For the same reason perfect chastity is certainly necessary for our state and must be sought in its true splendor. For internal purity which is an essential condition of union with God cannot be obtained without chastity (Cf. Const. 123).

B. Perfect chastity brings its own reward. For by it we are freed from those tribulations of the flesh with which others are constantly molested and disturbed. By it the peace of God which surpasses all understanding and keeps hearts and minds in Christ Jesus is prepared (Cf. Phil. 4, 7). Thus the way is paved to true interior prayer and contemplation by which profound ideas of the truths and mysteries of the faith are laid open to the soul, and such delights and such strength are granted it that it sees itself richly rewarded for the things it has given up for God.

This is the explanation why so many souls, devotees of perfect chastity, were able to sustain such hardships for their neighbor sick in soul and body, that they were rightfully called martyrs of charity. We may recall the words written of Judith: "For thou hast done manfully, and thy heart has been strengthened, because thou hast loved chastity, and after thy husband hast not known any other: therefore, also the hand of the Lord hath strengthened thee, and therefore, thou shalt be blest forever" (Judith 15, 11).

But virgins will at long last obtain their perfect and most splendid reward when they are united perfectly and inseparably with their Spouse and will rest from all their labors and struggles, and will receive what the Lord has promised: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5, 8). Then decked with the aureola

of virginity they will follow the Lamb without spot and will sing a new song which no one else can sing (Cf. Apoc. 14, 3. 4).

Therefore, "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory: for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men . . . and it triumpheth crowned forever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts" (Wisd. 4, 1.2).

80. Bonus Odor Christi

1. Just as sin is said to spread a stench, so virtue is said to spread a good odor as of incense or of a fragrant flower. This figure is usually applied in a special way to the virtue of perfect chastity, which seems to have descended from heaven rather than to have its birthplace upon earth, because it makes men, still in the flesh, live as though they were without flesh.

It is so much more permissible to use this figure, as untarnished chastity is a continuous sacrifice which is offered as a holocaust for a most sweet odor to the Lord (Cf. Num. 29, 2); and because "Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness" (Eph. 5, 2). No doubt, we shall highly please God, if we perfectly keep the vow of perfect chastity which we made when we dedicated ourselves to the perfect service of God.

2. With such conduct we shall inevitably be a source of edification to others, as we shall be a source of scandal, if we indulge in the opposite vice. The world itself will consider the slightest failure in guarding this virtue unspotted, a disgrace to ourselves. Therefore, we shall bring glory upon our Order by guarding the virtue of chastity, and we shall bring disgrace upon it by the vice of impurity. May we never forget what St. Peter urged upon all Christians, but which is in a special manner applicable to us: "But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a purchased people: that you may declare His virtues, Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2, 9). If we are really a chosen people and a royal priesthood, we should also walk worthy of our vocation (Cf. Eph. 4, 1), and not after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness (Cf. 2 Pet. 2, 10). Let us not grovel in the dust, since we are called to the heights; let us not serve our passions, since we ought to rule over them as kings and must, as priests, offer God the sacrifice of holiness and purity.

3. Since we are united to our Lord as members to their head,—and we are members of the mystical body of Christ,—we should spread His

fragrance, as St. Paul writes: "Now thanks be to God, Who always maketh us to triumph in Christ Jesus, and manifesteth the odor of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are the good odor of Christ unto God" (2 Cor. 2, 14, 15). In this sense our Constitutions admonish us: "Let (the brethren) so regulate the movements of the soul, that their speech may be chaste, their bearing modest, and all their actions breathe forth the most sweet fragrance of chastity, that they may thus be at all times and in all places the most sweet odor of Christ and His most Holy Mother" (Art. 123).

4. Christ our Lord has singled out chaste souls and virgins with a special love. Thus He chose a virgin as His Mother and a virgin for His foster-father and He honored St. John the Apostle with a privileged love. Although He did not reject or condemn sinners as long as they did penance and refrained from further sin, still He loved to feed among the lilies (Cf. Cant. 2, 16), and to be called the Spouse of virgins.

5. His Mother, however, to whose service we are especially dedicated and whom we resolved to follow when we took the habit of Carmel, is the Virgin of virgins. She clung to God alone with her whole soul, and as she was a Virgin before Christ's birth, she remained a Virgin in and after His birth.

What, therefore, is more fitting than that we live chastely in Christ and in Mary, and so strive to become always and everywhere the good odor of Christ and of His most Holy Mother?

CHAPTER THREE

HOLY OBEDIENCE

81. The Vow of Obedience

I. The vow of obedience is the greatest of the vows. This is already evident from the fact that in our primitive rule only the vow of obedience was expressly prescribed, since the other vows were considered as contained in it.

(a) The vow of obedience is a free promise made to God by which a religious obliges himself to execute the orders of his legitimate superiors, given according to the Rule and Constitutions. The religious by his vow of obedience does not renounce only a particular good as by the vows of poverty and chastity, but by surrendering his will, he subjects himself to his superior, so that he may keep nothing for himself. Nor does he, like servants or workmen, bind himself by contract to do certain work for wages or food and clothing, but he obliges himself to every kind of work and to do whatever the superior legitimately enjoins. He accordingly transfers all his faculties and powers to the authority of the order and of the superior.

In this way his holocaust is complete. There can be no doubt that the vow of obedience by itself is sufficient to constitute the religious state. For he who has given the greater, has included the less; he who cannot dispose of himself, cannot independently dispose of other things, and can no longer be bound to his family.

(b) Corresponding to the vow of obedience is the superior's dominative or paternal authority to command, which is based either on the natural relationship of father and son, or on a contract, as between servants and masters, or finally upon a vow, as among religious. Among the latter this authority is defined by the moral law, the laws of the Church and by the Rule and the Constitutions.

For no one can command what God forbids, because certainly "we ought to obey God, rather than men" (Acts 5, 29). Nor can the superior who is himself subject to the laws of the Church, command anything contrary to the laws of the Church, unless he has the power of dispensing. Finally, the superior must confine himself within the limits of the Rule and Constitutions, because he has been appointed for no other reason than to guard and enforce them, unless again he has the faculty of dispensing in a certain case. Consequently, he cannot issue orders against the Rule and Constitutions or beyond them, inasmuch as a religious obliges himself to nothing else than to observe the Rule and the Constitutions faithfully.

(c) However, when there is a doubt whether the command of the superior is just, the religious must obey. And it is not right to believe that everything which is not explicitly and literally contained in the Rules and Constitutions, is beyond them. In fact, superiors can order everything that according to the special aim and spirit of the respective order appears useful or necessary to preserve or renew religious observance, and for the faithful fulfillment of the religious vows.

II. The following are our superiors who enjoy this dominative authority to command:

(1) The Roman Pontiff, whom all religious are obliged to obey even in virtue of their vow (Can. 499; Const. 115).

(2) The Prior General, whom all are obliged to obey when he lawfully commands or forbids anything (Const. 506). "He enjoys full power in the Order as highest superior, of ordaining, changing or

abrogating as he judges fit according to the Constitutions. He can, after consulting the respective Provincials, transfer the brethren from province to province and from monastery to monastery" (Art. 510).

(3) The Prior Provincial in his province, who can remain and juridically preside in any monastery, when he finds it necessary for the good of regularity (Art. 454), and who can move the brethren from monastery to monastery, when and as he pleases (Art. 457).

(4) The local Prior who can really "command in virtue of holy obedience and then his subjects are obliged to obey him under vow" (Art. 311).

The other superiors or officials do not possess such authority, except the Subprior, when he, according to Art. 319, takes the Prior's place as Vicar. But all these superiors in their respective departments share in the so-called domestic authority, of which we shall presently speak.

III. (a) The orders of superiors using their dominative power, oblige under grave or venial sin, or under no sin, just as the superior intends to obligate. It can be supposed that ordinarily he does not wish to oblige under sin, lest sin be multiplied and because religious are considered to be mindful of his word without urging. If the superiors, however, really should wish to oblige under serious sin, he must in our Order give such a command "in virtue of holy obedience or in some other solemn formula," and moreover, in writing or before two witnesses (Art. 120), unless the Constitutions explicitly declare otherwise in a particular case, e.g., on the occasion of the Sacred Visitation (Art. 476).

(b) Even though the order given does not oblige under sin, the merit of obdience is not lost, if we faithfully execute the will of our superior, or carefully observe the Rule and Constitutions, inasmuch as the superior always acts in virtue of the offering we have made of ourselves, and we are commanded to regulate our lives according to the Rule and Constitutions (Art. 103).

A good religious will be exceedingly happy over this truth, since he can continually acquire new merits and new graces, and increase his glory in heaven. Accordingly he will not hesitate to keep in deed and in truth the obedience he has promised (Rule, 1).

82. Other Sources of Obedience

Although a religious binds himself to his order by vow, he is obliged to execute the commands of his superior not only by reason of his vow but also by reason of the other powers that his religious superiors possess in addition to the dominative power of which we have just treated.

(a) First, our superiors share in the power of ecclesiastical jurisdiction according to the norm of the Sacred Canons. Whereas their dominative power is private, their power of jurisdiction is official, deriving from the official authority of the Church by which her subjects are guided to their supernatural end. This authority is independent of the authority conferred by force of the vow. Therefore, it is exercised not only over the professed, but also over novices who are not yet bound by vow; indeed, in certain cases, also over domestics and servants and other secular inmates who remain day and night within the monastery. In virtue of this authority our superiors can give orders, pronounce judgments, threaten and inflict ecclesiastical penalties, and grant dispensations within the limits set by the Sacred Canons. Whatever is commanded by virtue of jurisdiction obliges by the respective virtue to which the work commanded belongs, or for the sake of which it is enjoined; whereas whatever is imposed by dominative power obliges by the virtue of religion (Cf. Const. 161, 233, 506).

(b) Secondly, religious superiors enjoy domestic or social authority. Such authority belongs to all who have charge of a family or community, in order that life may go on properly in the community. All, therefore, who belong to such a community are subject to this authority, and are obliged to obey it in all matters which are necessary for the good of the community. Such authority among professed religious coincides with dominative authority, but novices, candidates, servants, and pupils who live in such a community are subject to it. In this sense we say: "The novice is subject to the authority of the master and of the superiors of the Order and is obliged to obey them" (Can. 561, n. 2; Const. 47).

How seriously do those religious err who imagine they must obey only when they are ordered formally to obey in virtue of their vow! If this were true, they would not be better than seculars. For these are frequently compelled by dire necessity to be subject to "masters, not only good and gentle, but also the forward" (1 Pet. 2, 18), whereas religious superiors are expressly warned not to abuse their dominative authority (Const. 311). This is not remarkable, since religious, after they have freely and of their own accord surrendered their will to their superiors by the vow of obedience, are expected, for the sake of their perfection, to obey an order "as children of obedience" (1. Pet. 1, 14).

83. A Short Explanation of Our Holy Rule

Since our Holy Rule obliges under venial sin, though not all its

contents are formal precepts, but rather counsels, we shall here briefly discuss it and show what, in view of the text and by reason of tradition, is imposed as a true obligation and what as a mere counsel.

Chapter I. *The Prior and the Three Promises to be Made to Him.* Here three things are prescribed: (1) that one religious govern the Order as Prior (General); (2) that he be elected to office by the greater and graver part. The method of electing superiors is now more accurately determined by the laws of the Church and by the Constitutions; (3) that all the religious make three vows to the Prior General. *De facto* our religious profession is pronounced in the name of the Most Reverend Prior General. The laws of the Church and the Constitutions of the Order define how and under what conditions profession shall be made.

Chapter II. *Acceptance of Places.* The words to be specially noted in this chapter are: "suitable and convenient for the observances of your Order." Although these words were of greater moment at the time our Order was more contemplative, they do not lack their value even today. It is better not to have monasteries in which observance cannot be held according to the spirit of the Order. Moreover, particular laws determine what conditions must be observed in making new foundations.

Chapter III. *The Cells of the Brethren.* There are two commands, (1) that each religious have a separate cell; (2) that these cells shall not be chosen by the individuals but shall be assigned by the Prior with the consent of the others. Now that circumstances are changed, Chapter XV of the Constitutions orders that a separate individual cell shall be assigned to each religious by the Prior alone. But this separation is no longer such that one cell is at some distance from the other as it was in an age completely eremitical, but the cells are adjoining, as was already explicitly prescribed by Clement VIII and Urban VIII.

Chapter IV. *Meals in Common.* This chapter, in which an earlier practice is changed, orders: (1) that the meals be taken in a common refectory, and not in the individual cells; (2) that the allotted portions be taken in common and all individual service excluded; (3) that spiritual reading be held during meals. Only the Sacred Scriptures are recommended by the Holy Rule for such reading, though the reading is at present more accurately determined by the Constitutions, (165 and 166). From all of which it is clear that an exact common life is insisted upon with regard to food, and that all private eating, outside of necessity, is foreign to the intention of the Holy Rule. Since spiritual reading is prescribed during meals, by that very fact, silence is ordered in the dining room.

Chapter V. *Not Changing or Exchanging Cells.* Since it is not the privilege of the individual Brother to choose his own cell, but it is the duty of the Prior to assign a cell to each, it is forbidden to change one's cell at will. But "the Superior can exchange the cells of the Brethren as it suits him" (Const. 172).

Chapter VI. *The Prior's Cell.* Two things are ordered: (1) that the Prior's cell be near the entrance of the place; (2) that all things in the monastery be done according to his arrangement. Although the former is not so urgent in our day because of the changed form of monasteries, the latter remains in full force, as is clearly evident from the nature of things and from the prescriptions of the Constitutions, especially Art. 116 and 118. However, according to the norm of Church Law and of the Constitutions the advice or consent of the community is required for important business.

Chapter VII. *Dwelling in the Cells.* This chapter is of the highest importance, because in it the primitive spirit of our Order is unmistakably expressed. For it prescribes, (1) that all shall keep the solitude of their cell, as far as possible; (2) that dwelling in solitude, they give themselves to God in prayer and contemplation. The Rule itself wisely adds: "unless engaged in some other lawful occupations." It is clear that these "lawful occupations" are much more frequent now that we have been assigned to the active life, than they were formerly during the strictly eremitical stage. Moreover, Eugene IV permitted legitimate recreation at proper times. Thus the law, *juxta eas,* "near the cells," no longer holds since the form of the monastery was changed. But that we may be found faithful to the spirit of our Holy Rule, we should love the solitude of our cell and moreover, strive as fervently as possible for recollection and conversation with God. He who neglects this, even though he makes the prescribed meditations does not satisfy the precept of the Rule; whereas, on the contrary, he who is lawfully absent from meditation, but who tries to keep his soul recollected in God among his various occupations, fulfills the Rule.

Chapter VIII. *The Canonical Hours.* The command, (1) is to have Office in choir; (2) that those who are unable to say the Choir Office shall each day recite a certain number of Paters. At present the matter has been accurately defined for the clerics by the Church itself (Rule XI, Const. 62), whereas the Constitutions determine the number of prayers to be recited by the lay Brothers (Const. 82). That the Divine Office should be recited in common is also evident from the fact that according to the Rule, Compline and Prime are the limits of strict silence.

Chapter IX. *Not Possessing Property.* This chapter not only in-

culcates the strictly common life and, therefore, the poverty incumbent on each individual, but also forbids the monasteries themselves to hold any possessions with the exception of a few animals. Today, the obligation of common life and of poverty for the individual remains, but by general permission of the Church the Order, provinces and monasteries are capable of acquiring and possessing temporal goods with fixed or founded revenues (Const. 128; cf. *Anal.* X, 12ff).

Chapter X. *The Oratory and Daily Assistance at Mass.* The following two precepts are enjoined: (1) an oratory should be constructed as far as possible in the midst of the cells that all may have convenient access to it. In this matter also, change of times and places must be considered. "It is to be noted," says Blessed John Soreth, "a larger or smaller size is demanded according to different places; because, what would be a small oratory in a well populated town, would be a temple in a village where there is not such a large number of people." (2) All should assemble daily for the solemnities of Mass. Thus also, the celebration of the Conventual Mass is prescribed. Besides, the celebration and hearing of Mass is now governed by Canon Law (Cf. Const. 138 and 111). But each Carmelite is bound also by his Holy Rule to hear Mass daily, so that, unless necessity excuses he commits venial sin if he is not present at Mass. However, the private celebrating or hearing of Mass satisfies the precept of the Rule, as Lezana affirms (*Expositio Regulae Carmelitarum,* n. 112).

Chapter XI. *Chapter and Correction of Faults.* According to this chapter, the Chapter of Faults is to be held every week in order to strengthen regular discipline and promote the perfection of the religious. This obligation primarily rests on the Prior who does not satisfy the precept of the Rule if he does not hold the Chapter each week (Cf. Const. 307). But each one of the Brethren is also obliged to be present at the Chapter.

Chapters XII and XIII. *Fast and Abstinence.* The prescriptions of the Rule about fast and abstinence oblige under venial sin. However, authority to reduce the number of fast and abstinence days has been granted to the Prior General by the Sovereign Pontiffs, Pius II and Sixtus IV. Therefore, the statutes of the Constitutions have their force through consent of the Prior General who can modify them. Where the Prior General has left the prescriptions of the Rule intact in this matter, these fasts and abstinences continue to bind under venial sin; whereas the fasts enjoined by only the Constitutions, viz., from Easter to the Exaltation of the Cross oblige only under penalty.*

*(Translator's note: the fast days from Easter to the Exaltation of the Cross are the Fridays and the vigils.)

Chapter XIV. *Spiritual Arms.* Formal commands are not found in this chapter, except insofar as general precepts to love God and our neighbor are expressed. But excellent counsels are found for the entire spiritual life, drawn from Sacred Scripture, but especially from the Epistles of St. Paul. The religious should frequently meditate on these so that they may penetrate mind and heart, and mold their whole spiritual life.

Chapter XV. *Assiduous Work to Avoid Idleness.* Here probably a formal precept is not found, but only a general law to work diligently in order to avoid sin and to promote virtue. The obligation rises from the very condition and character of the human race and from the nature of the spiritual life. It is confirmed by the words and example of St. Paul. The Holy Rule, therefore, inculcates upon all Carmelites the famous saying: "Work and pray." It is evident that there are other motives besides those the Rule gives, e.g., love for the Order and one's brethren, apostolic zeal, the necessity of avoiding scandal, etc. Furthermore, "let him who will not work, not eat."

Chapter XVI. *Silence.* Silence is strictly enjoined from Compline until Prime of the following day has been said. Whoever breaks this silence without necessity, commits venial sin. For the rest of the day silence must be observed according to the circumstances of time, place and occupation. However, precaution should be taken against too much talking. Chapter XIII of the Constitutions gives more particular rules concerning this matter.

Chapter XVII. *An Exhortation to the Prior Concerning Humility.* The intention is not to impose a precept, but to recommend the law of the Gospel which our Lord Himself inculcated upon superiors that they should never abuse their authority or dignity nor seek their own, but rather others' interests.

Chapter XVIII. *An Exhortation to the Brethren to Honor Their Prior.* This exhortation corresponds to the preceding. It is not a special precept of the Rule, but a reminder of the Gospel law about honoring superiors who take Christ's place. Thus, therefore, the injunction of the first chapter is repeated. From this it is evident how important in the mind of our Holy Legislator prompt and humble obedience is for the Carmelite life.

Conclusion. In conclusion our Holy Legislator tries to arouse enthusiasm for the highest perfection, since he excites us to supereroga-

tory works, i.e., to such as are not commanded by the Holy Rule, but in his wisdom he advises us to use discernment in all things.

The Holy Rule, therefore, contains not only precepts, but also many counsels. The more perfectly we follow the latter, the more perfectly we shall live. It will be to the best interest of us all to drink in more deeply day by day the spirit of our Holy Rule by repeated meditations. If we have not acquired this spirit, even the precepts will be useless.

For a fuller exposition of the Holy Rule consult: Blessed John Soreth, cf. text for Latin titles in *Speculum Carmelitarum,* t. I, p. II, 689-736.—John Baptist de Lezana, *Summa Quaestionum Regularium,* Lyons 1656, t. III, pp. 192-214.—Finally, Angelus a SS. Corde Jesu, C. D., New Edition by Nicholas a P.C.M., Burgos, 1929, pp. 172-219, in which (p. 177) other authors and books are indicated. Cf. likewise, *Life in Carmel,* pp. 167f.

84. Sins against Obedience

(a) An apostate from the Order who withdraws completely from religious authority commits a most grievous sin against obedience. An apostate is one who after perpetual vows, whether solemn or simple, unlawfully leaves a religious house with the intention of not returning or who, even though he has left lawfully, does not return with the intention of withdrawing from obedience (Can. 644, n. 1). Such an apostate incurs by law itself excommunication reserved to his major superior, . . . is excluded from lawful ecclesiastical services, and is deprived of all the privileges of his Order (Can. 2385, cf. Const. 297).

(b) A fugitive, i.e., one who for only a time withdraws from obedience, also commits a grave sin. For a fugitive is one who deserts a religious house without the superiors' permission with the intention of returning (Can. 644, n. 3). The fugitive *ipso facto* incurs the privation of office, if he has any in the Order, and also suspension reserved to his own major superior, if he should be in Sacred Orders. When he returns, he must be punished according to the Constitutions; and if these make no provision in the matter, the major superior shall inflict punishments according to the gravity of the fault (Can. 2386; cf. Const. 297).

Besides, "the apostate and the fugitive are by no means freed from the obligation of the Rule and the vows, and must return to their Order without delay" (Can. 645, n. 1).

(c) According to what was said above, religious sin grievously against the vow of obedience "when something is enjoined on them according to the Rule and Constitutions in virtue of holy obedience

or in some other solemn formula if the precept transgressed has been imposed by the superior in writing or before two witnesses" (Const. 120).

(d) When a precept of the Holy Rule is violated a venial sin is committed, unles it concerns the violation of a vow or neglect of Divine Office, because both the violation of the vows and the omission of Divine Office are governed according to the general norms of Moral Theology (Const. 122).

(e) Since the Constitutions do not oblige under sin but only under penalty, whoever transgresses them does not *per se* contract sin. For the legislator did not wish to multiply sin without reason. Rather he intended to appeal to the fervor of the religious. Besides, the observance of the Constitutions can be enforced by punishments. Therefore, it is expressly said: "We wish, however, and we command that their transgressors be severely punished, especially superiors who do not observe them or who are negligent in punishing those at fault" (Const. 122).

If, therefore, the superior inflicts fitting penalties on violators of the Constitutions, they should realize that the superior is not unjust, inasmuch as he is compelled by office and conscience to punish such violations.

Moreover, violators of the Constitutions should remember that having violated the Constitutions they have not attained the degree of perfection which God expects of them through the observance of the Constitutions, and for the attainment of which He has also conferred the necessary graces. Therefore, they cannot repair this loss in a better way than by humbly undergoing the punishment inflicted by the superior; in fact they themselves should freely seek proper punishment from their superior.

(f) Nor should religious forget that they may sin for other reasons when they violate the Constitutions or other orders which *per se* were not imposed under sin; yes, at times they can even sin mortally. Such reasons are:

1. If the reason of the transgression is sinful, e.g., if it happens through pride, sloth, greed, etc. Sin is frequently committed in this way. Each one must, therefore, ask himself why he broke the Constitutions, or what is worse, why he is accustomed to break them. When the Constitutions are violated habitually, a certain sinful inclination cannot be lacking.

2. If scandal is given. Who can deny that the transgressions of one religious, especially of an older one or of one honored with some dig-

nity, is always a temptation and an incitement to others, especially younger ones, to do the same thing, and that there is, therefore, danger of relaxing religious observance? For many wish to be good and perfect, but when they see contrary example they are struck with human respect or fear and begin to withdraw from the pursuit of perfection and from regular observance. Let each one, therefore, beware of judging his shortcomings too lightly, and of overlooking the possibility of scandal.

3. If the transgression is done out of contempt. It is to be noted, however, that here it is a question of despising authority and not the chance imperfection of a superior. Nor is contempt present if one transgresses an article of the Constitutions because he considers it to be of minor importance or not in keeping with time or place. But he truly contemns authority who in effect says: "I refuse to be subject; no one may command me; I wish to be free and to direct my own course." The same is true if one who refuses to acknowledge or accept a lawfully appointed superior and perhaps, even promotes sedition among his brethren. Since by such contempt the foundations of religious life are overturned, it is clear how serious is such a state of mind.

Without doubt no religious intends to proceed to such a degree of perversity. But the following should be noted: "He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little" (Ecclus. 19, 1), and "He that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater" (Luke 16, 10). If anyone shall practically make a habit of breaking the Constitutions; if anyone has the daily practice of murmuring against his superiors or forming evil judgments about them; if anyone does not battle against his passions and against his evil inclinations as they arise; such a state of mind will be created in him that when stronger temptations come upon him he will not shrink even from contempt of authority and from despising every advice and warning. Therefore, we must also believe the remainder of Christ's words: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater" (Luke 16, 10).

85. The Virtue and the Perfection of Obedience

1. Although, strictly speaking, he who outwardly performs the duty imposed upon him is obedient and fulfills his vow, still the end of the vow is not the external performance of a work, but rather the virtue and perfection of obedience. Therefore, the obedience for which the religious must strive, is the virtue which renders the will

ready to execute the will of a superior when he lawfully gives a command. Usually three degrees of this virtue are given: (a) the obedience of performance, when the work enjoined is really accomplished; (b) the obedience of the will, when one also interiorly subjects his will to the will of his superior, so that he wishes what his superior wishes and because his superior wishes it; (c) the obedience of the understanding or of the judgment, when together with the will, the intellect also is made subject, so that it considers the command just and fitting.

II. The Rule and Constitutions expect us to render perfect obedience. Thus the Rule, having built all religious life on obedience, not only admonishes us to observe in truth and in deed the obedience we have promised (Rule, I), but also to consider in the person of our superior the person of Christ whose place he holds (Rule, XVIII). The Constitutions, however, explain these points more fully and inculcate three points:

(a) That we strive to obey those lawfully in charge in all lawful and becoming matters (114), that is:

1. *Simply and without discussion.* Thus it is not allowed to seek the reasons why the superior has ordered this or that. For the superior will reply with an explanation of his reasons; and to perform a task only because of reasons clearly understood is not obedience. For in this case we do not obey our superior, but our own judgment. It is sufficient for us to know that it is a lawful and upright matter. For this reason Father Dominic of St. Albert gave his novices this precept: "Let this devout saying prevail among them, 'Christ commands; it is enough.' Moreover, to the matters enjoined they should not only not oppose excuses—a matter which should be considered a serious mistake among them—but should not even listen to the reasons for the orders given them, since as ones truly obedient they should know only that God wills it" (*Exercitationes,* c. 7).

2. *Quickly and without delay.* An order should be fulfilled as soon as possible, and at the time for which it is prescribed. Other matters should rather be postponed. Nothing is more urgent than that obedience be satisfied, especially since it is written: "Likewise, no one should dare undertake anything, such as preaching, hearing confessions and the like, without the express permission of his superior" (Const. 118; cf. 106). Nor is it permitted to waste time through laziness or negligence in executing an order, but rather time should be redeemed with diligence and solicitude. He who employs more time on a work enjoined than is necessary for doing it well, does not act rightly.

3. *Cheerfully and not out of sadness and necessity.* It is not proper to obey outwardly and to murmur inwardly, especially since God loveth a cheerful giver (Cf. 2 Cor. 9, 7), and the duty of superiors is made easier by religious who obey cheerfully. These temptations to sadness and murmuring should be promptly and immediately repelled, lest they rob obedience of all merit and make it more difficult. Religious must extinguish these fiery darts of the most wicked one with the shield of faith. If the superior should give an order in an unbecoming manner, the subjects should remember that they "can be made perfect even through the defects of their superiors" (Const. 114).

(b) That we render obedience not only of the outward deed, but also of our will. For our Constitutions explicitly admonish us always to overcome our repugnances and difficulties, and to submit to the judgment of obedience and to the will of our superior all affairs and undertakings (Art. 119). It is true that frequently we are unable to hinder our weak and corrupt nature from objecting, but obedience does not on this account become imperfect, provided that we obey in spite of our repugnance. For obedience is not a matter of nature, but of the will. In fact, the greater the repugnances and difficulties, the more meritorious, other things being equal, will our obedience be. Besides, these repugnances and difficulties are diminished, the more quickly and the more courageously we begin the work imposed. But they grow by delay.

(c) That we also subject our judgment. For "subjects should convince themselves that everything ordered by the superiors is just, unless it is clearly seen of itself to be bad. They should conquer their own judgment and feelings . . ." (Art. 119).

It is clear that this submission of our intellect or judgment is not possible under all conditions. For when the truth is evident, we cannot force our intellects to the opposite, so that it will hold falsehood for truth. Therefore, whenever it is clear that the superior is wrong, we cannot say he is not wrong or that his command is proper. No one demands this of us for the perfection of obedience. Still we should obey and the merit in this case is the greater as it is more clearly evident that we are obeying solely for God's sake.

But generally the superior's mistake is not evident, and in this case it is a matter of perfection to submit one's own judgment to the superior's, and to convince oneself that what is commanded is just.

Moreover, we should always have before us the following facts:

1. Superiors on account of their office have special light and grace

to direct their subjects, whereas subjects receive grace to obey. Therefore, superiors are supposed to be more fitted than others for judging a particular case and for selecting just means.

2. Superiors can have several reasons for their actions, which we do not know and which they need not make known to us.

3. Although objectively and at the moment the arrangements of superiors are really not suitable, nevertheless, according to the plans of Divine Providence, they can be more suitable for the future than we suspect. Therefore, it is undoubtedly God's will that we obey, and refrain from every contrary judgment.

4. It is certain that we offer no better remedy for a superior's error, if there is one, than humble obedience, because on account of our obedience God will correct whatever the superior may have done wrong.

5. It is never lawful to accuse the superior of bad will or wrong intention. For it is God alone Who judges the interior.

III. Nevertheless, it is no obstacle to perfect obedience humbly to explain our difficulties to our superior, or if we think that he is making a mistake or is ignorant of some circumstances, modestly and reverently to point out the mistake or the circumstances to him, so that, when he is better informed, he may perhaps judge and order otherwise. But if he chooses not to agree with us and rather to abide by his own judgment, then we must simply obey and humbly submit our judgment on account of the motives given above. It is appropriate in this matter to quote the words of our older Constitutions, (1904, 209), "Each one shall be employed in the work assigned to him. In this matter he should leave the free disposition to his superior who directs him in Christ's place. However, he may modestly propose his reasons, but then he must agree entirely with the superior's decision." "No one, of any dignity or rank should presume to argue with the superior; but should rather show him the highest respect in word and deed" (Const. 117).

IV. The more deeply the faith of Christ imbues us with reverence for superiors and authority, the more easily and the more perfectly shall we observe all these things. Therefore, we should as carefully as possible close our ears in the presence of those whom we recognize as murmurers, nor should we ever give the least encouragement to the whisperings of the devil or of self-love beneath which pride is concealed.

The supports of perfect obedience are humility and faith. On the other hand the roots of disobedience and rebellion are unchecked pas-

sions. If we cultivate the former, and check the latter, we shall have no difficulty in obeying.

86. Obedience and Community Exercises

A. Our life is placed under the merit of continuous obedience by the fact that we are obliged to be present at the common acts or regular exercises as they are called. In truth we are obliged to be present at the common spiritual exercises (Const. c. XIII), at the Divine Office (Const. c. XI; Rule, VIII), at common meals (Rule, IV; Const. 163, 164, 169), even at common recreations (Const. 180). All things must be done according to a daily schedule. Chapter VII of our Constitutions plainly speaks of "The Regular and Common Life." There it is established as a general principle, "We should diligently guard against a clash of opinion in our activities, for it is the mother of discord. Harmony, however, is greatly promoted if everyone is made to share, according to the superior's arrangements, in the work, offices and exercises, and if all singularity is avoided" (101). And "no one of whatever dignity he may be, should dare without the Prior's permission undertake any work that would prevent his presence at the common exercises" (106).

B. All the religious therefore and also the novices should follow these rules:

(1) Common exercises are to be considered of highest value and are to be preferred to every private exercise, no matter how holy and perfect. Such is the teaching of the Saints which our Brother John of St. Samson explains when he teaches: "The life of a religious is humble regularity which he must prefer to every occupation that is not expressly commanded; he must strenuously avoid every dispensation" (*Theoremata,* p. 22, n. 15). "Not even the whole earth is to be saved at the expense of religious perfection and regular discipline" (ibid. n. 14). Let us not consider these statements exaggerations, since, by the regular life, not only obedience but also many other virtues are exercised and many dangers and losses avoided. This is the holy and perfect service of God.

(2) We should, as far as we can, attend every community exercise without exception. For as soon as our own choice prevails, regularity and obedience disappear. If attendance at the common exercises is omitted without necessity, their purpose is attained neither for the community nor for the individual. It is undoubtedly easy to be present at one or the other exercises when no obstacle is in the way; but it is the highest virtue, *never* to be absent. Religious who succeed in so doing,

are the mainstay of religious discipline. Whence it is evident that dispensations should not be asked without necessity nor without great and pressing utility. Much less may the religious withdraw from such exercises without permission; for "unless the contrary is expressly provided for, no one, of whatever dignity he may be or whatever office he may hold is exempted or shall be considered exempt from assistance at choir and other community exercises through any privilege or custom whatever, except for sickness or some other cause approved by the superior" (Const. 104).

(3) All must come to the common exercises with the greatest punctuality and promptness. For obedience should be accomplished "quickly and without delay" (Const. 114), and "those who make it a habit to come late to Matins and the other Hours, or to whatever is sung or read in choir, or to the refectory, chapter, scholastic lecture, or to any exercise to which they are called by the sound of the bell, should be severely punished" (Const. 142).

By tardiness and negligence obedience is violated; injustice is done to the rest of the brethren, who may have to wait—the exercise in question may be disturbed, and very frequently scandal is given. Therefore, Father Dominic of St. Albert urged the novices to obey immediately, at the sound of the bell, and immediately leave off the forming of a letter of the alphabet just begun, encouraging themselves with the words, "This is the signal of the great King; come, and let us offer Him our gifts" (*Exercitationes,* c. 7; cf. nn. 208-209).

All should be persuaded that regular and punctual assistance at the community exercises is an excellent school of perfect virtue.

87. The Excellence and Reward of Obedience

Father Michael of St. Augustine sees the excellence of obedience principally in the fact "that the only-begotten Son of God was so enthralled by love of it, that He forsook the bosom of the Eternal Father and deigned to assume a human body that He might practice obedience most perfectly" (*Inst. Myst.* III; tr. 1, c. 2). He also calls it the sister of the three theological virtues (ibid. c. 3). St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi esteemed this virtue so highly that she would not execute heavenly commands received in ecstasy except with the approval of her superiors, and once preferred for several days to crawl on the earth than to oppose even in the least an obedience imposed upon her (AA.SS. May 5, 676). This is not difficult to understand, for:

(1) Obedience, as we have said above (81) is the most noble and most perfect of all oblations since by it we offer to God our own

will, our own most sacred possession. God can take to Himself all the rest, even our life, whenever He wishes, but He will not force our free will, so that we may voluntarily offer it to Him. For this very reason "Obedience is a virtue that implants the other virtues in the soul, and having implanted them, guards them" (Const. Art. 114).

(2) Obedience is the only safe road to salvation and to perfection. For there is no greater or more dangerous obstacle than our will when blinded and seduced by our passions. When this obstacle is removed, everything is smooth and straight. Thus "an obedient man shall speak of victory" (Prov. 21, 28), and our own Brother John of St. Samson is of the opinion that, "so short and safe is the road of obedience that he who continues on it to the end can say that he has reached the port of desired happiness, as it were in a dream and without effort" (*Theoremata,* p. 21, n. 1).

(3) Obedience is singularly and superlatively meritorious. God does not so much look at the deed itself as at the intention and will with which it has been done. That is why He declared to Saul by the mouth of Samuel that obedience is better than victims (Cf. 1 Kings 15, 22), and He rejected the fasts and haircloths of the Israelites because their own will was found in their fast days (Cf. Isa. 58, 3). Rightly, therefore, John of St. Samson, says, "We must obey with simplicity when we are ordered to set aside our austerities and other works of virtue. For we must prefer to be holy and truthful at heart rather than in our deeds, and to be content to be such as God wants us to be, not caring what we shall do or not do" (*Theoremata,* p. 22, n. 11).

(4) By obedience one's powers are wonderfully increased and highly successful deeds performed, as our Lord said to St. Theresa of Jesus, "My daughter, all things are possible to obedience." For the blessing of God is most abundantly poured on deeds of obedience, and "no word shall be impossible with God" (Luke 1, 37). We shall never accomplish greater or more sublime things, than when we obey. The day of Judgment will demonstrate this before the whole world. Nothing, therefore, is more advantageous and more necessary for the glory of God, for spreading His Kingdom, and for promoting our Order, than the perfect and blind obedience of all religious. Although at times, another course may seem preferable, all should be mindful of the following: "There is a way which seemeth just to a man: but the ends thereof lead to death" (Prov. 14, 12). Obedience, however, can lead only to life and only give life, since it is true that "unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone.

But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12, 24. 25). By obedience we die to ourselves.

(5) Finally, obedience is the perfect imitation of Christ and His most blessed Mother. For when our Lord came into this world He promised absolute obedience to His eternal Father, "Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of Me: that I should do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10, 7). Truly He became "obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. 2, 8), and throughout His life He sought not His own will but the will of His Father Who had sent Him (Cf. John 5, 30). He was also subject to men. Indeed nothing more of His childhood and youth is known to us than that, "He was subject to them" (Luke 2, 51). And she who was elevated to the supreme dignity of God's Mother was no stranger to the spirit of obedience, and humbly answered the Angel, "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord" (Luke 1, 38).

Accordingly, Blessed John Soreth admonishes us, "If, O man, it is beneath your dignity to follow the example of a man, it will not, I believe, be beneath you to follow your Creator. It is little to be subject to God, unless you are also subject to every creature on God's account, whether he be the Prior General as excelling, or the Provincial or Prior as sent and appointed by him. In order that he, whom disobedience has separated from God, may return straight-way by obedience, he must no doubt fulfill his promise in deed and truth; for whoever openly or secretly endeavors to have his spiritual father impose upon him what he himself wishes, deceives himself if he should perchance congratulate himself on his supposed obedience. For he does not in this case obey his Prelate, but rather his Prelate obeys him . . . In promising obedience to his Prior, the truly obedient man gives up both likes and dislikes. How few are found today so perfectly obedient as to reject their own will, and to always, and without ceasing do not what they themselves wish, but what God wishes, saying with the Apostle, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me do' (Acts. 9, 6)? A brief statement but filled with mystery! A unique statement, but efficacious and worthy of all acceptance! Indeed today the pusillanimity and perversity of many demand that one should ask of them, "What can I do for you?" They do not ask, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" Today the minister of Christ must consider what commands his subjects wish, and so it is necessary for the superior to obey the will of his subjects. This is not to execute one's promised obedience in deed and in truth, but is a departure from the strict meaning of the Rule. For they are not ready to follow, they are not determined

to obey in all things Him who came not to do His own, but to do His Father's will" (*Expositio Regulae,* second text, c. 11).

To whom, therefore, except to him who has practiced perfect obedience, will it be said, "Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25, 21). For "he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23, 12). And even in this life the obedient man shall enjoy a certain foretaste of heavenly joy by means of the peace which surpasses all understanding and which is the fruit of a good conscience truly obedient and not fearing the reckoning. Such a one is numbered among those of whom it has been said, "Much peace have they who love Thy law" (Ps. 118, 165). The assertion of Blessed Frances of Amboise is true, "He who renounces his own will cannot perish" (*Speculum Carmelitanum,* n. 2586).

Accordingly let us have no other ambition than to be "children of obedience" (1 Pet. 1, 14). The greatest charisms are suspect when obedience is lacking; but there is no better preparation or disposition for the highest gifts than humble obedience.

PART THREE
THE CARMELITE LIFE
A HOLY HEART

88. Foreword

(a) So far we have treated of the origin of man, his fall, redemption and the final goal for which he must strive. In so doing we have become acquainted with the fundamentals and the content of the entire spiritual life. For everything in the spiritual life rests on the fact that man was created by God and for God, and that he may be closely united to God, his last end, here on earth and in heaven.

Then we have looked into the religious life which proposes nothing else than to draw final, practical conclusions from those things which have been explained concerning the spiritual life. The primary end of religious life is to develop the spiritual life more easily, more securely, and more perfectly, and bring it to its goal. All this we have explained at greater length above.

(b) Now, however, it is our duty to see what we must do to acquire perfection in the Carmelite Order. Having examined the obligations we undertake by the vows of religion, we must now learn, by considering both obstacles and means, how we can fulfill those obligations perfectly. Therefore that which follows has an entirely practical and concrete aspect.

The book already quoted *De Institutione Primorum Monachorum* has already clearly pointed out the way for us. Treating of the end of the Carmelite life, at that time purely eremitical, it has this to say: "The end of this life is recognized to be twofold; one indeed, we acquire by our own labor and practice of virtue through the help of God's grace. The aim of the first is to offer God a heart holy and free from every stain of actual sin.—The other aim is conferred as a free gift from God, viz., not only after death but even during this mortal life, to taste in some degree in one's heart, and to feel in one's soul the influence of God's presence and the sweetness of supernal glory" (Cf. *Anal.* III, 348):

(c) Consequently, two sections will be necessary: the one to explain how we may present a heart holy and free from every stain of actual sin; the other, to explain how we may commune with God by prayer, so that God, if it so please Him, may pour into our hearts rendered holy and yearning for Him, the grace of mystical contemplation.

The one cannot be separated from the other, "because," as Father Michael of St. Augustine says, "no one can rise to the divine life in God, without first dying to all things which are not God" (*Inst. Myst.* IV, Prologue). One assists and promotes the other. The more

one strives after purity of heart, the greater advances he will make in prayer; just as he who more earnestly communes with God in prayer will the more easily cleanse his heart from all that soils it. But both together will prepare and dispose the heart to receive more sublime graces of prayer and to find a closer union with God.

Let us, therefore, eagerly put our hand to the plow and direct our soul to the loftiest heights. Our reward will correspond to our fervor.

(d) That which we shall treat in this section is suggested also by these words of our Constitutions, "The purpose of the novitiate year is to train the soul of the novice by means of fitting exercises to thoroughly eradicate the roots of vice, to restrain the emotions, and to acquire virtue" (Art. 41). Therefore, we shall explain (1) what must be cleansed from the soul; (2) what must be avoided; (3) what virtues are to be acquired; (4) the law of continuous progress; (5) the means to be employed to obtain this end.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONQUEST OF EVIL HABITS

89. The Vices in General

(a) In order that our heart may become holy, i. e. consecrated to God, it must before all be cleansed from every stain and deformity of sin. For by sin the perfect union with God for which we must strive is hindered. Every effort must therefore be made not only that mortal sin, by which our union and friendship with God are entirely broken, but also that venial sin be entirely eliminated. For nothing unclean shall enter heaven. Besides, God does not pour His communications so copiously upon the soul as long as it remains even slightly subject to sin.

Since we have already treated of mortal and venial sin above, it will not be necessary to say more here. But since the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, our spiritual life must begin with a great horror of every sin, no matter how slight. In perfect and holy souls, this horror must constantly increase and advance, so that growth in horror for sin is a sign of progress in the spiritual life. The closer one comes to God, the more he will abominate every sin as an injury to God, because it is an object of deepest abomination and hatred to God.

(b) However, the resolution to avoid actual sin will lack success, unless the roots of sin, i. e., the habitual inclinations to sin, which formerly were called capital sins, or better, capital vices, are plucked out.

Seven are usually enumerated. They spring from original sin and lead to actual sin. They can be compared to a spark under the ashes, which under proper conditions, is fanned to a great conflagration and causes serious damage. This danger will never be lacking until the fire has been entirely extinguished. Since man is composed of soul and body, these vices are rooted partly in the soul and partly in the body. The vice of the soul is pride; the vices of the body are gluttony, lust, sloth. The rest, i. e., greed, envy and anger, serve the others to attain their ends or they flow from them.

(c) If these germs of sin are entirely plucked out, sin itself will be destroyed and will be unable to sprout further. And so the heart will be holy and free from every stain of actual sin.

Therefore, from the very beginning of the spiritual life, the soul must pay special attention to plucking out the vices, as it should also

realize that these sources of sin will not be destroyed in one day or in a short time. For even though manifest sin may be absent, the roots are not yet dead. Yes, the farther one progresses, the more subtle will the working of these vices be. The roots are more deeply set than we usually suspect. Therefore, it is necessary: (1) that each one know himself perfectly; for which reason much prayer, frequent and accurate examination of conscience, constant watchfulness are required, as also advice and correction from others; (2) that we set to work at once, and not postpone until tomorrow what can be done today. We have learned that the novitiate was established for this purpose; (3) that we patiently persevere, even though we discover in ourselves greater and more frequent defects the more we strive, or if we fall time and time again. For a drop hollows a stone not by its force, but by its frequency. Wisely does Thomas a Kempis teach, "All have not equal difficulties to overcome and mortify; but a diligent and zealous person will make greater progress, though he have more passions than another who is well regulated, but less fervent in the pursuit of virtue" (*Im. Chr.* 1, 25).

90. Pride

I. Pride, considered as a special sin, is the inordinate desire for an excellence deserving of honor and reverence. Therefore, St. Agustine asserts, "What is pride but a desire for inordinate superiority? For that superiority is inordinate which desires to become and to be in some way its own first principle, ignoring the principle to which the soul should cling" (*De Civitate Dei,* 14, 13, 1).

(a) Such pride works in four ways: (1) Man holds that he possesses some excellence of himself; (2) he thinks some gift has been given him from above because of his own merits; (3) he boasts of having that which he really does not have; (4) he supposes himself to be better than others and to possess something others do not possess, so that he looks down on them (Cf. II-II, q. 162, a. 4).

It is clear, therefore, that pride is a great untruth. In reality, we have received everything from on high, so that St. Paul censuring the proud asks, "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. 4, 7).

It is not lawful for us to imagine that this or that has been given to us because of our merits and sanctity. Have we not deserved punishments rather than rewards? Moreover, whence, may I ask, are these merits and virtues, if indeed they are found in us? Is

not "our sufficiency from God" (2 Cor. 3, 5)? Is not every least one of our merits founded in the merits of Christ our Lord, in Whom as in our Head we have been incorporated purely through grace? And how much have others also, as our parents, teachers, friends, benefactors, known and unknown, by example, teaching, prayers and sacrifices contributed that we might be such as we are? Therefore, we must confess, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us; but to Thy name be glory" (Ps. 113, 9).

But if it seems that we do excel others, if it is true that we do possess some accidentals such as knowledge or skill, we have no right on this account to despise others, as though we were better than they. "For who distinguisheth thee" (1 Cor. 4, 7)? Only virtue renders men better. But what man would dare judge of this? It is God's unique privilege to search hearts and reins. Who, finally, will say, which one of us will be found holier on the judgment day? Let the example of the Apostle, Judas, the traitor, and of the good thief admonish everyone to the greatest humility and prudence. Indeed, whenever it is a matter of judging another man's virtue, and of making a comparison between ourselves and others, "every man is a liar" (Rom. 3, 4).

"But God is true" (Rom. 3, 4) and must, therefore, of necessity hate the proud; and if "lying lips are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 12, 22), how much more will pride be, since it is a continuous lie. No wonder, then, that "God resisteth the proud" (James 4, 6), and that he "who exalteth himself shall be humbled" (Matt. 23, 12).

(b) Moreover, according to Scripture, many sins spring from pride. "Pride is the beginning of every sin" (Ecclus. 10, 15). For pride shrinks from no injustice, in order to attain its end; nor is it concerned whether the means are just or not. Three sins, however, are especially rooted in pride:

(1) Vain glory, which is the inordinate desire to proclaim one's own superiority. A man ensnared by vain glory wishes to make known to all how great he is, how much he knows, what he has done, how worthy he is of the praise and applause of all. Thus he is always speaking of himself, his efforts, his sufferings, his accomplishments, his family, his friends, his character and talents; like a child he is delighted with the slightest praise and the least success. Since his own virtues do not seem sufficient for his purpose, he does not hesitate to invent virtues and good deeds; he covers up as far as possible or excuses his shortcomings, sins and mistakes; he is not ashamed to adorn himself with the merits of others. He does not see that in

doing such things he is a source of laughter and sport to others, and that he is easily reduced to the slavery of those whose praise he craves. Would that he realized that not he who is on the tongue of many is great, but he who is loved and approved by God! Besides, we must live not for our glory, but for God's glory.

(2) Ambition or the inordinate desire for honor and dignities. Honor is the exhibition of reverence as a recognition of excellence. (Cf. II-II, q. 131, a. 1). The ambitious man wishes to be placed upon a lampstand, not caring whether he has enough light to shed upon others. He wishes to be like a statue upon a high pedestal to be admired by all. If he cannot attain his end righteously, he does not hesitate to try crooked and unlawful means. He does not consider that all honor must be referred to God as the source of all honor, and that dignities are not conferred except for the good of others, so that only the most worthy should be raised to dignities. But who, except the man puffed up with pride, would think himself worthy, since even the Saints were accustomed to flee dignities as far as they could? Or do you think yourself holier than they? Moreover, remember a severe accounting must be given concerning dignities before the Just Judge, since it is written, "For power is given you by the Lord, and strength by the Most High, Who will examine your works, and search out your thoughts; because being ministers of His Kingdom, you have not judged rightly, nor kept the law of justice, nor worked according to the will of God. Horribly and speedily will He appear to you: for a most severe judgment shall be for them that rule" (Wisd. 6, 4-6). Has not ambition caused much harm even in religious orders?

(3) Presumption, by which a man tends to the things which exceed his powers, or thinks that he is worthy of greater and higher things than he really is. Since the proud think themselves superior to everybody else, they easily believe they can do everything and that everything is lawful to them. Such presumption is frequently found among religious and ecclesiastics, when blinded by vain glory and ambition, which they consider zeal, they undertake excessive and ill-timed labors and neglect their own sanctification, prayer and the Sacraments. But when the presumptuous man does not accomplish what he hopes for, faintheartedness easily follows, which is not as many believe, a daughter of humility, but of pride.

(c) The proud never enjoy true peace or tranquility of soul. To submit or to obey is a torture to them. They are easily offended. They always imagine that they are being treated unjustly. Thus they rarely live at peace with others.

Since they seek their own, not God's glory, they already receive their reward (Cf. Matt. 6, 2-5) and lack true virtue and merit.

Frequently, because they are afraid of humiliations, they lose courage and refuse to undertake certain enterprises; they undertake others, because they desire such as will obtain easy praise for them. Frequently, too, by their imprudence and rashness, they quickly destroy what the humble have built up at the cost of much labor.

II. Accordingly, we must fight with strength and energy against this vice until it is dug up by the root.

(a) Besides the means which we have indicated above (n. 89, c) against all vices, we recommend the following: (1) never to speak about one's self or one's affairs, good or bad; (2) never to detract from the praise of others; (3) not to seek enterprises likely to bring praise, but rather common and lowly ones; (4) to flee dignities indeed, but under obedience to submit one's self to every charge and office with full trust in God; (5) to accept every kind of humiliation from the hand of God without complaint; (6) to follow strict obedience, setting aside all singularity.

(b) Yet we should know that pride will be perfectly uprooted only with God's help. "Man", says John of St. Samson, "is never secure against pride in this life. For, although he may be tending to God, his enemies will be aroused against him, according to the measure of his progress in perfection. The result will be an impairment of progress in his straight and active course toward God. When the primary root of pride has been torn out by the spiritual man, smaller and finer ones always remain, which sprout forth so many secret manifestations of self-seeking that all of them cannot be perfectly detected" (Theoremata, p. 10, n. 1-2).

The chief defects by which even pious souls are not infrequently disfigured are these: interior or exterior complaints that God does not hear them or does not reward them according to their merits; a desire for shining in everything and of discussing spiritual things; a yearning to display skill and knowledge in spiritual matters; a certian obstinacy by which they are unwilling to yield to the judgment of others, even of their director, imagining that they have a better understanding than others; grief and indignation because they think that they are not sufficiently understood or esteemed by others; an inclination to censure others and to pass judgment on everything; scheming to lord it over others and to impose their own opinions and doctrines. St. John of the Cross treats more fully and very clearly of this matter in *The Dark Night* (I, c. 2-3).

(c) Moreover, our Lord will Himself attack our pride in pro-

portion to the graces which He has destined for us; and we can do no better than allow Him to complete His work. He alone will complete it. Frequently familiar, interior conversation with God by which we shall better know His majesty and our unworthiness, will greatly help the work of God.

(d) In our flight from pride we must be particularly careful not to humble ourselves by deeds unbecoming our state. It is one thing to seek honor for one's own glorification and another thing to fulfill our Lord's admonition, "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven" (Matt. 5, 16).

91. Tepidity And Sloth

I. Sloth is the inordinate desire for rest or the inordinate aversion to bodily work or mental effort.

(a) Labor, however, can be threefold: (1) bodily labor; (2) intellectual labor; (3) spiritual labor, i. e, the effort usually connected with exercises of piety. Not all shrink equally from every kind of work. For instance, there are some who apply themselves most readily to corporal or mental labor, if only they may escape the exercises of piety and prayer. This disgust for spiritual exercises is called by a special name, spiritual sloth (*acedia*). This coincides more or less with tepidity, of which we have already spoken (n. 40), so that it will not be necessary to treat of it here at any length.

(b) It is natural for man to seek rest. For matter is consumed by use and by work, and, therefore, man has need of rest to repair the strength lost by work. He is forced to rest by very fatigue, and he cannot for a very long time refuse it without suffering serious detriment to health. Consequently, to give oneself to timely and due rest is not vice but virtue.

But we must consider it a vice to seek rest inordinately at the expense of due labor.

(c) The desire for rest is inordinate: (1) when rest is sought for its own sake and not to refresh our strength or for other just reasons; (2) when rest is sought excessively; (3) when the duties of one's state or of charity are neglected. Insofar as these duties are neglected, sloth is a sin.

(d) Sloth manifests itself in various ways: (1) by idleness, when one purposely avoids all work and does nothing at all; (2) by negligence when one does not undertake all, but only some, of the labors which are his duty, or only those that suit him; (3) by

fickleness and superficiality, when one does not fully complete his work or does not earnestly pay attention to it; (4) by lack of punctuality, when one easily puts off duties, habitually fails to come or begin on time; (5) by lack of order and cleanliness, because it requires a little work to observe them.

(e) Very frequently sloth conceals itself under the guise of industry and zeal. Certain people seem to be always occupied and to look after many things, whereas they are actually doing nothing. They neglect their own affairs, but give special attention to others' affairs. By a certain busy idleness they deceive themselves and others. Others prefer external occupations to such an extent, that they tire of prayer; others again are so given to meditation and contemplation that they refuse to perform their duties properly. Finally, there are those who are so given to amusements, to the reading of books and to the holding of conversations, that they waste much time. It is evident that some form of sloth is hidden in all these.

II. Great injuries arise from sloth: (a) Duties are violated and very many good deeds omitted; therefore, Holy Scripture says, "Every sluggard is always in want" (Prov. 21, 5). This is especially true concerning the spiritual life and supernatural merit. (b) Charity is injured; for only too often, the brethren and others are obliged to accept as a double burden what the slothful omit. (c) Peace and calm of soul perish, since the idle will never experience the satisfaction of achievement. Frequently, peace is disturbed in religious communities, because the slothful refuse to share in the labors, duties and exercises of the community (Cf. Const. 101). (d) Perfection becomes impossible; for on the one hand those things which are necessary, e.g., spiritual exercises, are not accomplished, and on the other hand the will is enfeebled and the door is opened to many grave temptations. "For idleness hath taught much evil," Holy Scripture teaches (Ecclus. 33, 29). For this very reason our Holy Rule (XV) is so insistent that the devil may always find us occupied, lest because of our idleness he find some avenue of approach to our souls.

III. In order to conquer this vice of sloth and tepidity, (a) we should consider that we certainly are not born nor have we entered religious life to spend our time in doing nothing, nor in hiding our talents, but that we may redeem the time, develop as far as possible the powers and faculties granted us and employ them for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. If we do this, we shall become perfect and save our souls. "Man is born to labor and the bird to fly," says Holy Scripture (Job 5, 7), since the first man himself was put into

the paradise of pleasure to dress it and keep it (Cf. Gen. 2, 15). Therefore, the Wise Man of the Old Testament teaches, "Go to the ant, O sluggard, and consider her ways and learn wisdom; which although she hath no guide, nor master, nor captain, provideth her meat for herself in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest" (Prov. 6, 6, 7). Indeed, it is true wisdom to double one's talents, as the Lord warned in the Gospels (Cf. Matt. 24, 27).

(b) We should also consider that diligent and constant labor is the best penance and the source of the greatest merits. On the contrary, "Every tree that doth not yield good fruit shall be cut down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3, 10), where "the slothful will be pricked with burning goads" (*Im. Chr.* 1, 24).

(c) We should accustom ourselves to well-ordered work, not following our own will and pleasure, but holy obedience to which we have surrendered all our powers. The memory of labor done is never more agreeable than when undertaken out of obedience.

(d) We should follow a good schedule of life and work. Burdens distributed according to the hours of the day become easier and more perfect. "Where there is order, there is some good," says St. Augustine (*De Natura Boni,* c. 23). Besides, according to the ancient proverb, "A work well begun is half done."

IV. St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi gave us a shining example as we have heard above (no. 59). No one can be more harmful to a religious community than "those walking disorderly, working not at all" (Rule, XV).

Therefore, "never be wholly idle, but either reading or writing, or praying, or meditating, or laboring at something for the common good" (*Im. Chr.* 1, 19). We should always follow this order: First of all necessary things and those enjoined by obedience, then the useful and finally, the pleasurable.

92. Gluttony

I. Gluttony is the vice which goes to excess in the use of food and drink, or again, it is the inordinate appetite for food and drink.

At once we must mention that sufficient bodily food is necessary to preserve life, to repair strength and to properly undertake labors. To live without food is a miracle, which no one may presume to expect from God. From this very necessity springs the serious difficulty of controlling the vice of gluttony. For, in order that men may readily bear the difficulties of seeking and finding sustenance, God in His wisdom and goodness has endowed eating and drinking with a certain

sensible delight. So it is that since original sin, man has a continual temptation to neglect the right way and just measure and to crave more food and drink than is necessary or useful for him. Accordingly, the vice can be overcome only with great perseverance and discretion.

II. The sin of gluttony is possible in five ways which are expressed in the verse, *Praepropere, laute, nimis, ardenter, studiose.* It is, therefore, a sin: (a) when one craves sumptuous and expensive foods (*laute*); (b) when one bestows too much care and interest in their preparation by using strong seasonings, etc. (*studiose*); (c) when one takes more food than needed (*nimis*); (d) when one does not observe regular mealtime, but either anticipates it or eats at any time or too frequently (*praepropere*); (e) when one does not observe due restraint in the act of eating, immersed heart and soul in such a material action (*ardenter*).

They likewise fail against perfection who think too frequently of eating, enjoy such thoughts, converse greedily of revellings and drinking bouts, censuring the least defect in the preparation of their food, and are never satisfied, etc.

St. Augustine writes in his classic style, "We need the nourishment of food. If the viands taken into the mouth are not agreeable, they cannot be swallowed and frequently are rejected through nausea, and hurtful items must be avoided with nice judgment. The weakness of our body, however, demands not merely food, but also tasty food, not to satisfy sensuality but to safeguard health. When, therefore, nature demands necessities which are lacking, it is not called sensuality, but hunger or thirst; but when, after our need has been filled, the delight of eating tempts us, that is sensuality, that is the evil to which we must not yield but must resist" (*Contra Julianum,* L. 4, n. 67).

III. The evils which are caused by the vice of gluttony are many and great. St. Thomas with St. Gregory enumerates five daughters of gluttony, viz., foolish mirth, vulgar coarseness, uncleanness, talkativeness, dullness of wit (II-II q. 148, a. 6). In general, it must be said that by the immoderate use of food and drink the entire man is engulfed in a certain type of materialism, so that he becomes accustomed to direct his attention almost solely to the pleasures and delights of the body, and is no longer concerned with spiritual things. It will be useless for us to speak to such men of acquiring perfection. For the carnal man does not understand the things of the spirit. Not infrequently there is also added the sin of scandal, especially when priests or religious are involved. Would not seculars, especially in these difficult times, when so many can hardly find the necessities of food

and clothing, be justly indignant, if religious, who are considered among the mendicants and beg and obtain alms from the poor themselves, lived more sumptuously than their state or vow allowed, or even gave themselves to excessive drinking?

IV. The following are the rules commonly indicated by the masters of the spiritual life to conquer the vice of gluttony: (a) Regarding quantity the general rule is, "as much as is necessary." *Per se* it is not lawful to go below what is necessary. But it is not lawful through lack of natural appetite and relish, to refuse food to such an extent that bodily powers begin to fail and cannot be repaired. But where are the just limits? For most men are misled by the very enjoyment, to take more food and drink than necessary, so that doctors acknowledge that one-half of all illness is rooted in this vice.

It is clear that the same quantity of food is not sufficient for all. Nor is it a sin, if on certain occasions and festive occurrences more is taken than strict necessity requires, in order to cultivate charity and holy joy. We must, therefore, consider the nature of all the circumstances, persons, place and time. Nor must hunger, as St. Augustine warns, be taken for sensuality. To establish a just measure spiritual authors lay down the following rules: (1) During some quiet time (i.e., not when hunger presses), a certain amount should be determined which is to be followed in eating without yielding to any contrary temptations; (2) for fifteen days we should experiment whether by withdrawing from our accustomed foods, we enjoy good or better health. If it should so happen, then we should subtract a little more for another fifteen days, until an average is found from which we should not withdraw thereafter except for truly just and extraordinary reasons.

(b) With regard to quality the general rule is that such foods should be prepared and in such a way as the health and condition of people demand. We should abstain from highly seasoned foods, lest gluttony be satisfied or the nerves be too highly excited. William of St. Theodoric, (*Epistola ad Fratres de Monte Dei,* c. XI) exhorts religious to use foods "which the general brotherhood uses, except in case of manifest necessity. Of seasonings, let there be enough, I pray, to make our food eatable, without making it exquisite or delicious." The rule of the Gospel is to eat what is placed before us. The same is inculcated by our Rule and Constitutions, since they prescribe a strictly common life in regard to food, and order us to take our food with the community in the common refectory. The Saints indeed, tried to hide or to destroy the taste of their food by

adding unpalatable foods, or by taking such as they did not relish. Yet religious who dine in common should avoid singularities in these matters.

(c) Regarding time. In our days people eat more frequently than was customary in olden times. The religious of primitive days ate very little and only once a day, and that after sunset. Some people are obliged, because of weakness, to take a little less at a time but at more frequent intervals. But if there is no necessity approved by the doctor and the superior, our religious should strictly follow community meals, especially, since our Constitutions explicitly caution, "No one shall enter the kitchen except by reason of his office. . . . Food and drink shall not be served to anyone outside the ordinary meals except with the permission of the superior" (Art. 171). Indeed, outside of mealtimes we should not even think of the food we have eaten or are going to eat. Much less should we speak of it.

(d) Regarding the manner of eating, the general rule is, that food and drink should be taken as becomes Christians and religious. Therefore, (1) the rules of etiquette and good breeding should always be observed, even though one eats alone. Gluttony is powerfully checked by them. (2) We should not eat too greedily nor too slowly as though enjoying each morsel. (3) As far as possible the mind should be raised to higher things either by listening to pious reading, holding pious and useful conversation, or by pursuing some holy thoughts so that both body and spirit may take nourishment. "When you eat," says William of St. Theodoric (ibid.), "let not your whole self eat; but while the body is seeking its refreshment, let the soul not neglect its own. Mindful of the delights of the Lord, let it consider and resolve within itself, or at least remember, some Scripture passage for its own nourishment. Our need itself should be satisfied not in a worldly and carnal way, but as becomes a monk and a servant of God. For even as far as bodily health is concerned, the more becomingly and orderly food is taken and eaten, the more easily and healthfully is it digested." (4) Before eating, a good intention should be elicited, and as far as possible, sensuality should be rejected according to the teaching of the Apostle, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10, 31).

V. Particular means are: (a) to observe diligently the fasts and abstinences prescribed by the Church, and by our Rule and Constitutions, "unless illness or weakness of the body or another just cause render it advisable to relax the fast" (Rule, XII); (b) at every meal to deny one's self a little especially of the more tasty foods, and

to wait a little before beginning to eat, so that a good intention, and not pleasure, may prevail.

Above all religious must beware of the abuse of alcoholic drinks. "Wine, wherein is luxury" (Eph. 5, 18), "hath destroyed very many" (Ecclus. 31, 30). Such abuse, even minor violations of proper measure, would surely be a source of the greatest scandal to seculars. In itself the moderate use of wine is not condemned in Holy Scripture. Therefore, those religious who moderately use it or a similar drink according to the custom of their country are not to be censured. If anyone, however, for supernatural motives, especially for apostolic motives, in prudence abstains entirely, such a one does well according to the prescriptions of our Holy Rule which counsels supererogatory works.

VI. Examples, which our Saints have left us concerning the present matter, are sufficiently known. Indeed Frater Arnold of St. Charles so sparingly ate what was needed, that unless the Superior had taken notice, and provided otherwise, he would have lived only on bread and thin beer. He did this with such care that it could hardly be noticed by those seated at the table. If, however, it was discovered, he would say, "If obedience had allowed, it would have been my entire refreshment to live on bread and water" (*Anal.* III, 24). Several other examples are to be found in *Vita Carmelitana* (p. 60 ff.). Our Saints knew very well that anyone who does not check this vice with all his might is unable to arrive at interior prayer and enjoyment of the spiritual life.

93. Lust

Lust in the strict sense is the inordinate desire for venereal pleasure. It is directly opposed to the virtue of chastity.

We have sufficiently explained everything that pertains to chastity when we treated the vow of chastity above (no. 75ff.). Here we shall add a few points concerning the opposite vice, which we must so much more diligently avoid and flee, as we are bound by vow to observe chastity and to strive after perfection.

I. It is agreed among all that the evils springing from this vice are most grievous. By its intense pleasure lust, more than any other vice, draws man to the material and, therefore, turns him from God and His service, and prevents all striving after perfection. For, (a) it blinds man so that he can hardly believe any pleasure possible except that of the flesh or one connected with it, as eating or drinking, self-indulgence, etc. How can such a man find delight in prayer or

meditation? How can he be zealous for God's glory or the salvation of souls? (b) It fills the imagination with obscene and sensual images, so that man can hardly rise to spiritual things or elevate his mind to the divine. He will never enjoy tranquility of soul without which true and genuine prayer are not possible. Rather, one given to lust flees from the thought of God and especially from the presence of God, because of the remorse of his conscience. (c) The will sacrifices its freedom in choosing other motives of acting, and having become like a ship without a rudder, is tossed about by every wind of its desires. Thus it happens that a man loses heart and despairs of betterment. He groans under this most harsh of slaveries, yet does not have the courage to rise. (d) Interior peace entirely vanishes. The lustful man is cruelly tossed between his desires and repentance. (e) The body itself is usually weakened and rendered unfit to be an instrument of the soul for virtue and perfection. Thus, new obstacles must necessarily arise from such violent excitement of the nervous system.

Accordingly, not only is the pursuit of perfection made impossible, but eternal salvation itself is placed in greatest danger. Therefore St. Peter admonishes us, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2, 11).

II. The remedies against this vice are the same as those for cultivating holy chastity. Before all, it is necessary to withstand beginnings, lest the remedy be applied too late. If anyone, however, should unfortunately fall, or if he should have indulged this vice for a lengthy period, he must persuade himself that, with the help of Divine Grace, correction and betterment are possible. Indeed, in no other vice is the temptation to despair so frequent as in the vice of lust. Such a temptation must be bravely resisted with a firm hope in the all-kind and all-powerful God, lest the latter sins become worse than the first.

Finally, this sin is best attacked by the careful keeping of the vow of chastity, which is a triumph over the flesh. From this it again becomes apparent why the vow of perfect and perpetual chastity is made in the religious state, the state of acquiring perfection.

94. Avarice

I. Avarice or greed, which is the inordinate desire for the riches of this world, pertains, as we said before (no. 89), to those capital vices which do not appear alone, but are indications of others that precede or are their instruments.

Of avarice it is written, "The desire of money is the root of all evils; which some coveting, have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6, 10). Indeed, "nothing is more wicked than the covetous man" (Ecclus. 10, 9), "for know you this and understand that no . . . covetous person, which is a serving of idols, hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5, 5). Therefore, the Lord Himself insists, "Take heed and beware of all covetousness" (Luke 12, 15).

II. Avarice, therefore, is concerned about external and inanimate things entirely distinct from ourselves. We must inquire, therefore, why man craves such things as riches. We know that man desires nothing except under the guise of good. What is that good, therefore, that man hopes to find in riches? If we discover the cause of avarice, it will be more easily eradicated.

The answer is easy. For it is clear that men desire temporal goods or riches to satisfy pride or other vices which we have already treated. For the rich, as we have heard, usually meet with greater honors, prompt service, and easier condonement of their vices. Moreover, they need not undergo annoying labors, they can live more sumptuously and comfortably; yes, they can more generously indulge their vices and passions. It is for this reason that riches are sought after with such eagerness; for this very reason also they serve to increase vice.

Such motives, although they may not always be clearly apparent, are always more or less hidden under the inordinate desire for riches and money. Sometimes, it is true, a certain lack of trust in Divine Providence, or faint-heartedness is found, as happens especially among the aged who are afraid that their money will not be sufficient for their lifetime. Hence, such an attachment to money gradually develops so that they would rather die of hunger than spend the money they have in abundance. Of these we read, "There is none worse than he who envieth himself, and this is the reward of his wickedness" (Ecclus. 14, 6).

Those enmeshed in this vice, must seek the source of it. Unless the source of this vice is stopped, muddy waters will not cease to flow from it. Religious also, who are accustomed to violate holy poverty, must search for the cause. It is clear that the cursed thirst for gold will be so much more violent, in proportion as the enjoyment of life increases and people become accustomed to a higher standard of living. For they will then stand in need of more money.

III. The desire for temporal goods is good and well-ordered when

they are sought not for themselves nor for an unbecoming enjoyment of life, but to sustain one's life and that of one's family, and to promote the glory of God and His kingdom. However, a mere good intention does not suffice; it is furthermore required that the measure of desiring such goods be in order, viz., that no responsibility whether of justice, charity or religion be violated. Religious and clerics must strictly observe the laws laid down by the Church and the Order against merchandizing by clerics or religious, as also the regulations concerning Mass stipends, etc. Likewise, we should be careful not to lose interior peace. Worry seems to betray a certain immoderation. For the Lord Himself has so urgently admonished us, "Be not solicitous" (Matt. 6, 31).

Among other well-known characteristics of avarice in the spiritual and the devout, the following are found: A mean economy and arguments with servants about wages; studied planning for the opportunity to force poor tradesmen and farmers to sell at a loss or to work for a lower wage; delight in beholding valuable furnishings, money, even objects of devotion and piety, curious and superfluous objects; excessive care in procuring and keeping material things; complaints because something is lacking; smallness in distributing alms; and among religious especially, frequent violations of the vow of poverty.

V. The remedies against this vice are: (a) Frequent consideration of our end and the purpose of temporal goods. For these have not been given us that we might place our happiness in them, but that, by using them properly, we may acquire eternal beatitude. Therefore, we shall render an account of them to God in His time, since we are only administrators. (b) Boundless trust in God. Since God so firmly promised to take care of our life, it would be an injustice to God to cling to temporal goods as though we expected our salvation from them and not from God, or as though we distrusted God. It is not lawful ceaselessly to collect riches and money even to spread the kingdom of God, for God before all else wishes and desires our perfection and interior peace. (c) A sober opinion of temporal things. They are worth nothing without God's blessing; not "in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4, 4). Nor is man's heart satisfied by them. "A covetous man shall not be satisfied with money; and he that loveth riches shall reap no fruit from them. So this also is vanity" (Eccles. 5, 9). Besides, "we brought nothing into this world and certainly we can carry nothing out" (1 Tim. 6, 7). By the testimony of experience the rich are usually not happier than the poor. Yes, "blessed are the

poor," said our Lord, and "woe to the rich." (d) Detachment from creatures, a simple standard of living, the eradication of other vices, as is clear from what we have said before concerning the causes of avarice. (e) Warm commiseration with the poor and unstinted liberality toward them in view of eternal reward, as our Lord taught, "Sell what you possess and give alms. Make to yourselves bags which grow not old, a treasure in heaven which faileth not: where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth" (Luke 12, 33).

The best and most efficacious remedy of all is voluntary poverty by which we renounce all temporal things and cling to God alone. The more faithfully we fulfill this vow, the more free we shall be from every appearance of avarice, the richer we shall become in spiritual goods and the more abundantly we shall drink of the torrent of divine pleasure.

95. Envy

I. According to St. Thomas, envy is sadness or grief over the good fortune of another, insofar as it seems to detract from our own good fortune (Cf. II-II, q. 36, a. 1). Thus we are envious of another's reputation and fame, because we ourselves seem to be so much more put into the shade and background. We are likewise envious of another's riches, because we feel our own poverty and wretchedness so much the more. We envy another's achievements because we more keenly feel that we have labored in vain. We are not saddened by our neighbor's fortune, only insofar as we seem to be belittled by it.

It is not envy, simply to grieve over anothers' good fortune and to wish him some evil. This is hatred and a greater sin. Nor is it envy to grieve over our neighbor's good fortune because he abuses it. In itself this is proper, especially when he abuses his good fortune against us, against God or against holy religion. For in this case, our sorrow is not over his good, but over his evil use of his good. This is either fear, or just zeal.

Finally, it is not envy, when we are saddened not because our neighbor possesses some advantage, but because we do not possess it and, therefore, desire to possess it without wishing to deprive him of it. This is emulation, good and just if it concerns the desire for some real good.

From envy we must also distinguish rivalry, through which we fear that the love or good will of our parents, superiors, or friends may be stolen or shared by another.

II. Envy in itself is a serious sin, because it directly opposes

charity. The sin grows in proportion to the good we envy. But ordinarily, through lack of full consent or smallness of matter, it does not exceed a venial sin. However, it is always a great obstacle to perfection, because the envious man is always distracted and annoyed by continuous disquiet. Thus it happens that his soul cannot, as it ought, commune with God by prayer nor experience the delights of God. He finds no gain whatever, not even an apparent one. Envy is that vice which procures no pleasure for man, but only torture.

Nevertheless, envy is very frequent, even among the spiritual and devout. For its fire is lighted and fed by countless happenings. We envy not only natural good, as beauty and health of body, goods of fortune, or honors, or learning, but also supernatural goods and virtues, good works, exercises of piety, mortifications, sensible devotion, etc. The cause of envy is never lacking, so that, from the day the devil prompted by envy, seduced our first parents, envy has not departed from the human race. Not even saints are free from such temptations, inasmuch as man begins to envy virtue and grace after he has surrendered everything. With great skill Father Michael of St. Augustine depicts the envy that is born of spiritual gluttony or of an inordinate attachment to sensible sweetness. "When the soul afflicted with this failing sees others enjoying the blessings of consolation which he so ardently desires, he envies them. When he sees others easily turning away the difficulties of temptation while he himself is toiling unto sweat in them, . . . when he sees others so zealous, fervent and interiorly recollected, whereas he is so flaccid, dry and distracted that he seems overwhelmed and conquered by the multitude of unclean thoughts and representations; when he sees that others frequent the Sacraments with deep devotion, and he receives them with hardness of heart, without feeling a spark of devotion or sorrow for his daily faults so that his heart seems to be of stone which cannot be crushed, . . . then especially is he disquieted and disturbed, sometimes becoming angry at himself because he cannot conquer himself as others can, sometimes envying others their progress. Then it happens that he cannot bear the presence of others; in fact, no matter how they may act, their actions and words are so many dagger thrusts wounding his heart, so that he cannot bear even to see them, hear them or have anything to do with them. Yes, he cannot restrain himself from imitating their manner of speech in mockery; sometimes he even gives them a blow, so that it would appear to be impossible for him to dwell with them any longer or to hear anything about them" (*Inst. Myst.* II, tr. 3, c. 22).

III. Like avarice, this vice is not solitary, but is rooted in other vices, especially in pride, which does not suffer others to excel. The greater pride is, the greater is envy. However, we do not usually envy those far away from us in place, time or rank, or those who are above us, either because we have no hope of ever equalling them, or their excellence does not seem to obscure us; for distant objects do not darken us with their shadows. But rather we envy those near us and our brethren, because a nearer light causes a deeper shadow. Likewise, fainthearted and childish people are more subject to temptations of envy, because they do not dare imitate or emulate others, and they consider everything great. No matter what good has happened to another, they imagine that they themselves have been outclassed on a grand scale (Cf. II-II, q. 36, a. 1 ad 2 et 3).

IV. The following are the more usual faults committed through envy: a certain satisfaction when we see or imagine our rivals stricken by misfortune; grief when we learn or witness their success; numberless detractions; an affected silence about the known or praised qualities of our neighbors; curiosity in looking for the faults of others or joy when their faults become known; a thousand and one artifices for tripping up our neighbor and for defaming his achievements or inventions. All of these frequently occur under the guise of vindicating honor, exercising charity, defending religion, etc.

The foregoing faults frequently bring about dissensions and discords, and draw the peace of religious communities into serious danger. No one is ignorant of the losses and injuries the Church of Christ has suffered through clerical envy, as it is called. The Apostle himself laments that "some, indeed, even out of envy and contention" (Phil. 1, 15) speak the word of God.

V. Therefore, each and every one must try to use all means to pluck from his heart the roots of this vice. The following are useful: (a) diligently to flee words or deeds which proceed from envy; (b) frequently to meditate on the innumerable graces and benefits we have received from God and our bad use of them; (c) a practical charity toward our neighbor and especially toward those whom we are tempted to envy; (d) a holy emulation in all good things, especially in practising virtues; (e) most perfect detachment from earthly goods together with a pursuit of heavenly good. "Whoever wishes to be entirely free from the contagion of envy," says St. Gregory the Great, "let him love that inheritance which the number of heirs does not diminish; which undivided, is for all and which in its entirety is for each; which appears so much greater, as the multitude of those

sharing increases. A growing affection for interior consolation is, therefore, the decline of envy; and a perfect love for eternity is its full death" (*Moralia,* 5, 46, 86).

Moreover, when there is question of envy because of graces conferred by God on our neighbor we must conceive a deep regard for the supreme dominion and infinite majesty of God, so that considering the parable of the workers in the vineyard, we may say, "He is the Lord; let Him do what seems good in His eyes, and distribute His gifts as He pleases" (Cf. Matt. 20, 1-16).

If the temptations nevertheless continue, we must patiently bear this annoyance. We must humble ourselves before God, at the same time confessing that at no price would we wish the divine dispositions changed in our favor to the loss of our neighbor. Moreover, we should pray that God by His grace may design to free us completely from this vice, since indeed He alone can accomplish this.

96. Anger

I. Under the name of anger goes both the passion of anger, which is a movement of the sensitive appetite, as well as the vice of anger, which resides in the will. The passion of anger is the reaction of nature itself against an aggressor or against some obstacle. But the vice of anger is the inordinate desire for revenge. Actually both are usually present. Therefore, anger is defined by some as follows: "Anger is an interior and vehement excitement against a true or apparent evil which man wishes to resist with violence." Man wishes to check or remove an evil. He wishes this with passion and a certain excitement and uses force and violence to attain his end. This is anger. What should we think of it?

From what has been said it is patent that not all anger is wrong or sinful, since man by very nature is impelled to check an evil and to defend himself. A man cannot be said to be perfect because he does not seem to be affected or moved by anything. This may be the result not of virtue, but of indifference, of fickleness, or tepidity, or even of a weak mind. In fact, one can be bound by justice and conscience to rise up against an evildoer or his evil deeds. The Lord Himself is an example. Fired by holiest anger He drove out the buyers and sellers from the temple (Matt. 21, 12; John 2, 15), and "looked round about with anger on the Pharisees who were watching Him, being grieved for the blindness of their hearts" (Mark 3, 5).

II. Therefore, to form a correct judgment of anger three things must be considered: (a) The object. For we must see whether we are

moved by a real evil or an apparent and false one. We must ask ourselves, therefore, "Why am I angry?" It is immediately evident that proud people and such as are held bound by an excessive love and desire for the things of this world, are more prone to anger, inasmuch as they more easily imagine themselves hurt or treated unjustly. Blinded by their vices and evil desires, they constantly suspect enemies and infliction of injuries. All are not angered for the same reasons, but each one is aroused in accordance with his own peculiar vices or particular inclinations. Furthermore, holy anger is possible only in those who are burning with zeal for God's glory and His kingdom. In others it is a ruse to excuse an unholy indignation. All are easily deceived in this matter by self-love.

(b) The degree of excitement must be considered. If the object is not good, anger cannot be good or holy. But even if the object is holy in itself, anger remains sinful if the right proportion between the evil to be checked and the excitement is not kept. For the rule of right reason demands that we should not be moved any more than the injury inflicted or the evil that threatens, demands, or utility advises. But whoever becomes so angry that he loses perfect deliberation and entire control of himself, always sins. He likewise becomes unreasonably angry, who is aroused to anger against senseless creatures, or who becomes angry when a matter can no longer be changed or corrected. It is to be noted that the right measure and proportion can be exceeded both by freely admitting interior excitement and by words or deeds.

(c) The intention must be considered. The excitement of anger is permitted for no other purpose than the correction of the delinquent and the restoration of right order. Whatever can be attained without angry commotion must be so attained. The desire for revenge is never to be entertained, nor the desire of humbling an enemy.

Since all the conditions necessary for a good and holy anger are only very rarely found, spiritual writers generally recommend that anger be nearly always repressed and the virtue of meekness preferred. Once the excitement of anger is aroused, reason is easily lost. Holy Scripture itself gives the simple admonition, "Let every man . . . be slow to anger. For the anger of man worketh not the justice of God" (James 1, 19. 20).

III. Anger easily turns into hatred and enmity. Even devout persons must be on their guard against this vice. For, as St. John of the Cross teaches, beginners usually commit many imperfections through the vice of anger. When they are deprived of spiritual

delights and sweetnesses to which they have clung with great avidity, they become peevish and are easily angered by almost anything; in fact, sometimes their behavior becomes intolerable. Others, through a certain impetuous zeal become quickly indignant at the faults and vices of others, watch them and violently reproach them; yes, they sometimes correct them as though they themselves were already perfect. Finally, there are some who become angry at themselves because of their own little defects, because they wish to become perfect in one day. They do not wish to wait in patience for divine grace (cf. *The Dark Night,* I, c, 5). There are not lacking in spiritual persons other signs of anger or effects of anger, as displays of impatience on account of little difficulties or because they have not received what they wanted; coarse, biting, insolent or incoherent remarks; scowls or a malicious silence against those whom they cannot bear; ill-controlled thoughts of revenge; interior imprecations; satisfaction over their opponent's losses; restlessness and worry, disturbance of mind, etc.

IV. The remedies to overcome anger are: (a) physical, since a quick excitability may also depend upon physical causes. Therefore, as far as possible, everything that may cause nervous excitement should be avoided, as highly-seasoned food, alcoholic drinks, etc., and if circumstances so demand, a physician should be consulted about suitable remedies. It will be a big help to arrange a proper schedule and to do everything according to the order one has established. (b) Spiritual remedies are, perfect detachment from creatures, because in this way the occasions of anger are decreased; a living faith and hope in God by Whom everything is arranged for our good; anticipating difficulties and temptations, because as St. Gregory the Great testifies, missiles foreseen wound less severely; meditation on the sufferings of Christ.

The supreme rule is, to resist anger in its beginnings, lest the remedy be applied too late. We must never speak, act, or pass judgment under the influence of anger, but we must await a peaceful mind. It is likewise useful to foresee with whom and on what occasions we are quickly excited and angered, that we may the more readily guard ourselves.

V. St. John Climacus has laid down the following steps in checking anger: "The first step in learning to overcome anger is to check the impulse to words by means of silence, even though our heart is in tumult; the second step of virtue is the quieting of our thoughts even though our soul is still somewhat disturbed; finally, absolute

victory is tranquil serenity of soul amidst the blasts of a frenzied whirlwind" (*Ladder of Paradise,* 8th step).

VI. Let us, therefore, learn from our Lord Who was meek and humble of heart, (Cf. Matt. 11, 29); and Who, when His disciples wished to call down fire from heaven upon the city of the Samaritans said, "You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of man came not to destroy souls, but to save" (Luke i, 55. 56). Father John of Jesus-Mary, O.C.D. introduced our Lord as saying, "I, My son, Who am Thy redeemer, came into this world to suffer with equanimity injuries and ignominies, and not to seek revenge. Indeed, I resolved to reign in the hearts of men by a certain peaceful sway and to subjugate the world by the cross and not by the sword, so that I might manifest My infinite meekness in such a victory. Therefore, whosoever wishes to be a participator in My victory, must not think of the sword or of revenge; but rather of being meek and of overcoming his, as well as his neighbor's anger by the power of My meekness" (*Epistola Christi ad hominem,* P. II, c. 2).

97. Self-Love

I. After explaining the particular vices, we must add a few points on self-love, which is not a distinct or separate vice but rather a sort of general vice or root of the rest. St. Augustine writes of it, "Two loves have built two cities. Self-love has built an earthly one reaching to contempt of God; love for God, a heavenly one reaching to contempt of self" (*The City of God,* 14, 28).

(a) Spiritual writers never cease warning us that this self-love is our chief and most dangerous enemy, and that we must make a serious attempt to conquer it and so come to perfection. It is evident that they do not wish to proscribe or forbid that holy love of oneself which is the standard of our love for our neighbor according to our Lord's command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22, 39). Will he who does not love himself be able to love his neighbor?

(b) Inordinate self-love, which coincides more or less with self-will, as it is called, is thus described by St. Basil, "He is guilty of self-love, who loves himself with an exclusive and excessive love" (*Reg. Brev. interrog.* 54). St. Bernard likewise depicts self-will in the following words, "I call that self-will which is not shared with God and men, but is ours exclusively; when we do what we wish, not for the honor of God or of the good of our neighbor but on account of ourselves, not intending to please God and to help our neighbor, but to

satisfy the whims of our own will" (Sermon 3 for the feast of Easter, n. 3), and he affirms, "Hell would cease, if self-will would cease." The Apostle too speaks of this false self-love and its effects, "Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughtly, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace, slanderers, incontinent, unmerciful, without kindness, traitors, stubborn, puffed up and lovers of pleasure more than of God: having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3, 2-5). St. Thomas commenting on all this says, "The root of all evil is self-love" (*Comment.* on 2 Tim. 3, 1. 1.).

(c) Self-love, therefore, is the habitual inclination toward the satisfaction of one's nature, caused by original sin. It is the ceaseless pursuit of one's own excellence or independence and of the satisfaction of one's senses in all things even against God's will. It is the neglect of the order by which we were primarily created for God's glory and secondarily for our own happiness, provided we seek God's glory. Man infected with self-love is prone to seek his own happiness in himself rather than in God, and to seek God only insofar as God will be of help to him. Until this root of all evil is plucked out, perfection cannot be reached.

II. The following principles must be impressed upon our minds: (a) Self-love is truly our enemy and the greatest obstacle to perfection. Without it not even the devil can succeed in the least against us.

"Since every evil, "says Father Maurus of the Child Jesus, "present only accidentally in other things, is essentially in human hearts corrupted by self-love, even their best deeds turn out to be useless, unless they strive to purify themselves from this cursed poison which insinuates itself into their holiest actions and which by itself displeases the eyes of the Divine Majecty" (*Intr. in div. sap.* III, C. 13). It is of the greatest moment in our spiritual life to convince ourselves of this.

(b) Likewise self-love is more or less concealed in all our desires and schemes, even the holiest. There is no defect which does not hide under the appearance of virtue, nor any virtue which self-love does not spoil. Furthermore, self-love always tries to hide itself that it may thrive so much more freely and may be able to satisfy itself. We are easily deceived by the appearance of virtue and we do not see that we are impelled to this or that action by self-love rather than by love of God or of our neighbor.

Self-love is identified with our very nature, insofar as we much rather follow our natural inclinations than supernatural motives.

Lawrence Scupoli very accurately speaks of this matter: "Nature is so inclined to exploit itself that it seeks its convenience and pleasure in all things and sometimes even more fervently in pious and spiritual things than in others. It continues in them for a long time and greedily feeds, as it were, on foods, not in the least suspected. . . . But you must know that the deceits of treacherous nature are not easily uncovered. Always seeking itself covertly it generally leads us to believe that we have the motive and purpose of pleasing God, which, however, is not true" (*Spiritual Combat,* c. 10). Father Michael of St. Augustine calls the attention of proficients in the spiritual life to the fact that self-love also takes possession of love for God, and that possessors of such love are not tolerated in heaven (*Inst. Myst.* IV, tr. 1, c. 39 et c. 45).

On account of this tendency, that which seems to be virtue, is perhaps nothing else than hidden pride, envy, lust, or gluttony, etc. Envy is often called zeal for tradition or sound learning; obstinacy is called prudence and constancy; lust hidden under certain friendships is called spiritual love and zeal for souls; inconstancy through which we day after day attempt something new, is termed zeal for perfection or progress; sloth is called caution and care of health, or humility and resignation to God's will; neglect of clothing and lack of cleanliness are called religious poverty; ambition for learned subjects and curiosity are called zeal for God's glory; unbecoming and dangerous reading is excused by the desire for wide erudition, etc., etc. Therefore, be not deceived, but look to the end.

(c) Through self-love we follow our own judgment in preference to that of others, and the ideas we have discovered ourselves, we love so much more than those received from other sources.

We prefer to be "self-taught" than to be taught by others. For the same reason we are more inclined to teach than to listen or to learn. Thus devout souls prefer so-called inspirations to the advice of their director or the command of their superior, etc.

(d) We always desire to follow our own will. That is why the good works we have ourselves chosen please us more than those imposed upon us by legitimate authority or necessity. Here those singularities so hurtful in the spiritual life have their source.

III. Since it is question here not of a particular vice, but of a universal vice or of the root of evil, one or the other means is not sufficient to uproot it, just as no particular virtue, but perfection itself, is opposed to this vice.

Total self-denial is the remedy. For "just as self-love" says Father Maurus of the Child Jesus, "causes us to love everything to our advantage and on account of ourselves, so on the contrary, self-denial causes us to wish nothing or to love nothing for our advantage" (*Intr. in div. sap.* III, c. 10).

For a religious, moreover, the most efficacious means is holy obedience and community life. We have attained much, as soon as we are persuaded that this enemy is always lying in wait for us. Finally, our entire instruction about the spiritual life and perfection has no other end than a total victory over this enemy.

We shall conclude with the grave words of Father Michael of St. Augustine. "Self-love," he says, "like the thinnest air penetrates everywhere, and since it is opposed completely to the love of God, it weakens our interior glance toward our Spouse, and lessens our loving attention to Him; indeed, by degrees it grows like a frightful cancer, which creeps, gnaws, and carries away all nourishment from Divine Love; furthermore, to remove this harmful, consuming and deadly cancer, the greatest circumspection is necessary, so that the devout soul, no matter how far it may have gone in the ways of justice and perfection, must summon all powers and must with the help of God employ all diligence, in order to expose, unmask and flee the intricate and apparently good methods of self-love" (*Inst. Myst.* II, tr. 4, c. 1).

CHAPTER TWO

DIFFICULTIES AND PRECAUTIONS

We have learned what must be purged out of our hearts. But that we may hope to carry off the victory, we should not be ignorant of the difficulties to be overcome. We must know, also, what good and what evil is in us so that we may encourage the former and suppress the latter. It is most necessary to know how we should use the faculties we have so that they may not only not hinder, but really assist us. Therefore, in this chapter we must before all else treat of temptations. After that we must speak of the passions and the temperaments. Then we shall explain the proper use of our senses. Finally, because of their great influence on the spiritual life, we shall say a few words about scruples and friendships.

98. Temptations

I. What is a temptation? In the strict sense in which it is used in the science of the spiritual life, temptation is an incitement or solicitation to sin or imperfection.

It should be well noted that there is temptation not only when the incitement is to commit formal sin, but also when it is a matter of hindering a better or more perfect act. For it is clear that the devil, when he despairs of being able to draw us at once to the commission of open sin, is for the time satisfied with a minor victory, i. e., our imperfection, in order that he may gradually obtain greater things. Besides, it is our concern to avoid not only sin, but also imperfections.

Temptations take place not merely against one or the other virtue, but against all of them. This must also be stressed, because there are some who are afraid of only one kind of temptation, e. g., against chastity, and neglect all the rest, although an incitement to violate any commandment is a true temptation and must be repelled.

II. Whence come temptations? It is certain that no temptation comes from God. As the Apostle teaches, "God is not a tempter of evils, and he tempteth no man" (James 1, 13). But God allows temptations for our progress and eternal good.

Tempters in the true and proper sense are they of whom we have already spoken above (no. 45) as our triple adversaries in the pursuit of perfection: namely, the devil, the world and our nature corrupted by sin. "For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2, 16), and "the devil as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5, 8). By them we are incited and seduced to evil. Nevertheless, the real source or rather the possibility of temptation is within ourselves, because we are not forced to follow the example of the world and the devil, as Father Michael of St. Augustine (following St. Augustine) says, "after the coming of the Son of God into the world, the devil is like a chained dog, who can indeed bark, but cannot bite, unless a man of his own will approaches him" (*Inst. Myst.* II, tr. 1, c. 2); "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured. Then when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. But sin, when it is completed, begetteth death" (James 1, 14. 15).

For frequently the things which please the body are harmful to the soul. But the body insists on having its desires, even though the soul may derive harm from them. The soul, therefore, is tempted

to neglect itself and to despise the Divine Law, and to yield to the desire of the body. If it does, it sins. But temptations can also rise in the soul itself or in our rational part. Man can seek things above him (Cf. Ecclus. 3, 22), and can strive, as did our first parents in paradise, to attain these even against God's prohibition. Thus the soul is tempted to pride, to the violation of charity, etc., although frequently temptations of man's lower nature are also hidden under them. The world greatly favors such temptations, and the devil uses them to complete his own work.

III. This is the way, then, in which temptation develops: an enjoyable object is proposed to us by our senses or imagination, by the suggestion of the devil, or by the insinuations of men. This object, though evil, is suitable to engage our will. This representation usually molests the imagination for some time and in some way overwhelms us, so that there seems to be a certain obsession, a fixed idea, as it were. But this is not yet sin.

Then our lower nature or inborn pride by a certain natural instinct inclines toward the pleasurable object and desires it. If there were no inclination or propensity, there could be no temptation. For this reason one man is tempted by one object or in one way; another man, in another. However, not even this propensity or the perception of some enjoyment is sinful, since it is not yet free.

Finally, the whole matter is brought to the tribunal of the will. The will must decide whether or not it wishes to accept this pleasure against God's law and will. If it should consent, it sins; if it refuses and rejects the temptation, it acquires merit. Everything, therefore, depends upon the will.

IV. What must we do about temptations?

(a) When free of temptation, we must watch and pray, lest we fall into temptation. "He that loveth danger shall perish in it" (Ecclus. 3, 27). It is not allowed to expose ourselves without sufficient reason and without safeguards to temptations from which the danger of consent may arise. Only the proud and those blinded by passion refuse to recognize or to reject threatening temptations. Many, indeed, persuade themselves that they will meet with no temptation on this or that occasion, whereas by refusing to avoid the occasion, they are already, because of their passion, surrounded by temptation itself. But the presumptuous may not hope for the extraordinary help of God. The best safeguard against temptations is a continuous and useful occupation by which idleness is avoided, and the exercise of God's presence, by which our mind is almost habitually

raised to the things above. Furthermore, it is evident that humble prayer must be added to watchfulness, because, "our help is in the name of the Lord" (Ps. 123, 8), and our Lord Himself warms us, "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26, 41).

However, we need not live in continual fear of temptation; we must unite a calm trust in God to our watchfulness and prayer. For fear and anxiety usually increase temptations and call forth new ones.

(b) During temptation we must resist. It is best to think little of and to neglect slight temptations which occur at any moment, such as slight temptations to vainglory. But on the other hand it is not lawful for us to hold ourselves passive in the presence of other temptations, but we must resist positively. This resistance can be made directly or indirectly. Resistance is direct when we elicit a contrary act of the will, e. g., saying "I will not do this," or countering with the Psalmist, "Shall not my soul be subjected to God?" (Ps. 61, 2). Resistance is indirect when we direct our attention to something else and in this way gradually extinguish the temptation by weakening it. This takes place when we excite ourselves to the fear or love of God by meditating on some divine truths, as the Last Things or the sufferings of our Lord, or also, when we turn our attention to some other, at least indifferent, occupations. Such indirect resistance is advised especially in temptations against faith and chastity, or when our temptations last a long time.

In order that resistance may be efficacious: it should be made quickly, as soon as we become conscious of the temptation; courageously, without wavering; sincerely, i. e., by employing the necessary means; without agitation of soul; and perseveringly, until the temptation has ceased. We must trust only God, and not ourselves. Furthermore, "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with the temptation issue that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10, 13).

Moreover, if it can be done and no other obligations are violated, external flight is recommended, especially, if otherwise the temptations will hardly be overcome or our soul begins to be confused. Thus the melancholic should shun solitude; one tempted to impurity, should shun the occasion, etc. Yet certain temptations are more quickly and more completely overcome, when we attack them directly and do not flee. Who, for example, will conquer his proneness to anger by flight, since he is obliged to bring his nature with him into the remotest desert?

Finally, when the temptation annoys us for a long time, we need

patience and perseverance in order that we may not become discouraged and drop our weapons before we conquer. Let us heed the Apostle's warning, "Patience is necessary for you; that doing the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Heb. 10, 36).

(c) After the temptation we must briefly examine whether we have won or not. If we have carried the victory, we must render thanks to God. If we have been conquered, we must be sorry, but we must not lose heart. Usually, after defeat, another temptation creeps in, and that is despair, which is much more dangerous than the preceding. We must bravely repel this temptation by placing our hope in the infinite mercy of God, Who does not wish the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live.

However, we should not dwell too long in examining our conscience, especially concerning impure temptations. For if we cannot discern immediately whether we have succumbed or not, the mind is more clouded than enlightened by excessive examination, and there is imminent danger that new and greater temptations may arise. If we have done nothing externally, though we could have, and if during the temptation we have prayed and invoked the Blessed Virgin Mary, it is lawful to conclude, as St. Alphonsus teaches, that we have not consented.

V. By overcoming temptations the soul is purified, becomes stronger, is enriched with merits, makes progress in good, comes closer to God, yes, God is even glorified. For this reason, God allows temptation for His glory and our good. "Temptation," says Father Michael of St. Augustine, "is certainly necessary to acquire the perfection of virtue. For virtue is the habit or permanent quality acquired by strenuous repetition of acts. This exercise of acts cannot well be done without temptation. Therefore, temptation is rightly called the grindstone of virtues" (*Inst. Myst.* II, tr. 1, c. 1).

But "the life of man on earth is a temptation," and therefore, "you should strive with all solicitude to put on the armor of God that you may stand against the snares of the enemy" (Rule, XIV).

99. The Control of the Passions

I. We have long since learned to distinguish between man's superior or rational nature and his lower or sensible nature, that the former is ruled by reason, the latter by images derived through the senses, and that it spontaneously springs into activity. Therefore, just as we have a rational appetite called the will, so also, we have a sensitive appetite.

(a) Passions in the strict sense are movements of the sensible

appetite, which arise with some change or excitement of body whenever our senses or the imagination set before us some sensible good or evil. These movements tend naturally to apprehend good or to flee evil.

Our passions, let us insist once more, belong to the lower or irrational part of man. Hence, when simple movements of the soul in our superior part, i. e., in the will, are called by the same names as the passions, as for instance, love, fear or anger, it is not a question of passions, but of simple acts or affections of the will. Although the acts of the will are free and do not immediately cause excitement of body, similar relationships to their proper objects are called by similar names (cf. I, q. 85, a. 5, ad 1).

(b) Furthermore, the sensitive appetite is subdivided into the concupiscible and irascible. The former simply regards good or evil to be desired or to be avoided. The latter, regards it to be sought or shunned under difficulty. Consequently, we have eleven passions: six in the concupiscible appetite, viz., love and hatred, desire and aversion, joy and sorrow; and five in the irascible appetite, viz., hope and despair, courage and fear, and finally, anger.

Whenever a sensible good or evil is presented to us we like or dislike it. Therefore, we desire or shun it. If we obtain the good, we rejoice; if the evil, we are sad. But if the difficulties which oppose our obtaining the good, appear superable, we are filled with hope; if the contrary is the case, we are afflicted with despair. When the evil is not easily avoided or checked, we are filled with courage or fear, according as the difficulties appear superable or not. Finally, anger, which has no contrary among the passions seeks revenge for a present evil. If it is obtained, there is joy; if not, sorrow.

Accordingly, St. Thomas teaches that the passions are begotten in the following order: "The first to occur are love and hatred; the second, desire and aversion; the third, hope and despair; the fourth, courage and fear; fifth, anger; sixth and finally, joy and sorrow, which follow all the rest" (I-II, q. 25, a. 3c).

II. In order to rightly establish our spiritual life, it will help much to know the relationship between the passions and the efforts of our rational appetite or will. Therefore:

(a) It can happen that the passions move toward the same object toward which our will is freely tending. In this case we have harmony between the two parts. Our lower nature follows our higher nature, as soldiers follow a leader. Provided the object is good this condition is in the highest degree desirable. St. Thomas speaks to the point,

"Just as it is better when man wishes the good and actually does it, so also it pertains to the perfection of a morally good act, that man be moved to it not only as regards his will, but also as regards his sensible appetite" (I-II, q. 24, a. 3). When such co-operation is found during prayer, we have sensible devotion which undoubtedly is a powerful instrument in spiritual progress.

(b) It can happen that the passions do not co-operate with free will, without, however, hindering it in its efforts. In this case, which is quite frequent, we do not have such facility as in the former case, but man pursues his end in peace and tranquility.

(c) Finally, it happens that the passions desire the contrary of what the will desires. Then there is a storm in the soul, which the will can settle only with great courage. The soul goes forward only with great difficulty; but if, after the passions are controlled it does go forward, its progress is so much nobler, and its merit the greater. When this occurs during prayer, we have the state of aridity and disgust.

III. From these premises we shall easily understand what we must do that our passions may not be harmful, but rather helpful. In themselves they are natural, good endowments which have been granted by our divine Creator for our good; but they have this characteristic that they readily forestall the judgment of reason and thus impel us to act, before the will, under the guidance of reason, has decided. They make frequent and strong solicitations to win the consent of the will against the dictate of reason. Before the sin of our first parents the preternatural gift of integrity (Cf. no. 12) guarded against this imperfection of human nature. Since this gift, lost through original sin, has not been restored by Redemption, we must strive with God's help, through watchfulness and courage to restore right order and again to perfectly subject our lower to our higher nature. When reason and will have once more recovered their supremacy, all will be well.

(a) Before all else we must be careful that the passions aroused unexpectedly do not blind the intellect or drag the will along with them to sin. Every one knows how many, blinded and seduced by passion and lust which they mistake for love, rush headlong to their temporal and eternal ruin. We must go on our way, not dragged by passion, but enlightened by faith.

(b) We should try to have our passions assist our will in seeking our eternal goal. Therefore, the imagination, weaned entirely from sinful and dangerous objects, should turn to good and useful ones,

especially by meditating on the mysteries of our Lord's life, the Last Things, etc., so that even our sensible appetite will begin to be affected by them.

(c) The sensible appetite should always be restrained within becoming limits; it should never be allowed to grow to excess, even though the object in itself is good. Joy, sadness or anger should never be allowed to grow to such vehemence, as to hinder the free and perfect use of our higher faculties or to impel us to rash undertakings.

(d) Natural passion should, as far as possible, be transferred to supernatural affections, so that, for example, natural sympathy should be changed into supernatural commiseration with our Lord's and the Blessed Virgin's sufferings, with the miseries of our neighbor; and sensible love should become true charity.

(e) Sentimentalism, as it is called, or excessive esteem of sensible excitement in prayer and other spiritual exercises, should be strongly avoided. Sensible excitement should not be sought or refused; it should not be judge good or bad, whether it fills the soul with certain sweet and agreeable sensations or not, nor should anyone be esteemed according to his greater or less affective disposition! Unless sentimentalism is avoided, the entire spiritual life is enervated and the way is paved to moral flabbiness. Indeed, we should strive after a manly and vigorous piety, rooted in clearly understood principles of the spiritual life and nourished by constant self-denial.

Let us watch, therefore, and pray that our sensible passions may not only not hinder us, but rather assist us, in our spiritual life. Rightly does Father John of Jesus-Mary, O.C.D. affirm, "It is to be clearly noted that our eleven passions, if they are permitted to act freely, are so many sources of vices. If, however, they are rigorously ordered according to the dictates of our reason strengthened by heavenly aid, they are so many seed-beds of virtue. From the movements of our passions, if reason succumbs, habits of vice are produced, and from the same movements governed by reason, habits of virtue are begotten" (*Instructio Novitiorum,* I, c. 7, n. 4).

100. The Temperaments

I. By experience we know that in the individual man the passions are nearly always excited in the same manner by certain impressions, whether these impressions arise from thoughts, imaginations or external facts, and we attribute this uniformity to temperament, as we call it. For temperament is that fundamental affection of soul by which one is aroused and moved to react to certain impressions in a certain more or less fixed and constant manner.

(a) When a thought, imagination or outward fact strikes the mind, three points must be noted: (1) Whether the mind is quickly and vehemently, or only slowly and lightly excited; (2) Whether the person is impelled to react immediately or rather calmly await further developments; (3) Whether the impression sticks in the mind for a long time and frequently revives in the memory, or whether it quickly disappears without leaving a trace behind.

(b) In ancient times four temperaments were usually distinguished; viz., the choleric, sanguine, melancholic, and phlegmatic. They can be defined thus:

Men endowed with a choleric temperament are usually deeply and strongly moved by every impression; they are impelled to immediate opposition; impressions last long and are easily revived.

Men of sanguine temperament are, like the former, deeply and strongly excited; they are pressed to react immediately, but the impressions quickly vanish.

Melancholics are only lightly moved and never, or only after a long while, offer opposition. But an impression remains long and does not leave the memory easily, especially when it is an injury done them.

Phlegmatics are slightly moved, react slightly, and impressions vanish quickly.

II. From the foregoing, the marks peculiar to each temperament are readily understood, as also their virtues and vices.

(a) Cholerics are gifted with strong passions, a firm will and not rarely with rich talent. They try with all their soul and with perseverance to overcome difficulties, but they are usually stubborn and infected with pride, ambition and the desire to rule. They are prone to anger, quarrels, hatred, and envy. If their anger is controlled, this temperament is the principle of magnanimity, constancy, virtue and courage; therefore, cholerics are capable of accomplishing the greatest and noblest deeds. If cholerics cultivate sanctity and perseveringly strive after perfection and humility, they are constant in penance, eminent for heroic deeds, unfailing in prayer, prompt in obedience. If, however, they are given to vice, they are obstinate, impudent, incorrigible, and they would rather die than be humiliated; they are quarrelsome and hotheaded; when they are punished, they hide their vices and do not correct them.

(b) The sanguine quickly adopt whatever seems good, but as quickly lay it aside; they do not penetrate or investigate matters, but rest on the surface. They are usually mentally keen, pliable, lovable, very sociable, and obedient; but they are also inclined to sensuality

and for that reason to familiarities; they hunger after delicacies, and penitential virtues are repugnant to them. Their vices are particular friendships, a fondness for dainties, and carelessness in guarding purity. They need direction. If they find it and follow it, they will quickly make much progress in the service of God, and if they are well protected, become saints.

(c) The melancholic flee the company of others, shrink from cheer and noise, and are inclined to sadness and pessimism. Whatever happens, they are inclined to consider and remember deeply and long, especially the dark and sad features. They are serious, lovers of silence and solitude, but they are also suspicious, timid and morose. They excel in prudence and counsel, but sometimes make decisions in doubt and anxiety. They readily understand the vanity of everything and turn to eternity; they freely give themselves to mental prayer. But their courage easily fails and their prayer is disturbed by pusillanimity and diffidence. If rightly directed, they are fit for the highest sanctity.

(d) Phlegmatics are of a grave and quiet disposition and slow in their actions. They are not excited by violent passions, and are, therefore, cold and insensible; they slowly become enthusiastic for good, flee labors, yearn for the conveniences of life, but they also deliberate all things with a calm mind, bear serious responsibilities and are usually lovers of peace and concord. They usually excel more in natural prudence than in science and learning. They need continual prodding. They arrive at high sanctity under great difficulties.

To know these facts is of great advantage in order to form a right judgment both of ourselves and of others. In this way we learn that many things in us are quite natural, though we hold them as supernatural virtues and signs of sanctity. Likewise, we shall more easily bear with others, treat them better and direct them more fittingly. However, it is necessary to observe in what age these temperaments are found, whether in children or youths, in men or the aged. In the latter, temperament has changed by their very life and experience, and in their case vices or virtues are more prominent.

III. Besides, the following should also be noted:

(a) Although bodily constitution and health have great influence in forming the temperament, nevertheless, no temperament is so firmly inborn that it cannot be changed or corrected by training and exercise. Therefore, no one should excuse his defects and vices by saying that such is his temperament. For the temperament can be formed and changed for the better, as is proved by the example of

the Saints, who, (such was their virtue) very often were changed from choleric or sanguine into the most controlled and meek of men.

(b) Only rarely are pure temperaments, as they are called, to be found; but more frequently mixed temperaments. With great difficulty, too, are temperaments recognized in very holy people who have acquired perfect control over themselves; or in wicked men who are enslaved by habitual vice and do not seem to be masters of themselves. Also great nervousness arising from sickness or overwork usually obscures or destroys the marks of the individual temperaments, so that some set down a fifth temperament, i.e., the nervous.

(c) We must strenuously labor to thoroughly cultivate the good found in our temperament and to correct the evil. In this way a character, as they call it, will be gradually formed in us. Then we shall ardently desire virtue and perfection, and constantly and perseveringly pursue it without straying from the right path, or being disturbed by internal or external tempests. Nor must we forget that self-love, of which we have spoken above, is frequently hidden under our temperament.

(d) Moreover, no temperament is, as it were, set by nature for sanctity, and no temperament is excluded from sanctity. All depends on how we use our temperament and with what zeal and fervor we reform it, so that it may conform to sanctity. We do not deny that in one temperament greater difficulties are to be found than in another. But grace and fervor will conquer all difficulties and will triumph over all enemies.

101. The Predominant Passion

I. By natural disposition, temperament, habit and life, one of our many cravings and propensities struggling so riotously within us, grows and develops to such an extent that it more or less lords it over the rest and reduces everything to its service. This special inclination is usually referred to as the dominant passion. The word "passion" is taken in a wider sense than above, ordinarily for a vice or defect, although we sometimes speak of "holy passions."

Everything undergoes the influence of this dominant passion, so that in our thoughts, desires, speech, actions and omissions we follow it more or less, often enough unconsciously and unwillingly. Therefore, it is of the highest importance for our spiritual life to recognize this passion. For so we shall better judge and understand all our efforts and desires, our virtues and vices, our deeds and omissions.

Some are more inclined to intellectual or spiritual good, others to

material and corporeal good, as we explained above in the chapter on vices. Those drawn to the former are more prone to pride; whereas the others who desire the convenience and the pleasures of the body fall easily into the meshes of sloth, gluttony or lust.

II. How shall we learn by what passion we are ruled?

(a) It is easily evident that men gifted with great talent, practical ability and energy are more drawn to pride than to the vices of the flesh, although not even these are immune from the latter; and when they, on account of their pride, neglect the necessary precautions and rules, they miserably surrender to these vices. It is not a rare thing for the highest pride to be joined with greatest lust, and that men who seem to crave honors above all things become like senseless animals.

(b) Persons, however, who because of little talent seem inferior to others and can find no pleasure in arts and sciences, tend by their nature more to pleasures of the body. But such also frequently tend to pride, so that a proverb affirms that stupidity and pride spring from one and the same root.

(c) To discover our dominant passion the following will be of service: (1) Frequently and humbly to ask for supernatural light from God; (2) To observe our spontaneous and indeliberate thoughts, words and actions, and even our day-dreams; (3) To examine what virtues we more frequently violate or what sins we more frequently commit; (4) To see what vices we vehemently censure in others, since it does not infrequently happen that we are caught in these same vices; (5) To examine in what things we are pleased, irritated or provoked to envy; (6) To inquire why we are an annoyance to others and why we are censured by them; (7) To consult our superiors, spiritual director, or even sincere friends; (8) To listen to what our opponents think of us, since they usually have sharper eyes in this matter and are usually more outspoken.

III. When our dominant passion has been discovered, we must attack it bravely and perseveringly. For when it has been conquered, the rest of the passions will be easily overcome. Our aim must be to be guided, not by passion, but by reason enlightened by faith. Here we must note that any passion, even though its object is harmless and innocent, is a serious obstacle to perfection when it has become too powerful. Freedom is destroyed whether one's neck, or his hands and feet are bound. Only those, however, are fit for the perfect service of God, who are masters of perfect interior liberty. The particular examen, of which we shall say more later, is a useful means to control

the dominant passion. Moreover, we should, as far as possible, remove the occasion and change its object. For instance, we should not seek glory in the honors and praises of men, but should seek it in the loyal service of God and Mary, our Mother. We should not seek corporal or material delights, but rather the testimony or peace of a good conscience and the joys of prayer and conversation with God.

By so acting, we shall, by the grace of God, be more and more raised to the things that are above, and no passion will rule in us except the holy passion of holy love.

102. The Proper Use of the Senses

I. The Senses in General.

No one will avoid vice or control his passions unless he has learned to use his senses rightly. For since our higher powers, the understanding and will, cannot ordinarily in this life perform their proper actions without the co-operation of our senses, much depends on those things which we have received through our senses.

(a) There can be no doubt that the senses of the body are a great gift of God. It is sufficient to behold an unfortunate man who lacks one or the other of his senses. They have been granted us not for our harm, but for our advantage. Through the senses we arrive at the knowledge of the world and its Creator. Without his senses man remains rude and unpolished; he even seems to lack understanding. For there is nothing in his intellect, except it has first been in his senses. In truth, because of man's nature composed of body and soul, "faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. 10, 17). Hence, we must be exceedingly grateful to God for sound senses.

It is, therefore, evident that not only must our senses be rightly applied, as God wishes, but also properly developed. All else being equal, a man blessed with well-developed senses will accomplish much more than one who suffers from impaired senses, or who has neglected to develop or preserve them.

(b) But, alack and alas! since sin entered into the world, our senses can be, and frequently are, not only a help, but also an obstacle. For through our senses, the images of sensible objects by means of which our sensitive appetite is aroused, enter into our phantasy. Often this appetite, before reason can pronounce judgment, or even contrary to the dictate of reason and conscience, is captivated by these sensible objects, although forbidden and dangerous. Yes, by means of the senses, it pursues these objects and enjoys them against the will of God. How well our Father Maurus of the Child Jesus writes,

"The senses are the portals of our soul through which it escapes and frequently entangles itself in external things, so that it is ignorant of interior things whereas it knows everything else, freely ignores its vices and flees from the very good which might make it happy" (*Intr. in div. sap.* I, dial. 1, p. 43). Vices and disorderly passions are fed and developed through the senses. Therefore, if we wish to extirpate our vices, our senses must also be controlled and watched lest they betray the soul. If, however, our vices are conquered and our passions well moderated, the government of our senses will be easy, so much the more, as the soul, having repudiated external pleasures and having turned to interior pleasures, rejoices in the Lord.

(c) For those who consecrate themselves in a special way to prayer, as we do, the restraint and custody of the senses is much more necessary, not only to avoid sin, but also that they may not suffer distractions during prayer through their own fault, nor be hindered from the contemplation of divine things by the images of creatures. For this purpose Father Michael of St. Augustine warns even the perfect, "Since the senses of man are inclined to evil all the days of his life and frequently act like beasts, kicking like horses against reason, it is not prudent to grant them much liberty; but it is more becoming that only our rational faculties be active during prayer, and that the imaginative, appetitive and other sensitive powers be allowed to operate only as long as it seems useful or necessary to the service and assistance of the Holy Spirit" (*Inst. Myst.* II, tr. 4, c. 37).

(d) Thus the masters of the spiritual life generally insist that we should not only refuse our senses what is unlawful, but also frequently withdraw them from licit objects. Thus St. John of the Cross simply and absolutely teaches, "If a pleasure, which is not purely to God's honor and glory, is presented to your senses, renounce it and forsake it for Jesus Christ" (*Ascent of Mount Carmel,* I, 13). The celebrated L. Scupoli also teaches, "Observe diligently and be careful not to allow your senses to roam about too freely and to go out at will, and do not employ them when mere satisfaction, and not some right motive of usefulness or necessity impels you so to act; but if, without your knowledge, they have gone far abroad, call them back and so regulate them that, whereas formerly they were made the wretched captives of empty pleasures, they may now carry away from every object some precious treasure and store it in the soul, that it may recover itself and stretch out the wings of its faculties to heaven unto the contemplation of God" (*Spiritual Combat.* c. 21).

Let those desirous of perfection remember that not rarely con-

cupiscence paints things as useful or necessary which are really useless or even harmful and of no service to further God's glory or our spiritual progress, but only to satisfy curiosity or lust.

The pescriptions of our Constitutions in this matter are known to all, "All should studiously exercise themselves in mortifying the senses. They should restrain their eyes, bridle the tongue and close the ears, because death enters through the windows" (Art. 123), and "all shall be careful to curb their senses within and without the monastery" (Art. 188).

II. The Senses in Particular.

We have already stressed and explained above (no. 77), how important the close custody of our senses is, to preserve holy purity unspotted. Having learned the general rules and admonitions, we need now only say a few words about the use and mortification of the individual senses.

(a) "Let them not cast their eyes hither and thither," is the warning of our Constitutions (Art. 177). Our eyes, without doubt, are of the greatest use and necessity for our social life, but on this very account they also present many dangers. For our passions are frequently excited and abused by this sense. Therefore, the eyes should be well preserved and granted necessary relaxation. When duty or necessity calls, we should keep our eyes open, as they say, and when it is our duty to watch we should not be asleep at our post. At the same time we must be careful not to allow our eyes to be ruled by lust or by mere curiosity from which so many distractions are wont to arise during prayer.

Indeed, our eyes should sometimes be turned away from things in themselves lawful and good, either to control our passions, or the more easily to avoid what is unlawful by renouncing what is lawful. We should with ready eye see and read whatever is of real profit and edification to us, and we should not turn our eyes away from disagreeable things, when we are obliged or invited by duty or charity, as in visiting the sick and the poor. We should also try to practise and preserve real humility by a "modest countenance" (Const. 188).

(b) We learn more by our ears than by our other senses. That is why the itch for news chiefly dominates this sense. This eagerness must be strenuously restrained, when right reason does not approve or when the Divine Law forbids. Therefore, our ears should be closed to defaming, obscene and unbecoming language, to idle, foolish, and useless words by which time is wasted and many distractions

created. They should be closed to adulation and praise, to the words of those who rouse others against superiors, or who are never contented with their lot and draw others to the same critical mind. Of its very nature our hearing is rightfully entertained by singing and music, but the Saints sometimes gave up even these for higher motives. It so becomes us also. On the other hand, our ears ought to be freely opened to good advice, to the commands and admonitions of our superiors, to the Divine Word and in general, to everything that might correct us or lead to greater heights. We should patiently hear, and charitably, for God's sake, listen to whatever displeases our ears, as gossip about ourselves, complaints, etc.

(c) It will be superfluous to speak of regulating our sense of taste since we have covered this subject sufficiently in treating of the vice of gluttony. There we clearly explained how necessary it is to bridle this sense. The higher one wishes to rise in the spiritual life, the more must one attend to the mastery of this sense.

(d) The sense of smell seems to be less harmful than the other senses, although it does not lack its dangers. It is surely permissible to enjoy the perfume of flowers and the like, but a spiritual man will try to restrain himself even in this. However, he will never imitate worldings who spread voluptuous scents in their clothing and in their dwellings. This would be proof of an effeminate and wordly spirit. The servant and minister of God will not only not be a voluptuous slave to this sense, but rather will he accustom himself to other scents, in hospitals, prisons, and the homes of the poor, in order to win souls for God.

(e) No one will deny that touch is the most dangerous of all our bodily senses. It is spread over the entire body. Unless we restrain it, it will draw us to the most sordid vices. "On account of this sense," says St. Jerome, "we desire, we become angry, we are happy, we are envious, we emulate, we are worried, and when passion is stilled by a certain kind of disgust, we are again aroused; and we seek to do what we shall again regret having done" (*Adv. Jovinianum* 2, 8). Therefore, as we already declared elsewhere, we should make it a principle, never, not even jokingly, to touch another without necessity. Indeed, we must be cautious and chaste in touching our own body. It is most certainly unbecoming to a religious to use soft beds or to stay in bed longer than necessary. Those who strive after perfection will try to mortify this sense by exterior austerities; when standing or sitting they will not indulge their ease (e.g., by putting one knee over the other or by leaning on a chair); they will patiently

bear heat or cold; if other reasons do not urge, they will go afoot, even if more convenient means are at hand; they will avoid clothing that is too soft, etc. "Their gestures will always be chaste, and all their actions will be redolent of the sweetest fragrance of chastity" (Const. 123).

Thus it is necessary by vigilance or by mortification so to reform our senses that they may not hinder our spiritual life, but rather promote it, so "that when the movements of sensuality have been subjected to the spirit, the soul may be able to cling more easily to God" (Const. 108). It should be a disgrace for every religious to become an effeminate member under the thorn-crowned head (of Christ)" (St. Bernard, Fifth Sermon on the Feast of All Saints, n. 9).

103. The Control of the Imagination

1. Among the interior senses the imagination or phantasy is outstanding.

(a) It is acknowledged by all that it is of the highest value for the intellectual and spiritual life of everyone. For the intellect abstracts its concepts from the images concealed in the imagination, so that without it no teaching or learning is possible. We all know by experience that we are helped much in prayer by the imagination. He who enjoys a lively imagination is usually more easily and forcefully moved by the mysteries of the Life and Passion of our Lord and other mysteries of faith; he is more easily terrified by the punishments of purgatory and hell and more readily enticed by the rewards of virtue in heaven. When the imagination works readily, prayer becomes easy and pleasing; when it offers opposition we are affected by aridity and disgust and are tempted to shorten our prayer.

(b) Thus it is evident that this faculty is a great gift of God. Nevertheless, great dangers and obstacles lie hidden in it for our spiritual life. Since it can never remain quiet, it is not directly subject to the control of the will. Moreover, it arbitrarily changes the images received through the outward senses, combines them and forms new ones which openly contradict reality and facts. In this way an unreal world appears in which the beautiful and good appear evil, and vices decked with the splendor of virtue. Thus our passions are aroused, and wild battles rage in the soul. Our entire spiritual life can be drawn into jeopardy. The words of Sacred Scripture are applicable here, "The man that giveth heed to lying visions, is like to him that catcheth at a shadow, and followeth after the wind" (Ecclus. 34, 2). Indeed only too often the things proposed by our

phantasy and painted in most glowing colors are lying visions. St. Theresa, frequently and with good reason, complained of this "madhouse," which she also used to call the clapper of a grist-mill. It must be noted, too, that the devil cannot suggest temptations except through our external senses and the imagination.

(c) We must therefore be on our guard (1) not to be drawn from our purpose during prayer and occupations of duty; (2) not to be deceived by the illusions of our phantasy; (3) not to be seduced to evil by our phantasy.

II. According to what we have said, an act of the will is not sufficient. Other means must be used to attain our end.

(a) We should keep from our fancy and exterior senses, as much as possible, all evil and dangerous images. Among these, impure and lustful images before all else must be suppressed; then such as fill us with great sadness or faintheartedness; finally, such as spur us on to anger or hatred for other.

(b) We should not give ourselves to idle dreams, but should arrange to have the imagination always well occupied, although occasionally, we should relax somewhat from our strict regime to restore our powers.

(c) We should also check the imagination when it distracts us, bravely and patiently fixing it upon what is to be done at the present moment.

(d) We should see that the imagination always remains under the direction of right reason. It should never dominate but only serve. Therefore, our actions should not be determined by the counsels and suggestions of our imagination, but by the solid arguments of reason enlightened by faith.

(e) The imagination should be filled with images drawn from nature, Holy Scripture, the lives of the Saints and also from sound Christian art. It should be called in as an aid during meditation, so that its images may vividly represent to us places, persons and events and thus our sensitive appetite being inflamed to good, our will can the more readily and advantageously elicit good resolutions, and our memory retain the matter of our meditation more clearly throughout the day.

(f) It is especially necessary to check the imagination by mortification of the senses, of which we spoke above; it is very useful to recall the presence of God and to converse interiorly and familiarly with Him.

(g) Also the extravagances of our imagination frequently show

us from what special vice we are suffering and what is our dominant passions. For the imagination in its flights usually reverts to the subjects of its predilection as well as to those of its greatest dislike. When such a passion is conquered and such a vice extirpated, our imagination will cease of its own accord to engage in them. If we really seek the things which are above and relish them, the imagination also will easily rise to them.

(h) The best remedy against the sport of the imagination is sincerity, as well as prompt and humble obedience to our spiritual director. The devil will not deceive him who is guided by a prudent and pious director.

104. The Control of the Memory

(a) Memory is the faculty by which we can preserve and recall the images of things perceived. It is, therefore, a most precious treasure. It avoids the need of beginning over and over in our deliberations and undertakings, and enables us to make progress. Without memory, knowledge and experience cannot be acquired, since we deposit in our memory what we learn in order that it may not be lost. Everyone will see how important it is for our life to develop our memory as far as possible. But just as no one mixes precious objects with useless ones and much less with such as would lessen or completely destroy their value, so also we should exclude or eject from our memory whatever is useless and harmful.

(b) Therefore, we should never purposely recall to mind anything that may disturb our peace, create temptations, or hinder our attention to God or to necessary occupations. It is not even advisable to recall the sins of one's past life, except in a general way to arouse ourselves to sorrow, unless it is for the purpose of preparing for confession or to make an examination of conscience. We should not tarry in brooding over injuries received; nor should we dream of permissible pleasures of the past, much less of illicit ones. If we do not observe this advice, we shall waste time, and perhaps make our labors harder for ourselves, unless perchance we should wish to confess with Job and encourage ourselves, "If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?" (Job 2, 10). In this sense the following words of St. Paul should be our encouragement and our motto, "Forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3, 13, 14).

(c) We should, however, endeavor to impress the following firmly on our memory: (1) the benefits which we have received from God, from the Order and from men, that we may remain grateful; (2) the presence of God everywhere and at all times; (3) everything that pertains to our duties, so that we may fulfill them most exactly. Therefore, it is necessary that we do not burden our memory with useless things. For it is certain and borne out by experience, that he who cares excessively for the things that do not concern him, easily forgets the things that he is obliged by duty and conscience to remember and to care for. Holy Scripture gives the warning, "My son, meddle not with many matters" (Ecclus. 11, 10).

(d) The memory should be so trained that it will easily retain what it ought to retain. St. Thomas himself offers some suggestions to acquire this art; viz., to choose fitting but not usual resemblances of the things we wish to remember; to memorize things in their order; to bestow care and affection on what we wish to remember; to meditate frequently on things to be remembered (II-II, q. 49, a. 1 ad 2).

(e) We should give ourselves entirely to what we must do and consider at the time, and to reject as temptations and distractions the remembrance of everything else, even though good and honorable in itself. This should be observed especially during prayer. Thus, we read among the cautions for students drawn from the writings of Brother John of St. Samson and Father Dominic of St. Albert, "If you must go to choir, hasten to free your mind from all images of your studies. If you do not shut them out, they will serve as the foundation of endless distraction" (*Methodus,* p. 668).

105. Scruples

I. Not rarely those who intend to devote themselves seriously to the spiritual life, fall into serious scruples by which they are violently tormented. This state of mind can be turned either to the soul's greater progress in good, or to its detriment, or at least into a great obstacle to perfection, according as remedies are applied prudently and discreetly or otherwise. Thus we have to speak here of scruples.

(a) A scruple is an empty fear of sin disturbing the conscience where there really is no sin. He who is frequently tormented with scruples is said to be scrupulous or to have a scrupulous conscience.

(b) We must at once distinguish a scrupulous conscience from a tender conscience. For whereas a scrupulous conscience, which is really not conscience, i.e., a true practical judgment concerning the

morality of an act, always fears sin without reason or exaggerates its gravity, a tender conscience is a true conscience and does not invent sin, but discovers and flees from even the slightest sin. It is desirable, therefore, that all be of a tender conscience, because it is not possible to strive after perfection otherwise. A scrupulous conscience, however, must be removed and cured as soon as possible. For it is not a reasonable service of God.

(c) It is to be noted that a man can be very scrupulous in one or the other matter, while he has a very lax conscience in everything else. Actually, there are those who are in constant fear about chastity, whereas they commit sins, even very serious ones, against charity without a scruple, or neglect duties of grave importance with a tranquil soul. In fact, the tempter, himself, seems to wish this in order that the soul, agitated by scruples may have neither the time nor the strength to attend to other virtues, and, in this manner, may be kept from making progress in the spiritual life; or also, being overcome by disgust, may entirely abandon the struggle for perfection.

II. Scruples usually concern one of the following:

(a) One's past life. Father Michael of St. Augustine paints an excellent picture of such scruples. "There recur to the memory of the scrupulous one now these and then those sins of the past with vivid impressions of their heinousness. At the sight of them it seems to him that he has never rightly judged or weighed them, or that be has not confessed them with requisite contrition. Accordingly, there arises in him a scruple, a great anxiety, whether his whole life so far has not been a continuous offense against God, whether he has not committed as many sacrileges as he has gone to confession and communion. Therefore he at once makes a general confession; but now it seems that he cannot make a sincere act of sorrow for his sins. Then he begins to have a horror of himself. It occurs to him that he is forsaken by God, and by constant sinning and the withdrawal of grace he is reaching a hardness of heart that cannot be broken. Yes, even after his general confession, a curtain seems to rise before him and there are displayed before him, in addition to the sins already confessed, numerous negligences and vices together with the doubt whether he has ever confessed them with contrition, whether he has duly examined his conscience, whether he has sufficiently explained this or that circumstance, whether he has not rather excused, than accused himself, whether out of shame he has not concealed something, etc." (*Inst. Myst.* 1, tr. 2, c. 3).

Moreover, the scrupulous usually fear for the validity of acts to

which they are obliged by their office; e.g., whether they have rightly heard or celebrated Mass; whether they have entirely said the whole Divine Office with proper intention and attention; whether their profession or sacred ordination is valid or not, etc.

(b) One's present life. As soon as a temptation or a slight thought occurs, they think that they have consented and committed even a serious sin against faith, chastity, charity or some other virtue. Time and time again they return to examine themselves, although they become more and more confused and never arrive at a decisive judgment.

(c) One's future life. Everything appears doubtful to them; no matter where they turn, they imagine they will sin; everything seems forbidden to them; whatever enters their mind, they consider an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which they think they must obey, and so they find themselves burdened with responsibilities which they can never satisfy. Thus their anxiety and confusion constantly increase and render all action impossible.

III. (a) The marks of a scrupulous soul, to enumerate them briefly, are stubbornness of judgment against the advice of the confessor; a frequent change of judgment for slight reasons; fear of sin in everything; irrelevant reflections about the circumstances of one's acts; an obstinate repetition of the same sin in confession; continued anxiety about past confessions, notwithstanding the judgment of the confessor, etc.

(b) The causes of scruples can be external as well as internal, bodily as well as mental, namely: (1) The subject's melancholic, timid, excessively analytic and nervous disposition; pride; obstinacy; ignorance in which one cannot discern between temptation and consent, between essential and accidental devotion, between mortal and venial sin; lack of instruction concerning one's real duties; the belief that one must answer for everyone's sins. (2) Associating with the scrupulous, instruction by scrupulous teachers, the reading of books which encourage the fear of sin more than the love of God. (3) The demon who tries in this way to disturb our peace and to make our spiritual life more difficult and so, distasteful. (4) God Himself, who allows all these things or even places the soul in a certain darkness to purge away its sins, to make it more cautious, to lay aside all pride and to resign itself humbly to its spiritual director.

IV. (a) Without doubt scrupulosity because of its serious consequences, must be driven out and cured as far as possible. The remedies must be chosen according to the causes which can be diagnosed as follows: The scruples arising from our own character are usually more obstinate and lasting; those sent by God are short and moderate; those inflicted by the devil are recognized by agitation and horrible extravagance; those arising from our companionship, vanish when companionship is changed.

(b) When natural causes are at work, a physician should be consulted and his advice followed. The exercises of the spiritual life should be prudently moderated to suit disposition and strength. In other cases humble prayer and strict obedience to the spiritual director are required.

(c) A scrupulous person should not try to discover from many books whether he is scrupulous or not. He will never be able to decide this, and it will be useless for him to seek in himself the marks indicated above. There is nothing else to do but abide by the statement of his director and to render prompt and perfect obedience. If he does this, he will be cured; if not, all other remedies are useless. He must obey, even though he seems to be committing sin, rushing into eternal damnation, and shifting the future accounting on his director. For obedience is never to our demerit, but rather to our merit. Therefore, he not only may, but must, act against his conscience, which really does not deserve the name of conscience.

(d) Furthermore, the scrupulous should patiently bear these interior tortures, and should offer them in union with our Lord's agony and dereliction, for the conversion of sinners and for those who have a lax conscience. So they should convince themselves that they are not suffering in vain. Moreover, they should conceive a great trust in the Infinite Goodness and Mercy of God, who "so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son" (John 3, 16). They should not meditate on depressing truths, but on such as fill the heart with joy and hope. They should nourish a tender devotion to the gentle Heart of Jesus and to the Mother of Mercy. In this way their trial cannot fail to turn to their advantage, and once cured of this illness, they will be able to apply their experience to the good of others so afflicted. But in the meanwhile, they can do no better than obey!

106. Friendships

I. It is natural for a man to develop a greater inclination and affection towards those who are equal to him either by blood, country, education, temperament, etc. He gladly seeks the companionship and conversation of such. From such sources do true and formal friendships frequently arise. Friendship, therefore, is defined as "a recog-

nized mutual good will, by which persons wish each other well for their own sake because of an honorable, enjoyable, and useful reason" (Schram, O.S.B., *Institutiones theologiae mysticae,* II, 383). Friendship adds this to love that it supposes reciprocation and a certain mutual communication. (I-II, q. 65, a. 5 c).

Friendship can be established on various motives which are either supernatural or (a) natural and lawful; e.g., likeness of disposition, benefits received, a common occupation; (b) natural and unlawful, e.g., carnal affection, ambition, gain, etc. Here we should remark that these motives can so combine that one will prevail and another will more or less exert a secondary influence. In fact it frequently happens that a friendship begun with a lawful motive degenerates into a friendship in which evil motives and unlawful affections rule supreme. It is, therefore, of highest importance to appraise our friendships correctly.

II. It is readily evident that friendships with evil motives must be condemned and avoided. It is certain that ascetical writers generally pass a very severe judgment on friendships, because many snares are hidden in them for those desiring perfection. For among the young, even though the immediate danger of violating chastity may not be present, still sensible affections are usually increased so that the austere manliness so necessary in the pursuit of perfection is lacking. Those of more advanced age easily abuse friendships to form conspiracies, to satisfy ambitions, etc. In religious communities, private friendships frequently injure fraternal charity and create factions and discords.

Our Constitutions therefore prescribe, "There should be no excessive familiarity among our religious, and no particular friendships, but with equal manifestations of love for one another in God, all should love each other from the heart with deep and tender love of Christ" (Art. 179).

The *Methodus* especially warns the newly-professed to avoid particular friendships and gives this explanation, "Such attachments cannot be maintained except with frequent transgressions of the Rule, the Constitutions, and common observance. They will murmur, break silence, uselessly pass tht time intended for silence in each other's company and commit many similar faults and sins. No matter how much one hitherto very exact in observing the Rule may be worried in the beginning by the repeated pricks of his conscience, a certain agreeable satisfaction finally overcomes his conscience and almost silences it. Then they reveal their secrets to each other and pledge loyalty and silence. They hide their words and deeds from their superior

and cast aside their former candor and simplicity toward him. But if one of them is worried he shifts his share of cares and worries to his companion who has appointed himself to share his thoughts and affections, and who murmurs with him so that he also condemns the conduct of the superior and of others in his regard. But if the former has need of anything, the second takes care of it, so that the mind of one is entirely occupied with the likes and dislikes of the other, and so both do not hesitate to disregard entirely the end of their vocation, their spiritual progress" (p. 613f).

St. Theresa, who is of the same opionion, writes thus, "Such great friendships rarely lead them to help each other to the greater love of God. In fact I believe them to be excited by the devil so that factions may be born among religious" (*Way of Perfection,* c. IV, n. 6).

III. Nevertheless, there were holy friendships among the Saints, and Holy Scripture itself praises and commends honorable friendships. Much profit can be drawn from them for the spiritual life, especially when a number of fervent souls live among the tepid or less fervent. Friends can assist each other and promote their interests, in order to defend and protect the true ideal and spirit of the Order, and, to assist each other, amid bad or imperfect example, not to lose heart nor to turn to a lax life or to seek worldly consolations. Therefore, the following rules should be observed:

(a) The motives of our friendship should be examined carefully so that they may be as pure and as supernatural as possible, and we should take care that they will not gradually degenerate. Friends should earnestly encourage and assist one another to make progress in the spiritual life by freely correcting any defects they may find.

(b) Exclusiveness, which makes friends shut out others from their conversations and take it ill when a friend is loved by others, should be avoided. Likewise, it is not a good sign when one is always thinking of his friend, even during prayer; when one is disquieted because of the absence of his friend, or when he is present has useless conversations with him. Let all display of sensuality be avoided. Let also the pharisaism which despises or condemns others as too lax because of little fervor, be avoided. Let friends so comfort themselves as to win the souls of others and allure them onward to the same zeal for holy observance.

(c) Friendship should always be strictly subordinated to the common life and charity. Community exercises, even community recreations, should be always and everywhere preferred and every separatist tendency rejected.

(d) Such a friendship should never be begun with seculars, not even with blood-relatives. For we shall hardly find among seculars, anything for our spiritual progress which we do not already possess abundantly within the cloister. There should not even be mention among us of friendship with members of the opposite sex, even the most devout and religious, since they cannot be entered into or encouraged without the most serious danger or harm,—yes, even scandal.

(e) Finally, God should be loved above all friends, and all friends should be loved in God according to the following words of St. Augustine, "Blessed the man who loves Thee and his friend in Thee. . . . For only he will never lose a friend to whom all are dear in the One who is never lost" (*Confessions,* 4, 9). We should not neglect to love each one of our brethren without exception, so that it may be true among us, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 132, 1).

CHAPTER THREE

THE ACQUISITION OF THE VIRTUES

107. The Pursuit of Virtue

I. The extirpation of vices, of which we have been treating, is not sufficient to offer God a holy heart. It is not sufficient that the heart appears "swept," (Cf. Luke 11, 25), but it should also be garnished with virtues that it may please God and that He may gladly dwell there. Like the Israelites who returned from the captivity of Babylon we must not only cleanse the Holy City from the pollution of idols, and, after it is cleansed, defend it against the irruption of the enemy, but we must also rebuild and restore the sanctuary of God in it, as far as we can. If we do not, our last state will become worse than our first (Cf. Luke 11, 26). Or what does it profit to have rid our field of thorns, unless it be planted to render fruit a hundredfold?

It is true we cannot eliminate our sins, vices or the evil emotions of our soul without exercising acts of the contrary virtues and partly acquiring the virtues; but since we, as beginners in the purgative way, have so far given our chief attention to this negative work, now that we are in the illuminative or progressive way, we must strive after positive results, as we have already explained (no. 43).

Certainly the struggle against our vices will not cease, since our temptations will not cease nor our enemies sleep. But the more positively the city of God is guarded, the more easily will its assailants be repelled, and the more will danger be diminished, lest any traitors remain in the city to conspire treacherously with its enemies. Watchfulness and struggle must continue, but victory will be more easily and more completely won as the virtues are more perfectly acquired day by day.

II. Virtue is a habit or permanent quality which makes us ready and prompt to do good.

(a) Such habits when acquired through our own efforts are merely natural, as we explained above, (no. 29), and are called acquired virtues; but when they are infused by God they are supernatural and are called infused virtues. Here we must again note that through the infused virtues, the faculty, and to some extent also, the inclination to elicit the respective acts of supernatural virtue is conferred; for, by this infusion, contrary inclinations or dispositions situated in our corrupt nature, are not eliminated. Therefore, in order to bring these infused habits to full development and prompt execution, one who has subjected himself to vice, must, after his conversion, labor all the more strenuously in proportion to the degree of his enslavement to vice.

(b) All the infused virtues are simultaneously born in the soul with sanctifying grace and perish with it, if one excepts the virtues of faith and hope which can remain after the others are lost. Among the acquired virtues, however, the same connection does not exist, so that one virtue can exist without the other. Thus we frequently notice a certain man to be sober and chaste, although he may not be meek and humble. However, no virtue can be perfect without the possession of the other virtues, although the opportunity of practising each and every virtue in an equal manner or degree is not always and everywhere granted. Nevertheless, the perfect man must be prepared and disposed in his heart to practise all the virtues when the opportunity presents itself.

(c) The infused virtues grow with sanctifying grace through every supernaturally good act, especially by the devout and frequent reception of the Sacraments and prayer. Individual virtues, however, are acquired or brought to greater facility and promptitude by the fequent repetition of their acts, by which also infused habits are increased, as we have explained, provided we are in the state of sanctifying grace.

Religious, who live according to their Rules and Constitutions and according to the orders of their superiors, make steady progress in all the virtues, even though they think of nothing else than of their sub-

mission to obedience. On the contrary, there is an end of all progress in virtue, when they on purpose or out of neglect depart from regular observance and obedience.

III. We have already distinguished between the theological and moral virtues, and also explained the distinction. It will now be our aim to treat of and explain each virtue, or at least the chief virtues, or such as are of great importance and most necessary. But before we begin, we shall first establish certain rules for the pursuit of virtue in general.

(a) In the first place, what can be more useful for progress in virtue and in walking in the illuminative way with giant strides, than to frequent the school of Jesus and Mary? "The first incentive to learning" says St. Ambrose, "is the eminence of the teacher" (*De Virginibus,* 2, 2, 7). What more noble example can be found than that of the Word Incarnate, or of God's Mother? What way more secure than to follow divine Truth and her who lived so closely associated with the divine Truth? Therefore, whereas in the purgative way, the Last Things and other truths likely to excite and confirm horror for sin, are preferably subjects of meditation, spiritual writers urge the proficient to dwell chiefly on the Life and Passion of our Lord. Therefore, St. John of the Cross admonishes us always to yearn to imitate Christ in everything by modelling ourselves according to His life, which we ought to study in order to enable us to imitate it and to conduct ourselves in all things as He would conduct Himself (Cf. *Ascent of Mount Carmel,* I, 13).

We give immediate warning however, that no one should stop at mere externals, but rather consider and contemplate the sentiments and affections of the Divine Heart, according to the teaching of St. Paul, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2, 5). Thus the words used in our reception of the religious habit will be fulfilled, "May the Lord divest you of the old man with his deeds," (and this pertains to the purgative way), "and may He clothe you with the new man who has been created according to God in the justice and sanctity of truth." (This belongs to the illuminative way). However, to put on the new man is the same as putting on Christ or to be clothed with His virtues and to think as our Lord thinks.

The Mother of God attained this most perfectly. It is apropos to quote what our mystic, John of St. Samson, declares in one of his Marian contemplations. He thus addresses our Lord, "Nothing better brings before our eyes the Majesty of Your Divinity and Humanity

than that which Mary has done outwardly and inwardly by deeds, words, conduct and her whole life. By a most lifelike representation she is a copy of Yourself, so that, when we understand her perfections, we understand Yours. We behold Your Goodness in hers, Your Love in hers; just as we behold her goodness and love in Yours. We must, therefore, contemplate her, in her exterior and interior goodness, as we do You, in a way that exceeds all natural speculation, no matter how pure, simple, exalted, and fruitful it may be. But if that which appears and is made known in her, exceeds all understanding and comprehension, how much less can that be understood which is hidden in her, and cannot be seen or recognized by men. Such things must be admired, revered and contemplated in the delightful quiet of an unspeakable, profound, and secret silence. At such a sight we shall be ravished and remain spell-bound, because we behold the deepest revelation of Yourself" (*Anal.* VIII, 62f).

It is clear that this is the best method of honoring our Blessed Mother and, accordingly, to be especially recommended to Carmelites. Therefore, we must also meditate diligently on the life of our most holy Mother and learn how she practised the different virtues. In doing so, we will propose her example to ourselves for imitation, fully trusting in her assistance.

For special virtues the other Saints can be profitably taken as examples, especially those who belong to our own Order and, therefore, served under the same rule with us.

(b) Moreover, the following rules should be kept:

(1) No one should expect to acquire all the virtues at one effort. Rather, let him attempt one after the other. A tree grows gradually, provided it is regularly watered and cultivated. Before all, such virtues should be practised which one seems to be more lacking or which are more necessary according to one's state in life. In the beginning at least, only simple and modest exercises, and such as are spontaneously presented and adopted, should be preferred to such as are rather conspicuous and are purposely sought after. For this reason the spiritual director should also be consulted.

(2) We do not wish it to be understood that we should strive for only one virtue at a time and neglect the rest. For instance, it is not lawful to cultivate chastity and forget charity. For perfection consists in the aggregate of all the virtues and it must be our endeavor to perfect the whole man. Our intention should be directed to all the virtues, but particular attention should be given to one virtue, especially when it cannot be perfectly practised except other virtues

also develop and grow with it. For all spring from the same root and, when they have grown, strengthen that virtue.

(3) It is of the greatest importance to apply oneself continually and without ceasing to the pursuit of virtue. He, for instance, who today practises temperance by great fasts, and tomorrow so much the more freely indulges his gluttony, when, I ask, will he acquire the virtue of temperance? Or he who on one occasion bridles his anger, and then on another yields to it unrestrainedly, when will he ever become meek? Therefore, we ought always to watch and labor when the occasion presents itself, just like one who climbs a mountain, proceeds slowly, it is true, and and occasionally rests to refresh his strength, but never goes back and always keeps in mind the goal he has before him.

(4) There is no use in always examining what degree of virtue one has reached. For who can decide this except only God Who searches hearts and reins? Let it suffice for us industriously and unceasingly to practise virtue. There will be no doubt then that we shall make progress, although the farther we progress, the more clearly shall we recognize how great a way there still remains.

(5) Finally, we should never become discouraged even though we seem to be moving more slowly than our fervor demands; yes; even though we sometimes fail. Provided we do not desist from striving for virtue and do not omit ardently to ask the Divine Help, He who has begun in us will also accomplish in us, according to the teaching of St. Paul, "For it is God Who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish according to His own good will" (Phil. 2, 13). Certainly Father Maurus of the Child Jesus says truthfully, "Virtue is always disagreeable to our senses and has nothing delightful except its fruit" (*Intr. in div. sap* I, 51). But the Lord in His goodness will also render this yoke and this burden sweeter and lighter day by day.

ARTICLE I—THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

108. The Theological Virtues in General

We have long since heard that the theological or divine virtues are infused together with sanctifying grace. They can never be acquired by us through our own acts, and hence are always supernatural and infused. Only God by His grace can grant us the power to believe, to hope, and to love.

Thus there are three theological virtues, faith, hope and charity.

Since no one can live as a Christian without them, they are already presupposed in the purgative way. Nevertheless, since they are to be specially practised and cutivated in the illuminative way, we must treat expressly of them in this place. They are called theological or divine, because they have God as their immediate and absolute object and unite us to Him, whereas, the other virtues ar directed immediately to the proper use of creatures and uprightness of conduct.

Yet the divine virtues do not equally unite us to God. Faith shows us God and eternal life; hope promises us the possession of God as eternal life; charity finally, accomplishes this union with God.

Moreover, hope and faith will be made void in the next life, because faith will pass into vision and hope will be dissolved in possession. Only charity will remain forever and on this account, is the assurance that we shall attain eternal life. St. Paul so teaches, "Charity never falleth away. . . . Now, however, there remains faith, hope and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor. 13, 8, 13).

Charity supposes faith and hope, and cannot be possessed in this life without them. On the other hand, faith and hope, we maintain (no. 107), can also be found without charity, although in this case they are imperfect and formless and are of no avail for our salvation. For no one shall enter into the kingdom of heaven without charity.

Charity is lost by every serious sin; faith and hope, however, only by those sins which are directly opposed to them, as unbelief and despair.

The theological virtues are the foundation and the measure of our perfection. Therefore, they should be developed as much as possible. For the light which must direct us on the way of perfection, is faith. Hope of eternal life and the help of God strengthens us lest we faint. But charity directs everything to God and unites us to Him. Therefore, we shall make greater progress in the spiritual life, as these theological virtues are increased and strengthend in us. They must penetrate our whole life before we can be said to be perfect.

Since the theological virtues are strictly infused and supernatural, it is evident that their increase cannot be directly accomplished through our own acts, but must be hoped and prayed for from God. They grow together with sanctifying grace. Since, however, we know that all graces come to us through our Lord, Jesus Christ, it is evident, that nothing will avail us to acquire these virtues more perfectly from day to day, than union and familiar conversation with our Lord. When we meditate on His life and suffering, when we receive and

visit Him frequently and devoutly in the most Holy Sacrament, we shall find what we desire, and, by faith, hope and charity, we shall in turn be more united to Him. Our tenderest Mother Mary, however, will be our model and help, so that, going forward bravely on the illuminative way, we may finally arrive at the unitive way.

109. Faith

I. a) Faith is the supernatural and infused virtue by which we give assent to the truths revealed by God precisely on the authority of God Who reveals them. Hence the Apostle says, "Now faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not" (Hebr. 11, 1).

For, although the one and true God, our Creator and Lord, can be known from creatures by the natural light of our reason, (Cf. *Vat. Counc.,* sess. III, c. 2, can. 1), still this knowledge, since we have been raised to the supernatural state, is insufficient to reach our ultimate end. Therefore "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebr. 11, 6; cf. Rule XIV). Thus faith is the beginning of man's salvation, the foundation and root of justification (Cf. *Counc. Trent,* sess. VI, c. 8). The deeper this foundation is placed, the higher will rise the edifice of perfection.

b) What, therefore, must we believe? All that God has revealed to us and proposes for our belief by the Church, the infallible guardian of the deposit of faith. It is not allowed to admit a doubt concerning such matters. The slightest voluntary doubt will separate us from God. The whole edifice of our faith is so constructed that we cannot remove even one stone without destroying the whole edifice.

c) Why must we believe? Because of the authority of God Who reveals. We believe, not because we understand by the light of our reason that the things God has revealed are true, but because God Himself says they are true. For God in His Wisdom and Truth cannot deceive nor can He be deceived. Our senses and our intellect can be deceived; God cannot be deceived. Therefore, God's communications are more certain than the knowledge which we have acquired through our senses and intellect or have learned from others.

The Catholic Church, however, is the faithful guardian and teacher of the truths revealed by God. She has been founded by our Lord Himself upon a strong rock and is constantly assisted by the Holy Spirit, lest she should fall into error. Therefore, when we adhere firmly to the teaching of the Church, we shall neither err nor perish; whereas, outside the Church there is no salvation.

d) God, before all, demands of us the sacrifice of faith. Deliberately to refuse assent to the revealed truths is an impiety and a most grievous sin. There are many examples related in Holy Scripture in which God inculcates this. Were not Moses and Aaron severely reprimanded and excluded from the promised land, because they had some slight doubts about the word of God? Zachary was deprived of his speech for a time, when he refused to believe the angel. Our Lord complained bitterly "of this wicked and adulterous generation," which never would believe (Cf. Matt. 12, 39; 16, 4), but looked for new signs day after day. Indeed, He frequently upbraided even His disciples, because they were "of little faith" (Cf. Matt. 6, 30; 8, 26), and He openly declared to His holy Apostle Thomas, "Because thou hast seen Me Thomas, thou has believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed" (John 20, 29).

Abraham, in turn is constantly praised on account of the faith he displayed towards God against all human reason. "And, therefore, it was reputed to him unto justice" (Rom. 4, 22). Finally, our Lord rejoices on account of the faith of the Centurion, (cf. Matt. 8, 10), and of the woman of Canaan (cf. Matt. 15, 28), and rewards them with miracles. He likewise promises all men, "Amen, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, Remove from hence hither, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you" (Matt. 17, 19).

e) Faith is a true light than which nothing in this world is clearer. "Faith," says St. Bernard, "touches the inaccessible, it discovers the unknown, comprehends the infinite, reaches to the end, and in some inexplicable way embraces eternity itself in its vast bosom. I may confidently say, I believe the eternal and blessed Trinity which I do not understand; I hold by faith that which I do not grasp with my mind" (*Serm. 76 in Cantica,* n. 6). Faith is the light that "shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1, 19).

II. The qualities our faith must have are these: (1) It must be humble and simple; i. e., it must lean not on human reason, but on the authority of God and the teaching of the Church; (2) It must be firm, without any wavering; (3) it must be living; i. e., it must be shown in deeds and in charity; (4) it must be constant; i. e., it must endure against all temptations and assaults. If any doubts against faith should rise in us, it is of no use to fight against them directly by assembling and weighing arguments for our faith, but it is better to elicit an act of faith in all revealed truths, and then turn to other

matters. The best battle against all doubts is to accommodate one's life perfectly to the teachings and admonitions of our faith. But if a doubt is based upon ignorance of a revealed truth, then it is necessary to seek instruction and advice from men expert and learned in the matter.

b) The following are ways of practicing our faith: (1) to believe interiorly what God has revealed and teaches us through the Church; (2) to profess our faith before others when occasion offers; (3) to teach others the faith; (4) to defend our faith by word and writing against those who attack it; (5) patiently to bear for the faith insults and persecution after the example of the Holy Martyrs.

c) It is clear that faith can and must grow. Faith, however, grows: (1) by the frequent repetition of acts of faith; e.g., by reciting the Apostles Creed; (2) by a more profound knowledge of our Holy Catholic religion; (3) by a truly Christian life guided by faith; (4) by sacrifices undertaken for the faith; (5) by nourishing faith in a special way through fervent devotion toward, and conversation with our Lord, present in the most Holy Eucharist. This sacrament is at once the proof and the food of our faith.

d) We should strive to look at all things and events not as they are presented by our senses and by our reason blinded by passion, but as they appear in the light of faith. This is the truth which will make us free. (Cf. John 8, 32). It is especially important that religious learn to exercise holy obedience through faith. Actually faith and obedience are intimately united, as Father Michael of St. Augustine so well explains. Invoking the authority of the Holy Fathers he says that "faith and obedience are almost one and the same virtue, or surely they are closely related to each other" (*Inst. Myst.* II, tr. 1, c. 3). As a matter of fact, only they will be able to fulfill obedience perfectly who according to the teaching of our Rule, by the light of faith, consider, in the person of their superior, Christ Who placed him over us (XVIII).

But if we find God in all His creatures as traces and manifestations of Him, then faith attains its perfection. "When this is accomplished," says Father Michael of St. Augustine, "the soul can easily keep itself recollected in and well disposed toward God; for a living faith that serves it as a torch to discover its Beloved in all things enables it to find Him, embrace Him, desire Him, adore Him and love Him in all things that meet its senses. . . . And it is this that gently occupies it during the time of prayer" (*Inst. Myst.* IV, tr. 2, c. 24).

III. Our Lord Jesus Christ could not practice the virtue of faith,

since He enjoyed the Beatific Vision from the beginning. But He merited the grace of faith for us and by faith we are joined to Him as to our head. He also is the Light and Teacher of our faith. If one follows Him, "he shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8, 12). He likewise must be frequently importuned to increase our faith (Cf. Luke 17, 5) and to help our unbelief (Cf. Mark 9, 23).

Our Blessed Mother, however, practiced faith to a marvelous degree. Through the mouth of Elizabeth inspired by the Holy Spirit, she received this praise, "Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord" (Luke, 1, 45). In the same faith she stood beneath the cross, while her Son hung there, and she offered the same sacrifice with her Son to the Eternal Father for the redemption of the world, and so was made Queen of Martyrs and Confessors.

Supported by the help of this most loving Mother, let us follow her example and as St. John of the Cross inculcates, let us ascend the height of Carmel "by the obscurity of faith," faithfully fulfilling the admonition of our Rule, "In all things take up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one" (XIV).

110. Hope

I. "Take unto you the helmet of salvation, that you may hope for salvation from Christ alone Who shall save His people from their sins" (Rule, XIV).

a) In these words, hope, the second theological virtue, is recommended to us. It must be well distinguished from the passion of the same name. This latter is a natural force and extends only to natural objects. The former is supernatural and has God for its object. For the hope of which we speak is the infused virtue by which we firmly expect the everlasting enjoyment of God and the means necessary to attain it, all because of the promise God has made to us.

b) What, therefore, do we hope for? Nothing less than to possess and enjoy God Himself forever in life eternal, since He is the ultimate end for which we were created. For "God's recompense is God Himself," says St. Augustine (*Ennar. in Ps. 72,* n. 32). God is the highest good which alone can satisfy our heart. The way to eternal bliss is steep and narrow. Still we do not lose heart, but firmly expect that we shall receive from our God and Creator whatever is neces-

sary to reach that end. We are so sure that God will help us that we actually accomplish such a task.

c) Why do we hope? Enlightened by faith we are convinced that without Divine Grace we accomplish nothing to attain eternal salvation. Our Savior Himself proclaims this and St. Paul confesses, "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. 3, 5). Thus our hope is not established either on our merits or on our good will, but on God Himself. God is all-powerful and can grant us all things. Likewise, He is Goodness and Mercy, and wishes to grant us every good. Moreover, through His only begotten Son He has expressly promised to give us eternal life and has given His Son for this purpose that He might merit it for us by His Passion and Death.

How then can we doubt? How can we despair? We would heap the greatest insult upon God were we to lose courage and not trust in His promises. Not even our sins are sufficient reason for despair. For, "as I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezech. 33, 11). Our Lord beautifully explained and confirmed this statement in the parable of the lost sheep, of the lost groat and of the prodigal son (Cf. Luke 15, 1-32).

d) It is true not all fear is shut out by hope, since indeed, we are sinners and can freely reject the grace offered us. That is why St. Paul admonishes us, "With fear and trembling work out your salvation" (Phil. 2, 12). Struck with this fear, let us at once do sincere penance for the sins we have committed; otherwise, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven (Cf. Matt. 4, 17; Luke 5, 32). Let us do everything to make our vocation and election certain by good works (Cf. 2 Pet. 1, 10). Our religious state offers the best opportunity for both. However, we may not descend to such fear that hope will vanish and pusillanimity take hold of us. Because, although we are weak, we can do all in Him Who strengthens us (Cf. Phil. 4, 13), and the grace of God is sufficient for all things (Cf. 2 Cor. 12, 9).

II. a) Our hope, therefore, should be: (1) simple, so that we accept God's promises as He gave them, and expect from God whatever leads to eternal salvation; (2) firm, so that it will not weaken under any difficulties, enmities, weaknesses or sins; (3) efficacious, sparing no labor to render our vocation and election certain; (4) patient, leaving to God, when He wishes to admit us to His kingdom and the way He wishes to conduct us, always ready to leave this world as well as to continue our labor.

b) A burning desire for eternal goods is necessarily joined with hope. The more we relish the things which are above and not those which are of the earth, the more our hope will be strengthened to look for salvation from God alone. To despise earthly things and to love the heavenly is made possible by hope, and at the same time strengthens hope. Through hope, also, we, ourselves, have left all things and followed our Lord Who promised us, "You will receive a hundredfold and will possess eternal life" (Cf. Matt. 19, 29). These words, as St. Bernard confesses, "have everywhere convinced men of contempt for the world and of voluntary poverty" (*Sermo de bonis deserendis*).

(c) Nothing more need be said than that we should boldly advance on the way so happily begun, conscientiously *growing* in hope. It will be so if we (1) frequently consider the Goodness, Mercy and Fidelity of God; (2) excite in ourselves a lively desire for eternal goods; (3) accept gratefully from the hand of God as a means of promoting our salvation, whatever may happen to us; (4) earnestly pray God to strengthen hope in us.

III. Filled thus with holy hope we shall understand the word of the Apostle, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice" (Phil. 4, 4). Yes, we shall confess with the same Apostle, "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations" (2 Cor. 7, 4). "But we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience trial, and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not." (Rom. 5, 3-5).

Animated by holy hope we shall receive new strength day by day, so that we shall rejoice to run our way. Thus the yoke of the Lord will become sweet and His burden light (Cf. Matt. 11, 30). We shall never complain of the austerity of religious life, and the more helpless we discover ourselves to be, the more confident shall we be of attaining our most glorious goal. And after we have striven lawfully, we shall rejoice, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord the just Judge, will render to me in that day (2 Tim. 4, 7, 8).

Finally, let us unite ourselves as closely as we can with our Lord Jesus Christ, "by Whom also we have access through faith into this grace, wherein we stand, and glory in the hope of the sons of God" (Rom. 5, 2). And let us remember that it never was heard that anyone had failed of eternal salvation, who always honored and invoked the Blessed Virgin Mary, as his Mother (especially by the Holy

Scapular). For "he that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord" (Prov. 8, 35). Let us confidently and joyfully greet our most lovable Mother, "Hail, our Hope."

111. Divine Charity

I. The third theological virtue is charity, by which we love God on His own account, ourselves and other men on God's account. Our Lord has taught us, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets" (Matt. 22, 37-40). And St. Paul proclaims, "Now the end of the commandment is charity, from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith" (1 Tim. 1, 5), and calls charity "the bond of perfection" (Col. 3, 14). From this the great importance of charity becomes evident.

a) Really, charity is the queen of all virtues. Without charity no virtue can lead to eternal life. All virtues are referred to charity and she directs all of them to our final goal, God Himself. Without charity, no infused virtue, except faith and hope, can exist in us, and even they are dead and formless without charity. But wherever perfect charity is found, there the other virtues cannot be lacking. That is why the Apostle sings, "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13, 4-7). Therefore, "if I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. 13, 1-3). Charity, therefore, is the queen of virtues also in dignity, because she tends immediately toward God on His own account and because she excites and directs all other virtues.

b) Yes, charity makes us like God and communicates the divine life to us. For "God is charity; and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God and God in him" (1 John 4, 16).

c) Moreover, "love is an excellent thing, a great good indeed,

which alone maketh light all that is burdensome, and equally bears all that is unequal. For it carries a burden without being burdened, and makes all that which is bitter, sweet and savory" (*Im. Chr.* 3, 5).

d) Love confers great merit on all our deeds no matter how trivial, whereas without love, not even our greatest deeds win the least merit for us from God.

e) When we are inflamed with love, our prayers for others have a wonderful efficacy with God. For "a loud cry in the ears of God is the ardent affection of the soul which saith, O my God, my Love, Thou art all mine and I am all Thine" (*Im. Chr.* 3, 5).

II. Why should we love God?

a) Because God is the sum-total in infinite degree of all perfection. He is very Beauty, very Goodness, very Holiness, very Wisdom, very Power, or as the Apostle puts it, "God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness" (1 John 1, 5). All that is worthy of love in heaven, on the earth, in the whole universe, draws its beginning from God and is worthy of love insofar as it receives goodness from Him and shares in His Goodness. He Himself, however, excels them all and can never be loved as much as He deserves to be loved. He alone can sufficiently love Himself. Why, then should we not love Him, or not love Him above all things, or not love Him for His own sake?

b) But it is lawful for us to love God also because He is the highest good in our respect, than which we cannot desire greater or better, so that our soul can find rest in Him alone. Although such love appears less perfect than pure love, as it is called, which loves God solely on His own account, still it must be noted that in our present condition of life, it is impossible for us habitually to disregard our own good entirely and to neglect our own advantage. Only we must be careful in loving God not to seek our own advantage alone; but, considering well what we owe God Who is so good, we must strive to cling, heart and soul, to Him with true love of frienship, a love which does indeed seek and find its joy and rest in its friend, but which, at the same time, sincerely wishes all good to Him and bestows it as far as it is able.

III. How should we love God?

a) Certainly it is not lawful to love anything above God, or contrary to God or equally with God. God must be preferred to all things. Nothing must be esteemed above Him. We must be ready to relinquish all for Him. Such love called appreciatively supreme, is necessary for salvation.

Intensively supreme love, a love which fills the heart with such

fervor and ardor that one feels himself, in some inexplicable way, drawn and ravished to love God, (as a mother is impelled by nature to love her own son before others), pertains to the completeness and perfection of the definition of love, but it is not demanded of us and does not depend on ourselves. If God has granted us so great a grace, the more easy will it be to bring the sacrifices which charity demands of us. And the greater the sacrifices are which we make on account of God, the more surely may we expect this grace through God's Goodness.

b) Love is also distinguished as effective and affective. The former shows itself in deed or produces external fruit; the latter consists only in affection, although deeds are not positively excluded.

1) St. John urges effective love, when he says, "My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth" (1 John 3, 18). Our Lord urged the same in these words, "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 7, 21). The further, therefore, we have departed from sin the more perfectly we fulfill the commandments of God; the more readily we follow also the Divine Counsels and the holy inspirations of the Holy Spirit, the more genuine and the more perfect will our charity be. In this way we can judge the degree of our charity.

2) Nevertheless, affective love also has its value, since indeed, it is the source of the former. Therefore, the affections of love which we elicit, for instance, during mental prayer, are of great importance and are entitled to merit; and it is not lawful to despise or neglect them. In fact, it is most proper to elicit them frequently so that the sacred fire of charity being continually fed, many burn brightly in us and, when occasion offers, may spur us on to deeds. If, however, these affections should never be brought to their effect or to execution, they would be suspect and would be like a tree that does not bear fruit.

IV. What are the marks of charity?

a) Charity shows itself especially by admiration. Since God is the abyss of all perfections, He cannot fail to excite the greatest admiration in us as soon as we know Him and have contemplated His majesty and glory. This absolute perfection of God moves us to love, and love is delighted with the perfection of the beloved.

b) Then charity is proved by good will. It is impossible not to wish or desire the greatest good for him whom we truly and sincerely love. And so the Psalmist confesses, "Thou art my God, for Thou

hast no need of my goods" (Ps. 15, 2). In truth God can receive nothing from us, since He is all in all, and likewise gives to each according to the greatness of His riches and goodness. We can give nothing to God which we have not first received from Him. Still it is the privilege of charity to delight in the fact that God possesses all riches in Himself. Moreover, we can wish and desire that God be more and more known, loved, honored and served by all creatures endowed with reason, according to the words, "Hallowed be Thy name. . . . Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6, 9, 10). Therefore, we must especially observe the teaching of our Lord, "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (John 14, 21).

c) Finally, charity tends toward union. That is why the Apostle says that he has the desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. (Cf. Phil. 1, 23). Although this desire can be perfectly fulfilled only in the next life, still the soul wounded with love removes everything that may stand in the way of this union, renounces all things for God's sake, and suffers all in order to merit to arrive at such union. In the meanwhile, it unites itself, as often as permitted, to God Incarnate through the sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist and by thought and desire dwells in its eternal home. Thus it more or less feels that it is not far from its Beloved, but that it lives in Him and by Him.

V. How to Grow in Charity.

(a) Self-love of which we spoke while on the subject of vices (no. 97), is the enemy of charity. In order therefore that charity may possess our hearts, self-love must be expelled. In the beginning of the spiritual life fear of God and His judgments usually prevails, but gradually the love of God draws all things to itself. At first, it is true, we love God because we find our greatest good in Him, and we cannot be happy without Him. Our soul by meditating frequently on the infinite benefits of God will be inflamed day by day to a greater love of gratitude, and so the way will be paved to charity itself, by which we love God for Himself. When charity becomes increasingly stronger, conformity with God's will is also increased. Thus we shall more readily and perfectly obey His commandments and we shall gratefully receive every kind of adversity from His hands, until, having died to ourselves, we shall live for Him alone, and shall do our best that His name may be great among the nations from the rising to the setting of the sun (Cf. Mal. 1, II). By such steps we must climb to the highest charity.

(b) Finally, if we desire always to grow in charity, besides the continuous struggle against self-love and the frequent interior and exterior acts of love, we can recommend nothing more than intimate familiarity with Christ our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament. For He has loved us and has delivered Himself for us (Cf. Gal. 2, 20). Likewise He is the burning furnace of charity and "who, standing by a great fire, does not receive from it some little heat?" (*Im. Chr.* 4, 4). Nor should we forget that our Blessed Mother is the "Mother of fair love," who not only loves with maternal affection, but also trains us and leads us to true charity. We should therefore earnestly beg Divine Love through her.

112. Fraternal Charity

I. Love for God begins to fail whenever love for one's neighbor begins to fail. For "if any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, Whom he seeth not? And this commandment we have from God, that he, who loveth God, love also his brother" (I John 4, 20, 21).

(a) We are commanded by the same precept to love God and our neighbor. Likewise, we love both God and our neighbor by the same virtue of charity. There are not two different precepts, nor two virtues. For we must love our neighbor for God's sake, and God in our neighbor, because all men have been created to the image and likeness of God, and He, who dwells in heaven and regards the lowly things of earth, is the common Father of all men. "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? why then doth everyone of us despise his brother, violating the covenant of our Fathers?" (Mal. 2, 10). Moreover, all of us have been redeemed by the same most Precious Blood of the only-begotten Son of God, and are called to the same heavenly home and there likewise to enjoy forever our Supreme Good.

(b) Our Lord Himself enjoined upon His disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13, 34). Although love for one's neighbor was already commanded in the Old Testament (Cf. Exod. 22, 21; Lev. 19, 18; Deut. 10, 19) still our Lord calls it a new commandment because (1) by word and example He has shown its full extent; (2) grace renders its fulfillment easier; (3) He declares it the mark of His disciples; (4) He promises to reward as having been done to Himself, whatever we do to our neighbor.

Moreover, (5) through Christ we find a new relationship to our neighbor. For we are the body of Christ and members of member according to the Apostle's teaching, "If one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member" (I Cor. 12, 26, 27). So we shall better understand Christ's word, "Amen, I say to you, so long as you have done it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. 25, 40).

II. (a) We ought, therefore, to love our neighbor for God's sake, and not because of the natural gifts by which we may be attracted and charmed; not because of physical beauty, not because of great talent, not because of elegant manners, not because of the advantages we have received or will receive from him. Although all these can render charity easier by provoking a certain natural sympathy, as we call it, still they cannot be the genuine motive of supernatural and Christian charity. Accordingly, we must love our neighbor even though we discover him to lack these qualities.

(b) For the same reason we are not allowed to exclude anyone, even our enemies from our love. Indeed, "love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father Who is in heaven, Who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathens this? Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5, 44-48).

(c) Although we are commanded to love all men, still a certain order is to be observed so that we should love those with a special charity who, according to the divine plan, are nearer to us. Undoubtedly, our brethren in the Order, to whom we are united by the religious state, hold the first place. They err most grievously, who though living in a monastery abound in affection for seculars and neglect their brethren. Although it becomes us to cherish our parents and blood relatives with great affection and gratitude, still we would be entirely wrong if we would love them to the detriment of our Order and fellow religious, or would neglect our religious duties on their account. Although it is certainly fitting to zealously seek the salvation of those living in the world, still he, who would forget his brethren on this account, would depart from the right order of charity. For if we are bound in conscience to love all men, then we

are bound to love our religious brethren in the highest degree.

(d) Since we are obliged to love our neighbor for God's sake, love is not permitted to seek reward or recompense from those we love. If it did so, it would cease to be love. Our Lord has explained it thus, "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind; and thou shalt be blessed, because they have not wherewith to make thee recompense; for recompense shall be made thee at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14, 13, 14).

III. That charity must be active and must reveal itself in deed, is known to all. Holy Scripture incessantly and strongly insists on this point.

For example, St. John teaches, "In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him?" (1 John 3, 16, 17). Our Lord preached that we should dare everything in the exercise of charity, or rather, He recommended that we undergo everything for our brethren, in these admonitions, "If a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him. And whosoever will force thee one mile, go with him other two. Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away" (Matt. 5, 40-42). Therefore, it is not sufficient not to do ill, but true charity impels us to do good, insofar as we are able, in thought, word, and deed.

(b) Besides we must wish and desire all blessings of grace and glory for our neighbor and such temporal blessings as will lead to them, and we must sincerely rejoice with him for those he already has. We must cover over his defects and excuse them as far as they are excusable; we must patiently bear the annoyance he inflicts on us and forgive injuries; we must live amicably with him and assist him as we are able in attaining eternal salvation; we must edify him by our example. Sometimes it seems more difficult to think well of our neighbor and sincerely to wish him well than to do him good. But we can pray for all and offer our sacrifices to God for them. Prayer and sacrifices are always of value, even when other means have failed.

(c) Finally, since well ordered charity begins with one's self, how can he who does not love himself properly, love his neighbor rightly? But he who does not love himself for God and in God, does not love himself properly. The more we love ourselves in God, the more we

shall love our neighbor also. For in loving our neighbor we love ourselves, since, as we just said, our Lord promised to reward all we do for our neighbor, even the giving of a cup of cold water (Cf. Matt. 10, 42). Therefore, our Lord has laid down this rule, "All things therefore, whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them" (Matt. 7, 12). Let us examine the desires of our heart, and we shall find out what we must wish and desire for our neighbor. Thus we shall execute the admonition of the Apostle, "But you, brethren, be not weary in well doing" (2 Thess. 3, 13). So we shall fulfill the law of the Lord.

IV. Our Lord Himself has given us an example of the highest charity in washing His disciples' feet, when He expressly taught us, "For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also" (John 13, 15). In fact He says, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (John 13, 35). What is more, our Lord even gives the strength to follow His example in loving our brethren. For the same reason He comes to us in the most Holy Sacrament to enable us to love our brethren not merely by word and tongue, but also in deed and in truth (Cf. John 3, 18). For "we being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread" (1 Cor. 10, 17). Let us approach every day to the throne of grace and draw waters from the Savior's fountains (Cf. Isa. 12, 3). Let us unite ourselves to the Divine Vine that we may bear the abundant fruit of charity. "He that loveth his brother, abideth in light, and there is no scandal in him. But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth; because the darkness hath blinded his eyes" (1 John 2, 10, 11).

ARTICLE II. THE MORAL VIRTUES

113. Through Creature to the Creator

I. (a) Since man was created for God that he might find his happiness in God, "everything upon earth was created for man that it might help him find the end for which he was created" (*Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius). St. Paul expresses the same truth as follows, "For all things are yours, whether it be Paul, or Apollo or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: for all are yours: and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3, 22, 23). He likewise affirms, "To them that love God, all things work together unto good" (Rom. 8, 28).

These words are, without doubt, a source of great consolation to us. With the same Apostle we can rejoice, "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8, 38, 39).

(b) For this reason it is necessary for man to know how to use all creatures and events properly, and under no condition place his end in them. He must use them, therefore, insofar as they help him attain his end; and he must refrain from them insofar as they are an obstacle in this respect. To act otherwise is against right reason.

(c) Now, however, a great difficulty arises from the fact that on account of original sin we are exceedingly inclined toward the things that delight us at the moment, and we shrink from those by which we are annoyed or saddened. We are not sufficiently indifferent to be able at any moment to judge and act rightly, as even the pagans have confessed, *Nitimur in vetitum semper cupimusque negata.* "We always tend toward the forbidden and desire what is denied us." Therefore, we must tend and strive for this end: to make ourselves before all else indifferent toward all creatures and to use them only insofar as they are useful to attain our end.

II. The theological virtues, as we have seen, unite us directly to our last end. The moral virtues render us fit and ready to use creatures in the right manner because of that end.

(a) Adorned and clothed with the moral virtues we shall so pass among temporal goods as not to lose the eternal; intent upon our eternal goal we shall employ all possessions or events in such a way that they will serve us in the attainment of that end. Of what advantage is it to believe in this eternal end, to love it, and desire it, if we have not the strength, or do not make a sufficient attempt, to attain it? Nor is it sufficient to have the good will or to make good resolutions. Unless we have, by constant and persevering practice, gradually accustomed our nature to do good, as it were spontaneously, we shall frequently fall short of our proposals, and even, though unwillingly, do wrong. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce the infused moral virtues to practice and to acquire the ease and the habit of doing well.

(b) All moral virtues can be reduced to the cardinal virtues, as they are called, or have a greater or lesser relation to them. We shall first treat of these, viz., prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude. Since space does not allow us to explain all the moral virtues fully,

we shall add to the cardinal virtues certain others which are of great importance for our state and are not contained in any other tract.

(c) Through the perfect development of the moral virtues, man's lower nature will be so fully subjected to his higher nature that the latter will be able easily and perfectly to cling to God Himself through the virtues of faith, hope and charity. But it is also true that the greatest and most powerful motives for the continual exercise of the moral virtues are derived from faith, hope and charity, until charity acquires an all-embracing mastery and is so established as queen of all virtues, that man, on account of charity and out of charity, freely and, as it were, spontaneously accomplishes whatever is contained in the other virtues.

114. Prudence

I. (a) In order that among the great and frequent upheavals and pitfalls of this life we may always know what to do and what to omit, and that we may not perish from the just way, (Cf. Ps. 2, 12), God has shed upon us a ray of His eternal light by the virtue of prudence. It is defined as the "discernment of what we must do or omit" (St. Basil, *Hom. in principium Proverbiorum*), and it is the first of the moral virtues. Frequently it is called the pilot or moderator of all virtues (Cf. Rule, *in fine*), without which no virtue can be perfect. For it shows us how to hold the middle course of reason by which true virtue is recognized. For "virtue holds a middle course," i.e., it must be such as to avoid both excess and defect. Thus, "by wisdom the house shall be built, and by prudence it shall be strengthened" (Prov. 24, 3).

(b) However, not every kind of prudence is virtue. For even the children of this world are prudent, and in fact, frequently more prudent, than the children of light, as our Lord says (Cf. St. Luke 16, 8). Therefore, the Apostle distinguishes between the prudence of the flesh and the prudence of the spirit. He says, "For they that are according to the flesh, mind the things that are of the flesh; but they that are according to the spirit, mind the things that are of the spirit. For the wisdom of the flesh is death; but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace" (Rom. 8, 5.6).

The prudence of the flesh seeks the things of the earth; the prudence of the spirit minds the things that are above. "For this is not wisdom, descending from above; but earthly, sensual, devilish. . . . But the wisdom that is from above, first indeed is chaste, then peace-

able, modest, easy to be persuaded, consenting to the good, full of mercy and good fruits, without judging, without dissimulation" (James 3, 15-17).

Christian prudence always has before its eyes the last end of man, always examining and inquiring, *"Quid midi hoc ad aeternitatem?"* What bearing has this on my eternity? and is solicitous how it may please God.

Since carnal prudence pursues a false good it also employs false means, such as deceit, lying, fraud and simulation. These are opposed to the holy simplicity so highly recommended by our Lord. "But the learning of wickedness is not wisdom, and the device of sinners is not prudence" (Ecclus. 19, 19). "For the fear of God is all wisdom, and therein is to fear God, and the disposition of the law is in all wisdom" (Ecclus. 19, 18). And "grace walks with simplicity, declines from all appearance of evil, offers no deceits" (*Im. Chr.* 3, 54).

(c) The virtue of prudence is not measured by excellence in science or learning. For only too often "knowledge puffeth up" (1 Cor. 8, 1) and leads to pride which is the greatest folly before God. That is why the prophet exclaims, "Woe to you that are wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own conceits" (Isa. 5, 21). On the contrary, our Lord exalts the little and the lowly, when He prays, "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones" (Matt. 11, 25), and warns us, "Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves" (Matt. 10, 16). Accordingly, all can acquire this virtue, if only they choose to be humble and desire it cordially. For "wisdom is glorious, and never fadeth away, and is easily seen by them that seek her. She preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them" (Wis. 6, 13, 14).

II. Three things are required to act with prudence:

(a) That in each case we properly and diligently make inquiries, in proportion to the gravity of the matter, as to what should be done or omitted. For it is the office of prudence rightly to apply the eternal law to individual cases, so that the will of God may be done in everything. So much more accurate inquiries are necessary, as greater or more serious consequences for the future depend on our placing or omitting an act. This holds especially with regard to the choice of a state of life. For this we must use our own and others' experience, seek the counsel of experts, and consider everything maturely. It is of great importance to control our passions lest they blind our

soul. Sufficient time is also necessary, and all precipitation should be avoided according to the proverb "Make haste slowly!" For "he that is hasty with his feet shall stumble" (Prov. 19, 2).

(b) That we make a right decision. After making inquiries, we must draw correct conclusions from them, and if there are several possibilities, we should choose the better ones, always mindful of the warning, "Whatever you do, act prudently and consider the outcome!"

(c) That we properly carry out our decisions. For prudence is a practical virtue and refers to the good ordering of one's life. And for this, circumspection and caution are needed. For "there is a way which seemeth just to a man, but the ends thereof lead to death" (Prov. 14, 12). By neglect and inconstancy everything is destroyed, and all things not well considered beforehand become useless.

III. To acquire true prudence, we must observe the following:

(a) Prayer is necessary. Thus teaches the Wise Man of the Old Testament, "And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, and this also was a point of wisdom, to know whose gift it was: I went to the Lord, and besought Him" (Wis. 8, 21).

(b) Perfect acquaintance with our offices and the duties of our state should be acquired; if such knowledge is lacking, the foundation of prudence is lacking. Therefore, it is the obligation of a religious frequently to read and study his Rule and Constitutions (Cf. Const. 115).

(c) We must flee from sin and master ourselves and our passions, or rather, we must die to ourselves lest self-love or carnal prudence deceive us. "For wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins' (Wisd. 1, 4). But "a good life makes a man wise according to God, and expert in many things" (*Im. Chr.* 1, 4).

(d) Those who follow the principles of the world should be shunned, and the society of the holy and perfect should be cultivated. It will help much in acquiring true prudence to read the Lives of the Saints, provided we are not intrigued by extraordinary matters, such as revelations and miracles, but rather regard the example and spirit of the Saints.

IV. In order to avoid being led into error by the evil spirit and being deceived by our corrupt and deceitful nature, and in order always to discover what is right, it will help much to cultivate in our hearts, a childlike devotion to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Wisdom, and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Seat of Wisdom. If we deliberate

everything with our Mother and in the Holy Spirit, light will not fail us to distinguish rightly what to do, nor the strength to carry out bravely what we have learned.

Moreover, we religious should remind ourselves that, "when we enter upon and pursue the way of holy obedience, we are far removed from every danger of imprudence." It is characteristic of the highest prudence, to observe obedience most strictly. As long as we abide by the precepts of our Rule and Constitutions and by the orders of our Superiors, there is no reason to fear that we are acting against prudence, even though the prudence of the flesh most loudly prompts the contrary. On this very account "it is a very great thing to stand in obedience, to live under a superior, and not to be at our own disposal" (*Im. Chr.* 1, 9).

115. Justice

I. Our Holy Rule admonishes us: "Put ye on the breastplate of justice" (XIV). This is the justice, taken in its widest sense as the sum-total of all virtues, of which our Lord speaks, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice" (Matt. 6, 33), and "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill" (Matt. 5, 6). Therefore, our Holy Rule continues, "That you may love the Lord God from your whole heart" (ibid.). This justice coincides more or less with charity and with perfection itself.

(a) We are treating of justice here in a narrower sense. This is the cardinal virtue of justice which makes us always ready and eager to grant everyone the right to his various goods.

Man's goods are interior, i.e., they inhere in his natural or supernatural life, such as life itself, health, soundness of limb, and divine grace; or exterior, which are subdivided into goods of fortune, such as wealth, and into personal goods, such as honor and reputation. The virtue of justice protects all these. When any rights are violated, the virtue of justice restores what has been taken or repairs damages inflicted.

(b) No one will deny that among exterior goods a good name excels. "A good name is better than great riches, and good favor is above silver and gold" (Prov. 22, 1). Thus Sacred Scripture exhorts, "Take care of a good name, for this shall continue with thee, more than a thousand treasures, precious and great" (Ecclus. 41, 15). This is all the more necessary, as a good name is indispensable in working with fruit for God. Our Lord admonishes us, "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven" (Matt. 5, 16).

Justice must therefore be on guard not to call another's good name into jeopardy. Accordingly, the just abstain from calumny, defamation, and detraction, and also from rash judgments and suspicions. The Imitation of Christ notes to the point, "In judging others, a man labors in vain, often errs, and easily sins; but in judging and looking into himself, he always labors with fruit" (1, 14). "For man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart" (I Kings 16, 7). It is God's prerogative to judge all, but to man it is said, "Who art thou, that judgest another man's servant? To his own lord he standeth or falleth. And he shall stand; for God is able to make him stand" (Rom. 14, 4). And so the Lord insists, "Judge not, that you may not be judged" (Matt. 7, 1). He, however, who has injured another's good name, must realize that he is obliged in justice to repair the damage as well as he can.

(c) This virtue also distributes the goods and the responsibilities in the community in view of the necessities of the community and of the capacities of each member, and sees to it that each member contribute according to his means to the common good (Cf. Rule IX). That is why justice begets and preserves peace and tranquility according to Psalm 74, 11, "Justice and peace have kissed."

II. Many virtues of great importance accompany justice: (a) religion, by which we render God due worship; (b) piety, by which we bestow proper service and love on blood relatives, our country and our Order; (c) reverence, by which we bestow becoming honor upon superiors and those who govern or who excel in special gifts; (d) obedience, by which we execute the orders of our superiors because they are commanded; (e) truth, by which we show ourselves by word and deed such as we really are; (f) gratitude, by which we repay benefactors; (g) affability, or friendship, by which we recognize befitting relationship towards others in social life; (h) liberality, which controls the desire of riches and renders man ready to distribute them when right reason so dictates; (i) correction, which inflicts condign punishment upon the erring to bring about their betterment or to maintain justice.

III. The virtue of justice cannot flourish, unless its enemies are vanquished and driven from our hearts. Among these, the following merit special mention: (a) an inordinate attachment to temporal things; for the cursed greed for gold impels men to commit the greatest injustices, as worldly experience teaches every day; (b) envy, unholy rivalry and hatred, by which we are tempted to regard our neighbor an enemy; (c) ambition and an inordinate craving for human applause, by which we are drawn to darken our neighbor's

reputation. Wherever these vices are allowed to germinate and grow, the virtue of justice is choked. Ceaseless disturbances of the peace and quarrels spring from them; the progress and successful activity of a religious community are hindered.

IV. To acquire the virtue of justice perfectly, the following means, besides prayer and general mortification, will be of much service: (a) to recall one's heart from the desire of earthly things; everyone sees how useful toward this end is the strict observance of holy poverty. (b) to avoid familiarities forbidden by our Constitutions (no. 179). From them easily spring calumnies and detractions toward the rest of our brethren; (c) to close one's ears to flatteries and one's hands to gifts, lest the soul be tainted; for "it is better to be rebuked by a wise man, than to be deceived by the flattery of fools" (Eccles. 7, 6), and "gifts blind the eyes of the wise, and change the words of the just" (Deut. 16, 19); (d) to fear the judgments of the Eternal Judge; because "with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. 7, 2). Know you not that the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God?" (1 Cor. 6, 9); (e) to crush envy, anger or hatred as soon as it appears, as the Apostle warns, "Let not the sun go down on your anger" (Eph. 4, 26); "for the anger of man, worketh not the justice of God" (James 1, 20); (f) to cultivate charity; whoever is moved by charity cannot perpetrate an injustice, as the Apostle testifies, "the love of our neighbor worketh no evil" (Rom. 13, 10). If, however, one has acted unwittingly and involuntarily, he will set everything in motion to repair the injustice. For charity would rather receive an injustice than inflict one. (Cf. 1 Cor. 6, 7).

Let us, therefore, listen to St. Ambrose, "If anyone, therefore, desires to please all men, let him in all things seek not what is to his advantage, but to that of the many, as St. Paul also sought to do. For this is to be conformed to Christ: never to seek another's goods, never to deprive another of it to make it one's own. For when Christ was in the form of God, he emptied Himself to assume the form of man whom He enriched by the virtues of His labors. Will you then, rob him whom Christ has assumed? Will you divest him whom Christ has clothed? This is what you do when you try to increase your advantages at the expense of another" (*De Off. ministrorum,* 3, 3, 15). All of us are members of the mystical body of Christ; consequently, every injustice imposed upon our brethren affects Christ, our Lord. Likewise, we are children of the same heavenly Mother.

116. Fortitude

Since the life of man upon earth is a warfare, and they that will live godly in Christ suffer persecution, and since your adversary the devil as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour (Rule XIV), we stand in need of the third cardinal virtue, namely, fortitude.

(a) Fortitude is the moral virtue which so controls and strengthens the soul that it is not deterred by any evil, however, grievous, from fulfilling its duty. In the strict sense it refers to the most serious dangers; in a wider sense, also to the dangers and difficulties of daily life, because, without fortitude, hardly any virtue can be practised constantly and perseveringly.

(b) The virtue of fortitude teaches us two things: first, to bear the serious evils which happen to us in pursuing perfection and preserving our faith, and secondly, for God's sake to undertake those things from which human nature shrinks. There is greater difficulty in bearing, because he who bears experiences dangers already present, whereas he who undertakes them, has yet to bear them. Therefore, it requires more fortitude not to be affected by present evils than by future evils. For a present good or a present evil is more powerfully affecting than a future one. Therefore, they who are gifted with a lively imagination, can paint the future as though present, and so are more strongly and more quickly excited (Cf. II-II, q. 123, a. 6).

(c) Since the virtue of fortitude cannot be distinguished into phases, there are, nevertheless, several integrating virtues, by the help of which its task is accomplished: (1) confidence, which renders the soul ready to undertake the arduous, when God or superiors so wish or right reason dictates: (2) magnificence, by which one courageously and bravely executes that which one has confidently begun; (3) patience, by which we bear with an even and cheerful spirit, labors, difficulties and evils, whatever their source; (4) perseverance, by which we are made fit and ready to continue to the end (Cf. II-II, q. 128).

II. (a) If the virtue of fortitude is taken in its wider sense, it is found in all virtue, must co-operate in all virtue and must, therefore, be exercised almost continuously in our daily life. For there is no good work that can be accomplished without difficulties. Our very nature corrupted by sin unceasingly creates many difficulties; and the higher the things are toward which we aspire, and the more fervently we apply ourselves to our perfection, the geater difficulties we experience, at least in the beginning, and the greater sufferings we must bear.

(b) There are some who dream of undergoing the greatest sacrifices for God and even of offering their lives, and are always wishing to go to the missions for this purpose; but in the meanwhile they miserably succumb to the slightest difficulties and inconveniences of daily life and never stop complaining and lamenting. Such deceive themselves, since it is not lawful to spurn the latter in preparing for the former. Only too often the devil and nature place before our gaze the extraordinary and the sublime in order that we may weaken and fail in the ordinary and the common. Fidelity, therefore, and perseverance in putting up with daily ills, are a sufficiently great and noble martyrdom.

(c) Besides, the followers of the world have their martyrdoms and their own kind of fortitude. But, says St. Gregory the Great, "The fortitude of the just is one thing, and the fortitude of the reprobate another. The fortitude of the just consists in conquering the flesh, opposing one's own whims, extinguishing the delight of this present life, loving the asperity of this life on account of eternal rewards, despising the flattery of prosperity, overcoming in one's heart the fear of adversity. The fortitude of the reprobate, however, is unceasingly to love passing things, senselessly to hold out against the blows of the Ceator, not to rest from the love of temporal things even in adversity, to attain empty glory even at the expense of life, to seek the growth of evil, to attack the life of the just not only by words and deeds, but even with the sword, to place their hope in themselves, to commit iniquity daily without the least flagging of purpose" (*Moralia,* 7, c. 8). But in general, "there is this difference between us and those who know not God," says St. Cyprian, "that they complain and murmur in their misfortunes, whereas misfortunes do not withdraw us from true virtue and faith, but rather stengthen us in our sorrow" (*De mortalitate,* 13).

III. It is, therefore, the office of fortitude (a) to spurn the attacks of human respect whenever they hinder God's glory and perfection according to our Lord's words, "Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10, 28); (b) to overcome promptly fear of ill health, contagious disease, poverty and want and other inconveniences when office or duty demand, e.g., when obedience sends us to another monastery or country, or when the care of souls demands; (c) to undergo freely arduous labors for God's glory and the salvation of souls, when we have learned that God so wills it; (d) not to lose heart or to despair when interior or exterior difficulties

arise, but to be strengthened in the Lord and continue the work we have begun; (e) to risk one's life for God even unto martyrdom; (f) to preserve peace of mind amidst the struggles of this world to the extent of rejoicing in them, according to St. Peter, "If you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice that when His glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4, 13).

IV. In order to acquire the virtue of fortitude the following should be noted: (a) Christian fortitude is a gift of God, not of nature, and is born of faith, hope and charity, "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength" (Ps. 17, 2). Therefore, we must beg it of God in prayer and by the frequent reception of the Sacraments. Beside the Sacrament of Confirmation by which the strength of the Holy Spirit is conferred to fight our battles properly, the Eucharistic Bread is especially intended to help us walk bravely to the mountain of God, even though the ascent be steep and strewn with thorns.

(b) The devout consideration of what our Lord has suffered for us and what the Saints have borne, will not only inflame us with love, but will also incite us magnanimously to follow the holiest examples, as St. Paul teaches in these words, "For you have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb. 12, 4).

(c) The consideration of eternal glory will teach us, "that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8, 18).

(d) It will help, also, to weigh what the children of this world suffer; for "such will have tribulation of the flesh" (1 Cor. 7, 28), and all will acknowledge, "We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways" (Wisd. 5, 7).

(e) Great mistrust of self and therefore caution should be cultivated because "he who loves the danger, shall perish in it" (Ecclus. 3, 27), but at the same time we should have the highest confidence in God, because "through my God I shall go over a wall" (Ps. 17, 30), and "his salvation is near to them that fear Him" (Ps. 84, 10).

(f) We should become accustomed early in life to daily sacrifices, inconveniences and difficulties, and to being content with little; for "it is good for a man, when he hath borne the yoke from his youth" (Lament. 3, 27). The more sumptuous a life one has learned to live and love, the more vividly will he feel hardships and privations, even ordinary and common ones, and the more repugnance will he find in fulfilling his daily duties.

(g) Again it will be of help to foresee dangers which may threaten. For "javelins foreseen do not strike so hard. And we suffer the evils of the world more patiently, if we are armed against them by the shield of fore-knowledge" (St. Gregory the Great, *Hom. 35 in Evang.*). Therefore, all who are about to enter the Order should convince themselves that the religious life is not one of convenience, free from difficulties and struggles, since we are warned in the Old Testament, "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation" (Ecclus. 2, 1).

Still it is not at all necessary to arouse our imaginations and disturb our soul by picturing every danger or difficulty which most likely will never occur or only in the far-distant future; for it is not lawful to hope for the grace before time, whereas on the contrary, when these difficulties assail us, grace will not be wanting.

V. In addition to the grace of fortitude, the gift of fortitude is also infused into us by the Holy Spirit. By it we are inspired by a certain assurance that we shall survive all dangers and one day successfully arrive at our eternal home (Cf. II-II, q. 139, a. 1). Devotion, therefore, to the "Spirit of Fortitude" will be of great assistance in courageously bearing the most difficult trials, and should occasion demand, even seeking them. Indeed, the holy Apostles who before Christ's Passion had fled in great fear, afterwards, when they were strengthened by the gift of the Holy Ghost, "went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts 5, 41).

117. Temperance

I. (a) The last among the cardinal virtues is temperance. When it is taken in a wider sense, temperance is to be found in every virtue in order that the virtue may really hold the middle course. If, however, it is taken strictly as a special virtue, temperance is the moral virtue which controls the sense-pleasures derived from taste and touch (Cf. II-II, q. 141, a. 4).

Its varieties are abstinence, sobriety, and chastity, which we have sufficiently explained in treating of the vow of chastity and of the vices of gluttony and lust. To make temperance complete righteousness, or the love of that which is virtuous, beautiful and becoming, and modesty, or the fear of disgrace among men because of shameful deeds, are necessary.

(b) Temperance grants the body what is necessary and truly use-

ful. To deny such things to the body, to weaken the powers of the body excessively, so that life itself is endangered or that one cannot rightly fulfill the duties of one's state, is not virtuous but vicious. "We must consider also," says St. Gregory the Great, "that if a violin string is not stretched it gives no sound; if it is stretched too much it gives a discord; because either there is no semblance of the virtue of temperance if one does not subdue his body as much as it can stand; or temperance is out of order, if it wears out the body more than it can bear. Through abstinence the vices of the body, and not the body itself, should be destroyed" (*Moralia* 20, 41, 78).

(c) Temperance likewise defends the right of the spirit against the concupiscence of the flesh, lest the flesh which should obey, become the master. "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary to one another; so that you do not the things you would" (Gal. 5, 17). The Apostle laments in the name of all, "For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man; but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members" (Rom. 7, 22, 23).

(d) Unless we are devoted to the virtue of temperance, we shall fall ignominiously. Not only will we not go forward in our spiritual life, but we shall be reduced from day to day into the slavery of the vices. The greater liberty we grant concupiscence, the greater demands will it make upon us and the less will it obey either reason or faith. It will never be satisfied; yes "a horse broken not, becometh stubborn, and a child left to himself will become headstrong" (Ecclus. 30, 8). That is why St. Paul insists, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscence" (Rom. 13, 14).

This is of singular importance for our Order. For the higher and nobler the things are which a man desires, the more imperative it is to free himself from the bonds of the flesh, as it is written, "For the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things" (Wisd. 9, 15). Indeed, "the sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2, 14). No one, therefore, will arrive at contemplation, as he is required in the Carmelite Order, in fact, he will not even learn to meditate as he ought, if he has not tried with all his might to mortify his flesh or to acquire the virtue of temperance. For this reason our Holy Rule not only admonishes us, "Gird your loins with the girdle of chastity" (XIV), but also

prescribes so many fasts and abstinences, and moreover encourages us to supererogatory works. When the body has been reduced to complete submission, the spirit will easily rise to God, or rather it will be raised up by God to the joyous and admiring contemplation of heavenly things.

II. The first degree of temperance is found when we refrain from carnal desires which war against the soul (Cf. 1 Pet. 2, 11), and seek nothing in sensible delights but what is necessary and truly useful.

The second degree consists in keeping ourselves entirely indifferent towards pleasure and pain, not occupying ourselves with them in thought or word.

The third degree is attained when we are nailed with Christ to the cross (Cf. Gal. 2, 19), and prefer bodily afflictions rather than pleasures, so that, having become more like our Lord, we may find the most perfect union with Him.

III. Since through Baptism we have become members of Christ's mystical body and now live in Christ—"For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God," says the Apostle (Col. 3, 3)—we must constantly give attention to abnegation and mortification, according to the example of the same Apostle, "Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4, 10). For "they that are Christ's, have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences" (Gal. 5, 24). For if we live according to the flesh, we shall die; but if by the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live (Cf. Rom. 8, 13).

As for the rest, even men living in the world are forced to deprive themselves of many things and they freely and for natural reasons deprive themselves of them, as St. Paul notes, "Every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown; but ye an incorruptible one" (1 Cor. 9, 25).

"Mortify, therefore, your members . . . stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds and putting on the new" (Col. 3, 5, 9, 10).

118. Religion

I. Religion is the virtue which makes us ready and prompt to render due worship to God, because He is the primary source and end of all things and, therefore, our sovereign Lord.

(a) Religion does not belong to the theological virtues, because its object is not God Himself, but the worship of God. It is not

concerned about our end, as the theological virtues are, but about the things which concern our end, like all the moral virtues. However, it surpasses all other moral virtues, "since it more closely approaches God than the other moral virtues, insofar as it accomplishes whatever tends, directly and immediately, to God's honor" (Cf. II-II, q. 81, a. 6c).

(b) This virtue is associated with the cardinal virtue of justice, because it endeavors to render to God that which is His due; but, it does not coincide with justice, because it is the office of justice to render all things to another in strict equality, whereas, on account of God's infinite majesty, we can never render Him sufficiently what we owe Him.

(c) The virtue of religion is practised principally toward God Himself as the first beginning of all things; secondarily, however, toward other persons and things which are in some way close to God, so that greater honor is shown to him who comes closer to God and is more intimately united to Him. Thus we honor the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints on account of God; but we honor her more than the Saints because of her incomparably greater union with God. However, we adore one God, i.e., we confess Him as the beginning and end of all things.

II. (a) The act peculiar to religion is devotion, i.e., a ready will to worship God. From it proceed all those acts—some interior and others exterior—which constitute the worship of God. The chief of these are adoration, by which we submit ourselves to God as to our sovereign Lord and render Him due honor; prayer and praise, by which we extol Him and beseech Him to grant us blessings; sacrifice and oblations, by which we withdraw sensible things from ourselves and give them to God as symbols that we recognize His divine supremacy and our entire dependence on Him. Secondary acts are oaths and vows.

(b) Worship is distinguished as private and public, i.e., official. It is public whenever it is offered in the name of the Church by those legitimately appointed for this purpose and by acts designated by the Church exclusively for God and the Saints. Thus the recitation of the Divine Office by those obliged to it is an act of public worship.

(c) Although God must first be worshipped by interior acts, and exterior acts are of no value without internal consent, still exterior acts are also of great importance. In fact, they are necessary, because, on account of the constitution of our human nature, exterior acts strongly encourage interior ones and these of their very nature urge

to outward manifestation by exterior acts. Moeover, the entire man must render homage to God. Besides, the exterior worship of God is necessary for men living in society. For the race of man as a group must confess God corporately as the creator and ruler of all creatures. Whoever neglects the ceremonies prescribed by the Church or conducts himself irreverently in God's house or during prayer, fails against the virtue of religion, and betrays a lack of fervor, or even of faith. Indeed, St. Theresa declared that she was ready to die for the smallest rubric.

III. (a) As the very name indicates, he, who chooses the religious state, dedicates his whole life to the worship of God (Cf. II-II, q. 81, a. 1 ad 5). He has, therefore, chosen the best part. For what is more excellent than to apply one's self to the service of Him before whose throne all the angels and saints fall down in adoration (Cf. Apoc. 5, 8ff)? By the vows of religion, not merely some particular good is offered in worship of God, but one's whole undivided life, so that all one's actions become in some way acts of religion which will be rewarded with special merit. In this way the teaching of the Apostle will be wonderfully fulfilled, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10, 31).

(b) Since we are commanded by our Holy Rule to meditate day and night on the law of the Lord and to be watchful in prayer (VII), and since our Constitutions affirm, that according to the primitive prophetical institute of the Patriarch Elias, we have been principally called to sing the praises of God, (no. 138), it is clear that the virtue of religion should be especially cultivated and practised by Carmelites. If they fail in this they will fail in their special vocation. Everything, therefore, which pertains to the worship of God should be our special care. To this end all should join forces to see that the Divine Office is celebrated in each monastery regularly, worthily, attentively and devoutly; and that the ceremonies and everything else pertaining to this matter prescribed by our Constitutions and by the Chapters be exactly observed. Nothing should be slighted by us in the greater service of God.

IV. In order that this virtue which is so necessary may be more perfectly acquired day by day, the following means should be employed:

(a) We should frequently consider the infinite majesty of God and our complete dependence upon Him not only as to our beginning but also as to our preservation and the attainment of our end. We should frequently repeat, "Who art Thou and who am I?" By so doing

everyone can see what a great honor it is to take part in the worship of God. The more progress one makes in interior prayer, the more profoundly will he understand this.

(b) We should frequently pray and converse interiorly with God. For by familiarity we learn and feel how sweet and agreeable the Lord is, so that we can confess from the bottom of our hearts whenever the bell calls us to sing God's praise, "*Laetatus sum in his, quae dicta sunt mihi; in domum Domini ibimus*" (Ps. 121, 1). "I rejoiced in the things that were said to me; we shall go into the house of the Lord."

(c) We must free our heart from the contamination of sin and from the inordinate desire for creatures in order to taste the spiritual and the divine.

(d) Imitating our Lord we must gladly be about our Father's business (Cf. Luke 2, 49), and following Him and His Mother we must go up to the mountain of sacrifice to offer ourselves for God's glory, until we are received into the eternal tabernacles to sing the praises of God forever.

119. Patience

I. Patience is numbered among the virtues connected with fortitude. Since it is the office of fortitude to suffer the great evils of this life and even danger to life itself, it is the office of patience to bear evils of daily occurrence in such a way as to neither disturb nor break down the soul by sadness. It moderates the passion of sadness, without, however, destroying it entirely, although it may cause the soul to experience a certain joy together with sadness.

This virtue is necessary because we can hardly ever be immune from the evils and difficulties occurring in daily life. Nor can we become perfect or merit life eternal, if we do not practise this virtue. "For sadness hath killed many, and there is no profit in it" (Ecclus. 30, 25). Therefore, "give not up thy soul to sadness" (Ecclus. 30, 22). "For patience is necessary for you; that doing the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Heb. 10, 36). Mortifications of our own choice will be of no value to us, if we bear ill the evils sent us by God or even fall into murmuring. Through our own efforts we will never be able to cleanse the soul of all hidden faults, if we reject the hand of God correcting and trying us. Only God, who searcheth heart and reins, knows them perfectly and understands the remedies needed to cure us.

II. By the following steps we ascend to greater patience from day

to day: (1) We should bear evils without murmuring or complaining or without any other signs of impatience and indignation. To achieve this, it is clear, we must also moderate interior sadness and restrain disturbance of soul. (2) We should be ready and prompt to bear greater evils and await threatening evils with a tranquil soul. (3) We should try to love and desire tribulations, and to rejoice over them after the example of our Saints, John of the Cross, Theresa of Jesus and Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi. Everyone can see that this is a sublime degree of perfection, and we should not think we have arrived there, because now and then when we are flooded with spiritual consolation we desire tribulations for our Lord's sake. We must first be proved by patiently bearing daily inconveniences. It is by no means against nature to rejoice over tribulations and to desire them on account of the splendor of eternal glory and a vehement compassion and love for our suffering Lord. What seems impossible to nature, becomes possible to the all-powerful grace of God.

III. In addition to what we have recommended for the acquiring of the virtue of fortitude, the following will be of assistance in acquiring holy patience:

(a) In the first place these two truths will have to be considered again and again: (1) that nothing will happen to us without the knowledge and will of God, our heavenly Father. (2) "That all things work unto good to them that love God" (Rom. 8, 28), since God so disposes. Therefore, no matter what accidents befall us, we should be convinced that they are for our profit and immediately say *"Deo gratias!,* I accept this from Thy hands, O heavenly Father." Thus we shall overcome the first difficulty. Sufferings surely are sent to us that we may expiate our sins and so escape greater evils; that our soul may be more and more cleansed from every stain; that we may be day by day more perfectly freed from the inordinate love and desire for creatures; that we may make progress in virtue and perfection; that we may procure God's greater glory; that we may save souls and spread God's kingdom; that we may procure more merit for ourselves; that we may obtain greater joys in heaven.

(b) Moreover, in all tribulations we should at once have recourse to Him who invited us, "Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. 11, 28). It is impossible that our yoke should not become sweet and our burden light (Cf. Matt. 11), through intimate and frequent conversation with our Eucharistic God. In our patience we shall possess our souls (Cf. Luke 21, 19).

(c) We should realize that nature and the devil are always whispering to us that nobody has to suffer hardships so great and so numerous as ours. If we believe this, we shall be tempted at once to murmuring and indignation against God's providence. In reality we are not the only ones carrying a cross, and our cross is not the heaviest of all. Everyone must more or less tread the way of the cross and many a one must carry a cross much heavier than ours. Many "had trial of mockeries and stripes, moreover also of bands and prisons. They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being in want, distressed, afflicted" (Heb. 11, 36.37). Add to this that "all that have pleased God, passed through many tribulations, remaining faithful" (Judith 8, 23). Nor are the children of this world an exception. Daily experience teaches us if we are observant that no one is an exception. Father John of Jesus-Mary speaks the truth when he tells religious that they, on account of their state, are free from many tribulations of the flesh which seculars have, and that, therefore, it is right that they bear so much more patiently those tribulations that befall them. (Cf. *Instr. Novit,* P. II, c. 13, n.3).

Therefore, "let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us; looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, Who having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12, 1.2).

120. Humility

I. The Nature of Humility

The virtue of humility, which is classed among the virtues related to temperance, tempers the desire for lofty things. It is found on the lips of many but practised perfectly by only a few and, we must confess, is frequently despised. However, spiritual writers declare it to be the foundation of perfection. It is therefore very necessary to know its nature.

Faith is also called the foundation of the spiritual life; and it is, but in a different sense. For faith is truly the foundation upon which the whole edifice must be erected. For without faith, as we have heard, it is impossible to please God, and faith is the root and foundation of all justification. Actually justification begins with faith, and faith points out the way to perfection and eternal salvation. Humility, however, is the foundation of perfection in the sense that

it removes pride, the principal obstacle, so that the structure can be built. For God resists the proud, and pride corrodes all the virtues. Even faith is rendered impossible by pride. Faith and humility therefore suppose and supplement one the other. Faith cannot flourish without humility and humility cannot flourish without faith.

Humility, according to St. Thomas, is the virtue which restrains the soul from tending immoderately toward eminence (Cf. II-II, q. 161, a 1c), and implies a certain praiseworthy self-depreciation or inclination to seek the last place (ibid. ad 2). St. Bernard defines it, "Humility is the virtue by which one grows small through a genuinely true self-knowledge" (*De gradibus humilitatis*).

It is necessary before everything, to recognize one's defects or his meanness, and then in virtue of this knowledge to repress the inordinate desire for excellence (Cf. II-II, q. 161 a.2c).

Accordingly, humility is divided into humility of intellect, by which we recognize our meanness, and humility of will, by which we actually live humbly. The former is difficult, the second more so. The second is grounded on the first, and the first is of no value without the second. Both, therefore, must be present that we may be called humble.

II. Humility of the Intellect

First it will be necessary to realize what we are, or rather what we are not. Because seduced by innate pride, we always consider ourselves better and richer than we are, "Because thou sayest: I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing; and knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Apoc. 3, 17). In ourselves we see only virtues; in others, however, we detect only vices and failings. This is the common disease of mankind.

(a) In truth, "Behold the Gentiles are as a drop of a bucket and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance: behold the islands are as little dust . . . All nations are before Him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to Him as nothing and vanity" (Isa. 40, 15, 17). What, therefore, am I? Nothing except "dust and ashes" (Gen. 18, 27). If nevertheless, God notices us, it must be attributed to God's grace and His infinite goodness, and not to our merit. After the example of the Psalmist we must wonder, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that Thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8, 5).

But if we should seem to be something, to have something, or to

accomplish something, we should recall the words of the Apostle, "What has thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (I Cor. 4, 7). "Where is then thy boasting? It is excluded" (Rom. 3, 27). Since we have received body and soul, natural and supernatural life from God, since it is God Who worketh in us both to will and to accomplish according to His own good will (Cf. Phil. 2, 13), since we are not sufficient to ourselves to think anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God (Cf. 2 Cor. 3, 5), "then it is not of him that runneth but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9, 16), and all honor and glory is owing to God. "Let thy glory be in the fear of God" (Ecclus. 9, 22), and this the more, as "we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings" (Rom. 8, 26).

Would that we had always used the blessings and graces of God well and for the purpose for which they were conferred upon us! But we have dared to raise tongue and hand against Him, who has given us everything and "can destroy both body and soul in hell" (Matt. 10, 28). What ingratitude, what presumption, what folly! Life after such great, such frequent sins and repeated rebellions against God is a favor of God's longanimity and mercy, and not of our own merit. Even though the guilt has been forgiven the fact that we have sinned remains. We are compelled always to confess with the prodigal son, "Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee, I am not now worthy to be called thy son" (Luke 15, 21). Moreover, how often would we have sinned, and grievously too, had not God by some extraordinary grace withdrawn us at the last moment, reluctant as we were, after we had neglected the warning of Sacred Scripture, "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it." How often have we left undone the good we could and should have done, and so have failed by omission! How often have we resisted the inspirations of God and have not answered when He knocked! What remains except that "when you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do?" (Luke 17, 10).

(b) There remains one subterfuge of pride, comparison with the rest of men. Although, we say, we are nothing before God and although there are many better than we—a matter we do not deny—still there are some who are worse. But first of all, how does that help us? Is God terrified at the large number of sinners, or is the guilt of the sin lessened because so many commit sin? Then "why

seest thou the mote in thy brother's eye, but the beam that is in thy own eye thou considerest not?" (Luke 6, 41). We know that we have sinned; we know that we have spoiled many good deeds because our intention was not good; we are not ignorant that we have been enriched with great graces; but how can we judge the souls of our brethren, since man sees only appearances? Therefore, "judge not, that you may not be judged" (Matt. 7, 1), and "there is one lawgiver and judge that is able to destroy and to deliver. But who art thou that judgest thy neighbor?" (James 4, 12.13). Moreover, if we were aflame with real love for God, we would, in the spirit of affliction and with contrite heart, serve Him the more fervently as He is the more grievously offended by others and in this way work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Cf. Phil, 2, 12). Therefore, "be not high-minded, but fear" (Rom. 11, 20).

(c) The Apostle admonishes the Philippians, "in humility, let each esteem others better than himself" (Phil. 2, 3). He prefers others to himself. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1, 15; 1 Cor. 15, 9; Eph. 3, 8). Thomas a Kempis likewise admonishes, "Never think thou hast made any progress till thou look upon thy self inferior to all" (*Im. Chr.* 2, 2). In fact, many of the Saints have confessed themselves to be the greatest sinners. St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, when close to death, said that she believed God was taking her from this world that He might not be compelled to send some severe scourge upon the world on account of her sins (AA. SS. May 5, 756, n. 187). And our own Father Michael of St. Augustine writes, "An enlightened soul thinks humbly of itself as though it were the cause of all evil" (*Inst. Myst.* III, tr. 4, c. 33). It is certain that the Saints did not act so out of pretense, but enlightened by God's grace they recognized their sins and their slightest defects so profoundly, that in horror of their sins, they refused to see or to judge those of others. On the other hand, admiring the abundant graces they themselves had received, they were convinced that if others had received them, they would have co-operated better. We cannot imitate such speech of the Saints, as long as we lack the same divine light. Still from this we must learn to abstain from every judgment of others, the while we grieve over our own faithlessness to God. We should never prefer ourselves to anybody, lest some day it be said to us "Give this man place," and then with shame we begin to take the lowest place (Cf. Luke 14, 9).

III. Humility of the Will

(a) We must express in our very life all we have so far con-

sidered. Many indeed see their misery—who can deny it?—and yet do not show themselves humble. Much less do they submit to humiliations from others. They do not wish to submit even to God. Thus, then, knowledge does not help them, but rather increases their guilt.

If God is everything and I am nothing, if, moreover, I have received everything from Him, and still receive it, what remains except to confess, "It is the Lord: let Him do what is good in His sight" (I Kings 3, 18). "Shall the axe boast itself against him that cutteth with it? or shall the saw exalt itself against him that lifteth it up," says the Prophet (Isa. 10, 15); all the more so since we have merited the direst punishments on account of our sins. Therefore, whatever God commands, must be done; whatever He sends us, must be humbly accepted. The humble man is a contented man, a grateful man; he considers himself worthy of the lowest place and of his own choice desires it sincerely, truthfully and without pretense.

(b) When this principle is acknowledged all else easily follows:

1. In the hierarchical order the humble gladly occupy the place assigned them by God. They promptly render to superiors what belongs to superiors, desiring rather to obey than to command. They do not solicit honors, because they intend to live solely for God's honor and glory. After the example of our Divine Savior, they do not wish to be ministered unto, but to minister. They are convinced that they will stand more surely on the lowest step. However, when God assigns them some office, they do not refuse the labor, but humbly submitting their shoulders, have only one aim—to procure the greatest glory for God, and to make themselves all things to all men, relying not on their own powers, but solely on the grace of God.

2. In the social order the humble, knowing full well that the goods of this earth are distributed by God, gratefully receive what God gives them, not as pay, but as a sheer gift of God. They never try to enrich themselves by unlawful means. They do not eat the bread of the idle, but fleeing idleness because of their salvation, they work seriously in order not to be burdensome to others, and rather to have something with which to assist others. Since they firmly hold that the dangers of riches, as the Apostle testifies (Cf. 1 Tim. 6, 9), are many and great, they prefer to be poor with Christ our Lord, and they envy nobody. They so much more liberally share their means with others, because "alms deliver from all sin and from death" (Tob. 4, 11).

3. In the moral order the humble try to fulfill God's laws as perfectly as possible and commit themselves wholly to God's guidance.

Everywhere and always they ask, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9, 6). Mindful of their weakness, they avoid, as much as they can, dangers and proximate occasions of sin, and most diligently employ all means of winning God's grace, especially prayer and the Sacraments. Deeming themselves unworthy of extraordinary graces, they on that account strive more faithfully to co-operate with ordinary ones. They likewise allow themselves to be directed freely by those who hold God's place, and never presume that God Himself would speak to them. With all their hope fixed on God's help, they walk securely.

4. In the order of grace. Although they esteem nothing more highly than God's grace and are ready to give all earthly things in exchange for it, still they hold it God's privilege to distribute His graces as He pleases. Therefore, accepting even the least grace with gratitude they are not envious of those who seem to have received greater graces or seem to be called to higher glory in heaven, mindful of the Lord's parable of the laborers in the vineyard and of His warning, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil, because I am good?" (Matt. 20, 15). They realize that they would have had to endure greater dangers, if they had received greater graces, for "unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required; and to whom they have committed much, of him they shall demand the more" (Luke 12, 48). Accordingly, they sincerely rejoice over the virtues and good deeds of others. Spiritual consolations they gratefully accept from God as an unmerited gift and they try to use them in the best way possible. However, if they lack consolations, they do not become downhearted, but so much more diligently they carry out God's will in all things. They never presume to murmur against Divine Providence, since they believe they are worthy of punishments and not of gifts. In this way they obtain the greatest graces from God.

Thus humility permeates their entire spiritual life. Therefore, "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5, 3). For they perfectly fulfill God's law.

IV. The Value and Degrees of Humility

(a) There are some who imagine that humility is unbecoming to man and who say honorable men should despise it.

(1) Humility, they say, is lying and pretense. Whereas, as we have heard, humility is entire conformity to truth. It does not at all demand that we should deny the presence of good in us. Indeed, it

is a mark of ingratitude not to acknowledge what God in His generosity has given us or has wrought in us. We should confess that all these are God's gifts and works, and all honor and glory flowing from them should be attributed to Him who has given us everything and without Whom we are nothing and can accomplish nothing. Therefore, "every man is a liar" (Cf. Rom. 3, 4), if in his pride he attributes to himself what he has received from God. "Glory not, and be not liars against the truth" (James 3, 14).

(2) Others accuse humility of weakness, cowardice and lack of initiative. But true humility has accomplished the greatest and sublimest deeds and still accomplishes them. For even though it does not hesitate to acknowledge that by its own powers it can do nothing, on the other hand it hopes to accomplish all things in him who strengthens it. Yes, it dares and executes the greater and more difficult undertakings, the less it fears humiliation. Besides, it well knows that the talents conferred by God must be doubled for God and for the eternal kingdom. It lives not for itself, but for God and others. Thus, humility always finds wonderful strength to carry on courageously, whereas the proud easily become discouraged and do not resist the difficulties that occur.

(b) Although various degrees of humility are enumerated by various writers, St. Ignatius of Loyola establishes that the first degree is to avoid all serious sin. This degree is absolutely necessary for salvation. According to him likewise, the second degree is to avoid even venial sin. The third degree, however, is to follow our Lord Who was poor and humble, as closely as we can, since the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord" (Cf. Matt. 10, 24).

Perfect humility coincides with perfect charity. For perfect charity is humble without thinking of practising humility, just as a mother filled with love renders the lowliest services to her infant, impelled by no other motive than love. On the contrary they who are "without affection," are also "puffed up and proud" (Cf. 2 Tim. 3, 2.3; Rom. 1, 30, 31). Pride, to use a saying of St. Augustine already quoted (no. 97), "is the love of one's self to the contempt of God"; perfect humility, however, is "the love of God to the contempt of self" (Cf. *City of God,* 14, 28).

V. Rules for Acquiring Humility

If, therefore, we intend to acquire humility, we must observe the following:

(a) We must stop the source of pride, and admit no thought within ourselves about our virtues. As soon as the tempter begins to whisper that we are perfect or at least, better than others, we must immediately repulse the temptation and raise our eyes to the majesty of God in order to adore it and give God all the glory, mindful of our sins and of God's judgments. We should not dwell in thought on the things we have done well, but rather on what we have omitted or done ill. We should never compare ourselves with others except to recognize their virtues for our own humiliation and to incite ourselves to imitate them. We should always follow the example of St. Paul, "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend, wherein I am also apprehended by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3, 12). We should always admonish ourselves, "Thou hast yet a great way to go" (3 Kings 19, 7).

(b) We should never speak of our affairs or accomplishments, except out of true necessity or great advantage, neither of our virtues or vices, of our family or of our friends, as our Constitutions so pointedly admonish us, "They should everywhere flee boasting of themselves and excessive exaggeration about our affairs" (Art. 185). We should not defame others and we should gladly approve of the praise bestowed upon others. When we must remain in the company of others we should as far as possible, let others speak, and never anticipate their words (Art. 177, 180). "The vice of boasting is serious and exceedingly dangerous and such as to cast down souls from the highest perfection" (Rufinus, *Historia monachorum,* c. 1).

(c) Humiliations are the food of humility. No one should promise himself to acquire the virtue of humility without them. They convince us what we are, or better what we are not; they accustom us to be deprived of praise and honor and to put up with insults. Thus the old custom prevails in monasteries both to ask and to undergo public humiliations in Chapter and in the refectory as also to confess one's faults, to eat while one is seated or kneeling on the floor, etc. (See *Dir. Nov.* P. III, c. 7, 24, 26). We should prefer the lowlier tasks and such as are shunned or rejected by others; we should likewise love to be hidden and ignored. We should more gladly serve than be served. Without opposition or defense, in fact, with gratitude, we should welcome reproof and correction; we should gladly bear to have others preferred to us; we should without envy see others elevated or elected to dignity before us; without murmur or bitterness of soul we should allow our labors to be minimized or criticized or left

unrewarded; we should not become indignant when we are removed from office; if we suffer or are humiliated on account of others, we should not become resentful towards them, but rather pray for them; with tanquil, though sorrowful soul, we should bear with our own defects, since it is not characteristic of humility, but rather of pride, to be unduly agitated by them or to be cast down by excessive sadness. In general, it may be said that the humiliations sent by God are of much greater value than those of our own choosing.

Brother John of St. Samson says, "To be sharply and unexpectedly buffeted by creatures is a much purer and safer way than to cast oneself down and accuse oneself before men. The soul thus moved by others is much holier, more pure and perfect. A soul exercising itself is entirely taken up with self and acts for its own self, but when it suffers, it is founded on God and annihilated as it were, looking only at the abyss of the Divinity and then of its own nothingness" (*Theoremata,* p. 6, n. 12). Thus, we are strengthened in our humility and we make more progress in this way than by much reading and many meditations on the value of humility.

(d) As to the rest, it also pertains to true humility to believe that true and perfect humility can be infused by God alone. Without a special grace we have not the courage or the strength to look down, much less to descend, into the abyss of our nothingness, in order to commit ourselves entirely to the Divine Mercy. Therefore, we ought incessantly implore this gift, and also strive after humility, as far as we can. For "God resisteth the poud, and giveth grace to the humble" (James 4, 6), and "unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18, 3), is the warning our Lord gives to His disciples indulging in ambition. The higher the edifice of spiritual life is to be raised, the deeper the foundation of humility must be sunk. Consequently, those called to the contemplative life, must give first attention to this virtue, so that they may consider themselves entirely unworthy of contemplation, as St. Theresa clearly inculcates (Cf. *Interior Castle,* c. 2). Nor may anyone hope to work successfully in the Lord's vineyard, if he does not practise humility. For God is a jealous God (Cf. Deut. 5, 9), Who will not give His glory to another (Isa. 42, 8). On this account our Constitutions expressly exhort our preachers to practise humility (Art. 251). Considering, therefore, the example of the Son of God, "Who emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil. 2, 7), as well as of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the lowly handmaid of the Lord, let us always realize and never forget, "One be-

comes so much lower before God, as he becomes precious in his own sight; he becomes so much more precious in God's sight, as he becomes lowly in his own, because He looketh on the low, and the high He knoweth afar off" (St. Gregory the Great, *Morals* 18, 38, 59).

121. Meekness

I. (a) Among the virtues connected with temperance is also found meekness, the sister of humility. Meekness moderates anger, as patience tempers sadness. Since all we said before about restraining anger, refers to this subject, only a few things remain to be said about the virtue of meekness.

Our Lord strongly recommends meekness when He says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land" (Matt. 5, 4). He also wishes us to practise it perfectly, for He exhorts us, "you have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil: but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other" (Matt. 5, 38, 39). He Himself called the traitor a friend, and at His death prayed for His enemies who ceased not to blaspheme.

(b) Since some anger is just and holy, so on the other hand, meekness can in some circumstances become wrong and unjust. For if it is indifferent to a violation of order and neglects its duty in order to preserve peace, then it ceases to be a virtue and has been perverted to a vice. Virtue surely holds a middle course. However, unless it is a matter of ill health or of a weak constitution, the danger of unrestrained anger is greater than that of excessive meekness. It is also possible to suffer from both vices simultaneously, anger and a false meekness. For even extremes are not far apart. In doubt, therefore, whether we are to give way to anger or to meekness, meekness should be preferred, since we are usually more inclined to anger.

II. Like humility meekness is frequently accused of weakness by the children of this world. But meekness, like humility, is a virtue of the strong who have acquired perfect command of themselves and of all their passions and are always and everywhere ruled by right reason. Meekness is not timidity nor does it refuse to strive for victory in a good cause; but rather tries to carry off the victory by better arms than anger. It strives to overcome evil with good (Rom. 12, 21). In fact, our Lord conquered the world and hell, and drew all to Himself by the very fact that He allowed Himself to be raised on the cross. Moreover, very frequently an outstanding meekness is the fruit of a protracted and vehement struggle against innate anger

or excessively irritable nerves. Thus it comes that the meek have such wonderful influence, as the example of St. Francis de Sales, the meekest of men teaches us, who is said to have led back to the Church 70,000 heretics.

(b) Meekness does not fear dangers or flee an enemy, but boldly attacks and resists whenever it seems necessary for God's glory or the salvation of souls; but it always does so with the greatest love. St. Stephen is an example, who courageously and fearlessly upbraided the Pharisees for their hardness of heart and did not hesitate to pray for his very enemies under the blows of the stones (Cf. Acts 7, 59).

(c) Meekness is not helpless, yielding or apathetic. It is silent and tolerant only in view of a greater good or to hinder more serious losses or greater scandals. Therefore the meek do not neglect their duties of office but with courage and watchfulness they impel their subjects to regular observance and obedience, and, in season and out of season, they are insistent, they reprove, entreat, and rebuke "in all patience and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4, 2). Yet they are careful not to destroy by anger what they have built up in words.

(d) Nor are the meek compelled to renounce their lawful rights. In fact, when it is a question of God's or their neighbors' rights, they are not allowed to do so. Yet they are careful not to avenge imaginary rights or defend lawful rights by unjust means. They gladly surrender their own rights, if by so doing they can procure God's greater glory or promote the salvation of souls, according to the example of our Lord, Who, for the same reason, was led as a sheep to the slaughter not opening His mouth (Cf. Acts 8, 32).

III. Meekness must also, or rather especially, be practised when others become angry or are in a furious rage. We can hardly do a greater favor to an angry man than to wait with an even and calm mind until his passion quiets down and he comes to his senses. Holy Scripture teaches on this point, "Quarrel not with a passionate man" (Ecclus. 8, 19). And, "if thou blow the spark, it shall burn as a fire: and if thou spit upon it, it shall be quenched: both come out of the same mouth" (Ecclus, 28, 14). For "a mild answer breaketh wrath, but a harsh word stirreth up fury" (Prov. 15, 1). But if we accomplish nothing, it is better to turn the conversation to something else or to leave entirely. "Meekness," says St. John Climacus, "is a cliff, jutting out into the storm of the sea. It scatters and breaks all the waves hurling themselves against it, whereas itself is never moved" (*Scala Paradisi,* gradus 24).

IV. This virtue is most sublime and is indispensable for community

life. It is not a fruit of this earth, but a gift from above which our Lord Who wished to be called the King of Meekness and "Who, when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not" (1 Pet. 2, 23), Himself brought from heaven. Thus He could invite us, "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. 11, 29). We must follow His footsteps. For "the servant of the Lord must not wrangle but be mild toward all men" (2 Tim. 2, 24).

Accordingly, let us not cease to implore of our Lord, that this mind being in us, which was also in Him (Cf. Phil, 2, 5), we may walk worthy of the vocation in which we are called, "with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity. Careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4, 1-3).

The more humble we are and the more we behold our neighbor in the light of faith, the more easily we shall observe meekness.

122. Penance

I. A virtue most necessary for bearing the austerity of religious life is the virtue of penance. Since we have been called to religious life, we must particularly impress upon our minds the teaching of St. Paul, "Knowest thou not, that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance?" (Rom. 2, 4).

In truth all holy religious have understood that their state is intended for the practice of penance and so leads to perfection. For this reason the superior in receiving the novices according to our Ritual prays, "O God, Who dost not wish the death of the sinner, but his repentance, and Who dost always seek emendation of life." In our Constitutions the master of novices is expressly admonished to teach his novices, "fervently and devotedly to undertake penance for their past life" (Art. 326). All should be convinced that they will the easier bear the burden of religious life and will make the more progress, the more they have imbibed the spirit of penance from the very beginning of religious life.

According to St. Thomas, the virtue of penance is the virtue by which we are displeased with our past sins and are determined to remove their consequence, namely, the offense against God and the guilt of punishment (Cf. III, q. 85, a. 1).

The virtue of penance not merely grieves and sorrows over past sins, charity itself does this, but moreover, tries to destroy past sin insofar as it is an injury to God by making amends as far as possible.

Thus penance belongs to the cardinal virtue of justice: for justice demands that we restore to God the honor we have refused Him and that we make satisfaction for the injustice done Him. Yet it is certain that we can never make complete satisfaction. In this sense, therefore, we shall never do enough penance and we will never be able to say, "Now I have done all." Some debt will always remain and "it is the mercy of God that we are not consumed" (Lament. 3, 22). Therefore, we must persevere in penance throughout our whole life.

II. Three motives should impel us to a fervent cultivation of penance: (1) Necessity. Without penance there is no forgiveness of sins and we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. As our Lord says, "Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13, 5). (2) Spiritual Progress. The farther we are removed from sin by fervent penance, the more perfect we shall become and the more vigorously we shall grow in all virtues. (3) Spiritual Joy, which is acquired by penance. What is in the beginning terrifying, gradually becomes agreeable and leads to a holy and delightful interior liberty by begetting a generous trust in our Lord's mercy. Father John of Jesus-Mary commenting on the words of the Prophet, "Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, therefore she is become unstable" (Lament. 1, 8), introduces our Lord as saying, "Man sins and departs from Me, the true peace, the center and stability of his soul, and no matter how laboriously he seeks refreshment outside of Me, he labors and struggles in vain and meets with ill success. There remains one way for him to find rest and that is to return to Me" (*Epist. Christi ad hominem,* P. II, c.7).

III. According to the foregoing, then, penance comprises two features: detestation or rejection of sin and emendation of life through satisfaction.

(a) Rejection of sin must be (1) interior by a serious sorrow; (2) humble, by acknowledging and confessing our sins without delay or excuse; (3) hopeful of obtaining forgiveness; (4) united with a resolution of not sinning again and of rendering due satisfaction.

(b) Satisfaction or reparation is partly necessary and partly voluntary.

(1) Necessary satisfaction consists in sacramental confession which must be made in accordance with our Lord's precept; in patiently bearing the consequences of sin; e.g., illness from the abuse of food or drink, humiliations arising from anger or sloth, etc.; in humbly receiving from the hand of God sufferings and afflictions.

All our duties and all our labors insofar as they offer any difficulty to us, are also a salutary penance. It is, therefore, proper to take them upon ourselves in the spirit of penance.

(2) By means of voluntary satisfaction which consists in works freely chosen by ourselves, we not only defend ourselves against sin, but we attack it in order to root it out completly. Nevertheless, this penance, although it is to be greatly esteemed and commended, is of value only if necessary penance is not rejected.

Among the voluntary works by which we can atone for our sins, the Council of Trent enumerates especially fasting, prayer, almsgiving and other works of piety. We shall treat in detail of penitential exercises when we treat of abnegation.

IV. In order that penance may be of value, it must be joined with other virtues: with faith, that we may understand the abomination of sin; with prudence and discretion, that we may not exceed right measure in our external practises; with perseverance and constancy in order not to cease too soon; with humility, that we may not believe we have already done sufficient penance; with hope and trust, that we may not despair or lose heart. However, charity gives the strongest impulse and is itself wonderfully increased by means of penance. Whatever we do, we must always be convinced that we depend on the Divine Mercy.

"Detest sin, therefore, and punish it in yourself and your soul will put on a new form; hope and the joy of My Heart united to yours will be reborn and you will run with greatest speed and unhindered along the way of eternal life" (Fr. John of Jesus-Mary, ibid.).

123. Modesty

I. Although the virtue of modesty is little esteemed, especially in our age, still we must confess that it does not hold the last place in the spiritual edifice, especially when one wishes to devote himself particularly to interior prayer.

(a) Modesty pertains to the cardinal virtue of temperance, and would have us careful not to offend our neighbor by our movements, but rather to have them accord with sanctity. Since temperance, according to St. Thomas, refers to great difficulties, modesty is concerned with what is easier and more ordinary (Cf. II-II, q. 160, a.1). He also teaches that modesty regards not only exterior movements, but also interior emotions, although it is usually and primarily applied to external arrangement of bodily carriage and movement according to right reason (ibid. a. 2).

(b) It is known to everyone that the interior reveals itself by the exterior, and that the exterior helps much to order the interior. Sacred Scripture confesses, "A man is known by his look, and a wise man, when thou meetest him, is known by his countenance. The attire of the body and the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of the man, show what he is" (Ecclus. 19, 26, 27). Since exterior modesty is an assurance of interior holiness, it is wonderful how greatly it serves to edify others. "It is impossible to describe," says Brother John of St. Samson, "how much influence one's perfect modesty has in keeping others from lapsing into anything unlawful and in bringing them back to their senses" (Theoremata p. 25, n. 3).

II. (a) Therefore, St. Paul admonishes the Philippians, "Let your modesty be known to all men" (Phil. 4, 5). These words are thus explained by Father Anthony of the Holy Spirit, O.C.D., "It is as though he said, let your knowledge be hidden, your prudence, your meekness, your temperance; but let your modesty be hidden from no one, let it be clear to all, and known to all men . . . In order that you may be known, let your modesty be known, and to all men, because the eyes of all are turned upon you. Let it, therefore, be known to the heathen that they may acknowledge the true God; let it be known to beretics that they may be converted to the faith; let it be known to all Christians that they may be strengthened in the faith; let it be known to all that by the sight of it, they may be reformed. This is so true, that modesty should be carefully guarded in all reformed orders and that the character of the novices he recognized in their modesty. For I have never seen one remarkable for modesty, who was not admirable in all virtues. On the contrary, those whom I saw lacking in modesty, I afterwards discovered to be bad religious" (*Dir. myst.* tr. 4, nn. 273, 274). From all of which Father Philip of the Holy Trinity, O.C.D., deduces these conclusions, "The perfect man must, therefore, be always and everywhere, of earnest, humble and serious countenance, but modestly cheerful toward everyone; he should especially guard his eyes in modesty, having them under control and not curious, and when necessary, slightly raised, but usually lowered. He must not be inclined to laughter; but when there is a becoming occasion for laughing, he will be careful not to laugh boisterously but modestly and becomingly; for gushing laughter is unbecoming to the austere humility of the perfect man. His carriage should not be weak and effeminate, but dignified and simple, free from affectation, neither too fast nor too slow. Finally, he must always observe the usages of politeness, unless perhaps some usages among seculars are opposed to devout humility,

because grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it and in some matters corrects it" (*Summa Theol. Myst.* t. III, tr. 2d, 3a. 5).

(b) This is in full agreement with our own Constitutions. For they prescribe, "Since the monastery is the house of God, it is fitting that religious who dwell within its walls conduct themselves and act as becomes saints; let the brethren therefore be graceful in their bearing and modest, and let them not interrupt the speech of others, nor move the head about lightly and cast the eyes hither and thither; let them keep their clothes clean and wear them becomingly; finally, let them show mutual respect one to another, and let each one speak and deal with his brethren with affability and with the reverence due them according to their rank and office" (Art. 177). And again, "Just as the internal perfection of our holy Order consists in most fervent charity, so its external honor and adornment consists in modest and becoming relationship with seculars" (Art. 181). They likewise declare, "In their relations with seculars our brethren should be prudent and modest, and they should observe the rules of politeness, taking into consideration the circumstances of place, time and person" (Art. 182; Cf. also Art. 195).

(c) The *Methodus* clearly explains why politeness should be so highly valued, in the following words which, because of their weight, we do not hesitate to reproduce in their entirety. "Refinement or religious decorum and elegance of language is not merely human, affected or acquired in a worldly style or fashion, but constitutes a part of the virtue of modesty. The first function of modesty is to govern the external conduct of a religious according to the rule of reason in matters pertaining to himself; its second function, however, is to render him upright and agreeable toward his neighbors.

"It springs from the most noble virtues of charity and humility. For charity suggests to us the esteem and veneration of our neighbor, and impels us to show honor to him in all things and marks of reverence according to each one's merits and state. Humility teaches us to prefer the convenience of others to our own on every occasion, and inspires in us a lower estimate of ourselves. The fruit of these two excellent virtues, as St. Thomas observes, is first to fear lest we offend or sadden our neighbor in any way; and then to do everything in the way we think will be more pleasing to him. It is a certain delicacy of affection which shrinks from everything that can displease.

"Politeness, therefore, does not merely consist in the courteous charm of words which one has committed to memory, nor in merely

external reverences and observances which well-bred and far-seeing men hold so much in derision, well realizing that they proceed only from pretense and duplicity; but it consists in a certain agreeableness of a kindly and peaceful soul. The Apostle describes and praises it abundantly, when he writes to the Romans and says, "Loving one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honor preventing one another" (Rom. 12, 10).

"Hugh of St. Victor wishes the religious to show himself lovable and courteous to all, offensive to none; because to show one's self lovable to one's neighbor is a sign that one is devoted to God. He is courteous to all, burdensome to none; he is kind to his neighbor because he is devoted to God.

"It is possible to find characters in whom politeness is inborn and who, without the help of any other virtue by mere generosity and good nature, are humble. They are reverent toward those who outrank them; they meet their equals with respect, and with those they think lower than themselves, they are joined in a loving and familiar friendship. Of them it can justly be said, *Gaudeant bene nati!* Let the noble born rejoice! Whatever they do, whatever they say, is pleasing, because in it humility, simplicity and beauty shine forth.

"On the other hand it is possible to find others who by force of nature are impolite and boorish, either because they are of a coarser spirit, or because they are not so humanely trained and educated, or because they are arrogant and excessively selfish. St. Bernard describes them thus under the name of the presumptuous, 'The presumptuous man takes the first seat at a gathering; he is the first to answer in a meeting. He comes uninvited, he introduces himself without credentials. He re-establishes what has already been established and makes over what has been done; he thinks that what he has not established or arranged has not been well done or properly arranged' (*De 12 grad. humil.*) A good religious must be carefully on his guard not only against the graver infractions of politeness but even against the smaller ones, whether he is among his brethren or among seculars" (*Methodus* II, 567ff.).

(d) Here also mention must be made of the recommendation of the Sacred Congregation of Religious to religious superiors, that when the novitiate is finished "they should in the matter of recreation, shield their students from such physical exercises as are especially unbecoming to clerics, according to the grave admonition of the Council of Trent (Sess. XXII. c. I, *De Reform.*): It certainly

becomes clerics, called to the Lord's portion, to mold their lives and all their habits so as to display only what is dignified, regulated and religious in their carriage, gesture, gait, speech and in all else" (*Instructio de formatione clericali et religiosa alumnorum ad sacerdotium vocatorum.* I Dec. 1931; Cf. *Anal.* VIII, 12).

We must also observe the enactments of Canon Law for seminaries. "(The rector and directors) shall frequently teach the rules of true Christian politeness (to the seminarians), and draw them by their example to practise them. They shall moreover encourage them always to observe the laws of health, bodily cleanliness, and gentlemanliness of conduct joined with modesty and dignity" (Can. 1369, n. 2).

(e) Even the children of the world endeavor to control their external movements according to certain rules, but for merely human ends. Among religious, however, such control of the exterior should be directed toward a supernatural end, that our Lord's exhortation may be fulfilled, "So let you light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven" (Matt. 5, 16). Or as our Rule urges, "Whatever you must do, let it be done in the word of the Lord" (XIV). Everything should be done for the edification or the good example of others (Cf. Const. 195), as preachers are explicitly commanded. "They should endeavor moreover to excel no less by the example of a religious life which they must always and everywhere observe, than by their word, lest they destroy by their deeds what they have built up by speech" (Art. 245). Father Anthony of the Holy Spirit, quoted above, says rightly, "You will more easily become an orator by modesty of life, than by eloquence of tongue. The latter only moves, the former draws. Eloquent modesty is of greater value than a noisy tongue, because he who talks too much proves that he is a fool" (*Dir. myst.* tr. 4, n. 277ff.).

Behold the complete doctrine concerning true modesty. Let no master of novices neglect it or slight it. If he trains his novices to observe it faithfully, he can rest assured that he has not labored in vain. If he does not pay enough attention to this matter, everything will sooner or later fail and nothing will be perfect.

III. To acquire modesty it is necessary:

(a) First to know how important it is and what it prescribes. To this end those chapters of our Constitutions which treat of our mode of life within and without the monastery should be frequently read and attentively considered and meditated upon.

(b) Then it is necessary to learn and to practise this virtue step

by step by means of the particular examen. This extensive virtue is not acquired in one bound. It will also be of help sincerely to ask our superiors and brethren to correct us when occasion demands. For others will recognize better what is lacking in us.

(c) Next it is proper to study and to follow the example of Him through whose meekness and modesty the Apostle beseeches the Corinthians (Cf. 2 Cor. 10, 1), and Whose modesty is extolled by the prophet who says, "He shall not cry, nor have respect to person, nor shall His voice be heard abroad" (Isa. 42, 2).

(d) The most efficacious means is interior conversation with our Lord, as the already-quoted Father Philip of the Holy Trinity testifies. "He who gives himself to the continuous presence of God and to interior conversations with Him, will easily preserve the described control and modesty of his whole body. The gaze of the soul fixed on heaven and the contemplation of divine things will shut out the view of the world and temporal things" (ibid.). But likewise such control of the body will no doubt be of great help to interior converse with God. No doubt it is for this reason that our Constitutions are so insistent in this matter, so that the virtue of modesty may be said to be a specialty and a necessity for Carmelites.

(e) The best teacher of modesty is the spirit of faith. For "the same reverence must be held for the body as for the soul, because it is the temple of the living God into which He condescends to enter daily in person" (*Theoremata,* p. 26, n. 10). For this very reason our Constitutions admonish us, "Let them without affectation show due reverence to all according to their station, and strive to recognize God in the neighbor as in His image" (Art. 188).

The advice of Father Maurus of the Child Jesus should be our rule, "Let it be evident from the bearing of your body that there dwells within your soul the King who directs all your actions and motivates your whole body" (*Intr. in div. sap.* I, dial. 1).

124. Gratitude

I. Gratitude, a virtue allied to justice, inclines us to remember favors received and, when occasion offers, promptly to make a return.

(a) Just as it is not the gift itself but the good will which prompted the gift that makes it of value, so the essence of gratitude is a sense of appreciation by which we acknowledge a gift as such and remember it. All of which supposes some humility, since, by acknowledging a favor, we admit that we are beneath our benefactor and in some way his subject. On this account, many would suffer the greatest misery

rather than ask or receive favors from others, because by a certain inborn pride they do not wish to be debtors to anyone. However, no one is excused from being grateful since nothing is needed other than a good will.

(b) Whoever has the spirit of gratitude tries to show it, at least in words spoken or written, and one who omits this, is branded with the stigma of ingratitude. The display of gratitude should not be postponed too long, but should be made as soon as possible. As he who gives when the need is greatest, doubles his gift, so he who gives immediate thanks, gives better thanks. God expects this from us before all else, as our Lord taught us by His example, always and everywhere giving thanks to God the Father (Cf. Matt. 15, 36; 26, 27, etc.).

(c) It is clear likewise that we are obliged in gratitude to prove our sentiments of gratitude in deed, when occasion offers, and to return more, if possible, to our benefactor than we have received. However, prudence and common sense are necessary. For if our benefactor is not in need or if he does not wish a return to be made, it might perhaps be indicative of ingratitude if we, immediately and in full equality, would wish to return a favor received, because it would seem to show that we are anxious to rid ourselves of our bond of gratitude and to shake off the moral dependence that sprang from the gift. Moreover, it would seem that we supposed our benefactor had not conferred his benefits with a pure intention. Therefore, we must look for an opportune moment. It is clear, however, that we can never sufficiently render thanks to God. We must therefore, so much the more do all we can, humbly using all the gifts received from Him for His service and also out of gratitude striving after perfection.

II. The virtue of gratitude is usually more easily forgotten than the other virtues, although Holy Scripture very highly commends and urges it. "God provideth for him that showeth favor; He remembereth him afterwards and in the time of his fall he shall find a sure stay" (Ecclus. 3, 34). On the contrary, "He that rendereth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house" (Prov. 17, 13). St. Paul, especially, repeatedly reminds his Christians of exercising gratitude. "In all things give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all" (1 Thess. 5, 18). And again, "Be ye thankful" (Coloss. 3, 15). Both Tobiases have left us a beautiful example of gratitude (Cf. Tob. 12, 1-3).

(a) Indeed, "what shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?" (Ps. 115, 12). Even though all the

leaves of the trees were to be changed into tongues gifted with unparalleled eloquence to express human ideas, still they would by no means suffice to express becomingly the ineffable benefits with which God has anticipated man and obliged him to love Him and adore Him forever (Cf. John of Jesus-Mary, O.C.D., *Epistola Christi ad hominem,* P. II, c. 8).

(b) We must be drawn in gratitude not only towards God, but also toward men. Therefore, we should show ourselves grateful toward our parents, teachers, confessors, spiritual directors and superiors, who have charge of us and will render an account for us; likewise, towards our brethren in the Order, even towards our subjects whenever they do us a service. Nor should we be ungrateful toward the benefactors of our Order by whose alms we live. We should frequently offer prayer for all of these, and show reverence and love for them according to their station.

(c) We are also bound by ties of gratitude to the Church. It has begotten us unto eternal life, and follows us through life with maternal affection. Even when we shall have died it will not desert us. Let us, therefore, so much more carefully observe what we have stated above (no. 33).

(d) Finally, we should be drawn by the highest gratitude toward our Order, which has received us without any merit of ours, and daily communicates spiritual and natural blessings to us. Should we not employ all our powers to promote its welfare and to be a credit and an honor to it by our life and conduct, as the Saints of our Order, both men and women, have been? Let us never omit to pray for it! Let us never become guilty of ingratitude toward our Order and toward God Who called us to it! May we never merit the reproach, "I brought you into the land of Carmel, to eat the fruit thereof, and the best things thereof; and when you entered in you defiled My land, and made My inheritance an abomination" (Jerem. 2, 7).

To show loyalty to the spirit of Carmel by our life and conduct is to render thanks to God, to our Blessed Mother, to our Order, and also to our benefactors who assist us for this very reason. Nothing can be more advantageous to ourselves.

Therefore, let us strive to acquire the virtues!

CHAPTER FOUR

Progress in the Spiritual Life

125. The Obligation and Signs of Spiritual Progress

I. Father Dominic of St. Albert had as his motto, *plus ultra!* This must also become our motto. For until death, we may not lay aside the desire for making a steady and constant progress in the spiritual life. If we should lay it aside in intention or in deed, our spiritual life would be ruined. It is, therefore, never permitted to say, "It is enough." We must always repeat to ourselves, "Thou hast yet a great way to go." Of old the common saying among spiritual masters was, "Not to go forward is to go backward." Thus, e.g., St. Gregory the Great says, "In this world the human soul is like a ship going against the current of a river. It cannot remain still in any place, because unless it makes constant efforts to go forward, it will be carried backward" (*Regula pastoralis*, 3, 34). At least the desire of progress must never fail. We shall understand all this after we have considered the following:

(a) The work of perfection to which we are bound in conscience as was said above (nn. 41 and 60), is a vital work. The spiritual organism furnished us can never remain inert, just as when the heart ceases beating, death ensues. May the example of St. Paul, therefore, shine before us as a light. He confesses, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended. But one thing I do. Forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3, 13, 14). Or have we already apprehended the things the Apostle affirms he has not yet apprehended? Therefore, we must run and never stand still.

(b) As we have explained above (n. 35) we all belong to the mystical body of Christ and are members of it. Therefore, we must all run, "until we meet in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of fulness of Christ; that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickednees of men . . . But doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him Who is the head, even Christ: from Whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself

in charity" (Eph. 4, 13-16). He who does not wish to grow is a useless member in the Mystical Body of Christ and so will shortly be amputated in order not to injure the entire body. Each one must, by his perfection and growth, contribute to the growth of the whole body. Only thus will he perfectly share in the advantages of this body. The more we contribute, the more we shall receive.

(c) Time is short and therefore, every moment of time must be redeemed, because we serve God. He who makes no progress, hides his talents and wastes time, because he does not use it according to the divine will. He must offer to God not only a few specified works, but his whole life and undivided time. Therefore, the words, "Be ye perfect" (Matt. 5, 48), contains the law of continual advance and spiritual growth, since, in this life, we can never be said to have reached our goal.

II. After learning the law of progress, we shall further ask how we may recognize our progress.

(a) The interior and objective principle both of spiritual progress as of the whole spiritual life is, as we have frequently heard, habitual grace. We make progress when this grace is increased within us. Everything therefore by which this grace is increased, contributes to our progress in the spiritual life.

We do not, however, see this grace. Only God knows truthfully the state and degree of our spiritual life, whereas we can pass only a quite superficial and uncertain judgment.

Nevertheless from certain mere outward signs we are able to conclude and decide, though not with absolute certainty, whether or not we are making progress, just as when we sit in a car, we can, by comparison with objects outside, see whether we are moving or not, even though we are not able to gauge our absolute speed.

(b) Our first care must be not to judge our progress by false signs. For the soul's progress is not recognized:

(1) by the absence of temptations; these can be absent for a time for various reasons, in fact even because of tepidity, which causes certain temptations, even though they are present, to cease to be recognized. On the other hand, all spiritual writers tell us that even the holiest souls are sometimes frequently bothered with filthy and violent temptations.

(2) by great sensible devotion; for sensible devotion is usually granted to beginners, whereas the advanced are compelled to pass through aridities and interior desolation in order to be freed from themselves.

(3) from the mere number of pious exercises or good works. For although these are not to be despised or omitted, and in part, can indicate real progress, still they alone should not be regarded as a sign of progress since progress is something interior and grounded in the soul, as we have just heard. A great number of exercises and works can often be joined with great imperfection; yes, when the right proportion is not kept, they can rather be an obstacle to interior progress and growth.

(c) Accordingly, we must depend on other indications to prevent us from deceiving ourselves. Spiritual progress is, therefore, rightly recognized:

(1) by a greater interior detachment from creatures, which will show itself especially when we are deprived of them by obedience or Divine Providence. Then we may judge the progress made from our interior tranquility or disturbance; for our whole spiritual life has this purpose: to free us more and more from creatures and to join us to the Creator. Religious, however, should be careful not to renounce one thing cheerfully and at the same time to cling to another more strongly. It is natural that adults are not usually pleased with the things that please children. (2) by the ease and readiness of the victory over temptations if this occurs regularly and not merely now and then; (3) from the smaller number or lesser gravity of our sins; (4) from the easier and more perfect practice of virtues, especially of those which formerly were entirely lacking; (5) from the greater calmness of soul in bearing with difficulties and injustices; (6) from the greater diligence and promptness in fulfilling the duties of one's state, especially when this demands sacrifices; (7) from the easier and more frequent interior conversation with God without neglect of external occupations; (8) from greater charity and affability towad one's neighbors.

By these and like indications each one can judge more or less whether he is really going forward, although the final judgment belongs to God, Whose eyes penetrate the depths of the heart. It is by no means proper that individuals should frequently hold such an examination; but having before their eyes what has been said, they should rather beware of listlessness and tepidity, and learn how to make real progress and to avoid making a wrong step. Finally, we should never forget that the principle of true progress is to know that as long as we live we must go forward. "If a bird," says Father Michael of St. Augustine, "closes its wings while flying aloft, it will quickly fall to earth. Likewise, no matter how much a spiritual soul

has advanced in grace, if it begins to weary in the practice of virtue, if it refuses to co-operate faithfully, if it ceases to expand the wings of the intellect and of the will by faith and love in God, and to balance itself in the air of divine grace, it will begin to go backward immediately, and will gradually come down from high heaven, or the contemplation and love of heavenly things, to the depths, i. e., to the harmful reflections about and affections for, earthly and sensual things" (*Inst. Myst.* 1, tr. 3, c. 2).

126. Union with God through Perfect Charity

The more clearly we have grasped the aim for which we should strive, the more readily will we observe the law of unceasing progress of which we have just spoken. We add here a few points concerning the ultimate perfection to be attained on earth.

We have long since heard that this perfection is to be sought in the closest union with God (no. 42). After we have, in the way of the beginners, freed ourselves from our vices and, in the way of the proficient, have sufficiently clothed ourselves with virtues, we must now, in the way of the perfect, pay especial attention to union with God (no. 43). "The third aim is," says St. Thomas, "that man seek chiefly to cling to God and to enjoy Him; and this belongs to the perfect . . . The perfect, it is true, also advance in charity; but their chief care is not concerning it. Their aim now is especially to cling to God. Although beginners and advanced also seek this, they feel greater solicitude concerning other matters—beginners concerning the avoidance of sin, the advanced concerning progress in virtue" (II-II, q. 24, a. 9). For this reason the third and last degree of the spiritual life is called the degree or the state of union, or of the perfect.

We shall here pass over the subject of the actual union to be attained by prayer, because we shall treat at length of the entire subject of prayer later on. Here we shall only briefly describe the aspect that truly perfect souls present, in order that, seeing by contrast our own deficiencies, we may more readily find our way.

In the unitive way charity holds perfect sway. It constantly keeps the soul directed to God and unites it to Him. To souls wounded with love all things seem to speak of God and to sing His praises. They think of hardly anything else than to please God, that God's kingdom be spread, that men be saved. All else has become vile to them.

The soul united to God by perfect charity not merely believes that

it is the dwelling and temple of the most Holy Trinity; it in some way experiences it. For this reason it loves and seeks solitude and silence and separation from all creatures, so that it may be able to converse familiarly and alone with its Beloved without disturbance. Yes, it has come to such constancy in this conversation that even though it may be distracted by frequent business affairs according to its state in life, it does not neglect its conversation, but rather is impelled by all these things to turn again to its Beloved. Nevertheless, it is afire with interest and zeal for souls, and therefore, is always ready to forsake its beloved solitude for God's sake, and completely forgetful of self, to serve others.

Perfect charity absorbs everything and reduces all faculties and powers to its most tender slavery, so that nothing may happen except what pleases charity. Charity gives and accomplishes everything for its beloved Spouse on Whose words it hangs. "Let me love Thee more than myself, and myself only for Thee; and all others in Thee, who truly love Thee as the law of love commands, which shines forth from Thee" (*Im. Chr.* 3, 5). All its actions, therefore, spring from charity and tend to increase charity.

No virtue can ever be perfect without charity by which it is directed to God as to its last end (no. 42). When charity itself has reached perfection, all the virtues are filled with it. Faith becomes an almost unbroken glance at God always present; hope seems to have yielded its place to charity, because from now on the soul is solicitous not so much for its own happiness as for God's glory, and for this very reason, it is certain that its hope will not be frustrated. Charity never strays from the rule of prudence, because it follows one rule and that is God's will and counsel. In most accurately observing the laws of justice, charity gives more than justice demands; indeed, it is ready to give itself and all it has for God's sake. Charity is strong; yes, so strong that many waters cannot quench it (Cf. Cant. 8, 7). "Whosoever is not ready to suffer all things, and to stand resigned to the will of his Beloved, is not worthy to be called a lover" (*Im. Chr.* 3, 5). The virtue of temperance no longer finds any difficulty, because it is the office of charity to renounce all things for God and to withdraw as far as possible from creatures. Likewise charity animates all the other virtues. Yes, "Love is circumspect, humble and upright, not soft, not light, not intent upon vain things; is sober, chaste, stable, quiet, and keeps a guard over its senses. Love is submissive and obedient to superiors; in its own eyes mean and contemptible; devout and thankful to God;

always trusting and hoping in Him, even then when it does not taste the relish of God's sweetness, for there is no living in love without some pain or sorrow" (*Im. Chr.* 3, 5).

For charity seems to have attained its perfection when it has learned to make all its voluntary thoughts, affections, desires, words and deeds to agree always and everywhere with God's will and pleasure. St. Lawrence Justinian enumerates the following marks of perfect charity: (1) to think gladly of God and therefore, gladly to visit Him in His churches; (2) to speak gladly of God; (3) to hear gladly of God; (4) to give alms gladly for God; (5) to suffer gladly for God; (6) to gladly obey God's laws; (7) to despise temporal things (*Lignum vitae, de caritate,* c. 11).

Blessed are those souls who have already reached this state! For "love feels no burden, values no labors . . . Love watches and, sleeping, slumbers not. When weary is not tired; when straightened is not constrained; when frightened, is not disturbed; but like a lively flame, and a torch all on fire, it mounts upward, and securely passes through all" (*Im. Chr.* 3, 5).

127. Conformity with God's Will

I. Without complete conformity with God's will there is no perfection, no perfect charity and no perfect union with God. Every other union without this union of conformity is suspected, even though extraordinary and mystical graces seem to accompany it. This is the union which St. Theresa preferred to mystical union and which she continually recommended to her sisters as being safer than any other. For such conformity it is required:

(a) That we be always ready to execute what God has commanded, or advised, or desired, without asking whether it be a grave or a slight command or a mere counsel. For nothing is small to him who loves, but he wishes to prove his love in everything, great or little. In his burning love he wishes to do everything and offer everything that is pleasing to God. God's will replaces his own will. Therefore he prays, "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God" (Ps. 142, 10). According to the teaching of Father Michael of St. Augustine, the will of God may be recognized in three ways, viz., by obedience, charity, necessity. Of these obedience can and must serve as the certain sign of God's good pleasure, so that when we follow its lead there will be no occasion for doubt (*Inst. Myst.* III, tr. 3, c. 14).

(b) That we cheerfully receive from the hands of God whatever

He may send us or whatever He may permit to befall us. For the soul burning with love prays sincerely "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6, 10). It wishes nothing to be excepted. With affection it kisses the hand that strikes it, because it well knows that by so doing it is united more closely to its Beloved than by receiving most precious gifts. And what does it more vehemently desire than to die to self and then to live entirely for God and in God? "Love often knows no measure, but is inflamed above all measure" (*Im. Chr.* 3, 5). It is not strange, therefore, that St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, languishing with love, desired to suffer and not to die. This is folly to the children of the world, but the highest wisdom to the sons of God, who are led by the spirit of God (Cf. Rom. 8, 14).

(c) If, however, we find our will differing from the divine, we should observe the following words of St. Augustine, "Can you ever join the crooked to the straight? It can never be adjusted. It is as though you would put a crooked board upon a level floor. It is not firm, it does not cling, it does not fit the floor. The floor is level throughout, but the board is crooked, it is not adapted to the level. Thus God's will is straight, and yours is crooked. His seems crooked to you, because it cannot be fitted to yours. Align yourself with Him; do not try to bend Him to yourself. You cannot do it, and you try in vain. His will is always straight. Do you wish to adhere to it? Make straight your ways" (*In Psalmum* 44, n. 17).

(d) If we ought to accept with calm mind and great humility whatever God sends us, still God does not wish us to be merely passive, I almost said, fatalistic. Frequently God intends to excite us by this means to greater diligence and fervor. If, for example, we have labored in vain, it is not enough to say that God wished it so; but before all else, we must examine whether the matter was badly conducted through our fault or not, and deliberate what we must do to succeed the next time. It is ever God's will that we correct whatever needs correction. But whatever we cannot change by just means, we must bear with patience and cheerfulness until God changes it.

II. The following motives will impel us to practise this conformity with God's will:

(a) He who has reached entire conformity with God's will, has entered into the peace of the Lord. After wars and storms a great peace is established in that soul and it is not worried about anything. For its will is always accomplished, since God's will, with which the

will of that soul has been absorbed, cannot fail of fulfillment. "Indeed, what can hurt him," says Father Michael of St. Augustine, "what can sadden him to whom nothing is wanting. He who allows himself to be led by God, will never be lacking in sufficient grace. Therefore, nothing can hurt him, nothing sadden him, and he will always remain calm and cheerful in the Lord, learning by experience that the yoke of exact obedience borne for the Lord is sweet and his burden light" (*Inst. Myst.* 3 tr, 1, c. 18).

(b) Since such a soul always casts its net at our Lord's word, it never labors in vain. It likewise is always busy, praying, working, resting or sleeping. It always works through God Whose will it does and Whose glory alone it seeks.

(c) Christ our Lord lived on the food of this admirable conformity with the will of His Father (Cf. John 4, 34), and became, "obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. 2, 8). The soul incorporated into Christ its Head by Baptism and united perfectly with Him by love, may not follow another rule or partake of a different food. Our most sweet Mother prompted by the same spirit, proclaimed "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word" (Luke 1, 38). She persevered in her profession of conformity even when she stood beneath the cross of her Son. Mary's will never differed in the least, it could not differ, from the will of God or that of her Son. That is why we hear her say, "Whatever He shall say to you, do ye" (John 2, 5).

We who boast of being the favored sons of the Blessed Virgin Mary, must follow her example and never fail to yearn for this perfect conformity, with the Divine Will; the more so, as without it, we can never hope to attain contemplation or the interior life.

III. Appropriately Father Michael of St. Augustine recommends the following "deiform" intention, as he terms it, "Praise, glory, thanksgiving to Thee, O blissful, blessed and glorious Trinity, through my thoughts, words and deeds of this day in union with the merits of Christ, with the intention in which He performed His own actions and with the intention God wishes me to have in mine. So also I offer them all through our loving Mother and to her honor, through NN. my patrons, and my Guardian Angel, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be for ever. Amen." He likewise urges that we renew this intention throughout the day before more important occupations and that we change it somewhat according to the requirements of each action (Cf. *Inst. Myst.* 3, tr. 3, c. 28).

As for the rest, it makes little difference what formula we use.

St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi spoke only one little word but with great affection, "God's will!" St. Theresa of Jesus, "God's Holy Will in all things!" Blessed Archangela, "Jesus, my Love," and many others, "All things in the spirit and sentiments of Jesus and Mary."

Burning with love and seeking the Divine Will before all, we shall always find something to please God. The soul which has given itself wholly and undividedly to God through Jesus and Mary ceases to be reflected in itself and its actions, and imitates St. Therese of the Child Jesus, who said, "Jesus, my spiritual director, did not teach me to direct my actions, but to do everything out of love."

Divine Love is the best guide and teacher in the spiritual life, because, "he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4, 16).

128. Heroic Virtue

A. When charity has become perfect and the soul, united to God, has given itself entirely to Him, the other virtues must necessarily have attained a certain heroic and eminent degree. If they have not, charity would not be perfect. In fact, the perfection of charity is recognized with certitude from the perfection of the other virtues, and not from the intensity of affection, which remains suspected as long as the virtues are in any way deficient.

We shall more easily understand what we are going to say, after we have compared the virtues of the unitive way with those of the illuminative way. For according to authorities in the spiritual life, the virtues should have reached such a degree in the illuminative way, that they leave tranquility in the heart and peace in the soul.

The signs which prove that the virtues have reached the perfect degree are indicated as follows by Father Anthony of the Holy Spirit (Cf. *Directorium mysticum,* III, d. 2s. 15).

(1) If they operate in regard to their proper object with ease, promptness, uniformity, constancy and satisfaction. It matters not if nature sometimes objects; but the will must be strong enough in virtue to easily and promptly conquer such repugnance.

(2) If one is free from the assault of former vices and from the insistent vexation of the passions. For the virtues expel the opposite vices, as light expels darkness. Still, even in the perfect, certain inordinate movements of the passions can arise, but without danger of formal consent.

(3) An exact observance of God's laws and, in religious, a strict observance of their rules. For it is with these that the virtues must be especially concerned.

(4) If one finds within himself an intense desire for progress in virtue. "For virtues tasted and possessed," says Anthony of the Holy Spirit, "stir up in those experiencing them a further desire for them, and the more they are experienced, the more they excite desire. To this mark must be added the desire to imitate Christ. In fact, the imitation of Christ our Lord consists in the exercise of the most perfect virtues" (ibid.).

(b) The heroic degree of the virtues is an habitual or constant exercise of all the virtues in the highest degree, even under most difficult circumstances. It is necessary therefore, (1) that no virtue be lacking. For the Christian hero may not be driven from the path of right reason by any object whatsoever. As we said elsewhere, in the perfect degree all the virtues are most intimately connected, and one supposes the other; (2) that this practice be habitual or steady. Occasionally even the imperfect can accomplish the extraordinary; (3) that virtue be exercised in its highest degree, although it always remains possible to advance. It is characteristic of the heroic to exceed the common measure. That is why heroic virtue is for the few. However, extraordinary things which excite the admiration of all, are not necessary. But "an entire course of life, and life-long innocence observed amidst the dangers of sin to which they, who dwell among men, are exposed, together with an exact observance of the commandments and counsels, make up the heroic and inspire admiration in the beholders" (Benedict XIV, *De Servorum Dei Beatificatione,* III, c. 22, n. 11); (4) that it be exercised even in most difficult circumstances "with expedition, promptness and pleasure above the common measure and from a supernatural aim, and so without any human consideration, with the denial of self and the control of the affections" (ibid. n. 1).

It frequently happens that such virtue being little understood is censured by others, even such as desire the spiritual life, since it is exercised not so much by reason enlightened by faith as by the inspiration and impulse of the Holy Spirit. "There are certain virtues," says St. Thomas, "possessed by those who have attained the Divine Likeness which are called the virtues of a purified soul. Their prudence understands only the things of God; their temperance disregards earthly desires; their fortitude ignores the passions; their

justice, by imitating God, is allied with Him in an everlasting treaty. These virtues we say are the possession of the Blessed in heaven or of the perfect on earth" (I-II, q. 61, a.5).

Only "He, to whose knowledge and power all things are subject, preserves us by His own power from all folly, ignorance, reluctance, hardness, etc." (I-II, q. 68, a.2 ad 3). For this reason the gifts of the Holy Spirit co-operate wonderfully to the performance of heroic virtue. These can only be elicited when the gifts have rendered the soul as worthy as possible of being moved and ruled by the Holy Spirit.

129. Perfect Self-Abnegation

I. Union with God cannot take place unless man entirely denies self. Our Lord proposes abnegation as an indispensable condition to those who wish to follow Him. He says to all, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Luke 9, 23). Therefore, in the unitive way abnegation reaches its highest degree, so that the soul ceases to think of self, intent solely on serving and obeying its Beloved. Yet it does not think or say much of abnegation. In its burning love for God, it has forgotten itself entirely. Continuous and complete self-abnegation is its food without which it cannot live or wish to live. "If it rejoices in anything," says Father Michael of St. Augustine, "it rejoices only in the mortification of Christ, which it always carries about in its body in the crucifixion of the flesh with its vices and concupiscences, in one word, in all things which the sensual and worldly usually shun, and flee with all their might and cast far away" (*Inst. Myst.* 3, 65, 4, c. 31). The soul is nailed to the cross with Christ and wishes to know nothing save Christ, (Cf. Gal. 2, 19), and Him crucified (Cf. 1 Cor. 2, 2). This love of the cross flourished luxuriantly among our Carmelite saints.

2. From perfect self-denial spontaneously springs the perfect poverty of the spirit, which our Lord declared blessed. What can the world offer a soul dead to itself? With what pleasure allure it? Neither honors nor pleasures of the body influence it, since really its only joy is in God. It fears neither threats, insults nor torments of men, since it rejoices to suffer every hardship for its Beloved. Freed from all things and from itself, that soul has attained a holy indifference in which it has ceased to relish earthly things, and yearns only for those of heaven. It has stripped off the old man with his deeds and concupiscences (Cf. Col. 3, 9), and has put on the new man,

"who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth" (Ephes. 4, 24). Emptied of earthly things, that fortunate soul discovers heavenly things and joyfully confesses with the Spouse in the Canticle, "I found Him Whom my soul loveth. I held Him, and I will not let Him go" (Cant. 4, 24). Indeed, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5, 3).

3. Where the things we have been describing are present, the heart must have been cleansed from every stain. Although small faults may, indeed, creep in, they are not perfectly deliberate, and are immediately washed away by sorrow and repentance, by increased humility and fervor. Moreover, this purity of heart is not something merely negative, but very positive; it is a likeness to God, effected by interior perfections which have been infused or acquired by long struggle and practice. Consequently, God is greatly pleased with this likeness and clothes it from day to day with new splendors.

4. Where there is love for God, there is zeal for God. He who truly loves God, desires and labors that God may be loved as much as possible by others also. Is it to be wondered at that the soul in the unitive way for whom God has become everything, is consumed with holy zeal for God's house and kingdom? Indeed, if this zeal is lacking, union itself is doubtful. The soul, inflamed and urged by this zeal, strives by penance to expiate the injuries inflicted upon God, prays unceasingly for sinners and all the faithful, and strives as far as its own condition allows, to spread God's kingdom. It does not wish to be perfect alone, but desires earnestly that all tend to, and arrive at, perfection. Therefore, it rejoices no less on account of the good works and virtues of others, than of its own. Yes, it rejoices, because others supply what it thinks it lacks. Such zeal is far removed from all envy and rivalry.

5. However, no matter how high a degree of union one has reached, there always remains a higher degree to strive for. Let no one ever think that he has already apprehended or is perfect, but let him stretch out to apprehend the more. Love allows itself no rest in this life, in order that it may the more surely attain eternal rest.

130. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

A. Our sanctification is the work of God, not only because we are totally unable to wish or to effect anything without Divine Grace, but also, because the higher one advances in the way of holiness, the more fully and the more closely the Holy Spirit undertakes the direction of one's whole spiritual life. This becomes possible through

the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These were infused at Baptism and were never inoperative; but now, together with the virtues, they have arrived at the highest perfection. Thus we have the explanation why the Saints have been capable of such wonderful and splendid deeds.

1. For "the just man, i.e., one living the life of Divine Grace and acting by corresponding virtues as faculties, has a real need of these sevenfold gifts, which are properly called the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For through them the soul is equipped and fortified so that it may the more easily and readily follow His inspirations and impulses. These gifts, therefore, are of such efficacy that they lead it to the height of sanctity, and of such excellence that they remain even in the kingdom of heaven, though in a more perfect degree" (Leo. XIII, *Divinum illud,* May 9, 1897).

2. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are infused into us that we may more promptly and more easily obey the inspirations of the Holy Spirit even in difficult matters and in matters beyond human reason. For, "among these gifts (which are distributed to the members of Christ by the Holy Spirit) are those secret warnings and attractions, effected repeatedly by the Holy Spirit in our minds and hearts, without which there is no beginning or progress on the way of perfection, nor completion in eternal salvation" (ibid.). It is evident that the more these gifts have grown with the growth of spiritual life, the more prompt will be the obedience to them, even though they beckon to greater and more difficult sacrifices. But it is also evident, that the more promptly one obeys, the higher he will be carried in the spiritual life.

3. From the fact that the gifts of the Holy Spirit have their place in each one's spiritual life from its very beginning, it does not follow that the working of these gifts is apparent to each one. In fact, ordinarily it is hidden. Only in certain special cases is it manifest, especially in the mystical union, as it is called, concerning which we shall speak later. In other cases, it can be recognized more or less from its effects. The more a man is dead to himself, the more he will be led and helped by the Holy Spirit, and the more will the influence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit become apparent.

B. What, therefore, is our duty? (1) Before all we must highly esteem the gifts of the Holy Spirit as true and precious instruments of perfection; (2) we must devoutly honor the Holy Spirit and frequently ask Him for His sevenfold gifts; (3) we must diligently remove whatever hinders the working of His gifts in us, especially

an inordinate attachment to our own opinion and will; (4) we must faithfully follow the directions and inspirations of the Holy Spirit; (5) nevertheless, it is not lawful to spurn and neglect the direction of legitimate authority and to presume the special direction of the Holy Spirit; for the Holy Spirit does not operate when obedience is wanting; (6) it is especially important to apply oneself as much as possible to recollection of soul and to interior conversation with the Holy Spirit.

Those who practise these admonitions may lawfully expect to be led day by day to greater perfection and to work great things for the glory of God and His kingdom. "For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8, 14).

Let us, therefore, courageously go our way and never stop until we are permitted to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord will render to me" (2 Tim. 4, 7. 8).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MEANS OF PERFECTION

131. The Means in General

Having explained the fundamental conditions for acquiring perfection and how we are to attain perfection and to offer to God a heart completely purified, we will now investigate the means that are necessary to arrive at the perfection already explained. The means must be determined by the end.

(a) It is certain that we can do nothing without divine grace. "For it is God Who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will" (Phil. 2, 13). Our perfection, therefore, "is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9, 16).

Therefore, we have need of God's grace which we must humbly, earnestly and perseveringly ask of Him both by prayer and by the other means established by Him for this end. Among these the sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist excel. Unless we attend to these means we shall labor in vain in building the edifice of perfection so that in the end we may find ourselves empty-handed.

(b) Nevertheless we ourselves must attempt everything possible

to accomplish the proposed work by most faithfully co-operating with divine grace. God, Who has called us to the state of perfection according to His kindness and mercy without any merits of our own, will not deny us abundant grace and He will confer it still more abundantly the more faithfully we have co-operated with the graces obtained. However, He will not accomplish the work without us.

(1) First we must be watchful, according to our Lord, "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26, 41). We shall exercise this vigilance chiefly through the various examens by which we ought daily to examen our conscience so that the defects which may have crept in may be immediately eliminated and also our good resolutions renewed and put into execution. We have frequently heard that it takes a long time to arrive at perfection.

(2) Secondly, constant self-denial is necessary. It is clearer than daylight that no one, who refuses to fulfill the law of abnegation, is fit to amend his life and to reach perfection. For Truth itself has repeatedly proclaimed and inculcated this law. Therefore, we must at greater length treat of the kinds and conditions of true and profitable abnegation.

(3) Finally, a most efficacious means, though not always necessary in the same degree, is spiritual direction by a master experienced in the spiritual life. For undoubtedly we shall walk more securely when we find a learned and experienced guide in this way strewn with difficulties and dangers. Some remarks are therefore in order concerning spiritual direction.

After these preliminaries we shall treat of each of the means separately.

132. Prayer of Petition

I. It is not our intention to explain here the whole matter of prayer, but only insofar as it is "a petition of the seemly from God." We shall speak of prayer in general in a following section.

(a) God, "Who will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2, 4), in His goodness and liberality, bestows many things on us even before we ask. In fact, "we know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Rom. 8, 26), so that it is necessary for Him first to grant us grace to pray to Him rightly. Moreover, our Lord taught us not to be too solicitous about food and clothing; "for your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things" (Matt. 6, 32).

Nevertheless our Lord likewise insists, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you"

(Matt. 7, 7). Indeed, He exhorts us, "We ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18, 1). For there are some things God does not wish to give us except after a fitting request—all for our own profit.

(b) By the very fact that we are bound to ask for blessings, we must think of them and of everything necessary, as also of avoiding dangers and overcoming difficulties. And in this way we shall know ourselves and our lives better and learn to take care of ourselves, just as those children, who have early to provide for themselves, become stronger and more fit for life than those who have been weakened and deceived by the excessive love and solicitude of their parents, and never learn to stand on their own feet. Many certainly would never be induced in any other way to have at least occasional recourse to God.

Besides, many virtues are exercised by the prayer of petition: humility, by which we profess our entire dependence on God; religion, by which we worship God; faith and hope, by which we have recourse to God the source of all blessings and graces; patience, constancy, perseverance, when it is necessary to beg for a longer time before we are heard; charity toward our neighbor, when we pray for him; in fact also, love for God, especially when we implore the love of God or perfection. From these considerations it is also evident that the prayer of petition is a great school of perfection, attendance at which is of great advantage to us. By asking, under due conditions, we advance in the spiritual life, both through petition as well as by the graces we obtain by asking.

(c) We may ask for everything which may be lawfully desired: the glory of God, eternal salvation and whatever avails toward it, perfection or any specific virtue, even temporal goods both for ourselves and for others.

We know that before all else the kingdom of God and its justice should be asked (Cf. Matt. 6, 33), for what does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and be excluded from the kingdom of heaven? "For the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. 7, 31). We should always, therefore, observe the right order in our petitions so that the supernatural and eternal will ever be peferred to the natural and temporal.

II. However, that our petitions may be heard, they must have the following qualities:

(a) They must be sincere; that is, they must be made with the strong desire of obtaining what we ask. For how can we expect with

certainty what seems to be of little concern to us? This is to be especially noted in regard to the graces which pertain to the spiritual life. We so slowly lay aside our vices and acquire virtues because we are spurred on with so little desire and we pray so tepidly. Therefore, in all such matters we must first excite a fervent desire within us. When our prayers are so animated God will hardly refuse. Our petitions will appear so much more sincere as we do not neglect the other means of the spiritual life,—vigilance and abnegation.

(b) They must be attentive. If we sincerely desire what we ask, we cannot help being attentive to our prayers, at least as far as they depend on ourselves. Involuntary distractions may easily creep in. These do not hinder the effect of prayer, provided we try to repel them when they are noticed. He fails against this condition, who offers his prayers under circumstances in which it is impossible to have sufficient attention, or who betakes himself to prayer without due preparation. Although we can and laudably should pray everywhere, still in order to pray with greater attention, we should as far as possible choose places and times suitable for praying. Our attention can be focussed upon God, Whom we address, or upon ourselves and our misery, or upon the things we desire and ask for, or on the right pronunciation of the words we are using and their meaning.

(c) They must be humble. We must be convinced that we are entirely unworthy to be heard, since we are nothing and have frequently offended God. This humility will likewise show itself by outward reverence. However, humility should not be confused with faintheartedness. For our prayers, though humble, must also be:

(d) Filled with confidence. The more we mistrust ourselves, the greater and stronger must be our trust in God. He Himself, wishes it so. Therefore, the greater our confidence, the surer the answer to our prayer. "Amen, I say to you," our Lord said to His disciples, "if you shall have faith, and stagger not, not only this of the fig tree shall you do, but also if you shall say to this mountain, Take up and cast thyself into the sea, it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive" (Matt. 21, 21.22). But the grounds of this confidence are not be sought in ourselves, but exclusively in God and His infinite perfections; e. g., in His kindness, mercy, fidelity, in the merits of Christ, etc. This confidence must not be lessened by our sins. Indeed, just as a weak and helpless infant is fostered by its mother with greater care, so we likewise can expect the greater care from God, the more we stand in need of divine help. For, "Him that cometh to Me I will not cast out," says our Lord,

and in fact He "receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke 15, 2). We must consider the merits of Christ and not our demerits.

(e) Conformed to the Divine will. When it is a matter of eternal salvation or of things indispensably necessary for it, as the avoidance of sin or the acquisition of virtue, of final perseverance, etc., we must ask without adding conditions. For God certainly wishes these, and we can not misuse such graces. Whenever, therefore, it is a matter of other things, even spiritual, but not absolutely necessary, or when we ask for temporal things, we must always expressly or tacitly add, "Provided it pleases God and is to my good." For very often the very things we think useful to us, are dangerous and harmful. God knows everything better than we. Furthermore, "It is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His sight" (1 Kings 3, 18). We are not, however, on this account forbidden to ask temporal or private benefits since the Church, our teacher, in its collects and litanies asks such temporal and private goods, e.g., the fruits of the earth, peace, health, etc. Our Lord did likewise, when He prayed on the Mount of Olives that the chalice of His passion might pass from Him (Cf. Matt. 26, 39).

(f) Persevering. God, indeed, has promised to hear if we observe the necessary conditions; but He did not obligate Himself to hear every little prayer as soon as uttered. It would not be good for us. Whatever is easily obtained, is usually little valued. Therefore, we must persevere in our prayer until we are heard. We do not know the times or the moments God has placed in His power. Some things, like graces necessary to conquer temptations are granted at once; others, however, are only granted after many fervent prayers. Our prayers endowed with the necessary qualities can never be useless. Either we obtain the very things we desire, or greater and better ones.

III. It is of great advantage to ask the prayers of others and to invoke the Saints, as the Apostle teaches, "Pray for one another that you may be saved, for the continual prayer of a just man availeth much" (James 5, 16). Especially in religious orders it is fitting that all sometimes pray in common and that one pray for another. This is true brotherhood. Such humility and such charity are also very pleasing to God.

Moreover, our petitions acquire a unique strength by almsgiving, mortifications and fasts. That is why our Lord once warned, "But this kind (of demons) is not cast out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. 17, 20).

Petitions made in union with the Sacrifice of the Mass, of which

we shall treat at greater length and more in particular elsewhere, are wonderfully efficacious. In the Mass our Lord renews the sacrifice of the cross, and His own perfect offering to obtain graces for us, so that St. Alphonsus is said to have affirmed that what we have not obtained *with* Mass, we shall hardly obtain *without* it.

We always and everywhere stand in need of divine help. Would that we ran at once to God in all our necessities! Besides the prayers to be recited at stated times, we must also on other occasions ask help by raising our eyes to God in our temptations, doubts and repugnances. Likewise all good resolutions must be supported by prayer. Every meditation therefore should be concluded with petitions.

The more fervently we desire perfection, the more fervently and frequently we must ask for it and for whatever is necessary or useful to attain it. God will not refuse His grace to those who ask it. Let us imitate our Lord, Who spent whole nights in prayer, and Who "being in agony prayed the longer" (Luke 22, 43). Who also exhorts us, "Pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (Luke 22, 40). By praying we shall overcome all difficulties both interior and exterior; for by praying we draw from Divine Omnipotence grace for grace.

133. Reception of the Sacraments

I. Among the means by which we procure divine grace to attain perfection, the holy Sacraments stand preeminent (Cf. no. 34). For they were instituted by our Lord that the grace He merited for us by His passion and death, might flow through them to us, as it were through canals. They are visible signs of invisible grace which they produce in us by our Lord's institution. They produce their effect *ex opere operato,* i. e., grace is infallibly communicated to us by the very placing of the sacramental action according to the will and institution of Christ, provided we place no hindrance or obstacle. The worthiness of minister or recipient does not of itself influence their efficacy, but more abundant grace awaits those who are better disposed.

2. We distinguish a threefold effect of the Sacraments. The first is common to all the Sacraments and consists in sanctifying grace (with the supernatural virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit), which is conferred, if it is not yet possessed, or is increased if it is already possessed. The second effect is peculiar to each Sacrament and consists in the so-called sacramental grace. By this name we understand a certain disposition conferred on the soul, or a permanent right to all the actual graces, interior or exterior, to be received in due time.

They are necessary that the specific effect of each sacrament may be obtained. The third effect is found only in three Sacraments, i. e., Baptism, Confirmation, and Orders. It is a spiritual mark or sign permanently impressed on the soul by which the soul is made like to Christ and is specially deputed and consecrated to His service in various states or degrees.

3. It is of the greatest importance to receive the Sacraments with due preparation. For just as canals can be closed by dykes and dams to transmit more or less water, so the Sacraments which, as we have said, are mystic canals of divine grace, are obstructed more or less by obstacles. In fact, by sacrilegious reception we can not only hinder the reception of every grace, but also contract a most serious sin. Supposing a valid reception, we receive greater or lesser graces, according to our greater or lesser preparation and disposition.

4. Therefore, we must always prepare ourselves as diligently as possible for the reception of the Sacraments, that they may become for us so much more abundant sources of divine grace and perfection. Without danger of transgressing the limit of truth we may affirm that the time of preparation as well as the time of thanksgiving for the Sacrament of Confession and Holy Communion is among the most precious and most fruitful moments of our lives.

134. The Sacrament of Penance

I. The Church (Can. 595, n. 1) and the Order (Const. 111) prescribe, "Superiors shall see that all religious . . . go to confession at least once a week."

Although the reception of this Sacrament is necessary only when one has fallen into mortal sin, still it contains so many advantages that its frequent use is to be strongly recommended to those desirous of perfection. Some of the Saints used to go to confession every day.

He, who has committed mortal sin, must immediately elicit as perfect an act of contrition as possible and should go to confession as soon as he can, in order that he may not remain long in mortal sin and so waste time useful for eternity or for the pursuit of perfection. If he does so and strives to perform true penance for the sin committed, not even this mortal sin can hinder his progress in perfection, because scarcely a vestige of it will be left in the soul. The contrary will happen, if he remains long in mortal sin.

II. The following are the fruits of this Sacrament: (a) for such as are in mortal sin, restoration of the state of grace, forgiveness of eternal punishment and at least a part of the temporal punishment and

the restoration of merits; (b) for the rest, the forgiveness of the venial sins for which they are sorry, remission of at least some temporal punishment, increase of sanctifying grace with the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit; (c) for all, special grace to avoid sin; also peace and joy of soul. Moreover, in receiving this Sacrament we exercise in an excellent way the virtue of penance, because it was instituted by our Lord for this purpose. Besides, by repeatedly examining our conscience we come to know ourselves better.

III. But that these fruits may be fully realized this Sacrament must be properly and devoutly received by observing the following rules:

(a) First the Holy Spirit must be invoked that He may pour upon us His light to know our sins, and sorrow to detest them. It is well also briefly to recall the benefits we have received from God because in the light of His benefits the ingratitude of our sins is more deeply impressed upon our minds.

(b) Then the examination of conscience must be made. Those who examine their conscience seriously every day, do not need much time to find matter for confession. Every kind of scrupulosity, especially about impure thoughts and temptations against faith, should be avoided. An examination conducted about such matters creates disturbance and confusion of mind rather than clearness. Therefore, we must judge according to ordinary events. Furthermore, it appears to be of greater value for religious life to ascertain and sincerely confess our sins and shortcomings against fraternal charity, obedience, poverty and one's special duties.

It will be a good thing to draw up an outline according to which one is to examine his conscience. Such an outline must no doubt be more accurate and detailed for religious than for seculars. (Find more about this matter below, No. 138).

(c) We must elicit sorrow for the sins we have committed, together with a purpose of avoiding them in the future. This is the most serious feature on which the fruit of confession depends. The more sincere, the more intense, the more universal our sorrow is, the greater an instrument of sanctity will confession be.

Let us, therefore, detest all our sins, even the slightest, because they are more harmful to us than any physical evil and because, by acting against God's will, we have offended God the Infinite Goodness. Let us grieve over them so that we may be ready rather to undergo any and every evil than to commit sin again. We must not, however, picture any particular sins to ourselves by our imagination,

in order to prove the sincerity of our sorrow. The purpose of our will is sufficient and the rest we should entrust to Divine Providence and grace.

We should not force ourselves to sensible sorrow. Although it is very good, it is not necessary, since the whole force of sorrow is in the act of the will. But we should always try to elicit perfect contrition which springs not from the fear of punishments, but from the love of God. By briefly considering one or the other mystery of the life and sufferings of Christ, Who is love itself, it is usually not difficult to elicit this perfect act of sorrow. We should also include in our sorrow our hidden and our past sins. If it is a question of sins committed more through thoughtlessness, we should detest and remedy this thoughtlessness.

(d) The resolution by which the sincerity of our sorrow is proved, should have the same qualities as contrition. It must extend not only to sins committed, but also to all sins which can be committed in the future. Still the strength and sincerity of the resolution does not exclude the fear that through human frailty we may sin again. It is sufficient, therefore, that here and now we have the true intention of avoiding all sin in future.

In order that we may make gradual progress we must have a particular resolution to which we wish to give particular attention and for which we wish to provide necessary and useful means. As far as possible our particular resolution should coincide with the object of our particular examen. In our meditations we should especially seek for motives to strengthen this resolution and we should recommend it to our Lord in a special way after Holy Communion. We should also make known to our confessor how we have kept it. In this way the Sacrament of Penance will be free from the danger of becoming mechanical and will contribute most efficaciously to our spiritual progress.

(e) In confession we must reveal all grave sins of which we are conscious together with their kind, number and necessary circumstances. If there are no serious sins, it is strictly speaking sufficient to confess only one of our venial sins. However, in order to gain greater profit from our confession, the following are recommended: to select such sins as will better reveal our state of soul and will humble us more; to make known the evil motives of our actions, because actions in themselves excellent, are spoiled by evil motives and become sins; to repeat in a general way one of the graver sins of our past life or a sin for which we have the greater sorrow. We may

say, "I also confess my past sins against charity, against the fourth commandment," etc. We should avoid useless narration and try to be brief. We should offer no excuse for our sins.

When our confession is finished, we should attentively and humbly listen to what the confessor says. Then we should renew our sorrow and elicit trust in the mercy and providence of God and devoutly await absolution.

(f) Finally, we should make satisfaction, i. e., fulfill the penance imposed by our confessor and then make thanksgiving. It is not fitting to speak about profane matters immediately after confession, not even with one's confessor. But rather let us thank God for so great a blessing and let us ask Him to give us the grace of amending our lives and of keeping our resolutions. We should renew our resolutions, and especially our particular resolution, and diligently consider the counsels and admonitions given us by our confessor. We should then recommend all to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to our Guardian Angel, and our special patron.

(g) Spiritual writers urge that we devote at least ten or fifteen minutes to preparation and thanksgiving and that we always make our confession as though it were to be our last. So made, it would surely greatly contribute to our spiritual progress.

(h) Furthermore we must remove everything that would cause us to fall again. We must make whatever restitution is necessary, especially of the good name of our neighbor, if we have injured it, and repair all scandal given, and in case it is necessary, must seek reconciliation with our enemies, as far as this depends on us.

If we had the intention of making a good confession, it will not be wise to re-examine a confession once made, but it will be much better cheerfully to try our best not to offend so merciful a God again.

135. Holy Communion

I. Holy Communion, as its name indicates, is a real union with our Lord, the source of all perfection and holiness, Who is taken as food and drink under the consecrated species. Thus from its very nature it is clear that Holy Communion is in itself the most efficacious means to acquire perfection and that by it we can acquire all graces to unite us eventually and perfectly with God, our end.

The effects or fruits are described by the Council of Trent as follows: "(Our Redeemer) wished this Sacrament to be taken as the spiritual food of our souls by which those living the life of Him who said, 'He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me' (John

6, 58), may be nourished and strengthened. He wished it to be taken also as an antidote by which we may be freed from our daily faults and preserved from mortal sin. Moreover, He wished it to be the pledge of our future glory and everlasting happiness, and therefore, a symbol of that body whose head He is, and to which He wished us to be joined as members in the closest bond of faith, hope and charity, that we may all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms among us (Cf. 1 Cor. 1, 10)" (Sess. XIII, cap. 2).

Add to this that the soul is filled with a certain spiritual delight (St. Thomas III, q. 79, a. 1 ad 2), so that it may more easily renounce the pleasures of this world and more eagerly yearn for the company of our Lord and union with Him.

Therefore, both the Church (Can. 595, n. 2) as well as our Order (Const. 111) expect that the frequent, yes, the daily reception of Christ's Body, flourish among our religious.

II. (a) The essential conditions for the reception of frequent Communion are (Cf. Decree on Frequent Communion, Dec. 20, 1905):

(1) The state of grace. Whoever is conscious of any grievous sin, is commanded by the Church to confess his sins properly before Holy Communion. Contrition alone will not suffice. Let the terrible crime of sacrilegious Communion be far from us. For "whoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord . . . , he eateth and drinketh judgment to himself" (1 Cor. 11, 27.29). Venial sins of themselves do not hinder approach to Holy Communion; though it is clear how much more fruitfully and worthily it is received, the more one is free of venial sin.

(2) The right purpose or intention. It is found in him who approaches the holy table not out of habit, vanity or human considerations, but who wishes to satisfy God's good pleasure, wishes to be united to Him more perfectly by charity and to have recourse to that divine remedy for his infirmities and defects. It will also help to have particular intentions in order the more easily to excite fervor.

(3) Moreover, in order that frequent and daily Communion may be practised with greater prudence and may be enriched with more merit, the advice of a confessor should be sought.

(b) Fitting preparation and thanksgiving is likewise supposed and spiritual writers insist that each be made for at least a quarter of an hour.

(1) Now the first foundation of the preparation is a living faith

in God's presence and a vivid desire of receiving Him. When these are present, the other condition will readily follow. For it is not a matter of words or formulas but of disposition of heart. The preparation should tend to remove the obstacles which may hinder the full fruits of Holy Communion or the perfect union with God, and to procure whatever is required to open our heart perfectly to the inspirations and sacred impulses of our Lord. Not only, therefore, should we remove even the slightest sins by sincere sorrow, but also the affections for sin, especially hidden pride, interior hatreds, carnal and sensual friendships, the spirit of rebellion and of murmuring, inordinate attachment to any creature. We should make acts of faith, hope and charity by which we are united directly to God. These will be followed naturally by acts of desire, adoration, admiration, petition, etc., as grace will inspire. If we receive Holy Communion during Mass, it is well for us to recite the same prayers as the priest, as they contain the acts just mentioned. We may also, if we wish, use books written for this purpose.

But remote preparation is also necessary. He, who neglects it, will not be sufficiently disposed by his proximate preparation. He who cultivates it, can approach Holy Communion in all tranquility, even though, on account of peculiar circumstances, he is hindered from spending much time on his proximate preparation. Intending to receive our Lord daily, he lives in the meanwhile so as to be disposed at every moment to receive Him. Living not for himself, but for God, he bestows his efforts on interior recollection and the faithful fulfillment of his duties. St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi thus addressed her novices, "See that one Communion is a preparation for the next, i. e., take such care of yourselves, since you have received God within you, that the time of receiving Him again may overtake you. Offer God all your actions and all your religious exercises in preparation and frequently offer up the blood of Jesus." She counseled them to use the time up to Vespers as thanksgiving for the Communion received and the time from Vespers until morning as a preparation for receiving it (AA. SS. May 5, 749, n. 155).

(2) Thanksgiving should follow Holy Communion. "After Holy Communion," says Father Michael of St. Augustine, "keep your heart in check and gather together the powers of your soul, so that you may be worthy to hear the divine inspirations. Say to Him, Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth" (*Inst. Myst.* 1, tr. 1, c.11). When are we more obliged to render thanks than when we have received so divine a gift? We shall receive fruits in proportion to our thanks-

giving, since thanksgiving itself is the most efficacious petition. We must surrender ourselves wholly and entirely to such a guest. Therefore, we must elicit acts similar to those of our preparation, only we must also listen to what our Lord may perhaps inspire. We should treat and converse with Him about what we must do or suffer during the day; offering Him our resolutions we shall ask Him to help us keep them. Nor should we be forgetful of others. Holy Communion is the symbol and the means of our union with the Church, the mystical body of Christ, and of all her members with us and among themselves according to the teaching of St. Paul, "For we, being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread" (1 Cor. 10, 17).

For this reason, the Council of Trent calls this admirable Sacrament the mark of unity, the bond of charity and the symbol of concord (Sess. XIII, cap. 8). Consequently it is becoming to pray in a "catholic" manner, i.e., for others and for the whole Church. We shall, then, be so much more perfectly heard in our own necessities. If we have received Holy Communion during Mass, let us again quietly follow the prayers of the Church, with the intention of praying according to the mind of the Church and for all our needs. But when Mass is over, we should add a few minutes to converse more intimately with our Lord Who is present within us.

Furthermore, the whole day should be a certain kind of protracted thanksgiving. Remaining in love we should keep our mind recollected in Christ, as far as we are able, and we should courageously and faithfully undergo sufferings and also carry the cross of Christ. The sacramental union must create and foster our spiritual union with our Lord. Always closer to Thee, O Lord!

(3) Certain Saints made Holy Communion the center of their daily lives, so that they grouped all their affairs around it and lived in an almost uninterrupted preparation or thanksgiving for it.

Those obliged to the recitation of the Divine Office, find in it a perfect opportunity for preparation and thanksgiving; and rightly so, since in the mind of the Church the Office is arranged around the Sacrifice of the Mass as a frame around the image of our Lord.

III. Spiritual writers strongly recommend the so-called spiritual communion. "They who in desire eat this heavenly bread with a lively faith that worketh by charity (Cf. Gal. 5, 6) and experience its fruits and advantage" (Trent, l. c), receive spiritual communion. There is required, therefore, a lively faith in our Lord sacramentally present under the sacred species and a fervent desire to receive Him,

and no more. Words are not necessary much less precise formulas. The speech of the heart and the voice of love suffice. We can therefore receive spiritual communion always and everywhere, day and night, during work and during prayer, filled with joy or depressed by grief. It is also an excellent means of preparation for sacramental communion and of thanksgiving afterward. It develops and nourishes interior union with God. Accordingly, being mindful of Holy Communion, let us frequently repeat, "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water; so my soul panteth after Thee, O God . . . When shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. 41, 2.3).

136. Indulgences

I. The Church admonishes us, "Let all highly estcem indulgences" (Can. 911), in order that we may be impelled freely and becomingly to employ them as a powerful means for our salvation and for our perfection.

(a) For an indulgence "is the remission before God of temporal punishment due for sins already forgiven as to their guilt, which ecclesiastical authority grants from the treasury of the Church" (ibid.).

(b) Two things may be considered in every sin; guilt which makes sin, and the punishment owing to sin. The guilt cannot be destroyed except by true and sincere sorrow for the sin committed. The punishment, however, is wiped out by the satisfaction made by the sinner or by the application of indulgences.

(c) Punishment can be eternal or temporal. Eternal punishment which is attached only to grievous or mortal sins, is always wiped out by the remission of the mortal sins themselves. But the temporal punishment which remains after the remission of mortal sin and its eternal punishment, or temporal punishment contracted through venial sins, must be washed away on earth by the patient bearing of the sufferings and tribulations of this life or after this life by the sufferings of Purgatory, unless it has been wiped out by voluntary satisfaction, or as we have said, by the application of indulgences.

(d) The Church because of the Communion of Saints and in virtue of the power of the keys which our Lord has conferred upon it, draws from the infinite treasury of Christ's merits and those of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the Saints, and offers to God for us and for our debts the superabundant merits they have earned. Our Lord, however, and the Blessed Virgin Mary did not need satisfaction for themselves, and the Saints also offered more satis-

faction than was necessary for their sins. All such satisfaction falls to our profit.

(e) We distinguish plenary and partial indulgences. The former signify a remission of all temporal punishments to which one is subject; the latter only a part of the punishments. Thus when an indulgence of three hundred days or of five years is granted, this signifies that as much punishment is remitted as would have been remitted if we had done penance for the time indicated according to the austere discipline of the ancient Church.

(f) "No one gaining indulgences can apply them to those still in this life; all indulgences granted by the Roman Pontiff, unless it is otherwise evident, are applicable to the souls detained in Purgatory" (Can. 930). However, indulgences for the living are granted by way of absolution; i.e., by fulfilling the conditions, the respective punishments of the living are certainly and infallibly remitted, because the Church has full jurisdiction over the living and therefore, simply pays their debt. In the case of the deceased, however, over whom the Church has ceased to have authority, indulgences are granted by way of suffrage; i.e., the Church begs God to deign kindly to accept these satisfactions offered for these souls from the treasury of the Church and to remit the corresponding punishment.

II. The conditions for gaining indulgences are as follows: (a) the state of grace, at least when the last of the works enjoined is performed; (b) sorrow for all sins, the temporal punishments of which are to be remitted, and the breaking of all attachments to such sin; (c) the faithful fulfillment of the works enjoined.

If one, therefore, wishes to gain a plenary indulgence, he must elicit an act of sorrow for all and everyone of his sins, and retract every wilful attachment to them. Unless he does this, he will gain only a partial indulgence.

From such considerations everyone must see that indulgences by no means encourage fickleness or tepidity, but urge on to the pursuit of true perfection. The more one strives for perfection, the more surely will he gain indulgences by performing the requirements. Therefore, it was not without reason St. Alphonsus asserted that in order to reach perfection it was sufficient to gain all the indulgences possible. For this supposes a serious pursuit of perfection, and confers immense benefits on the souls suffering in Purgatory for their sins. These will not cease to thank us for their benefits by praying to God for us, especially after we have helped them to heaven.

III. No one is ignorant of the fact that we who live in an Order

and are accustomed to dwell under the same roof with our Lord have numberless opportunities daily to gain indulgences.

(a) For after every communion, by the Divine Office recited before the most Holy Sacrament, by the third part of the Rosary, likewise recited before the Holy Sacrament, by the Way of the Cross, etc., we can gain plenary indulgences every day, and apply them to the deceased if only we wish.

(b) Moreover, on the chief festivals of the Church and the Order special plenary indulgences have been granted us, not to mention innumerable partial indulgences. The gaining of plenary indulgences is so much easier for us, insomuch as we either celebrate Holy Mass or receive Holy Communion every day, and so one of the most important conditions is already fulfilled.

(c) We should therefore esteem indulgences very highly on account of our perfection and every morning we should elicit the intention of gaining during the day all the indulgences we can. In turn while striving for perfection we withdraw as far as possible from sin that we may the more surely gain indulgences for ourselves as well as for the deceased. One practice assists the other.

137. The Examination of Conscience

1. Very frequently our Lord admonishes us to watch. Watchfulness certainly is necessary not only that we may not be overtaken by unprovided death, but also that we may make progress in the spiritual life. Just as we are accustomed to sweep our rooms frequently in order that they may not be filled with dust, so also we must cleanse our consciences regularly lest sins multiply. Yet, just as we try to rid our gardens of weeds in order that the good plants may grow more abundantly, so we must pluck out the roots of our sins by frequent examination that the virtues may be strengthened. Moreover, we shall never know ourselves as our spiritual progress demands, unless we regularly and frequently examine our actions, words and intentions. Therefore, our Constitutions prescribe an examination of conscience twice a day (Art. 152); in fact, in several Provinces the ancient praiseworthy custom of holding it three times a day still prevails—twice the particular examen and once the general examen.

2. The examination of conscience is a scrutiny of our interior moral condition, in order to ascertain and correct our failings. Primarily it is an act of the memory by which we recall our deeds, and of the intellect by which we pass judgment on them. It is also an act of the will, because we must detest whatever we have done

wrong and resolve to correct it. Otherwise the examination of conscience would not be an exercise of the spiritual life and would contribute nothing toward our perfection.

3. Two kinds of examinations are usually distinguished: the general examen and the particular examen. These are to be held at set times. Moreover, in every meditation some kind of examen is made because we must learn how we have observed the truth just learned and what we must correct in future. It will likewise be of value occasionally during the day to look very briefly into one's self and to ask, "What direction of will and what intention have I now? Do I really seek God's will and am I tending to God?"

4. There are some, who having their interior state nearly always before their minds, attend instantly and spontaneously to the morality of their acts and thoughts, and so keep themselves free from every taint of sin. Such a grace is perfectly sublime and most precious, and is usually given only after long practice of the interior life. Most people, however, must examine their consciences intensively at stated times unless they wish to give up the spiritual life.

5. St. Ignatius is said to have affirmed that he who did not make such an examination was not worth his daily bread. Indeed, in one sense, the examination of conscience seems to be of greater importance than meditation itself; meditation can become impossible on account of circumstances, whereas the examination of conscience is always possible.

138. The General Examination of Conscience

I. The general examination of conscience is so called because it covers all the actions of a certain period.

(a) We must make such an examination before every sacramental confession, as we have already explained above. But religious are obliged to render an account to themselves and to God in the evening for the works of the day and hence must examine their conscience that they may be ready if their soul should be demanded of them during that night (Cf. Luke 12, 20). A more accurate examination of conscience should be made on the monthly day of recollection and during the retreat, in order that one's state of soul may be more clearly understood.

(b) This examination has the same steps or points as the examination for sacramental confession (no. 134); namely, the invocation of the Holy Spirit with thanksgiving, examination of conscience proper, sorrow and purpose of amendment. Again we warn that the principal

place must be assigned to sorrow and the purpose of amendment. For what good would it be to have discovered the stain of sin in our soul unless we tried to wash it away. Therefore, they err, who take up the whole time in discovering sins and failings, so that there is no time left for eliciting sorrow and a purpose of amendment. Even though we should lapse into almost the same faults day after day for a long time, we must always make a fresh start by renewing our sorrow and our resolutions. If we place before our eyes one of the Last Things or a mystery of our Lord's life and death, such a start will not be difficult, so that we can begin another day with fresh courage. We should be especially carefully to make a specific resolution.

II. This examination must have the following qualities:

(a) It must be sincere. It should not, therefore, be done out of mere habit, but from a genuine desire of knowing and judging oneself before our Lord in order to correct oneself. For this reason we should imagine ourselves placed before God's tribunal on the point of rendering an account. It will not be out of place to make this examination an act of preparation for the reception of Holy Communion on the following day. In this way it will acquire greater force and reality.

(b) It must be orderly. Therefore some plan should be followed. Unless we do so, we shall waste time and fail in our purpose. Thus we can run through in succession the commandments of God and our vows; or we can ask what faults we have committed in thought, word and deed against God, against ourselves, and against our neighbor; or also, how we have interiorly misused our memory, understanding and will, and exteriorly our senses. In fact, we may as we judge best, draw up our own plan or particular method according to our usual defects. But it is only right to hold faithfully to the plan selected lest the door be opened to fickleness.

(c) It should be accurate. We should inquire into the number and malice of our sins. We should not forget omissions; i.e., negligences committed in undertaking our duties and labors and in exercising charity. Frequently there will be no great transgressions, if any at all, because the occasions have been few. But there will be omissions aplenty and grave ones. We could have done many good deeds which we have omitted through sloth, culpable indifference, lack of charity, envy or some other bad motive. We have wasted time doing useless things. Accordingly, we not rarely learn our temperament and passions better from our omissions than from our transgressions. Therefore, they must be investigated.

The examination of conscience should extend not only to our evil actions but also to our good ones to ascertain whether all the circumstances, especially the intention, were good or not. The closer a soul comes to God, the more defects will it discover in actions good in themselves.

Likewise, the causes and roots of our failings should be investigated, because, unless we know them, we shall hardly be able to avoid our faults. When we know the causes we shall also be able to render a better account to our confessor or spiritual director, and so receive more appropriate counsels from him. We must therefore inquire from which passions and on what occasions our defects took their rise.

If there are no signs in the strict sense we can ask ourselves, "What return should God have received from us for His great kindness? What have we promised? How would this or that saint have acted in our place?" Then it will become evident how far from perfection we are even in our good deeds.

When our examination of conscience, contrition and purpose of amendment have been finished, we may briefly add a spiritual communion. Then we can say, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23, 46). When the day has been so closed, we shall begin the next day with fresh courage, inspired by the saying of Father Dominic of St. Albert, "Plus ultra!"

139. The Particular Examen

I. This examination is called the particular examen, because it is concerned with rooting out a particular failing or acquiring a particular virtue.

(a) The reason of this examen is that we are unable to extirpate all our failings or acquire all virtues simultaneously. That is why we apply to our spiritual struggle the proverb of the Romans, "Divide and conquer." On the other hand, our spiritual life is, as we have again and again insisted, an organism. When one vice is totally plucked out, our entire spiritual life grows strong and thrives. We attain perfection only very gradually.

(b) Here, however, the word examen includes more than it did in the case of the general examination. It includes three periods during which the following are to be observed:

(1) Morning. When we rise, we must resolve to avoid some particular fault, or practise a particular virtue. We should also foresee the occasions, as far as possible, and briefly implore God's help.

(2) Noon. At noon we must examine how we carried out our resolution. The rules are the same as for the general examination,

except that we should confine our scrutiny to the particular matter. If we have done well, we should thank God; if badly, we should repent. After renewing our resolution, we should foresee occasions of the afternoon and beg God's help.

(3) In the evening we should do the same as at noon.

(c) From what has been said, it is clear that this examen can be made in two ways, negatively and positively.

We make it negatively when we try to root out a fault; positively, when we turn our attention to the practice of a virtue. Both forms are useful inasmuch as we make progress in the virtues when attacking our faults, and by practising virtue we pluck out the opposite vices. Some more easily and more usefully practise the positive method; others, the negative. Each one, therefore, should with the advice of his spiritual director, choose that form which seems to fit him better. However, one who abounds in defects, had better choose the negative form, lest being deceived by a few virtuous acts, he becomes puffed up; he who has progressed considerably in the interior life and self-observation, will perhaps use the positive form with greater fruit. We can also change the form for a time in order that we may not grow careless.

III. It is of great importance to choose the right matter. The following can be the subject-matter:

(a) Wilful sins. Before all else we must strive to free our conscience from everything which may endanger our friendship with God. Ordinarily, however, the particular examen is not to be made concerning grave sins, unless they should frequently occur in a particular matter; never, concerning sins of impurity. In such a case, will power with usual vigilance must suffice.

(b) External defects, by which our neighbor is offended or scandalized or regular discipline disturbed; e.g., loquacity, lack of punctuality, uncontrolled gestures (Cf. Const. 177); lack of orderliness and cleanliness (ibid. 172; 177); sharp manner of speaking, neglect of the rules of politeness (182); our way of sitting, eating, walking, etc. The more numerous faults should be taken first. Father Maurus of the Child Jesus advises his disciples, "Begin thus: Every week try to mortify one of your senses. Impose a penance on yourself whenever you fail" (*Intr. in. div. sap.* I, dial. 1).

(c) Interior failings, among which our predominant fault must be attacked first. Our predominant fault is either the one which is of greatest consequence, e.g., lack of charity; or the one which is the most frequent, e.g., distractions; or finally, the one which is the cause

of the others, e.g., envy, pride, ambition, sloth, anger, etc. We must recall to mind the explanation about our ruling passion (no. 101).

(d) He who wishes to use the positive method, should choose the virtue he needs most; but he should always choose something solid and not merely external devotions.

(e) It is useful to add some interior acts, such as ejaculatory prayers or a renewal of intention, to our external acts whether they are negative or positive. Thus, when we have proposed to practise meekness, we should frequently repeat, "O Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine." Thus we shall both recall and renew our resolution and implore the divine help. In this way the negative and positive methods are united, and there is always the possibility or occasion of putting our resolution into practice.

(f) We must give warning that the particular examen should always be about a simple, and not a complicated matter. A few things should be resolved on which can be easily kept in mind, and should be quite concrete. For this reason each vice or virtue should be subdivided in order that we may place before our eyes some clearly defined acts. For instance, to practise humility, "I will not speak of myself. I will not excuse the faults I commit: I will sincerely approve the praise given to others," etc. (Cf. no. 140).

III. (a) We must dwell on the selected subject matter until we have made real progress in it. If the practice of a monthly virtue determined by the superior prevails, each may legitimately follow this practice. Some take in order the chapters of the ascetical life for their particular examen and then continue in each one for a determined period of time, e.g., two weeks. Everyone should do as seems best, although he should consult his spiritual director so as not to be deceived by his own judgment.

(b) It will help much to be mindful of our particular examen during meditation, spiritual reading and prayers, and to seek especially such motives and reasons as will fortify us from day to day with fresh incentives to root out more vigorously our particular defect or to practise more fervently our particular virtue. Thus will be engendered in our spiritual life, the unity by which the struggle for perfection is so much aided.

IV. To attain more easily and speedily the end of our particular examen, it remains to urge the following:

(a) Secretly to place our hand on our breast during the day whenever we have committed a fault.

(b) To impose a slight penance on ourselves for each failure.

(c) To repeat a short ejaculation conformable to the subject matter, as we have already suggested.

(d) After the examen to note on a chart or in a booklet the number of our faults or positive acts, and later, to compare morning with afternoon, day with day, week with week, month with month, so that any progress we may, or may not, have made will be evident. Such annotations will show and encourage both the degree of fervor as well as real progress. The omission of the annotation can be a sign of lessening fervor.

In order that our words may be clearer we submit the following outline in which we show an accurate and a less accurate system of marking. The breaking of silence is used as an example.

Week	*1 - 7* Less Accurate	*8 - 14* More Accurate			*15 - 21*	*22 - 28*
		.	—	..		
Sunday	7	4	3	1	. — ..	. — ..
Monday	6	5	3	1		
Tuesday	7	4	4	1		
Wednesday	7	4	3	-		
Thursday	6	3	2	1		
Friday	5	2	2	-		
Saturday	4	1	1	-		
Total	42	23	18	4		

N. B. The period denotes a superfluous word; the dash, unnecessary talk; two periods, a longer transgression.

A more or less accurate annotation can be made also in other matters. It is evident that the whole matter is thus clarified.

The general examen can likewise be noted down, though this seems less necessary.

V. In order to rouse and sustain enthusiasm for these exercises, we should remember the words of Scripture, "I passed by the fields of the slothful man, and by the vineyard of the foolish man: and behold it was filled with nettles, and thorns covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down" (Prov. 24, 30. 31). We should also consider the recommendation of the Imitation of Christ, "If every year we rooted out one vice, we should soon be perfect men" (1, 11).

Therefore, in every community we must especially insist that these examens be held regularly by the whole community in common, and

that all faithfully and punctually without exception assemble to make them, those also who are legitimately exempted from choir and other community exercises. This will guard against the omission of so important a matter. Tepidity usually begins with the neglect of the examen of conscience or with a slovenly way of making it.

140. The Virtue of the Month

1. Since experience testifies that we shall make little progress in in the spiritual life if we have only vague resolutions, many who are eager for spiritual progress have been accustomed to propose to themselves a special virtue for each month, and to make their particular examen about it. This custom was established in our Order through the *Directoires of Novices* published in the 17th century. Together with devotion to the Child Jesus a monthly virtue was recommended to be practised during each month by the novices, clerics and lay brothers (up to solemn profession).

2. This practice is very useful for spiritual advancement, because when our goal is well defined tepidity and laxity are more easily avoided. Moreover, matter changed each month will not allow familiarity to breed contempt, or one phase of spiritual life to develop to the neglect of all the rest. It is supposed, however, that the practice is cultivated seriously, and that each one wishes and tries to make some true and lasting progress in virtue during the month. For the rest all that we said in the preceding section about the particular examen also holds here.

3. The *Directoires* just mentioned, very wisely note, "Since many virtues have a wide extent, it is better to choose only one phase for a week, e. g., not all of modesty, at once, but modesty of the head, of the hands, of gait or speech. The same holds of humility and the other virtues. "Then, too," they continue, "it is very useful to determine a certain number of external acts concerning which one intends to give an accurate and indispensable account to one's self; because he who resolves too much, accomplishes less on account of the great blindness of the human spirit" (Vol. III, *De actionibus,* c. 27).

4. If this monthly virtue is announced by the Superior or is determined either by drawing or in some other way, (e. g., in the Calendar of the Divine Office), every difficulty or uncertainty as to the choice of a virtue is removed. If, however, it is left to individual choice, the virtue should be chosen according to the rules given in the foregoing paragraph. The monthly day of recollection is a splendid occasion for choosing the virtue of the month.

5. Together with the monthly virtue, a special patron is usually selected for the month. He should be, for the most part, chosen from the Saints of the Order, whose feast may happen to occur during the month, or who practised the respective virtue in a remarkable way, so that we may by his example and intercession perfectly attain the end of this exercise.

141. The Annual Retreat

I. A retreat is a combination of means for nourishing our spiritual life, and being such, is a most efficacious means of making progress in the way of perfection. Therefore, our Constitutions establish, "We oblige each and every one of our brethren to make a yearly retreat of ten days (the beginning and end included) in common, for the purpose of recollecting their souls. Whoever, for a grave reason and with the permission of the Provincial, cannot be present at the common retreat, must make it privately" (Art. 151).

(a) From this it is clear that in our Order a retreat in common is preferred to one in private, and this, not without reason since greater fruits can be expected. For at the retreat greater silence and greater recollection of spirit prevail in our monasteries, and greater assistance can be expected from God, according to the Gospel, "For where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18, 20). Moreover, each one is a source of edification to the others.

(b) There surely is no one who doubts that a retreat avails much in promoting perfection. For since at retreat time we are occupied with God alone through frequent vocal and mental prayers, through spiritual reading and examinations of conscience—all done in an orderly manner and fixed method—the result must be that the eternal truths penetrate our souls gently but very deeply and there produce salutary results. During retreats it becomes clearly evident that our religious life consists in the modeling of ourselves after the example of our Lord and His Blessed Mother; likewise, the dangers and obstacles become manifest as well as the means we must use to overcome them and to attain the goal we propose. No one will deny that God pours forth His graces more abundantly during these days. Therefore, Pius XI recommended the spiritual exercises to religious communities in these words, "Since those who in any way serve in the seclusion of religious discipline are commanded by law (Can. 595, n. 1) to make the sacred exercises every year, there is no doubt that they will by these holy retreats reap an abundant harvest of

heavenly blessings from which they will be enabled to draw a greater perfection and to obtain all the helps necessary to walk with greater alacrity the way of the evangelical counsels. For the annual retreat is the 'tree of life' (Gen. 2, 9) by which both individuals and communities will become renowned for sanctity, for which every religious family should be in high repute" (Encycl. *Mens Nostra,* Dec. 20, 1929, 3c).

(c) These exercises are so much more necessary in our day on account of the inconstancy of human nature. Even though we are gifted with a good will, it is inevitable that among the varied occupations and distractions of our daily life, we are weakened and fall away from our fervor. Therefore, we ought at least once a year examine our path more attentively and excite ourselves again to our first fervor. Unless we do this our whole spiritual life will be brought into jeopardy and our pursuit of perfection will collapse. Here we may cite the words which Pope Leo I used in a sermon favoring the Lenten fast, "Unceasing devotion and continuous reverence are owing at all times to the great mysteries of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, so that we ought always to be in the sight of God as it is fitting to be at Easter. But since strength is the privilege of the few, since such severity of conduct is generally weakened by the frailty of our flesh, since our attention is distracted by the various actions of this life and since it is inevitable that even religious souls become soiled with the dust of the world, provision has been made by the salutary appointment of God that, to restore the purity of our souls, a forty days' exercise has been established as a remedy for us, so that, during this time, we may by good works redeem and by chastening fasts liquidate the sins of other seasons" (4th Lenten Sermon).

II. In order that we may in full abundance gather the fruits contained in retreat, it is necessary to perform the exercises as perfectly as possible. For the sacred time of retreat is not to be spent in quiet leisure, but we are to weigh the important questions of our origin and goal, whence we come and whither we are to go (Encycl. *Mens Nostra*).

Therefore, the following should be carefully observed;

(a) We should attend the exercises with great alacrity and promptness, determined to fulfill whatever God asks of us.

(b) We should carefully observe the rules of the retreat, especially as regards solitude and silence, "setting aside the cares and anxieties of daily life" (ibid. IV a).

(c) We should carefully consider the truths proposed and not anticipate the order of meditations or disturb it by irrelevant readings. Most certainly, not everything is to be left to the director of the retreat or the speaker, but we also must do our share by meditating and thinking. For no one will make us saints, unless we ourselves assisted by God's grace shall have striven for sanctity, a point which also holds in retreat. However, let no one, casting discretion aside, instead of refreshing his spiritual faculties, exhaust them through excessive effort. Yet God's inspiration should be magnanimously accepted and executed.

(d) We should patiently bear all inconveniences that may arise in retreat, especially dryness, dereliction, etc. For God in His own time, if not during the exercises themselves, will give what is necessary for our spiritual progress provided we have done our part.

(e) We should trustfully treat of our interior difficulties and doubts with the director of the exercises.

(f) We should cultivate full confidence in God and constantly implore God's grace and light, especially by means of short and frequent ejaculations.

(g) It is useful for our life in the future to set down in writing our lights and resolutions, and afterward to read them occasionally, especially on the monthly day of recollection.

(h) Since we really do not know when the Lord will come, it will not be out of place to make our retreat as though it were the last one, and as though it were the last grace to be granted us to arrange our lives. We should listen to the warnings of God, examine our sins, and make a sacramental confession of them at least from the time of our last retreat, (unless our spiritual director judges otherwise) as though we were going to die immediately. Finally, according to the lights received, we should decide to use for God the time He will yet grant us, so that we may be ready without further preparation to appear at any moment before God's tribunal to give an account also of this retreat. It does not seem necessary to urge Carmelites to place the entire retreat under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to call upon their Mother repeatedly during the exercises, especially when aridity, darkness or temptation has come upon them.

III. The retreat should be so highly esteemed that under no consideration should we omit it, not even for the sake of pastoral duties. The Supreme Pontiff expressly teaches, "Let neither secular nor religious priests believe that the time taken up by the retreat will tend to the detriment of their apostolic ministry. Let them only

listen to St. Bernard who did not hesitate to write to the Supreme Pontiff, Blessed Eugene III, whose teacher he had been, 'If you wish to be at the service of all, like Him Who became all things to all men, I praise your kindly charity, provided it is complete. But how can it be complete, if it does not include yourself? You also are a man; therefore, that your charity may be full and complete, let it, since you welcome all, also embrace yourself; otherwise, what good is it if you win all, but lose yourself? Therefore, since all claim you, be one of those who possess you. Remember, I do not say always; I do not say often, but I say at least occasionally, give yourself to yourself' (*De consideratione L. 1,* c.5)" (ibid. III c).

We should however add that all that has been said is much more true now that we have passed to the active life and to the cultivation of the Lord's vineyard. Since we cannot, like our forefathers, be always occupied with God in solitude and silence, we must on that account dedicate ourselves exclusively to our principal calling for at least a few days a year. Apostolic labors are not therefore, so much an excuse from the retreat as they are an insistence on it and a justification of it. A constant pouring out with no intake quickly ends in depletion.

142. The Monthly Day of Recollection

1. Besides the retreat to be made each year, our Constitutions prescribe another most useful means for promoting our perfection. They declare, "Moreover, all must give themselves to recollection of spirit for one day each month" (Art. 151). On this day they should exclude, as far as possible, all other business and affairs, and give themselves solely to God by prayer and pious exercises, in order to prolong the good effects of the annual retreat, to give new impulse and increase to the spiritual life and so prevent any slackening of fervor.

2. In the Encyclical *Mens Nostra* quoted above, the Supreme Pontiff, Pius XI also recommends this pious exercise. He writes, "It remains for us, Venerable Brethren, strongly to urge that pious practice, which we might name a miniature retreat, namely, the practice of monthly or at least of tri-monthly recollection for the purpose of protecting and safe-guarding the Spiritual Exercises which we have so highly praised, and of refreshing the remembrance of them. This custom, which—here it pleases us to employ the same words as our predecessor, Pius X, of blessed memory—'we are glad to see introduced and flourishing in many places' especially among

religious communities and pious priests of the secular clergy, we vehemently desire to be introduced also among the laity because it will tend to their great profit" (ibid. IV d).

3. Rightly has someone said, "All should be convinced that there is no more efficacious and infallible means to live holily and die happily than fidelity in making the monthly retreat." For it is true that within a month a certain decline or tepidity may creep into our spiritual life as well as a greater or lesser forgetfulness and neglectfulness of our resolutions.

It is therefore surely most useful, if not necessary, each month to examine our conscience and our whole spiritual life more accurately, to recall to mind our resolutions and restore our fervor, not merely to repair damages, but also to make greater and quicker progress by acquiring fresh strength and giving more effort to our perfection. It is permissible to state that everyone genuinely desirous of perfection applies himself most faithfully to this exercise.

4. If anyone desires to derive from this pious exercise all the rich fruits possible, the following practice should be included: Solitude with silence, meditation, a check-up of one's soul, resolutions, confession of sins committed during the month, consultation with one's spiritual director. We shall speak more at length later concerning the check-up of the soul. If the spiritual director cannot be consulted on the day itself, he should be consulted as soon as possible and a reckoning given of the past month. We should let him know especially how our mental prayer is doing, how we practise the presence of God, what is the subject of our particular examen. With such knowledge he can give us more practical advice. For meditation, spiritual writers especially recommend death. That is why this recollection is called a preparation for death. In fact, it is best to spend that day as the last day of our life, and to accomplish our examination of conscience, our Holy Communion, confession and all our occupations which we must undergo, filled with this thought. Then without doubt we shall always be prepared to give an account before God without fear.

5. No community, therefore, should omit this day; none of our religious, as far as he can help, should absent himself from it, or perform it slovenly or reluctantly. All should be convinced that in proportion to the gain to be had from this exercise no sacrifice is too great.

143. Examen for the Day of Recollection

On the monthly day of recollection it is proper to examine one's

conscience more widely both to discover sins for confession as well as to diagnose our spiritual condition. Accordingly, we are here giving an extensive outline. In using it we can also learn the points necessary for leading a truly spiritual life. By forming too vague an idea we easily neglect details or little things, as we call them, and so deceive ourselves.

I. Concerning prayer. Do I value prayer as becomes a Carmelite whose principal vocation is to converse with God?—Do I have the desire of advancing in prayer?—Do I punctually perform all my prayers of obligation without exception, both mental and vocal?—In praying do I sufficiently preserve external devotion by holding my eyes and other senses in check and by assuming such posture of body as circumstances demand or permit?—Do I sufficiently strive after interior devotion by calmly but firmly rejecting distractions which may arise?—Do I patiently bear inculpable dryness and desolation without omitting prayers or shortening them?

In examining various prayers and pious exercises we should ask:

(1) About *meditation*. Do I give enough effort to remote and proximate preparation?—Do I sufficiently and seriously recollect myself in the beginning?—Do I seriously meditate and elicit affections?—Do I make practical resolutions?—Do I devoutly and earnestly beg God's help?—Do I reflect on the meditation I have made?—What influence does the morning meditation usually exert on my daily work?

(2) About the *Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and Holy Communion*. With what intention and desire do I daily approach so holy an exercise?—What preparation and what thanksgiving do I make?—What are the daily fruits?

(3) About the *particular examen*. Do I make it faithfully and seriously?—Do I have a practical subject matter?—Do I observe the rules concerning it given above?—Has any progress resulted from it?

(4) About the *general examen*. Do I seriously investigate the whole day?—Have I a practical outline and is it sufficient for my needs?—Do I perhaps make my act of sorrow and resolution lightly and superficially?

(5) About the *visit to the Blessed Sacrament*. How often do I visit our Lord?—How long?—What do I do and say in our Lord's presence?

(6) About the *Divine Office*. Is it firmly impressed upon my mind that the Divine Office pertains to the choicest lot of a Carmelite?—

Do I try to recite it *digne, attente, ac devote?* Do I well observe the rubrics and ceremonies?—Do I freely seek excuses to be absent from Office in Choir?

(7) About *God's presence* and our interior conversation with Him. Do I frequently enough apply myself to this exercise or do I at least wish to learn it?—Do I not merely recall the presence of God, but do I also add affections or some ejaculatory prayer?—What influence has this practice on my whole spiritual life?

(8) About *spiritual reading.* Do I make it regularly and properly (having invoked the Holy Spirit)?—Do I seek my spiritual advancement or rather indulge my curiosity?—Am I attentive to the reading in the dining room?

II. Concerning *fraternal charity.* Do I esteem my neighbor as a brother, as I am taught by faith, or am I, in seeking or avoiding my neighbor, rather influenced by nature?—Am I moved by sincere good will toward all, or am I filled with hatred, indignation, envy or rivalry toward anyone?—Do I out of curiosity, or for some other reason inordinately scrutinize what others are doing?—Am I suspicious?—Am I accustomed to judge rashly?—Do I gladly and frequently speak of the faults of others?—Do I carry tales, maliciously telling others what I heard about them?—Have I caluminated anyone?—Do I despise, criticise, or deride others?—Am I slow in helping others?—Do I thank others for help or service I have received?

III. Concerning *obedience.* Am I convinced that by far the most certain way to salvation and perfection is obedience?—Do I, according to the admonition of the Rule, consider my Superiors as taking God's place, and disregard their human defects?—Do I love them in a supernatural way?—Do I give them due honor and reverence (greeting them, speaking with them, answering them)?—Do I carry out what they demand or desire of me, simply without discussion, quickly without hesitation, joyfully without sadness or necessity?—Do I with a good intention try to anticipate their wishes?—Am I accustomed to murmur against them or to incite others against them?—Am I filled with reverence toward our Holy Rule and Constitutions, considering them as the manifest will of God?—Do I try to learn their letter and spirit and faithfully fulfill every one of them?—Or rather do I think little of them and despise them, sometimes speaking with contempt of them or at least of some of the articles?—Do I try to learn and observe accurately the rubrics and ceremonies?

IV. Concerning *chastity.* Am I concerned about purity of soul and body?—Do I in thought, word, and deed, most diligently avoid everything which might soil this angelic virtue?—Do I refrain from

dangerous looks or from dangerous reading?—Do I converse with enough caution with persons of the opposite sex, by observing the regulations enjoined by our Constitutions in this matter?—Do I, in order to preserve holy purity, practise discreet mortification, and do I often ask the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary?

V. Concerning *poverty.* Is it firmly impressed upon my mind that it is the aim of poverty to free us from earthly things?—Do I posses anything or use anything without permission?—Have I given anything away without due permission?—Am I accustomed to presume the permission of my superior without justification?—Have any goods perished through my fault or neglect?—Do I nourish any desires contrary to poverty?—Do I keep in my cell superfluous things or such as are against the religious spirit?—Do I resent being deprived of some thing by my Superior or being refused a permission I have asked?

VI. Concerning *study and work.* Do I cheerfully work according to the precept of our Holy Rule?—Do I indulge in idleness?—Do I undergo the labors which holy obedience has ordered, or do I rather seek such as please me just because they please me?—Do I work diligently and with a good intention, not too fast, not lazily, and not too slow?—Do I have a well arranged schedule and do I follow it?

VII. Concerning *our struggle against our vices.* What is my principal fault?—Do I attack it with courage and constancy?— Do I use the particular examen successfully against it?—Have I made any progress in this matter since the last day of recollection?—What about the other capital sins?

VIII. Concerning *the acquisition of virtues.* Do I foster a true desire for advancing in the virtues?

First concerning *faith.* Do I regard all things in the light of faith?—Do I voluntarily admit doubts concerning the truths of faith?—Do I follow nature rather than faith?

Secondly concerning *hope.* Do I look for all blessings and successes from grace and the goodness of God rather than from my own talent and effort?—Am I fainthearted?—Am I more detached from creatures?—Am I filled with the desire of eternal goods and my heavenly country?

Then concerning *charity.* Do I truly love God?—Am I on fire with the desire of a more intimate union with God?—Do I have a tender love for the most Holy Eucharist?—Do I truly fear and flee sin because of God?—Do I patiently bear for God's sake the inconveniences that befall me?

Finally, we must make inquiries concerning one or the other moral

virtue which seems more necessary or which begets greater difficulty, especially, however, concerning our virtue of the month—all according to the explanation given above (Chap. III) about each virtue.

IX. General questions. Have I gone forward or backward since the last day of recollection?—Have I given way somewhat to lukewarmness or am I animated by a true desire for perfection?—Do I easily lose courage when I fall, or am I advancing as quickly as I wish?—Do I rise immediately after I have fallen, fully resolved to recover with greater vigilance and zeal what I have lost?—Do I frequently ask God each day to advance?—What specific resolutions should I make now?—What means should I employ?—What kind of devotion have I for my most sweet Mother Mary, upon which my spiritual life so largely depends?

When we have finished this scrutiny, we should elicit a sincere art of contrition for the sins and negligences committed and a firm purpose to proceed henceforth with fresh fervor. It would be excellent to note briefly in writing our own findings concerning our spiritual state and also our resolutions, so that we can read and compare them on our next day of recollection.

Note. It is evident that much more is included in this outline than is suitable for novices, but they must learn how to make their examen not only now but also later. Besides, they must here and now procure a general outlook upon the spiritual and religious life.

144. Self-Abnegation

I. Reasons for self-abnegation.

(a) Our Lord proclaimed the law of abnegation for the spiritual life, when He said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16, 24); and he "that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14, 33). Our Lord likewise "avoided what all desire and desired what all avoid. But when He avoided what all desire and desired what all avoided, He did something which all admired, in order that, after His death, He might rise, and by His death raise others from death" (St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia* 30, 24.69). Thus He gave not only the law but also the highest example of abnegation. Therefore, "They that are Christ's, have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences" (Gal. 5, 24)), although the Holy Spirit had already taught in the Old Testament, "Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will" (Ecclus. 18, 30).

(b) All the Saints and all masters of the spiritual life have held

this doctrine and have defended it against all the snares of human passions. The Imitation of Christ does no more than sum up the universal Christian tradition, when it insists, "You will make as much progress as you use violence on yourself" (1, 25); and again, "Son, you cannot possess true liberty unless you wholly deny yourself" (3, 32); and again, "If (the animal man) will be spiritual indeed, he must renounce as well those that are near to him, as those that are afar off, and beware of none more than himself" (3, 53). For, "abnegation is the first stone to be laid in our spiritual edifice. For what good are high speculations concerning God and divine things, if we seek ourselves in them, and if lifted up with pride we worship ourselves as an idol and exasperate others with our pharisaical pride?" (Card. Bona, O. Cist., *Principia et documenta vitae christianae,* II, c.4).

(c) This law is so serious and so necessary that no one, of whatever rank he may be, can be excused from it, just as a sick man, provided he wishes to be cured, can not be excused from the law of living reasonably and of abstaining from everything harmful. Without observance of the law of abnegation not even the ordinary Christian life is possible, to say nothing of a religious or a perfect life. No devotion can be found which can supply for abnegation. In fact, it is the purpose of all true Catholic devotions to stimulate and help us to fulfill this law with greater ease and freedom, e. g., out of love for our Lord's Sacred Heart or of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

It is true that "all men have not alike to overcome and to practise mortification" (*Im. Chr.* 1, 25). The degree of mortification depends on character, temperament, education, custom, etc. But no one can be dispensed from the law of abnegation; moreover the practice of abnegation may never be discontinued lest the evil forces within us wax strong again and must be once more overcome.

All should be convinced that their whole religious and spiritual life begins, grows and ends as this law is observed or neglected. Everything else will flow spontaneously from it and will be grasped without difficulty. And if certain religious sooner or later have suffered shipwreck in their vocation or have fallen into the disease or death of tepidity, they should know that all has resulted from the fact that they began to forget or to despise this fundamental law. Everything turns on this hinge. That we speak truly will become quite evident from what we have so far explained, especially about extirpating vices, about checking our senses and interior faculties, about governing our passions and about acquiring virtues. For whence do all difficulties

arise except from the fact that we must deny ourselves if we desire to observe all these things.

(d) Father Michael of St. Augustine very clearly explains the interior reason of this law,—a law which will never become obsolete: "Since God is the final end for which man has been created, it is clearly evident that all things which are not God, cannot serve man as an end in which to find rest, but at most as means by which man may attain to God; moreover, since man himself and all creatures are usually a hindrance to him in his due turning and clinging to God, so that it is impossible for him to reach, possess, or enjoy God his final end, as long as he rests in himself, or in any creature, i. e., in the inordinate love of self or any creature, therefore . . . it follows that no one can pursue God, cling to Him, or love Him alone with a pure heart, unless he first denies himself and renounces everything he possesses with inordinate affection; for no one will deny himself and all created things without coming closer to God. For since nothing except the Creator and creatures can be found, the farther he is removed from creatures by abnegation, so much the more will he approach the Creator. These are the two chief principles of a perfect Christian life, namely, the withdrawing of oneself from oneself and from every creature by true abnegation and the immediate clinging to the Creator, or the turning away from creatures and the loving turning to God . . . Therefore, the soul in love with God can do nothing better than to strive with every effort and with all diligence for the total abnegation of self and of all things. And no illuminations or touches of the spirit should be held of any value unless they are directed to turn man from himself and other things and turn him to God" (*Inst. Myst.* IV, tr. 1, c.1).

II. Nature of Self-Abnegation.

(a) Abnegation for which also the words mortification, renunciation, etc., are frequently used almost as synonyms, is an act or an omission contrary to our own inclinations, practised for a supernatural reason, especially our own moral perfection.

The man who has by frequently repeating such actions or omissions acquired a certain habit of doing them readily and easily, is said to be dead to himself or mortified.

(b) Abnegation is divided:

(1) into interior and exterior. The former regulates our interior and spiritual faculties and rules our passions; the latter restrains our senses.

External mortification is practised to encourage interior abnegation, and has its value only insofar as it leads to the interior. For "all the glory of the king's daughter is within" (Ps. 44, 14), i. e., only interior perfection makes us pleasing to God and unites us to Him. But exterior mortification is necessary for the interior. No one will rightly dispose himself to cling to God except he has first rightly controlled his body and his senses.

(2) into negative, which renounces certain things and is known by its proper name, renunciation; and positive, by which we inflict pain upon ourselves. This latter is called, by its own name, mortification in the strict sense.

Negative abnegation must be practised more frequently and is more necessary than the positive; and yet, the latter may not be rejected for reasons we shall explain at greater length later on.

(3) into active, by which we impose sacrifices upon ourselves, and passive, by which we piously accept whatever God inflicts upon us.

Passive abnegation inasmuch as inflicted by God must be accepted by all and is most salutary. As far as the active is concerned, we must choose and decide it ourselves according to circumstances and needs, always within the limits of prudence.

(c) The aim of abnegation is not to remove or destroy what is good in us but whatever has been rendered evil by original sin.

Nor should we renounce those things which by their nature or divine appointment lead us to God; but rather those things which by their nature or because of our weakness turn us from Him.

Abnegation, therefore, is by no means against nature but in favor of it, since it tends to restore nature to that purity and liberty in which it was originally created by God, as the Apostle teaches, "You have been taught . . . to put off according to former conversation, the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error. And be you renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth" (Eph. 4, 21-24). Therefore, Father John Dominic Controni, a member of the Congregation of Mantua, says, "Mortification is nothing else than a skirmish or means by which the superior part of man with the assistance of divine grace overcomes the inferior part and by oppressing and slaying its evil inclinations turns them into good ones" (*Regulae securae,* p. 148).

Abnegation has a disciplinary end because it is intended to render us fit for union with God.

Moreover, by abnegation we can expiate the sins we have committed, can obtain greater graces day by day and acquire merits for

eternal life. Why, therefore, are we saddened by abnegation, since it has such salutary effects? Certainly true abnegation does not make us sad. In truth, the Saints were almost always more cheerful than others.

(d) It follows immediately that abnegation must be so much more profound and so much more refined, the higher we aim and the more intimate the union with God we desire here upon earth. In Carmel therefore abnegation is of unique importance, because we are called to an intimate union with God through interior prayer and contemplation; and also because we glory in being favorite children of the Blessed Virgin Mary whom we should follow to the summit of Calvary and to the foot of the Cross. Not without good reason do our saints especially insist on entire and complete mortification, as St. John of the Cross and Brother John of St. Samson, St. Theresa, St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, etc. Likewise, our Rule and Constitutions recommend that even works of supererogation be added to the many and great abnegations and mortifications they prescribe (Rule, XVIII; Const. 108); and they exhort us to check all our senses (Const. 123); to restrain our emotions (41, 123); to root out thoroughly the seeds of vice (41); always to overcome our judgment and opinion, our repugnances and difficulties (119); patiently to bear with the hardships and sufferings of life (108, 362).

III. The Degrees of Self-Abnegation.

(a) In seeking the degrees of abnegation, we must before all recall to mind what we have said of the degrees of temperance (no. 117); and of humility (no. 120). Father Controni distinguishes abnegation, renunciation and crucifixion. He explains them thus:

Abnegation, which must be practised by beginners, is watchful that the inclinations of our lower nature do not exceed the limits of right reason and do not lead us to commit mortal sin. Therefore, we must abstain from everything unlawful by which the habit of charity might be destroyed.

Renunciation, proper to those advancing, withdraws even certain lawful and becoming things, because the soul wishes to avoid also venial sin and to practise more perfect charity.

Crucifixion, which term is borrowed from St. Paul (Gal. 6, 14), belongs to the perfect who have already checked all their vices and the movements of their lower nature so that hardly any traces of them remain. This degree includes the preceding kinds or degrees, and swayed by the most perfect love of God performs heroic acts, is not satisfied with simply mortifying the lower nature, but also as

it were, tries to destroy it by torments like unto the Cross. Thus its name is justified (*Regulae securae* pp. 148ff).

(b) For the sake of completeness and clearness we add the following counsels:

(1) Abnegation must become the more stalwart the higher the degree of perfection is that we are striving for or have attained. Such abnegation as avoids mortal sin is absolutely necessary. But we must also strive to avoid venial sin, and also imperfections,—at least deliberate ones.

(2) The following order can be observed in the matter of seeking and not seeking pleasure.

First, no pleasure (whether interior or exterior), which is forbidden by the divine law or by the duties of our state of life, should be sought. Such abnegation is necessary to avoid sin. But for the same reason we should not shrink from those creatures or burdens which are indeed hard for us to bear, but are imposed by God's will.

Then we must strive—in order to obtain genuine indifference,—not to judge matters by the greater or less pleasure they procure for us, or by the greater or less repugnance they provoke in us, but rather to regard solely the divine will or whether they will be a help or a hindrance toward attaining our eternal end. In theory this degree does not seem so difficult, but in practice it presupposes great advancement in spiritual life.

Finally, if it is according to God's will, it is fitting to desire and to choose that which pleases us less or causes greater repugnance. If this abnegation is constantly practised, it will powerfully arm us against sin, it shows a high degree of perfection, elevates us day after day to higher perfection, and procures for us infinite divine graces. Such is that stupendous love of the cross in which the Saints of our Order especially excelled. Through such abnegation they arrived at such sublime contemplation, and in turn, they drew from such contemplation the most efficacious motives to practise this mortification. We should admire them in this matter and try to follow them as perfectly as possible, and prudently imitate them. No one, however, should think that he has already attained this degree because sometimes he seems to be impelled to similar things with great fervor and zeal. For during sensible devotion we easily give up everything, but afterwards we feel human weakness so much more vehemently. Therefore, we must rise slowly to the heights with humility and trust.

(3) The following order is to be observed in the practical exercise of abnegation:

Before all, we must practise such abnegation as is necessary for not merely a mediocre, but for an exact, regular observance and the strict common life. Should we do this, we would constantly practise no mean abnegation. If we should fail in this, all the rest would be useless and open to suspicion.

Then, let us learn to fulfill most faithfully and carefully all our duties, untiringly to apply ourselves to study and prayer according to our daily schedule, and to deny ourselves sufficiently in everything always to safeguard fraternal charity. Indeed, we should become accustomed rather to mortify ourselves for the sake of a brother or a neighbor than to sadden him or to refuse him the service we can render him, if our other duties permit.

Finally, we should add other renunciations, abstinences and mortifications as circumstances allow and our fervor impels. We should however, observe discretion and avoid all singularity. If it is question of extraordinary mortifications, we should also obtain the advice of our spiritual director and the permission of our superior.

Father Michael of St. Augustine has the following principles or axioms: A religious must become accustomed to coarse and simple things, to be content with little, and disregard minor ailments. A religious should avoid singularity as a plague, from which he who follows the community is immune. A religious must in all things follow obedience and God's will, and he must be punctual in regular observance without any difference as to assignments (Cf. *Inst. Myst.* 2, tr. 3, cc. 28-30).

If we follow these rules, we shall not go astray and shall advance with giant strides on the way of perfection.

Let us, therefore, have a firm purpose to cultivate abnegation diligently; to give it constant effort; to mortify the *whole* man and so to free ourselves from all creatures that we may truly say, "*Deus meus et omnia!*" "My God and my all!"

145. Active Abnegation

I. In this matter of abnegation we must, as it were, set our hands to the task, that is, we must practise active mortification in order to withdraw from sin, to advance in virtue and to unite ourselves to God.

(a) Active abnegation, as we have heard, is both interior and exterior. We have sufficiently insisted on the necessity of interior abnegation for all. It must be practised courageously and constantly and must comprise everything, lest, while we are denying ourselves

in one, perhaps unimportant, matter, we indulge ourselves so much more in others. Interior abnegation is the more important; the exterior must be subordinated to it as to its end.

However, exterior mortification is also necessary, as it checks the senses and flees from everything that is in itself sinful and forbidden, or that creates danger of falling into sin. But besides this, penitential exercises also pertain to exterior abnegation. By them we either deny our senses a lawful pleasure or we purposely inflict some pain on our bodies.

(b) Among the penitential exercises are numbered the following which have been in use since the earliest times: fasts and watchings or the withdrawal of food and sleep, prayer upon bended knees and with outstretched arms; sleeping on the floor or on a hard bed; the scourging of oneself or the discipline; rough garments and hairshirts.

II. Against the opponents of these penitential exercises we must prove that, provided they are employed discretely and prudently, they are not harmful to health. Moreover they strongly promote the spiritual life. For (1) they keep alive in us and preserve the spirit of penance which is so necessary, especially for spiritual persons. For many in the abundance of their devotions, consoling experiences and holy practices forget that they are sinners and live in a kind of spiritual pride. (2) They satisfy for our sins and negligences and so avert temporal punishment from ourselves and others. (3) They merit for us an increase of grace and glory and are a most efficacious addition to the supplication we make for ourselves and others. Thus souls burning with apostolic zeal have frequently used them for this purpose and still use them so, especially when other means of exercising the apostolate are not available or seem to be ineffectual. Thus St. John Vianney is said to have answered a priest who was lamenting that he was accomplishing so little in his parish, by asking whether he had already scourged himself. In contemplative orders, therefore, these exercises are not allowed to lapse into desuetude. (4) They are the works of supererogation recommended to us by our Holy Rule.

(b) In truth, bodily penances are so connected with Christian perfection that without them the Church does not approve heroic virtue. Therefore Benedict XIV writes, "Silence must be imposed on the Cause of a Servant of God, if proofs are lacking that during life he employed due and adequate bodily mortification" (*De Serv. Dei Beatif.*, III, c. 28, n. 18). St. Francis de Sales, however, who so consistently recommended moderation, thinks, "The devil fears us when he learns that we can fast" (*Philothea* 3, 23).

(c) Father Michael of St. Augustine teaches that such penance is especially necessary for Carmelites. "The Carmelite Rule in the 14th chapter *De Armis Spiritualibus* profusely exhorts Carmelites to mortification as absolutely necessary to attain their aim. And indeed, what end do so many fasts serve, so many abstinences, the girdle of chastity, etc., except to teach them to mortify their members here upon earth, and to carry about in their bodies always and everywhere the mortification of Christ? . . . If they will use the means established for them for reaching their final perfection by seeking refuge, as far as possible, in solitude, by keeping silence exactly, by always carrying the mortification of Christ about in their bodies, God will undoubtedly anoint them with the unction of His grace so that they may always be able to walk before Him by faith which is their final perfection" (*Inst. Myst.* 3, tr. 2, c.4). His biographer bears witness that by his example he corroborates his recommendations. (Cf. Ed. Wessels pp. ix. xv). For "if the mortification of the flesh and body is lacking," says Benedict XIV again, "it is very difficult to open the way to contemplation" (ibid. n. 19). Therefore to reject such exercises, or on principle to oppose them, is certainly unlawful. Whosoever would do so, would contradict the whole tradition of the Church and the peculiar spirit of our Order.

III. However, in order that these mortifications may prove salutary and produce good fruit, the following rules must be followed:

(a) They should be considered as means to an end, and not as an end in themselves. Consequently, they should be undertaken, moderated or omitted according to the circumstances and character of each one.

(b) They should be done with true discretion and moderation, taking into account state, age, corporal and spiritual strength, work or office, degree of spiritual life and the like. The author just quoted gives special warning to the novices not to be misled by immature fervor and to overstep the right measure. "When they notice in themselves an indiscreet fervor and vehement desires for some singular way of life, howsoever sublime, which might greatly weaken the body, they should be convinced that, with Christ, they are being tempted on the pinnacle of the temple, to cast themselves down; and so let them also imitate Christ in the manner of conquering such a temptation, saying, 'It is written: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,; i. e., that shalt do nothing beyond reason and the average; thou shalt not choose any mode of life in which, according to the usual course of nature, thou canst not remain or persevere without a miracle; for

this is to tempt God" (*Inst. Myst.* 2, tr. 2, c. 13). Therefore, for notable practices, the judgment of one's director or superior should be obtained. However, discretion should never reach such a degree as to reject such exercises on principle. If we are not allowed to do much, we should do at least the little. If one, for instance, is unable to bear great fasts, let him abstain from less necessary things, abstinence from which will not only injure his health, but rather greatly help it. Such abstinence is always becoming to religious on account of poverty.

(c) The individual practices should be alternated; in this way danger to health is avoided. Neverthless, we should always have some practice, at least while our health is sound, in order that the spirit of penance and austerity may not grow cold. We must persevere to the end. For many begin with great fervor and afterward drop everything. They resolve to do many things, but they bring nothing to completion.

(d) They should always be done with a pure intention, and never from malicious emulation or ambition. If pride appears, it should be suppressed; but the exercises themselves should not be omitted (at least not habitually) on account of such temptation.

(e) As we have already said, those prescribed by the Rule itself or the Constitutions, should always be practised, unless a sufficient reason excuses. For such is God's will, and we bound ourselves to practise them when we entered the Order. Furthermore, "if anyone should do more, the Lord on His return will repay him" (Rule XVIII).

146. Passive Abnegation

I. Passive abnegation, we have said, is the abnegation imposed upon us by God. If one can be excused from active abnegation, at least insofar as it consists in penitential exercises, he certainly cannot be excused from passive abnegation, since God Himself selects and arranges it for us.

(a) Passive abnegation is necessary for us:

(1) because we do not not sufficiently recognize our defects, or know impending dangers, or future responsibilities, and so we cannot train ourselves or prepare ourselves sufficiently. Only God, Who searches hearts and reins, and knows our future as He knows the past, can do this. God, therefore, must lead us and train us;

(2) because we have not enough courage to bring our knowledge to ultimate practical conclusions. For we are usually too timid and

do not dare to use enough force and so form a thousand and one excuses. We are like children who would prefer to remain untaught rather than go to school. But like these children, even though unwilling, we must be forced to school, to be instructed and trained. No one surely leaves children to train themselves. Therefore, God also, our Father and Master, instructs and trains us by passive abnegation. He does this the more vigorously, the higher He intends to raise us.

(b) This passive abnegation consists in accepting everything which God imposes upon us or permits to happen to us contrary to our inclinations and desires. For it is never allowed to contradict or resist God. We must humbly and gratefully accept from His hands both good and evil, because "to them that love God, all things work together unto good" (Rom. 8, 28). The following especially pertain to this abnegation:

(1) Corporal pains and illnesses; (2) the inconveniences of the seasons and weather; cold, heat, dampness, drought, etc.; (3) poverty, scarcity of food or of the conveniences of life; (4) sufferings of soul, such as temptations, scruples, aridities, derelictions; (5) unjust judgments of men, hatred and envy, persecutions, ingratitude, and in general the shortcomings and vices of those with whom we must live; (6) unsuccessful, frequently interrupted and exceedingly difficult labors, the natural consequences of our sins and mistakes; (7) in general, everything by which we are afflicted or humiliated or tempted to lament and murmur, also difficulty of obedience and community life.

II. What must we do when such things have happened to us?

(a) Before all, we must recognize and acknowledge God's Providence in these matters realizing that nothing happens to us without God's knowledge or permission. We must repeat to ourselves, "Behold the finger of God!"

(b) We must resign ourselves to God's will and disposition so as to accept such trials from God's hands with tranquil and grateful spirit.

(c) We must convince ourselves that such a trial is so much more necessary and salutary for us, the greater the pain is with which we are afflicted; e.g., when by obedience we are forced to change our favorite occupation or even our exercises of piety, or when we are sent to another house. Then we must accept these things with their consequences and effects. It is not allowed to resist or murmur either because of one or the other circumstance or for a private reason. We should accept the trial in its entirety, as a healing draught cannot be

rejected because of its color or bitterness; not even because of its high cost.

(d) We must try to understand God's plans well and to adapt ourselves perfectly to the accomplishment of His purpose. It may be that God intends to warn us to avoid certain dangers; to walk more cautiously; to perform our work more diligently, that trusting ourselves less, we may give more emphasis to prayer; to forsake a certain spiritual pride; to a greater practice of fraternal charity. We must not understand resignation to mean that we simply accept the disagreeable without caring for our correction or amendment. Holy resignation is not merely passive or fatalistic, but is active in the sense explained.

(e) We should refrain from trying to correct Providence by any effort of our own, by unlawful or imperfect means, e.g., by subterfuges or deceptions against obedience, by violations of poverty against the sacrifices of community life, by injustice or revenge against an injury inflicted, by lying to obtain greater success in our work, or to hide failure, etc. This is not subjection to Divine Providence or self-denial, but rebellion and approval of our vices. In acting so, we shall not be cured by the remedy offered us by God, but we only strike ourselves and cast ourselves into more cruel illnesses. We are not going forward, but backward. May we never act so imprudently, but may God's will be done for our benefit!

147. The Teachings and Examples of Carmelite Saints

Although we have frequently mentioned the teaching of our Carmelite Saints and have praised their astonishing examples, nevertheless, we shall add a few more of their teachings and examples in order that we may better recognize the genuine spirit of Carmel.

None of us is ignorant of the greatness of the love of the cross to which St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa and St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi have risen. Their mottoes "To suffer and to be despised for Thee," "To suffer or to die," "Not to die, but to suffer," are on the tongues of all. Their lives show that they were nourished by many exterior and interior sufferings. But others also, to speak of only more recent ones, e.g., Brother John of St. Samson who was blind all his life, yet who passed through both the night of the senses and of the soul; Father Dominic of St. Albert, who in childlike candor describes his corporal and spiritual sufferings to the foregoing Brother John of St. Samson, his spiritual master; Father Michael de la Fuente, Venerable Angelus Paoli, Father Philip Thibault, etc., all without exception continually hungered after active mortifi-

cation and magnanimously suffered the many afflictions sent by the Lord, and in so doing made wonderful advancement in holiness (Cf. *Anal.* I, 160ff.; VI, 246. 261; VII, 56).

(2) Because of the salutary fruits derived from their mortifications they also teach us what they have experienced. Thus St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi insists: "Always oppose yourselves by continuous mortification of your passions and inclinations." She also taught the Sisters: "Grieve and consider that day lost on which you have not sometimes overcome yourself" (AA. SS. May 5, p. 673, n.105).

Brother John of St. Samson sets forth that "a religious will never taste the delicious manna which no one knows except him who receives it, if he does not perfectly overcome himself unto death" and "for no other reason have our rules been given to us by God and man than that we may fight against ourselves and destroy in us the animal and carnal man." In fact, he does not hesitate to assert, "a Carmelite religious cannot be a saint without contemplation, even though his life and deeds are holy. This however cannot be without prayer and the denial of the passions and human affections" (*Theoremata,* p. 33f). He likewise appeals to the example of our Lord. "We are invited," he says in his treatise *De Tribulatione,* "we are begged and strongly aroused to seek sweet crosses and crucifixions by the keen and forceful insistence of our Savior, Who not only arouses us to them by what He has suffered for us, but also compels us with such power and necessity, with such sweet, loving, interior liberty that we desire, love and accept nothing so lovingly and tenderly as the cross and sufferings" (*Opera,* 803).

(3) St. John of the Cross summarizes his own doctrine as well as that of all Carmelite Saints in the following sentences, promising that if we faithfully execute them, they will produce excellent virtues and merits in us.

"Strive* always to choose not that which is easiest, but that which is most difficult; not that which is most delectable, but that which is most unpleasing; not that which gives most pleasure, but rather that which gives least; not that which is restful, but that which is wearisome; not that which gives consolation, but rather that which gives desolation; not that which is greatest, but that which is least; not that which is loftiest and most precious, but that which is lowest and despised; not that which is a desire for anything, but that which is a desire for nothing; strive not to go about seeking the best of temporal things, but the worst. Strive thus to desire to enter into

*—Translation by Prof. Peers.

complete detachment and emptiness and poverty with respect to the things of this world for Christ's sake" (*Ascent of Mount Carmel,* I, 13).

To this we add those lines by which he explains his picture of the "Holy Mount." They are brief but forceful and contain his whole doctrine for reaching the highest degree of union. In the chapter just quoted he repeats them with some few changes.

How to reach the "All."

"In* order to arrive at that which thou dost not know,
Thou must go through that which thou dost not know.
In order to arrive at that wherein thou hast no pleasure,
Thou must go by a way wherein thou hast no pleasure.
In order to arrive at that which thou possessest not,
Thou must go by a way that thou possessest not.
In order to arrive at that which thou art not,
Thou must go through that which thou art not."

How to possess the "All."

"In order to arrive at knowing everything,
Desire to know nothing.
In order to have pleasure in everything,
Desire to have pleasure in nothing.
In order to arrive at possessing everything,
Desire to possess nothing.
In order to arrive at being everything,
Desire to be nothing."

How not to hinder the "All."

"When thou thinkest upon anything,
Thou ceasest to cast thyself upon the All.
For, in order to pass from the all to the All,
Thou hast to deny thyself wholly in All.
And, when thou comest to possess It wholly,
Thou must possess It without desiring anything.
For, if thou wilt have anything in the All,
Thou hast not thy treasure purely in God."

Indications that we possess the "All."

"In this detachment the spiritual soul finds its quiet and repose; for, since it covets nothing, nothing wearies it when it is lifted up, and nothing oppresses it when it is cast down, for it is in the center of its humility; since, when it covets anything, at that very moment it becomes wearied."

*—Translation of Prof. Peers.

Without doubt all this is most sublime and transcends our grasp. But so much we have understood: that if we wish to ascend the height of Carmel, we must earnestly cultivate abnegation. At least we must make the effort as far as we are able.

(4) Such is the school of Christ, who emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, and Who became obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross (Cf. Phil. 2, 7. 8).

Such also is the school of our sweetest Mother, who having become the faithful handmaid of the Lord stood beneath the Cross of Jesus.

If we attend this school, we shall learn the highest wisdom, which is to leave all things, even oneself, for the Lord and Creator of all.

148. Spiritual Direction

I. (a) We have called attention on several occasions to the need of consulting our spiritual director. In matters of such importance as our spiritual life and our spiritual progress, no one should trust himself, since no one is a judge of his own case. Especially in the spiritual life is the sacred proverb true, "There is a way which seemeth just to a man, but the ends thereof lead to death" (Prov. 14, 12). For the way is steep, our nature crafty, and the devil goes about seeking whom he may devour. Not only beginners stand in need of counsel and direction, but also the advanced and the perfect: indeed, these last especially, in order that they may not be deceived or fall into the snares of the "old serpent."

(b) Moreover, history testifies that Providence usually arranges to have men directed by men. Indeed, Saul, struck down and receiving his vocation from Heaven, is taught by Ananias what he must do (Cf. Acts 9, 10ff.). Cornelius is told to summon St. Peter, although He who had first spoken to them could have doubtlessly revealed further directions, but He did not wish to do so, except through men chosen by Himself. Exceptions prove the rule.

(c) The Saints freely sought and received direction. St. Theresa is an example. Even though gifted with great mystical graces, with divine locutions and visions, she was unwilling to do or undertake anything without the counsel of her superior or director. Brother John of St. Samson did not refuse to make a second novitiate under his own disciple, even though he had already experienced most sublime favors. We cannot read without emotion with what sincerity and humility Father Dominic of St. Albert, even though a priest and professor of theology, was accustomed to disclose his interior

state and seek advice from the lay-brother by whom he had been introduced into the interior life (Cf. *Anal.* VIII, 266ff.).

(d) There is no doubt that such humility produces excellent fruits by obtaining heavenly blessings; whereas the proud who imagine themselves self-sufficient, and who, relying on their own powers presume to enter the way of perfection, fall into the snares of the devil, (God Himself resisting them), and sooner or later stray from the right path. No one should hope to be led by God by means of extraordinary illuminations.

II. (a) It is true that special direction is not ordinarily as necessary for religious as for those who live in the world. Religious have their rules and their superiors. Their time is well distributed by their daily schedule, and prayer and work are properly limited. We have already commented upon this great blessing elsewhere (no. 48). We should not however consider our superiors merely as administrators of the goods and affairs of the monastery; they are our pastors and directors in the spiritual life. If we listen to them, we shall not need angels or revelations.

(b) It is true that in order to forestall abuses, the Church has today established that "All religious superiors are strictly forbidden to induce in any way the persons subject to them to make a manifestation of conscience to them" (Can. 530, n. 1); "still subjects are not forbidden to open their souls to their superiors freely and of their own accord; in fact, it is fitting that they approach their Superiors with filial trust, and also if they are priests, disclose to them the doubts and anxieties of their conscience" (Can. 530, n. 2).

(c) We should never forget that we must render obedience to our superiors by divine will, and that this is obedience in the strict sense; whereas obedience to our spiritual director is in itself free, and only in a wider sense can it be called obedience. Therefore the superior can give a strict command, but the director can only advise and urge. The director can never countermand the orders of superiors or dispense from the rules; nor has he authority to grant permissions, e.g., regarding the vow of poverty, a matter which belongs solely to superiors. In fact, it is the duty of the spiritual director, if he wishes to perform his office rightly, to insist upon perfect obedience to legitimate superiors and upon a strict observance of rules. If he does otherwise he is not a leader (*ductor*), but a seducer (*seductor*).

III. (a) Nevertheless, if it is possible to choose a special director, it will pay to do so. Indeed, it is sometimes necessary to choose one,

especially when the higher ways of spirituality are concerned and special discernment of spirits is necessary. He need not necessarily be the confessor, although it would be better, when possible, that the confessor be chosen as director. The following counsels are usually given.

(1) Since it is of great importance to find a good director, our choice should be made with discretion and God's grace should be asked. "The soul that wishes to advance in recollection and perfection," says St. John of the Cross, "must carefully consider to whom it entrusts itself; for the pupil will be as his master; the son, as the father" (*The Living Flame of Love,* III, 3, n. 4). In choosing a director we must be led entirely by a right and pure intention, considering only our spiritual progress. We should choose a director who is a lover of prayer and mortification and who excels in sufficient knowledge and experience in the spiritual life. Since in our Order we are especially called to cultivate prayer, our director should undoubtedly know the ways and methods of interior prayer.

(2) After the director we have chosen has undertaken to guide us, we should have great confidence in him and, as far as we can, we should open our souls to him. We should reveal to him not only our sins, but also their causes, occasions, motives and temptations; likewise our inclinations and habits, good and bad; our way of praying with the difficulties we experience in it, or the graces and consolations we enjoy; our way of making the particular examen and its matter; mortifications and penances which we are accustomed to undertake; our private devotions; our work and our duties, and in general everything by which he may know us better or which he may inquire of us. It is not allowed to hide anything from him whether it is good or evil, even though we are greatly embarrassed and our nature rebels. Otherwise, our director cannot rightly direct us. It is clear that all this need not be done in each confession, but only at certain intervals or when a special occasion renders it advisable.

(3) We should humbly, gratefully, promptly, and obediently hear and accept what he advises or enjoins on us, even correction and scoldings. We should obey as far as we are able. Unless we do so, direction will not attain its end, and will be deprived of its fruit.

(4) However, we cannot leave everything to our director. We ourselves must also employ reason and deliberation in our actions and omissions, and assume final responsibility. Before all else, however, we should, as we have warned, carry out our Rules, Constitutions and the orders of our Superiors. We should not neglect to pray

earnestly for our director that he may be able to perform his office rightly, and properly in our regard. Likewise, we should observe silence concerning all things he says to us.

(5) The director should not easily be changed. If, however, prudence and our advantage demand it, there is no reason why we should not change. And if by necessity or obedience, e.g., when we are sent to another monastery or our director himself is transferred, we are deprived of our director, we should also recognize God's finger in this and subject ourselves to the divine will without murmuring. God will provide for us again.

(b) It is evident that for novices their ordinary director *ex officio* is the master of novices himself, to whose direction they should commit themselves with full confidence; and for the professed clerics, making due allowances, their prefect. For by Divine Providence itself, masters are appointed for them for this purpose. They should, therefore, see in him not a superior, but a spiritual father from whom they may rightly and justly expect their spiritual advancement.

IV. (a) If it is not possible for us to find a suitable director, we should not become discouraged. For if we follow our Constitutions and the orders of our superiors, we shall be quite secure about our salvation and our spiritual progress, and God will provide the rest. The masters of the spiritual life usually dissuade direction by correspondence on account of many inconveniences.

(b) We should try to supply the lack of direction by spiritual reading.

(c) We use this occasion to recommend spiritual conversations, especially with our brethren. By the testimony of experience, they greatly excite fervor, correct errors, banish difficulties and strengthen the soul. Frequently they accomplish more for us than sermons or spiritual readings. Engaged in them we should rather listen than talk, and should beware lest seduced by vain glory, we do not so much try to learn as to preach to others, and to make known our knowledge of spiritual things or graces obtained from God. Beginners are usually very much inclined to this; they wish to be teachers before they have been pupils.

149. Perfect Purity of Heart

I. At the end of this section we again give an admonition concerning the acquisition of purity of heart, lest this purity be taken too superficially. "Perhaps some one will say," says our Father Michael of St. Augustine, "I feel sure I have a pure conscience, because I

cleanse it frequently by the Blood of Christ in the Sacrament of Penance, and every day by Holy Communion. I am glad that you are clean, that you are washed; but listen to Christ saying to the Prince of the Apostles, 'He that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet' (John 13, 10), i.e., he who is free from sin must strive to cleanse also his affections (for by these the soul goes, as it were upon its feet, wherever it wishes) by the water of salutary wisdom. Therefore, he must struggle to free the tendencies of his soul from everything transitory and to direct them to tend always and directly toward God and to those things which are God's or which lead to God" (*Inst. Myst.* 3, tr. 1, c.39).

(2) In the following serious words he explains more fully "in what the purity of heart peculiar to Carmelites consists": "Do you wish to know in what perfect purity of heart consists and how you may successfully attain it? Before all, it consists in this, that nothing enters or leaves your heart except what is deiform or that leads to God. Likewise in this, that you seek, aim at, and find and love only God, and that you possess only Him in the intimacy of your soul and that you hold Him fast, restraining all the powers of your soul and of your senses in the bonds of continuous mortification; finally, in this, that you indignantly reject all vain and useless things which knock at the door of your heart. This purity of heart also demands that you withhold yourselves from everything that is useless and does not lead to God, always and everywhere searching what is the good, the approved and the perfect will of God; likewise, that you cut away all empty occupations of the intellect, restraining all the faculties and senses of your soul, memory, will, imagination, sensitive appetite, etc. In this way you will be able to escape every flight of the mind and keep your heart fixed on God alone by pious affections and by fervent aspirations, clinging to Him in simple faith and unfeigned charity. This purity of heart demands that you conduct yourselves in this world as strangers and pilgrims, desiring nothing that is in it; in fact, behaving as though you were alone in the world before God and with God. You will not attract any person to yourself, and you will not care for anything outside of God or which is not like God, just as though nothing existed except God and you. In fact, you will not take note of yourselves outside of God or in what is not like to God. In a word, perfect purity of heart consists in a total emptying and rejection of every affection for any creature, even of thoughts about creatures (insofar as this affection and these thoughts are not in conformity with the divine approval) and in a sincere

union of the heart with God alone" (*Introd. in terram Carmeli,* I, 32).

(3) This purity of heart, therefore, has two phases: freeing ourselves from sin and from every inordinate affection to creatures, and this part is negative; and, a sincere and entire clinging of the heart to God alone, and this part is positive.

We have treated of the former; we shall now speak of the latter. In the meanwhile, let us persevere with the Psalmist in prayer from the depth of our soul, "Create a clean heart in me, O God; and renew a right spirit within my bowels" (Ps. 50, 12).

PART FOUR

THE CARMELITE LIFE
THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

150. Foreword

1. The study of the primary purpose of our Carmelite life is now completed. We have seen that the primary purpose is "to offer God our hearts, holy and free from every stain of actual sin" and "to attain this end with the help of divine grace and by our own labors and works of virtue." We must now, therefore, go on to treat of the other purpose of our life, which is "to taste in our hearts and to experience in our minds not only after death, but in some measure, even in this mortal life, the power of God's presence and the sweetness of supernal glory" (*Institutio primorum monachorum,* c. 2). Although the attainment of this end, in the fullest sense, does not depend upon our own activities but is granted to us as a free gift of God, nevertheless, we in our turn must co-operate in achieving it and in further preparing our souls for it, by occupying ourselves with God and by uniting ourselves to Him as much as possible. This union should be not only habitual by means of God's sanctifying grace, but also *actual* by the practice of the theological virtues, that is, by the application of the soul to both oral and mental prayer.

2. We have repeatedly taught that it is impossible to be united to God, or to be occupied with Him in meditation and contemplation, unless we also give ourselves to the task of purifying our hearts. On the other hand, it is likewise true that perfect purity of heart cannot be acquired, unless at certain times we be wholly occupied with God by prayer. In fact, this occupation with God is a most efficacious means to attain perfect purity of heart, for purity of heart can come only from God. It is God Who creates a clean heart within us and renews a right spirit within our bowels (Cf. Ps. 50, 12). Contact and intimacy with Sanctity itself cannot fail to purify our hearts and we cannot taste the sweetness of God without disgust for creatures arising within us. Hence St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi teaches, "Prayer is the short-cut to the attainment of perfection, because in prayer God nourishes the soul, and by prayer, the soul is set free from created things and unites itself to Him" (*Avvertimenti,* c. 13, n. 1).

These two things, the purification of the heart and occupation with God, must be done together. We do not progress in the one without also progressing in the other. This is the teaching of Father Daniel of the Virgin Mary, "St. Augustine teaches us (*Sermo 225 de tempore*) that just as in Solomon's temple, two altars were erected: one within the Holy of Holies where the incense of thyme prepared from sweet-smelling herbs was offered, and another outside where the

sacrifice of animals was performed, so also in us there must be erected two altars, one in our hearts where we send up the sweet incense of prayer, and another in our bodies, which is mortification. These two, prayer and mortification, are to be united and to help each other like two sisters. Mortification is an absolutely necessary preparation for prayer and prayer is the means to the attainment of perfect mortification" (*Ars Artium* I,3). Hence the novices should be taught these two things simultaneously, although here we are compelled to treat them separately.

3. All should be on their guard, however, not to consider this occupation with God merely as a means to root out vices or to acquire virtues, because it has its greatest value quite independently of this effect. The spirit of prayer is the more important part in the make-up of the true Carmelite, even after the Order has passed to the active life and the external apostolate. Not without good reason has Father Dominic of St. Albert given the warning, "It is of the utmost importance that one who approaches the practice of prayer for the first time should know well the end towards which this holy exercise tends. He should not apply himself to it as to other works of mortification and virtue, or merely as to a means by which we become pleasing to God. Rather he should undertake it as that in which the fullness of our life consists. For prayer, to which we intend to dedicate ourselves, may be defined as the interior intercourse and occupation of our soul with God" (*Anal.* VIII, 296f.).

4. According to the same holy author, this is but the logical conclusion that we derive from a consideration of the religious state, especially in Carmel. "It is necessary," he says, "now that we have been freed from the bonds of earth by the three vows, that we should strive to join and unite our souls intimately to God, not only by the habitual union which is found in the state of grace, but also by an active and continual striving after God by the interior operations of knowledge and love." He summarizes all this succinctly in the maxim, "We should be with God in thought and desire" (ibid. 205f).

The more deeply the novices impress this upon their minds from the very beginning, the more perfect Carmelites will they become. They should, of course, learn with intense zeal the things we have explained in the preceding sections; but, the things which are now to be taught they should study with even greater fervor, so that they may imbibe the true spirit of Carmel, "and afterwards become lovers of the interior life and, according as God grants to each, practise it as the Rule directs" (Const. 326). The novices should be thoroughly con-

vinced that this is the art of arts and that by it they will taste the fruit of Carmel and the very best thereof (Cf. Jer. 2, 7).

5. Let them not be discouraged by the difficulties which will necessarily confront them in this way of life. If they but continue to strive, they will, with the help of divine grace, conquer all obstacles, and having overcome them, they will begin to taste the sweetness of the Lord. After that, all things, even privations and mortifications, will become sweet to them. Indeed, "to him who sees the Creator, all creatures are trifles" (St. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 2, 35), and we can say with St. Paul, "I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4, 13). Furthermore, this interior spirit is not the result of great talents, but of an ardent and loving soul. Love God and you have already found Him.

6. Hence in this section, we shall first explain the conditions necessary for occupation with God, for, without them we shall never really and successfully achieve our goal. We will not speak explicitly of the necessity of sanctifying grace because all can easily see that this is presumed in those who set out to sing God's praises and to meditate on His perfections and truths. Indeed, how can devotion to God be reconciled with the state of mortal sin, which is really hatred of God? For the very purpose of our communing with God is to be more and more united with Him and being thus united to find our happiness in Him.

After explaining these conditions, we shall explain the whole subject of prayer in which occupation with God finds it fullest expression.

Since, however, we cannot be always occupied in prayer alone, we shall attempt to show that even though "we are occupied in other just engagements," interior union with God is not only not dissolved thereby but is strengthened and re-enforced, and ever greater fruit is derived from the works themselves.

CHAPTER ONE

The Necessary Conditions for Prayer

151. Love of Solitude

I. In the past all masters of the spiritual life stressed the fact that the most important prerequisite for prayer is solitude. Thus St. Gregory writes "His (God's) servants, cut off from worldly activities, do not even know how to speak idly. They avoid the habit of distracting and sullying the mind with words, and they speak to the Author of life rather than to creatures. By this singleness and simplicity of thought they come to resemble Him as far as possible, attaining a certain similarity to Him even in this life. But we, because of mingling with ordinary men, often speak idle and sometimes gravely sinful words; in proportion as our speech draws close to this world, it departs from God. We debase ourselves more and more when, by constant speaking, we fraternize with the world" (*Dialogues* 3, 15).

Hence the author of the *Institutio primorum monachorum* exhorts us, "If, therefore, my son, you wish to be perfect and attain the end of the monastic eremitical life, and there drink from the torrent, hide thyself near the torrent Carith (as did St. Elias the Prophet), cultivate silence in that hidden solitude. Knowing your weakness and the frailty of the vessel you carry, fear to stumble in the city lest you collide with the crowd, fall and be shattered. Dwell in solitude, therefore, and observe silence, for it is good for man to seek the salvation of God in silence" (Chap. 5; cf. *Anal.* III, 353).

Indeed, even though our Holy Rule has been modified, it supposes that solitary places are to be preferred, and it strictly commands, "All shall remain in their cells" (VII). This precept was mitigated by Eugene IV, or rather it would be better to say that it was merely explained by him, when he decreed that at the proper time we may legitimately and with perfect freedom gather in our churches and cloisters and in their immediate surroundings, and walk about in them. The general rule, therefore, of remaining in the solitude of our cells is not abolished. Even down to our own day, the Constitutions express the desire that in every Province in which it can be done there should be established an eremitical monastery, so that that part of the spirit of our Order, which was formerly the only part and is still the most important, namely, the pursuit of divine contemplation and the love of holy solitude, may unceasingly flourish amongst us (Cf. Art. 112).

This insistence on the necessity of solitude is not surprising when we consider the fact that all holy men who have striven after perfection, have always sought holy solitude with utmost zeal and have separated themselves from the ordinary pursuits of men. In fact, even those who were engaged in the active apostolate have either received their call to the active life in the quiet of solitude, or have there prepared themselves for the work that God called them to do. Our Lord set the example when he remained hidden in his home in Nazareth for thirty years and when he buried himself in the desert for forty days before beginning his public life, in order to give Himself wholly to His heavenly Father.

Hence, the *Directoires* that we formerly used, cite the words of Scripture, "Go, my people, enter into thy chambers, shut thy doors behind thee, hide thyself a little for a moment" (Isa. 26, 20). The *Directoires* caution us, "If our religious follow this teaching, they will most effectually be separating themselves from the world and living in solitude, for this is one of the principal means which our Holy Rule offers for the attainment of perfection and union with God (III, *de Actionibus,* cap. 5).

Our blind mystic, Brother John of St. Samson, whom God endowed with the highest degree of contemplation, was an extremely zealous upholder of the doctrine of solitude. He does not hesitate to write, "No life is more blessed than that which is truly solitary and cut off from worldly affairs and anxieties. This is the life of true happiness in which God gives Himself wholly to the creature, and the creature gives itself wholly to God by an intimate union and bond of heart and soul" (*Theoremata,* p. 106; cf. *Anal.* VIII, 34ff.).

Father Dominic of St. Albert was deeply filled with this teaching of his master and he discovered such graces and sweetness in solitude that he hoped he would never have to leave it. He declared that he was willing to endure even imprisonment if thereby he might be permitted to be continually occupied with God in holy contemplation (Cf. *Anal.* VIII, 274). Likewise, it is related of St. Angelus the Martyr, that he lived in absolute solitude for five years. No less remarkable was the conduct of St. Simon Stock, who, as a boy, following the example of John the Baptist, hid himself in solitude in order that he might give himself to the contemplation of divine truths. The magnificent work done afterwards by these men is known to us all. Father Michael de la Fuente, who was above all a truly apostolic man, "frequently used to seclude himself in a country house of the monastery of Toledo situated not far from the city. Free from wit-

nesses, in silence and far removed from disturbances, he would remove all restraint and unfold the wings of his soul to the seraphic bursts of love which burned within him so that he seemed to be transformed from a man into one of heaven's seraphim" (*Anal.* VI, 259).

II. In order that the religious may be more surely drawn to love the solitude of their cells, the above mentioned *Directoires* place before their eyes the following motives:

First, solitude is the divine school, in which the Holy Spirit teaches the soul of him who is willing to remain in it, for as Holy Scripture tells us, "I will lead her into a place of solitude and speak to her heart" (Osee 2, 14). Indeed, this voice is so gentle and sweet that it is not heard in the tumult and distractions of many occupations.

Secondly, in solitude our religious find the fullness of spiritual delights and treasures of incomparable sweetness. St. Bernard calls it "the store-house of all good things" for religious who love it. It is true that in the beginning solitude is somewhat irksome to nature, but if a person does violence to himself, he will gradually learn to enjoy its sweetness; and the *Imitation of Christ* affirms, "Thy cell if thou continue in it, grows sweet, but if thou keep not to it, it becomes tedious and distasteful" (1, 20). Similarly Brother John of St. Samson affirms, "Although solitude is necessary for all, it is, however, of special value only for the proficient; and only for the perfect is it enjoyable and delightful. The fullness of its blessedness is acquired only gradually. Hence, those who come to the service of the Lord receive the divine attentions" (*Opera, Contemplatio* I, p. 389).

Thirdly, the cell is the faithful guardian of innocence and purity of heart. The religious who lives in solitude escapes a thousand imperfections, quarreling, idle words, useless recreation, needless conversation, murmuring, uncharitable words, and other faults, so frequently committed with the eyes, ears and tongue. Only the entrance to the heart remains to be guarded, for only through the heart can the devil now attack the soul. The heart itself is rendered invulnerable by spiritual reading and other exercises of devotion, if only he desires it. Daily experience clearly proves that such is the truth.

III. Considering all the blessings of solitude, the true Carmelite will follow these principles:

(a) He will not want to remain outside the monastery longer than necessary (Cf. Const. 181. 182). Seeking friendships in the world frequenting the homes of seculars, attending shows and worldly entertainments, traveling about, except for some higher purpose or for some real necessity—all these things surely are not compatible with

being occupied with God, and are scarcely in keeping with the Carmelite spirit. If the Carmelite is forced by obedience or necessity to live outside the monastery, he will constantly cherish a desire and love for holy solitude. At all times and places he will conduct himself in such a way as to preserve his internal union with God and thus be able to occupy himself again with God without distraction or restlessness when he returns to his monastery.

(b) Within the monastery, he will love his cell more than any other place, the chapel alone excepted. He will not leave it without necessity or obedience and will quickly return to it when freed from other duties.

(c) In his cell he will not always desire ease and comfort, nor will he apply himself merely to studies; rather he will occupy himself with God in prayer and meditation or in pious reading. This is the primary purpose of the cell. "The solitude of the learned who are on fire with a love of studies, I neither praise nor condemn. But it is not the solitude commanded by our Rule," says Brother John of St. Samson, commenting on the Carmelite Rule and explaining the spirit of our Order (*Opera* p. 59; cf. *Anal.* VIII, 274). Surely our saintly forefathers went to the solitude of Carmel for no other reason than to meditate on the law of the Lord and to watch and pray. However, now that we have taken up the active life, other occupations have become necessary. Brother John of St. Samson, with all his admiration for solitude, admits, "Although it is not so virtuous to live in solitude merely on account of study, nevertheless, study does sanctify solitude, provided it is done well and in the proper way, i. e., purely for the glory of God" (*Opera* p. 1018). It is scarcely becoming for the Carmelite religious to admit a worldly spirit into the solitude of his cell and without necessity spend his time reading profane books and similar things, or to let his mind wander far from his cell in dreams and desires. This is not what we mean by being occupied with God, not even in the broadest sense. Internal solitude must accompany external solitude; that is, besides the external separation, there must also be an interior turning away from creatures and a turning of the soul to God.

The true Carmelite will scrupulously observe all those things which the Constitutions prescribe concerning entering the cells of others (Art. 174), or concerning speaking in the cells (Art. 175). Our religious should not only love and guard the solitude of their own cell, but they should also take care not to disturb the solitude of the rest of the community.

IV. In order that the cell may ever remain consecrated to its primary purpose, the *Directoires* recommend that when the Carmelite religious returns to his cell from some occupation, he should immediately recall its primary purpose and raise his soul to God. He should kneel down and recite this or some similar prayer, "Accept, O Lord, the time which the Order grants me to commune with Thee and myself far from the haunts of men. Give me the grace, that employing this time usefully, I may taste the spiritual joys known to those who are faithful to You. O most glorious Virgin, thou who in the solitude of thy room didst merit to become the Mother of God, ask this grace of Him for me" (ibid.; cf. *Methodus* II, c. 11). Afterwards at set times—at least every hour—he should renew the realization of the presence of God, and in the meantime zealously give his attention to his lawful occupations. Finally, modesty is to be preserved in the cell, "as is fitting a holy place" (Const. 172).

If we act thus, we will rightly and holily enjoy solitude and make ourselves worthy to find God there. And if we find God, what else can we desire?

V. The novices should therefore zealously strive to acquire this invaluable art, thanking God that for at least a year they can occupy themselves solely with Him, freed from all other cares and occupations. They should follow strictly the order of the day laid down by the master and should diligently avoid wasting precious time in idleness and sleep. They should not yield to negligence and inconstancy by continual change of occupation, gazing out the window, or doing unnecessary things for the sole purpose of speeding the tardy hours, and cheering up nature weary of solitude (Cf. Dir. Nov. III, c. 5).

With necessary allowances, the same is true also for the students. For, unless our religious learn before ordination to love solitude and to live in it, they will scarcely do so afterwards, and will never penetrate the depths of the true spirit of Carmel. Rather they will pervert it into a mere external activity. Never, or perhaps on only rare occasions, and then only under compulsion, will they strive to occupy themselves with God. They will despise and contemn Carmel's proudest heritage. He, for whom God alone suffices, loves solitude; but he, who seeks himself and the things of this world, will flee from it, because he will not find in it what he desires (Cf. also *"Vita Carmelitana,"* 1. c. 3, n. 1).

We conclude with the words of the *Directoires* themselves (III, c. 5), which exhort Carmelites to a love of solitude, "Remember that our Order is founded upon the rocks of Carmel and for two thousand

years our forefathers lived the eremitical life with remarkable holiness. If we wish then to be their true sons and imitators, surely we must be filled with a great affection for solitude. Fittingly, therefore, we can quote the words of Isaias the Prophet, 'Look unto the rock whence you are hewn and to the hole of the pit from which you are dug out' " (51, 1).

152. Silence

I. "Silence and solitude are brother and sister, who offer each other a helping hand for their mutual protection," says Brother John of St. Samson (*Theoremata,* p. 28, n. 1). And Father Michael of St. Augustine calls silence "the inseparable companion of solitude" (*Inst. Myst.* III, tr. 2, c. 4).

Indeed, we seek solitude in order to observe silence more easily and perfectly. It is by means of silence that we retain our solitude even outside our cell and in the midst of the crowded world. "Silence is voluntary solitude in the midst of the crowd. Without silence a man wastes himself on external things. Silence constructs 'a desert' within the heart, without which, as the Fathers held, sanctity could not be attained. Silence creates and preserves the atmosphere of the religious house" (Hertling, L., S. J., *Theologia Ascetica,* n. 238).

Our own mystic does not hesitate to affirm, "the virtue of silence is one of the principal means to cure our blindness and the many defects of our intellect" (*Theoremata,* p. 29, n. 10). And Father Michael of St. Augustine thinks that "all must admit that silence is unquestionably necessary for the interior or mystical life" (*Inst. Myst.* III, tr. 3, c. 4; cf. also *Vita Carmelitana,* I, c. 3, n. 2).

Moreover, it seems superfluous for a Carmelite to add anything more when our Holy Rule and the Constitutions speak so very strongly in praising and ordering silence. If the words of the Rule and Constitutions fail to move us, what good will further words do? Hence, from the very beginning of their religious life, our religious should read the chapter on silence over and over again, meditate upon it and impress it deeply upon their memories and in the depths of their souls. They will thus become cultivators of holy silence and lovers of its wonderful fruits. They will learn to cherish the interior life and, with giant strides, will progress along the way of virtue and perfection.

Strict adherence to the rule of silence is the foundation of the whole regular observance. It is the guardian of the genuine Carmelite spirit. For what use is the solitude of the monastery, if silence is not

kept by the dwellers in that solitude? Did not St. Francis de Sales declare that a revival of the love of silence was capable of reforming a monastery?

II. (a) With silence there is acquired also that most difficult of all arts, the art of knowing when to speak and what to say. Just as no one can safely appear in public but he who loves seclusion, so no one can safely speak but he who loves silence (Cf. *Im. Chr.* 1, 20). But conversation with men will do no harm to the religious who, in the solitude and silence of the cloister, has attained interior union with God, and who has learned to weigh and choose his words in accordance with the holy will of God. Hence, "in silence and hope shall your strength be" (Is. 30, 15; cf. *Rule* XVI).

On the other hand, we easily lapse into faults of the tongue by hasty speaking, namely, faults against charity, against humility or against one of the other virtues. Holy Scripture warns us, "In the multitude of words, there shall not want sin: but he that refraineth his lips is most wise" (Prov. 10, 19). We keep the doors closed to prevent thieves from coming in and stealing our belongings; but what is more dear or precious to us than our purity of heart by which we possess God Himself?

(b) For Carmelites, however, this is not the only nor the main reason for silence, although, of course, it is not to be disregarded. As the Apostle says, "If anyone does not offend in word, he is a perfect man" (James 3, 2). For us, the observance of silence, like solitude, has primarily this end in view: to enable us to devote ourselves to God and enjoy interior converse with the One to Whom we have dedicated our lives. For this reason St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, "a true lover of the silence prescribed by the Rule, wished others also to observe it strictly. She used to say that it is impossible for the religious soul that does not enjoy silence to taste of divine things" (*AA.SS.* May 5, p. 743, n. 128).

III. A mere external silence, therefore, does not suffice; there must also be internal silence which according to John of St. Samson is "more excellent than the former" (*Theoremata,* p. 28, n. 4). This internal silence, says Michael of St. Augustine, is the best proximate disposition and preparation for the interior life. It consists in this: that the soul with true loyalty to God quiets and suppresses all agitation and unruly activity of its internal and external senses" (*Inst. Myst.* III, tr. 3, c. 5). For what does it profit us to stress external solitude and silence, if while holding our tongues we allow our passions and desires to wander through the world? What does

it profit us if in the solitude and silence of our cell, we are intent upon things by which the tumult of the world seems to be carried right into our cells?

We should even impose silence upon our hearts by suppressing vain longing. Thus we will be able to be united to God without hindrance; we will hear what He says within us and receive divine graces into our souls because they have been emptied of the desire for earthly pleasures. Far more than the clamor of the world, the clamor of our own passions prevents interior conversation with God. Why are we affected with such weariness in seeking God except that we still foolishly yearn for creatures and the frivolities of the world? Whence come so many distractions in prayer and meditation, except from the fact that we are too solicitous what we shall eat and what we shall drink, and wherewith we shall be clothed and how we shall satisfy the vain desires of our heart? Is this not the reason, why we repeatedly defend the thesis that mortification is most necessary for us?

Consequently, interior silence must be added to external silence in order to help us to avoid distractions and to occupy ourselves with God. However, we must be convinced that we will never acquire interior silence unless we earnestly and continually strive for external silence, just as in turn the latter will beget no difficulty as soon as we have reached a certain degree of internal silence. For then will we also begin to taste the sweetness of God.

IV. With this in mind, the novices will see why it is not permitted to neglect silence or to consider loquaciousness as a small fault. Strict observance of silence is so closely connected with the spirit of Carmel that those who despise it can never be called true Carmelites. Consequently, following the prescription of the Constitutions (Art. 157) real Carmelites should also avoid making noise which might disturb others. Outside the time of absolute silence, when they may and should speak for some good reason, they will try to do so discreetly and in a subdued tone.

A monastery in which loud voices and shouting are heard is not admired and praised by anyone. Out of love and respect for their monastery, therefore, the religious will observe all these admonitions most diligently, so that silence may reign in the cloister and all may more easily occupy themselves with God and be a source of edification to visitors (Cf. examples given in *Vita Carmelitana,* p. 49).

Even when the Carmelite goes out of the house, he should still cultivate and love silence as much as possible and not acquire the habit of talking too much. Otherwise he may quickly lose what he

has acquired in the silence of the cloister, and become a scandal rather than an inspiration and source of edification to lay-people. Therefore, all should avoid wasting time lightly and foolishly in words and conversation which are not religious and certainly are not conducive to edification (Cf. Const. 182). With all their strength they should keep their internal attention directed toward God, and never allow the passions, which were held in check in the monastery, to recover their tyranny over the soul on these occasions.

If we admit that occupation with God is the principal part of our Carmelite life, we certainly should devote our energies to the great work of acquiring the virtue of silence.

153. The Spirit of Prayer

I. Solitude and silence are as it were a body into which a soul must be infused to give life. That soul is the spirit of prayer.

(a) If occupation with God is the more important and the chief part of our Carmelite life, surely it is not enough to recite certain prayers at certain hours when we are obliged to or when we need the grace and help of Almighty God. We should not value any exercise or any other matter above prayer and occupation with God. We ought to pray not under compulsion but with joy and eagerness. To no other work, considered in itself, should we apply ourselves so willingly as to prayer and conversation with God.

(b) We do not deny that it can often happen that nature offers opposition and rather inclines to other less spiritual occupations from which it derives greater enjoyment. Frequent meditation is always an affliction of the flesh (Cf. Eccles. 12, 12), at least in the beginning of the spiritual life, until the soul truly tastes the sweetness of God. But we do not speak here of the tendency of our sense nature but of the desire of the mind and the spirit. In a similar way a person can love God above all things and nevertheless experience within himself a strong desire for objects of sense.

(c) Nevertheless, we ought to impress deeply upon our minds and souls the highest regard for prayer, so that we will not cease from our prayers despite the unwillingness of nature, but will conquer the flesh by the spirit. An ordinary needle will lie as it is placed, but a magnetic needle will always turn to the north. Similarly, he who is filled with the spirit of prayer, preserves an eagerness and love of prayer in the midst of all occupations, and he willingly returns to prayer and occupation with God as soon as he can. When such a person prays he will pray far differently from the one who does it

merely to fulfill an obligation. This is true for all exercises of devotion. As Father Michael of St. Augustine says, all these are impossible and will be lifeless and barren if the spirit of prayer and of elevating one's soul to God is lacking (*Inst. Myst.* III, tr. 3, c. 2).

(d) When we find our joy in prayer, when we love occupation with God and place it above all things, when we are convinced that occupation with God is a wonderful blessing, then we really possess the spirit of prayer. There is no question that in order to be true Carmelites we must be marked by that spirit. A glance at the heritage left us and handed down to us by our holy forefathers assures us of this. Father Dominic of St. Albert, who was filled with the spirit of prayer, was deeply grateful to the spiritual master who first led him to prayer and the interior life (Cf. Anal. VIII, 266). This spirit of prayer must be absorbed by our religious with great avidity. It must be faithfully preserved despite all difficulties and trials.

II. (a) If the novices have a true Carmelite vocation and are given sufficient instruction, they usually give themselves to prayer and meditation with great fervor in the beginning. God usually bestows upon them abundant sensible consolations to draw them more perfectly from the enticements of the world and to make them renounce such enticements more easily. Gradually God diminishes and withdraws these consolations, and aridity and disgust set in.

Then the temptation to shorten the exercises of devotion or to perform them half-heartedly arises, and that such course of action may appear eminently right and reasonable, nature in its craftiness, finds and suggests a hundred and one excuses. Among other things it will tell us that since we have changed to the active life, God calls us rather to studies and to giving sermons and hearing confessions, and therefore, prayer is to be restricted as much as possible. It tells us that this is especially true if we consider that lay-people are usually more edified and pleased by activity and hard work than by a life of prayer. The contemplative life is today considered to be a life of idleness, unprofitable for the world and for men.

Each individual finds additional excuses for himself. Some, for instance, when they despair of making progress in prayer, imagine that they are wasting their time. They think that by working they will accomplish more for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Moreover, they conclude it is wrong to hide one's talents, and so on.

(b) Against these insinuations and temptations we must firmly maintain:

1. If occupation with God is really the more important and the

chief feature of the Carmelite life, as the Rule and Constitutions clearly teach, then indeed Carmelites should give their best efforts to it and regard it as their highest vocation, both in theory and in practice.

2. If we are really called to Carmel, it seems reasonable that we should feel within ourselves a certain inclination and love for prayer. This is true even if we are not destined for the highest degrees of contemplation. Therefore, difficulties should not stand in our way. We should strive to overcome them all the more. In fact, we should understand that we shall have to pass through dark nights only to learn how to pray more perfectly and thus to be elevated to higher things.

3. This occupation with God becomes profitable not only for Carmelites themselves who are doing the praying, but also for the whole world. Moreover, it gives great honor and glory to God. This is borne out in the lives of our great mystics: St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa, St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, John of St. Samson and numerous other Carmelites. Does not the great zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls which we admire in the lives of our holy Father Elias and other Carmelites come from the depths of contemplation? Therefore, the more faithfully Carmel adheres to its primitive vocation in the practice of prayer and mortification, the greater and the more glorious things it will achieve for the world.

4. If we wish to live rightly and fulfill the holy will of God, we cannot conform to the judgment of the world or seek its applause. The world condemned and crucified even the King of Glory and the Teacher of all truth. Only God's will should be considered.

III. (a) Carmelites should often meditate upon these all-important words of our Constitutions, "It must first of all be deeply impressed upon our minds that prayer is the very soul of the religious; if prayer fails, the soul of the religious fails; if prayer is strong, the soul grows strong. Indeed, this is so true in our holy Order that we declare, the principal and primary end of our Order is prayer and contemplation" (Art. 148).

Commenting on these words, Father Michael of St. Augustine says, "What is most dear to a man? Does he not love his own soul more than anything else? Likewise, since the prayer of the Carmelite, precisely because he is a Carmelite, must be his very soul, what should be dearer to him and what more loved than the exercise of prayer,—of earnest occupation with God? This soul is what gives him the grace of living in God; it must be the source of all his spiritual

activity, the origin and support of all virtues; in a word, it must be the root of the perfect interior life, just as our soul is the principle and source of bodily life and of our vital operations. It is for this reason that our Constitutions, explaining what is meant by prayer as the soul of the religious, add, 'if it fails, the religious fails; and if it thrives, the religious thrives' " (*Introductio in terram Carmeli,* tr. 3, c. 2; cf. *Inst. Myst.* II, tr. 3, c. 2).

(b) Therefore, our religious should insistently and perseveringly ask God for this spirit of prayer. Having acquired it, they should preserve it. With great fervor they should foster it and give their best efforts to it. It should be fostered not by excessive emphasis on vocal prayer, but rather by thoroughly learning mental prayer and by diligently practising the presence of God. Thus they will taste and see how sweet the Lord is and they will be all the more drawn to occupation with God. If they encounter difficulties they will suffer them patiently, for, as we said above, such things are necessary in order that we may absorb the spirit of prayer more profoundly.

CHAPTER TWO

IN LEGE DOMINI MEDITANTES

154. Foreword

1. We have seen that the principal part of our life is occupation with God. Now let us inquire more precisely in what this occupation with God consists, and discover why we have hidden ourselves in the solitude and silence of Carmel. Our Holy Rule itself gives the answer when it bids Carmelites "remain in their cells, meditating day and night on the Law of the Lord, being watchful in prayer, unless engaged in some other lawful occupations" (VII).

First, therefore, we must "meditate upon the Law of the Lord," that is, we must be filled with divine truths by reading, meditation, contemplation and other exercises of this kind. The purpose of this is not only to understand these truths more thoroughly, but also to embrace and relish them with all our heart and soul, and thus to live in them and by them according to the teaching of St. Paul, "The just man liveth by faith" (Rom. 1, 17).

Secondly, "we are to be watchful in prayer," that is, to sing the praises of God in the Divine Office and to converse with Him in private prayers and devotions.

Thirdly, we must learn how to live always and everywhere in actual union with God, that is, how to walk in His presence and to speak with Him in the intimacy of our hearts, and in this way to pray always and not to grow faint.

Finally, we must prepare ourselves to perform properly the various occupations which are absolutely necessary for life and which cannot be neglected even in a strictly contemplative monastery, as also other occupations imposed upon us by the active life. We must apply ourselves to these tasks in such a way that they become a kind of continuation of our prayers. In this way we will keep the more important and chief feature of our life intact.

After explaining these things, we shall add a section on the mystical life proper, in order to see what the *Institutio* means when it says, "The other purpose of this life is given to us as a free gift of God; namely, to taste in our hearts and to experience in our minds not only after death, but in some measure even in this mortal life, the power of God's presence and the sweetness of supernal glory" (*Anal.* III, 348). Thus we shall have some idea of how bountiful God is toward those who die to themselves with unselfish generosity and zealously occupy themselves with Him. Consider the glorious examples that we have in our holy Order: the Doctor of Mysticism, St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, St. Theresa and numerous other mystics whom we can call our brothers and sisters.

II. With these introductory remarks we shall now set forth a few fundamental considerations which are necessary in order to understand more easily and more fully the things that are to follow:

(a) Prayer in general may be defined as "the elevation of the soul to God." It is, therefore, not merely an act of the intellect—for them it would be just a study of God and divine things—but it is an act of both intellect and will, i. e., of the whole interior man. Real and perfect prayer involves the exercise of the virtues of faith, hope and charity. The more it is built upon these virtues, the more perfect and efficacious it is. Good prayer, therefore, is the result of union with God and leads to even greater union with Him.

(b) The ordinary and best-known division of prayer is into vocal and mental or interior prayer. As the words signify, the former is that which is uttered by the mouth or voice, while the latter in itself exists only in the mind. This is not to say that in vocal prayer the mind does not have a very necessary part; otherwise it would not be an elevation of the soul to God, but merely a physical exercise. This does not exclude the formation and expression of some oral prayers during mental prayer.

The true relation between the two is this: (1) mental prayer, i. e., internal occupation of the intellect and will with God, is the foundation of vocal prayer. It is the very soul of vocal prayer. Hence, we shall speak first of the divine truths which are to be grasped by mental prayer; afterwards, we shall speak of singing the praises of God in vocal prayer. (2) One is the complement of the other. No one can continually remain absorbed in mental prayer; he must have recourse to vocal prayer almost as a rest and refreshment. Moreover, we are required by law and for other reasons to recite certain determined prayers which are necessarily oral. This is all the more true since we live in community and are obliged to recite prayers in common. In a similar way, no one can spend all his time in continual oral prayer without becoming tired and inattentive, and losing his elevation of soul. Consequently, to be occupied with God for any great length of time, we must not only meditate on the Law of the Lord (pray mentally), but also be watchful in prayer (pray orally).

(c) According to its meaning or primary end, prayer is divided into adoration, thanksgiving, satisfaction and petition. The first embraces the whole concept of man's worship of God, the beginning and the end of the entire world and the supreme Lord of all created things. The second consists in joyful praise of God as our supreme Benefactor, for graces and benefits received. The third is a confession of our offenses against God, with a prayer for their forgiveness and a promise not to fall into them again; it includes also the idea of offering our prayers in reparation for the injuries committed against the Divine Majesty. The last is a prayer made to obtain help from God, as we have explained fully above (no. 132). Even petition is a form of praising God because it is an admission of our absolute dependence upon Him and of His supreme dominion over us. Thus all of these kinds of prayer are connected with one another and can be expressed in various words according to our intentions.

(d) There are various degrees of non-mystical mental prayer: first, discursive meditation, which is usually simply called meditation; secondly, affective prayer; and thirdly, prayer of simple regard or of simplicity. Each kind will be treated in detail.

Of prayer as such we must certainly hold the following: it is the elevation of the soul to God, or converse with God and talking to Him. By prayer, therefore, we in some measure anticipate the life of Heaven, where we will pray without ceasing and enjoy God with untold happiness. The better we learn to pray in this life, the more surely and completely will we enjoy God in the next.

Note: In our explanation, we will follow as closely as possible the

text and method found in the oft-quoted *Methodus*. For centuries our religious learned the art of praying from this book. Near the end of the preface of the book, it warns the novices, "They need not distract their minds by reading other books that treat of this subject, first because absolutely all the instructions necessary for understanding the practice of prayer are contained in this method, and secondly, because, this practice and method has always been taught, observed and practised in our Observance, from the very beginning down to the present time."

ART. I—MEDITATION

155. The Excellence and Necessity of Mental Prayer

Mental prayer is often simply called prayer, especially by the authors of our Order. It is prayer in the truest sense and scarcely needs recommendation.

(a) It is truly "an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God, being commended for the gift of discipline" (Wisd. 7, 14). By drawing near to God in prayer we are enlightened; by spiritual conversation with Him we become spiritual; and by continually devoting ourselves to Him we become entirely divine. Just as by frequent converse with the wise, we become wise; so also by frequent spiritual union with God, we are gradually transformed into Him. Just as iron cast into a fire loses its own natural properties and characteristics and takes on the properties of fire, so also the religious who frequently occupies his mind with things divine, gradually loses the affections, infirmities and inclinations of corrupt nature and acquires affections and perfections that are truly divine. 'Indeed" says the *Methodus,* "if one were to compare two religious, one fervent in prayer, with another neglecting it or going through with it coldly, half-heartedly and, as it were, with nausea and disgust, there would be as great a difference between them as between a star and a burnt-out coal. The one would have a soul clear as crystal; the other would be like dark and filthy glass. In a word, the thoughts and affections of the first will tend toward wise and prudent things, while the soul of the second will be drawn to frivolity and rashness, and ordinarily he will be immeshed in an abundance of vain and useless desires and affections" (I, 19).

Similarly, a person who is in earnest about mental prayer will quickly attain perfection according to the proverb of the Fathers of

the Desert, "Fervent prayer quickly purifies the soul." Just as all defects and sorrows of men arise from thoughtlessness, so on the other hand, all their perfection and happiness come from mature consideration of all things.

(b) Who would dare to commit even the slightest offense against God, if he remembered that God was watching him at all times and in all places? Or if he reflected even briefly on the reverence and perfect obedience due to the Divine Majesty? For even greater reason who would not absolutely tremble to commit a more serious sin, if only he would attentively consider the utmost rigor of God's justice and the excruciating punishment prepared for sinners? Consider, therefore, that all the evils in the world have risen solely from thoughtlessness. Jeremias testifies to this when he says, "With desolation is the land made desolate because there is no one who thinketh in his heart" (Jer. 12, 11). But by prayer alone we can properly practise such thoughtfulness. Prayer alone, therefore, can remedy all our ills.

There is scarcely a religious to be found who would not be animated to endure hardships and difficulties in the way of the Lord, if he but directed his mind toward that heavenly glory which is prepared for him and if he attentively contemplated what great things our Lord Jesus Christ has suffered for him, and most of all if he remembered the reward he will receive from God. He will thus endure infinitely greater things for God's honor and for the expiation of his sins. Let us suppose a certain act of virtue is to be done. If the religious enters into himself, as it were, and applies himself to a serious consideration of the matter, he will see the reasons, motives and means of performing the act of virtue. Thus prayer, by which this consideration has taken place, is indispensably and absolutely necessary. Hence St. Augustine says, "He knows how to live rightly who knows how to pray rightly."

(c) It seems to be true that all miseries of men and all sins come not so much from a lack of faith (as some think), but rather from the absence of meditation and deliberation. There are really many who are very well instructed in matters of faith and who truly and sincerely believe all the truths which faith proposes to them, but their faith is languid and half-hearted. It is not animated and vivified by meditation and serious reflection on the truths it presents. And thus, even though an individual has the faith, it is not operative and remains almost completely devoid of fruit.

The real difference, therefore, between those who live holy lives

and those who permit themselves to be weighed down and enslaved by their immortification and imperfection, consists in this, that the former properly devote themselves to prayer, but the latter do not. These latter do not try to sound for themselves the depths of the truths which they believe and to impress their sweetness upon their souls and thus to excite themselves to virtue. The fervent, on the other hand, daily acquire new and more delightful affections toward God. St. Theresa, for example, attributed all her defects by the omission of mental prayer and all her progress to the practice of it. Hence she exhorts all who have begun to pray to persevere and those who have not yet begun, to make no delay in beginning (Cf. *Life,* c. 8).

We conclude with the words of Father Michael of St. Augustine, "Piety is rightly compared to a fire, by which devout souls are gradually more and more inflamed with the love of God. We can fan the flame in various ways, among which mental prayer or meditation is by far the best, because without meditation the warmth of piety is easily extinguished. Hence the devout soul should be faithful in making its meditation every day" (*Inst. Myst.* 1, tr. 1, c. 13).

This applies also to us in even greater measure. As the *Methodus* says, "This was also the end which God intended in calling us to religion, because here in religion the means of prayer are given us which were almost impossible in the world. It is indeed unquestionable that all our exercises, all our penances, all the chanting of psalms, even the religious vows themselves, have but one purpose, namely, to dispose us to pray well. Either they tear us away from everything that would hinder prayer, or they help us to acquire things that contribute to it" (I, 16f.).

156. Meditation and Its Parts

I. Meditation is the attentive consideration of some subject in order that we may better perceive divine truth and our own duties, elicit holy affections, advance in the spiritual life and be more closely united to God.

(a) Note that we say attentive. This distinguishes meditation from other pious thoughts which come to us unexpectedly and, because they are superficial, do not last long. Ordinarily, these do not leave great impression upon the soul.

(b) The purpose of meditation is to help us progress in the spiritual life. Hence it differs from speculation which intends merely the acquisition of knowledge. We speculate to satisfy the thirst for knowledge, but we meditate in order to love. "You must not seek knowledge," says Father Maurus of the Child Jesus, "except to reduce it to

practice. This is the only secret of the spiritual life: to accomplish much even if you are not learned" (*Intr. in div. sap.* I, dial. 1).

The will is so constituted that it can love nothing which the intellect does not first know and propose to the will. Hence the intellect in our case can be compared to a servant bearing a light before the will, its master. Thus, just as a servant carries a torch not for his own pleasure, but that he may offer light to the master of the house in whatever work he has to do, so also the intellect should not meditate for the precise purpose of satisfying its inclination, but in order to direct the affections and workings of the will, for the will is, as it were, the queen of all the faculties of the soul.

(c) We speak here, however, of methodical or discursive meditation. In this sort of prayer, the individual considers the proposed subject in a certain definite order and goes over each point thoroughly. In this it differs from contemplation which in an instant and, as it were, at a glance, sees everything that is hidden in the mystery or other pious topic.

(d) Although we have insisted upon the necessity of mental prayer, we have not equally asserted the necessity of a determined method. Indeed, there are many different methods of making a meditation. As the religious progresses in prayer, he will form his own method as experience dictates. Nevertheless, in the beginning it is essential to have some set method, lest mere caprice be followed and the time of prayer be wasted.

(e) To avoid this last pitfall we shall explain here the method which came into use among us after the Reform of Touraine. The characteristic of this method is that it allots greater time for the affections and hence prepares the way for contemplation itself. For as Father Michael of St. Augustine says, "It should be recognized that meditation is merely the way to contemplation" (*Inst. Myst.* 1, tr. 4, c. 16).

(f) According to this method, meditation has three parts. Each part corresponds to one of the three faculties of the soul that enter into prayer. First the matter must be assembled and presented to the intellect as the object on which it is to occupy itself in thought. This pertains to the memory. Secondly, we consider, dwell upon and digest the matter. This pertains to the intellect. Finally, we resolve by our will to carry out in practice the obligations we have learned. Thus, the memory suggests, the intellect meditates and is enlightened, the will is filled with holy affections, good desires and resolutions concerning the practice of virtue.

Due preparation must, of course, precede all these steps.

II. Hence, meditation can be put into this outline which will be explained afterwards:

I	PREPARATION	Remote Preparation	1. Avoidance of sin and of voluntary imperfections. 2. A great love for solitude and silence. 3. Freedom of the heart from all earthly affections. 4. Avoidance of anxiety and disturbances.
		Proximate Preparation	1. Prayer for the proper understanding of the matter. 2. Attentive assimilation of the matter into the soul. 3. Determination in a general way of the affections and resolutions.
II	INTRODUCTION	Introduction	1. Vivid recollection of God's presence. 2. Act of Contrition. 3. Prayer asking for help to meditate well.
III	MEDITATION PROPER	1. Memory	Memory presents the material to the intellect.
		2. The Intellect dwells upon the event, virtue or truth and derives conclusions therefrom.	Who? What? Where? By what means? Why? How? When? Especially however: What does this mean to me? How have I observed it in the past? What should I do about it in the future? What obstacles are to be removed and what dangers avoided? What means are to be used?
		3. During the meditation the Will tends toward particular affections.	Sorrow, contrition, horror, humility, love, fervor, gratitude, fear, joy, compassion, admiration, etc.
		And at the end towards more general affections.	1. Good resolutions. 2. Thanksgiving. 3. Oblation. 4. Petition.
IV	CONCLUSION	End of the Meditation	1. A thought or pious ejaculation. 2. Final prayer, thanksgiving for graces received and a plea for forgiveness for faults committed. 3. Reflection: Was it a good meditation or not? Why?

157. The Preparation for Meditation

A. Before beginning to pray, we should seriously and diligently prepare ourselves and have the proper dispositions, lest we stir up the divine wrath against us. Holy Scripture warns us, "Before prayer, prepare thy soul and be not as a man who tempteth God" (Ecclus. 18, 23). Do not think that God will work miracles for you to make up for your neglect. Apparently that is what you expect if you hope to receive devotion from God in prayer when you have not in the least prepared yourself for it.

When we are about to speak to men of authority about some important matter, do we not, before we enter their presence, consider well each and every detail? Do we not well consider what words we shall use and what attitude we shall take, lest because of imprudence and insolence we be repulsed rather than receive the favor we ask? How then should we act when we are about to approach the King of kings and the Lord of lords to treat with Him of our eternal salvation and of our spiritual progress, the most serious subject conceivable?

However, the purpose of this whole preparation which should preface not only meditation strictly so called, but every kind of prayer, is simply this: that we restrain our imagination, conserve peace of heart and tranquility of thought in order that we may freely apply our faculties and powers to the subject we have chosen for our meditation.

B. To achieve this, according to the masters of the spiritual life, a twofold preparation must be made: remote and proximate. The first removes obstacles; the second produces the necessary dispositions.

I. The first is called remote because it disposes us remotely, or as it were, from afar, for the tranquillity of soul and interior peace so necessary for the exercise of prayer. This preparation consists of the following:

(a) We should guard ourselves against imperfections and sins, for they render us unworthy to enter the presence of God. Likewise we should strive always to be interiorly recollected, for experience teaches that "as a man is in his life and desires, so will he be in prayer, both mental and vocal" (*Theoremata*, p. 41, n. 4). Hence, the religious who outside of prayer is usually devout, recollected, faithful to the practice of mortification of the senses, modest and restrained in his conduct, will ordinarily enjoy great peace and tranquility in the actual exercise of prayer; on the contrary, those who are not devout, but who are given to foolish behavior and are poured out on external

things, always curious, irresponsible and free in their life and actions, are almost always bothered by a storm of irrelevant thoughts during prayer are thus incapable of accomplishing any good.

"If, therefore, our religious," the *Methodus* says explicitly, "are thoroughly convinced that they are not religious, especially not Carmelite religious, except for the purpose of giving themselves to prayer, and furthermore that all the exercises of the religious life are adapted to this one purpose, they will constantly be on their guard always to be ready to appear before God." For "to have undisturbed and continual attention in prayer, great purity of heart, of desire and of intention is necessary together with tranquility of heart and soul" (ibid. p. 41, n. 6). Consequently, it is clear that just as "everyone who striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things" (1 Cor. 9, 25), so all who intend to progress in the contest of prayer must abstain not only from all things which might defile the soul but also from all things which might disturb the tranquillity of spirit and fill the imagination unnecessarily with worldly ideas. "For," as Blessed John Soreth says, "whatever is in our minds before the hour of prayer will necessarily be conjured up in our memories while we are praying. Hence, in the measure in which we wish to succeed in prayer, we ought to prepare ourselves beforehand" (*Expositio Paraenetica,* text VIII, c. 2).

As the religious ascends higher in prayer or wishes to ascend higher, he must practice this renunciation more rigorously. It is evident that the mortification of those who have a special calling must be much more severe than the mortification of others. Hence, before all else they must conceive the deepest aversion to even the smallest sin, in fact, to all defects which in any way might hinder the free approach to God.

(b) Our remote preparation consists, secondly, in this, that we strictly observe and cultivate solitude and flee from all useless and vain occupations, such as those which neither obedience nor charity enjoins. Such occupations only fill our mind and our soul with distracting phantasies and images. Those tasks which we cannot avoid we should perform in such a way that we will always remember to keep our heart in readiness to turn to God.

(c) It consists also in this that we have our heart absolutely free from inordinate affection toward any created thing whatsoever; otherwise, many vain thoughts and worries will disturb us, through which the enemy of our salvation will be able to attack us more vigorously.

(d) It consists in the renunciation and the separation of ourselves from useless recreation, from loss of time, idle conversation, wandering of the senses, useless, silly and irrelevant thoughts, foolish joy as well as foolish sadness, anger and bitterness of heart and all things which might in the least disconcert us or unsettle our soul.

If many religious are never successful in prayer, one of the main reasons is that they neglect this remote preparation.

II. The proximate preparation includes two elements: one pertains to the intellect and consists in preparing the subject-matter of the meditation; the other pertains to the will and consists in a lively desire and a spiritual hunger for this angelic occupation.

(a) Ordinarily the subject-matter is to be prepared by reading. The *Methodus* (I, 27), lays down these rules:

1. The reading should be of medium length, neither too long nor too short, but such as is adequate to supply the intellect with ideas.

2. It should not be made hurriedly but with attention and understanding, so that the memory can properly retain what has been read.

3. The religious should select those points and ideas which please him most, and from which he expects a greater benefit. In a word, he should choose matters which can be developed in meditation and which will stir up good desires within his soul. However, the number of ideas should be small enough to avoid confusion, and copious enough not to waste time in idleness.

4. If the religious does not find anything in the reading that he likes or from which he could derive fruit, he should nevertheless select two or three points with the hope that God will give life to the subject even though it seems dead. Just as of old God drew waters from the rock, so now He may perhaps cause the waters of devotion to flow in the heart.

5. The Brethren should be ever vigilant in their reading not to grant too great liberty to the intellect which perhaps, because of its vivacity, will wish to begin reasoning immediately regarding the things that have been read. If they allow this it can easily happen that in the act of prayer itself, they will become disgusted when nothing new occurs to them. Moreover, it would be a sign of too great curiosity and precipitation, and could easily become an obstacle to the grace of the Holy Spirit.

6. They should follow the order of the book strictly and not wander about here and there taking a meditation first from the beginning of the book, then from the end. On big feasts, of course, it is good to meditate on the mystery of the day.

7. However, it is not necessary that we so slavishly follow the material and style of the author that we may not change from them in the least. In fact, it is usually much better if we use the readiness and initiative of our own powers. Those things which come to us from ourselves usually have more force and produce greater fruit in our soul than things which come to us from others. If any thought makes a special appeal during the reading, it may be written down and meditated upon afterwards.

8. After the reading, the brethren should determine the general or particular fruit which they hope to derive from the meditation or ought to derive from it. The general fruit can be, for instance, sorrow for sin and the intention of expiating it by penance. The particular fruit would be the practice of a certain virtue, an act of mortification, the avoidance of some occasion of sin or the like. Nevertheless, the guidance of the Holy Spirit is always to be followed, if He should perhaps wish to produce other fruits within us during meditation.

(b) To dispose the will, it is necessary to have:

1. A lively desire to make progress in prayer. We should recall with how great enthusiasm men in the world seek for money, or how the thirsty traveler desires a spring of clear, sparkling water, or the hungry man longs for a generous repast, or the sick man wants health. But we in prayer seek much greater and more precious goods than these.

Indeed, the fact that it is such an excellent thing to speak to God and to discuss with Him the most important things of life and eternity, should in itself be enough to stir up within us the ardent desire for prayer. By prayer, we are in some way immersed in the immense ocean of the Divine Majesty and Goodness. Therein we absorb life, health and all other goods of every kind. To pray is indeed to enter into God and to rest in Him.

2. Secondly, we must approach prayer with the firm determination of never quitting it no matter how much difficulty and labor we find therein. Our resolution must be to persevere in it until the end. We must remain unshaken in this conviction, even though it sometimes happens that we can do nothing else but raise our eyes to the crucifix and say within ourselves, "For Thy love, dear Lord Jesus, I am here and here I remain." From this alone we will derive no little fruit.

158. Entrance into Meditation

That which the *Methodus* calls the entrance into meditation is called by other authors the immediate preparation. It comprises those things that are to be done in the beginning of meditation.

I. Before describing this entrance into meditation we shall first explain and stress the following practical suggestions:

(a) Time: The ancients preferred the night-time for meditation, when all things were enveloped in profound silence and the very darkness was an invitation to prayer. They were thus but following the example set by our Divine Savior Himself. Accordingly it was customary for our forefathers to remain for some time in choir after singing Matins at midnight in order to give themselves to meditation (Cf. *Introductio,* ed. Wessels, p. xii). To take the place of this, the *Methodus* urges the novices frequently throughout the day to make an artificial night for themselves by darkening the windows of their cells, and thus in the dark to treat with God concerning the salvation of their souls.

Furthermore, the morning is the most suitable time for making meditation. Then it is that the soul is usually tranquil and at peace and can easily apply itself to whatever it wishes. Another reason for making one's meditation at that time is that thereby the work of the whole day may be directed to God. However, there are some who can meditate better in the evening. Since for us meditation is a community exercise and is determined in the schedule of the day, we should with a good spirit overcome any difficulties that may arise in this matter and apply ourselves to our meditation as well as we can.

(b) Place: The Constitutions prescribe that "twice a day mental prayer is to be made together by all in choir or in some more suitable place designated by the superior" (Art. 149). Therefore, the individual is not free to select the place for himself. As far as possible, the place should be quiet where perfect silence reigns. It is therefore imperative that all should be present at the appointed place before the beginning of prayer; lest in coming late they disturb the brethren by opening and closing doors and in taking their places among the brethren who have already begun praying. For the same reason, the Constitutions state that no one should be called from prayer without urgent necessity. As the *Methodus* says, it is not only improper to call a religious away from his converse with God (unless an act of charity absolutely must be done and cannot be deferred), but it is also important to see that others are not disturbed in their prayers. If, however, there is a case of necessity, the Constitutions warn that the religious in going out should at least diligently avoid all noise (Art. 150). In fact, all should prevent as far as possible, even the least noise by avoiding coughing, clearing of the throat, etc.

(c) Position of the body: The *Methodus* says that the position

of the body should be respectful, pious, dignified and reverent. Never, therefore, should the religious sit down unless he is compelled to do so by sickness. He should always kneel or stand erect without slouching over. However, in due moderation and in a becoming manner, it is permissible to lean on the pew. He should not fidget and move about this way and that, with evident signs of restlessness. In a word, the religious should bear himself in every way so as not to give indications of impropriety, laziness, or irreverence. Indeed, our brethren should especially take care not to seek their own comfort too much at the time of prayer. Experience has taught that those who are too intent upon seeking their ease advance very little in this holy exercise and have no consciousness of the living presence of God. On the other hand, we can safely declare that a position of the body that expresses respect for the presence of God is in itself a prayer and a manifestation of internal faith and devotion. In the state of aridity this alone is sufficient to guarantee that the prayer will not be without fruit and worth.

(d) When the hour of prayer comes, the brethren should quickly direct their minds to God and hasten to the designated place with great joy and eagerness. Overcoming all disgust, laziness and repugnance, they should feel as though they are about to enter the temple of God, where He is radiant with uncircumscribed light. There all good things will be given to them to care for their every need.

Since all things depend on the grace and unction of the Divine Spirit, they should, at the appointed place, devoutly recite the antiphon *Veni, Sancte Spiritus,* as is our custom. Then they should make the sign of the cross, cover their heads, lower their eyes, and recollect themselves as best they can. They should strive to create serenity and tranquility within their souls, and to cast out all thoughts, cares and worries which do not pertain to this holy exercise. To achieve this, they may also recite some vocal prayer, if they find it helpful. This practice seems to be helpful to most people.

II. The entrance into meditation itself, that is, the proximate preparation, includes four main acts:

(a) We must place ourselves in the presence of the Divine Majesty. Accordingly our brethren will raise their hearts to God with a tender devotion that is both humble and reverent. They will represent to themselves His Divine Majesty, as the subject of the meditation suggests, either as a King provoked against His rebellious subjects, or as an exacting, severe and rigorous Judge, or as the eternal King, seated upon a throne of light diffusing its radiance on

all sides, Whom the angels venerate and all the Saints and Blessed round about adore, or as a Father, most loving towards His children, etc. These images, however, should not be forced, affected or too vivid; rather they should be sweet, moderate, affectionate, and capable of subduing the senses and of holding the soul in fear and reverence. This indeed, is their sole purpose. Nevertheless, although such imaginary representations are usually more efficacious, those who are not endowed with such vivid imaginations and find difficulty in creating mental images, should be content with a simple act of faith. To avoid boredom, the religious can vary the manner of representation, just as he should unhesitatingly follow a special inspiration of the Holy Spirit if he should experience any. For since good prayer is rather an operation of the Divine Spirit than of the human spirit, great heed must be given to Him by following the interior dispositions which He establishes within us.

If it is enough for any individual merely to think of himself as being in the very presence of God or that he is in some way immersed in God as in an immense ocean, and if he wishes to pray out of pure love for Him so that he cannot easily conjure up any other concept of the presence of God, he should be satisfied to remain there and not try to go further.

(b) An examination of conscience should be made so that we may purge from our hearts all imperfections by our contrition, "for wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul" (Wisd. 1, 4). However, the examination itself should be quite brief and more insistence should be placed on the act of contrition itself. For more scrupulous individuals, it is sufficient if with great humility they ask God for the pardon of their sins in general, without making a real examination of conscience.

(c) We should elicit an act of humility and of most profound abjection and annihilation before God, to Whom we desire to speak. "The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds" (Ecclus. 35, 21). What am I? How can I appear before such majesty, since all "the Gentiles are as a drop of a bucket and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance" (Isa. 40, 15)? This consideration should keep the soul in deep reverence and attention before God.

(d) Finally, the religious should consecrate his meditation purely and wholly to the greater glory of God and to obtain his own betterment, rejecting any other intention. Moreover, he should henceforth despise all distractions which may occur against his will. He should

beseech God with his whole heart to assist, direct and guide him by the grace of the Holy Spirit. For this purpose he can compose for himself a set prayer, which, however, he can vary at will by expanding it or cutting it short to prevent weariness or distaste.

III. It is distinctly helpful, especially for beginners, to spend considerable time in these preparatory exercises in order that they may acquire the practice of them more readily and easily. In fact, it would not be unreasonable for them sometimes to spend the better part of the hour of prayer on these steps alone, until they have acquired at least a fairly satisfactory habit of practising them. In truth, these things mentioned as the preparatory acts are in themselves excellent material for spending the whole hour well. If the religious finds special relish and fruit in them, he should not hesitate to continue in them. If however, despite all effort, our brethren are not successful in these things, if after they have religiously followed all the suggestions and counsels given above, and if they have used all diligence and zeal in trying to dispose themselves well and to become recollected, they do not succeed at all, or only slightly, they should not become despondent and cease from the work they have begun. Rather they should try to suffer and endure their spiritual indigence and desolation with complete and perfect resignation. With glad confidence they should place their trust in God, hoping that He will see their fidelity and constancy, and lighten all their difficulties.

159. Counsels and Suggestions for Meditating

The meditation proper follows at once after the entrance or immediate preparation. Just as the purpose of the entrance is to recollect the soul and to dispose it properly for speaking to God, so the purpose of the meditation is to stir up the affections of the will to make resolutions to carry out the practical findings and conclusions of the intellect.

(a) First of all, therefore, the memory must recall the material that has been chosen beforehand for meditation, and present it to the intellect. With the help of the imagination we should slowly and attentively represent to ourselves an historical fact, a saying from Sacred Scripture or of our Lord, or a truth of our faith with all its attendant circumstances and details. As far as possible we should represent them in such a way that everything appears before our minds clearly and vividly. If the subject is an historical fact, we should imagine ourselves as being present. If it is a saying of our Lord, we should hear and see Him in our mind uttering this very

word. If it is some virtue or truth, we should bring to mind the example of some saint who practised it in a special way. In this way, not only will attention of the mind be made easy, but the intellect will be considerably helped in understanding the matter and the will more easily stimulated to act.

However, those who are gifted with strong imaginations should take care not to spend the whole time in drawing mental images and thus find themselves without results at the end. The memory and imagination must be used considerably, of course, but only as a help. The main work pertains to the intellect and the will.

If, for any reason, the reading or the preparation of the matter was omitted, it should be done at this point.

(b) These things are to be noted concerning the considerations of the intellect:

1. They should be ordinary and homely, i.e., expressed in simple words without artifice or over-ornamentation. Our business is not to make deep speculations or to conceive wonderful ideas, but to contemplate practical truths for our daily life. Hence, as Holy Scripture says, God "looketh down upon the low things in heaven and on earth" (Ps. 112, 6), and "His communication is with the simple" (Prov. 3, 32).

2. They should be devout, i.e., affectionate, so that the will may be drawn by holy inclinations and impulses; otherwise, prayer becomes a mere exercise of the mind. Piety not curiosity should be our aim. "The progress of the soul," says St. Theresa, "does not consist in thinking much, but in loving much" (*Foundations* V, 2).

3. They should be adapted to the condition of the person meditating, i.e., proportionate to the degree of perfection which he thinks he is in, i.e., in the state of beginners, proficients or the perfect. Indeed, they should also be adapted, as far as possible, to the way by which God is leading the soul. That is, all the thoughts should be made to lead, as much as possible, to those interior feelings and desires which the soul ordinarily experiences and by which it seems to be led by God. Novices, therefore, and beginners in general, should strive to understand well the misery of their former life, to stifle all remembrance of the world, to mortify their senses and to overcome their passions. Proficients should strive to cut off the subtle attacks and excuses of self-love and should accustom themselves to the practice of virtue. The perfect, finally, should strive for more intimate union with God.

4. As many intellectual considerations should be used as are

required to stir the will to action. If one does not suffice, two, three or four should be used, until the interior sentiments of the heart are awakened. We should carefully note, however, that we ought not to race through the subject-matter lightly and superficially; rather we should return to the same thought two or three times if necessary, in order to reap the desired fruit from it.

(c) Many religious make little progress or even fall into undesirable pactices, because they do not avoid certain defects. They should take care, therefore:

1. Not to apply themselves to the meditation too violently. If a religious begins to consider the subject from the very beginning with such impetuosity, straining and effort of heart and head that nature is soon fatigued and all energy is exhausted, he is compelled to stop and can make no further progress.

2. Not to fail to apply themselves sufficiently. There are some who approach the intellectual considerations so lackadaisically and with such languor of heart and soul that they do absolutely nothing other than amuse themselves in forming, I know not what, shallow and superficial ideas, from which they can certainly get no fruit.

3. Not to be inconstant. Many, indeed, labor well enough in the beginning, but they are soon wearied and are carried away by the first thoughts which the imagination suggests to them, and they do not seriously meditate or consider anything.

4. Not to indulge in a false peace. There are some who are tired of striving and are great lovers of rest. At the very beginning of meditation, they raise themselves aloft, I know not where, and their soul and intellect are carried off to some wonderful height where they think they are elevated above all things and enjoy a great peace, which, however, is really only a natural phenomenon. They try to continue in this state and will do nothing for themselves, little realizing that they are rooted and established in pure laziness and sloth. Thus they squander and lose their time in utter uselessness.

5. Not to hurry superficially through the subject of their meditation, continually eliciting a great number of acts and affections of the will, without any real contact with God and without any order. In this way they only rack their heads and carry away no fruit with them.

6. Not to give way to a natural vivacity which makes them jump from one point of the matter to the other without any order or sequence. In this way no one thing is considered separately with deliberation and maturity. Such religious are like those who sit down

to a sumptuous meal and barely touch each dish, eating practically nothing from any of them. For that reason they remain hungry.

These are the more serious defects. Each one can quite easily notice in himself the defects into which he more frequently falls, and corrct himself in accordance with the instructions and advice of the master, whom he should consult frequently on this subject.

160. The Use of the Imagination

I. Since at the beginning of meditation we ought to recall to mind the subject and the various points that we have prepared and then construct our own mental images of them as realistically and as easily as possible, we must first of all distinguish between subjects that are concrete or material, and those that are abstract or immaterial.

(a) Examples of concrete subjects are: the mysteries of the incarnation and birth of our Savior, etc.; also His miracles, life, passion and death; lives of the saints, heaven, hell and other things in the consideration of which the imagination is used considerably.

Abstract subjects, i.e., removed from sense, are: vices, virtues, counsels of perfection, thoughts taken from Sacred Scripture, divine perfections, etc., in the consideration of which reason plays a greater part than imagination.

(b) Nevertheless, even in concrete subjects, there are usually found some circumstances that are purely spiritual, and in abstract subjects there will be some material circumstances which taken separately can supply matter for meditation. For instance, in the mystery of the nativity of our Lord, which in itself is concrete, one can concentrate wholly on the great love of God for us, by which He sent His only-begotten Son into the world. This meditation would be purely spiritual. On the other hand, in meditating on the virtue of obedience, which is an abstract subject, one can meditate precisely on what great promptitude the truly obedient man ought to show in his actions. This meditation is concrete but with an abstract feature, because the picture of the truly obedient man, ready and eager to execute all commands is concrete and based on the imagination.

II. (a) The religious, therefore, who wishes to meditate on a concrete subject, e.g., the nativity of our Savior, will try to imagine a picture of the whole mystery as true to life as possible, yet gently and without strain, together with all the circumstances of place, time and persons. He will behold God become an infant, lying on a bit of straw in a manger, with the animals round about, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph there, and the adoring shepherds. The Infant

will be trembling with the cold, but He will be most patient and will offer these first beginnings of His sufferings to His Eternal Father for our salvation.

(b) On the other hand, those who wish to meditate on an abstract subject should form an intellectual concept of it in their minds. For instance, if they are going to meditate on some virtue or on some outstanding or noteworthy truth or pious thought, they should think of it as very good and beautiful, most pleasing to God and beneficial to men. Or if they wish to meditate on some vice or false teaching of a wicked world, they should formulate the opposite concept, namely, of some disgraceful thing, imperfect, abominable in the sight of God and most injurious to the soul.

If by any chance this method should seem too difficult for anyone, he should not use violence on himself to understand it, much less to put it into practice, because he will gradually but unconsciously come to acquire it by himself without any effort or attention to the method we have explained here. These are not so much laws of a science, which must be followed absolutely, as observations which holy souls notice within themselves during prayer. Moreover, a mental image is necessary only insofar as it helps to foster recollection of soul and spirit. It makes little difference if one is able to travel better by another way.

III. (a) However, it is most expedient for the novices to use images in the beginning of their meditation, at least for some time, when they first undertake this holy exercise. Although there are some who can picture things only in a rather vague and utterly confused way, and even at times add other wholly different and unrelated images suggested by the imagination, they should be satisfied with this imperfect representation and continue their prayer tranquilly as it will not be without fruit. Those on the contrary, who have such active and strong imaginations that they really see all, even the most insignificant circumstances of the things proposed, as though they were actually watching the event and can discern not only the persons, but also the face, color, background, etc., these must labor to moderate such vivacity. Otherwise, they will expose themselves to the danger of extreme illusions.

(b) It does not make any difference whether the things that the religious pictures are represented as near or far away, as within himself or outside himself. Some get more fruit if they picture to themselves the place where the events actually occurred and go there in spirit. Others bring the things, as it were, to themselves and

represent them as close. Others enclose the pictures within themselves. Still others place themselves among the things about which they are meditating. All these ways are good. Hence each should follow that which he thinks is easier, more natural and more effective for himself in keeping the senses in tranquility.

(c) If it should seem expedient for any one to simply imagine himself to be praying in the very company, as it were, of our divine Savior, or of one of the saints, and if this alone is sufficient to tranquilize all his thoughts and to preserve his heart in attention and due respect, he can profitably devote himself to such a practice.

(d) Let each one, therefore, choose the method which is most natural and suitable for himself, and strive to arrange his prayer according to it.

161. Developing the Meditation

All that we have said thus far touches merely the beginnings of meditation. But now we shall explain how meditation itself takes place and consider the process of unfolding or developing the subject chosen, or of penetrating into it.

This development is nothing else than the discovery of a number of reasons or truths by which the intellect may be instructed, illuminated and convinced. It may be compared to the development of a subject by an orator who illustrates and explains his subject to his audience from all sides, in order that they may fully understand it and, having grasped the reasoning behind it, may freely consent and do what is suggested.

I. As we said before, we must distinguish between concrete and abstract subjects.

(a) If, therefore, an individual begins to meditate on a material or corporeal subject, e.g., the Nativity, he can consider: (1) the history, namely, what took place in general; and in the example given, what Sacred Scripture tells us about it; (2) the circumstances of time and place—in the Nativity, for instance, that our Lord was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, in a stable, placed in a lowly manger, during the reign of Herod, when the fullness of time had come, as it was foretold, while Palestine was under the rule of the Romans, etc.; (3) the circumstances and qualities of the individuals who are present or acting; (4) everything that was said, by the various individuals on that occasion or during that action; or if no words are related, everything that might have been said; how the words were spoken; with what spirit, with what intention, etc.; (5)

the feelings which the persons had or seem to have had; (6) the purpose for which the whole mystery took place, or which the individual persons had in mind; (7) what results came from it; (8) how we can imitate it; (9) how we have failed in due imitation; (10) what we must do in the future or what fruit we should derive from it.

If it should happen that the matter set for our meditation bears no relation to one or the other of these points, the point should be omitted and the next taken up. On the other hand, if a certain point seems sufficient to foster thought, we should stress it as long as we experience any relish in it, and forget about the rest. The aim is not to exhaust the subject but to gather fruit for our spiritual life. The remaining points can well be considered in a following meditation.

(b) In meditating on a purely abstract subject, e. g., one of the blessings of God, or some virtue, we should consider:

(1) The nature or essence of the thing, that is, just exactly what it is in itself, e. g., what is the religious state or what it means to be a religious; (2) The names by which it is known, if they contain anything worth considering; thus, for example, the religious state is sometimes called another baptism, or the state of perfection; (3) the motives and causes which lead to it; thus various things can impel an individual to embrace the religious state, though the precise cause is always grace and the vocation from God; (4) its properties and effects; (5) the end toward which it tends; (6) the examples we have of it in the life of Christ and of the Blessed Virgin; what our Lord said or thought about it; (7) how we ourselves have hitherto observed the teaching that is derived therefrom; (8) what we are going to do about it in future; (9) the method and means of acquiring the desired fruit and how we can hope to make progress in this matter.

By using these and similar techniques, it will not be so difficult, with some practice to unfold and develop any subject whatever.

II. (a) To this end, it sometimes helps to soliloquize, i. e., to address one's self or one's soul in particular. Likewise, it is helpful to hold a conversation with one of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity, or with the Blessed Virgin Mary, or one's Guardian Angel, or with the saint about whom we are meditating, to ask for various things or to explain one's weaknesses, difficulties, doubts, fears, etc. By these soliloquies and conversations the meditation becomes very effective, the heart is wonderfully inflamed and filled with the desire of making further spiritual progress.

(b) If the religious uses a meditation book in which there are

complete meditations, he need do no more than read the matter attentively and understand it well. He need only embrace wholeheartedly what is taught there and by means of the reasons and motives found there as well as by his own, resolve upon a plan of action. However, the book can only help us; we ourselves must meditate. The more one digests the whole matter independently of the book, the greater fruit will he derive therefrom.

(c) Each one must do these things according to the interior dispositions which he experiences within himself. For in all the rules we have given here, we always presuppose this fundamental principle: "The Holy Spirit is the primary and principal teacher of the art of prayer." Therefore, all our practices of piety should be directed toward removing the obstacles which might impede the Holy Spirit and prevent Him from producing in us His lights, impulses and affections. If we seem to make no progress, it is from Him that we must again and again humbly implore help and light.

He, however, who is endowed with such a poor imagination or with so little instruction that he can only with great difficulty develop a subject by himself, or if he feels that for some reasons he is unusually tired, he can follow the advice of Father Daniel of the Virgin Mary, who, inspired by the example of St. Theresa says, "At the beginning of meditation we should read devoutly some point of a subject for meditation. If the will is then filled with some good inclination or some desire for virtue, we should close the book, raise our mind to God and meditate on what we have read as long as we can, according to the method explained above. When our devotion diminishes or distractions begin to bother us, we should open the book again, read another point and meditate again. In this way, we should read and meditate alternately until the end of meditation, using the book as a staff and a support" (*Ars Artium* III, 1).

162. The Role of the Will or the Affections

I. (a) We said above (no. 159) that the whole immediate fruit of prayer and its very purpose consists in the affections. It will profit us very little if we have many beautful thoughts and ideas about God and spiritual things, unless our heart is inflamed with love of them. Nevertheless, certain peculiar characters are to be found who never cease their mental considerations and permit very little, if any, time for the will to elicit desires. Such persons leave prayer as cold and dry as they entered it, because their meditations—more properly called, speculations—are light without heat. Hence, the soil of their

hearts produces no good fruit, and they derive nothing from all their spiritual exercises but curiosity, pride and vanity. Thomas a Kempis says, "I would rather feel compunction than know how to define it" (*Im. Chr.* I, 1).

(b) Therefore, as soon as one begins to feel that his will is inflamed, whether by an interior prompting from God, even though the mental considerations have not yet gone very far, or whether by means of the thoughts presented by the intellect, he should cease from the discursive process so that the will can bring forth the holy affections which it has conceived. Father Daniel of the Virgin Mary says, "When anybody is digging in the ground in search of water or a hidden treasure, he ceases digging and searching as soon as he discovers what he is seeking. We ought to do the same in meditation. The praiseworthy desires for virtue and the affections of the will are the gold and precious treasure which we seek in meditation. Here is the living fountain by which the soul is purified and freed from all its defects and evil passions. Herein the tender plants of virtue are watered and grow" (*Ars Artum* II, 6).

II. What is an affection, therefore, and how is it born in our hearts? An affection, in the sense in which we here speak of it, is a certain movement of the heart, or a certain holy ardor. It can arise in our souls in two ways:

(a) It can come from immediate contact with God, Who infuses an extraordinary light by which our intellect is illuminated in an instant. It sees the things more clearly than if it spent two or three hours on the meditation. It is similar to the way a room is much better lit up by the penetrating rays of the sun than by many lighted candles. At the same time God impresses a strong and sweet inclination on our will to make it conform to the truth presented by the intellect. These affections can also be had outside of the time of prayer since God can touch the heart of man at any time.

(b) Another way that affections are created, the usual and the ordinary way, depends partly on human industry. Thus when the soul begins to meditate on a certain matter and grasps some deep truth, it dwells upon it, loves and desires it. It resolves to adopt it and seeks suitable means to do so. This can happen in such a natural and sweet way that without any advertence to these rules and without any effort, the mind, as soon as it perceives a lovable thing, is immediately carried out of itself toward the thing loved; or if it perceives the thing worthy of hate, it begins to hate it and turn away from it. The application of the intellect, therefore, is personal effort; but by affection the soul is

moved toward or away from the truth proposed for meditation without any labor, as a natural consequence and by a natural connection. Similarly, there is no need for labor or much striving in order to love, admire or desire a beautiful statue of any other beautiful thing, or to be repelled by an ugly thing placed before our eyes. It is sufficient for us to see these things in order to love and desire some, or to hate and fly from others.

III. There are various kinds of affections:

(a) Some are directed to good, holy and virtuous objects and cause us to desire them, and some are directed to evil and vicious things and cause us to detest them. Some are filled with eagerness, with a wonderful tenderness. Some are vigorous and quick; others without being less efficacious, are slower and gentler.

(b) The distinction of greatest importance is that between purely spiritual affections which the will alone feels and affections which are both spiritual and corporeal, by which not only the will or the spiritual part of man is moved, but also the material part or the passions. This can come about in two ways:

1. When the object of the meditations is sensible and, therefore, is accessible and accommodated to the imagination, the sensitive appetite which works with the imagination in the lower part of the soul, just as the will works with the intellect in the upper part, is moved first. By this movement, it helps considerably in stirring up more ardent affections of the will. Hence, we advise the novices to apply their imaginations as much as they can in meditating.

2. However, when the subject of the meditation is purely spiritual, the imagination works very little. It is the will that first feels these holy desires. The desires are sometimes so strong that they excite the corresponding emotions in the lower part of the soul as the wood of a musical instrument vibrates when the strings are played.

3. Although all interior acts derive their perfections and their merit from the will and hence are no less pleasing to God for being produced without sensible feelings or even with great repugnance in the lower part, nevertheless, the harmony of the two parts is to be considered a great grace and is not to be despised. God usually grants this, so that by such sensible sweetness, prayer will be made with greater ease and joy. This interior sweetness and delight greatly strengthens the resolutions that we make; it renders our acts more fervent and prompt and is a very powerful incentive to give our whole selves to this divine exercise in the future. But if these sensible consolations fail us, we must not become sad, but should persevere faith-

fully in prayer. God does not give them continually, lest we seek these sensible consolations rather than God Himself (Cf. nn. 99, 181, 182).

163. The Manner of Exciting and Sustaining Affections

I. Just as there are divers subjects on which one can meditate, so also there is the greatest diversity among the affections which we can elicit on each subject.

(a) Affections begotten from the consideration of some good, are affections of love, desire, joy, hope, admiration, praise of God etc. However, those begotten from the consideration of some evil are affections of hatred, horror and fear lest it should happen, or of sorrow if it has happened, of contrition when it is a question of one's own sins, and other affections of this kind.

(b) Generally, we can say that among the affections those which inspire us to put into practice what we have meditated on are to be more esteemed than those which are, as it were, half-speculative and, further, are accustomed to produce little fruit, such as acts of admiration, exclamations, etc.

II. What order are we to follow in eliciting affections?

(a) Above all things, the direction of the grace of the Holy Spirit must be followed, whenever we experience it with us, without attending to the state or degree of perfection in which we are. For the Spirit breathes where He wills.

(b) However, when God leaves us to our own effort, the order which He Himself is wont to follow in converting and leading souls to perfection must be followed.

1. Novices and beginners must cultivate, preserve and foster the affections of the purgative life more than the other affections, although the latter may appear to be more lofty. Their ordinary affections ought to be sorrow and detestation of sin; fear of dying in sin; fear of God's judgments; desire to do fitting penance for past sins; contempt of the world; thanksgiving and joy for their vocation to the religious state; resolution of firmly and totally adhering to God in future and therefore, of learning as well as possible, all that is necessary or useful for this purpose; a resolution to overcome temptations and courageously to undertake mortification; confidence in the help of divine grace, etc.

2. Proficients must dwell more on affections which incline them to have a tender devotion toward the Humanity of Christ our Lord; which incline them to perfect imitation of Him, of the Blessed Virgin and of the saints; to flight from venial sins and from even the smallest

imperfections; to perfect self-denial, so that they may deny themselves even in the subtlest inclinations of self-love; to a solid and exact practice of the virtues, and other exercises which belong to the illuminative way.

3. No rule can be prescribed for the perfect, because they receive one from God Himself when they are moved and directed interiorly by the Holy Spirit in their spiritual exercises. Hence, their deepest affections are either a total self-surrender and abandonment into the hands of God, or a simple and absolute adherence to God, or transformation, conformity, deiformity and so on, to which no art or human effort can attain, although it can dispose us for that summit of perfection. For one arrives at such an exalted degree of prayer through these more humble practices which we are treating of here (*Methodus* I, 88).

(c) However, let no one imagine that these affections are so proper to any one of the three above-mentioned states, that one in another state can or ought never to experience them. For it sometimes happens that God strikes even the most perfect souls with fear of Himself; and on the other hand, beginners too are frequently so inflamed with the love of God that they believe they are already capable of being perfectly united to Him. However, such affections are only passing, and after one has given place to the Holy Spirit Who arouses them, he should immediately return to his ordinary way when such an impulse ceases, in order to act according to his state.

III. How can the affections be continued?

For this purpose we can use certain practices like those we prescribed above for developing meditation.

(a) It is helpful for us to turn now to God, now to the Blessed Virgin, to our guardian angel or to some saint, and sometimes to irrational creatures themselves to address them. We can invite the saints and other creatures to praise God with us, to give thanks for us; we can rejoice over their perfection or innocence, etc.

(b) Above all, however, we must often examine ourselves in order to accuse ourselves of our lukewarmness and our negligences, and to arouse, animate and encourage our souls with many reasons, so that they may determine to put into execution strenuously and unweariedly what we know through meditation.

IV. When are affections to be formed? There are those who elicit affections immediately after any consideration whatever. There are others who wait until the end of all considerations and still others who join affections together with considerations and produce them simultaneously.

Of these three methods each one can select what to him seems to be more convenient and fruitful. Each can likewise vary the methods as he pleases. However, no one should always expect a special inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but should work himself.

V. Although we cannot arouse sensible affections at will nor must we for this reason do violence to ourselves, we can, however, always elicit some spiritual affections by the will alone, at least some general or universal affections, which are suited to any subject of meditation.

These general affections are:

1. thanksgiving; 2. good resolutions; 3. oblation; 4. petition.

We shall now treat of these in detail.

164. Thanksgiving

1. Thanksgiving is interpreted in two ways. First, in its more proper and strict sense it is a certain affection of the soul by which we give thanks to God for benefits bestowed. Second, in a broader sense it is taken for any praises we offer to God, as for instance, when we sing at Mass *Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.*

This affection in both senses holds a place in every meditation. For we can thank God not only for the benefits shown us which we have considered in our meditation, but also for the grace of meditation itself, because God has granted us access to Himself and has enlightened us with the rays of His heavenly light.

2. This kind of affections is very pleasing to God. Since not even a moment passes in which we do not experience His goodness, God looks for gratitude from us. Indeed he who fails to give due thanks to God deserves to be deprived of all these graces. For this reason there are some who, each day, devote a notable time of their prayer, either in the beginning or at the end to give thanks to the Divine Majesty both for particular benefits received on the day itself as well as for general benefits, namely, for creation and preservation, for election to the faith, for the vocation to the religious or the priestly state, etc. In order to form and increase this affection it will help much to offer to God the thanksgivings and sacrifices of His Only-Begotten Son, of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the saints.

3. There will hardly ever be wanting an occasion for thanksgiving, because there are few subjects of meditation in which a special favor of God is not evident. For example, in a meditation on sin we thank God for having preserved or freed us from sin; in meditation on death, for not having given us up to it when we were in a state of sin, but giving us instead, time for penance; in meditating on divine judgment and on other terrifying subjects, the fact that He has given us these thoughts as so many restraints by which the violent torrents of our perverse inclinations might be kept in check and by the consideration of which the love of creatures might be extinguished in us; in meditating on heaven, the fact that he has prepared for us so glorious and blessed an abode for all eternity; in the consideration of some virtue, that he has rendered us capable of knowing and acquiring it, because by it we may attain to possession of God Himself, and because we have received a glorious example of it in our Lord, etc.

4. Likewise, when we seem to be abandoned by God on account of the little devotion we feel, we must be convinced that He always keeps His eyes upon us and lovingly cares for us. For this fact alone we have a very great opportunity of being thankful. For God intends nothing else, than, that by this apparent abandonment, He may free us more and more from creatures and from ourselves, and unite us more prefectly with Himself. When we have reflected on these things there can be no doubt that we ought to give thanks also in this case; and this thanksgiving will be very beneficial for us.

5. But if, actually, there are subjects from the consideration of which we feel ourselvs in no way moved by an affection of gratitude, as may be the case regarding the perfections of God and the virtuous actions of the saints—although the revelation and knowledge of them is a great favor—inwardly we must not do violence to ourselves in order to forcibly elicit this affection. But it is sufficient if we bless and praise God for this, by inviting all creatures for this purpose to do the same with us. For it is far better and more useful to form one interior act with complete liberty of spirit by following the attraction and guidance of the Holy Spirit, than violently to elicit ten or to form ten artifically, because no particular affection is in itself absolutely necessary, excepting resolutions and petitions.

165. Good Resolutions

I. Good resolutions are certain acts of the will aroused in meditation, by which a person is drawn to efficaciously embrace a known good or to avoid evil.

(a) Just as we said above that the whole fruit of meditation depends on this, viz., that we form holy affections, so also must we say here that the whole fruit of the affections consists in eliciting good and efficacious resolutions. Therefore, we must be careful not to insist so much on eliciting fruitless and useless affections, as on eliciting good resolutions.

(b) He who would finish prayer without having formed some good resolution would be like a person invited to a sumptuous banquet, who would only admire and praise the food that was displayed but would not taste or eat it. And so he would take away with him no other fruit from the meditation than an empty, imaginary pleasure.

(c) On the other hand, those who realize that they are at the end of prayer before they seemed even to have begun, because they were disturbed by various thoughts for the whole hour of prayer and were unable to accomplish any good, and now finally recollect themselves at the last moment, make very strong resolutions and carry them out very faithfully, these certainly take away with them greater fruit than those who enjoyed the greatest peace and tranquility during the whole time of prayer.

II. But, if resolutions are to be fruitful, they must possess four qualities.

(a) The first quality is that they should be specific, i. e., regarding some thing in particular, not in general. For example, to resolve to humble oneself is to resolve nothing. One must specify in what he determines to humble himself, e. g., by loving and seeking out the meaner and more abject duties, by never saying anything that would be to one's praise, and other things of this kind. It would not at all be sufficient to resolve to avoid all sin, unless some particular sin were determined. Of course, it is clear that in these resolutions we must always take into consideration our weaknesses and peculiar tendencies. As Father Daniel of the Virgin Mary says: "A sick man going to a pharmacy will not buy any kind of medicine, but will buy the kind he considers most suited to and effective for curing his sickness. But meditation is the pharmacy containing various remedies for the sins and diseases of the soul" (*Ars Artium* II, 7).

(b) The second quality is that they should be prudent, and not thoughtless or according to a sudden impulse of some inordinate sense-affection. He would be acting imprudently, for example, who would resolve to seek an opportunity for martyrdom or to elicit daily an immense number of interior acts or other things of a similar kind which are very difficult or clearly beyond one's strength.

(c) The third quality is that they should be in conformity with one's state, as we explained above for each of the three ways, although one must always freely follow the attractions of God and the leadings of the Holy Spirit. Even for those who have made the greatest progress in perfection, it is almost necessary frequently to take as a subject of their prayer the review of their interior state. If they should

find in this review that they have been wanting, or have been somewhat indulgent in certain excesses or weaknesses which we are accustomed to condemn even in beginners, let them form strong resolutions to amend and effectively correct them.

(d) The fourth quality is that these resolutions be made with a certain liberty of spirit, with readiness and confidence that we are going to keep them. An excessive fear that we shall break them or that we shall not observe them as readily or as well as we ought, must be banished. For we must always hope that the Divine Goodness, Which now gives us the grace to promise these things, will also continue to give us the grace to make good our promises. Although we sometimes break our promises, after having risen from our falls we should place all the greater trust in God that He will so strengthen us by His abundant and efficacious grace, that we shall be able to observe as exactly as possible all that we have promised.

166. Oblations

An oblation is an affection of the soul by which we are moved to give God something within our power, or in general, to offer Him something that we know will be acceptable to Him.

(a) We are urged to make an offering to God by three motives:

1. The first is gratitude or recognition of some favor. For, if the soul, after it has meditated on the favors of God, is moved by a more ardent affection of gratitude, it will not only give thanks in words, but will also strive to respond to the kindness and love of its benefactor according to its capacity, such as it is, by offering Him all that it can.

2. The second motive is a desire to satisfy the Divine Majesty for our sins and faults. For, when the soul has considered its past negligences, it will be confounded and ashamed before God and therefore, to expiate its former sins, it will offer itself to please Him and to make some satisfaction.

3. The third is the intention to ask some new grace of God for the future. Indeed we know from daily experience that we strive almost by natural instinct to honor with gifts and to win over to ourselves a person of whose grace or aid we are in need and from whom we expect something. Now it is indeed certain that a creature, inasmuch as it is poor and helpless, can give God absolutely nothing which is not already His. Nevertheless, by its free and voluntary actions it can approve and, as it were, confirm the fact that it and all other beings are creatures of God. Moreover, it can promise and freely

offer Him some supererogatory work, some act of penance or devotion. Finally, it can present again and offer Him anew the merits of our Savior and of His most holy Mother, and of all the saints, as priests daily offer anew to the Eternal Father our Savior in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

(b) For these reasons, oblations can be made in the three steps of a meditation. First, in connection with thanskgiving, when they proceed from the first motive. Second, after good resolutions, when they proceed from the second motive; and, finally, together with the petitions, when we make them for the purpose of obtaining some grace from God.

Moreover, in this, as in other affections the directions or the order which they seem to have in relation to other affections need not be regarded so much as the interior movement of devotion, as the Holy Spirit may inspire. However, beginners must bind themselves to follow for some notable time the order of these general affections and always strive to produce some acts of these affections, so that they may gradually make this exercise easier and more familiar.

(c) Let our brethren also observe that, although this kind of affections may not be absolutely necessary in every meditation, it is, however, most expedient never to leave prayer without giving God something, even externally, although it may be nothing else than kissing the floor as a sign of adoration when they have returned to their cell, or reciting at least an "Our Father" with arms extended in the form of a cross, and the like. Although these practices seem to be trivial, they bear much fruit, for they recall to mind what we have promised God, and His Divine Majesty is accustomed to reward these practices generously by the infusion of the necessary and efficacious grace to faithfully fulfill our good resolutions.

167. Petitions

I. Petitions usually conclude the meditation. They are nothing else than a manifestation of our needs to God so that we may be freed from them through His help.

Although we can offer our petitions to God at any time and in fact are almost continually compelled to this by our very needs, meditation is the particular occasion for making petition, since in meditation itself we better understand our necessities, our manifold misery and want, and are inflamed with the desire of going to God. Moreover, what will our good resolutions, which essentially belong to meditation, accomplish, unless we shall have received from above the grace and strength to carry them out faithfully?

Here it is not necessary to explain the qualities of petition, since we have already done that when we spoke of petition as a means for attaining perfection (cf. n. 132).

For meditation itself we only add the order that is fittingly observed in making petitions. Above all, let us ask for the grace to practise and acquire what we have learned in meditation to be necessary, useful or wanting to us; for example, the extirpation of some vice. Then indeed we will be able to pass on to other more general petitions both for ourselves as well as for others, following always our interior disposition and the movement and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

II. We can proceed to make petitions of this kind in a twofold way.

(a) First, by openly and simply setting forth our necessities with interior affection, just as sick beggars, sitting at the doors of churches, show only their sores or wounds in order to move those going in or coming out to compassion, and thus obtain an alms from them. By acting in this way they receive an alms more easily than if they were to deafen the ears of those passing by with their importunate cries. For misery speaks and pleads for itself. We have examples of this kind in the Sacred Scriptures, viz., Lazarus lying before the door of the rich banqueter (Luke 16, 20); the leper acknowledging before the Lord, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean" (Matt. 8, 2); or Mary, the sister of Martha, sitting at the feet of the Lord (cf. Luke 10, 39); or also Martha and Mary announcing to our Lord, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick" (John 11, 13).

This method of praying is very rarely deprived of its effects, because it is sincere, childlike, humble and full of trust. It is desire, pure and simple, without explanation, but very pleasing to God and most worthy of being heard, as the Psalmist says, "The Lord has heard the desire of the poor" (Ps. 10, 17).

(b) A second method of praying consists in using a prepared discourse and in endeavoring to strengthen one's petition with many reasons and proofs as it were, to persuade our Lord to hear. Thus do they usually act who wish to obtain something from some ruler of this world. They ask, beg, implore and entreat. Now they praise the goodness and the virtues of those with whom they plead; then they recite the favors which these love to confer upon all men; yes, and frequently they even employ the entreaties of friends; in a word, they omit nothing that can serve their purpose.

We can act toward God in precisely the same way, by begging and beseeching Him by all His absolutely infinite perfections, by His ineffable goodness, His boundless mercy toward sinners, and finally

by all the titles of that immense love, of which He has so frequently given us proofs, by enumerating one by one, as many as possible, the favors He has bestowed upon us, and by inducing Him with all these reasons to hear us. At the same time, we can show how reasonable our petitions are, how much they contribute to our salvation and how weak we are unless we are strengthened by divine aid.

Likewise, we can, yes, we must bring forward the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we already said, and also have recourse to the Blessed Virgin, our guardian angel and all our patrons according as our devotion will impel us.

Moreover, the more profound our meditation, the more easily and perfectly shall we ask, and the more fervently we ask, the more abundant shall be the fruit of our meditation.

168. Conclusion and Review of the Meditation

I. (a) When our petitions have been made and the hour of meditation is closing, we should, before all, select some brief thought or ejaculatory prayer, by which we may recall and renew our resolutions during the day. Finally, the meditation should be concluded with a short prayer in which we give thanks for all the favors received during the meditation.

(b) The prayer concluded, it remains for us briefly to look back at the meditation. This examination of the meditation is of the greatest importance in learning how to meditate better each day. But if there is no time immediately after or at least not long after the meditation, the examination should be made before we leave the meditation itself.

In it we should examine how we have conducted ourselves during the meditation: namely, whether we have prepared the matter well; whether, after having begun well, we have remained continually attentive and undisturbed in the presence of God; whether, on the other hand, we were disturbed and distracted, and what was the source of it; what kind of inspirations and affections we had; to what they impel us; how greatly we are bound to put them into practice and what we have specifically promised God.

Let us not readily think that all has been done well or that no fault has crept in; for often we commit many faults and imperfections or are quite lazy and negligent. Very often we have neglected the remote preparation itself, from which neglect many distractions, often more or less voluntary, arise. Indeed, if our heart were pure and empty of inordinate passions and our fervor were perfect, we would be intimately and lovingly united to God during meditation. We must, therefore, humbly and with a contrite heart beg pardon of

God for the faults committed and the grace neglected, lest God, in future, deprive us of His grace.

If, however, the meditation has turned out well for us, let us not for that reason be puffed up! For it is a gift of God. Therefore, we ought to thank God again and to offer Him, through the hands of the Blessed Virgin Mary, all that we have successfully accomplished through the help of His grace, and to ask Him mercifully to help us in future, "Not to us O Lord, not to us, but to Thy Name give glory" (Ps. 113, 9).

II. "After we have completed the meditation," says Father Daniel of the Virgin Mary, "we must not forget God nor act as though henceforth we had nothing to do with Him, or forget Him for the rest of the day. Rather ought we to cherish some pious thoughts throughout the whole day and sometimes recall what we have meditated on" (*Ars Artium* II, 9).

(a) Since, therefore, meditation is meant to make us better, we must after meditation, first of all put into execution what we have resolved upon for the amendment of our life. Otherwise, meditation is like a tree full of leaves and blossoms which produces no fruit. For this reason we must keep our good resolutions fixed in mind and frequently renew them. For this purpose it is important, as we have just indicated, that, at the end of the meditation, we select or form a pious ejaculatory prayer in agreement with our resolutions, and repeatedly during the day direct it to God. In this way we shall succeed in always remembering our resolution and in obtaining the grace of following it when the occasion arises. Thus meditation will produce fruit in our daily life,—enduring fruit. It will also be very profitable to write down in a few words the fruit of every meditation in some small memorandum-book.

(b) Moreover, we must strive as far as possible to preserve throughout the whole day the recollection acquired during prayer. We can accomplish this by means of ejaculatory prayers, by fostering the affections that have been developed in prayer, and especially, by avoiding curiosity of the eyes and talkativeness. For well has Thomas a Kempis said, "Quickly does the devotion perish which is not guarded with the bridle of silence" (*De Disciplina Claustrali* c. 8) .

169. Problems regarding Meditation

Since the younger brethren are wont to meet with many difficulties when they begin to practise mental prayer, we here lay down some rules by the observance of which they will make great progress. These rules for the greatest part are again taken from our *Methodus* (I,

242ff.). Since they are not commands, one may in particular instances for a good reason depart from them and follow rather the lead of grace. However, it is necessary for beginners to impress well on their minds our method of meditating, lest they indulge a false liberty and so lose the fruits of prayer.

I. The Preparation:

(a) Many, as we already pointed out above (n. 157), make little progress in the way of prayer, although they began it with great fervor, because they neglect the remote preparation. They do not remove the obstacles; they do not tear out the vices by the root; they live in dissipation; they do not practise self-control. Full of unrestrained passions they do not have a sincere will to make progress. Therefore, since their mind is almost always distracted and dissipated they can hardly control or recollect themselves. Then when they must meditate, they find no relish in it; rather, the greatest disgust; whence it happens that they permit all manner of thoughts to run through their weak, wandering minds; they do not combat these wanderings, temptations and distractions of mind any more than a city without walls and filled with rebels, resists an enemy. Therefore, we must take care to be well recollected interiorly in every place, at all times and on every occasion.

(b) As for the proximate preparation, two or three truths or points will suffice. The use of books is helpful, especially for beginners, provided they do not frequently change these books or do not omit to exert themselves and provided the application always pertains to their state. We have already given a few points above on this matter (n. 161, II, b). It is advisable that the same truth or subject be taken up two or three times, especially when we have been greatly moved by it the first time, or even when we have remained absolutely unmoved, for often God grants to those who persevere and try again what He refused in the beginning.

(c) If one, on the occasion of a sermon or otherwise, feels himself notably touched by some subject or truth, and has not immediately the time to dwell upon it, it might be useful to consider the same subject afterward during meditation and thus enter into it more deeply, if God so wishes. Even when we meet with difficulties in some matter, e. g., holy obedience imposing some great sacrifice on us, or when God Himself by His ordinary providence seems to demand greater things of us, it is good to make a meditation on this very matter, so that we may learn how to act rightly and to submit ourselves. When we act in this way, meditation will always be practical and will exercise a salutary influence on our life.

II. The Meditation Proper:

(a) The weariness of meditation must be generously dispelled and all curiosity carefully avoided. We must not curiously inquire whether a mystery or point on which we are meditating is true, we must simply believe it. For meditation supposes faith. Nor is it lawful curiously to seek elegance in the form of prayer or of imagination or subtility of thought.

(b) If we are not enlightened or impressed by the first point, let us pass on to the second, or even to the third, if the occasion demands. If we do not find anything even in the third point, let us bear it patiently, and, humbly standing in spirit near the Cross, let us breathe forth our sighs to the suffering Redeemer. Let us attentively gaze on His sufferings, and devoutly recite some prayers and renew our resolutions. He who cannot meditate, but nevertheless greatly desires to make progress, will succeed, provided he stays close to our suffering Lord, sighing in the bitterness of his soul.

(c) Use the imagination in meditation only as far as it is useful. As long as the understanding is pleased with a certain truth or remains recollected in Christ, or the will elicits affections easily, do not pass on to other truths. But whenever you notice that you are drawn by God to great interior quiet, leave off reasoning, and gently follow this attraction of grace by remaining absolutely and simply in the presence of God that you may intimately converse with Him and enjoy Him, without its being necessary to elicit acts expressed with effort and with actual reflection on what you are doing. Nor should you fear that you are being idle in acting so. Moreover, at the end of each point it is always useful to turn in upon oneself for awhile to listen whether the Holy Spirit is speaking and what He is saying, according to the saying, "I will hear what the Lord God speaks in me" (Ps. 84, 9). For it often happens that we do not hear his voice, because we ourselves speak too much, though only one small word from the divine mouth itself would teach us more than a great number of our ordinary meditations could do. But in order that this may be done, we must be very tranquil and interiorly recollected.

(d) When good thoughts or affections differing from the matter prepared rise up, we must follow them quietly, whenever they seem to come from God. However, if this happens frequently and in the end we notice that we derive little profit from it, it is better to follow the meditation that has been prepared. One must consult his spiritual director about this matter.

III. The Affections:

(a) He who is unable to stir up either special or general affections

should elicit or strive to elicit acts of humble resignation and bear his inability patiently. Let him ask holy affections from our most sweet Mother and offer up Christ's affections and hers. To forcibly stir up affections does not help, but rather causes fatigue and headache.

(b) If one has an abundance of affections which arise from the tenderness of his nature, he must moderate these affections, and, if the occasion demands, he must change the subject of meditation and build a solid foundation. If, however, one already has a deep knowledge of the subject and therefore these affections spring from the meditation, they may be encouraged. However, if they become too impetuous, they must be moderated lest they cause harm; also they must be moderated because it is probable that one's nature is influencing them. External manifestations of the affections, such as sighs, tears, kisses impressed on images, etc., should ordinarily be checked, especially in the presence of others.

(c) If the affections are weakening or seem to be coming to an end, they should be fed by new considerations according as it is necessary and useful, or one should pass on to the next point.

(d) It is not necessary when eliciting affections always to speak directly to God, addressing Him in the second person, although sometimes we do so with great fruit; we may also address ourselves or our souls, or other creatures.

(e) It is not well to stir up affections of all the virtues indiscriminately, but rather of that virtue which is more necessary for our state, without rejecting other acts if they arise spontaneously. Although affections of pure love excel all other affections, still affections of lowly compunction comprise our daily bread.

(f) Nor is it necessary or useful to form new resolutions every day; for it suffices and is very useful to renew the same resolutions, until they have been perfectly put into execution.

IV. The Fruits of Prayer:

The fruit of our prayer is discerned not so much from great sensible fervor in prayer, as from what follows after prayer: from greater interior peace, greater indifference to earthly things, greater control of the senses and of the tongue, greater submission, obedience and denial of one's own will, greater self-possession and attention to all one's actions.

Very fittingly indeed our older fathers used to say that a religious who applies himself to prayer and does not come forth from it more mortified and recollected, is like an empty ear of corn, which indeed is beautiful in appearance, but really in itself is only chaff easily

tossed about by every wind. "This," says Father Daniel of the Virgin Mary, "is the principal fruit of meditation, without which it must be considered useless: to recognize well and to avoid our vices and sins; to learn what kind of virtues we must specially acquire and to practise them" (*Ars Artium* II, 9).

170. The Various States of Soul and their Causes

Having given the rules of meditation and having explained its practice, we will now point out the various states in which the soul may find itself during prayer and how it should act in each. (Cf. *Methodus* I, 187ff.).

I. That these states differ much is certain, for sometimes we experience great ease and alertness of mind in praying; at other times we are so dull and stupid that we are unable either to begin the meditation or to elicit any good thought. One day, we are fervent, calm, recollected; on another we are disgusted, disturbed and distracted. It may happen that we enjoy a great abundance of devotion and spiritual consolation and presently we are afflicted with aridity and desolation. Sometimes we are filled with joy and burn with great ardor; at other times we are cold and are troubled with serious temptations. Beginners in particular are continually subject to changes, so that today they are drawn to prayer with great ardor and tomorrow for some unknown reason they are repelled. It will not be foreign to our purpose to know from what source these various dispositions spring.

II. The cause can be either God, ourselves or the devil.

(a) God, the First Cause, acts as the primary director. For it is He who calls the soul to prayer, Who leads it as it were by the hand and Who, so to speak, pays all the expenses of the journey by suggesting good thoughts to it, by supplying the words He wishes it to use, by impressing on it good impulses and holy affections and finally, by inspiring in it all good resolutions which it conceives. For this purpose, He sometimes sends the soul trials and aridities, as though He had withdrawn Himself from it; He does this to prove the soul's fidelity as well as its constancy and sincerity in loving Him.

(b) Our soul also does its part by co-operating with the divine guidance, by dwelling attentively on the proposed subject, by duly receiving the good thoughts sent by God and by using well the holy affections which He inspires. However, since the soul is united to a body subject to many vicissitudes and since it depends largely on the body to do its work, it will sometimes experience facility, and some-

times disgust and difficulty; and therefore, he would uselessly belabor his brain who would strive to advance always at an even pace.

(c) The devil, who fears nothing more than this truly angelic exercise, is likewise not lacking on his side, because he strives as far as possible to keep religious persons away from prayer, and sometimes causes in them a disgust for it and sometimes even contempt.

1. He persuades some that it is only a human institution; others, that it is impossible; and still others, that it is a pure gift of Divine Goodness which one strives in vain to acquire. There are many religious, who, though gifted with a great talent for acquiring the sciences, yield to these suggestions and seduce others to the same opinion. Thus it happens that, after they have begun mental prayer with great fervor, they now consider the time set aside for this holy exercise as a torture and prefer to undergo the most laborious occupations of the active life rather than to devote even a half hour to prayer. But if they are compelled to assist at it together with the community, they do so superficially without preparation, without devotion, and without fruit.

2. Those who resist these first attacks, the devil strives to win over by other devices. For he suggests many distractions, evil, vain and useless thoughts; he affects the body with great languor, indispositions, pains, sleepiness and laziness, or finally even stirs up furious temptations so terrible against God, purity, faith, etc., that, unless the soul is cautious, it will fall or, at least, will suffer harm.

3. Thwarted in this attempt the devil devises a third means, by exciting false illuminations in the imagination and sensible joys in the sense appetite and by cunningly planning that these illuminations and pleasures may end in a false liberty of the senses, that so the soul may be withdrawn from mortification or from the reverence due to God.

At the same time, the good angels also assist us. For this reason we need fear nothing provided we remain faithful to prayer when the crafty schemes of our adversary have been discovered and overcome. Indeed, the greater the temptations and difficulties, the more certain we are to arrive at the summit of prayer and perfection.

171. God's Ways of leading the Soul in Prayer

I. God is accustomed to lead the prayerful soul by three different ways. The first way is the ordinary and common way; the second is the way of sensible consolation, and the third is the way of privation and of aridity. Let us explain each of these ways (Cf. *Methodus* I, 192ff.).

(a) The first way is common and ordinary and consists in this, that God gives us only ordinary grace which is imperceptible, and thus permits that we ourselves labor by diligently applying all our faculties according to the prescribed rules. This way is excellent and full of merits, nor must we desire another state during this life, since it is fully sufficient to enable us to arrive at the affective union of our heart with God, the principal fruit of prayer. Therefore, let our brethren not fall into the error of those who are never satisfied with their prayer unless they feel sweetness or sensible devotion.

In this first way one must work with great energy. The understanding must be aroused to seek for suitable motives to influence the will. Then it is necessary to nourish the flame thus enkindled and to increase it by producing acts conformable to the subject matter of the meditation. Finally, all the rules of this divine art must be reduced to practice.

(b) The second way is called the way of grace and sensible devotion, when God, as it were, clearly and openly manifests Himself to the soul by granting it lights, sweetnesses and sensible consolations. In this state the soul runs, yes, it flies without being hindered by anything; it begins and accomplishes all things without difficulty and sometimes has so much joy that it seems to experience, as it were, a certain token of future heavenly glory. This way is indeed excellent and much to be desired since it helps us to make great progress and leads to an intimate union with God. But we must be careful not to indulge in spiritual gluttony or in self-love, nor to be deceived by the devil who not rarely counterfeits these sensible delights. We should, therefore, regard the effect. Sensible consolations which come from the Holy Spirit foster humility, self-denial and true devotion; diabolical operations, on the other hand, produce secret pride, obstinacy, confusion and infidelity.

(c) The third way is the way of dryness and desolation. In this state the soul is deprived not only of every sensible grace, but is even deprived of its own strength to such an extent that it is unable to form even a single thought or produce a good affection. It remains totally dumb and insensible to everything so that it can only say with the Psalmist, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd and my tongue has cleaved to my jaws" (Ps. 21, 16). Still, although this way is so painful and difficult, it is the most excellent and most highly meritorious. In this way the soul is passively purified and prepared to receive great graces providing it perseveres generously. All our saints have passed through this way at some time: St. Theresa, St. Mary

Magdalen dei Pazzi, St. John of the Cross, Brother John of St. Samson, Father Dominic of St. Albert. By great humility, generous self-denial, loving devotion and courageous perseverance we shall gain a glorious victory.

II. The following rules must be followed in whatever stage one may be:

(a) We must approach prayer with a mind utterly simple, humble and indifferent to what God will be pleased to do with us or in us, whether He wishes to lead us through light or darkness, through sensible grace or desolation. For, whatever God does can only be of the greatest benefit to us, and the whole matter is summed up in this, that we accept, with equanimity, all things as coming from His hand.

(b) It is necessary to have a constant and determined resolve never to stop in the way of prayer once begun. Whatever happens, however it turns out, whatever labor, trouble or opposition may occur, we must always be resolute and strive to be men of prayer. For we must cultivate prayer not for our pleasure, but to please God.

(c) Thenceforth it is necessary to carry out that resolution by taking care to have great perseverance not only in the prayer we are then making, (which must never be interrupted or broken off for any trouble whatever or interior difficulty), but also in general in any prayer which we must undertake. Each day we must faithfully spend in prayer at least the time prescribed by our Constitutions, no matter what the pretext may be, no matter what disgust, annoyance or sluggishness we may feel, no matter what amount of experience we may think we have of meager progress in prayer.

(d) Finally, we must not be too much attached to our own efforts but we should rather commit ourselves to the impulse of the Holy Spirit. We should not trust our natural ability, but place our trust in the aid of divine grace, because whoever presumes on himself is rejected by God. When the soul is humble, docile and intently alert to the interior instructions of God, it is more copiously and perfectly instructed in one moment by the aid of one small ray of divine light than by many years of its own labor and effort. Effort is indeed necessary in the exercise of meditation, but always in such a way that the soul depends more on the help of God, and prizes a single good thought which emanates from Him with sweetness and fervor above all the most subtle ideas of its own devising.

172. Distractions and Their Remedies

I. (a) Distractions are wandering thoughts and imaginations which annoy us during prayer and prevent us from applying ourselves

to it in peace and quiet. They are to be found especially in the first of the three ways of which we have just spoken (Cf. *Methodus,* I, 198 ff).

(b) The causes of distractions are:

(1) Too much freedom of the senses outside of prayer; (2) a multitude of vain desires or inordinate and intense affections for things even good in themselves; (3) inconstancy of mind and liveliness of intellect which results in an inability to direct the attention to any subject without immediately skipping from one subject to another. Since the intellect wishes to reason about everything, it is gradually and imperceptibly drawn away from the determined subject and finally lost and forgetful of itself, it does not know where it is; (4) the lack of a duly prepared subject; (5) the snares of the devil who is burning with an implacable hatred for prayer, so that he would rather prefer us to do great penances than to be occupied in it.

(c) Experience teaches that we are not always annoyed by distractions in the same way. For sometimes we are unexpectedly taken up with them and are gradually drawn away from our subject; or, if we knowingly yield to them, we do so against our will because of their great importunity. But occasionally we yield to them because of our laziness. Such yielding is not without venial sin more or less serious. However, it must be noted that on the one hand, interior recollection is so delicate a matter that unless we are carefully on our guard it can be disturbed by the least thing; on the other hand, if at any time we unwarily occasion distractions we must faithfully and earnestly resist them when we become aware of them.

II. How distractions are to be overcome.

(a) When one first becomes aware that he is distracted, he should immediately return to himself, humbly beg pardon of God and continue the prayer with a stronger determination than before. Nor should he deliberate whence these different thoughts have come. For it is of much more importance to leave them at once without any further ado, and to turn the heart resolutely and affectionately to God. When the heart has been restored to its task and the will has been provided with a fresh desire to devote itself to the determined prayer, the other faculties are very easily brought back. For, since it is very obvious that our thoughts ordinarily spring from the affections, as soon as these have returned to God, the thoughts will immediately follow.

(b) He who experiences difficulty in getting rid of a distraction because he dwells on it with some pleasure, must generously overcome himself. For this purpose let him consider that he is in God's

presence and is speaking to His Divine Majesty, that it is a great insult to leave Him in order to occupy oneself with trifles and trash, especially since God is so good to us that He does not even for a moment turn His divine eyes away from us. Therefore, it is especially fitting that we too should be entirely attentive to Him, at least during the hour of prayer! One can encourage himself in the following or in some other way, "Where am I going, Oh my God? My soul, where are we? Realize, we are in the presence of God, before Whom the angels tremble in awe, and you, do you despise Him?"

(c) Similar exercises performed with attention and from the depths of the heart will produce very great fruit. However, as often as the distraction returns one must again have recourse to the same practice. And if the distraction is so troublesome that one does not enjoy even a moment of rest, one must continually repeat this exercise, repelling the distraction as often as it seeks entrance. For the time given to this struggle will not be devoid of fruit, even though one did nothing else during the whole time of prayer than fight distractions. Yes, it is possible that this affliction is far more acceptable to God than if we were to enjoy perfect recollection.

III. However, to uproot the evil entirely, a few remedies must be used beforehand. They are:

(a) To love solitude, to speak little, seldom to inquire into curious matters, to avoid idleness and waste of time and to curb the affections.

(b) To accustom one's self to regulating the thoughts well through the day by keeping a serious mind and by avoiding as poison, conversations, useless talking and jokes, as well as other things harmful to sincere devotion; for, as a certain person has said, "A vessel will give forth the odor of the liquid that was in it; and the seeds that will grow in the garden of your heart will be according to the nature of the plants you inserted there." According to the nature of the thoughts you usually cherish in your heart will be the fruits you produce at prayer.

(c) To desire nothing vehemently. Vehement and restless desires in the heart infallibly produce a great many thoughts that will necessarily trouble us. For, it is impossible to desire anything ardently and not think of it often.

(d) But if, in spite of all these counsels, remedies and rules, distractions persistently assail us without our being able to get rid of them, it will not be out of place to recite vocally a few verses of the psalms, if we see that this will be useful. Others in this difficulty

profitably utter with their mouth that which they are considering in their heart, by associating the voice with the meditation. This is allowable, providing it is done with the voice so subdued that it is not heard by anyone. Finally, each one is free to use those means that he finds useful for himself, as for instance, having recourse to the Blessed Virgin or to his guardian angel, by profoundly humbling himself before God, or by alternating meditation with reading and the like.

IV. It remains for us to note four defects of no little consequence into which one can fall in this matter.

(a) The first is a defect of those who by nature are so ardent, of so lively and restless a mind that they cannot remain quiet even for a moment. Whenever they have some task to perform, they are sure to abandon prayer or they remain in it with great weariness, thinking of nothing else than of the task before them. These souls must conquer themselves; they must rather prolong prayer than shorten it, and as far as obedience and right reason permit, even defer the work, the thought of which disquiets them, so that they may thus gradually mortify this great eagerness and liveliness of mind.

(b) The second defect is one of cowardly and neglectful souls, who, after a little resistance, give way to distractions thinking it useless to exert themselves any longer since the distractions will return. They must be convinced that this laziness is the cause of their distractions and, on this account, the distractions will be imputed to them as a sin, whereas they might turn these very distractions into an occasion of greater merit. Therefore, they must resolve to fight resolutely, even though they do nothing else during the whole time of prayer,—yes, even for a whole lifetime.

(c) The third is a defect of unusually timid and excessively faint-hearted souls, who are continually distracted for fear of distractions. For this inordinate fear is itself the greatest distraction. Therefore, they must moderate their fear, trust in God and remain sweetly recollected in prayer.

(d) Finally, the fourth is a defect of some souls who, carried away by impatience, despair of ever being able to advance in prayer on account of the fickleness and inconstancy of their imagination and of the frequent distractions that arise therefrom. They should be patient, bearing with these annoyances and frequently renewing their good resolutions. For the fruit of prayer rests principally in this, that one continues faithful in it to the end, and does not interrupt it or abandon it when overcome by fatigue. Let them humble them-

selves before God Who bears with them so patiently, and they should offer, in reparation for these distractions, the eager and loving application of mind which our Savior and His most holy Mother had in their divine contemplations. Finally, when they have done their part, they will be rewarded with consolation.

173. Other Annoyances during Prayer

These annoyances sometime affect the soul, at other times the body. With regard to the soul we may be plagued by troublesome temptations, by great passions, by murmuring, sadness or disgust. With regard to the body we are cast down by infirmities, sometimes real, sometimes imaginary. We feel certain indescribable attacks of heaviness which deprive the soul of the power to think. We are affected by pain in heart and head, by lassitude of bodily members, languor of the whole body, or we are overwhelmed with sleep. We shall now briefly consider how we must act in all these conditions (Cf. *Methodus* I, 211ff.).

(a) In temptations we must proceed in precisely the same way as in distractions. Therefore, after we have conceived a great horror of them we should strive simply to banish them from our mind by turning away from them and by turning to God with as much affection as possible. Then we should return as best we can to the subject of our prayer.

However, if they should be persistent and violent, we should protest before God that we will never consent to them. Then we should offer to God with humble resignation the annoyance caused by such dreadful thoughts, and at once endeavor to address some praise to God, either mentally or orally. Finally, we should elicit some acts of penance, resignation, conformity to the divine will and adoration, adding, if the prayer is made privately, some external acts of mortification; for example, the recitation of a psalm with arms extended in the form of a cross, etc., but without using violence. These practices will do more good for the soul than the temptation has done harm.

(b) When the soul is disturbed by some passion as of murmuring, of exasperation or the like, it must calm this tumult by returning to God and by renouncing all its natural affections; and after it has placed everything at the feet of our Lord, it should resume the meditation. However, if the soul cannot return to its former tranquillity, it should protest that it will not consent to these disturbing thoughts; it should offer them to God as a most just punishment of its pride; it should deplore these affections in His presence. For the rest it will

patiently bear with this inability to do anything good, into which this storm has brought it. But if the murmuring or indignation is against one of the brethren in particular, it will be best to say a prayer for him. For many have found that by this very charitable remedy they recovered their former tranquillity after a disturbance of this kind

(c) When one is affected by weariness, sadness or by some other depressing mood which in spite of one's efforts to spur oneself on prevents all application, one cannot do better than bear this condition patiently before God in all humility and reverence, by uniting this sadness with the agony of our Lord in the garden or with His abandonment on the Cross.

From time to time one can also form interior acts of adoration, resignation, oblation and other acts of this kind. Although it may appear to be done without any relish or affection, nevertheless these acts will be most pleasing to God and very meritorious for the soul. In addition to this, one can use mixed prayer of which we shall speak later on. If this is disagreeable, it will be sufficient for the time being to pray vocally, now and then making certain elevations of the soul to God. Above all, however, one must beware of abandoning or shortening prayer when in such a condition. One ought to imitate the Lord, Who "being in an agony, prayed the longer" (Luke 22, 43). From this practice one can expect greater fruit than if he had been gifted with greater facility. For by these trials the soul becomes more and more rooted in God and is accustomed to unite itself invariably to the Divine Majesty under every condition.

(d) Bodily infirmities, if they consist in sudden attacks of lassitude, fatigue, sickness, etc., must be carefully examined to see whether they actually arise from real, i.e., corporal causes, as from excessive work, study, fast, lack of sleep and the like. If this is the case, one must thereafter use greater discretion in these exercises. While this condition of weakness lasts one may assume a more convenient, but always reverent posture during prayer, e.g., being seated if the superior permits, using mixed prayer or even vocal prayer alone by intermingling some devout acts of resignation, patience, oblation, adoration and so on. However, if no physical causes of these frequent infirmities can be discovered one should struggle against these infirmities. We should continue kneeling during prayer and fervently arouse the affections lest we fall into the devil's snares, or be deceived by our own nature or our imagination.

(e) When we suffer from a headache, we should without a long examination as to its origin, attend to our prayer with minimum

activity by praying affectively and not by torturing our head further with many or forced considerations. If not even this can be done we should have recourse to mixed prayer or to vocal prayer alone with affections of resignation, etc. For the rest, while humbly and patiently bearing this suffering, we should unite it with the suffering of Christ and of His beloved Mother. In doing so we shall reap the most abundant fruits. It is also advisable to seek the advice of a spiritual director or of one's superiors if this suffering occurs frequently.

(f) Sleepiness however, from whatever cause it arises, must always be generously resisted. First of all we should avoid too comfortable a posture, neither sitting nor leaning on any kind of support. If in spite of this, sleepiness continues to annoy us, we should adopt a somewhat rigid posture. We should, moreover, arouse ourselves by some vocal prayers and fervently continue our meditation that we may not deserve to be reproved by our Lord for our sluggishness, as were the disciples on the Mount of Olives (Cf. Matt. 26, 40). However, when sleepiness comes from excessive watching, it is necessary to grant the demands of nature. If it arises from bad health, one must attend to his health.

We shall add in conclusion: When we have properly employed all means to be well prepared for prayer, and our prayer nevertheless falls far short of our expectations, we should try to repair the loss caused by distractions, temptations, illness or sleepiness, by means of frequent ejaculations and greater recollection throughout the day.

174. Sensible Devotion in Mental Prayer

I. The second way which the soul experiences in prayer, is as we have said (No. 171) the way of sensible devotion (Cf. *Methodus* I, 218ff.).

(a) Devotion in itself is nothing else than a prompt and resolute will to do whatever pertains to the service of God. This promptitude can exist in the soul without any delight or pleasure. Indeed, there are many who perform their spiritual exercises with great repugnance of the inferior part, although they are really devout with a very solid devotion, because in their repugnance they do with great generosity all the things they would do if they had sensible attraction for them. We can and must always have this devotion.

(b) Sensible devotion, however, is the ordinary satisfaction which the soul perceives when it begins to feel a facility in conversing with God. There are certain delights and softenings of the heart, a certain

abundance of thoughts and affections, a most sweet expansion and loving liquefaction supported and accompanied by certain indescribable divine enlightenments, which in a moment of time bring to many truths and more efficiciously take possession of the heart than long continued meditations could accomplish. These delights are called sensible devotion, although they often affect only the superior and rational faculties without descending to the inferior and sensitive ones. However, sometimes they are so abundant that overflowing and effervescing, they sweetly bedew and penetrate all the sense faculties; as a result the heart is influenced, the countenance glows, and all the members are affected with a certain extraordinary agility. Many seem to perceive a certain pleasant odor by which the soul as well as the body are refreshed; others taste an ineffable savor which refreshes the mouth and tongue, and so also of the other senses.

II. This sensible devotion can come from God, from the devil or from one's own nature.

(a) God gives it to us for a twofold purpose. Namely, to show men and especially beginners, how sweet He is and how much the imperishable delights of Heaven surpass the base delights of the world, that they may therefore reject the latter and desire the former. For "it is not difficult to despise human consolation in the presence of the divine" (*Im. Chr.* 2, 9). Again God grants sensible devotion so that we may be strongly drawn to prayer and may be so inviolably bound to His service that we may never be separated from Him.

(b) On the other hand, when the devil attempts to counterfeit these consolations by bringing up pleasant images to the imagination and by stirring up the senses of the body, he has quite another purpose. For he desires either to make men incapable of praying or to draw them into a vain complacency and presumption in themselves and into excessive freedom.

(c) Those who are of a more tender and sensitive nature also easily experience a certain sensible devotion, but without any special advantage. Therefore, let them not trust in these delights, but let them judge the true from real and lasting fruits.

III. The following signs will serve to discern the good consolations which truly come from God, from the other consolations mentioned above:

(a) Those consolations are to be suspected which are

1. Frequent and long lasting, because, St. Bernard declares, those that are of God do not occur often and lost only a short while. For God withdraws when the effect has been obtained, while the devil

strives more and more to ensnare us and to incite us to an idolatrous worship of such pleasure, and nature also always remains sensitive. Nevertheless in the beginning of conversion certain interior delights can endure for whole months, as also certain extraordinary emotions which the more advanced experience.

2. Those consolations are to be suspected which come with great violence, for it is proper and peculiar to the sweet and delightful visit of God to draw the soul into itself, to induce tranquility in its faculties and a wonderful recollection; while on the contrary the work of the devil confuses the soul and ordinarily withdraws it from God.

3. Those consolations are to be suspected which are of a too tender and of an effeminate sweetness, and which imperceptibly lead the soul into excessive freedom.

4. Finally, those consolations are to be suspected which lead the soul to vain complacency.

(b) However, good consolations always urge the soul to strict mortification and self-denial, to penance and humility, to fulfill the duties of its state promptly, willingly to practise fraternal charity, to sincerity with one's spiritual director, and so on.

IV. Accordingly these spiritual consolations must be received with caution and prudence.

(a) We must beware of becoming admirers of ourselves, but should give all the glory to God. Again we must avoid spiritual gluttony lest we seek the consolations themselves rather than God. They must be used for the purpose for which God has given them to us. We must never undertake prayer for the purpose of feeling them, nor is it becoming to use extraordinary care to obtain them, nor to use any artifice or industry to foster, increase or prolong them. We must simply prepare ourselves for prayer and leave the bestowal or refusal of delights of this kind to God, since those prayers in which we enjoy delights of this kind, are not always for that reason better.

(b) As long as the consolations last we ought to give ourselves up lovingly to the divine guidance. Nor should we allow them to pass away without resolving to correct some particular vice in ourselves according as we shall deem necessary. Moreover, in view of these enlightenments we shall better perceive our nothingness, our ingratitude, our faults and sins, and how far we have yet to go. All must be used for the amendment of our life.

(c) As soon as sensible consolation passes away we must return to meditation and the ordinary method. When sensible devotion returns we must act as we did before. When this has passed we must

again follow the ordinary way, and so we should continue to the end, always being careful not to give any entrance to secret presumption or to a false and deceitful liberty of the senses, and we must be careful that others may not find out what has occurred to us. Let us never think we are better than others because of these graces. Everything must be measured by essential devotion and by permanent fruits.

175. Aridity and Dereliction

I. We have already heard (no. 171) and know by experience that the soul is not always blessed with sensible devotion; in fact, not rarely does it find itself in aridity and dereliction.

The states of aridity and dereliction are very much alike in as far as the severe trials are concerned that they inflict, and therefore even the names are frequently interchanged. For this reason they can be treated together, although they spring from different causes. For aridity in the proper sense has its roots in ourselves and in our infirmity, while dereliction is purposely sent us by God for our probation, even though we have not committed faults which merit this particular punishment (Cf. *Methodus* I, 231 ff.).

(a) The state in which the soul is so affected by languor, disgust and unresponsiveness, that it cannot give its attention to even a good thought is called aridity. We are speaking, however, of a soul that greatly desires perfection and holy prayer; a weak and tepid soul hardly cares for these things.

Aridity may come upon us:

1. As a punishment for our former distractions and self-indulgences. There is then no other remedy for us but to remove all these excesses and errors by faithful custody of our heart and by attention to ourselves.

2. From the variety of exterior things in which we are interested and the immoderate care we bestow on them, even though they may be entrusted to us by obedience. For our heart is more easily impressed by that which it loves ardently and about which it is anxiously solicitous. The remedy will be to restrain our ardor and natural activity by striving to do these things without attachment and simply in God's presence, being always prepared to forsake them if God wishes. Moreover, we must consider that the matter of greatest importance in religion is prayer, to which we must place no obstacle for any reason whatsoever.

3. From ill health, from change of season or of weather and from other circumstances or natural indispositions. In this case there is

nothing we can do but bear the annoyance humbly and patiently in God's presence and frequently elicit interior acts in the form of ejaculatory prayers even if these have to be made without any relish or affection.

4. Whenever we experience aridity and cannot trace it to any of the causes within ourselves or outside of ourselves mentiond above, we must be convinced that it is God Himself Who sends it for some particular purpose. It may be to test our fidelity or to cleanse us from our own self-seeking with which we are not infrequently infected in our spiritual exercises; or it may be to teach us to serve Him with a sheer faith and a pure heart which seeks not what is its own; or finally it may be to prove to us that sensible devotion does not proceed from ourselves or from our own effort, but from Him alone.

(b) In the state of dereliction it seems to the soul that God has withdrawn from it, since it is without light, taste or affection, without any sensible devotion or interior satisfaction. It is, as it were, as though destitute of every thought of divine things, or attention to them. It can, therefore, do nothing else than suffer and remain before the Divine Majesty as though it had neither life nor action.

However, we may experience dereliction in two ways. Either it is simple inability to act so that we are unable to enter upon the determined subject of meditation and our faculties seem almost paralyzed; or we are cast into very great sorrow, disgust and almost despair. There may also be a certain fear of having perhaps fallen from the grace of God, so that to ourselves we appear as though damned and rejected for eternity. From this source those martyrdoms ordinarily have their beginning by which faithful souls are entirely transformed into God.

II. What therefore must be done?

(a) Since the cause of aridity can be either within ourselves or outside of ourselves, we must first of all discover the cause. If we discover that we ourselves are at fault, we must humbly beg pardon of God and form a resolution to amend and to remove the occasions of relapsing. When this has been done we must endeavor to resume prayer, and after imploring the aid of the Holy Spirit we should return to the determined subject of meditation. If the door remains closed we must knock and entreat God with continual aspirations. If even this does not suffice, we may use mixed prayer or even vocal prayer only, or we may read a book of meditations or some other book that will serve to recollect the mind. However, if everything seems to be useless, we must bear this trial with great resignation

and patience and offer it to God as a penance for sin. If however we find that we have committed no fault, we ought nevertheless to humble ourselves before God for our sins and to adore His justice.

(b) Moreover, we must be convinced that even in this state we are praying most excellently if we seek nothing else than the will of God, and that even from such prayer very great benefits will come to us. For greater labor should merit a greater reward and God can and will give us in one moment even outside of prayer what He wished to deny us during prayer. For this reason we should firmly believe that this state no less that the state of devotion comes from God. We should then humbly consent to accept whatever God provides. Finally, we should continue in this state with great perseverance, as long as God wishes. Thus we shall succeed in making all things work for our good and we ourselves shall advance with great steps in the way of prayer and perfection.

(c) To the foregoing we add the following precautions:

1. We should not forcibly strive to elicit good thoughts or fervent affections, when the depth of the soul is entirely barren and dry. It suffices for us to be content with what God wishes, and while quietly remaining in His presence humbly and simply to show Him our miserable state, as a poor man to a rich person, as a sick person to a physician.

2. However, we must beware of indifferently and carelessly giving entrance to thoughts of every kind. For although our prayer is not progressing as we desire, the whole hour of prayer belongs to God and must be devoted to God; troublesome thoughts and affections should be driven away as far as possible.

3. Sorrow or impatience or despair of doing anything well must be carefully dispelled. Indeed, we ought rather to rejoice and to hope since God is manifestly guiding us in the way of salvation. Let us unite all these trials with the trials and desolations of our suffering Lord Himself and of His most sorrowful mother. By acting thus we shall be more intimately united to them and made like them than we would be by sensible devotion.

ART. II OTHER WAYS OF PRAYING

176. Mixed Prayer

I. Mixed prayer is the prayer in which we mingle internal reflection with words uttered by the mouth, maturely considering and ac-

cording to our powers digesting those things which are concealed beneath the sense of these words (Cf. *Methodus* I, 262ff.).

(a) This kind of prayer is very easy and requires little labor and is therefore, very suitable for beginners who have not yet learned to develop the subject of their meditation. But it is also very useful for proficients and the perfect, especially when there has been no time for preparation, or when, on account of infirmity or great fatigue, they are not capable of deeper reflection.

(b) When you desire to use this kind of prayer you should observe the following counsels:

1. Select some psalm, verse or other vocal prayer which is affective or to which you are already drawn by particular devotion; otherwise, if you take a subject in which you cannot occupy yourself because it is dry in itself or because it does not suit your taste, you will meet with disappointment.

2. When the prayer has been begun as usual, consider attentively each word or verse individually and in order, with calm and tranquil mind and feeling, endeavoring in this way to be moved by some affection. But if after some consideration, a word or verse furnishes no thought, you should pass on to another, and try to elicit some holy thoughts, but without straining yourself because in time of prayer one ought to allow the mind great freedom. Besides, as we have already declared, one thought or good idea formed spontaneously is more profitable than all those which one has endeavored forcibly to elicit.

3. We must not seek for lofty or inquisitive thoughts, but rather insist on simple and pious thoughts and such as can be easily reduced to practice. If the subject is purely affective, we may make a purely affective meditation, conversing with our Lord as we explained above; otherwise we will find it necessary first to form some considerations from which the affections will flow. We call that subject purely affective in which the words are addressed to God in the second person, as in the text, "Lord, who will dwell in Thy tabernacle? or who will rest in Thy holy mountain?" (Ps. 14, 1). But when the words are in the third person, the subject is not purely affective, as in this text, "Who will ascend to the mount of the Lord? or who will stand within His holy place? the innocent in hands and the clean of heart" (Ps. 23, 3, 3).

4. In order that we may somewhat develop the considerations we must employ the same endeavors that we have pointed out above, sometimes addressing God, sometimes conversing with our Lord, sometimes also addressing our own soul.

5. We should produce affections just as they may arise in our heart, without any other order than that which the matter itself may offer. These affections can be our own or can be drawn from the subject itself, but they must not be forcibly and artificially sought from some other source. Finally we should above all foster those affections that incline the soul to the practice of virtue and of mortification. We should never forget or omit the forming of good resolutions which are as it were the fruit of prayer, nor should we forget to petition God for the grace to carry out our resolutions. When the hour of prayer has come to an end we should vocally recite the entire thought on which we have meditated.

II. Another easy method of meditation is to run through the Ten Commandments of God, or our vows, or the Rules and Constitutions in the manner of an examination of conscience, and to see how all these things should have been observed and how we have observed them up to this moment and how we will observe them in future. In the same way we can question ourselves on the use we have made or should make of our external and internal senses, as also of our spiritual faculties.

No one therefore, can excuse himself on the plea that meditation or mental prayer is impossible for him or that he cannot find a subject, even though he has no book of meditations before him at the moment. For one who desires to advance, an infinite number of subjects are open.

177. Spiritual Reading and Conferences

I. Among the means by which it becomes possible to commune with God in solitude, spiritual reading ranks next to prayer. For one can hardly continue always in communion with God unless he sometimes refreshes his mind with such reading. We have already spoken of spiritual reading insofar as it pertains to the proximate preparation for mental prayer. Here, however, we will treat of spiritual reading as an exercise in itself.

(a) Spiritual reading as a pious exercise is the reading of spiritual books and writings in order better to understand the ways of spiritual life, to be inflamed in will to embrace virtue, and actually to advance in the spiritual life. It is not, therefore, a question of merely enlightening the intellect, but also, and especially, of moving the will. For this reason, spiritual reading is closely allied to mental prayer.

(b) Therefore, before spiritual reading we must invoke the Holy Spirit that He may enlighten our understanding by His grace to

know the truth and also ourselves better and that He may move our will to embrace and to accomplish what is good. Moreover, we must protest before our Lord that we seek nothing else than our own edification and instruction for our soul which is so poor and ignorant in things spiritual. Many do not draw any fruit from spiritual reading because, before it, they omit the raising of their heart to God, contrary to the advice of the inspired writer, "I wished, and understanding was given me; and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me" (Wisd. 7, 7).

(c) Moreover, the *Directoires for Novices* (III, c. 6) give these counsels for this exercise:

1. One ought to perform spiritual reading without haste, curiosity or vain desire of one's own satisfaction; but rather, slowly and attentively so that God may be able to touch our heart. For, they say, just as one who desires to be well nourished must not eat quickly, but slowly, carefully masticating the food since it is otherwise not well digested, so he who devours a book with too much avidity, without reflection or understanding or appreciation, in the end will have a rather undernourished and enfeebled soul. Therefore, when we have found some beautiful thought it is very profitable to read it two or three times and to resolve to put it into practice. However, if we suddenly feel ourselves touched by a certain affection, we ought to close the book and delight in that truth with pious affections, unless this happens too frequently. In which case it is proper to continue the reading unless the spiritual director counsels otherwise.

2. A book should be read in an orderly way from beginning to end, and one sould not flit from one page to another, restlessly looking for something to give satisfaction. For just as he who is continually tasting different foods without eating any, is looked upon as a sick man, so he who is everywhere seeking spiritual nourishment without seeming to find it anywhere, is certainly proved to be sick in soul. From this it does not follow that one is not permitted to quickly pass over those passages which he does not readily understand. For where much reflection is required the mind is more distracted from God than recollected in Him.

3. Finally, spiritual reading must be made with a desire for virtue, and not as an indifferent action merely to pass away time. For it is one of the principal means for the spiritual progress and nourishment of our soul. We must read in order that the heart may be filled with holy thoughts and pious affections and that the faculties of the soul, weakened in their various functions, may again be refreshed. Spiritual

reading, like prayer, is a channel through which God communicates His light and manifests His will to us, for really it is not so much the book that speaks to us as God Himself. And his words are words of eternal life. That is why spiritual reading is of so much importance. St. Augustine for instance, was converted by reading; St. Ignatius Loyola, while reading the Lives of the Saints, was induced to undertake the service of God; St. Theresa of Avila, on reading the Acts of the Martyrs, was inflamed with a desire for martyrdom. Likewise, we ourselves will shortly experience the great value of spiritual reading.

(d) Wherefore, we should regularly perform spiritual reading devoutly, for at least a quarter of an hour each day. The benefits of spiritual reading depend very much on the spirit and the desire that actuate us in reading. In order that these fruits may endure we should ask God in our thanksgiving at the end of the spiritual reading to help us to put into practice what we have learned and have resolved upon.

II. What we said of spiritual reading must also be applied, making due allowance, to spiritual conferences, either public or private. These usually have greater efficacy in touching the heart since the living voice, primarily attuned to the circumstances of individuals, usually has an easier approach to the heart. The Holy Rule and Constitutions call us every week to the Chapter where we are to be instructed in regular observance.

The *Methodus* (II, 504) requires the following interior dispositions for these and similar occasions:

1. That we should consider the superior or speaker as a prophet or as an ambassador sent to us by our heavenly King to announce His wishes;

2. That we should ask God's spirit for him so that he may properly and fruitfully perform his office of preaching;

3. That we may listen to him with great simplicity of heart and mind and with a pure intention of advancing in virtue; for he who would attend a sermon out of mere curiosity, would come away from it without any fruit.

4. That we observe the things that are profitable for our souls, and be especially attracted to those sermons which move our hearts.

5. That from every conference we carry away some thought that may help us to advance in virtue, just as a busy bee brings to the hive something from all the flowers it touches, out of which to make its honey.

When these counsels have been observed the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, will dwell abundantly in our mouth and in our heart, and our breast will always be fortified with holy thoughts (Cf. *Rule* XIV)

178. The Higher Degrees of Mental Prayer

I. The degrees of mental prayer in general.

(a) Not only the spiritual life in general, but prayer in particular can and must progress, especially among Carmelites whose principal calling is to commune with God. The more prayer flourishes the more will religious life itself flourish, for the soul of our soul is prayer (Cf. *Const.* 148). Therefore, we must strive with all our powers and put forth every effort to perfect our mental prayer so that it may become day by day more intimate and effectual, and that we may rise to those degrees which are within our reach through the assistance of ordinary grace.

In this Father Michael of St. Augustine strives to encourage us to the greatest heights. For he holds that the soul makes progress not so much through meditation as through contemplation, and he explains it as follows: "By this however, I do not intend to disparage souls given to meditation; since I am aware that those who are beginning to serve God must help and rouse themselves by meditations, because those, who wish to devote themselves to the spiritual life and to fight against sensuality, should, above all things, strive to put off the animal man, and exercise the understanding so that they may put on the rational man. This is properly done by meditations, although for the greater part natural (that is, of natural effort). However, one ought to note that, in order to advance in pure love of God and to live spiritually according to the good pleasure of the Eternal Father, it is necessary, not so much to depend on beautiful discourses and curious speculations, as to observe well and to be interiorly attentive to the inspirations, directions and attractions of the Divine Spirit, by which the will is enkindled and inflamed with supernatural affections; in fact, these affections and these same inspirations or enlightenments are alone sufficient to fix the heart on God and to exercise love of God and the other virtues as are necessary for salvation. Moreover, we must note that meditation is only the way to contemplation. The soul, therefore, must not delay in meditation, but on the contrary, should hasten with all diligence to complete this way —and the more quickly it is completed the better—and to arrive at the goal,—the mystical life, the mystic sleep. For the truth is that in this way one lives more quickly and more perfectly in Christ and by

living in Christ is transformed into Him" (*Inst.* 1, tr. 4, c. 16). From the *Methodus* also we have heard similar things (Cf. no. 163, II b, n. 3). On these matters all our authors without exception seem to agree.

(b) We have already heard that in meditation considerations are indeed necessary, not however as an end, but as a means to the end. For the end consists in the eliciting of affections and resolutions of the will and in a heart inflamed with love for God. Therefore, the soul that in the end is so penetrated and filled by the truth that has been considered that it feels the truth and experiences the entire strength of it in itself, and does not seem to need further instruction or encouragement to put it into practice,—that soul has made an excellent meditation. If at the end the soul has no other desire than to live wholly and entirely in God according to that truth, the meditation has fully attained its end. In our Order especially, the affective part of the meditation has always been considered of greater importance, because we are more quickly and perfectly united to God by love and because we are exhorted by our holy Rule to prolong prayer. For our understanding and memory are easily fatigued in examining and straining, because, according to our nature, the body plays a great part in the operation of the higher faculties, while the heart is never fatigued in loving. For in loving and enjoying truth the soul does not so much labor as rest in God. Moreover, truths easily relished by love freely and without effort return to mind. Therefore, Father Dominic of St. Albert defines in these words the prayer which he so highly recommends to his novices, "This application to prayer is nothing else than a real, entire and actual elevation of the mind to God and an affectionate expansion of all the faculties of the soul. In this exercise (novices) are so united and joined to God that they converse with God almost at all times, everywhere and continually" (*Anal.* VIII, 298). The first degree according to him also is discursive meditation. But he holds that the mind must be gradually drawn from earthly things and filled with heavenly thought. And the principal fruit of every meditation must be an ardent kindling of the will (ibid. 299).

(3) With these explanations we shall briefly sketch the higher degrees of mental prayer which can be attained by ordinary grace. There are two higher degrees which today are usually called affective prayer and the prayer of simplicity or also acquired contemplation.

II. Affective Prayer

(a) It is not necessary to meditate again at length upon truths

of faith which have been frequently considered. A brief and simple recalling to mind of a truth suffices to enkindle the will just as a fire hidden beneath ashes bursts into flame when stirred by a slight breath of air.

The *Methodus* gives the following answer to the question, why some persons are more quickly moved to affections than others: "First it comes from the tenderness of one's nature. . . . Second it can be due to the fact that one has already acquired a very deep knowledge of divine things through former meditations. The soul, thefore, has such deep insight into the truth, that, if it wished to continue meditating on it, it would rather be deprived of light and would grow cold. Such souls must not persistently wish to meditate, but must rather enjoy the fruit of their former labors and spend the whole time in affections, because from the beginning of their prayers half the task has already been accomplished; that is, they have a well enlightened and a well ordered understanding of the particular truths. This practice is suitable only for the proficient who are able on occasions (when, namely, they are hindered from preparing themselves for prayer) to recall to mind a former meditation in order to relish it again, and to be profitably engaged in the affections which they aroused in themselves" (I, 256, n. 4).

However, Father Dominic of St. Albert observes on the second degree of prayer, "After they have practised methodical meditation for some time by considering the reasons and circumstances of whatever subject they have chosen, etc., and when they already feel that the will is drawn toward divine things and that they easily remember these things and are readily taken up with them, it is necessary to choose another method of meditating and that more simple, that is, by pure colloquies." Namely, they must address God with affections "by replying to our Lord, asking Him questions, thanking Him, eliciting numerous acts of love together with resolutions of serving Him and living in His presence, of imitating His virtues, etc." (Cf. *Anal.* VIII, 299).

In this degrees St. Theresa's definition of interior prayer is fully realized, "For me mental prayer seems to be nothing else than a familiar conversation in which we often treat secretly with Him by Whom we know we are loved" (*Life,* c. 8, n. 5).

Here it must be observed that it is not necessary for all these affections to be expressed in words; it is enough for the heart, inflamed with love, to speak with its Lord and God.

(b) This is the prayer that is called affective prayer among modern

authors. The soul now finds the door in a certain measure already open and there is no need for much knocking. Since progress in the spiritual life, as we have heard repeatedly, is made not so much by acts of the intellect as by acts of the will, the soul is accustomed to make much progress by this prayer.

III. The Prayer of Simplicity

(a) Just as God, since He is the fullness of life, is most simple in Himself and in His operations, so also is the life of the soul more simple as it becomes richer and fuller; the same is true of prayer, by which the soul mounts higher. For this reason also the great number and variety of affections is reduced by degrees to a few, even perhaps to only one—so much more profound and intense,—from which the whole soul seems to draw life and activity. These affections are particularly directed toward God's boundless majesty and one's own nothingness. Full of admiration and reverence it seems to the soul that it, as it were, touches the divine greatness and its own nothingness and it is astonished that the Infinite and Eternal God should stoop to itself with so much benevolence and liberality. From this spring up spontaneously a most fervent love and a strong will to give oneself whole and entire to God and His service with every kind of self-denial. Nor does the soul labor in reasoning on these things, but begins to rest and grow enthusiastic in the mere glance at them, desiring nothing else than to be allowed to continue always in this sight. The soul enters every day into greater familiarity with the crucified Christ, since it is convinced that all life must be drawn from this source.

Father Michael of St. Augustine seems to point to this degree when he writes, "Do you wish to know what kind of interior prayer is proper in the state of abnegation, then listen to this: The soul places itself in the simple presence of the unlimited and unformed essence of God, encouraging this contemplation not through violent aspirations or in the manner of ejaculatory prayers, but as the word *aspiration* indicates, the desire for something, so that it yearns for the divine essence alone as for air, in which it must live by breathing. This aspiration contains in itself an act of faith, insofar as it is a glance at God, and as such, is in the understanding; and a tending or leaning of soul to take possesion of God or to enjoy Him, and so it is in the will. Whence it is clear that the soul is not idle, but is nobly occupied in God" (*Inst. Myst.* 4, tr. 1, c. 15).

(b) Many, however, fear and perhaps, even the soul itself fears,

that by so acting, it is yielding to a treacherous idleness. But it is not really idle, since, according to the testimony of Father Dominic of St. Albert and other mystics, such contemplative souls are active in the most sublime way, that is, by actual love of the purest charity, although they themselves seem to be unaware of it.

(c) This degree is called by modern authors the prayer of simplicity or also acquired contemplation, because the soul does not now make deductions from one truth to another by meditating, but by a simple act gazes with admiration upon or contemplates the truth itself as its object. Whence as a certain natural consequence there arises a certain continual prayer or remembrance of God. "This remembrance of God," says Dominic of St. Albert, "is not a speculation or meditation on some perfection of God, but is a certain anxious, eager, affectionate glance at God our treasure, our end, and center. This thought is made with eagerness" (Cf. *Anal.* VIII, 300).

(d) And thus prayer reaches its full development, at least insofar as is possible without strictly mystical graces which we shall discuss later. For, if the soul goes further, says the mystic just quoted, it is filled with, even tormented by, so great a hunger and thirst for God that it is unable to express in words what it feels and cannot be satisfied (Cf. *Anal.* VIII, 300). O blessed soul! Although heavy trials and desolations are not wanting, at least occasionally it experiences, "Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure" (Ps. 35, 9).

179. Counsels for the Higher Degrees of Prayer

I. Now that the higher degrees of prayer have been explained, one may at once ask, "Who will ascend this mount of prayer and to this holy place?" And we reply: God can raise anyone to such prayer from the very beginning. There are actually some who have never known discursive meditation, but have been immediately drawn to affective prayer or even to the prayer of simplicity. They are, as St. Theresa admits, those simple souls, very often adorned with a great innocence, who, being gifted with neither a fine understanding nor a vivid imagination, seem born rather to love.

But ordinarily no one will arrive at these degrees of prayer without having first exercised himself for a long time in discursive meditation and in the practice of the presence of God, and also in continual self-denial. The more one applies himself to interior recollection and complete self-denial the more quickly will he be brought to these degrees of prayer. For the higher the union with God, the greater

must be the detachment from creatures. The prayer that is not raised on this foundation of detachment is to be suspected, even though it appears to abound in the sublinest thoughts and affections. For no one ascends to that holy mount except "the innocent in hands, and the clean of heart" (Ps. 23, 4).

We must beware both of entering before the time and of delaying when God is calling. Both do great harm.

II. On the authority of St. John of the Cross one can recognize this call by these three signs:

(a) The soul is unable to use images of the imagination and considerations of the intellect for meditation as easily as before; and if it strives to use them it finds neither pleasure nor delight in them.

(b) It wearies the soul to be engaged in particular objects, exterior or interior; its delight is in divine things alone. This latter is the sign by which this state is distinguished from tepidity.

(c) The soul desires nothing else than to remain in loving attentiveness to God without any particular reflections, but to be in profound peace and interior quiet, free at least from the acts of the discursive faculties. This sign, says the mystical Doctor, is the most certain of all (*Ascent of Mt. Carmel*, II, 11).

He who recognizes these signs simultaneously in himself—one or the other does not suffice—should not fear or delay to pass on to this prayer. No one should presume to enter it before the time because the will of God must be followed in all things.

III. (a) However, unless one is carefully viligant, he may slip into error and defects even in these prayers. For even here many dangers lurk. Let him not try forcibly to produce fervent sensible affections; let him not indulge in spiritual gluttony, that is, in coveting pleasure more than solid food; let him not neglect his duties for the sake of sweetness of prayer; let him not, when he thinks he has already attained great things, place more trust in himself than is justifiable or despise others; let him not lose heart when he finds himself in aridity nor let him, by resisting grace, return to former ways of praying, or ever give himself over to slothful inactivity. For when this prayer has been withdrawn and the facility for discursive meditation has been restored we must return to it, at least for a time, or to some other more active prayer.

(b) Therefore, the following should be noted:

1. Whether a certain kind of prayer comes from the person himself deceived by his own imagination or from God, will be shown by his life. As a result of prayer the soul ought to be more prompt and ready

for self-denial, for renunciation of all creatures, for the perfect service of God. For prayer to accomplish such a result it is not necessary that it should have included many intellectual considerations, but it suffices that the soul is touched and wounded by love. For union with God is effected by love and desire (Cf. *Dark Night,* II, c. 18).

It is not necessary that such a soul be already perfect and immune from every fault. But true prayer and especially prayer of simplicity or contemplation accomplishes this, viz., that everyone knows himself and his faults more clearly; that he is very sincerely sorry for all his faults; that he watches over himself more carefully; that he diligently examines his conscience not only for sins, but likewise for the smallest infidelity; that he punishes himself severely for sins committed; that he more earnestly implores the aid of God to avoid sin; that he more humbly receives advice and correction. Thus the soul will gradually be purified. Prayer therefore is recognized by its permanent fruits.

2. Let no one confuse affective prayer or the prayer of simplicity with sensible devotion which the soul enjoys occasionally before arriving at this form of prayer. The higher a man ascends, the closer he approaches God Who is a Spirit, the more spiritual does everything in him become. For this reason also, will his prayer become more spiritual each day. Certainly union with God cannot be attained by the senses; it can be attained only by the spirit. And therefore, this prayer is compatible wtih great dryness and even with distractions which tend toward the senses and things of the senses, while a hidden attraction to loving attention remains. When the soul has contemplated more deeply, it will perceive that amid all these annoyances it is living with God, is more intimately united with Him and is drawing closer to Him than ever. For sometimes the vestibule appears to be flooded in a brighter light than the inner rooms. But the inner rooms are distinguished by the more solemn calm and presence of the King. The soul, providing it is attentive, will not be deceived, but should with full confidence persevere in this prayer.

3. If anyone should be introduced to this prayer by a special grace of God before he seems sufficiently instructed in spiritual things, he must necessarily strive to gather such knowledge for himself in another way than by discursive meditation, either through spiritual reading, through conversations with well-instructed persons or through listening to sermons, lest his spiritual life become too narrow. Unless he does this, his spiritual life will lack solid foundations and sufficient light, error will creep in, self-will will rule, and gradually, retrogression and not progress will be evident. For, piety, unless strengthened by

discretion and knowledge, cannot be equal to the difficulties and storms of life. Nor should due preparation for prayer be neglected, unless experience proves it to be entirely useless. However, the preparation can be more simple and more suited to the state of the soul, and can consist, for example, in the selection of a brief and affective thought, some word of Holy Scripture, some event or saying which has perhaps left a deep impression on the soul, and so on, so that, if grace is less abundant in the beginning of prayer or even during prayer, the soul has something to which it may turn.

4. To foster this prayer and to advance further in it, requires, as far as possible, continual recollection of spirit, faithful accomplishment of all duties, careful vigilance, prompt obedience to superiors no less than to the inspirations and warnings of God. The whole spiritual life must harmonize with this prayer; must be penetrated and animated by it.

5. Moreover, great docility to the spiritual director is necessary. He must be well versed in these degrees of prayer, otherwise he will hinder the soul rather than advance it. The spiritual director must judge whether the time has come for the soul to pass on without fear to affective prayer or to prayer of simplicity. He should likewise see to it that the soul conducts itself well and is drawing profit from everything.

The Carmelite should strive to meditate day and night on the law of the Lord so that he may love God with his whole heart, relish Him as far as God will permit, and being dead to self live only for God.

CHAPTER THREE

IN ORATIONIBUS VIGILANTES

180. Vocal Prayer

1. The distinction of prayer into mental and vocal prayer is well known. Even our holy Rule seems to indicate it when it admonishes us to remain in our cells "meditating day and night on the law of the Lord," and "watching in prayers." However, it is not permissible to interpret this distinction to mean that one kind of prayer is perfectly and essentially distinct from the other or could be entirely separated from the other; but rather, that man can be occupied with God and divine truths in his mind alone and in perfect silence, as we have considered in the foregoing chapter, and can also express in words and

utter with the voice those things which he experiences interiorly. Indeed, man to be perfect in his spiritual life requires both forms of prayer. The one must penetrate and animate the other. For the former as well as for the latter the definition "Prayer is a lifting up of the mind to God" holds. This lifting up of the mind ought to be the soul of every prayer, whether mental or vocal.

2. That prayer therefore which is performed not only with the interior faculties of the soul, but also by the tongue and the lips to express and to manifest interior devotion is called vocal prayer.

This prayer is useful, yes, even necessary, because we are obliged to praise God not only with the mind but also with the body; because interior devotion is aided and increased by words and by the voice; because interior devotion itself, by its very nature, demands external manifestation; because we must be an example to others; and human society as such is obliged to sing the praises of God. (For further reasons see above, no. 162).

Our Father Michael of St. Augustine remarks on this subject, "Many thoughtlessly wish to banish (vocal prayers) entirely from the contemplative soul, but without reason; for, although our Savior warns us, saying, 'when you are praying, speak not much, as the heathens; for they think that in their much speaking they may be heard' (Matt. 6. 7). He exhorts us indeed to adore the Father in spirit (Cf. John 4, 23), but He also taught us by words and deeds to pray vocally, as is well known from the Holy Gospels." And after relating the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of St. Angelus, Martyr, of St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, he continues, "We read similar things of many others who, nevertheless, attained great perfection in the mystical life; and therefore, it must not seem so surprising to us that even the perfect are sometimes obliged to pray vocally. Indeed, it falls to them especially to intercede with God for others; for these are they whom the Holy Spirit often causes to pray with unutterable groanings" (*Inst. Myst.* 2, tr. 4, c. 42).

3. Vocal prayer is divided into private and public. The former is performed in the name of a private individual, the latter in the name of the Church by men appointed for this purpose. Moreover, through vocal prayer as through mental prayer we can adore God, thank Him for benefits, make satisfaction for sins committed and ask Him for graces and favors. All these things turn to the praise of God, even petitions, because, as we already said elsewhere, in seeking gifts from God, we recognize and proclaim His Power and Goodness and other divine perfections.

4. The most efficacious prayer of all is the prayer of the Church. For the Church is the Spouse of Christ, exceedingly beautiful, holy, without blemish or wrinkle. Her prayer obtains its effect, as it were, *ex opere operato*, and, on account of the sanctity of her who prays, cannot fail to be heard. She prays through her ministers whom she appoints to this office, whether they are ordained in sacred orders or not. Therefore, a priest acts in her name and authority, whenever he performs the liturgical functions; religious do the same when they recite the Divine Office privately or in choir, to which they are obliged by their profession.

5. Moreover, the value and efficacy of vocal prayer, although it depends primarily on interior devotion, can be increased:

(a) Through the source of the prayer. The Our Father, since it was taught by our Lord Himself, surpasses all other prayers in excellence and efficacy; the Hail Mary in the Angel's salutation augmented by the inspired words of Elizabeth and the words of the Church; the Psalms are prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit; the liturgical prayers have their origin from the Church. Therefore, all things being equal, there is a special efficacy present in all these prayers. This truth should not prevent one, when inspired and impelled by interior devotion, from forming for himself and using his own formulas in private prayers. For the soul of prayer is always the devotion of the one who prays.

(b) Through the holiness of the one who prays. The holier one is, the more precious in the sight of God is his praise and prayer. "For," says the Apostle, "the continual prayer of a just man is of great avail" (James 5, 16). The efficacy and the value of prayer are undoubtedly diminished by sin.

(c) Through association with others. Our Lord Himself promised, "For where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18, 20). Therefore, we must esteem very highly the fact that in the monastery we have so many prayers in common.

6. The religious should, therefore, carefully fulfill his obligations, whether of the recitation of the Divine Office or of prayers imposed by our holy Rule, the Constitutions or by some other source of obedience. For the rest, let him, as much as possible, "watch in prayers"; however, let him beware lest mental prayer be stifled by excessive vocal prayers, for he ought to prefer mental prayer when not urged by obedience or some other obligation; mental prayer must constitute the foundation of his vocal prayer. In fact, vocal prayer should be performed in such a way that it too should approach mental prayer as

much as possible, so that the soul raised by the mind to God and united to Him by holy affection, may really taste the eternal truths, while the mouth praises and invokes God. For the rest, when we are free to choose we ought to choose the way in which we make the greater progress.

181. The Divine Office

1. "Our holy Mother the Church," says Father Michael of St. Augustine, "well knowing the utility and necessity of prayer and fearing that, notwithstanding, many of her children might neglect it, has appointed common prayers which are to be said day and night by clergy and religious, in which she likewise forms her special intention. Like a solicitous and devout mother, she directs and offers these prayers to God, not only to foster and increase the devotion and piety of the faithful, but also for their necessities; for example, to preserve the fruits of the earth, to avert contagious diseases and other evils, for peace among Catholic princes, for the conversion of sinners, for the enlightenment of infidels, etc., so that the aforesaid prayers have their own efficacy and utility from the intention of Mother Church. For this is the purpose of the Divine Office, which is everywhere well organized with great solemnity and splendid ceremonies and is celebrated in many places, and this for no other reason than to inflame and preserve devotion and piety in the hearts of the faithful."

"As for our holy Order of Carmel," he continues, "our holy Father, the Prophet Elias, ordained that the divine praises should be devoutly sung in it from the beginning. . . For which reason our Constitutions speak thus, 'Since religious must be occupied in divine services, especially our Carmelites, who, according to the ancient prophetical institute of the Patriarch Elias were called principally to sing the praises of God' (Cf. *Const.* 138), undoubtedly, that in such a way they might fervently excite themselves, and might be better exercised in piety day and night" (*Inst. Myst.* 1, tr. 1, c. 17).

De facto, the Rule contains the following command: "Those, who know how to say the canonical hours with the clerics, shall say them according to the directions of the holy Fathers and the approved custom of the Church" (VIII).

2. Divine Office is the *opus Dei* by excellence. For in the Divine Office it is not so much ourselves as the Church, the Spouse of Christ, and together with the Church our Order, who chants the praises of God. In the Divine Office we are united with numberless choirs of angels and saints in Heaven, as well as with all those who, dispersed

throughout the world, are occupied with the divine praises. In this prayer God is most certainly in the midst of us, the more so, since the whole Divine Office culminates in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, towards which it leads every day. And therefore our defects are abundantly supplied for in this prayer and are submerged in a certain measure in the holiness of the whole Church and are covered over by the infinite merits of our Lord.

Besides, the whole liturgy is the work of the Holy Spirit Who is constantly assisting the Church, both in composing prayers and in celebrating the sacred functions, and in this way fulfills the words, "The Spirit Himself asks for us with unspeakable groanings" (Rom. 8, 26).

Therefore, no prayer is of more worth than the Divine Office, none is more suitable for praising and adoring God, none more efficacious in obtaining graces. Who, therefore, would dare to prefer any private prayer whatever to this great prayer? Who would presume to be careless in reciting it? Who would not do all in his power to bring it about that the Divine Office may be celebrated worthily, attentively and devoutly every day in his monastery?

3. After considering and weighing these points, certainly all should very gladly obey the precept, "We ordain that at the first signal whether for the day or night hours, the brethren prepare themselves and quickly assemble at the appointed time to proceed to the Church . . . and there humbly and devoutly recite the Divine Office" (Const. 138). Let them prefer nothing to this work of God. And since the Divine Office will not have its perfect effect or meaning unless it is celebrated in choir and together with the brethren, they will also glady carry out the words, "We recommend this also when there are not four religious present" (ibid.). Indeed St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi "was particularly careful about choir functions, at which she was always present, unless she was prevented from going by sickness or by obedience. But if for such a reason she had to be absent from choir, she gladly recited the Office with a companion, 'Since,' she said, 'I have little devotion, I share in the fervor and devotion of the Sister reciting with me' " (AA. SS. May V, 744, n. 134).

The whole religious monastery breathes by far another spirit when the Office is celebrated regularly and without interruption in choir. Then indeed it "is called a house of prayer" (Matt. 21, 13) and will be "the house of God and the gate of Heaven" (Gen. 28, 17).

4. We shold not believe that meditation or contemplation is hindered or diminished by the Divine Office. Indeed St. Mary Magda-

len dei Pazzi, the ecstatic Virgin, esteemed the Divine Office so highly as to teach her nuns, "In comparison with the celebration of the Divine Office in choir any meditation or private prayer whatsoever is of little merit before God."

Does it not contain many readings taken from Holy Scripture, from the Lives of the Saints, from writings of the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, in which we are taught the way of truth and in which we receive powerful inspirations to run in the way of holiness? Is not excellent material for our meditations offered us in these readings? Do not the hymns and psalms abundantly suggest profound thoughts for our understanding as well as ardent affections for our will so that the whole man is raised up to God and adheres to Him as indeed we ask before the Divine Office, *Enlighten our understanding, inflame our will!*

During the Divine Office our mind is sometimes extraordinarily enlightened but the time does not suffice for fully digesting what we have learned. What is more fitting than to resume the subject at meditation? But we may also preserve in the Divine Office what we have learned in meditation, so that our prayer may become the expression of our heart. Thus each helps and fosters the other in a wonderful way. In this way "we meditate day and night on the law of the Lord and watch in prayer."

182. Digne, Attente, Devote

I. After considering the exalted dignity of the Divine Office it is evident that we are obliged to recite it not only in its entirety, but also worthily, attentively and devoutly. Let us consider these points:

(a) Worthily:

1. External carriage of body should be worthy, as Father Dominic of St. Albert exhorts his novices, "When they must stand, they should always be erect, bending neither to the right nor to the left, not fidgeting with hands, head or any part of the body lest they offend against the presence of God, of the angels or against the brethren who are present. Let them rather put up with the annoyances of flies and the like than transgress against due gravity. Moreover, let them observe exactly the rubrics and regulations of our Ceremonial in standing, sitting, bowing and genuflecting" (*Exercitatio,* III, 8; Cf. *Const.* 143).

2. The voice should be becoming and therefore, neither affected, nor too loud nor too soft, but moderate and dignified, in harmony with the number and quality of the brethren. The asterisk should be

observed and the voice should not be drawn out at the end (*Const.* 140, 141).

3. The pronunciation should be dignified, and therefore, distinct and uniform, neither hasty nor precipitate, in accordance with the rules of good psalmody. It is fitting that we offer God the sacrifice of praise which could, as far as the external part is concerned, be free of any defect or fault. To despise external things is to offer insult to the Divine Majesty. Indeed, the rubrics are nothing else than rules of politeness for communication and converse with our God and Father. Who would dare to say that the observance of these rubrics is of little importance when we are so much accustomed to check and restrain ourselves before the great ones of the world? Besides, for those who love, nothing seems too great or too difficult, or too small. Even details are animated and ennobled by divine love.

(b) Attentively:

In itself attention is the application of the mind to what we are doing. In prayer, therefore, we are attentive when we shut out distractions and keep the mind really raised to God.

No one denies that the Divine Office should always be recited attentively, although this is not always easy. To be attentive it is necessary before all else seriously and sincerely to wish to avoid distractions and to pray attentively. We must therefore not only strictly avoid indulgence in all those things that would almost of necessity withdraw us from prayer, such as too much freedom of the eyes during prayer; but we ought also to observe certain things that will aid us the more easily to be attentive, namely:

1. Let us expressly resolve in the beginning of the Office to preserve attention and immediately call to mind the divine presence; let us renew this same attention during the Office as soon as we notice that we have been distracted. The antiphons for the psalms, the first verse of the psalms, the Gloria Patri at the end of every psalm, as often as we turn toward the altar according to the rubrics—these are excellent occasions for recalling the mind to what we are doing. St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi "likewise admonished her novices, that, whenever they bowed their head at the Gloria Patri, they might offer their own life in martyrdom to the most Holy Trinity" (AA. SS. May 5, 678, n. 124).

2. To preserve attention it is also helpful to have particular intentions for every part or hour of the Divine Office, or during each hour to fix the mind on the various mysteries of our Lord's Passion. However, this should be done without straining or fatiguing the head.

For the rest, it is quite natural and not too difficult to follow the meaning of the text, so that, as the words, the sense and interior grace may inspire, we may praise God by the pious affections thus excited, implore His benefits for ourselves and others, and in all confidence commend ourselves wholly and entirely to Him.

3. Let us firmly believe that we are in the presence of God and of the angels, and that we are seen by the Divine Majesty, as though we were alone with Him in the world.

4. Let us patiently reject distractions which involuntarily come to us, consoling ourselves with the fact that we are praying together with so many other holy souls, whether in Heaven or on earth, and with so many brothers and sisters of our Order who are more attentive than we and whose perfection supplies for our imperfection; and let us gladly, even though we are annoyed by distractions, continue in prayer with a tranquil mind.

5. Finally, let us constantly and diligently avoid haste and precipitation, being convinced that nothing harms attention and devotion more than this.

(c) Devoutly:

1. We have heard repeatedly that devotion holds the principal part in every prayer. In fact we cultivate attention only that we may be devout, that our heart may be inflamed by pious and loving affections and that our soul may devote itself entirely to the service of God.

With this in view, Father Dominic of St. Albert instructs the novices, "Let them expand their hearts before their Lord (in choir), attentive to the psalms not only with an intellectual or sense attention, but with a loving and affective attention, and let them touch the heart of their most loving Spouse with the verses of the psalms as with fiery arrows, by which they in turn will very often be wounded. In doing this they will very often be raised up to enjoy the delights of paradise. For the psalms are understood in proportion as they are relished. Therefore those who, by meditation and attention, draw devout affections from them, transform them into the intimate being of their soul, and thus are fed with delights by their Lord" (*Exercitatio,* III, 8).

The *Directoires for Novices* teach the same, "Our religious," they say, "will apply themselves with affection and earnest diligence to be attentive to the sense of the words of the Office, and will strive to relish the Office and to draw benefit from it. If they should feel themselves moved more by a certain verse or antiphon than by others, as often happens, they can continue reflecting on it for a time, in the

meantime taking care to follow the chant and recitation with the brethren lest their devotion appear externally" (III, c. 1).

2. Not only is the solemnity of the Divine Office increased by chant and God is therefore more honored, but interior devotion is also wonderfully fostered. If, however, anyone should be distracted by excessive attention to the chant rather than helped but it, it is necessary that he learn how to sing the psalms well. Moreover, all must diligently unite their efforts so that in the psalmody the rules and norms for ecclesiastical chant may be observed as exactly as possible. For this reason the master of novices is expressly counseled, "Let him see that the clerics learn ecclesiastical chant" (*Const.* 326).

3. To celebrate the Divine Office attentively and devoutly, it will also be very helpful, especially on feast days, to read attentively the more important parts before the recitation of the Office, so that during the recitation we may be able to occuy ourselves the more easily and quietly with the theme of the day and to experience its force and sweetness. In general, a certain knowledge of the texts which we are reciting is required, especially of the psalms; therefore, in the chapter on the duty of the novice-master we read, "We recommend also the interpretation of the psalms" (*Const.* 326).

Nor should the points be omitted which were given above on the remote preparation for prayer. For, "in order to have a calm and continued attention in prayer," says Brother John of St. Samson, "a great purity of heart, affection and intention is necssary together with peace of heart and mind" (*Theoremata,* p. 41, n. 6).

II. We should leave nothing undone constantly to offer God a perfect sacrifice of praise and to have it constantly offered up in our monastery. Father Michael of St. Augustine very appropriately remarks on this point, "Moreover, in order that all . . . may become accustomed to assist at the divine service with greater devotion and reverence, they should imagine that all who are occupied in the divine service are engaged in the functions of angels and are doing here on earth what they will do for all eternity in Heaven. And it is permissible to believe that there are many angelic spirits present in choir assisting at the Divine Office with utmost reverence and exciting all present, as far as possible, to attention, care, devotion and reverence. And if these spirits notice that members of the choir are present with reverence, alertness of mind, interior and exterior reverence, they are greatly delighted and offer this devotion to the most Holy Trinity as an odor of sweetness, praying God to deign to bestow His blessing on them. But if, on the other hand, they see the religious or others

present without reverence for God, hastening to the end of the Office, increasing the speed of the psalmody or chant, neglecting the ceremonies, sparing their voices as though they were present by compulsion, yearning to get out, yawning with weariness, unmortified in sense and conduct, voluntarily distracted, etc., undoubtedly they are greatly saddened and indignant, and it is very much to be feared that they will call down the anger of God upon all who perform the divine services so carelessly and irreverently. To avoid this it will be well often to repeat before and during the Divine Office the saying of the prophet-king, "In the sight of the angels I will sing to Thee, my God" (*Inst. Myst.* 1, tr. 1, c. 17).

Therefore, let us firmly hold, "It is good to give praise to the Lord: and to sing to Thy name, O most High" (Ps. 91, 2).

183. The Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

I. (a) We have already stated that the entire Divine Office reaches its climax in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. For this reason, in every monastery where there are at least four religious who are obliged to choir and are not actually lawfully hindered, there exists the obligation not only of daily saying the Divine Office in common, but also of daily celebrating the Mass corresponding to the office of the day according to the rubrics (Cf. *Const.* 138; Can. 610, n. 2). Moreover, the Holy Rule itself prescribes that the brethren should gather each day in the morning to hear Mass (X).

Therefore, we must be convinced that our most important task is the daily celebration of, or assistance at, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This can be no surprise for us if we have considered what this great Sacrifice is and what it is worth.

(b) Our Lord entered the world that He might always, everywhere and in all things, do the will of His Father and that He might give Himself up wholly and entirely for His honor and to His service, "Wherefore coming into the world, He says: Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not: but a body Thou hast fitted to me: holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I: Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of Me: that I should do Thy will, O God" (Hebr. 10, 5-7).

This self-surrender finds its noblest expression and fulfillment in the bloody Sacrifice of the Cross. For there in the anguish of the bitterest interior and exterior sufferings He offered everything to God the Father—honor, health, life. In this way he gave His heavenly Father the highest adoration, thanksgiving and satisfaction possible,

and likewise most effectually prayed for us. For he was especially fitted for this, since He alone of all men most perfectly understood what was owing to God and what man needed, and He likewise enhanced His praise and prayer by a most excellent gift when He offered Himself with the most ardent love and the most lowly reverence. Therefore, the sacrifice of the Cross was a latreutic act of adoration, absolutely perfect, so that God received from it all He desired.

(c) Now, our Lord has offered this bloody sacrifice not only for us, but also in our name, as He is the head of the whole human race. As the head of His mystical body, which is the Church, He continues to offer the same sacrifice innumerable times each day in an unbloody manner in the Mass, using the ministry of priests. Therefore, together with Christ the principal offerer, the Church too and her members offer this sacrifice through Christ. And this oblation is very pleasing to God the Father as was the sacrifice of the Cross, for there is the same priest, the same intention of the priest and the same victim. Our Lord does not merit again, but applies what he merited for us by the Sacrifice of the Cross, and bestows it upon us through the Sacrifice of the Mass. Therefore, the Sacrifice of Holy Mass is the channel of that fountain from which alone salvation was obtained for the whole world; it is the noblest worship than which no greater or more exalted can be given to God because of its essential identity with the Sacrifice of the Cross.

II. (a) To celebrate or to hear holy Mass with fruit, we must be imbued with the mind of Christ Himself, according to the words of the Apostle, "For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: Who being the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross" (Philipp. 2, 5-8).

We too must be prepared for all things, even unto scourgings and to the drinking of the chalice with our Lord (Cf. Matt. 20, 22; John 18, 11). The more we are filled with this disposition the better shall we celebrate the Sacrifice of the Mass with Christ. Filled with this mind let us adore God the Father through Christ, let us give Him thanks and make satisfaction, let us set forth our necessities while we offer the only-begotten Son. In this way we cannot fail to please God nor can we go unheard. Whether we should recite these or those prayers during Mass, or perform some mental prayer, for example, on the Passion of our Lord, does not seem to be so im-

portant, provided we express or foster this disposition of sacrifice by these prayers and continue to be filled with the same disposition. To recite the liturgical prayers together with the priest in this spirit is certainly best.

(b) Therefore, after we have prepared our hearts in a spirit of humility and contrition during the Confiteor of the priest, let us offer ourselves during the Offertory together with the bread and wine as symbols of ourselves. During the Consecration, in the oblation of the only-begotten Son, let us ask that God, just as He deigns to transform the bread and wine into His beloved Son, so also He may transform us and receive us together with Him as a holocaust.

(c) After we have offered to the Father the only-begotten Son in Whom he was well pleased, we again receive the same Son from the hands of the Father in Holy Communion, so that by a holy union we may adhere to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that in this way the prayer of our Lord, the High Priest, may be fulfilled, "That they all may be one, as thou Father in me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us" (John 17, 21). A more excellent gift we could not give, a more excellent gift we could not receive. For "how has He not also, with Him, given us all things?" (Rom. 8, 32). "By Whom also we have access through faith into this grace, wherein we stand, and glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God" (Rom. 5, 2).

Therefore, just as the Sacrifice of the Mass is not complete without the Communion of the priest, so we too, if we wish to perfectly offer the Mass with the priest ought to receive Holy Communion. If we cannot do so actually, we should do so at least spiritually, so that our union with Christ, in which alone we can please the Father, may be perfect. Let us therefore unite ourselves with Christ as intimately as possible in Holy Communion that thereafter we may not live for ourselves, but for the Father in Christ and through Christ.

(d) Just as Christ in eternal glory always lives to intercede for us (Cf. Hebr. 7, 25), showing the Father the wounds endured on the Cross, and on earth does not cease to renew the Sacrifice of the Cross, so we too, when leaving Mass, must persevere in that disposition in which we offered the Son to the Eternal Father and ourselves together with the Son. Therefore, whatever the Father should ask of us we should do promptly, the more so since, by a sacramental union entered into with Christ, we have been so wonderfully strengthened and prepared for it. Then, after we have died with Christ, we

shall also live with Him and through Him, so that we live, now not we, but Christ in us.

III. The Divine Office, in the center of which stands the celebration of the conventual Mass, should prepare us to celebrate Mass or assist at it worthily; it should also help us to persevere in that disposition with which we have celebrated or assisted at it. Thus the daily course around the Sun of Justice, which is Christ, will be perfected and completed, and the Divine Office will become for us and for others a source of saving water unto eternal life (Cf. John 4, 14), and unto a perpetual sacrifice of praise.

184. Further Counsels for Assisting at Mass

Now that we have sketched the principles let us add some counsels especially for the younger brethren, taken for the most part from the *Methodus,* by which we may more easily assist properly at holy Mass.

The *Methodus* (II, 452ff.) first of all distinguishes between a conventual and a private Mass.

I. (a) That our religious must be present at the conventual Mass unless they are excused by a just cause is clear from the very fact that it is called *conventual* and that clerics are obliged to the Divine Office, the center of which, as we have explained, is the Sacrifice of the Mass. Moreover, all our brethren are commanded by the Holy Rule to assemble daily to hear the solemnity of the Mass (X). In doing this they imitate the early Christians, who "were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread and in prayers" (Acts 2, 42). So also will be fulfilled in the religious community itself, what has been written of the Church, "Doing the truth in charity, let us in all things grow up in Him Who is the head, even Christ: from Whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplies according to the operation in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity" (Ephes. 4, 15. 16). From this union with Christ and in Christ religious will learn "while living together in the house of God, to be of one mind and heart" (*Const.* 101).

(b) All should likewise willingly co-operate so that the conventual Mass, at least on the greater festivals, may be celebrated with greater solemnity both for the greater glory of God as well as to foster the devotion of the religious. The rubrics *per se* suppose that the conventual Mass is sung daily. If this cannot be done, it is fitting to celebrate a dialogue Mass as it is called. At such a Mass

the religious are not only united with the celebrant, but are also excellently united among themselves to offer the Sacrifice to God. In this way the manner of assisting at Mass is sufficiently determined. For each one attentively follows the holy action itself by listening, answering, reading and meditating.

II. With this explanation, the *Methodus* has these counsels and admonitions:

(a) A certain intention of the Mass must be made beforehand for which the following prayer is recommended, "O Eternal Father, Who didst so love the world as to give it Thy only-begotten Son; and Thou, O Lord Jesus Christ, Who, out of the immense love which Thou didst bear for us, didst not consider it enough to have offered Thyself once for our sins in the Sacrifice of the Cross, but didst also institute the thrice adorable Sacrament of the altar, the Eucharist, in which, as often as Thy priests offer Mass Thou dost offer Thyself to Thy Eternal Father! I desire now to be present at this truly divine Sacrifice, and there to adore Thee together with the blessed spirits who are present there with Thee. I beseech Thee to purify my heart and make me worthy of so sublime a mystery. Grant me this grace that I may go forth to Thy service more fervently than ever before. And thou, O most holy Virgin, who wert present at the bloody Sacrifice of the Cross and didst co-operate with Him in accomplishing it by a most noble resignation to the death of thy Son, grant that I may be attentively and devoutly present at this Sacrifice to the greater glory of God, as an expression of thanks to my Redeemer and to thy unceasing praise."

(b) But if the Mass is sung it is an excellent practice if one answers interiorly and, with a certain devout eagerness, sings with the choir itself, and strives to say with the heart what is pronounced with the mouth. This should be done at the *Kyrie, Gloria, Gradual, Sanctus,* etc.

We must listen to the Epistle and Gospel with great attention and reverence and not allege the empty excuse that, since we have heard it so often, we already remember it. For in listening to these parts of the Mass we can gain the greatest merit for ourselves.

We ought to say the Creed with affection and sing the profession of our faith with raised voice, glorying that we are Christians and sons of the Church.

(c) Let us pray with the priest when he says the Collects and sings the Preface. For in them he speaks in the plural and in the name of all assisting whom he has previously greeted by saying,

"Dominus vobiscum," and who themselves have answered, *"Et cum spiritu tuo."* Then he said, *"Oremus"* in order to invite them to apply their heart to those things which he pronounces with his tongue.

(d) We do not recommend that other vocal prayers be said now, but only that each one unite his prayer with the intention of the priest and, together with him, offer the Sacrifice for the same ends and in the same manner in which our Lord offered it for the whole world. That one may conform himself to the ends of the Sacrifice, the offering should be:

1. A thanksgiving for each and every benefit, and especially for the benefit of our Redemption fulfilled by the bloody Passion of Jesus.
2. To show the highest worship due to the Divinity by the worthiest possible Victim, and by the profoundest adoration.
3. In expiation for all offenses, our own as well as of all men who are still living on earth or of those whose souls are detained in the fires and pains of Purgatory.
4. To obtain, through the merits of Jesus Christ offered to the Eternal Father, all the graces necessary especially for ourselves as well as for the whole Church in general and for the Order.

(e) At the Elevations, by adoring Jesus Christ, our Lord, in the Most Blessed Sacrament on our own behalf as well as in behalf of the unbelieving and infidels who do not acknowledge His in this mystery; and let us especially ask of Him our eternal salvation and the final grace of a good death, saying for example, "O good Jesus, never permit me to be separated from Thee. I am Thine, save me."

The Church has enriched various invocations with indulgences when they are recited during the Consecration, namely: *My Lord and my God!* (An indulgence of seven years is granted the faithful, who recite this ejaculatory prayer with faith, piety and love, when the most Sacred Host is elevated in the Sacrifice of the Mass, or while It remains solemnly exposed; a plenary indulgence can be gained once a week, if the above pious practice has been followed daily, together with sacramental Confession, Holy Communion and prayer for the intention of the Holy Father). Then, 1. *Hail, saving Victim, offered for me and for the whole human race on the gibbet of the Cross.* 2. *Hail, Precious Blood, flowing from the wounds of Jesus Christ, our crucified Lord, and washing away the sins of the whole world.* 3. *Remember Thy creature, O Lord, whom Thou didst redeem by this Precious Blood.* (Five hundred days indulgence for each ejaculatory prayer, also when said separately, if recited during the Eleva-

tion of the Mass). Finally, *Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.* (An indulgence of five hundred days is granted to the faithful, who devoutly recite this little prayer after the Consecration in the Sacrifice of the Mass; a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions, if they devoutly recite the same prayer each day for an entire month). Cf. *Preces et pia opera,* Rome, 1938, nn. 106. 107. 113).

(f) At the Agnus Dei preparation begins for Communion, whether sacramental or spiritual.

(g) For the rest, everything that will now be said concerning assistance at a private Mass should be applied when appropriate.

III. For one who assists at a private Mass, the *Methodus* recommends the following:

He should make the same offering and adoration at the Elevations, and the same acts for spiritual Communion, if he does not actually receive Holy Communion. He should not recite his Divine Office unless perhaps hindered by extraordinary duties. But rather, he should be occupied interiorly, dividing the Mass into three parts. The first part is from the beginning up to the Offertory, which is for him a time of preparation; the second is from the Offertory up to the Agnus Dei, which is the offering of the Sacrifice; and the third is from the Agnus Dei to the end, in which the Communion, actual or spiritual, takes place.

(a) With regard to the first part: Having first formed his intention as in a conventual Mass, 1. he says the Confiteor with the server, interiorly acknowledging his sins, and seeking pardon for them through the intercession of the ever Blessed Virgin and of all the saints. 2. He unites his intention to the intention of the priest during the Collects and the other prayers. 3. He spends the remaining time thinking of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and the shedding of His Blood, of which our Savior wished the Sacrifice of the Altar to be a continual commemoration until the end of the world. Under no condition must he forget this.

(b) With regard to the second part: 1. He offers the Sacrifice in the same manner as at the conventual Mass. 2. He offers adoration at the Elevations for all those who do not acknowledge or adore our Lord in this mystery. 3. He asks his own salvation and the conversion of all who have gone astray. 4. He recites the *Pater Noster* together with the priest.

(c) With regard to the third part: 1. He makes a sacramental or spiritual Communion. 2. He makes thanksgiving by uniting his

intention with that of the priest while saying the thanksgiving prayers. 3. At the end he receives the priest's blessings as a son from his father, hoping that with it and by the invocation of the most Holy Trinity made over him he will receive the grace of Heaven to stand by his promises and to belong entirely to God.

IV. (a) Let each one follow the method of assisting at Mass by which he makes more progress, by promptly obeying the attraction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. When however one labors under a certain aridity or fatigue, and finds nothing to say to our Lord, he may use a devout book to aid him, unless he prefers simply to follow the prayers and actions of the priest from a small Missal, which practice is always to be highly recommended.

The spirit of sacrifice, however, should always increase in us through the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, so that we may be conformed to our Lord as perfectly as possible, the more so since we actually receive Him in Holy Communion. Not without reason did a certain very pious man reply to one asking how a person may best assist at Mass, "By sacrificing one's self, by sacrificing one's self."

(b) Religious should also gladly serve the Sacrifice of the Mass, being convinced, all things being equal, that, the more closely we are united with the priest in the sacred action itself, the greater fruits we shall receive from it. Likewise, let them learn the rubrics well, so that they may be prepared to rightly carry out so holy a service. For, "to serve the priest who celebrates the Sacrifice of the Mass, is indeed an angelic office. Therefore, let him serve at this Sacrifice with all possible piety and devotion . . . intent only upon God or His sacred ministry" (*Ceremoniale O. N.,* n. 413).

(c) All the religious should well consider the advice our Constitutions give priests, "They should so regulate their conduct according to the dictates of piety and sanctity that they will be able to celebrate daily, worthily and with fruit. To accomplish this more perfectly, let them approach the Sacrament of Penance at least once a week, and practise special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to the mysteries of the Passion of our Lord" (Art. 228). This holds also for the other religious in the sense that he who especially applies himself to the remote preparation or to a truly religious life, will certainly celebrate or assist at Mass very devoutly, and so will each day be wonderfully strengthened and confirmed in his holy purpose.

We conclude with the words of St. Francis de Sales: "The Sun of the spiritual exercises is the Mass, the center of Christian religion,

the heart of devotion, the soul of piety, an ineffable mystery which contains the abyss of divine love and in which God magnificently lavishes His graces and benefits by actually communicating Himself to us" (*Philothea* II, 14).

Let us rejoice, therefore, that in the Order we have such an opportunity of celebrating Mass or assisting at it, and let us thank God by gladly and devoutly celebrating Mass each day or assisting at it.

185. Private Devotions

I. The time which is not taken up by the Divine Office, by community exercises or by other necessary occupations, remains free for the private devotion of the religious. It is up to them, unless otherwise detained, to choose how they shall be occupied with God during this time. Christian piety, sometimes under God's own direction and inspiration, discovers many devotions which are very useful for this purpose and greatly aid the spiritual life. We shall now briefly discuss these.

(a) Devotion, in the strict sense, as we have said, is a focusing of the faculties of the soul upon our prayer and, therefore, is opposed to distractions and aridities.

But in the wider sense it means a certain more intense worship, with which we surround some particular religious or sacred object. This object can be some particular mystery of our faith, for example, the Holy Trinity, the Holy Eucharist; some event of our Lord's life, e.g., our Lord's Infancy or Passion; some part of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, e.g., His most Sacred Heart, His holy Wounds; some instrument of our Redemption, as the Holy Cross; finally, our patrons or other saints, etc.

(b) To despise particular devotions as it were on principle or to neglect them entirely in practice is contrary to the doctrine and custom of the Catholic Church. For they suppose faith and nourish it, and especially promote the interior life and the virtues, particularly of humility, hope and charity. It has often happened that some special devotion was inspired and recommended by our Lord Himself, or that the spiritual life of some saint was greatly advanced by some particular devotion or even eternal salvation itself assured, as is clear to everyone regarding veneration and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Catholic Church has not only repeatedly defended the worship of the Sacred Humanity of Christ, and the veneration of the saints and of their images against heretics

and other assailants, but has also been carefully vigilant that nothing unfitting or unbecoming might creep into such veneration.

(c) Hence it is helpful for all striving after perfection and the interior life to cultivate one or other particular devotion. In this way the whole spiritual life is endowed with wonderful stability and with a clear and determined purpose, around which all our energies and endeavors are easily rallied. There were saints who ordered their life around the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, others, around the Passion of our Lord; others devoted their efforts solely to the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary; others, influenced by some other particular devotion made great progress in the spiritual life giving themselves wholly and entirely to God.

II. But through imprudence it can happen that certain dangers and injuries, sometimes serious, accidentally spring from such devotions. Therefore, these counsels and principles should be followed:

(a) It is never permissible to cultivate particular devotions in such a way that obligatory ones are omitted or neglected. The community exercises and prescribed prayers should always be preferred.

(b) Devotions should not be unduly multiplied. Here also the proverb should be applied: Quality, not quantity. One solidly deep particular devotion, which fashions and penetrates the whole life is of more worth than many superficial and external devotions. From the imprudent increase of devotions easily arises a disgust for prayer and piety, more necessary or useful things are omitted, due self-denial is neglected, all piety degenerates into a certain spiritual sensuality and voluptuousness. Mental prayer especially should not be interrupted or curtailed on account of devotions. For St. Francis de Sales counsels the devout soul, "If during vocal prayer you feel that your heart is drawn and attracted to interior or mental prayer, do not hesitate to yield; but turn your mind very gently to it without worrying because you have not carried out the determined vocal prayers. For the mental prayer, which you have made in place of them, is more pleasing to God and more useful to you" (*Philothea* II, 1). Certainly, this doctrine should not be neglected by Carmelites who are especially called to mental prayer.

(c) We should not yield to anxiety if some particular devotion to which there is no obligation, is omitted or if some saint is less venerated. For where there is choice there is no reason for fear. For it is neither necessary nor useful to do everything. Nor do any of the saints envy or strive to emulate others. Besides, if we devoutly

perform the Sacred Liturgy with the Church each day there is no doubt that we sufficiently celebrate each mystery of the Faith and sufficiently honor all the saints.

(d) We should not lightly change particular devotions from which we have learned that we draw great benefit for the spiritual life, in order to transfer to new ones. For frequent changing is a sign of fickleness and is harmful to the spiritual life.

III. Nor should we hope that any devotion will ever be found by which we shall be exempted from the fundamental law of the spiritual life, that of self-denial. Rather, that devotion by which we are especially excited to mortification of ourselves is the most useful of all for us; while, on the other hand, any devotion, by which we are withdrawn from it is to be suspected. Therefore, we must not seek sweet or tender affections, but strong resolutions to give up all things and give ourselves entirely to God. It is not permissible to venerate the saints primarily to obtain their aid in temporal affairs, but rather our veneration should lead us to imitate them and by their aid to be led on to perfection.

Therefore, true devotion to a mystery or to a saint does not consist chiefly in vocally reciting many prayers, but rather in familiarity with the object of our devotion, and in this way, striving to grasp it as perfectly as possible and gladly stirring our affections through it to acquire light and strength for our whole spiritual life.

186. Carmelite Devotions

(a) Certain devotions can to some extent be obligatory for us, either because they are prescribed by the Church or by our Constitutions, or because they are connected by a certain necessity with our state and our duties and help much to fulfill them rightly. For this reason we shall here speak briefly of some particular devotions.

(b) Devotions peculiar to Carmel which must be close to the heart of every Carmelite, are:

1. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Mother, the external sign of which is the Holy Scapular. For our Order is eminently Marian (*Const.* 3) and the faithful cultivation of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and its widest diffusion, especially by means of the Holy Scapular, is strongly recommended to all our brethren (Art. 2 & 4).

2. Devotion to the holy Prophet Elias, our Father and Leader, after whose example we must unite the active life with the contemplative as its foundation and principal part (Art. 2, 7). For Holy

Mother Church herself insists that in every Order, its Holy Founder and spiritual Father should be venerated in a special way (Cf. Pius XI, Apostolic Letter *Ad Summos Moderatores Ordinum Regularium,* March 19, 1924).

3. Devotion to the holy Prophet Eliseus, Saint Joseph our chief protector, Saint Gabriel the Archangel, the holy parents of the Blessed Virgin and the saints of our Order (Cf. Art. 7). Especially in the school of these saints shall we learn what the true spirit of Carmel is, and how it should be preserved and practised. It is certainly our duty to honor these saints before other saints.

4. To the priests however, the Constitutions recommend that, "They should practise special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to the mysteries of the Passion of our Lord" (Art. 228). For the priest owes his state in life to the most Holy Eucharist without which there would be no priesthood of the New Testament, and he himself daily renews the mysteries of our Lord's Passion in the Sacrifice of the Mass. "He has before him and behind him the sign of the Cross of the Lord that he may always remember the Passion of Christ," says the *Imitation of Christ* (4, c. 5, n. 3). He must also be inflamed by the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the burning furnace of charity, so that, urged by the charity of Christ, he may become all things to all men (Cf. 2 Cor. 5, 14), and having become an ardent devotee of the Sacred Heart, he may draw upon himself those abundant graces promised to such devotees,—graces that will aid and strengthen him to gather abundant fruits in the vineyard of the Lord.

However, these devotions should be strongly recommended not only to our priests but to all religious. For, from familiarity with the divine Guest present among us under the Sacred Species they should learn to love our Lord above all things and with all their strength; by frequent meditation and contemplation of the Passion of our Lord and of the Sacred Heart burning with an infinite love they should be inflamed to love the cross of religious life and to embrace it with their whole heart and courageously to submit to spiritual death so that they may find a new life in our Lord.

5. Through a long tradition among us a special devotion to the Infant Jesus flourishes in our novitiates. By the example of the Infant Jesus the novices should be taught to understand the saying of our Lord, "Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 18, 3). Indeed they must learn to be humble, to be subject, to be docile, so that the

lofty edifice of the interior life may be built on as strong a foundation as possible. Let them enter into familiarity with our Lord Who deigned to become an infant for us, and let them continue fervently to beg Him that they may find the way of spiritual infancy and may be formed according to the divine example.

6. Finally, since experience teaches and the saints declare that all souls who have attained a high degree of prayer owe this to the Holy Spirit, whoever desires to advance in the interior and spiritual life must be dedicated to the Holy Spirit by a special devotion. Such will experience how beneficial this devotion is and how much they will advance under the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit.

(c) Although there is complete freedom in the practice of these devotions, still it is very important after mature deliberation to choose one and to determine its nature and method, and faithfully follow it as far as right reason indicates, lest through human fickleness the whole devotion should gradually wane. Above all however, those points should be observed which are prescribed or encouraged in this matter by the Church or the Constitutions or legitimate customs, or which the spiritual director may have counseled. For the best devotion is obedience and humble submission.

Let us add a few thoughts about some of the devotions which we should especially cultivate.

187. The Cult of the Blessed Sacrament

1. Our Lord, even after the Sacrifice of the Mass has been offered, remains amongst us in the Blessed Sacrament hidden in the tabernacle. So greatly does He burn with love for us according to the words, "My delights are to be with the children of men" (Prov. 8, 31). He invites all, "Come to Me all you who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. 11, 28). He dwells under the same roof with us. Can we neglect Him and forget His presence? Does not charity compel us to visit Him as frequently as possible? Are we not compelled by very necessity and by our misery to approach this throne of grace as often as possible and to find grace to help us in time of need (Cf. Heb. 3, 16)?

2. Indeed, Blessed Bartholomew Fanti poured forth most devout prayers day and night amid tears and heavenly joy before this mystery of the most burning love. Whence the power of performing miracles was often given him and of working instantaneous cures among the sick by merely the touch of the oil which fed the lamp before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament (Cf. *Brev. Carm.* Dec. 5). Very

frequently during the day St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi would visit and honor the most holy Sacrament and would remain before It with all the affection of her heart (Cf. AA. SS. May 5, n. 749). Blessed John Soreth saved the Sacred Species with danger to his own life (Cf. *Brev. Carm.* July 28). Finally Venerable Angelus Paoli "would worship the Eucharist with the deepest feelings, and whenever It was publicly exposed would abstain entirely from every kind of work, day and night contemplating and adoring God alone present in the Eucharist" (*Anal.* I, 76). Examples can easily be multiplied. Therefore, we follow the holy tradition of Carmel, when we visit with singular devotion our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament.

3. Indeed, intimacy with our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament will obtain for us abundant graces for every necessity of life. Besides, it will cause us to experience how sweet the Lord is so that we may more easily renounce earthly delights. It will be to our great gain, if we hasten to visit Him whenever our heart is disturbed by storms of any kind. For when our Lord commands, a great calm will ensue and the danger will pass so that we shall not speak or act imprudently before men. Particularly when we are tempted by hatred or anger toward our neighbor, it is especially advisable to cast ourselves on our knees before the tabernacle and to open our heart to our Lord, and expain our difficulties to Him. Then everything will appear to us in another light and the temptations will vanish. Finally, it is inevitable that our sentiments will gradually be transformed into the sentiments of our Lord and we shall indeed learn to live and work by faith. In this school of the most sublime holiness we cannot help becoming saints. Therefore, let us treat with the Lord hidden in the Blessed Sacrament as familiarly as possible and let us freely open and confide to Him all the secrets of our soul. Then, filled with a wonderful peace we shall enter into the rest of the Lord.

4. Lest we waste the precious time of our visits, it is important to use some determined method when visiting the Blessed Sacrament. Unless we are using a book (e.g., *The Visits* of St. Alphonsus Ligouri) it is best to elicit familiar affections as we have learned in meditation, that is, thanksgiving, oblation, resolution, petition, as the consideration of such a Sacrament will inspire or as the circumstances of time and place, and the actual state of our soul suggest. Spiritual Communion should never be neglected, and at the end, let us always approach the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Mother that she may supply what was wanting and may obtain greater graces for us from our Eucharistic Lord. It is very useful to determine in our daily schedule, when and

how long we shall make these visits. We should never depart from such a schedule unless out of urgent necessity.

5. Just as we can receive our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament in spiritual Communion, so also can we visit Him spiritually whenever we are hindered from physically visiting Him. Many, even though far away, are accustomed to adore our Lord in the tabernacle at least every hour, and to invite Him to visit their heart with His grace. Yes, even at the beginning of the day they first salute our Lord and direct their intentions to Him. Whenever they are free of other thoughts, they turn in spirit to the tabernacle to renew their faith, hope, charity and zeal for our Lord and the salvation of souls. They seem to dwell almost continually with our Eucharistic Lord whence they not only draw a wonderful peace, tranquility of mind and perfect detachment from creatures, but also draw abundant blessings for themselves and for the whole world. Always close to their Beloved they exclaim, "My beloved to me and I to Him, Who feeds among the lilies" (Cant. 2, 16).

188. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

I. "Among all the proofs of the Infinite Goodness of our Redeemer," says Pius XI, "it is particularly evident, that when the charity of the faithful is waning, the charity of God itself has been proposed for honor by a special worship and the riches of His Goodness have been widely made known by that form of devotion by which the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, in which are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, is worshiped" (Col. 2, 3; Encycl. Litt. *Miserentissimus Redemtor,* May 8, 1928).

(a) The object of this devotion is our Lord's corporeal heart of flesh, which was "formed in the womb of the Virgin Mother by the Holy Spirit," and is "substantially united to the Word of God." It is therefore, worthy of latreutic cult or adoration as is every member of the most sacred body of Jesus. However, we adore it in preference to the other members because it is a certain natural symbol of the whole interior life of our Lord and especially of that infinite love with which "He loved us and gave Himself up for us" (Eph. 5, 2). Moreover, this Heart "bruised for our offences," endured a very prominent part of the sufferings and sorrows of our Lord and in the end, pierced with a lance, it poured forth blood and water. Therefore, it is impossible for us, while contemplating this divine Heart to forget what our Lord has done for us and to fail to confess, "What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that He has rendered to me?" (Ps. 115, 12).

(b) Rightly and deservedly, therefore, do we adore this divine Heart in a special manner and see that others adore It also. "Are we not to see in that blessed sign and in the devotion which flows from it, the very substance of our holy religion, as well as the rules to guide us toward a more perfect form of life, since the Sacred Heart is the road which will most surely lead us to know intimately Jesus Christ and will cause our hearts to love Him more tenderly and to imitate Him more generously than we have heretofore done?" (Pius XI, ibid.).

II. But how are we to practise this devotion?

(a) "Among the different practices which directly accompany devotion to the most Sacred Heart assuredly the foremost is the act of consecration by which we offer to the Heart of Jesus both ourselves and all that belongs to us, recognizing that all we have comes to us from the infinite charity of God" (ibid.). This consecration, desired by our Lord Himself and asked by explicit words, is easier for us, since by our state we already belong wholly and entirely to God. But it should also continually remind us of what we owe according to our state and warn us not to withdraw any part fraudulently by badly fulfilling our holy vows.

(b) To this consecration it is necessary to add the duty of making worthy satisfaction or reparation to the most Sacred Heart afflicted because of our sins and continual ingratitude. We must suffer together with the suffering Christ "covered with opprobrium" and repair by our love and supererogatory works what we and others have withdrawn from Him or inflicted upon Him by sin and negligence. "Therefore, to the act of consecration, by virtue of which we offer ourselves to God and become thereby sacred to Him through the sanctity which necessarily flows from an act of consecration, as the Angelic Doctor teaches (II-II, q. 81, a. 8 c), we must add an act of expiation, by means of which all our faults are blotted out, lest perchance the sanctity of infinite Justice may spurn our arrogant unworthiness and may look upon our gift as something to be rejected rather than to be accepted. . . . As the act of consecration proclaims and confirms our union with Christ, so the act of expiation, by purifying us from sin, is the beginning of such union; our participation in the sufferings of Christ perfects it, and the offering we make to Him of our sacrifices for the welfare of our brethren brings such union to its final consummation" (ibid.).

1. In order to make reparation for such faults, our Lord Himself, among other requests, especially recommended the reception of the Communion of Reparation on the first Friday of every month and

a Holy Hour as it is called, by which we offer Him for that intention pious acts and prayers of reparation throughout the hour (Cf. ibid.).

2. In general we must practise this devotion for the purpose of presenting ourselves as "a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God" (Rom. 12, 1), "always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus" (2 Cor. 4, 10). Yes, while crucifying our flesh with its vices and concupiscences (Cf. Gal. 5, 24), and "fleeing the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world" (2 Pet. 1, 4), we must aim at dying to ourselves "that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4, 10).

(c) There is no one who does not see how well a truly religious life harmonizes with the foregoing, and that a truly religious life is the outstanding form of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

(d) But it is likewise apparent how closely devotion to the divine Heart is united to an intense devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, since indeed not only an image of the Sacred Heart is found there, but that Heart Itself is really and truly present. Next to His Passion our Lord could not give us a greater proof of His infinite love than to give Himself to us as food in the sacrifice of the Cross renewed daily among us and to seek His delights in conversing with the sons of men. Therefore, let us often visit the most Sacred Heart present in the Blessed Sacrament and draw from thence its riches. The Church herself counsels this when she teaches us to pray, "O Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, increase in us faith, hope and charity" (Indulg. 300 days).

When we act thus, the Lord will not hesitate to confer upon us abundantly what He promised to pious worshipers of His Heart, and He will not be slow to bless all our works and efforts until we have departed this life by a holy death, and we shall be privileged "to be with Christ" (Phil. 1, 23) forever and to rest in His Sacred Heart.

189. Devotion to the Infant Jesus

I. This devotion is usually recommended to our religious from the very novitiate for the reasons given above (no. 186) and on account of the abundant fruits which will flow from it for the spiritual life (Cf. *Directoires for Novices* III, c. 27).

(a) Because of our innate pride nothing seems to be more difficult for us than to practise what are called small virtues, in secret and hidden from the eyes of men with God alone as a witness. Not without a very good reason therefore did our Lord Himself wish to go before us as an example so that we might find this way more easily.

Hence, we should, throughout our whole life, keep our eyes fixed on the Child Jesus and His divine Mother who can never be separated from Him; and modeling ourselves after their example, we should love the hidden life along with solitude and silence; and this the more so since by our vocation to Carmel we are above all obliged to remain in our cell occupied in prayer.

(b) Novices and the younger professed especially should be trained in this school. Touched by divine grace they have indeed left the world and have entered religion with courage and fervor. But since they are still children in the spiritual life they are usually inexperienced and unskilled and lacking in solid virtues. Therefore, they are rightly called beginners. They must above all learn the spiritual childhood by which they should give themselves entirely and without restriction to God and commit themselves to their master as children who are to be taught. They must learn to be little and to believe without doubt, to obey without reluctance, to be in want without murmuring, to work without presumption, to live in a spirit of humility and simplicity, to strive for nothing else than to please God. Where, one may ask, will they better and more easily learn these virtues than in the school of the Child Jesus, Who while subject to Mary and Joseph, advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and man. (Cf. Luke 2, 52)?

(c) St. Theresa of Avila, to whom the Child Jesus Himself appeared, advanced in this school to a mature perfection and holiness. The same is true of St. Albert of Sicily who merited to receive the divine Child in his arms, and especially of the illustrious St. Therese of the Child Jesus who professedly taught us this way, and whose intercession we should implore in order to learn it. If our religious walk in this way, they will never stray from the way of the just.

II. In the novitiate, according to the *Directoires for Novices,* this devotion is commonly practised in this way: A statue or image of the Child Jesus is kept each month by one of the novices in his cell. On a set day in the beginning of the month, it is carried in procession to the oratory of the novitiate. There the Father Master names an external virtue which the novices ought especially practise during the month and which he explains and recommends. Then the novice who is to keep the holy image, and a companion are chosen by lot among the novices. It is the special task of these two to excite the other novices to practise the virtue of the month by their example. Likewise, they kneel before the holy image and promise that they

will faithfully practise that virtue in honor of the Child Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, and will implore their aid for this purpose. They will promise to grant the novice who has excelled the others in the virtue indicated, a fifth part of the satisfactory value of their good works. Finally the holy image is taken in procession to the cell of the custodian. Everyone can see that if this exercise is performed in the right spirit it will avail much in acquiring virtue.

190. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary

(a) It is sufficiently inculcated upon all the members of Carmel by the whole tradition of the Order and by the Constitutions themselves, how great devotion they must foster toward the Mother of God, who is in good right called the *Mother and Splendor of Carmel* and to whom we are in a special manner consecrated by our very title, happily and faithfully preserved through the course of centuries with the aid of Heaven, i.e., the *Order of the Brothers of the most Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel.*

(b) Saint Berthold, our first Latin General, "was inflamed with such affection for the most Blessed Virgin, that he would not allow one hour of the day to pass without saluting her with devout prayers while prostrate on the ground." St. Brocard, to whose prayers we owe the Rule, lying on his deathbed left this inheritance to his Brethren, "Children, God has called us by lot to the Order and among the number of hermits, and by His special favor we are called Brothers of the most Blessed Virgin Mary. See, therefore, that after my death you do not falsely claim this name. Therefore, remain constant in goodness, detest riches, despise the world and lead a good life after the example of Mary and Elias!" (Cf. *Carm. Brev.,* March 29 and Sept. 2, Lessons of the 2nd nocturn).

From these words we now see what we must above all observe if we wish to be true members of Carmel and devotees of the Blessed Virgin. All else will receive force and value only when these words are well observed. All will be vain and useless if they are not. The predilection of the Blessed Virgin Mary in which we glory will be changed into abhorrence and rejection, if we should forget or neglect what we have solemnly vowed to her praise.

(c) But let us listen to an outstanding client of Mary, Father Michael of St. Augustine, than whom no one could better commend or explain this devotion:

(1) "I can no longer omit striving with all my strength to instill and highly recommend cordial devotion, filial love and most tender

affection for our beloved Mother Mary, as a special and efficacious means to a devout life in Christ; since indeed we salute her every day as *Mary, Mother of grace, Mother of mercy,* which grace and mercy are absolutely necessary for a devout life. With what greater right shall we seek refuge to obtain grace and mercy than in the Mother of grace and mercy? Therefore, I say with the Apostle, 'Let us go with confidence to the throne of grace: that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid' (Heb. 4, 16).

(2) "However, in order that we may be permitted to go with confidence to this throne and Mother of grace, we ought to earn her love. All those therefore who glory in proclaiming that they are her servants, her sons and her brothers, must certainly conform their lives to the obligation of their profession, by striving to become, in some degree, like so holy a Patroness, so lovable a Mother and so kindly a Sister, by imitating her perfections and by absorbing her admirable dispositions. You who love Mary, emulate her humility, her chastity, her poverty, and her obedience; imitate her in the love of God and the neighbor and in the other virtues, as indeed it is fitting to exercise yourself in virtuous works which become such a Mother, lest you be rejected as false sons. But, if she is your Mother, where is her honor? Where is your filial affection of love for her, or where is her most kind, devout and sweet disposition reflected in you?

(3) "Therefore, in order to show her due and fitting honor and love, every day after you have offered yourself, all your possessions and works to the most Holy Trinity with the intentions of Christ in union with His merits, accustom ourself thereafter to offer yourself, all your possessions and exercises to this your most lovable Mother in a special way in union with her Immaculate Conception, her undefiled maternity, her inviolate virginity and most exalted sanctity, and at the same time, in her honor, to her most Beloved Son. And as you do everything in the word of the Lord, do it also in the word and in the name of Mary, after the example of our St. Peter-Thomas, Patriarch of Constantinople. You should also imitate him by impressing the most sweet name of Mary on your heart and by having it often on your lips as most sweet honey. Frequently also throughout the day and night raise our mind and heart to her with a most tender affection of love, saying, 'Show thyself a mother.'

(4) "Then, too, in every temptation, in every adversity and distress run to her with sure confidence and loving affection, just as children are wont to run to their mother's bosom when they are frightened or molested. Rest in her arms and sleep on the most

sweet breast of her mercy; in a word, act freely in all things as a beloved child with a dear kind mother; for, although you perhaps have many saintly patrons and patronesses to whom you are devoted, you do not have many mothers. For she has begotten, suckled and nourished you in Christ. When you discover her image anywhere, rejoice and from the bottom of your heart venerate your mother in it; when you are writing, let your pen first write her sweet name; likewise in evey conversation, at all times and in every place, strive to be the good odor of such a loving Mother in all your works, words and thoughts.

(5) "Commit yourself entirely to her, approach her as your most excellent teacher, consult her as the most prudent Virgin; prepare for and spend her feasts with special honor and by the practice of some special devotion; in a word, conduct yourself as becomes a good son and you will learn by experience that she is the Mother of fair love and of holy hope, from whom all the grace of the way and of the truth will flow into you and from whom all hope of life and of virtue will shine upon you (Cf. Ecclus. 24, 24-25). Nor will she ever cease to obtain for you the graces necessary to persevere in true devotion. Nay rather she herself will serve you as the fountain of living waters (Cf. Cant. 4, 15). Likewise she herself will not disdain to say to you at the hour of death that she is your sister, yes, your Mother, that it may be especially well for you at that time and that your soul may live for her sake (Cf. Gen. 12, 13). By thus passing a devout life in her honor and service you will also merit to die securely, peacefully and piously in love of her and to be happily brought by her maternal arms to the gate of salvation; for at death it will be well for the lover of Mary" (*Inst. Myst.* 1 tr. 1, c. 18).

(d) Let us continually bear in mind and heart the name of Mary and practise what is recommended in the *Methodus* (II, 417): "We are taught by the tradition of our Fathers and also by the example of the saints of our Order to offer whatever we do to God through the most pure hands of the holy Mother of God, because whatever comes from and through her hands is most acceptable to the Divine Majesty." In this way we can gradually approach that form of Marian devotion, which according to the practice and experience of Marie of St. Theresa, Tertiary of our Order, Father Michael of St. Augustine especially recommended in his treatise *On the Marian life* and which Saint Louis-Grignon de Montfort propagated afterwards in a similar manner, "All things in Mary, for Mary, with Mary and through Mary" (Cf. n. 214 B). Let each one of us therefore love his

heavenly Mother as much as possible, and most fervently honor her as the Holy Spirit will inspire him, but especially by a truly Carmelite life. Love does not need either commands or urgings. (Cf. nn. 205 and 214 B).

191. The Holy Scapular

I. It is agreed amongst all that the distinctive mark of Carmelites is the holy scapular of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is the glory and joy of Carmel, for which we can never sufficiently thank this tenderest of mothers. For this reason we are so much the more bound by our profession to think rightly of this gift and to use it conscientiously. (Cf. *Anal.* X, 238 ff).

(a) Our Order was passing through a crisis, when our Fathers were slowly expelled from the East and many powerful enemies denied that the Carmelite Order had a right to exist and to develop in the West. The Carmelites, especially the Prior General, St. Simon Stock, persevered in prayer and implored their Mother to come to their assistance. Nor did this Mother fail her children. Rather she enriched the Order with so great a privilege that its name was soon on everyone's lips, and we may rightly exclaim, "Oh happy persecution which was the occasion of so great a grace for us!"

When the most holy Virgin appeared to St. Simon Stock on July 16, 1251, she gave him the holy scapular and promised, "This will be to you and to all Carmelites a privilege, that he who dies in this will not suffer the eternal fire," i.e., he who dies in this will be saved. Could our most tender Mother have promised us anything greater? Could she have given us a more beautiful sign of her good will?

(b) Still it was not enough for this Mother to have honored her Order with so great a privilege. She added another one of no less importance. For she also appeared to Pope John XXII when, though not yet raised to the supreme pontificate, he was in anguish of soul because of his enemies, and she promised him future deliverance and elevation to the triple crown, admonishing him to defend and protect the Order of Carmel. At the same time she promised that, whoever devoutly wore the scapular of the Order and, observing chastity according to his state in life, would recite daily the canonical hours or, in case of impossibility, observe the prescribed fasts of the Church and abstain from meat on Wednesdays and Saturdays, she would free him from the pains of purgatory on the Saturday after death. These are her words, "I the Mother of graces will descend on the Saturday

after their death and whom I shall find in purgatory, I will deliver and lead him to the holy mount of eternal life" (*Bulla Sabbatina;* cf. *Anal.* IV, 255). Therefore, we do well to sing in the Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, "The gate of the inner court that looks toward the east shall be shut six days, but on the sabbath day it shall be opened." (cf. Ezech. 46, 1).

II. She is a faithful Mother and will not deceive us; she will stand by her promises and will not fail us in our necessities. But we too ought to show ourselves faithful. The holy scapular most efficaciously defends us against the fires of hell as well as of purgatory, provided we do our share. For, unless we do it, it is possible that, at the hour of death, whether outside or inside the Order, we shall find ourselves without the scapular. For presumption does not merit the special protection of this Mother. Therefore, Pius XI writing to the Prior General of the Order on March 18, 1922, "on the occasion of the sixth centenary of the Sabbatine Privilege," warned all who enroll in Carmelite confraternities, and, therefore, the Carmelites also," perseveringly to adhere to everything prescibed for the gaining of indulgences and especially the greatest of indulgences called the Sabbatine. For the Virgin loves those who love her, nor can anyone expect to have her assistance at death, unless during life he has found favor with her both by abstaining from sin as well as by some practice in ber honor" (cf. *Anal.* IV, 275; AAS. XIV, 274). Certainly our Blessed Mother did not give us the scapular as a kind of charm, or that superstition should be encouraged, but that the supernatural life might be safeguarded and increased.

(b) Let us constantly give thanks both in word and deed, and let us always wear the holy scapular with great piety, devoutly kissing it whenever, as is our custom, we pass before the most holy Sacrament or whenever we bow before a Crucifix or image of the Blessed Mother. Then, while interiorly renewing our perfect and unfailing devotion, let us in substance say with our lips or at least in our heart, "I am thine; save me!"

(c) The more we burn with love for our Blessed Mother and her scapular, the more gladly and fervently shall be spread her devotion and scapular among the faithful according to the wish of the Constitutions (art. 12, 17). For who would not desire that this Mother be known and loved by everyone and that all experience her powerful protection and assistance? Moreover, our Blessed Mother says, "They that explain me shall have life everlasting" (Ecclus. 24, 31).

192. The Holy Rosary

"The rosary is a fixed form of prayer, which we divide into fifteen decades of Hail Mary's with the Our Father inserted between each decade, at each of which we recall in pious meditation a certain mystery of our Redemption" (*The Breviary,* feast of the Rosary). It is a truly Catholic prayer and is spread among Christian people all over the earth. Its daily recitation is recommended to clerics by the Church herself (Can. 125), and it is enjoined on Carmelites by their Constitutions (no. 15) in which they are required to honor the Virgin Mother of God by the daily recitation of the Rosary publicly or at least privately.

I. The rosary has this advantage, that it is not only a prayer to ask the help of God and of Blessed Virgin, but also a school of the spiritual life. For when we are asked to meditate on the mysteries of the life, passion, death and glory of our Lord and His Mother while reciting these vocal prayers, the most powerful thoughts by which we are taught and urged to make progress in the spiritual life, pass before our eyes while we are reciting the rosary.

(a) First we are taught by the joyful mysteries, what are the elements of the spiritual life. For we are taught by the example of our Blessed Mother that after we have been freed from every worldly tie by perpetual and perfect virginity, we should serve and regard God alone, always and everywhere prepared to accept and follow the divine will in every circumstance (first mystery). The divine will also commands us to love our neighbor and, as far as possible, to assist him; therefore, we must often leave God for God's sake in order to be at the service of our brethren (second mystery). Nor is it less necessary to renounce the things of the world and in poverty to follow the Lord Who became poor for us; unless we desire this, we shall find neither Him nor His Mother (third mystery). While meditating on the presentation in the temple we should recall that sacrifice cannot be separated from the spiritual and religious life (fourth mystery). Finally we are taught to be wholly occupied in those things which pertain to our heavenly Father, and to persevere in seeking the Lord continually and with the strongest desire even though He seems sometimes to withdraw Himself from us. With desire and perseverance the greatest heights can be attained in the spiritual life (fifth mystery).

(b) Then the sorrowful mysteries teach us that no one who

refuses to ascend Calvary with Jesus and Mary will arrive at perfection or the enjoyment of contemplation in Carmel. For when fighting against sin we ought to resist with Christ even to blood; nor can we attain the joy of contemplation or eternal happiness without having become sorrowful even unto death (first mystery). Likewise, he who studiously flees the scourgings of corporal mortifications or the thorns of humiliations, will never be quite free from either the vice of sensuality, pride or ambition, so that his inmost soul remains unfit to receive the grace of contemplation (second and third mysteries). Yes, we ought to boldly and courageously follow the Lord beneath the Cross and His sorrowful Mother into every abandonment and desolation until we stand with the Mother under the Cross contemplating our Lord in His last agony (fourth mystery). Resurrection to a perfect spiritual life cannot come unless a perfect spiritual death has preceded it. To follow the Mother to the top of Mount Calvary, behold the life and goal of Carmelites! Finally, as sons, we shall be perfectly united with our Mother under the Cross, and, therefore, also with our Lord (fifth mystery).

(c) Finally, we are taught by the glorious mysteries that he who through spiritual death has offered to God "a heart holy and free from every stain of actual sin," as the *Institutio primorum monachorum* admonishes us Carmelites, can justly hope to be admitted to the other aim of Carmel, i.e., even in this mortal life to taste to some extent in heart and to experience in soul "the power of God's presence, and the sweetness of heavenly glory" (ibid. c. 2.). He who stands with Mary near the Cross, will rejoice with her at our Lord's resurrection (first mystery). For that reason he will yearn so much more for eternal and perfect consummation in Heaven and, although living on earth in body, will converse with the Lord in Heaven in thought and desire (second mystery). Confiding in the intercession of our Blessed Mother he will ask with great fervor for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that, transformed into God, he may not do his own will but may promptly understand and follow the inspirations of the Spirit of the Lord (third mystery). Thus, it will happen that he will continually increase and be strengthened in divine love after the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, until having attained perfect spiritual maturity and being completely dead to self, he may be considered worthy after departing this life, to be raised to his heavenly country to receive eternal reward (fourth and fifth mysteries).

He who frequently recites the rosary in this way will not be given

to tepidity but will advance from virtue to virtue. For him, therefore, the rosary will be a true school of holiness.

II. In order to encourage us to recite the rosary as often as possible, the Supreme Pontiffs have opened wide the treasury of the Church by granting numerous indulgences. Among others, we can gain a plenary indulgence as often as we devoutly recite a third part of the rosary before the Blessed Sacrament and go to confession and holy Communion (*Preces et pia Opera,* n. 360 c). In addition Pope Pius XI has granted that "all the faithful can gain the same indulgences whenever they are hindered by manual labor or some other reasonable cause from carrying in their hands, according to prescriptions a rosary or crucifix on which the blessing for gaining the indulgences either of the holy rosary or of the Way of the Cross has been bestowed, provided that during the recitation, they carry the rosary or Crucifix with them in some way" (AAS. XXV, 502 s).

We can therefore say the rosary everywhere and can gain the indulgences not only to ensure our own salvation but also to aid the souls still in purgatory.

"Let us always honor the most holy Mother of God by this most acceptable devotion that she, who so often overcame and destroyed earthly enemies when implored by the faithful through the rosary, may also overcome our infernal adversaries" (*Carm. Brev.* feast of the Rosary, lesson 6).

193. Devotion to St. Joseph

To God we owe adoration or latreutic worship; to the Blessed Virgin Mary we owe a very special honor which is called hyperdulia; to the other saints, however, the cult of dulia or simple veneration.

(1) Among these saints, St. Joseph, the foster-father of the Son of God and spouse of the Mother of God, certainly excels and should be particularly venerated by us as the chief patron of our Order who has been held in highest veneration amongst us from time immemorial. Arnold Bostius says in the year 1479, "We honor him with devout affection and venerate him with a more solemn devotion" (*Speculum Carmelitanum,* n. 1009).

(2) St. Joseph was united in marriage to the Blessed Virgin Mary by the will of God Himself, so that the virginity of the Mother of God might be defended and provision made for her honor and support. Although in this marriage both spouses observed perfect and perpetual virginity, in no other marriage was the union of souls more intimate or firm. St. Joseph honored his spouse with a most tender

love, nor was he loved less by the Blessed Virgin Mary. Who is able to imagine or to describe the greatness of the joys, the purest of joys, that flowed thence to both spouses? Having become one heart and soul for the sake of Jesus, their most precious pledge of love, they lived together, assisting each other as far as they were able, and inspiring each other to the highest sanctity. One would have believed that the life of paradise once lost had been restored. Can we neglect him, upon whom our Blessed Mother bestowed such love, reverence and obedience? Shall not that Order which is especially dedicated to her, rightly expect everything from her spouse?

(3) God wished St. Joseph to hold the place of a father for Jesus with all the rights and duties of a father. Therefore, he gave him a father's heart, filled with a tender and strong natural love but adorned with an even greater supernatural love for his foster-Son. This love increased wonderfully because of the beauty and lovableness bestowed upon the divine Child, because of the gratitude and obedience with which Jesus corresponded to his fatherly solicitude and because of the majesty and divine wisdom which were more manifest in Him each day. With what joy did he carry the divine Infant in his arms, kiss Him and hear the name of father from His lips, with what admiration and reverence did he contemplate all the actions of Jesus! With what care and diligence did he strive to be a father to the divine Son and to do everything for Him that seemed necessary or useful, sparing neither labor nor sacrifice. But with what sorrow and affection also did he reflect on the future sufferings of Jesus, deeply moved with compassion, "mingling tears with his joys."

(4) The life of St. Joseph is a true image of the life of Jesus and Mary. No one has come more closely to it than he. For Joseph did everything that pleased Jesus and Mary. Since he was head of the family he lived not for himself but for them. No one was so greatly aided by the grace and example of Jesus and Mary as he, and when he was forced to be absent, he remained with them in heart and mind. All his works were done for them and to them he devoted all his energies. He considered no sacrifice too difficult or too great to undergo for them. Out of love for them new and greater graces seemed to accrue to him each day. He renounced all else, since they alone were sufficient for him. He, therefore, has left us an admirable example.

(5) As we already said, a special devotion to St. Joseph is peculiar to our Order. Indeed our Order was among the first to celebrate the office of the Saint; likewise, it is known that many of our religious

brethren labored with great zeal to spread his devotion. Blessed Baptist of Mantua and St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi held St. Joseph in highest veneration. Especially did St. Theresa of Jesus inflame all with devotion for her "father and wonder-worker" (cf. *Anal.* X, We cannot fail to follow these examples.

194. Devotion to our Holy Father Elias

(1) In the old Constitutions of our Order, it was written, "We assert, however, bearing testimony to the truth, that from the time of Elias and Eliseus the prophets who lived devoutly on Mt. Carmel, other holy Fathers, both of the New and of the Old Testament, true lovers of the solitary mountain, dwelt near the fountain of Elias, contemplating heavenly things and persevering in the practice of mortification." These truths found visible expression when the Carmelites, with permission of the highest authority, placed a statute of the Prophet Elias in the Basilica of St. Peter adorned with this inscription, "The whole Order of Carmelites to their Father and Founder."

It is certainly true that no one else has ever held the name or honor of father and founder in our Order, and that Carmelites have always proposed the example of Elias for their imitation.

(2) Rightly is our holy Father Elias said to have laid the foundation of the monastic life (Cf. *Carmelite Missal,* Preface of St. Elias). He was concealed for a long time in the solitude of the torrent Carith (3 Kings 17, 3), lived in poverty and in perfect perpetual chastity and consecrated himself entirely to God, having no other desire than to walk in the sight of God (cf. 3 Kings 17, 1) and to fight for his honor. With zeal he was zealous for the Lord God of hosts (cf. 3 Kings 19, 10). However, Mount Carmel was a witness not only to his miracles but also to his contemplations, and from the top of that mount the holy Prophet saw the little cloud rising out of the sea like the footprint of a man which announced the end of the drought and was a figure of the Immaculate Mother (Cf. 3 Kings 18, 44). All those who were afterwards received on Mount Carmel strove to imitate his example, so that "near the fountain of Elias" (Rule, Prologue) they might be able efficaciously to serve their Creator on the lofty height of contemplation (Cf. Const. of the Gen. Chap., 1287).

(3) The author of the book *De Institutione Primorum Monachorum* has very extensively drawn a norm of life for the members of Carmel from the life of our holy Father Elias. There Carmelites,

as we have so often heard, are taught by the example of St. Elias to renounce the riches and the enjoyments of the world, to love solitude and silence, and constantly denying themselves through the three religious vows to offer God a heart holy and free from every stain of actual sin that so they may arrive, if God grants it, at some foretaste of the heavenly life.

(4) Finally, St. Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, at the request of St. Brocard gave a rule to our fathers dwelling on Carmel "near the fountain of Elias," which we continue to follow. Although it is very short, it contains everything necessary to live a perfect life in the spirit of Elias. It teaches perfect renunciation of the world through obedience, poverty and chastity, teaches the love of solitude and silence, demands continual converse with God, the avoidance of all idleness, and thus strives to lead its followers to perfect love of God and the neighbor; yes, it even strives to excite them to the greatest possible fervor by means of the supererogatory works it recommends. Therefore, it truly expresses the spirit of the man who, hating all hesitation and mediocrity, of old rebuked the Israelites, "How long do you halt between two sides?" (3 Kings 18, 21), and who, for this very reason, merited to be fed by God in a wonderful way and to behold Him on Mount Horeb.

(5) Holy Scripture itself has celebrated the glories of our Father Elias (Ecclus. 48, 1, 2), and has handed down his life to posterity (3 Kings 17, 1; 4 Kings 2, 12), from which his disciples might learn what they should imitate. St. James especially has commended him as a man powerful in prayer, saying, "Elias was a man like ourselves, subject to the same infirmities; and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain upon the earth, and it did not rain for three years and six months. He prayed again, and the heavens gave rain and the earth brought forth its fruit" (James 5, 17-18).

(6) It is known to everyone that the holy Prophet is held in highest veneration among the Orientals. But his cult has also passed to the West and at the end of the tenth century there were churches dedicated to him. In the *Speculum Carmelitanum* (I. pp. 109ff), many miracles are attributed to the holy Prophet. Nor are there lacking today, even among lay people, those who positively declare that they have experienced his powerful intercession (cf. *Anal.* X, 105).

(7) We have already heard the advice of St. Brocard (n. 190). Saint Avertanus, however, "proposed Christ and the great Prophet Elias, the founder of our Order, as his model of poverty" (*Carm.*

Brev. Feb. 25). We too should imitate our father Elias by a truly Carmelite life and invoke him with all confidence in our needs and in the needs of the Order dear to him. "Blessed are they that saw thee, and were honored with thy friendship" says Holy Scripture itself of our holy Father (Ecclus. 48, 11).

195. Various Devotions

It only remains to add a few details concerning devotion to the saints of our Order, to patron saints and to our guardian angel.

(1) First comes devotion to our guardian angel. If we ought to look on all the holy angels with great admiration and veneration because they are far superior to us by nature and are powerful friends of God, we ought to hold our guardian angel in special veneration. We should observe two things in his regard. First we should pray to him, invoke him and thank him. For the more powerful he is with God, since he has been appointed by God Himself as our advocate, the more thanks he merits since he continually assists us day and night, and defends us against all dangers and against the powers of darkness. Second, we hould willingly accept his guidance. For the Church herself warns us in the words of Sacred Scripture (Ex. 23, 20-21), "Behold I will send my angel, who shall go before thee and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him, and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned: for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned, and My name is in him" (*Carm. Brev.* Office of the Guardian Angels). Many saints of our Order such as St. Theresa, St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi and especially Father Michael of St. Augustine excelled in veneration of their holy guardian angel. Blessed Mary of the Angels when about to enter or leave her cell would send her guardian angel before her. Hence, we should particularly remember to implore his aid and to thank him at least in the morning and evening.

(2) If we are commanded to love our brethren, we ought first of all to love our saints. For those who gave glory to our Order by their virtues and deeds and dwell with God in eternal happiness have not ceased loving us. If any of the saints should be invoked, they should especially be those of our Order, because they more than other saints are solicitous for our salvation and for the good of the Order. If any of the saints should be imitated, they ought to be those of our Order, because they professed the same rule and walked on the same road as we to arrive at holiness and eternal reward. They teach us

by word and example how we, when filled with the spirit of our Order, should accomplish in deed what we, as well as they, have promised. Hence, on the feast of All Saints of our Order we are taught to say, "Almighty and merciful God . . . graciously grant that we, living solely for Thee in continual meditation of Thy Law and in perfect self-denial, may be able through their example and merits to attain with them to the happiness of eternal life."

(3) Among the many holy patrons of our Order whom we are ordered by our Constitutions to venerate, Saints Joachim and Anne, the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose cult is very ancient among us (especially as far as the cult of St. Anne is concerned), are certainly worthy of special mention. Our fathers seem to have brought it with them from the East, (Cf. *Anal.* X, 104, 232; *Anal. Carm. Disc.* VII, 1932, pp. 104-151). Nor should we pass over St. Gabriel the Archangel, who brought to the Blessed Virgin so exalted a message from Heaven (Cf. *Const.* no. 7).

(4) Moreover, the patron whose holy name we received with the religious habit should not be neglected. His name should remind us that we have left the world and, therefore, have changed our name and have placed ourselves under his special protection so that we may more surely attain the object of our coming to the Order. With good reason, therefore, do we pray to him before other saints. Since, however, we must be concerned not only about ourselves but about the whole Order and all our brethren, let us not forget frequently to recommend our Order to him and our other holy patrons, so that freed from internal and external difficulties, it may grow in the love and grace of God and may flourish to the glory of God and the honor of our beloved Mother.

(5) It may be that some will fear that, having recommended devotion to so many saints, we are unmindful of the prudence and discretion we recommended above, or that by excessively multiplying vocal prayers mental prayer and interior converse with God may suffer. But it is not necessary to say long prayers daily to each of the saints. Indeed, for this very reason St. Theresa composed short litanies of all the saints she especially venerated, and recited them every day. By following this practice we render to the saints what belongs to the saints and reserve sufficient liberty and enough time for mental prayer. Yes, the saints themselves will promptly help us so that as we by their example penetrate each day more deeply into the secrets of mental prayer, we may also attain true sanctity.

CHAPTER FOUR

ASPIRATIONS

196. The Nature and Effects of Aspirations

I. Our nature and our actual condition do not allow us to apply ourselves constantly in a formal and explicit manner to mental or vocal prayer. Even though other multitudinous occupations did not urge, we would not be able without special grace to bear so great a burden and responsibility. If we were to attempt this, our human nature would speedily succumb.

Nevertheless, our Lord admonishes us to pray always and never to faint, (Cf Luke 18, 1) and our Constitutions desire that all give themselves to a permanent union with God according to their ability and the unction of the Divine Spirit (Cf. no. 149). For according to the teaching of Father Dominic of St. Albert, our intellect and will, our principal faculties, have been primarily given to us to be actually applied to God (Cf. *Anal.* VIII, 308). To effect this, our Carmelite School teaches us the prayer of aspiration, as it is called, which we shall now explain according to the *Methodus.* At this point we note at once, that in this kind of prayer, as we shall see, the exercise of the presence of God is included and contained.

This prayer agrees with mental prayer in that it is conceived in the mind; with mixed prayer, in that it is produced frequently by heart and lips. However, it is distinguished from both in that it consists of few words and is sent briskly heaven-ward in an instant, like an arrow or spear. Thus it comes to be commonly called ejaculatory prayer.

II. What, therefore, is an aspiration?

The *Methodus* quoted above answers: It is the fervent raising of our soul to God in a few words and the vigorous and instantaneous direction of our soul to Heaven that we may make known to the Divine Majesty the good affections and holy desires we have conceived. It is explained thus:

(a) It is an elevation of soul to God; in which respect it agrees with every other kind of prayer. But this prayer is fervent, because it is the effect of our actual love, and, as it were, a spark emitted from the burning furnace of divine love enkindled in our heart.

(b) It is comprehended in few words because it is not stretched out or protracted as is mental prayer, but rather, the soul, as far as it can, expresses all the affections of the heart in one word. But

sometimes the soul dwells a little longer on some truth and converses lovingly with God about it. Such prayer is called conversation and not an aspiration.

(c) It is sent briskly toward Heaven, because it is like an arrow forcefully shot toward its target. Man is like the archer because he sends it forth; the target is God Whom the arrow will reach without fail because He freely exposes Himself to it. However, for one act of love sent up to God by the soul and for only one arrow shot toward Him, He returns a hundred. Thus ensues that wonderful struggle between God and His creatures, in which, it is true, God will always carry off the victory, but only to the advantage of the creatures. When the creature has been wounded with the javelin of love, it cannot help thinking of Him unceasingly and being consumed day and night with the desire of pleasing Him.

III. (a) The practice of aspirations as just explained seems suitable only for such as have made great progress in prayer and in the love of God; because the tepid and negligent deem this exercise impossible. Indeed, it is impossible until one has given himself seriously to mental prayer and has filled his soul with good thoughts and affections to serve him as loving aspirations. Nevertheless, it sometimes happens that God efficaciously excites novices right at the beginning of their conversion and so strongly draws their hearts to Himself that this exercise becomes very easy for them; and in a few days He leads them to high virtue, provided they are willing to encourage His solicitations and to feed the fire burning within them.

(b) From the beginning, our novices should as deeply as possible impress on their minds that the spirit of our holy Order consists chiefly in the constant actual affective communion with God, according to the words of our Holy Rule, "meditating day and night on the Law of the Lord." "For the word *meditate,*" says the *Methodus,* "does not mean that we must be always intent on the consideration and investigation of divine things. This is impossible because of the weakness of man's mind and heart. Rather by meditation we understand the affection of our heart and the ardor of our will which is not only not fatigued by loving, as is the mind by thinking, but on the contrary, the more it loves so much the more does it experience incitement, pleasure and strength to love still more" (I, 287).

(c) In this respect the spirit of our holy Order is by far most sublime and our brethren ought, therefore, to esteem it highly. Surely no greater inheritance could fall to our lot in this world than to be called to the state in which we profess to imitate the Blessed. For

just as the life of the Blessed in Heaven is founded on the unbroken vision of God, on the most intense love and praise, so the life of the Carmelite religious must ever be intent on seeing God in everything and having his heart raised to Him. The more instant, the more genuine and the more unbroken our love for God is, the more will it resemble the love of the Blessed.

(d) If in the Old Testament God commanded that there should always be fire on the altar and that the priest should carefully feed the fire by adding wood every morning, it was not because He had need of material fire, but rather that He might teach us that the fire of holy love should always burn on the altar of our heart, and that we should feed it each morning by adding fuel, i. e., by prayer, and that by the draft of aspirations, as it were, we might guard against extinguishing it. "The fire on the altar shall always burn, and the priest shall feed it, putting wood on it every day in the morning, and laying on the holocaust, shall burn thereupon the fat of the peace offerings. This is the perpetual fire which shall never go out on the altar" (Lev. 6, 12, 13).

IV. If all the foregoing should not suffice to excite esteem for the practice of aspirations, we should at least consider the rich fruits which are sure to accrue to the soul from this source.

(a) Frequent aspirations turn our heart to the Lord and hold it bound with a certain strength and readiness generously to embrace every occasion of mortification and virtue we may meet. For how could he who has long since sworn fidelity to the Lord, swerve from his obligations to Him on such occasions? On the contrary, we know by experience that most of our faults rise from the fact that we pay no attention to God or to ourselves.

(b) Frequent aspirations in a certain way render us invulnerable to the temptations of our adversary. For he who has learnt this exercise has a mind so alert, so sharp and so clear that the demons set their snares in vain, because he raises himself to Heaven with wonderful speed. The Wise Man already notes this and explains it under the figure of a bird, saying, "A net is spread in vain before the eyes of them that have wings" (Prov. 1, 17). Thus also the devil lays his snares in vain for those souls who fly up to Heaven like eagles and whose conversation is with God more than upon earth.

(c) Frequent aspirations purify the mind, restrain exessive haste in working and the precipitation of a too ardent nature, teach us to proceed prudently and cautiously in all things, accustom the religious to fix his first thoughts on God and to seek God's advice in everything

in order that he may not throw himself heedlessly and frivolously into any and every affair.

(d) Since God is a consuming fire, the soul will be inflamed so much more as it approaches more closely to Him by means of fervent aspirations and loving desires.

V. For this reason Brother John of St. Samson warmly approves this practice, saying, "when this method of aspirations is generously employed by means of a familiar, religious, prompt and loving conversation with God in which the soul is drawn out of itself to Him, it is so excellent that by it you will shortly reach the summit of perfection and you will be aflame with the love of Love Itself" (Op. 321).

It would be desirable, therefore, that the novices try with with all diligence to acquire this practice together with remembrance of the presence of God of which we shall speak later. Through the advantage and help of these two practices they will surely reach the highest and most outstanding summit of intimate and loving union with God.

Even though as beginners they do not yet experience a great conflagration of love within themselves, and cannot, as certain saints did, ceaselessly emit aspirations as from a roaring furnace, still, they will strive to light a little flame in their heart and gradually enlarge it and add to it. They will make special efforts to conceive a strong desire for God. This desire frequently and fervently communicated to God by means of ejaculatory prayers will bring them in a short time and by a shorter course to a loving and continuous union with God Himself .

197. The Method of Practicing Aspirations

I. The Genesis of Aspirations.

Aspirations can arise or can be produced in our soul in two ways:

(a) First, by the mere touch or breath of God Who in some inexplicable way excites us by the impulse of His grace and in a moment gathers up all our powers. To the intellect He communicates a light by means of which an outstanding truth that has been shown us impels our will to produce an affection in conformity with it. This affection directed toward God is the aspiration,—the ejaculatory prayer of which we are speaking. E. g., if, while thinking of nothing in particular my mind is suddenly accosted and enlightened by an idea to the effect, "God sees you and is unspeakably satisfied in having His eyes fixed on His creatures. And what are you thinking?", and the will immediately corresponds to this light and sends an aspiration heaven-

ward in this wise, "Who am I, Lord, that Thou shouldst fix Thy divine eyes upon me." Or it may be, "O that I were cleansed from all imperfections so that I might be more acceptable to His eyes!" Or again, "Thou regardest me everywhere, O Lord, with infinitely watchful eye! I in turn will regard Thee everywhere and in everything; for I wish that my heart and thoughts be ceaselessly fixed on Thee."

According to this first manner, the aspiration rises without any effort or attention on our part, by the mere fact that we simply yield to the inspiration and impulse of the Holy Spirit; although very frequently such great readiness, or perhaps spontaneity, in eliciting aspirations may be the fruit of longstanding antecedent practice, or perhaps the spontaneous movement of a pure heart on fire with divine love. For what is more natural to a heart on fire with divine love than to think of its Beloved and converse lovingly with Him? Everything seems to call the Beloved to mind.

(b) The second way depends more on ourselves and consists in the fact that we try carefully, diligently and methodically to recollect ourselves and to raise our heart to God.

(1) For this purpose no great reasonings or profound considerations are necessary, but merely that we seize occasion from what happens to us, of praising and blessing God, or perhaps of recalling some truth already known to us and well considered, confronted with which our will must inevitably be re-animated; just as he who has been stirred to some great joy by some spectacle or event, is accustomed to experience similar affections whenever he recalls it, or at last he is moved to wish the same enjoyment once more. Or just as one who has undergone some horror, is by the mere remembrance or mention of it again affected with like horror. In spiritual matters we can purposely recall such affections.

(2) Thus everything we see, every word we hear, everyone we meet, all that happens to us, pleasant and annoying, beautiful and ugly, holy and sinful, can offer us an occasion of drawing our mind to interior things and of raising it to God. We should remember, however, that in interior exercises, the aim is not so much to try to ascend on high and to conceive the most sublime thoughts possible, but to act with judgment, prudence and with regard to God in all things no matter how small and insignificant.

(3) What we have said thus far is not yet sufficient. It it were, we might spend a whole hour without a thought of God, and that should not happen. For this exercise of aspirations is not merely

intended to keep us in the way of God, but also and more so, to enable us to progress and grow in God's love. Therefore, we must as often as possible excite ourselves to elicit some holy affections, especially to repeat, and as it were to re-digest, those that we elicited in our morning meditation, or on some other occasion.

(4) For those who have made much progress in prayer and the love of God, this exercise almost passes into their nature. So imperceptibly does it take possession of them that their heart, like a burning furnace, is ever emitting heavenward most ardent aspirations like so many sparks. Accordingly, whatever they do and wherever they are, either within the monastery or outside, by day or night, alone or with others, at work or at rest, they are always in thought and in affection unceasingly in God. To Him they speak, and to Him they direct frequent buring desires, not unlike the eagerness of a miser who burning with the love of his riches, cannot help thinking of them and having his heart set upon them. For such we do not prescribe any rules or practices, inasmuch as they accomplish much more of themselves and accomplish it better than any rules could prescribe for them. For the others, however, the rules which follow will be most useful.

II. Rules for Exciting Aspirations.

(a) In the morning at the first opportunity we should carefully select the practice of aspirations to which we intend to devote ourselves during the day. That is, we should store up some holy thoughts and determine some good affections, so that when the thought of God comes to us, we shall be ready to speak to Him. In such a choice it will not be necessary to multiply subjects, because one thought or concept can supply matter for cultivating aspirations during a whole week, or even a month. It will be most useful, however, for novices to make this choice in conformity with the subject of their meditations, taking from them two or three ideas by which they were more deeply affected in the prayer just made. It is an excellent plan, therefore, at the close of the morning meditation or shortly after to condense the meditation into a few affections or ejaculatory prayers that will serve as reminders of the resolutions of the meditation and aid in strengthening them. In view of this, St. Francis de Sales recommends the gathering of a "spiritual bouquet," by means of which we can recall and spiritually inhale during the day all we have meditated upon (cf. Philothea II, 7). Moreover, the Divine Office suggests and presents many verses by which we can afterward preserve and nourish in us the fire of holy fervor and devotion.

(b) Notwithstanding the choice just discussed, we should remain

in great liberty of spirit in order to follow the inspirations and impulses of our Lord if He should wish to rouse us to speak with Him, about some other matter.

(c) As soon as one remembers God, he should recollect his soul, and as far as he is able he should keep it quiet for a moment. Then he should try to conceive a pious thought and affection for God, and finally he should fix his heart and soul on God with great attention and affection. In the more advanced, all this can be done in one moment, but beginners can tarry for the space of a "Hail Mary," so that they will better acquire the habit. If they are alone, they can utter with the mouth what they conceived in their mind, because in this way they usually procure greater attention. But if they are with others, it will be sufficient to speak with the heart without any exterior gesture or sign.

(d) We should never put aside the desire or intention of continuing this holy exercise, no matter what duties come our way or how great the inconstancy of mind we may experience. Rather we should try to reserve one section of our attention at all times for God. No violence is required for this, but only that we preserve tranquillity of heart and recollection as best we can, so that in this way we may be always and everywhere ready to speak to God. When we find that we have been drawn from this attention, we should not be disquieted or saddened, but should simply return to ourselves and again offer our heart to God. Furthermore, whenever such a distraction has crept in, we must recollect ourselves anew. For by recollecting ourselves so often we shall finally learn to persist in recollection, and when once we have tasted in the depths of our heart how sweet the Lord is, nothing will be easier for us than this recollection and this return to ourselves. For our soul will experience in itself not a little enjoyment and a lasting attraction. We may compare this attraction of the soul to the attraction of a fish for water. A fish drawn out of the water longs for the water and in every way tries to reach it again. And when it is thrown back, it seems to revive, because it has found its element.

(e) As far as the specific kind of aspirations is concerned we must not bind or confine ourselves to any, but rather follow the impulse of the Holy Spirit and accommodate ourselves to circumstances as they arise. Sometimes the aspirations will be of love, joy, desire, hope, holy boldness for good; sometimes of hatred, aversion, sorrow, fear and holy indignation against evil; sometimes they will be evoked as a wish or desire, sometimes as a promise, petition, admiration, self-

depreciation before God. Finally there is no virtue which cannot present matter for aspirations.

(f) The best school is the recitation of the Divine Office in which an abundance of verses or aspirations is presented to us for every state of soul and for the most varied occasions. Out of these the novices will be able to draw up for themselves a splendid collection of aspirations that they may always have something to say to God or by which they may be enabled to rouse themselves and urge themselves to good. The can also form their own ejaculatory prayers suitable to their state. The greatest liberty is allowed in this practice. However, the following faults should be avoided.

III. Faults to be avoided.

(a) We should pay attention not so much to making many and varied aspirations, as to making well those we do make; because a large number formed without spirit does not help us as much as only one made with relish and affection. Nor should we make them out of custom and routine, hurriedly, perfunctorily, or under compulsion. Nor so frequently as to cause nausea, but with attention, affection and sincerity, as one enjoying them.

(b) We should insist not so much on clearly understanding or vividly penetrating the things that excite our spirit, as trying to be drawn to God with a generous spirit and a right good will. For this exercise is not acquired by subtlety of intellect, but by a loving elevation of the heart to God. In a matter so simple, affection avails more than all that is written in all the books of the world. We should not look for beautiful or curious expressions but for simplicity. One word uttered with spirit from a good heart is sufficient.

(c) In order to direct our aspirations to God, it is not necessary to seek Him far away from us, since He is near us and fills all with His Immensity. Nothing, however, forbids our picturing God to ourselves as seated on His throne of Majesty regarding all things in Heaven and on earth and our humbly and reverently offering Him the affection of our heart. Others prefer spiritually to conceive God as simply filling the whole universe, and to speak to Him as present within the intimate recesses of their soul. This third method is best of all, because it is most simple and recollected. But if anyone is unable to use it at once, he can employ the other two until he gradually reaches the third.

(d) When one finds himself strongly transported by sensible devotion, he should employ such help with much discretion, lest he labor too ardently to encourage this affection. It would be best, therefore

if after he has yielded to this holy emotion and impulse, he would hold himself for the time being in a merely passive state, as it were. If such an affection continues longer, he should inform his director. And if it should occur during a community exercise or during work or before other religious, he should give no indication exteriorly, but continue his outward labor as though nothing had happened interiorly.

(e) Finally, when you notice that you are in a state of sluggishness and aridity, in contrast to the foregoing state, you must under no condition try to produce such affections forcibly, since the attempts would be useless and ill-timed; but when you, without success, have reasonably tried to rouse yourself by some tender but brief consideration to drive off this sluggishness and indolence, try at least in full resignation to God's will to be displeased with your condition and to humble yourself before God. Nevetheless, you may present yourself before the throne of God's majesty, and raising your eyes to Him plead for compassion. Even though you were to do this without satisfaction, it would not be without fruit. You can likewise recite orally one or two verses of the Psalms, to express your wretchedness and desire, and you will derive not a little fruit from this device.

198. God's Presence and Aspirations

I. (a) If we examine the matter more closely, the prayer of aspiration is a sort of abbreviated meditation and therefore comprises three acts. The first is of the memory by which we recall that God is present. The second is an act of the mind in which some truth connected with God and moving our will is simply and momentarily represented to us. The third, finally, is an act of the will by which we at once elicit a devout and fervent affection or the aspiration itself (cf. *Methodus* I, 301 ff).

(b) Hence it is evident that the prayer of aspiration also supposes the exercise of the presence of God. In other words, an aspiration is the exercise of the presence of God fully developed. The mere presence of God through the memory is dead and unpalatable, and will never suffice to bring us to union with God which takes place only through the will or by an act of love. If, however, an affection is associated with the exercise of the presence of God or the remembrance of God's presence, then it is vivified and becomes active, tender and delightful.

(c) As aspirations suppose the exercise of God's presence, the latter attains its perfection in the prayer of aspiration; therefore, the

one cannot be separated from the other. In reality, one is frequently taken for the other, and when understood in its full sense, rightly so, although in itself the exercise of the presence of God indicates rather the acts of the memory and intellect, whereas the prayer of aspiration, an act of the will or an affection. When, therefore, our writers teach the prayer of aspiration, they wish to include in it the exercise of God's presence. But when they simply speak of the presence of God, they wish it to be taken in its full sense, or as the *Methodus* (I, 393), defines it, "To be in God's presence is always to represent God before us, carefully watching to adjust all our actions, our hidden thoughts and our intentions, and frequently offering Him our heart." In other words, we recall that God is present before us, so that avoiding whatever displeases Him and doing whatever pleases Him, we cling to Him with pious and devout affection.

(d) At present, however, in explaining the presence of God, we shall pay more attention to the acts of the memory and intellect, inasmuch as they are the means to excite the acts of the will.

II. Writers generally commend the immense advantages that accrue to us from this exercise. Our *Methodus* does not hesitate to assert that this exercise alone without the aid of any other, is sufficient to withdraw us from every kind of sin and imperfection, and to lead the way to every virtue and perfection (I, 303). And rightly so for the following reasons:

(a) It renders us immune to sin. For who would wish to throw himself, I shall not say into serious sin, but into even a minor fault, if he always realizes that God sees him? Did not Susanna have God's presence before her eyes when she cried out, "I am straitened on every side; for if I do this thing it is death to me: and if I do it not, I shall not escape your hands. But it is better to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord" (Dan 13, 22-23)? St. Augustine admonishes us, "God is to be feared in public; He is to be feared in private. You go walking and He sees you; you enter a house and He sees you; the light shines and He sees you; the light is extinguished and He sees you; you enter a room and He sees you; you are busy in your own heart and He sees you. Fear Him whose concern is to see you; through sheer fear you will be chaste. Or if you must commit sin, look for some place where He will not see you and then do as you please" (Sermon 132, 2, 2).

(b) This practice of the presence of God strongly and efficaciously impels us to every kind of virtue and perfection. For just as nothing so urges servants to work steadily and strenuously as the thought that

they are seen by their masters; and just as a soldier never fights more courageously than when he realizes he is being watched by his commander, so the religious, the servant of God and the soldier of Jesus Christ, is most powerfully roused to embrace every kind of virtue and mortification when he considers the eye of God closely observing him, particularly when he learns through the exercise of God's presence and the prayer of aspiration, to taste how sweet the Lord is. And so he is enabled to renounce the delights of creatures more easily.

(c) From this practice rises a wonderful peace and calm of soul, so indispensable to interior prayer; for if the Lord is near, whom shall we fear? Thus we better understand the warning of our Lord, "Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him that can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10, 28), and also His other admonition, "Be not solicitous therefore . . . For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things" (Matt. 6, 31. 32); and we shall joyfully confess with the Psalmist, "I set the Lord always in my sight; for He is at my right hand, that I be not moved" (Ps. 15, 8).

III. This was one of the first and chief teachings which our forefathers were wont to suggest to their novices as soon as they entered the Order. "Never," they used to say, "withdraw your hearts from the remembrance of God. Reflect that He is always before you and you before Him. This is a brief compendium of all those things which are necessary for the attainment of holiness." God Himself suggested only this one precept as necessary, when He said, "Walk before Me and be perfect" (Gen. 17, 1). On the other hand, forgetfulness of God's presence is the root of all evil according to this verse, "God is not before his eyes; his ways are filthy at all times" (Ps. 9, 26).

Since this exercise bestows so many great advantages and since it was on that account so close to the hearts of our Carmelite predecessors, it is certainly just that we also earnestly embrace it and become so familiar with it that we will make it, as it were, part of our nature. Indeed, according to our Constitutions the novices should be instructed by their Master in the various methods of prayer, and "in the manner of directing their actions together with the practice of the presence of God" (Art. 325). The Brothers are to learn the same (Art. 88). For this is the spirit of our Order according to the example of our holy Father Elias, who drew his wonderful strength and fervent zeal from his constant remembrance of the presence of the Lord in Whose sight he habitually stood.

But if it should prove difficult for the novices to subject themselves to this discipline, they must never lose courage because it will gradually, though perhaps imperceptibly, turn out very easy and agreeable to them. Moreover, nothing will render religious life itself and its austerities so easy as walking in the presence of God and conversing interiorly with Him by pious aspirations.

IV. Certainly when this exercise is constantly and cheerfully practised, it will be the total death of corrupt nature, because by it the vain liberty of the senses is restrained, the wanderings of the imagination are checked, immoderate outburts of laughter are suppressed, useless recreations and waste of time are abolished. He who is not dead to himself will not long remain in God's presence, because continuous mortification is inseparably united to this exercise. Thus it is that many do not make any progress in this exercise and many lay it aside after their first fervor, not that its practice is impossible, but that they are unwilling to mortify themselves and to yield to the interior inspirations by which they are admonished and impelled to practise mortification. The difficulty is not situated in the memory or intellect, but in the will which is not quite ready for renunciations, whereas spiritual souls gifted with the spirit of mortification and sacrifice easily acquire this practice.

By this exercise, as we already affirmed above, continuous and total mortification and abnegation are not only possible, but even easy, because, as St. Gregory says, "all creatures are insignificant to him who beholds the Creator" (Dialogues 2, 35). Accordingly, Father Dominic of St. Albert declared, "Both interior and exterior mortifications proceed from such elevation to God. Each is as it were a fruit that springs only from the divine presence. For by means of this exercise,—since all interior things are drawn to their center, i. e., God,—a strong but most tender violence is inflicted on souls to produce exterior acts of virtue and do whatever outwardly or inwardly pleases Him to Whom they wish to unite themselves entirely" (*Anal.* VIII, 298).

199. The Ways of Practising the Presence of God

The holy Fathers who have written about the spiritual life for our benefit distinguish three methods of practising the presence of God—the imaginative, the intellectual and the affective. (Cf. *Methodus* I, 309 ff.). We shall explain each.

I. The imaginative presence of God.

(a) When by means of our imagination we represent to ourselves the Sacred Humanity of our Savior and perform all our actions in

His presence as though we beheld Him with our bodily eyes, trying to perform them with the same perfection with which He would do them if He were on earth.

(b) When we picture God to ourselves spread far and wide throughout the universe as a corporeal form which fills Heaven and earth with its immensity, just as the light of the sun fills the atmosphere.

(c) When we consider Him giving life to all things by His intimate indwelling in them and by His communicating to all creatures their motive power, just as the soul quickens the body and brings the power of action to each of its members.

(d) Finally, when we conceive Him as though surrounding, penetrating and inundating the earth like a vast sea, in which we live, move and have our being just like fish in the sea. For "if I ascend into Heaven, Thou are there; if I descend into hell, Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there also shall Thy hand lead me: and Thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps. 138, 8-10).

II. The intellectual presence of God.

The practice of presence of God is intellectual when we consider God without any image or corporeal representation but merely by a simple act of faith, where we see God as angered by our sins, or infinitely worthy of our service, or sweetly disposing all things in this world by His wonderful providence, or finally, in a more general way, when we employ certain truths, sayings, axioms or teachings, reflecting on them in order to recollect ourselves and to elevate our mind to God.

For example, he who with living and firm faith believes that nothing happens in this world without God's will or permission, and that nothing happens to him individually without God's providence sending it to him, and continually keeps the eye of his intellect fixed on this truth of faith, has the intellectual presence of God, and in all events and on all occasions of acting or sufferings refers everything to the will of God as to the first cause.

III. The affective presence of God.

(a) When the soul remains in a certain real attraction toward God because of a pious illuminating affection of the will which it has happily and delightfully experienced, it is practising the affective presence of God. We can call this state one of adherence,—since the the soul not only thinks of God present, but also clings very closely to Him.

(b) In a more general way the presence of God can be called

affective when the love of God burns so ardently in our heart that it constantly sends forth sparks, i. e., fervent aspirations, like a strongly heated furnace. All this in such a way that we know perfectly how lovable God is, not because we have read about God's lovableness or learned it, but because we ourselves have experienced it according to these lines of St. Bernard, *Expertus potest credere, quid sit Jesum diligere,*—only he who has experienced the love of Jesus can believe what is is.

This delight once experienced is that eternal and inescapable call which unceasingly summons the soul in its inmost recesses to God. Father Dominic of St. Albert perceiving this call continually and deeply within himself, adjured his companions thus, "Listen to the herald's voice! Behold he cries to you, 'O love, love the Lover Who loves you eternally' " (*Anal.* IX, 17). And again, "Why do I live? Why do I breathe, except to love Thee, O my God? Thou always thinkest of me, Thou watchest me, Thou refreshest me, and shall I forget Thee? Let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I do not remember Thee" (ibid. 18).

This feeling of affection is occasionally specific, being aroused by a particular stimulus. Such a specific affection is characteristic of those who are not yet sufficiently skilled in these exercises or accustomed to them, or who are not yet expert or perfect in them. For instance, he who has realized with very strong feeling and affection the greatness of his vocation, or that God has not withdrawn him from life while he was in mortal sin as he has many others, plunges such a specific affection into his heart like an arrow. This affection then ceaselessly presses him to give God thanks for this favor and to testify in everything and by means of everything, by suffering and by action, how much he acknowledges that he is overwhelmed by the Divine Love. Wherever he may be or abide, this thought always knocks on the door of his soul, "Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell" (Ps. 93, 17). And so his heart sends forth numerous holy aspirations and ardent affections of gratitude, humility, of fervent desire in some way to reciprocate this favor.

This practice of the affective presence of God does not depend entirely on one's own effort; nor does one ordinarily attain it, unless one has already exercised himself for a long while in the other methods. However, it not infrequently happens that God shortens this way for some.

But if one should ask which of the three he should preferably cultivate we answer that the method is to be chosen principally which

appears easier and more beneficial. However, it will not be amiss to explain which one is especially suitable for beginners.

200. A Method suitable for Novices

I. We can easily conjecture that the presence of God most appropriate and suitable for novices, is the first of the three methods we have just mentioned, i. e., the imaginative presence. It is not advisable to bind novices right at the start to make many aspirations. For since they have not yet made much progress in prayer, either they elicit them in vain without foundation, reason or motive; or they fatigue their heads to produce them with affection at all cost; or finally, since they cannot accomplish their purpose, they thenceforth reject all these interior exercises on the plea that they are incapable of them. It is necessary, therefore, to proceed slowly, step by step.

(a) Novices, therefore, must early become accustomed to reflect frequently on themselves and at once to return to God saying in their hearts, "God sees me; I am in His presence. He is the eye-witness and spectator of all my actions, according to the word of Job, 'Doth He not consider my ways, and number all my steps?' " (31, 4). Such thoughts are so many acts of faith which will gradually impress the remembrance of God so firmly in their souls that to recall God will become as natural for them as to breathe. Not only this, but they will henceforth walk before Him with fear, reverence and circumspection. They will study to please Him in everything and by every means; they will direct all their actions to His greater glory; they will generously overcome themselves in all their repugnances and will be fearful of allowing even smaller failings and breaches of modesty, lest perchance they offend the piercing eyes of God.

(b) In the first three months of the novitiate it will be sufficient for the novices in their practice of aspirations and the presence of God to make a good intention at the beginning of their occupations and direct their actions properly to God and then perform them worthily in the following manner: (1)—that they try to undertake all the acts of religious life with a great desire of pleasing God; (2)—that they equip themselves with some good thought (if they can draw this from the nature of their work, it will be so much better and the more useful); (3)—that they undertake their actions with fervor and love, trying to observe in them all necessary conditions of modesty, industry, skill and cheerfulness; (4)—that they complete them entirely, on the one hand moderating natural impetuosity and excessive eagerness, if such is found in them; on the other

hand, overcoming laziness which might cause them to desist before their work has been done or to perform it superficially or perfunctorily; (5)—that at the end they make a little review, examining whether perhaps any defects have slipped in, in order to beg pardon of God; but if not, to give thanks to Him and ascribe all to His glory.

(c) Those for whom three months are not enough to acquire the habit and ease of all these exercises, should continue them as long as it seems expedient to the Master, so that their chief interior occupations during this time must be to strive to perform all the exterior exercises of religious life worthily before God and with edification to their brethren. This, however, must not hinder them from trying to train themselves slowly to make some devout and fervent, even though infrequent, elevations of soul to God while making their intention at the beginning of their action and their examen at the end. However, this must not be their chief concern.

II. With regard to the holy thoughts which they can use from time to time in raising their souls to God, it will help to note that there are two classes of actions:

(a) Some actions of themselves turn the soul toward God, as for instance, to sing or to recite the Divine Office, to serve at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to make spiritual reading, to listen to spiritual exhortations or sermons, to converse about matters concerning spiritual progress, etc. In these actions nothing more is necessary than to turn them, i.e., the singing, reading, listening, etc., into occasions of ejaculatory prayers.

(b) With regard to other actions which do not of themselves tend toward God, as manual labor, fulfilling ordinary duties, eating in the refectory, etc., when the novice recalls God during such an action, he should offer the action again to God, renewing the good intention made in the beginning, or performing the action only to please God. Or he can raise his soul to God by means of the thought with which he equipped himself before he began. E.g., if on his way to manual labor, he had provided himself with the consideration of the Child Jesus working with St. Joseph, he can, if perchance he thinks of God during work, form this aspiration, "O my God, accept this work in union with the labor of your most beloved Son"; or directing his words to our most loving Savior, he will say, "O Lord, just as Thou by Thy labor didst glorify Thy Father here upon earth, so I also wish and intend to glorify Thee by my labor."

III. However, they do not at all err, who assert that the best

instructor of the religious in this divine art is one's own good will and fervor. For one who is fervent, even though only a novice, will never think of God without in his heart experiencing a certain movement and inclination toward God with indescribable spiritual joy, just as the Royal Prophet did, who said, "I remembered God, and was delighted" (Ps. 76, 4). Such are in need of little instruction and rather need restraint to keep them from using their fervor excessively.

The rest, however, who have not received such a grace from God, and yet are serious in their desire for the end and aim of this exercise, should observe the following rules:

(a) After they have fixed their eyes on God in the beginning of an action by means of their intention and judgment, they should endeavor to continue in this good disposition, attending to their work with the purpose of pleasing God by it. This must never be done violently or anxiously, for such effort would be useless and might cause a headache. But the attention should be gentle and loving, rather than reflexively conscious. In this they should be like the workman, says St. Basil, to whom an assignment of his trade has been given, attends at the same time to the execution of his work as well as to the one who has given him the commission. For when we are careful about doing our actions properly, we always carry in our heart the ardent desire of satisfying God Who has imposed them upon us and for Whom and before Whom we perform them.

(b) The second rule, which follows from the first, requires them to be very careful to remove from their actions all vain-glory, human respect, self-complacency and all other sinful motives which may enter the soul to destroy the good intention with which they began their actions. For it not infrequently happens that one begins with a good motive and ends with an evil one. If we do not pay enough attention, little by little the desire for one's own convenience insinuates itself and finally prevails, as when we begin to take food from the motive of pure necessity, but gradually enjoyment makes its appearance and we end with sensuality. Therefore, Cassian counsels (*Conferences* I, c. 20) the religious to examine his motives like the cashier who takes accurate and diligent care that no false coins be accepted unnoticed. And when he notices an imperfect motive arising, he should suppress it, renewing his intention in a moment in this wise, "O Lord, I have already dedicated my entire action to Thee. I do not wish to retract my intention."

(c) The third rule is that when they are drawn away from this attention, (a matter that can be readily noticed by a certain interior

disquiet and disturbance by which one is immediately overtaken), they should gently recollect themselves, and by renewing their good intention should place themselves in God's presence as before. If this should happen a number of times during the same work, they must just as often return to themselves. For by frequently and purposely recalling the presence of God, they will eventually learn to remain in it perseveringly. They can encourage themselves in these and similar words, "In all thy ways think on Him, and He will direct thy steps" (Prov. 3, 6), or "The Lord hath looked down from heaven upon the children of men" (Ps. 13, 2). Then they will raise their hearts and answer, "My heart hath said to Thee; my face hath sought Thee; Thy face, O Lord, will I seek" (Ps. 26, 8), or "It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God" (Ps. 72, 28).

IV. In general our brethren should testify to God by aspirations made during all their actions, that they desire to honor Him in all their works. For this purpose each one can draw up for himself a list of verses and expressions chosen from Scripture, especially from the Psalms, and store them in the treasury of his memory, that he may use them in forming aspirations and frequently speaking with God in hymns, psalms and interior spiritual canticles, according to the Apostle's exhortation, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly, in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing in grace in your hearts to God" (Col. 3, 16). All this is in entire agreement with our Holy Rule which prescribes "Your breast should be fortified with holy thoughts; for it is written 'The Holy thought will save thee' . . . Finally, 'the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God,' should dwell in your mouth and in your heart; and whatsoever you have to do, do it according to the word of the Lord" (XIV).

201. To God through Creatures

I. After our brethren have learned to do all their actions well before God by interspersing some elevating thoughts, they can proceed to another way of walking in God's presence, namely, the raising up of their mind to God by means of all happenings and events and of all creatures, and of uniting themselves to Him by pious affections.

(a) Ancient writers who treated of the lives of the holy fathers in the desert, called this method divine wisdom, because they did not consider human matters merely as human, nor did they look at them merely with corporeal eyes, but traced all things to God as to their eternal primary cause, now admiring God's power, now acknowledg-

ing His infinite wisdom, now blessing Him for His exceeding liberality, now thanking Him for His goodness, now taking occasion of rousing themselves to the practice of virtue and of more thoroughly learning it; in a word, seeing all created things in a spiritual light.

(b) We have splendid examples of this in the three young men of the Old Testament who when cast into the fiery furnace intoned their Canticle the *Benedicite* and called on all creatures to praise God (Cf. Dan. 3, 51-90). The Psalmist has left us a perfect course in this exercise. Most outstanding is this practice is St. Francis, who used to call all creatures his brothers and sisters, and composed the Canticle of the Sun, as it is called.

(c) The exercise was always familiar to the dwellers on Carmel. Blessed Nicholas the Gaul, successor to St. Simon Stock in the generalate and an enthusiastic defender of the eremitical life, cries out in his *Ignea Sagitta* in praise of solitude, "All creatures which we hear and see in our solitude refresh and strengthen us as their companions; and while telling wonders by their silence, rouse the interior man to the praise of their Creator" (Chap. XI). St. John of the Cross in his *Living Flame of Love* salutes creatures as the heralds of God, and St. Theresa of the Child Jesus dearly loved snow as a symbol of unsullied purity and was ravished by flowers to contemplate and admire the beauty and glory of God. Sometimes when St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi gazed on a flower or some other worthless object, she was at once rapt in ecstasy" (AA. SS. May 5, 728, n. 54).

(d) Furthermore, our Lord Himself invites us to such spiritual outlook when He makes use of numberless parables drawn from nature and from human life and conduct to explain the external truths and to raise men's minds to higher things. Scripture also explicitly teaches us to use all things to raise our heart to God because it is a means of keeping our soul always united to Him. For instance, "Look upon the rainbow, and bless Him that made it; it is very beautiful in its brightness" (Ecclus, 42, 12; cf. c. 43). All things favorable and unfavorable, pleasant and unpleasant, can recall God the Creator and Director of all things to the mind of the wise.

II. This exercise is not difficult, because no violence or straining of the head is required, but it is sufficient to have the intention of deriving advantage from everything. When this intention is once made, we must remain gently recollected in God. After that, we must form some simple devout idea from everything that occurs, not distorted but gentle, not violent but loving, not labored but easy and natural, and not far-fetched. This simple idea, tender and devout,

will finally be the subject of our elevation of heart. Such then, is the entire method we must follow in this holy philosophy. We shall now explain the individual steps.

(a) The ideas to be drawn from creatures must be simple and not distorted; otherwise they would be insipid and fruitless. This is the fault of some who rack their mind with vague and lofty speculations, conceived without reason and without foundation. This defect should be strictly avoided. It surely cannot be difficult to form simple and natural ideas because, since there is nothing in the world which is not either directed toward God or opposed to Him, nothing is easier than to direct our mind straight to God when the matter leads to God, or to conceive a horror for it when it withdraws us from Him.

(b) They must be gentle, not violent or far-fetched. For hardly ever need we seek for things outside of ourselves to lead us to God. This would mean to be drawn in several directions, and to be drawn outward rather than inward to interior recollection. Indeed, in order to preserve our interior disposition for receiving the instruction and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it is enough to think piously about the subjects that come spontaneously to us. But if after a full and gentle application of our mind no thought presents itself to us, we should under no condition forcibly strive to conceive some particular thought. It will be sufficient, if we remember God and elicit an aspiration about some other matter. Nor should we seek several concepts if one is strong enough to keep us longer in union with God.

(c) They must be loving and not labored. For the difference between divine wisdom and human wisdom is that the latter has no other purpose than a knowledge of material things and is therefore filled with intricate cares; but the former has no other aim than to move the heart with holy affections. It may happen that a rather general idea of the object that is being considered is quite enough without going into details and particulars because such an idea is sufficient to incline the soul to God. For example, when looking at a beautiful flower or at the rainbow, the mind does not insist on distinguishing the colors or other details with which it may be adorned, but it is enough to see that the object is beautiful and is a work of God for which He deserves to be praised and loved.

(d) Provided the heart is inflamed with the desire of God (without which desire no fruit can be expected), everything else will be easy, since most assuredly divine grace will not be lacking.

III. To give a few examples: When we see fire, we can recall hell and God's justice; then we should implore His mercy and thank

Him for having preserved us from hell, notwithstanding our many sins. When we admire the vastness of the firmament, we should recall to mind the majesty and power of the Creator and adore Him. The sun can be a symbol of divine charity. Night and darkness will cause us to detest the ugliness of sin and the horrors of hell. The song of the birds excites us to praise God. The flowers of the fields ought to be, according to our Lord's word, pledges of divine providence (Cf. Matt. 6, 28). When we feel some satisfaction of natural pleasure while warming ourselves when we are cold, while eating or drinking, etc., we should rise above the natural pleasure and thank God for being so abundantly provident of us in all our necessities even though we have chosen the privations of voluntary poverty for His sake. From pain and suffering let us learn the emptiness of all things. From the death of friends and acquaintances, we should learn the frailty of human life. Afflicted with injustices, we should consider the injuries we have inflicted on God, and how greatly our Lord suffered for us.

By these and similar considerations we can seize the opportunity from all things and events to raise our mind to God and unite ourselves more closely and more intimately to Him day by day. Love itself will be the best teacher and will likewise be greatly increased by this exercise.

202. Christ's Sacred Humanity

The third method of practising the presence of God is picturing the Sacred Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. In one sense this exercise is necessary for everyone, since our Savior Himself said, "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me" (John 14, 6), and invited us to follow Him. He is the "light of the world," and He promises us, "He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8, 12). He also is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14, 6). We have been engrafted as members upon Him, as upon the head, and therefore perfect harmony and conformity must prevail between Him and us, and we must be made conformable to His image (Cf. Rom. 8, 29).

Accordingly, we are taught by all masters of the spiritual life never to deprive ourselves of the image of the Sacred Humanity of our Savior, not even in the state of contemplation, a state in which it is advisable to strip ourselves of every form and image. For the image of "Christ, Who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4, 4), and "the brightness of His glory and the figure of His substance" (Hebr. 1, 3), can never be an obstacle on the way of perfection and union with God;

but rather it recollects, tranquilizes and wonderfully elevates the soul. All this is all the more true, as this image becomes animated day by day with greater love and grows more and more spiritual as one makes greater and greater progress in this exercise.

II. The geatest advantage flows from all this.

(a) The peculiar effect of this exercise is to curb the excessive natural vivacity and vehemence which is noted in the actions of so many.

(b) The second effect is to make the religious an example for others, prudent in words, well ordered in exterior, regulated in thought, mortified in his passions and filled with great peace of soul. For the simple and natural representation of the Sacred Person of our Savior produces all these effects, since it is certain that we become exteriorly as we are interiorly. In a word, it is the characteristic of this exercise to lead the religious, as it were, by the hand in the whole course of his life, teaching him hiddenly, but clearly, how he must conduct himself in every action and on every occasion, because Christ will be to him a shining torch revealing, in a moment, what he must do and how he must do it on every occasion.

III. We can distinguish three degrees in this exercise:

(a) The first degree consists in a mere imaginative representation which belongs to beginners. Novices, therefore, can employ this right after their reception. By such an imaginative representation of our Redeemer they can restrain their wandering imagination, and conduct themselves at all times as though openly seen by our Lord either living upon earth or reigning in heaven. To this end they should direct all the intentions of their actions, all their aspirations and interior conversations. This method is very easy and very profitable. Nevertheless, they should not force themselves if it does not appeal to them.

(b) The second degree. Those more advanced—and this exercise is chiefly for them—must conceive for themselves a beautiful, loving and majestic idea of Christ's Humanity; they must constantly walk in His sight and strive to be transformed into Him by faithful imitations and by a tender, cordial and sincere affection for the Sacred Humanity. Thus they should endeavor to put on the divine spirit in which our Lord dwelt upon earth, penetrating with gentle and loving reflection His feelings and affections, and conforming themselves to Him, as far as possible, in all they do. If they do this with a faithful and loving spirit, they will shortly find themselves clothed in the life, spirit and sentiments of Jesus Christ and finally perfectly transformed

into Him. For the Son of God put on our nature that He might draw us to Himself by the things of sense, and might conform us to His Sacred Humanity and elevate us to the Divinity.

(c) The third degree is that of the perfect who have through frequent practice acquired so perfect a likeness in their whole life to our Savior's Humanity, that they seem to be totally transformed into Him in all their actions, as the Apostle perceived in himself, "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2, 20).

IV. We shall now give the rules which we must follow in so excellent and useful an exercise.

(a) It is supposed that the soul, influenced by a tender devotion to Christ's Humanity, has already eliminated the coarser exterior defects by the pursuit and practice of exterior modesty.

(b) We must form within our soul a very beautiful idea of our Savior, as a man surpassingly modest, supremely lovable and conspicuous in all His actions for a majesty entirely divine, always serene of countenance with eyes full of charming sweetness, kind in speech, with a heart filled with tender commiseration and always ready to bestow favors on all men, humble and patient under injuries, insults and calumnies,—in a word, attentive and thoughtful in all His words and actions, so that nothing can be discovered in Him which does not ravish our heart by some hidden virtue. If we come across some beautiful picture of our Lord it will be very profitable to study it attentively so that the likeness will be of some assistance in forming the idea of our Lord that we are speaking of. Such a mental representation, however, must not be forced or violent, but gentle and spontaneous, more in our affection than in our imagination. For although we have described the humanity of the Son of God in much detail, in order to supply an outstanding idea of Him, still in the various circumstances we must form the idea in our mind in an instant and strip our knowledge of all the foregoing circumstances to insist merely on one simple, natural concept.

(c) Once we have decided upon putting the foregoing exercise into practice, we should endeavor to have this representation constantly in our heart and before our mind. We should form it at the break of day, offering all our actions to God in union with the actions of His Son. Then we should try to perform all our actions in the same spirit in which we know our Lord performed His, and likewise to cast some loving glances upon Him and to converse familiarly with Him.

(d) Those who walk in this way must often read the Gospel and meditate on the life of Christ, that they may well comprehend His

true spirit, appreciate it and conform themselves to it, working and suffering as they know Christ acted and suffered. They will strive for this conformity so that, in conversing, speaking, walking, working, eating, in the church or in their cells, in public or in private, they will always conform themselves inwardly to the manner in which Christ performed His actions while on earth.

V. Here are a few examples. When it is time to rise in the morning and we feel some reluctance to rise, or when nature finds some difficulty in obeying, we must consider how courageously our Lord conquered human nature on Mount Olivet when it shrank from the chalice of suffering, or we must recall the words He spoke on the way to His suffering, "That the world may know, that I love the Father: and as the Father hath given me commandment, so do I. Arise and let us go hence" (John 14, 31). During prayer, both vocal and mental, we should place before our eyes how earnestly and reverently our divine Master appeared before the Eternal Father in His prayers and what profound acts of adoration and petition He offered to Him. In our solitude we should consider Him alone in the desert communing with God. When we are at work, we should consider Him at work in the home of His parents. When we tire of mortifications, humiliations and contradictions, we should say within ourselves, "Think diligently upon Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself; that you be not wearied, fainting in your mind" (Hebr. 12, 3). When we must move among men, we should imitate Him, in Whom the goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared (Cf. Titus 5, 4). And so in other matters.

We should, therefore, live and die in perfect conformity with the most Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ. It is the school of holiness.

203. The Finger of God in the Universe

The fourth method of exercising the presence of God is entirely spiritual and consists in recognizing God operating in all things, and therein accepting all things from His hands.

Since, therefore, we believe creatures to be only His instruments, we refer whatever happens to us to God's Providence and conform our will entirely to it.

This exercise is of wonderful value because it always keeps our soul lifted up and preserves our heart in great tranquility. It is also most sublime, because it is the continuous exercise of the three theological virtues and, therefore, unites us to God.

(a) Before all it is an act of faith. It supposes that we are

convinced that nothing can happen to us in this life without the express intervention of God's Providence decreeing or permitting it. Nothing happens to us by chance. Truly, "good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God" (Ecclus. 11, 14). For God "worketh all things according to the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1, 11).

If we believe this, we ought to receive all things, not as though proceeding from men, but as coming from the hand of God. Our *Methodus* illustrates this truth and its practice by this example. Suppose, it says, a certain unfortunate traveler is cast by shipwreck upon some shore and is received as a guest by a nobleman. One servant, accordingly, hastens to light the fire, another brings him clothes, one serves food and drink, the other makes his bed, etc. That man does not receive these acts of charity except through the hands of the servants, but his principal obligation is to the master of the house who has ordered all this. In like manner must we consider creatures only as the servants of God and look upon all things that come to us from them as proceeding from the hand of God by His special order and decree. Our Savior Himself teaches us this truth in His answer to St. Peter, "The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18, 11). He did not accuse man, but obeyed His Father.

(b) This exercise also includes an act of hope, by which we firmly trust that God, in His infinite Goodness will direct all things in a most excellent way to our salvation and perfection, no matter what His plan may be in our regard. How beautifully the Wise Man of the Old Testament says, "Thou being master of power, judgest with tranquility; and with great favor disposest of us" (Wisd. 12, 18), as though he wished to say that God treats us as we are accustomed to treat crystal vases or precious glassware which we handle with great circumspection, because we wish to preserve them and not break them. Therefore, the Apostle informs us, "To them that love God, all things work together unto good" (Rom. 8, 28).

(c) The consummation and essential perfection of this exercise is a humble and loving assent to God's guidance and a denial of self in success as well as in failure. This is nothing else than an act of charity, by which we choose whatever God chooses, so that things please us not because of themselves, but because of the love of God Who arranges them. If failures displease us because of themselves, nevertheless they please us because of God's will attached to them.

Two great benefits flow from this exercise. One is an immeasur-

able peace with wonderful self-mastery and tranquillity. The other is a generous increase in virtue with a rooting of our heart so deeply in God, that nothing can tear it away from Him.

Everyone can see that this exercise leads us to the highest perfection, since perfection itself consists in perfect conformity with the Divine Will, and perfect conformity is an admirable expression of the highest love.

204. The Indwelling of God in Man

I. It remains for us to recommend a fifth practice of God's presence and that is to behold God or the most Holy Trinity present within us. We are taught by our faith that God dwells within us not merely because He preserves us and moves us to act, but especially because He is the author and preserver of our supernatural life and dwells within us by His grace as in His temple, communicating His life to us and making us participators of His divine nature. Our whole substance, therefore, together with our faculties, i.e., our intellect and our will, is rendered supernatural and divine. All this we have already sufficiently explained above (no. 28).

It is our present duty to reflect on this truth and to draw logical conclusions from it for our whole life. If we wish to find God, there is no need to seek Him far from us, since He is within us and closer to us than any creature, indeed, closer to us than we are to ourselves. Here within ourselves we should adore Him, thank Him, ask His pardon, implore favors and assistance from Him.

II. Here within ourselves we find everything our heart can wish for, and infinitely more. For here is the Source of life. Here is He Whose light we shall find light (Cf. Ps. 35, 10). Here is He for Whom our heart was created, so that it is restless until it rests in Him. Here is our nobility and glory. Here are our riches.

The soul that is convinced of God's indwelling and has learned to keep its spiritual sight directed within and to adore God in spirit and truth, will gradually, though perhaps insensibly, be withdrawn from creatures,—even from itself, and will be completely changed and transformed into God, its Beloved. Then it gladly and readily prays, even though it may perhaps find itself in dryness; then it loves solitude and silence; then it seems to possess all things. It nourishes no other desire than to behold in eternal happiness the unveiled face of its beloved God Whom it already carries within itself, and to enjoy Him without any intermediary.

"When the soul," says Father Michael of St. Augustine, "can grasp this point and has learned tranquilly to find, to contemplate,

to adore and to embrace God within itself, its one and only Good, or tranquilly and reverentially to turn its spirit to its Beloved as dwelling within it or united to it, it is in constant prayer. Of such adorers our Savior spoke to the Samaritan woman, 'The hour cometh and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth" (John 4, 23). Such souls are most pleasing to God; for, as Christ says, 'The Father seeketh such to adore Him' (John 4, 23). The soul loving God must expend every effort and employ every means to become one of the number of these, because 'God is a Spirit,' and therefore all 'that adore Him, must adore Him in Spirit and in truth' (John 4, 24). Prayer is not difficult to them even in aridity; it is sufficient for them to have their Beloved essentially present within themselves, or to believe that He is intimately present within themselves, interpenetrating them according to His essence, even though they do not find Him clothed 'with light as with a garment' (Ps. 103, 2). Therefore, they always remain entirely tranquil, sweetly or at least reasonably and reverentially turned to Him" (*Inst. Myst.* IV, tr. 4, c. 7).

III. In this way, therefore, the soul dies to self and lives to God. "Here, however, the devout soul must be on its guard," continues Father Michael, "in order to proceed cautiously. It should realize, that this reverential feeling toward God must not be exercised constrainedly or violently, otherwise the brain may be injured or headache ensue, but restrainedly and tenderly, with a gentle direction or application of one's spirit, as toward something within it or united to it. To direct one's spirit thus, it is not necessary to do violence to oneself, in an effort, as it were, to raise one's spirit on high and to keep it there, since God is 'not far from every one of us. For in Him we live, and move and are' (Acts 17, 27, 28), and he 'that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him' (1 John 4, 16), in such a way, that nothing else is necessary than to turn our spirit to Him by a simple glance of faith, with a sweet inflowing of our soul into Him, or a reverential rest in Him; for otherwise, that extension or elevation of the spirit, especially when not encouraged from within (by a special grace or attraction), takes place with an expenditure of effort that cannot last" (ibid.).

Thus the soul arrives at the introversion which our mystics have so much praised, and prepares itself as far as it can to receive greater graces.

205. The Presence of Our Blessed Mother

I. (a) From what we have explained in a previous chapter

(nn. 24; 190-192), it is quite clear that our Blessed Lady holds a unique position in the work of our salvation and of our perfection. It is not, therefore, strange that the saints have been so insistent in honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary and have built all their piety around her, their Mother, in order to reach God more easily. "Those who profess to be her dearest sons," says Father Michael of St. Augustine, "employ the same discerning eye to ascertain whether their actions or omissions are according to the pleasure of God and of His beloved Mother, trying in all their actions and omissions to have their eye open to God and His most Holy Mother in order to execute promptly and cheerfully whatever they know pleases them, and carefully avoiding whatever they know displeases them" (*De Vita Mariaeformi,* I c. 1). And rightly so, because whatever pleases God, pleases Mary; and whatever displeases God, displeases Mary. Accordingly we seek only one and the same purpose, whether we follow God's, or Christ's, or Mary's will.

(b) Accordingly, we attain the purpose of God's presence also by holding our mind attentive to the Blessed Virgin Mary and by trying to walk in some way in the presence of our well-beloved Mother and trying also to live in her. Father Michael of St. Augustine cites these words of St. Ambrose, "Let Mary's soul be in each one of us that it may magnify the Lord; let Mary's spirit be in each one of us that we may exult in God" (*In Lucam* 2, 44-45). He then continues, "And I say still further, let the spirit of Mary be in each one of us that we may live by that spirit; and may her spirit abiding in us, accomplish all our works that we may be able to live by her spirit" (ibid.). And "it is possible for us to live in our most lovable Mother Mary by endeavoring in all our actions and sufferings, in all our doings and omissions, in all our vexations and pains, afflictions and anxieties, to preserve and encourage in ourselves (not only a tender and loving attention of our spirit to God), but also a filial, gentle, and ingenuous attention of our soul, a loving aspiration or breathing in Mary as our most lovable and most beloved Mother in God, in such a way that our love may have its gentle inspiration and expiration toward her and from her toward God" (ibid.). He explains as follows, "In this disposition . . . the soul preserves a continuous and tender remembrance of Mary, and a similar inclination toward her, almost in the same way in which it experiences a loving reverential remembrance of God in all its works. Just as by the faithful exercise of faith and constant love it has acquired the habit of always and everywhere keeping in mind God's presence and of returning to God

with genuine affection with such ease that it seems impossible for it to forget Him,—so also the loving son of Mary by the constant exercise of remembering her as his beloved Mother acquires the habit of that loving and filial remembrance so that all his thoughts and affections terminate in her and God simultaneously, and his soul does not seem able to forget his loving Mother of God" (ibid.).

II. (a) This exercise can be the effect of a special grace of the Holy Spirit, as Father Michael, quoted above, well notes, citing the example of St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, St. Peter-Thomas, St. Bernard, Blessed Herman Joseph and others. And "when that tender childlike and innocent affection of soul for its loving Mother is excited in the devout soul by the Spirit of God or of Divine Love then everything flows freely and even its nature seems to be changed for the time being, so that it seems to assume the innocence, tenderness, littleness and other conditions and tendencies of a little one for its most lovable and dear mother, and as such converses with her most ingenuously." The love for our Mother infused by the Holy Spirit Who is acting, directing and animating the soul is nothing else than the exuberance and overflowing of Divine Love by which the soul is then also moved and most tenderly drawn toward its loving Mother, in such a way, however, that the soul at the same time and with the same tenderness of love reverts to God without any medium, hindrance or mingling of spirit. And in this way the love of God and the love of Mary seem to be one and the same, emanating and re-emanating, until the soul rests with its loving Mother most lovingly in God. (*Cf. De Vita Mariaeformi,* c. 3).

(b) But aside from this actual attraction and special operation of the Holy Spirit of Divine Love, the loving Son of Mary will endeavor with all his strength and efforts to retain the remembrance of his beloved Mother and to follow her good pleasure in everything. To render this easier, the following rules, besides those recommended above (no. 190), will be helpful:

(1) In the first place it is necessary to form a most perfect and clear idea or picture of one's heavenly Mother. It will be necessary, therefore, by means of frequent meditations and loving contemplations to consider those sublime prerogatives by which God elevated her above all other creatures,—prerogatives that flow from the truth that she was chosen before the creation of the world to be second Eve and the Mother of God. Then her outstanding virtues should be considered, her humility, her perpetual virginity, her obedience, modesty, faith, hope, constancy, charity, devotion and all other virtues in

which she far excels the saints and the angels. But each one should especially impress upon himself how much this Mother has done and sacrificed for him and his salvation, and how much he can and should expect from her, since she is treasurer of all graces and God Himself wishes us to have everything through Mary. In this way is born that pious and truly filial affection without which this exercise is of no value and will be quickly set aside. If the soul is filled with this affection, it immediately and easily finds the form of this exercise most suited to it. Such a one will cling to his Mother with a simple faith without doing violence to his imagination.

(2) Nevertheless, it will be useful, at least in the beginning, to use certain devices and helps to retain the memory of our loving Mother more easily and to assure a more profound effect in the soul. We can, e. g., at certain intervals cast our eyes on the image of the Blessed Virgin which according to the provisions of our Rule, we have in our cells or which we find in the principal places of our monastery. (no. 14; 135). Moreover, many parts of the Divine Office recall to mind the beloved name of our Mother, if only we are attentive to it. The religious habit itself and especially the Scapular turns our thoughts and affections to her. Moreover, each one, if only he wishes, will easily find suitable means to strengthen his memory and nourish devotion.

(3) As soon as we remember our Blessed Mother, we must turn toward her with pious affections. Besides the affections springing spontaneously from love, we elicit some by our own effort and have them ready for various occasions. The affections can be chosen from our meditation, or taken from the Litanies or other sources. For example, when we have meditated on the ugliness of sin and recall it anew, we can contrast the ineffable beauty of the Blessed Virgin and salute her, "Thou are all beautiful, O Mary, and no spot is in thee"; or we can ask, "Mirror without spot, mirror of justice, pray for me that I may be freed from every sin." Having considered the severity of God's judgment, it is fitting to implore our Mother, "Refuge of sinners, protect us." In the difficulties of the day, in labors, in the doubts and anxieties of life, we may invoke our Mother, "Help of Christians, consoler of the afflicted, health of the sick, pray for us." When sacrifices threaten or are upon us, we should offer them to our Mother and exclaim,

Juxta crucem tecum stare
Et me tibi sociare
In planctu desidero.

We can also choose other similar prayers, and in doing so we shall

gradually become accustomed always to retain her dear name in our memory and upon our lips so that this holy exercise will no longer beget difficulties for us, especially since our Mother does not hesitate to come to our assistance and obtain abundant grace for us.

III. If we, as becomes Carmelites, are faithful to this exercise, Christ Himself will be gradually formed in us and we shall be transformed into Him, inasmuch as the Blessed Virgin is His living image. Thus we shall reach the goal we desire in our state and Order, perfect union with God. We must therefore, be convinced with Father Michael of St. Augustine, "that whether we live, we live for this Queen and Mother, or whether we die, we die for this Lady and Mother, whether we live or whether we die, we are children of this Lady and Mother. Consequently it seems to me I hear her proclaim, 'For if you have many nurses and stepmothers, yet not many mothers. For in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you (Cf. 1 Cor. 4, 15)' (*De Vita Mariae-formi,* c. 4.)."

We shall learn from experience that this Marian life is not a hindrance to our life in God and for the sake of God, but rather a help. For the reign of Mary is not opposed to the reign of Jesus, but is directed entirely toward it. Our Mother will lead us to Him for Whom both she and we have been created, and "so we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4, 16).

206. Final Remarks on the Prayer of Aspirations

To conclude the tract on the presence of God, and aspirations, we add a few notes which are for the most part taken from the *Methodus* (I, 390 ff), but in reality reproduce the teaching of our illustrious mystic, Brother John of St. Samson (Cf. Opp. 80 ff; 911 ff. Cf. also *Anal. VIII,* 28-34).

(1) It is not sufficient always to be ready to raise our mind to God when occasion offers, but we must put forth efforts to excite ourselves to it. Hence, we should always have some good thought ready in our heart from which we shall be able to draw the theme of our ejaculations and more ardent prayers. Otherwise, we shall remain idle, not knowing whither we are going. Not that it is impossible to occupy ourselves, as so many assert, but we remain idle because we do not stir up our will with that which could arouse and inflame it. And this occupation of continuous and ardent love ought to be the life of all souls called to the Order of Carmel, that they may know and love God perfectly. Indeed, this is the end for which we have been created and for which we have been called to the Order.

(2) Although the practice of aspirations strenuously cultivated

is the effect of most ardent charity, and seems therefore to be the prerogative of those already perfect, everyone can pursue it according to his ability. Even though in the beginning one's heart is not much aroused and inflamed, nevertheless this exercise is most excellent, holy and profitable. When one has persevered in it, he will notice that his heart is being strongly drawn to God, so that it cannot rest anywhere unless it converses always with God and feels itself united to the Divine Majesty. Finally, arrived at this stage, he will need no further rules or particular effort, because in the course of time aspirations, by the grace of God, become as easy and as natural as breathing. Therefore, let each one adopt the method of aspirations or of the practice of the presence of God that he finds easiest and most profitable to put into practice. Brother John of St. Samson explicitly teaches, "although I may seem to establish a definite method, I do not, except for beginners . . . Let each one employ a method in accordance with the degree of his active love" (Opp. 88).

(3) This exercise is necessary for every religious, but especially for those who cannot meditate or who are much entagled in exterior work. In this way they can re-enforce the little time which they spend in mental prayer. Experience proves that when they have their heart raised to God in the midst of necessary labors, there is in their actions something inexpressibly divine. Yes, even from their appearance and way of acting it is quite clear that they are directed by the Holy Spirit. But they should realize that they do not truly practise this exercise if they frequently admit voluntary imperfections, since it is certainly impossible to have one's heart directed to God and at the same time to withdraw it from Him. Brother John of St. Samson says pointedly, "You must know that voluntary imperfection is entirely opposed to good aspirations" (Opp. 123).

(4) It is an excellent thing for those who cannot yet form their own aspirations to make a collection of aspirations from the writings of authors, especially of our own mystics. But they should be careful to pick out such aspirations as are comprised of few words and are conformable to their state and taste, so that they will not need to force themselves to use them.

(5) It will be very useful during the day to foster and employ in the exercise of aspirations those concepts and pious thoughts which one has had during the morning meditation. For in this way those pious thoughts will strike deeper roots, and when they have been frequently reviewed and digested will pass into habit and second nature. If for example one has meditated on sin, by recalling to mind

repeatedly during the day the horror of sin, he will detest it from his whole heart and will offer all his sufferings as penance for his sins. Or if one has meditated on some mystery of the Life and Passion of our Lord, by recalling it time and time again, he will offer his sacrifices in thanksgiving, etc. This will not hinder his drawing aspirations from Divine Office, if he readily finds any there, especially on feast-days, and feels himself more drawn to them.

(6) It will also be useful to join the practice of aspirations to the practice of the virtue to which we are devoting ourselves in a special way during the week or month. For in this way our hearts will be drawn more toward this virtue, and our exterior actions will be efficaciously animated by our interior acts.

(7) Notwithstanding the preceding admonition, no one should use more than ordinary effort in forming thoughts and producing acts of this kind. If the intellect suggests no motives, it will be sufficient to pray simply and lovingly to God that He may deign to grant us that virtue. We can simply and ingenuously make known our wish of possessing it and beseech Him to strengthen this desire, if perchance it was too weak, as the father of the lunatic child cried out with tears, "I do believe Lord; help my unbelief" (Mark 9, 23).

(8) Furthermore, two fundamental conditions for learning this exercise well are a true and sincere desire and a constant perseverance. If these conditions are not lacking, God's grace will not be lacking. Great talent is not required for this practice, but good will and much love. "For," says Brother John of St. Samson, "in reality the union of our spirit with God does not take place except through the active virtue of the will aroused toward its divine Object. Whence we easily deduce that this divine exercise is of the will, and if the will should be lacking, the reformation of our soul and its transformation into God would fail." But the same mystic promises, "If you faithfully persevere, you will in the course of time reach the height of greatest perfection, where union with God Himself, your supreme Good, is found" (Opp. 336).

(9) It is evident that we need not strive, nor are we expected to strive for the ability to pay attention to two things at once—to our work and to meditation on God. But our striving must be for the following, namely: (a) that as soon as we are free from other necessary occupations, we immediately revert to God with attention and eagerness, and that we do not stray after useless and sinful things; (b) that we diligently undertake all our labors acording to God's holy will and for His sake, with a pure intention; (c) that even

during our various occupations the habitual and loving inclination towards God endures and that occasionally we raise our thoughts to God by a pious aspiration.

(10) We have elsewhere inculcated that abnegation must be strenuously associated with this exercise; and that nothing can render abnegation easier and more profound than this affective presence of God. If our brethren remain faithful to this affective presence of God, they must of necessity be more and more drawn to their interior life and they will keep their hearts free from every stain of actual sin, so that God may be able, if He so pleases, to infuse even higher graces. Let us never forget that this exercise impresses the characteristic mark on the Carmelite life.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONTEMPLATION AND THE ACTIVE LIFE.

207. The Carmelite Vocation to the Apostolate

I. Although our Holy Rule insists very strongly on the fact that we should meditate day and night on the Law of the Lord and that we should be watchful in prayer, communing with God in solitude, it does not deny that this cannot be done without some interruption. For this reason, it explicitly adds, "Unless they are engaged in other just occupations" (VIII).

(a) In addition to occupations necessary for life itself, such as eating and sleeping, these just occupations are certain common exercises and such works as are necessary in every community and for the community itself, to which some of the brethren must devote themselves even in purely contemplative orders.

(b) But in the course of time it has happened that many other occupations were added to these exercises. For it has been arranged by Divine Providence that the active life, or the care of souls, should be joined to the contemplative life. Our Constitutions confirm this fact in these words, "We have been rightfully and deservedly transferred to the public service of the Church and to the cultivation of the Lord's vineyard" (Art. 198), without, however, mystical theology ceasing to be the *pars optima* of Carmelites. Therefore, to commune with God through contemplation in solitude and silence remains the chief feature, but contemplation or occupation with God must now

be interrupted more frequently on account of other just occupations.

(c) Moreover, Blessed Nicholas the Gaul, a very strenuous defender of holy and perfect solitude, asserts of our fathers dwelling on Carmel, "When they planned to assist their neighbors without themselves being losers, they sometimes, though very rarely, came down from their solitude, and generously distributed the grain they had gently gathered in solitude with the scythe of contemplation,—grain threshed and freed from the chaff by their preaching" (*Ignea Sagitta* c. VI). Certainly they acted justly in this, according to the example of our holy Father Elias, who, stirred by holy zeal hastened hither and thither to defend and vindicate belief and worship of the true God.

We are told that even St. John of the Cross with his first companions preached many times a day and taught catechism to the poor of the district. At night, however, they made up by long vigils for their seeming loss of contemplation on account of the care of souls.

Father Michael de la Fuente excelled in zeal and apostolic labor (Cf. *Anal.* VI, 251 ff). Likewise Father Michael of St. Augustine taught by word and example how to unite properly the active with the contemplative life. He affirmed, "Just as a member of our Order who intended to practise only the active life, which consists in converting and instructing souls, in performing works of charity for our neighbor, in external occupations, etc. would not be a true Carmelite, inasmuch as he would be lacking the principal feature, which is to commune with God with a pure heart; so also, he who would profess the contemplative life alone, not wishing to practise the active life at all, would not be a complete Carmelite, but rather a hermit or a monk, because he would be lacking the active life which is a partial, although secondary feature of our institute" (*Introductio,* II, c. 5).

(d) All, however, showed themselves faithful to this axiom, "The primary and chief heritage of Carmelites is to commune with God by prayer and contemplation." There has never been any disagreement among our authors on this point.

II. Our religious must always keep these things before their eyes, lest they enter upon false ways which neither lead to salvation nor can be of profit to the Order. It is necessary that they order their whole life according to these principles. Neither feature of our Order therefore, may be excluded, but both must be cultivated by Carmelites, so that they both commune with God in silence and solitude and labor for the salvation of souls. Yet, as far as he himself is concerned, a

Carmelite must always be more inclined to the contemplative part of his vocation and put his heart in it. The active part must be the most excellent fruit of the former.

The love of God will point out the right proportion to be kept between the two, since it must be the love of God alone and not the love of our convenience or self-will that draws us to solitude, or that impels us to the active life.

We shall now explain briefly the correct principles for the active life which the novices must deeply impress upon their minds. For the understanding of these principles is of the greatest importance for the rest of their religious life. Many, by neglecting these principles, have suffered shipwreck not only in the interior life of prayer, but also in the care of souls, if they did not utterly fail in their vocation. At least in the case of many, the spiritual life and especially prayer never attained perfect growth or withered away in a short time because they had either cultivated a false repose, or, after they had rejected prayer, they imprudently rushed into the active life to the greatest harm not only of their own soul, but also of the souls for whose salvation they seemed to labor with such extraordinary zeal. There are snares on both sides and he who does not recognize them or avoid them, will not be able to labor for his own salvation or for the salvation of others.

208. The Proper Performance of Community Exercises

That we may know how to judge rightly concerning external activity and to conduct ourselves properly, it is above all necessary rightly to esteem and perform the community exercises, as they are called. Although we have spoken of this repeatedly (no. 86), because it is so important, we again treat it here expressly, strictly following the *Methodus* (II, cc. 1-6), that we may not seem to assert things novel or unusual.

I. It is the duty of a good religious always to prefer the exercises of the community to his own, no matter how much more excellent his own may seem. Therefore, he must not be absent from them, unless obedience expressely orders what is inconsistent with them. Nay rather, he must use all possible diligence so to perform the latter as not to neglect the former. However, in order to preserve esteem and love for community exercises, let him consider the following:

(a) Our Lord presides over them and honors them with His special presence according to the promise He has made, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst

of them" (Matt. 18, 20). There He imparts His graces and blessings more abundantly; whoever has not been deprived of spiritual and interior vision will recognize Him there and will be refreshed by the presence of his heavenly King, as it is said in the psalm, "Let the children of Sion be joyful in their King" (Ps. 149, 2).

(b) In these exercises all the things with which we may work out our salvation according to our vocation and attain perfection are furnished us. Indeed all the saints sought nothing else in their Order. Nay rather they attained the height of sanctity by the exact practice of the common observance of their Order; while on the other hand, no one can be absent from common observance through his own fault without at once neglecting the aim of his vocation. For if God wishes the religious to be there, and in His ineffable Goodness has determined to distribute His graces there, it is not lawful for the religious to presume that he will obtain them elsewhere. When, therefore, he has established himself outside the will of God and, therefore, remains deprived of God's grace, what else can he expect than his own ruin! The grain of wheat, indeed, perishes when it remains alone, but it is preserved when it remains in the heap of grain. Coal, when extinguished, is re-kindled and set aglow when it is brought in contact with other burning coals.

(c) Finally, since the religious is a member of the community, he renders the community defective by his absence from it, just as the body which lacks only one of its members is deformed. Moreover, the community exercises at which he is present will be of great additional benefit to him. For if he is imperfect, the fervor of the others will supply for his imperfection. God will receive his action and prayers not indeed as the action and prayers of one individual, which would be of small value, but as the action and prayers of all who are present, which will greatly increase his merit. Therefore, that he may resolve never to be absent from community exercises, let him say to himself with our divine Savior, "I must be about My Father's business" (Cf. Luke 2, 49).

It will be profitable for us to consider attentively what Blessed Frances d'Amboise remarks about complete observance of the rules, "If you were to neglect some point today, another tomorrow, in a short time the entire observance would perish" (Cf. *Speculum Carmelitanum,* II, 1690, n. 2586).

II. However, the mere presence at the community exercises is not sufficient; it is necessary to perform them properly. For it can happen that of two religious who have lived for an equal length of time

in the Order and have performed the same exercises, one will have stored up for himself an immenes treasure of merits, while the other has remained poor. Yes, even our Lord's threat can be verified, "Two men will be in a field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the millstone; one will be taken, and one will be left" (Matt. 24, 40, 41). The reason for the difference is that the former, not the latter, performed his actions in a good and proper spirit.

We should arouse ourselves to perform them rightly with these considerations:

(a) In and by them we please God. How great a happiness for the devout to say that God wishes to be glorified by all men, although in His presence they are less than a little worm or a tiny ant. "God, Who is glorified in the assembly of the saints; great and terrible above all of them that are about Him" (Ps. 88, 8).

(b) Every religious is obliged in conscience to honor the Order which so kindly adopted him among the number of its children. Now, the chief glory of an Order consists in the fact that it is a shining light to all people by its good example in the exact observance of the smallest exercise. For outsiders, seeing the uniform conduct, look on with admiration and give glory to God and a thousand praises to the community whose religious observe such an excellent routine. Whence St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi used to say that one of the greatest services the Divine Majesty expects of religious is that of good example (Cf. *Methodus* II, 414).

(c) For all actions rightly performed we shall merit a special degree of glory in heaven. Indeed St. Bernard says, "Our good works do not pass away as they seem to, but temporal works are sown as the seeds of eternity" (*De conversione ad clericos,* c. 7, n. 17). But the things that are done out of obedience obtain double merit. For that virtue is like the precious stone which would turn into gold whatever it touched, and if it touched gold, would double its value. Therefore, Holy Scripture says, "Place thy treasure in the commandments of the most High, and it shall bring thee more profit than gold" (Ecclus. 29, 14).

(d) But if we perform our actions unwillingly, imperfectly or carelessly, we shall obtain little or no fruit from them according to the prophecy, "You have sowed much, and brought in little . . . and he that has earned wages, put them in a bag with holes" (Agg. 1, 6). We have, therefore, more or less squandered our energies and our time and have not used our talents as was fitting.

III. That our community acts may really be done in the right way we must observe the following: The soul of our works is a good intention of pleasing God, without which they are in a certain sense dead. For sometimes we perform them out of habit and custom, without any elevation of mind and spirit. At other times, nature, being a lover of self, seeks its own satisfaction at least in part, and at the same time such a defective motive may remain unnoticed by one who does not carefully examine his thoughts. For our natural cravings can be very subtle and yet capable of destroying merit entirely or at least of greatly diminishing it.

(a) A good religious is therefore above all especially careful to offer every action to God with great attention, not lightly and superficially or hastily and thoughtlessly. Novices in the spiritual life ought to become accustomed to this practice, so that they may not be satisfied to do their works with a certain general intention of pleasing God, but should strive to perform them in the spirit that each individual action requires.

(b) Then the good religious forms a good intention for his work. If this intention is considered closely, it contains a threefold interior act, one closely following the other and all being formed at almost the same moment, even though not always expressed in so many words. They are, the resolve to perform this action with a good motive; the offering of it to God; the petition for the grace to do it well.

1. To find a good motive or incentive for doing an action, it is not necessary to use great solicitude, nor to seek extraordinary or sublime reasons, but if a motive does not occur one may sincerely and attentively elicit one of the following intentions with simplicity, peace and liberty of heart: "For the greater glory of God"; or "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God"; or "Not that I may do my will but the will of Him Who sent me, i. e., called me to this holy profession." Or one may say, "O Lord my God, I am a child, and do not know how I ought to honor Thee; but I desire to perfom this action for the same purposes and the same intentions which Thou Thyself dost require and expect of me."

2. We must offer our actions to God with a free and simple heart, and at the same time renounce all ambitions and our own conveniences and selfish motives, declaring in our heart that we will do these actions out of love for God alone and to observe obedience.

This offering will be of even greater merit, if it is made in union with the actions and sufferings of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Our offering will thus be transformed even as a drop of water placed in

a barrel of wine is changed in color and taste and is transformed into wine.

It has already been said (no. 190) that we are taught by the tradition of our forefathers and also by the example of the saints of our Order, to offer to God by the most pure hands of His most holy Mother whatever we do, because whatever comes from her hands or through them is most acceptable to the Divine Majesty.

3. We should ask for the grace to perfom the action properly in whatever circumstances we may be, desiring grace ardently and acknowledging that without divine aid we can do nothing, according to the saying of our Savior, "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15, 5). Hence we are required to apply His merits, as the Church does when she concludes all her prayers to the Eternal Father in these words, "Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son."

209. The Qualities of Community Exercises

After having explained the general principles for properly carrying out the community exercises, we shall now explain how we should perform them in order to attain their desired end.

1. We must undertake them with diligence, fervor and the greatest punctuality. Therefore, at the first sound of the bell, without even a momentary delay, we must betake ourselves to the scheduled exercises. "He who regulates his life by such an intention" (i. e., of pleasing God according to the command of obedience), says Father Michael of St. Augustine, "does not choose among works. He does not pray more readily than study, nor does he study more readily than pray. But the time alloted for one, he uses for that purpose, and the time alloted for the other, he uses for it. No matter how deep the recollection or sublime the contemplation he is engaged in, he leaves it at once when the time for study comes; and on the other hand, he leaves his studying at the time appointed for prayer. Nor does he seek anything except the will of God; and if after prayer he discovers that his subtle reasoning has vanished or that after study, prayer does not succeed as well as before, he considers it all to be God's will. He even considers the intimacy and fervor of prayer or even subtle reflections performed outside the time of obedience as a temptation,—as a ruse of the devil to withdraw him from the rule of perfection, thus to bring him to follow his own will and to fall into various faults of self-love, vain glory and self-complacency" (*Inst. Myst.* 2, tr. 3, c. 30).

These considerations are easily applied to other situations, and,

if they are observed, the main obstacles to punctuality are removed. The striving after punctuality is an effect of fervor and the desire to please God alone.

2. Community exercises which are already the fruit of such fervor should be performed with interior joy and gladness of soul. We ought to say, "I will freely sacrifice to Thee" (Ps. 53, 8), according to the words, "May God . . . give you all a heart to worship Him, and to do His will with a great heart and a willing mind" (2 *Mach.* 1, 3).

3. Our actions ought to be complete, without curtailment of the smallest part of them. He would be guilty of such curtailment, for example, who would leave the choir before the Divine Office is completed, or would cut off even a moment intended for prayer or would leave unfinished a work enjoined by obedience. He who would act thus would dedicate to the devil the epilogue of an action which should have been entirely consecrated to God. For it happens very often that the enemy of our soul assails us at the end of an action when he was not able to attack us in the beginning; when we was not able to convince us to abandon the whole action he seizes at least some part for himself. The weariness or disgust with which we are affected when performing an action often inclines us to curtail it. Likewise, it often happens that a certain excessive natural eagerness in performing an action urges one to rid himself of this particular work as soon as possible in order to begin another; and therefore, the mind is troubled by worry over the action that is to follow, when it ought to be thinking only of performing the present action properly. But as long as we engaged in one action, we must prudently reject as a temptation, or at least as a distraction, the thought of the action that is to follow. We must, with great tranquility of mind, so distribute our actions that one will follow the other in its turn. In this way we will fill the twenty-four hours of the day after the example of those of whom it is said, "Full days shall be found in them" (Ps. 72, 10).

4. Religious decorum requires that we perfom all our actions, but especially the community exercises, with a certain grace and dexterity for the edification of those who see us, and with great care and modesty as regards all the circumstances. To attain this a certain gentle and alert attention of the mind is necessary, so that we may regulate our senses and the movements of our body in a becoming way. We should, therefore, not be too hasty, nor too slow, too active nor too hesitant, but we ought to preserve a happy medium in a certain

measured movement of our activity. It will be especially helpful in attaining this end if we keep before our eyes the most Sacred Humanity of our Savior as though He were then performing the same action as we ourselves. Indeed, we must consider not only the sublime intentions for which He offered all His actions to His Eternal Father, but also the wonderful care, dexterity and modesty which He exhibited in them, and strive to imitate them according to our ability. Indeed, our conduct will be so much more perfect as it approaches more closely the conduct of our Savior.

5. We ought to watch over our heart with all care and solicitude so that we may reject self-love which is wont to creep into some of the best actions and often to vitiate the best intention with which we begin to work. Thus, for example, it can happen that when we have begun to eat merely from necessity we greedily finish our meal with a pleasure that has gradually but unconsciously insinuated itself.

This attention does not consist so much in actually thinking of God during the action, as in keeping ourselves in a certain, interior peace and tranquility, so that the soul may always be composed and prepared to consider and to judge all its thoughts and the movements of its heart. Undoubtedly it would be great presumption to think that one would never slip into error or sin in this matter. However, if we correct the faults committed as soon as we notice them, and if after some forgetfulness has crept in, we recall our former attention by a gentle elevation of our soul to God, we shall gradually arrive at that degree of self-mastery that almost without any labor or difficulty, we shall keep our mind fixed and immovable in the presence of God and attentive to ourselves.

210. The Preparation for the Active Life

Since in spite of the fact that contemplation remains our chief vocation, we are called to the active life and to the cultivation of the Lord's field, it becomes immediately evident that our preparation must be far different from the preparation required for a purely contemplative life. For there are many requirements in the active life which are unnecessary in the purely contemplative life. If a common agricultural field cannot be cultivated except by one who has learned to do so, how much less the field of the Lord! Therefore, lest our religious, or the Order, or souls, should suffer harm, a threefold preparation is required from those of us who are called to the priesthood, viz., a spiritual, a moral and a scientific preparation.

I. Prayer, or the Interior Life.

(a) The first requirement is that the life of prayer strike deep root in the soul. Unless it does, prayer will quickly wilt as soon as our religious have taken up the exercises of the active life, and nothing will be left of their first fervor. The prayer-life of such religious will be like the seed, which "when the sun was risen, was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away" (Mark 4, 6).

What an error do they commit who think that because of our vocation to the active life, our chief vocation is to be neglected in the years of preparation! Not only do they contradict all the pronouncements of Holy Church made especially in recent years, but they deny the experience of all men. When the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius XII, addressed the members of all the Ecclesiastical Institutes of Rome on June 24, 1939, he declared, "It is the duty of your vocation to pave the way to the love and grace of Christ in men's souls. To attain this end, you, yourselves, must necessarily be fired by that love. Kindle Christ's love in your hearts by joining yourselves with Christ in prayer and sacrifice. By union, we repeat, in prayer. If you should ask what message we have for the priests of the Church in the beginning of our pontificate, we answer: Pray, pray more and more, pray more earnestly!" (AAS. XXXI, 249).

(b) Our obligation has not been lessened, but rather has been doubled. Much greater preparation is necessary, because of two offices.

For if our life were purely contemplative, many things might be expected in the course of time, like one who making a trip misses one car, and waits for another. External danger would be lacking, labors would not be urgent, and so one's prayer-life could be developed day by day without difficulty. Now, however, when a certain time has elapsed, one's prayer-life must already have advanced to such a degree of perfection that entrance into the active life will not endanger it. The religious priest must have gathered such a spiritual treasure within himself that he can afford to spend it upon others without loss to himself. Woe to those who imagine they are rich whereas they are poor! (Cf. Apoc. 3, 17). It is characteristic of the inexperienced to expect a life of prayer insufficiently developed to develop better in the active life than it did when all circumstances were in the highest degree favorable. Will the grape plucked before it is ripe afterward ripen? Will foods not sufficiently prepared be cooked by being placed on the table? And let no one quote the proverb, "To make a man swim, pitch him in the river." For many who did not learn to swim perished in the waters.

Let us listen to Father Michael of St. Augustine speaking on this matter. "It happens to many devout and religious persons who have tasted and drunk only a little of the wine of divine love and made little progress in virtue, that they give themselves heart and soul to the active life more out of their own inclination and will than by God's will or in the order of their superiors. They engage in hearing confessions, preaching, conversing with men, or in other exterior occupations. Such easily lose what they seemed to have imbibed of the love of God, they fall away from the practice of virtue which they had begun, and so gradually they are deprived of their spiritual nourishment. While they think they are helping others, they neglect themselves and while they are serving spiritual food and drink to others, they themselves remain destitute of heavenly food and graces. Thus they imperceptibly fail and become like those who have never experienced God or begun the spiritual life. In fact, they become spiritually more destitute than people in the world. Why is this? Because these external occupations, like cold water, extinguish the bit of burning charity they possess, especially when they push themselves into such occupations, uncalled by God and not appointed by unsolicited obedience. Others on the contrary, perfect in charity, called by God and experienced in virtue come forth, as it were, from the wine-cellar of the Spouse, where they have generously drunk, go forth into public and in a worldly atmosphere, in the exercises of the active life become still more ardent and zealous, and accomplish all these things with the greatest gain for souls and for themselves" (*Inst. Myst.* 1, tr. 4, c. 22).

(c) Therefore, the novices especially, must give so much greater attention to the perfect acquisition of prayer, and must strive for it with even greater fervor after profession, as long as they are in preparation for the priesthood and for the active life. Under no condition should they wish or plan to be ordained before time, but their concern should be to be ready when they are ordained. For it belongs to their superiors and not to them to arrange and to decide whether and when they are to be ordained. But it does belong to them to dispose themselves as perfectly as possible and to deeply imbibe the spirit of the Order before they are assigned to the active life (Cf. Const. 60).

II. Character Training.

(a) Everyone sees that solid virtues are necessary for the active life, virtues equal to the many difficulties and dangers that threaten. The purely contemplative life, it is true, is by no means devoid of

difficulties and dangers, and not everyone possesses sufficient courage or strength to undergo its trials, yet in comparison with the active life it offers much more security, and not all virtues are necessary in it in equal degree, at least as far as outward practice is concerned. If the contemplative life can in some respect be compared to a ship dividing the waters on a calm sea, the active life is frequently like the bark of the Apostles thrown hither and thither by the winds and the waves, so that they, accustomed though they were to the sea, cried out in fear, "Lord, save us, we perish" (Matt. 8, 25). A strong and experienced pilot is necessary. For this reason, the active life seems to offer a richer opportunity of developing the virtues in a general way and of bringing them to a heroic degree, provided they were solid from the very inception of the active life. If they were not, experience testifies that they easily change to the contrary. At least all is over with the interior life and the pursuit of perfection.

(b) Since, therefore, we are also called to the active life, the following precept carries all the more weight, "The purpose of the novitiate year is to train the character of the novices under the discipline of the master . . . through appropriate exercises to uproot the germs of vice, to control the emotions, and to acquire virtue" (Const. 41). This precept has not lightened the obligations of the Master or of the novices, nor has it lightened their burden. Rather this preparation, as well as the probation must be so much more extensive and solid.

(1) The novices must test themselves and they must be tested, whether they possess sufficient strength, aptitude and talent not only for prayer and contemplation, but also for embracing the active life, so that salutary fruits can be looked for in both fields.

(2) Two dangers must be avoided—the danger of losing the love of solitude and contemplation and the danger of not being equipped to cultivate the field of the Lord. For since our entire mode of life is adapted to our double vocation, he who has no aptitude for the active life will not advance far in the contemplative life, and there is imminent danger that later he will begin to live a totally idle life, and therefore a restless one. He will fail in both kinds of life.

(3) Again they must strive to acquire not merely superficial virtues, but they should lay solid and deep foundations; otherwise they will be like the "foolish man that built his house upon the sand, and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof" (Matt. 7, 26, 27). They should especially strive to acquire humility,

obedience, chastity, charity, and to conquer self-seeking and self-love.

(4) Likewise they should constantly and perseveringly pray that God may deign to regard their good will and to fashion them into fit instruments of His divine pleasure, because without God they can accomplish nothing.

(5) But even when the novitiate is over and they have made profession, they should ardently persevere in their aim that when they are called in due time by their superiors, they may with calm and confident heart proceed to sacred orders. The closer those days approach, the more strenuously they should labor to this end, lest they quickly succumb in the Lord's vineyard under the burden and the heat of the day.

III. Acquisition of the Sciences.

(a) "Since we have been transferred to the public service of the Church and the cultivation of the field of the Lord, the purpose of our Institute demands that we diligently unite the study of the arts and sciences with the study of mystical theology, the noblest phase of our Carmelite vocation . . . For religious in our day cannot worthily and successfully hold their place unless they excel in nearly every branch of literature and learning" (Const. 198). No one will deny this truth. He who wishes to attain the end without the necessary means is devoid of reason. Wherefore, the Supreme Authority has repeatedly taught and inculcated this requirement with great earnestness, "If you wish to become the light of truth which is Christ," says our Sovereign Pontiff, Pius XII, in his allocution quoted above, "you yourselves must first be enlightened. For this reason you will apply yourselves to the studies of the sacred sciences" (AAS. XXXI, 246).

(b) It is true that the novices are forbidden to occupy themselves with the study of literature and science in an organized course (Cf. Const. 42). Yet they must train their mind in such a way that when they are professed and called by their superiors, they will not hesitate to dedicate themselves to their studies and will not yield to any contrary reasons whether of humility, piety, devotion or health. Father Michael of St. Augustine teaches that such reasons are to be bravely and immediately rejected as temptations. He discourses thus at great length: "Suppose a religious to be assigned by obedience to studies through which he could become a learned man and fit to convert sinners by his sermons, edify many by his virtuous conversation, keep his Order in honor and establish it widely by attracting fit subjects to it, direct his brethren to perfection and win his own salvation and

that of many others. Suppose, however, that he by not giving due consideration and thought to these things and by not weighing that God had decreed to grant him an abundance of His grace for the undertaking and executing of his studies,—graces that He will refuse in any other form of activity—suppose I say, that not considering these things and not having his studies at heart, he schemes to shake this yoke of obedience from his shoulders, and so wrings from his superiors another more agreeable order. The superiors for the sake of peace and quiet or for other reasons allow themselves to be persuaded; they relieve him of his studies; he remains a stupid ass; the souls he could have saved by his learning perish or remain in their sins; through the failure of the edification he might have given by his life, his Order suffers; many who would otherwise have been called to it are turned away from religious life; the Order and its rules wasted away; and thus for numerous souls he is the occasion of much spiritual harm. One can imagine how these souls perishing or retarded in virtue on his account will rise up against him and accuse him on the Last Day. I leave it to your own thought how hard a judgment he will have to fear on the Last Day" (*Inst. Myst.* 2, tr. 3, c. 27). Who could more vividly describe the value of studies for a Carmelite priest?

(c) Does anyone imagine that it is lawful to work in God's vineyard without the requisite knowledge? If it is not lawful to despise or neglect learning in contemplative orders, (Cf. Apost. Letter, *Unigenitus Dei Filius,* March 19, 1924. AAS. XVI, 137; *Anal.* VIII, 113), how much less in those orders which are established for both the active and contemplative life?

(d) Therefore, we must dedicate ourselves fervently to the sciences, but in such a way that it will be done with a good intention and without ambition, that curiosity and restlessness be minimized, that the interior life be not neglected and that thus the mind and heart be properly developed.

Most certainly they who are called to cultivate the Lord's vineyard, have need of most solid preparation.

211. Qualities of the Active Life

Now we are to inquire what we must do to reconcile the active life so perfectly with the interior life that the latter may not only not be hindered or suffer detriment, but rather be augmented because of the active life; and how we are to serve God and remain close to Him

by external activity no less than by contemplation. No one will deny the great importance of this question for our own spiritual life as well as for all religious discipline.

(a) In the first place we must be convinced that the greatest part of our activity is such that it will of itself lead us to God.

Is not the administration of the holy Sacraments a certain divine duty by which the holiest thoughts and affections are suggested to us? Do we not, in preaching and teaching Catechism, have a perfect opportunity of meditating on divine truths? Are we not, when we assist the sick and dying, continually reminded of the vanity of all earthly things and our thoughts drawn to the Last Things? Do not all such matters place before us unceasingly the glory and goodness of God? Does not such activity, since it should proceed from charity, also bring us to greater charity and so unite us closer to God, especially since it offers so many occasions of denying and mortifying ourselves? Our whole activity does not so much draw us to outward things as to the inward, provided all things are done in the spirit of faith and with a pure heart which aspires to the eternal. By such activity those who yearn for heaven, learn from day to day to seek not so much what is earthly as that which is heavenly.

(b) If, therefore, the contrary happens to us, it is due not to the activity itself, but *per accidens* to our own fault. We add something which does not pertain to our work but is born of our concupiscence and lack of mortification. Relishing earthly things, we seek something else besides God and souls. Misled by self-love, we turn aside from the straight path. To avoid such dangers, we must fulfill the following conditions:

I. HOLY OBEDIENCE

(a) In addition to the state of charity or habitual grace without which we cannot hope for God's blessing or acquire supernatural merit, the first necessary condition is that our activity and work proceed from holy obedience.

1. As far as external activity is concerned, we must be perfectly indifferent. In fact, since our primary vocation is to commune with God by prayer and contemplation, *per se,* all else being equal, we must be more inclined toward it and to cloistered solitude than to external activity. It is the prerogative of obedience to call us to the latter in due time, although impelled by holy zeal we are free to tell our superiors of our desire to work in the Lord's vineyard (Cf. Const. 270, On the Missionary Vocation).

However, according to the words of Father Michael of St. Augustine quoted before, we may never refuse external activity when we are ordered by obedience. Our Constitutions explicitly declare, "As soon as confessors are called to hear confessions in our own churches or to visit the sick, they should at once present themselves with fervent zeal so that they may gain for God the souls redeemed by the Precious Blood of Christ" (Art. 241). All this applies especially and with greater force to those to whom the care of souls has been formally entrusted, as missionaries, pastors, etc.

If, therefore, we are not called by holy obedience, we should cheerfully attend to God within the monastery and give ourselves to study or other labors. If, however, we are called, we should not less cheerfully hold ourselves in readiness to fulfill holy obedience by our work. In this way, we shall draw the divine blessing upon ourselves and shall labor for God's glory in the salvation of others.

2. We should leave to obedience the kind of work to which we shall be assigned. We ourselves should not choose what suits us better, but we should show ourselves indifferent. We should be guilty of grave imperfection, if we were to avoid work within the monastery as teacher, prefect, master, or the like, and prefer work outside, because there we more easily gain the applause or even the rewards of men. Perfect religious are animated by different motives and prefer what holy obedience has set before them. They do not shrink from any labors or burdens, but are fervently anxious to sacrifice themselves in any place for God and the salvation of souls. Accordingly, they do not resist or delay when they are sent by holy obedience even into another Province or into distant lands. Accommodating themselves as well as they can to the customs of the place and people, they strive to become all things to all men in order to save as many as possible (Cf. 1 Cor. 9, 22). With St. Paul they have learnt to be content in whatsoever state they are (Cf. Phil. 4, 11). Of such calibre must they be who go to the foreign missions. For "no man putting his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9, 62), much less for propagating it.

3. Finally the religious immediately withdraws from every activity as soon as recalled by obedience, even though he may experience great reluctance on account of the abundant fruits he seems to harvest in the Lord's vineyard. In fact, he is convinced that God's blessing without which all our labor is in vain, will be wanting if he does not obey. He rejects every contrary consideration or suggestion as a temptation.

(b) Holy obedience preserves us from all error and illusion,

obtains God's blessing, increases and safeguards merit. If, motivated by self-will under the guise of fervor and zeal, we reject obedience and deceive our superiors, we shall sooner or later see that we have fallen into the snare of the devil. Therefore, we should yield ourselves and our faculties to obedience according to our vow and diligently fulfill it. In this way, free from the obligation of rendering an account, we shall accomplish much for the kingdom of God without our interior life suffering any harm. The foundation of the entire spiritual life is the denial of one's will, and "obedience is better than sacrifices; and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams" (1 Kings 15, 22).

(c) When holy obedience and regular observance allow any choice in exercising the Apostolate, we should do what holy zeal may inspire, observing the rules already given or presently to be given. However, we must act sincerely with our superiors both in asking and in following their advice.

II. A PURE INTENTION

We have insisted above (no. 208) that a right and pure intention is the life of our deeds.

(a) Our intention is right and pure when we seek nothing else in our activity than God's glory, the salvation of souls and their progress in virtue, as well as our own. We must not seek or desire the praise or glory of men, material gain or convenience, gifts or rewards, but only that God may be glorified in all things and that souls may be saved. "The charity of Christ presseth us" (2 Cor. 5, 14).

(b) It is not sufficient, however, to say at the beginning of our undertaking, "All for the glory of God," or the like; but we should examine and see whether our intention actually corresponds to these holy words or whether we are influenced rather by human motives.

If we should in any way act against holy obedience, as we have explained above, it is evident that our intention is not right and pure. For among religious a right intention and obedience are one and the same.

Other signs by which we may learn that something is lacking in our intention are: excessive haste, accompanied by disturbance of soul; too great anxiety to reach one's goal; anxious inquiry as to what others think of our work; discouragement and depression of spirit when we do not attain our purpose; boasting to others of our deeds; envy of those who are successfully working in God's vineyard; preference for working in public rather than in obscurity; accepting personal gifts; refraining from laudable undertakings because of human respect. From these and like signs we may easily discover that our intention is not quite pure. Still, when we discover our intention to be defective, we must not on that account omit our labors; but we must carefully reject the bad motives and strengthen our good ones.

(c) We must frequently renew our good intention in order that merely human motives may not intrude themselves and triumph because of the corruption of our human nature.

1. In itself it is sufficient to gain merit, if each morning we direct and offer all our occupations to God, provided they are good or at least neutral, and we ourselves are in the state of grace. Nevertheless, for the reason just given, namely that the right intention may not gradually and insensibly degenerate into a bad or imperfect one, it will be of advantage to renew our good intention at least at the beginning of every occupation; or if the work is of long duration and there is danger of our intention being spoiled, to renew it frequently in the course of the work. Besides, this renewal of intention is an excellent practice and therefore worthy of merit. Finally, by often renewing our intention we acquire the interior habit of being ready with a good motive when it is needed.

2. The practice of the good intention is best joined with that of the presence of God.

3. This exercise should be united with constant renunciation. For, if we do not practise continuous abnegation, although we may affirm a thousand times that we intend only God's glory, we shall frequently seek our own selves and in the end shall gain no merit. By continuous abnegation the intention is purified and strengthened.

(d) What we have said about the perfect performace of the common exercises and of our intention during them, is also applicable here.

We should, therefore, beware of the least imperfection in our intention and be careful that our whole intention is good, that our activity be pleasing to God, and in this way profitable to our neighbor.

III. Efficacious and Loving Attention to God

The third condition of our external activity must be to preserve as much as possible a loving regard for God by which we may persevere in prayer.

(a) As we said above, nobody expects us to pay attention explicitly

to two things at the same time, viz., to the performance of our duty and the presence of God. For without an entirely special grace this would be impossible to our nature in certain undertakings; and if we were to attempt it, we might seriously injure our mind. It is sufficient, therefore, that our prayerful affection continue together with our right intention and that we try to carry out our work as diligently as we can, impelled by this affection and animated with the right intention.

(b) If, however, our work is sometimes interrupted, our attention should return to God that we may rest a while in Him, until it is time to resume work. In fact, we should occasionally break off a longer work, as far as is lawful, to rest a little in God and to renew our intention according to the rule just given. Likewise, we should preserve in our soul such detachment from our work, that we may be able to be on our guard to ward off any bad or imperfect intentions; yet at the same time we should neglect nothing that belongs to the perfect execution of our work. We should, therefore, observe all that we have proposed about the practice of God's presence (Cf. IV, c. 4).

IV. Fidelity to Community Exercises and Personal Religious Practices

(a) It is the special duty of superiors to arrange that the active life harmonizes with regular observance and, therefore, with proper perfomance of community execises. According to the rule given in our Constitutions, "Our communities should proceed carefully in accepting pious endowments, so that they are not on the one hand too reluctant to accept those that conduce to the edification of souls, and the good of the Order, or on the other hand, too ready to accept burdensome ones that require some change in the ordinary schedule of regular observance" (Art. 147). This holds with so much greater force of external activity.

(b) Moreover, each religious must always be careful to absent himself as little as possible from common exercises, as we have already taught above (no. 208). Let only holy obedience and his own necessity or the necessity of others force him to be absent. As far as depends on him, he will arrange his outside work in such a way that it will square perfectly with regular life within the monastery. Whoever acts otherwise is guilty of a bad intention or of negligence. All who rightly consider what we have said above of the supreme regard we should have for community exercises will agree with this.

(c) All must likewise see to it that they do not in general neglect or weaken their spiritual exercises and their spiritual life. Our Constitutions expressly admonish priests and confessors, "Let them be mindful not to neglect their own personal sanctification, under the pretext of procuring the salvation of others, but let them often recall the words of the Apostle, 'Lest when I have preached to others I myself become a castaway.' Wherefore let all beware of curtailing the accustomed exercises of prayer and examination of conscience, and above all let them meditate for at least a half hour every day, unless necessity or charity demands otherwise" (Art. 243).

(d) There is no doubt that many apparent contradictions can be reconciled. Were not the saints most active, and yet most contemplative? Besides the seraphic St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, St. Theresa of Jesus, the Venerahle Michael de la Fuente, Angelo Paoli and others, let Father Philip Thibault, the renowned founder of the reform of Touraine, be an example to us. "Although he was most zealous for souls, still during his whole life he was not addicted to anything so completely as to prayer and the contemplation of divine things, so necessary for those aspiring to perfection. As though he were not overwhelmed with daily cares and labors, he was often discovered passing the whole night in prayer and meditation; and although bound by no law as to the duration of prayer but impelled only by the desire for progress in the ways of God, he daily spent two hours or one hour and a half in this angelic exercise, even when he was most occupied in teaching the higher sciences or preaching Lenten courses" (*Anal.* VII, 54).

Although we cannot always closely imitate the example of the saints since they are sometimes superhuman and we cannot force ourselves to the impossible, still the fervor of the saints should excite us to flee all sloth and neglect in this matter.

(e) Most assuredly God's blessing for accomplishing our labors in His vineyard cannot be obtained in greater abundance than by our fidelity to our spiritual exercises. It is not at all becoming to build up God's kingdom exteriorly and at the same time to destroy or neglect it interiorly.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this tract on the proper exercise of the active life, we shall give a most useful admonition of Father Michael of St. Augustine, the champion of the mixed life in Carmel. "In case the pious soul on account of external occupation, the variety of occasions, the multitude of affairs, the lack of fidelity in attending to the good intention, or the lack of circumspection in its otherwise God-like conduct, notices after a time that imaginations, disturbances, innumerable matters becloud and hinder its spirit, weaken its peace and tranquility, and do not seem to follow the direction of the spirit, so that they can hardly be overcome or controlled; the soul must strive to find more time to exercise itself in solitude, silence and prayer in order to acquire new strength and enthusiasm. For experience teaches that when the soul has failed and weakened in the active life, it can and must recover its first fervor by prayer and the exercise of solitude. Otherwise it is in danger of complete extroversion of its nature, and it will complete in the flesh or in sensuality that which it began in the spirit. For when the spirit begins to be estranged and depressed and to succumb to the yoke of corrupt nature, it is as it were choked, and nature again takes up its former life, and evil inclinations and wicked desires again thrive. Thus, unless it takes timely care in the way indicated, the soul will quickly and completely fall from the spiritual to the natural" (*Inst. Myst.* 4, tr. 2, c. 28).

Instructed by the teachings of the wisest of men who were thoroughly experienced in both active and contemplative life, we must consider what our Constitutions prescribe in our day when the active life is more prominent than ever. "We oblige each and every one of the brethren to make a yearly retreat of ten days . . . in common, for the purpose of recollecting their souls. Whoever for a grave reason and with the permission of the Provincial, cannot be present at the common retreat must take it privately. One day each month, all shall devote themselves to spiritual recollection" (Art. 151).

If anyone ought to observe these instructions to the letter, surely the laborers in the Lord's vineyard and all those who are frequently distracted by worldly affairs, should do so, in order that neither they nor regular discipline may suffer harm.

CHAPTER SIX

The Mystic Experience of God

212. The Mystical Union or Infused Contemplation

1. The *Institutio primorum monachorum* or the Rule of John 44, proposes the presentation to God of a heart, holy and free from every stain of actual sin as the first end to be attained through our own powers and efforts with the assistance of divine grace. To attain this end manifestly and necessarily includes communion with God by vocal and mental prayer.

If we accomplish this first aim, the legislator promises us the attainment of the second aim, obtainable only through a gift of God, viz., even in this life to experience in some measure or to behold mystically in our heart the virtue of God's presence and to taste the sweetness of supernal glory (Cf. *Anal.* III, p. 348).

There is no doubt that the foregoing passage of the Rule indicates a strictly mystical life or infused contemplation, so clearly described by St. Theresa and so excellently explained by St. John of the Cross, the Mystical Doctor.

2. It is true,—and the Rule just mentioned explicitly proclaims it,—that the attainment of this second end does not depend upon us, since we are not able, even assisted by grace, to attain it or strictly to merit it, for it is a pure gift of God. And this gift does not seem to be absolutely necessary for eternal salvation. Nevertheless, it is always a great grace, because it effectually frees the soul from creatures and unites it to God in a most excellent way. According to the teaching of St. John of the Cross, it is ordinarily withheld from us not because God is unwilling to grant it, but because we have not disposed ourselves sufficiently to receive it (Cf. *The Ascent,* 2, 4. 13; *Living Flame,* 2, 5). If in our eagerness for this interior life we had really presented to God a heart holy and free from every stain of actual sin, God would hardly hesitate to enrich us with it. This concerns Carmelites in a special way, since according to our authors we seem to have a special calling to it. Our *Methodus* after describing the mystical life itself in a few words, concludes the entire tract about prayer in the following words, "Such are the boundaries of the region concerning the possession of which all the exercises of prayer and the presence of God of which we have spoken so far, are concerned. If our brethren seriously and faithfully dedicate themselves to these practices, we can promise them that one day they will

see the God of gods on Sion by the holy ascent of the mount of contemplation. May God grant it!" (I, 400).

3. For this reason we shall give a brief outline of the mystical life in its strict sense, or of infused contemplation, in order that our brethren may have a right idea of it and that with God's help they may also daily dispose themselves for it. We intend to do no more than propose simple concepts and to offer some kind of an introduction to mystical theology. Whoever wishes a deeper insight into it and to experience in some measure the blessings it offers, should read with pious affection the splendid works of our mystical writers, namely, Father Dominic of St. Albert, Father Maurus of the Child Jesus, Father Michael of St. Augustine, Father Michael de la Fuente, St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, Brother John of St. Samson, and especially St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross, who are of outstanding authority and, therefore, are the ornament and glory of Carmel.

4. To all this we add the admonition of Father Michael of St. Augustine, "Do not be led astray and deceived with so many to whom the mere name of mystical theology is hateful and begets disgust, because, as they say, it makes man rise too high; but rather straightway apply your mind to the diligent study of it . . . In my judgment, (I yield to a better one), it is nothing else than a practical knowledge of God and divine things. It consists partly in theory and partly in practice, and makes man deiform in intellect and will" (*Inst. Myst.* 3, t. 3, c. 7).

213. The Nature of the Mystical Union

We must now distinguish between the habitual and the actual union with God.

1. There can be only one kind of habitual union, that which is effected by sanctifying grace and infused charity through which the substance of the soul is deified. This union of charity can vary in degree and intensity in various souls, but not in kind. In truth, it will be the same in our heavenly home as on earth; for charity never falleth away, even though faith and hope shall fall away when vision and possession take place (Cf. 1 Cor. 13, 8-12).

Actual union, however, or the application and turning of our mind and will to God can be either active in ordinary prayer when it is performed by our own powers assisted by grace; or passive when and insofar as God Himself draws and unites our intellect and will to Himself, so that our soul is directed and drawn toward Him by love. In the former case, the soul turns to God by its own effort; in the

second case, it is moved by God. This latter is called infused contemplation. In the early stages this contemplation can be partly active and partly passive, so that its limits can be discerned with great difficulty, and the soul itself does not know what is taking place within it. This will be quite clear from what we shall say below (no. 215) concerning the obscure night of the senses (Cf. Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D., *St. John of the Cross, Doctor of Divine Love,* Florence, 1937, pp. 163 ff.).

2. Our Father Maurus of the Child Jesus thus defines mystical theology or infused contemplation: "Mystical theology is a secret and intimate conversation of the soul with God by the continuous application of the powers of the soul to God as He is experienced and perceived within oneself, in the obscurity of faith indeed, but nevertheless by a true experience" (*Intr. in div. sap.* III, 4f). It is more briefly stated by Brother John of St. Samson, "God inexplicably perceived" (*Anal.* VII, 236), or by Father Dominic of St. Albert, "a delightful experimental knowledge of God" (*Anal.* VIII, 311). According to St. John of the Cross, however, it is "A general, confused and loving knowledge by which a union of the soul with God takes place" (*Ascent* 3, 32), or also "A secret, tranquil and loving infusion of God by which the soul is inflamed with the spirit of love" (*Dark Night,* I, c. 10).

Accordingly we may say, "infused contemplation or mystical union is a simple and loving attention of the soul to God Whose presence and influence it perceives in some experimental way."

In order to understand this better, we should note the following: By faith we all hold that God is not far from us, in fact, that when we are in the state of grace, He dwells within us as in His temple and constantly effects His work in us. But Father Dominic of St. Albert notes that whereas the faithful at large have only the belief in this supernatural state, mystic souls experience and enjoy it. For, he says, "The Blessed in heaven both see and enjoy God; the faithful on earth in general neither see nor enjoy Him, (but merely believe); whereas the true mystics do not see God, but enjoy and know Him by a real experience" (*Anal.* VIII, 324). Everyone sees that this actual mystic union of our soul with God is much higher and more intimate than the union which we ourselves are able to procure; in fact, this state, says the author before quoted, "is the highest union of our spirit with God that can be gained in this world" (ibid.). For the soul in infused contemplation realizes by experience that it is with God and God with it.

Father Dominic tries to explain this as follows, "If I should ask

you what God is, you would answer that He is a being, infinite, immense, etc., but that you do not understand. If I should ask a real contemplative in love with God what God is, he would not know how to explain; but within himself he experiences a certain infinite perception of what God is and also a certain infinite expansion of soul" (*Anal.* VIII, 313 f). And he alleges an example frequently employed by mystics, "Whoever has never heard that honey is sweet has without doubt, when he does taste it, a real experimental knowledge of its sweetness and a much better knowledge than he who has never tasted it, but has only heard of its sweetness" (ibid. 312).

3. Contemplation differs from meditation, as we have already shown elsewhere (no. 178), in that no reasoning or deduction of truth from truth takes place in it, but by a simple glance without labor or weariness God or a truth is perceived. And yet *per se* there is no knowledge of several distinct truths, but only a confused and general experience of God's presence. New concepts are not given, nor are new matters shown, but by a profound, intense, and simple yet overwhelming glance the soul penetrates into the abyss of the incomprehensible Majesty of God, and enthralled, as it were, absorbed in admiration and love, it adheres to God and desires only that this state may endure as long as possible.

4. In this sense, therefore, is the soul passive, that it can never, not even in the lowest degree, procure this state by its own will. Thus St. Theresa says, "I call that supernatural, (i.e., mystical), which cannot, no matter how much we may try, be acquired by our own effort or diligence" (*Relation 2 to Father Alvarez*). God gives, the soul receives. God comes when He pleases, frequently when the soul is not expecting, even outside the hours of prayer, and withdraws when He pleases without the soul's being able to stop Him. St. Bernard, speaking of his own experience confesses, "I felt that He was present; I recalled that He was with me. Occasionally I was able even to have a presentiment that He was coming, but never was I able to feel His coming or His going. For, I confess, that even now I do not know whence He came into my soul and where He went when He left it and how He entered and how He left." (*In Cantica,* sermon 74, n. 5).

5. However, the soul in this state is by no means idle. "*Pati divina,* (experiencing the divine touch)," says Father Dominic of St. Albert, "is not without interior, vital, free and meritorious action. . . . This experience is a supernatural action, effected by God in us and through us, who truly and freely co-operate in it; but it is called *inaction* or

suffering the divine, because our soul at the time does not perceive how it acts" (ibid. 325). Contemplative souls endeavor to return with greatest love the Love eternally loving them. "They alone," says the same Father, "give what God expects from His Church, i. e., perfect love. Therefore, also, God finds more pleasure in one such soul than in one hundred thousand of the ordinary just; yes, in a far different way, since that one alone possesses more love than all the rest combined" (ibid. 324). To all this St. John of the Cross fully assents, affirming, "A little of this pure love is more precious in God's sight and brings more advantages to the Church, even though it seems to be doing nothing, than all other works taken collectively" (*Spiritual Canticle,* Annotation to verse 29).

6. In contemplation no dialectic process takes place and no images or figures of this natural and visible world are employed. On this account, too, the imagination has no part in it, but rather everything is done in a purely spiritual manner or in the "apex of the mind" or in the "spark of the soul," as the mystics usually say. Thus it is that no mystic is able to describe his experience adequately. This experience is simply indescribable and no one is able to understand the mystics fully except the one who by the grace of God has had the same experience. Not even the mystics themselves are able to comprehend what they experience (Cf. *Anal.* VIII, 313). Whence it happens that they frequently heap up words or use unusual words and images to express mystical phenomena, which to us seem to exceed all bounds of truth.

7. Nevertheless, from the sayings and writings of the mystics we can easily gather that whatever is communicated to these souls by the divine generosity is stupendous and yet most enjoyable, and that no earthly delights can be compared to it. St. John explains it thus, "This delightful knowledge is mystical theology which spiritual writers call contemplation. It is most delightful because it is knowledge through love. Love which renders everything delightful is its teacher. And since God communicates this knowledge and understanding through love by which He communicates Himself to the soul, that knowledge is sweet both to the intellect—for knowledge is of the intellect—and to the will, because of love which pertains to the will" (*Spiritual Canticle,* v. 27, 1. 2.). This is why all things which the world is accustomed to offer or to promise becomes vile to the mystic.

8. This contemplation is infused by God for the purpose of totally freeing and withdrawing the soul from creatures, or inflaming it with

love for higher things and of giving it wholly and entirely to its Creator. Therefore, love cannot be absent in mystical contemplation; in fact spiritual writers tell us, the latter is born of love and leads to love. The Carmelite School especially emphasizes the affective element. "True contemplation," says Father Dominic of St. Albert, "is nothing else than a delightful experimental knowledge of God, excelling all human knowledge and reasoning. It owes its beginning and present existence to antecedent love and yet begets present love" (ibid. 311). Thus mystical contemplation is the most effective means of habitually uniting the soul to God by love.

9. Still, faith is by no means destroyed by infused contemplation, nor is the last veil which conceals eternal things torn asunder. Mystical experience is not beatific vision. We have already heard this from the mouth of our author. "Since faith, which is obscure, does not show us God as He is in Himself, so neither does mystical knowledge show us God as He is in Himself, although by this knowledge God is shown more clearly to the mystics than by faith (alone), namely as being infinitely lovable, immense, and so on with the rest of God's infinite perfections. . . . This knowledge, since it is not perfectly clear, does not destroy the merit of faith, but it is the experience of the certitude of faith" (ibid. 315).

214. The Degrees of the Mystical Union

Mystical union like everything else in the spiritual life follows the law of progress. The soul little by little is lifted up from the initial stage which is quite feeble and very short to the highest permanent union. Nevertheless, the soul must strive to show itself most faithful to God when He calls and must very diligently abstain from everything that might hinder more abundant graces. More than once did St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross lament the fact that because of the lack of generosity in souls, God's liberality did not attain its full effect.

We shall omit all controversies concerning the number of degrees. Following our own writers, we distinguish three degrees—imperfect union, perfect or full union, and spiritual marriage. The second degree can be subdivided as we shall see. But we remark that the degrees are not designated by the same name by all authors.

I. INCOMPLETE UNION

(a) This union is called imperfect, because not all the interior powers of the soul are as yet united to God. It is subdivided, according to St. Theresa, into three degrees of intensity—passive recollection,

the prayer of quiet, and the sleep of the powers. We shall briefly describe each (Cf. St. Theresa, *Life,* cc. 14-17; *Mansion* IV, cc. 2, 3).

1. Passive recollection is truly mystical and differs from the recollection which all can procure by their own efforts; for passive recollection is effected directly by God. It can happen that God gives this recollection while we are praying without its being the fruit of our prayer or meditation, but a free gift of God. It frequently happens too, that the powers of our soul (memory, understanding, will), are inwardly collected, before we have thought of God, called, as it were, by "a sweet whisper from the divine Shepherd," as St. Theresa says. However, the powers are not bound, but remain free to be sweetly occupied in the Lord. Let him who is gifted with this recollection cling, in the sweet silence of his powers and in interior tranquility of his soul, to God Who is present, watching and listening; and let him speak with God by a loving glance rather than in formal discourse (Cf. Anthony of the Holy Spirit, O.C.D., *Directorium Mysticum,* IV, d. 1, s. 10).

2. The prayer of quiet is so called because the soul desists from meditating and from its initiative in prayer, and because it enjoys peace and quiet in the highest part of the soul; not, however, because the soul always abounds in consolations or because temptations are entirely absent. Again it is so called because the soul in an extraordinary manner experiences the presence of God to Whom the will clings and adheres as a captive, although the other powers retain their liberty. On this account the spirit and frequently the body are filled with great delights. This presence of God is not the fruit of faith or of consideration, but is a true experience granted and effected by God. However, this grace usually passes very quickly; but occasionally, when the impression is especially strong, the effects continue for several days. Then the will remains captivated by the pleasure while the powers of the soul and the senses attend to their usual affairs.

3. The sleep of the powers. Sometimes, in addition to the will, the intellect is also held bound. In this case it is not discursive, but attends to the perception of God. It sees so many great things, that it does not know where to turn, says St. Theresa (*Life,* c. 17). Memory and imagination are free, a fact which usually is the source of great annoyance to the soul. It can likewise happen that the soul from the interior sweetness it enjoys, is, as it were, intoxicated, and utters disconnected words devoid of sense, or composes verses and hymns in God's praises. That is why writers call this state spiritual intoxication.

(b) Father Anthony of the Holy Spirit, relying on the authority

of St. Theresa, enumerates the following fruits of this union: Interior peace, which remains even after the prayer of quiet has passed; deep humility; readiness for spiritual exercises; heavenly light in the intellect; firmness of will for good and for all virtues, which virtues, since they are granted by God, are much more excellent than those which can be acquired by one's own effort; a desire for progress in prayer; a desire for solitude; a certain moral conviction that this state comes from God. On the contrary, the quiet which springs from our own imagination cannot produce these or similar effects, but leaves behind it a certain aridity; the quiet, however, caused by the devil begets disturbance, pride, unfitness for spiritual exercises, darkness in the intellect and weakness in the will. In this way the experienced soul easily distinguishes the true quiet from the false (ibid. s. 11).

(c) Cautions! Since this union is imperfect and is usually granted only at intervals, sometimes great intervals, the soul, as long as it has the free use of its powers, should employ them as usual during prayer, and should not try to place itself in this state of quiet. When God draws, it should follow gently and not be worried about the wanderings of its powers which have remained free. Furthermore, it should solicitously avoid sin and deliberate imperfection, should diligently satisfy the obligations of its state and freely apply itself to prayer. Moreover, it should not become impatient if God should for a longer time deny greater graces and a higher union. It cannot dispose itself in any better way for progress in mystical union than by humility and fidelity. God frequently delays, in order that the desire and fervor of soul may increase.

Father Maurus of the Child Jesus teaches on this point, "God indeed applies the form and completes each state (or step in the ascent to the summit of the spiritual life). Yet He also wishes man assisted by grace to prepare the dispositions necessary for each degree. When these have been placed and the obstacles removed by the co-operation of divine grace and of human effort and activity, God demands that man, assisted by divine grace, should once more begin to destroy within himself other more subtle obstacles by which God's action and the communication of His lights may be limited. In this way we must continue until everything is consummated" (*Intr. in div. Sap.* II, 2).

II. COMPLETE UNION

A. Simple Union

Although full union seems to be a single degree, we shall speak of simple union and afterward of ecstatic union, as of two degrees differ-

ing in intensity, in order that the individual phenomena may more clearly appear (Cf. St. Theresa, *Life,* cc. 18, 19; *Mansion V*).

(a) This degree differs from the preceding degree, (i. e., incomplete union)—(1) because there is greater passivity in it. The soul, according to the teaching of St. Theresa, now ceases from every one of its usual operations. The water, she says, now falls from heaven and irrigates the garden, while the gardener rests; (2) because all the powers are bound, so that external occupation becomes impossible. For the intellect is stupefied; the will filled with love clings to God; the imagination seems to have perished; even the memory has ceased its wandering; (3) because one has greater assurance concerning his state. In the prayer of quiet, says St. Theresa, the soul seemed to sleep and did not know what was going on; now it is perfectly awake and is conscious of its state. Before God it watches, whereas it is asleep to self and to the world. It is in safety from the deceptions of the devil and of the imagination. The exterior senses are not yet bound, but very much hindered. With increasing intensity of union, they are still more hindered and bound.

(b) St. Theresa confesses that she had never remained in this union for a half hour. However, after the union has been dissolved the will can remain bound and the others freed, but in a way asleep, presently to be recalled to full union once more. This union can be drawn out for several hours in varying fluctuations. Indeed, the soul gone out of this union retains the remembrance of the graces received and the hope that the union may be repeated, so that in this way the other actions undergo the influence of union. St. Theresa compares this union with the period customary before the espousals of two lovers which has for its purpose the better knowledge of each other. For which purpose they usually visit each other more frequently. God, therefore, unfolds His perfections to the soul, His future spouse, that it may be enthralled by the strongest love and may never henceforth withdraw from God.

(c) The fruits of this union are so precious that St. Theresa affirms that a soul coming forth from it hardly recognizes itself, because it sees itself so greatly changed. All earthly things are distasteful to it. It is filled with the zeal of God, as well as of penance and the desire to suffer and to die. Moreover, it enjoys profound peace. Its delights, however, are so great that the soul seems to have received its rewards for all sufferings already borne on earth and yet to be borne. In fact, even its corporal strength, taken away during union itself, is afterward restored and greatly increased. The soul also accomplishes wonders among its neighbors.

(d) St. Theresa very wisely warns that the soul enriched with these graces is not yet certain of its salvation and can relapse. For which reason it ought to continue with humility working out its salvation. Besides, these graces are usually not conferred except on those who have suffered much both inwardly and outwardly.

B. Ecstatic Union

When the intensity of full union is increased, the soul is ravished out of itself and enters that union which is called ecstatic. In this union spiritual marriage, as it is called, is wont to be celebrated between the soul and its divine Spouse, for which, as we have said, simple union is the preparation (Cf. St. Theresa, *Life,* cc. 20, 21; *Mansion VI*).

(a) Mystical ecstasy is the alienation of the soul from the senses and the suspension of the latter effected by infused contemplation. Therefore, two elements concur in it. The first is infused contemplation. If this is lacking, there is no mystical ecstasy, but a certain external imitation wrought either by the devil or certain natural causes, e. g., illness. This first is the chief element. The second is the privation of exterior senses, because of the weakness of the soul which is unable to bear the great burden of infused contemplation. Therefore, according to St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross (Cf. *Spiritual Canticle,* 13, 12; 14, 5), ecstasies usually cease when the soul has been strengthened by further trials and graces, so that in the highest degree of mystical union they occur very rarely. Accordingly, ecstasy in itself is not a sign of perfection, but of weakness, in the sense that the soul has not yet arrived at the highest perfection. All its value depends on infused contemplation by which it is brought about, although perhaps God Himself sometimes ravishes the soul from its senses before infusing contemplation, in order that the soul may more readily give itself up to contemplation and other spiritual communications.

(b) Three kinds of ecstasy are usually distinguished by spiritual writers:

1. Simple ecstasy, if the withdrawal from the senses takes place gradually. In this case the body grows colder and colder without suffering, but with great pleasure. No inconveniences follow from this kind of ecstasy. On the contrary, as St. Theresa confesses, frequently the body which was formerly harassed by sickness and pain is cured and has greater activity.

2. Rapture, if the withdrawal from and suspension of the senses

is violent and sudden. In this case pains in the arms and in the whole body remain for a whole day after the ecstasy has ceased.

3. Flight of the spirit, in which the soul seems to leave the body, although in reality it does not. To itself the soul seems to be transferred to another region (Cf. "to the third heaven," 2 Cor. 12, 2), far different from the present one and there beholds wonders. However, these three varieties do not differ essentially.

(c) The more violent the ecstasy is, the shorter it lasts. St. Theresa estimates that ordinarily it does not exceed a half hour. The complete interruption of the senses is presently lessened and the whole body seems to revive, but at the same moment it dies again that the higher life of the soul may be conferred upon it. Furthermore, after the ecstasy the will frequently remains, as it were, intoxicated for a whole day and sometimes for several days; and the intellect is totally occupied with the things it has seen. The soul seems to be unfit for everything except to love God. Certain saints remained raised in the air and out of their senses for many hours and even for several days, as we read in the life of St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi (Cf. AA. SS., May 5, 657, 659, 687). All this far exceeds the level of ordinary infused contemplation.

(d) During ecstasy God usually presents the soul with extraordinary knowledge and communications about Himself, about the Sacred Humanity of Christ, about the Blessed Virgin, about other mysteries of faith, so that the intellect, even though separated from its connatural objects is by no means idle, and the will burns with love. According to St. Theresa the soul even merits, since its liberty remains. Further, the effects here are the same as in simple union, although they are greater in intensity according to the greater or lesser intensity of the infused contemplation. Contempt for the world and the desire of enjoying God increase in a marvelous manner.

(e) We have already said that in ecstatic union the spiritual espousals between the soul and its divine Spouse are celebrated. This is no more than the promise of a future spiritual marriage, by which the soul is assured that it will be raised to greater heights, if only it remains faithful. So far it has not had this assurance, since the foregoing mystical graces did not include the right of receiving other graces. One mystical grace did not depend on another, and everything remained in the free disposition of God. When the espousals have been entered into, God in some way obliges Himself to admit the faithful soul to a closer bond with Himself. This promise does not consist only in an affective union, but in a real union, which takes

place by Christ's descent into the soul, not in its center, it is true, but in its higher part and only as an act (Father Anthony of the Holy Spirit, *Dir. Myst.* IV d. IV s. 1). From this there overflows into the soul a certain fullness of graces, consolation and peace. It is not remarkable if the soul thereafter is unable to desire anything but God. However, before it can be admitted to the celebration of the spiritual marriage, it will be compelled to undergo a terrible probation of which we shall speak hereafter.

(f) Since ecstasies can be imitated for an evil purpose both by nature and the devil, every ecstasy must be tested. In this matter the soul should not trust itself, but should consult a spiritual director and deal openly with him. It should keep itself in great humility, since the proud are easily deceived. It should refrain most carefully from every desire of such phenomena. For the very desire contains the greatest danger of deception; in fact, every ecstasy must be suspected in the soul that desires them. Indeed, the saints, not only did not desire them, but rather feared and avoided them.

III. SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE

A. Perfect Union

After the soul has been perfectly purified by the dark night of the spirit which we shall explain presently, it is introduced into the last degree of mystical union, in which the spiritual marriage is celebrated. Thus the soul ascends to the highest union with God possible in this life (Cf. St. Theresa, *Mansion VII*; St. John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love*).

(a) Various names are given to this degree: Transforming union, union of love, consummated union, delightful union, union without difference, union without intermediary, the perfect state of the spiritual life. St. John of the Cross sometimes simple calls it *union* as the end of the spiritual life. Father Philip of the Holy Trinity explains the name *spiritual marriage* by which this union is distinguished, in the following words, "Since in human affairs no greater union of two human beings can be found than that of marriage by means of which they are no longer two, but one flesh, as the Apostle said, it has come about that to express the soul's intimate state of union with God, not only the Holy Fathers and other Doctors, but even the Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture employs the name of spiritual marriage by means of which he who clings to the Lord is one spirit, as the Apostle again says, (Cf. 1 Cor. 6). The bridal song of this marriage is sung

in the Canticle of Canticles" (*Summa Theologiae Mysticae,* III, tr. 3, d. 1).

(b) This spiritual marriage according to the teaching of St. John of the Cross is a total transformation of the soul into its Beloved. In this transformation each party gives itself exclusively to the other for complete possession by a union of love in some way consummated. It comprises three elements, viz., the permanent presence of God, transformation, and vision of the Holy Trinity. We shall explain each.

1. The presence of God. St. Theresa compares the spiritual espousals which precede, to the combined light of two candles which can easily be separated; but the spiritual marriage to the water which falls from the sky into a river or well and can no longer be separated, or also to a river flowing into the ocean, and to the light coming through a window into a room and mixing with the light already there. She affirms, "In this grace . . . the soul always remains in its centre with God" (*Mansion* VII, c. 2). However, a distinction must be made between habitual and actual union. The former always remains in the substance of the soul; the latter, which is experienced in the powers, is not continuous and cannot be continuous in this life. "Nevertheless, very frequently also the powers are united in this substantial union of the soul, and from this wine-cellar the intellect drinks by understanding and the will by loving" (*Spiritual Canticle,* 26, 2). The soul more or less has always a general or confused feeling that God is with it. For God has given Himself to the soul and the soul itself to God. Therefore, as St. Theresa says, "the soul sometimes seems divided. Even though the soul is not divisible, still, what I have said is not a fiction of the imagination, because in this state it is an ordinary thing" (*Mansion* VII, c. 1). On this account the interior mansion of the soul's castle can be in peace, whereas wars, annoyances and passions are sometimes found in the other mansions. (Cf. *Mansion* VII, c. 2).

2. Transformation. "The substance of the soul, it is true," says the Mystical Doctor, "is not the substance of God, because the soul cannot be substantially changed into God; but united to Him and absorbed in Him, as it is here, it is God by participation of God" (*Living Flame,* 2, 6). "In this state it is so transformed and burns interiorly with the fire of such great love that it is not only united with this fire, but it has now become a living flame within it" (*Living Flame,* Prologue). Therefore, "the soul does nothing alone without

God" (*Spiritual Canticle,* 37, 4). And "it is one thing to possess God in Himself through grace and another to possess Him also through union. The former is mutual love, the latter is also mutual communication" (*Living Flame,* III, m. 3). The soul, therefore, is conscious of the fact that with regard to the supernatural acts of the intellect and will it shares the divine life and analogous acts which are in God. In this consists the essence of spiritual marriage (Cf. Poulain, *Graces of Interior Prayer,* c. 11, no. 11). God after this is not only the object of the soul's actions, but is also seen to be their principal cause. In this life God is perceived to be working in the soul; and in the next life God Himself is seen face to face in Himself. Still the liberty of the soul, and therefore also merit remains.

3. The Vision of the most Holy Trinity. It is a matter here of an intellectual vision of the most Holy Trinity or of some divine perfection. St. Theresa says that the soul with all certainty understands that all three Persons are one substance, one power, one knowledge, one only God. However, as the saint confesses, particular intellectual visions of the most Holy Trinity can take place before the highest degree of union is attained. Certain authors do not believe that all souls who have attained the highest degree, experience this continuous vision of the most Holy Trinity, although they behold God without interruption but with His perfections indistinct to them, or they see one perfection to the exclusion of the others. In this state such souls, besides the mysteries of faith, such as the Incarnation of the Word, behold creatures in God as in a mirror, and they know them more perfectly in this way, since they behold them in their cause (*Living Flame,* 4, 1, 2).

(c) The fruits of this state are more excellent in proportion as this union excels the preceding, not only in intensity, but also in the transformation itself. Such fruits are not passing, but remain with the transformation. Thence arises a continuous peace and calm of the soul, at least in its very centre. The delights are so great that St. John of the Cross does not hesitate to affirm that the soul already possesses a relish and foretaste of heavenly bliss as far as is possible here on earth. (Cf. *Living Flame,* 1, 5). The virtues, however, are perfect and heroic (*Spiritual Canticle,* 24, 1). St. Theresa adds complete forgetfulness of self and a most vehement desire for suffering.

St. John clearly affirms that the soul is not admitted to this state without being confirmed in grace (Cf. *Spiritual Canticle,* 22, 1; *Living Flame,* 1, 6). This seems to belong to the concept of the spiritual marriage, although St. Theresa speaks less confidently. Yet

she grants that such souls must diligently avoid all sin; yes, even deliberate imperfections (Cf. *Mansion* VII, 3). Furthermore, it is certain that in this state the intensity varies, so that moments are not entirely lacking in which the soul is less secure.

(e) In this degree, although called supreme, the transformed soul is still able to make progress in sanctifying grace and charity; and even further advances in this transforming union itself seem possible, so that it can happen that the soul must pass through fresh "nights." Therefore, Father Maurus of the Child Jesus writes, "These souls are not exempt from vicissitudes and changes in their essence. Not that they may be radically changed or altered, but that they are not always either in enjoyment or privation. God acts thus that He may more and more confirm and perfect them in Himself, and therefore He at one time communicates Himself in such abundance that all the treasures and delights of paradise seem to be showered upon them, and at other times withdraws His sensible presence to such a degreee from all their powers that they seem never to have merited the least love from Him . . . But fundamentally the soul always enjoys the essential possession of its goal and object. This possession and enjoyment can have various degrees of excellence; and besides, the soul, a creature, is still a wayfarer on the way of life. Therefore, it is capable of meriting, progressing and generally of immersing itself more profoundly in the Divine Essence" (Cf. *Intr. in div. sap.* IV, 3, p. 88 ff).

Moreover, God seems to suspend the delightful effects of this union in some souls, as the effect of the beatific vision was suspended in Christ, our Lord, even unto suffering and dereliction. It is certain that the cross is not removed as long as one wanders in this valley of tears.

B. Union with God through Mary

In this supreme degree of mystical union with God, mystical union with the Blessed Virgin Mary, or the Marian life, reaches its height in certain souls.

(a) Thus the Venerable Marie of St. Theresa, a spiritual daughter of Father Michael of St. Augustine and a Tertiary of our Order, describes her experiences of this union to this Father. "Divine grace granted me to experience that this life in Mary and for Mary, with Mary and by Mary, and at the same time in God and for God, with God and by God, can be practised with almost as great simplicity, intimacy and abstraction of spirit as life in the pure Divinity alone.

At such times little remains in the mind of the images of Mary, because the spirit beholds her as one with and in God. Memory, intellect and will are together occupied in God with such tranquillity, simplicity, intimacy and tenderness that the soul hardly understands what influences it is undergoing and how it undergoes them. It is true, it well knows and realizes, though in a confused way, that the memory is occupied by a most simple remembrance of God and Mary, the intellect by a bare, pure and clear knowledge or contemplation of God Who is present, and of Mary in God, and the will by a most tranquil, intimate, tender, yet most spiritual love and loving embrace of God and Mary.

"I call this love spiritual, because this love seems at the time to glow and operate usually in the highest part of the soul abstracted from the lower or sense powers. It is this love which is more fitted to create an intimate fusion, absorption and union with God, and at the same time in and with Mary.

"When the powers of the soul are occupied in so noble, perfect and stupendous a manner by the thought, knowledge and love of God and of Mary, so close and so strong a union of the whole soul with God and with Mary follows that all three by certain liquefaction of love seem to become one—God, Mary and the soul—as though these three had been melted, blended and absorbed into one, in fact, changed into one.

"This is the last and supreme degree which the soul can reach in the Marian life and the unique fruit or principal effect of this practice and of love for Mary, because she, i. e., Mary, is a powerful means and bond to tie and unite the soul to God. She, therefore, strengthens and assists the soul to obtain more surely and more perfectly the contemplative, unitive and transforming life in God and to persevere therein" (Michael of St. Augustine, *The Life of the Ven. Mother Marie of St. Theresa,* II, 1681, c. 215; old Flemish text; Cf. Michael of St. Augustine, *De vita Mariae-formi,* c. 12).

This delightful contemplation and union with God and Mary without any images, by means of a very spiritual recalling and remembrance of God and Mary in God and united to God, causes love also to be wholly and entirely referred simultaneously to God and to Mary as to one object. "It is this that occurs," says Marie of St. Theresa, "even in my daily life whenever I raise my eyes lovingly to God and desire to act according to His good pleasure in all that I undertake and omit. For then I do the same thing toward my lovable Mother with great simplicity, tranquillity and peace of

mind. This seems to be to be in some way an unbroken revelation, continuous fruition and union with God and with Mary in God. For my soul, if I may so speak, can no longer be withdrawn; because my memory, my intellect and my will, as it were, in their essence adhere to God and to Mary whose knowledge, memory and love are, as it were, impressed on the corresponding powers of my mind" (ibid. c. 128).

(c) In this way the soul is placed entirely under the influence and direction of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as the same mystic again proclaims. "It remains," she says, "for me to speak here of a wonderful experience of mine with regard to this life of Mary in God. Truly, I do not know whether I rightly diagnose my case. Indeed, it seems to me that by means of this custom or habit of keeping our loving Mother in my heart and soul in this way, my spirit is directed, animated and possessed by the spirit of Mary, no matter what I may do or suffer. The spirit of Mary seems to be working through me, just as formerly the spirit of Jesus seemed to direct and animate me. . . . There was in me an experimental knowledge of the life of Jesus manifest in me. Now in the same way the spirit of Mary seems to live in me and to direct, moderate and move the powers of my soul in all things so as to make them live in God in a new and hitherto unknown manner. Accordingly, Mary seems to be my life and a certain, gentle, life-giving light, in which and through which I breathe and live in God in a much more noble and sublime manner than ever before" (ibid. c. 217).

We find the explanation of these words from the pen of Father Michael of St. Augustine. "Undoubtedly," he says, "the spirit of Jesus possesses, energizes and vivifies His loving Mother in an inexpressibly more perfect way than any other creature. The spirit of Jesus dwelling in her accomplished her works (Cf. John 14, 10), and she never failed to co-operate, so that by her most faithful co-operation the spirit of Jesus became her spirit of which she herself says, 'My spirit is sweet above honey' (Ecclus. 24, 27). Thus her spirit shone forth in her in all kinds of virtues and wrought all in her and with her. When, however, she herself deigns to form little souls, she procures for them her spirit, i. e., the spirit of Jesus working her virtues in them, her disposition, her way of acting, her inclinations. Thus it is that they seem to be transformed into Mary and the spirit of Mary to live in them, or rather the spirit of Jesus lives and works in them as in Mary. Is it strange that these most dear children should become one soul with their loving Mother and should absorb her

disposition? Such is the characteristic of good children, such is the intention of loving mothers" (*De Vita Mariae-formi,* c. 14).

(d) This supreme contemplation and union with Mary produces wonderful effects in one's whole life. "What strength," says Marie of St. Theresa, "this fire of love confers upon the soul to undertake great and courageous deeds, when its Beloved and its loving Mother ask them in order to please them in all things. It seems it would be willing to go through fire and sword" (*Life* II, c. 225).

(e) Therefore, love and devotion to our Mother lead to the highest perfection and to closest union with our Lord Himself. When all those who fear that attention to our Blessed Mother will in any way hinder pure contemplation or the perfect service of God consider this, they will have a tranquil heart. In truth, the more attention we confer upon the Mother, the more easily we shall find the Son, because Mother and Son are in a certain sense one. Thus we must not only confess, "He that hath the Son, hath life; he who hath not the Son, hath not life" (1 John 5, 12), but we should also say, "He that hath the Mother hath life; he who hath not the Mother hath not life." A tender and fervent love for this Mother disposes and elevates us to greater heights from day to day.

215. The Dark Night

Lest anyone yield to vain desires for mystic graces, he should carefully weigh the number and gravity of the trials his soul must pass through before he may be admitted to these graces. Not to mention the exterior trials which no one who wishes to live piously in Christ can escape, the soul called to infused contemplation must undergo those mystic nights which St. John of the Cross describes in his book *The Dark Night.* This night is divided into two parts, *The Dark Night of Senses* and *The Dark Night of the Soul.* We shall speak of each.

1. The Dark Night of the Senses

The dark night of the senses is sent by God that the soul may be purged of its imperfections and so become fit for infused contemplation. The night itself, as the Mystical Doctor says, is only the portal and first step to contemplation. It occurs rather to subject the senses to the soul than to unite the soul with God (Cf. *Dark Night,* II, c. 2). It is also called contemplation by this Holy Doctor, because it also contains a mystical element, as we shall presently see.

(a) This night consists in a certain aridity by which the soul is

tried and purified. It is not the ordinary aridity which is a lack of accidental devotion and frequently occurs during prayer. But it is a kind of mystical aridity sent by God by which the sense-faculties are deprived of all consolation. God usually recalls beginners in the spiritual life from the enjoyment of creatures and allures them to Himself by means of great spiritual consolations. Later when they have become strong enough not to return to the enjoyments of the senses when they lack sensible consolation, God "hides this light entirely from them, closes the door, and shuts off the sweet spiritual water which they have enjoyed so often and as long as they wished. . . . Now He settles them in darkness so that they do not know whither to turn their imagination and intellect" (ibid. I, c. 8). Since aridity according to the Holy Doctor and St. Theresa (Cf. *Mansion* III, c. 1) can also spring from negligences and from bodily or mental infirmity, melancholy, etc., St. John of the Cross indicates three signs by which this mystical aridity can be distinguished.

1. First Sign. The soul neither seeks nor finds consolation in creatures. If the aridity had its origin in negligence and tepidity, the soul would seek pleasure and consolation among creatures; because it is the quest of creatures that gives birth to negligence and tepidity. But the soul which we are considering is already so strengthened in the spiritual life that it shuns at least frequent sins and yearns entirely for God. Moreover, even if it should so wish, it would not find consolation among creatures. Yet it is not sensibly pleased with God or the things of God. Thus it is seriously harassed and does not know which way to turn.

2. The Second Sign. The soul is very much solicitous about God and His service. The soul wishes and desires to serve God as perfectly as possible and not to offend Him in any way. It gladly devotes itself to God by prayer in solitude and silence. It fears nothing more than to be unfaithful, although it experiences nothing in itself that pleases or attracts it. This sign excludes tepidity as well as a physical cause rooted in ill health of mind or body. For if the aridity were founded in corporal illness, in melancholy or in dullness of mind, the soul would not be solicitous about the service of God, but would be indifferent about everything. This soul, however, is alive and enthusiastic about God, and strongly desires to come close to Him.

3. The Third Sign. The soul is unable to meditate in its usual way. In this feature the mystical elements lies. If this inability were caused by tepidity, the soul would be able to meditate after throwing

aside tepidity and employing greater care. If it were caused by ill health, the inability would cease after the recovery of health. But during the dark night of the senses this inability grows day by day, because it issues from the mystical operation of God Himself upon the soul, as St. John of the Cross so well explains.

These three signs, therefore, must be present simultaneously in order that we may be able to say that the aridity is the mystical night. One or the other sign is not sufficient.

(b) How is it, therefore, that the soul so solicitous about God finds itself so dry and unable to meditate? There are two reasons—one infused contemplation, the other, weakness or inexperience.

1. All our cognition begins in the senses and is received by the imagination, from which the intellect draws its concepts. This also holds of meditation. In infused contemplation, however, God Himself—our senses and imagination are excluded—speaks immediately to the human soul and fills it with love.

2. Since the soul has never experienced such matters and is accustomed to another way of treating and conversing with God, it does not recognize or distinguish in itself this divine operation which in the beginning is very slight, but merely sees that it is not meditating in its usual way (Cf. *Dark Night,* I, c. 9). Therefore, it thinks itself inactive and in danger of deceiving itself and wasting its time. Such a soul is like a man of the lowest social strata, taken and separated from home and friends, and placed in a higher station, where everything appears unusual and strange. Accordingly, in the beginning he suffers from the desire of his own home and former circumstances, until he has become used to his new surroundings.

The soul is actually burning with love for God, but does not know it, because it can neither excite nor show this love in the old way by accustomed prayer. For it is unable to elicit those acts of love, but it is God Who excites in it the fire of love. Moreover, "the outburst of love is usually not noticed in the beginning, since on account of the weakness of human nature, love has not yet begun to glow (as moist wood resists fire), or since the soul out of ignorance is unwilling to yield quietly" (ibid. I, c. II).

In this way the soul learns to humble itself, to die to self, to await everything from God, to depend entirely upon Him and to refer all to Him. It is likewise cleansed from such imperfections as commonly cling to all beginners in the spiritual life (Cf. ibid. I, cc. 1-8).

(c) Great and lasting tribulations and temptations (though not

the same for all), usually accompany the dark night of the senses in the case of those who are to be introduced into the dark night of the spirit. For such souls are tortured by impure imaginations or terrible blasphemies which they are almost compelled to express. It approaches very closely to the torments of the future night of the spirit that St. John calls "the spirit of giddiness" (Cf. Isaias 19, 14). Such souls are filled with a thousand and one scruples and with such confusion and indecision that they are satisfied with nothing and cannot submit themselves to the advice or counsel of others (*Dark Night,* I, 14).

(d) What are the advantages of this dark night of the senses? In the first place the soul is brought to contemplation, which is, as St. John says, the special root of the other effects; although, as we have just said, the dark night of the senses itself already contains a mystical element (Cf. no. 213).

From it the soul acquires greater self-knowledge and the realization of its misery, a greater reverence in speaking with God, a greater charity toward its neighbor whom it judges less rashly, an increase of all virtues, peace and tranquility. Occasionally also, the sublimest flashes of spiritual knowledge are communicated to it (*Dark Night* I, c. 12, 13).

(e) How long will it last? The night and the probation are not of the same duration for all who enter it. First, the duration will depend on the greater or lesser imperfection of the soul. The greater the illness, the longer the remedy will have to be applied. Then it depends on living conditions. Those who lead a life removed from the world and recollected in God, as religious and especially contemplative religions do, are more quickly introduced in this night, are more quickly cleansed, and leave it more quickly, provided they are faithful to their state. Finally it also depends, in fact it especially depends, on the secret designs of God Who alone decides to what degree of infused contemplation He intends to elevate the soul (Cf. ibid. I, c. 14).

Some, the Holy Doctor confesses, are never completely within this night or ever completely out of it. They remain in some way in the vestibule of infused contemplation, because God does not intend to raise them to infused contemplation itself, but only to try them, to humble them, and to reform their desires, in order that they may not indulge in gluttony in spiritual matters (Cf. ibid. I, c. 9).

Moreover, those souls who are called to this state of loving union

(i.e., to the highest degree), are usually detained in these aridities and temptations for a long time, even though God may raise them up quickly (ibid. I, c. 14).

(f) Souls, therefore, placed in this night, even though they must bear many grievous trials, should bear them patiently, should cheerfully refrain from meditating, and should remain faithful to recollection and prayer, until the Lord deigns to elevate them to higher states. As far as possible, they should consult a learned and spiritual director, in order to be properly guided during these trials.

II. The Dark Night of the Soul

Another night, which St. John of the Cross calls the dark night of the soul, envelops the soul after it has passed through the night of the senses (*Dark Night,* II, c. 1) and has made great progress in infused contemplation. This night is darker (Cf. *Ascent,* II, c. 1), and more grievous (*Dark Night,* I, c. 14), and prepares the soul for the highest degree of the prayer of mystical union. It lasts many years, although it is sometimes interrupted (Cf. ibid. II, c. 7).

(a) The state to which the soul is to be raised is so sublime that it can enter here only by undergoing a fresh purgation. Although the dark night of the senses has cleansed the soul of many imperfections, many defects have remained which the Holy Doctor divides into habitual and actual faults (ibid. II, c. 2).

1. The habitual imperfections are certain affections or dispositions which are remnants in the soul either of our nature corrupted by sin or of former actual sins. They are the roots, as it were, e.g., a certain natural dullness and slowness of mind, a distraction and extroversion of spirit, which hinder the soul from giving itself entirely to God.

2. The actual imperfections are not committed by all in the same way, says St. John of the Cross. Some on account of the favors received fall into false ecstasies, visions and revelations, are seduced by the demon to vain-glory and arrogance, and lose the reverential fear of God "which is the key and custodian of virtue." The saint says that such imperfections are cured with great difficulty as they are considered to be more spiritual (ibid. II, c.2). Therefore, the night of the soul is necessary, if the soul is to be introduced to the union of love.

(b) This night, according to our Doctor, consists in infused contemplation itself, or in mystical theology. This in itself is a most clear light, but in this state it is not only a dark night for the soul, but also a punishment and a torture. It is so for two

reasons; first, because of the height of the divine wisdom which infinitely exceeds the capacity of the soul; second, because of the vileness and impurity of the soul itself (ibid. II, c.5).

But now the soul must be united to the divine wisdom, the human element to the divine, which is infused contemplation. One is opposed to the other, as extremes are opposed to each other. The divine element strives to renew and divinize the soul by despoiling it of the habitual affections and properties of the old man. In this way "God crushes and destroys the spiritual substance of the soul and envelops it in so great and horrible darkness that the soul in wretchedness seems to itself to be undergoing a most cruel death and to be melting away" (ibid. II, c. 6). It is filled with such pain and sorrow that it imagines itself rejected and reprobated by God; in fact, it desires death itself as a relief and a favor (ibid.). Sometimes the soul suffers a *quasi* purgatory (*Living Flame* 1, 4).

(c) The more the soul realizes that it is deprived of all supernatural consolations, the more clearly its own imperfections stand out and the more it is convinced that it can neither do nor suffer.

In addition to all this there are frequently also bodily pains and infirmities, persecutions and contradictions on the part of men, and attacks and temptations on the part of the demon. Unless God would refresh the soul occasionally it would shortly depart from the body. However, in this way it suffers its purgatory, so that according to the teaching of St. John of the Cross it will be kept in purgatory only a short while in the next world, if it does not escape it entirely (ibid.). The pains and sorrows are increased by the memory of its happy state in the past and by the thought that its present state will not be changed. (*Dark Night* II, c. 7).

(d) As long as this night lasts—usually for several years—the soul as the Mystic Doctor affirms, is unable to pray or to attend to divine matters, much less to give any effort to temporal matters. In fact, it labors under such abstraction of mind and weakness of memory that for many hours it does not know what it has been doing or thinking, nor what it is now doing or wishing. Yes, even if it wishes, it cannot pay attention to what is going on in its presence (ibid. c. 8).

The evil is increased by the fact that the soul on account of its loneliness and dereliction seeks no consolation or help from any teaching or from a spiritual director. It always thinks that it is not understood by others (ibid. II, c. 7).

This is confirmed by the teaching of Brother John of St. Samson, who confesses that sometimes the soul in such a state cannot even lament before its divine Spouse and is found, as it were in hell, so

that it would prefer death (Opp. 89). Dominic of St. Albert writes of himself, "Where am I; there is neither heaven or earth. I am swallowed up in misery, so that I can say, I am brought to nothing, and I know not." Even four years later he makes known the same to his spiritual master. "Our Lord deigns to make me share His derelictions, so that life becomes burdensome to me" (*Anal.* VIII, 282). No one is ignorant of the fact that St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi underwent terrible trials for five years (Cf. AA. SS. May 5, 656 ff).

(e) Through darkness comes light. In the midst of darkness, that loving attention and vehement desire for God which comprises the essence of the mystical union remains at the apex or in the center of the soul. For although sometimes it experiences the sensation of probation, it clings to God with firmest hope.

After the soul is purified by this night of the soul, it enjoys perfect liberty of spirit and is never thereafter confused or distracted by the sensitive faculties (*Dark Night,* II, c. 1). It likewise acquires wonderful strength to ascend the ten steps of the ladder of divine love, the last degree of which is no longer found upon earth but in heaven. The soul that has arrived at the ninth degree, is so cleansed and prepared that it will be permitted to enter heaven without purgatory (ibid. II, c. 20; *Living Flame,* 2, 5).

Accordingly when the soul has come out of this darkness, it exults with the Psalmist, "How great troubles hast Thou shown me, many and grievous; and turning Thou hast brought me back again from the depths of the earth. Thou hast multiplied Thy magnificence; and turning to me hast comforted me" (Ps. 70, 20, 21; *Living Flame,* 2, 5).

The soul, therefore, tried in this way, should patiently leave itself to God, and should be very careful not to hinder God's work by its importunate efforts. Father Dominic of St. Albert laments that some, when desolations and destitutions come upon them, think that God's secret plan is not enough for them and so do not surrender themselves into God's hands, although in reality God united the soul to Himself much better in its passive state than in its active state, i.e., better under trials than in spiritual abundance (*Anal.* VIII, 321-323).

216. Extraordinary Mystical Phenomena

Besides the general and obscure or indistinct contemplation by which the mystical union is effected, there is also a clear contemplation, as it is called. By its means certain particular and definite

ideas are communicated. It includes visions, locutions, and supernatural revelations. Moreover, other stupendous and extraordinary phenomena are found in the mystical life, such as levitation or the raising of the body on high, the stigmata, prolongation of life without food, etc. We do not intend to explain these individually, since it does not pertain to our special purpose, and space does not permit. Leaving this explanation to other authors, we shall give some warnings and counsels so that one's conduct in their regard may be guided and the essence of the spiritual life better recognized.

(a) Before all we must believe that such phenomena can really come from God. For God is all-powerful and does sometimes actually manifest Himself to certain souls in a most extraordinary way and distinguishes them by such gifts. It is not, therefore, lawful to attribute as it were on principle, to lying, fiction or illusion, all such things narrated in the lives of the mystics. But we must examine whether in a given case such things come from God or not.

(b) We should also know that they are not necessary to the spiritual life even in its highest degree. They are the less necessary since God can confer them, and has sometimes conferred them, on even great sinners. For they pertain to the charisms strictly so called, which are conferred not for the salvation of him who receives them, but for the salvation of others. In point we may cite the words of our Lord, "Many will say to Me in that day: Lord, Lord . . . have we not done many miracles in Thy name? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from Me, you that work iniquity" (Matt. 7, 22, 23). Charity is the only necessary way to salvation. Neither contemplation nor mystical union will be of any value unless it strongly excites charity.

(c) No one will deny that God's gifts in themselves are not harmful, but most useful. Therefore, such phenomena, when they come from God are not dangerous and need not be feared; but they are dangerous and should be feared, because they are easily simulated either by one's own imagination or by the fraud of the devil, and also frequently, because the soul does not use them well.

When they are bestowed by God, they encourage humility, patience, abnegation and mortification—in a word, solid virtue. If they are caused by the devil, they impel to the contrary vices, although in the beginning under the appearance of good. If they are figments of one's own imagination, they produce no permanent effect, except that they easily seduce the soul to vain-glory, to neglect exercises of piety, to omit duties of its state and to despise others.

The danger of deception is the greater because nature and the

devils strive to mingle secretly their own inventions among the visions, locutions and revelations which really come from God, so that what began in truth ends in falsehood. Only the effects can give a certain kind of security, not indeed sudden effects, but long-lasting ones, proved by long experience. Nature is crafty and the devil transforms himself into an angel of light, as the Apostle warns (2 Cor. 11, 14).

(d) It is, therefore, never lawful to desire or to seek them. St. John of the Cross does not hesitate to accuse the soul desiring them of venial sin, even though it may be led by the best intention (*Ascent* II, c. 21; c. 17). The Mystical Doctor adduces six reasons for forbidding them:

1, Perfection is lessened because pure and simple faith is relinquished; 2, the spirit is hindered from rising to the invisible; 3, the soul clinging to them will not reach true resignation or nakedness of spirit; 4, the soul interested in them destroys their effect and spirit, since it turns rather to their sense-features which are of lesser importance than their spiritual features; 5, God withdraws His favors, if the soul in seeking them does not use them well; 6, an avenue of approach is opened to the demon to deceive the soul by his illusions (Cf. *Ascent* II, c. 11).

Although all this is said of corporeal visions, it is to be applied more or less to all visions, locutions and other extraordinary phenomena.

(e) Only one conclusion remains from what has been said, a conclusion which St. John of the Cross teaches explicity. We should immediately reject every vision or locution and should under no condition dwell on it to inquire whether it is from God or not. When God grants such gifts, He accomplishes His purpose in the soul in one moment without the need of co-operation from the soul. The more the soul casts its attention on God Himself and not on His gifts and operations, the more perfectly and the more quickly is it united to God. Revelations, visions and the like, can never unite the soul to God immediately. This belongs purely to faith and charity (*Ascent* II, c. 16). Accordingly, the Mystical Doctor warns the spiritual director to instruct souls who think they have visions that the effort or work of the will accomplished in charity is more esteemed by God than all visions, revelations and communications received from above, since these do not establish merit or blame. He also teaches that many souls who have never obtained such favors, have made much more progress than others who have received many favors of this kind (*Ascent* II, c. 22).

(f) Thus a prudent soul as soon as it thinks itself enriched with extraordinary graces will sincerely reveal all to its director, and then will neither think nor worry about them, but will obey its director with greatest humility, no matter what he may say. Then it will not go astray.

217. Discernment of Spirits

We are taught by all spiritual writers and by our own experience that temptations frequently occur under the guise of good and of virtue, and that many illusions take place, especially when certain extraordinary phenomena of the mystical life make their appearance. There is need, therefore, of great prudence, in order that we may not be deceived, or, falling into the traps of the devil, stray from the right path or be held back in spiritual progress. For this reason, we shall speak of the discernment of spirits, as it is called. St. John warns us, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God" (1 John 4, 1).

I. (a) The discerning of spirits is the faculty, infused or acquired, by which we distinguish the true from the false, the good from the evil, when there is danger of deception. Such discernment is infused when it is granted by God in an extraordinary manner, as frequently happened in the days of the Apostles and in the lives of the saints. It is acquired when we gradually learn it by our own powers and by ordinary means.

The word *spirit* is here taken in its widest sense for any kind of interior impulse or movement of soul, by which we are roused to some human act. We can be impelled or moved by three principles or causes: 1, by God and His good angels; 2 by our own corrupt nature; 3, by the devil.

(b) If we find out by what spirit we are moved, we shall know whether the impulse is good or bad, whether it tends to a good or evil end. Since, however, our nature in its craftiness and the devil in his cunning and malice usually imitate God and His angels in order to attain their end more easily, it is necessary to have their purposes in mind.

(1) In the first place God and His angels cannot wish anything else than our true good. God always impels and inspires us to true and solid virtue and perfection according to the circumstances of age, temperament, strength and state. He leads us to higher things firmly, yet gently, gradually and not abruptly. He excites sinners to compunction and conversion by remorse of conscience; when conversion

has followed He inspires peace and tranquility of soul by lasting sorrow. In the souls of the just He excites a burning desire for perfection, and then day by day encourages and strengthens the desire without any disturbance or disquiet. He warns us to renounce creatures, to resist our passions, to die to ourselves, to aspire to union with Him. He impels us to humility, modesty, interior recollection and patience, to show obedience to the Church and other legitimate authority. He impels us to avoid extraordinary matters and every form of singularity and to apply ourselves well and perseveringly to ordinary means, accessible to all. He excludes faint-heartedness as well as presumption and teaches us to mistrust ourselves and to place all our hope in Him.

(2) Our nature, although created good and endowed from the beginning with preternatural gift and raised to the supernatural state, has been spoiled by sin. Thus "the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth" (Gen. 8, 21). Although "where sin abounded, grace did more abound" (Rom. 5, 20), even after the Redemption the inclination to evil remains and will remain, and no one may believe himself secure, no matter what progress he has made, even if he seems to be, as it were, confirmed in good. The artifices of nature are so much more dangerous as they are wont to become more subtle as the soul progresses. Nature impels to pride and ambition, to sloth and convenience, to gluttony and luxury. For the same reason also, nature desires honors and riches. But very frequently, in order to conceal pride, it pretends humility; in order not to be called ambitious and sensual, it simulates zeal for the kingdom of God; in order not to be accused of sloth and negligence, it pretends prayer and contemplation. Since nature has as great a hatred for labor as it has a desire for praise and glory, it uses false and unjust means, pretense and injustice, in striving to obtain its end and to obtain it as quickly and as easily as possible. Nor does it ever pursue a true, but rather an apparent end; it wishes to appear holy rather than to be so. It will be very useful to read the *Imitation of Christ* (Bk. III, c. 54) concerning the various movements of nature and grace. Beginners should be frequently warned concerning this matter, so that they may be armed against the craftiness of nature.

(3) It should not be unknown to anyone that the devil seeks nothing else than our total perdition. Whatever proceeds from the devil can have no other purpose. He seduces all he can to the greatest sins. Such as he sees in fear of grievous sin, he first tempts to venial sin in order to pave the way for more serious ones. In fact,

for a time he is satisfied with imperfections, if at the moment he despairs of obtaining more serious sins. He does not even hesitate to impel us to good actions, if he has hope that by this means his temptations, e.g., to pride, contempt of others, will afterwards produce his desired effect. Accordingly, he impels to feigned humility, to inopportune disclosure of faults, to indiscreet mortifications, to protracted prayer, to importunate zeal, to unholy rivalry, to singularities, to dangerous affections under the pretext of spiritual guidance, to particular friendships under the plea of cultivating devotion. His aim, however, is pride, vain-glory, stubbornness, disobedience, luxury, loss of energy, disturbance of soul, loss of interior peace, scandal of others, ruin of vocation and finally eternal perdition. He does not spare even the most perfect, although he attacks them by more subtle means, not infrequently by fictitious visions and revelations. He fears nothing more than openness toward superiors and spiritual directors, and therefore he suggests that they be kept in the dark about such matters and he will not allow souls to ask their advice. He accommodates himself with much cunning to the nature of each individual that by its help he may more easily deceive.

II. What rules are to be followed? Before all we must remember the principle, *Bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quolibet defectu.* Unless every feature is good, the impulse cannot proceed from God. However, it is possible that the impulse comes from God, but that nature gradually intrudes and so one part is good and another evil. A thing, therefore, can begin in the spirit and end in the flesh. We must therefore inquire whether the matter is good in itself in every respect, and whether it conceals anything that is against faith or morality as contained in the teaching of the Church. We must also see whether everything is proper in regard to the circumstances and rank of the person, his ability, his state and his degree of perfection. We should consider the results as they affect the person himself, his community and others. If it is a matter of great importance, judgment should not be pronounced from momentary effects, but we should wait until the matter has been proved by time.

Father Michael of St. Augustine wisely gives this counsel: "Souls may under no condition yield to interior operations or inspirations of the spirit as long as these are opposed to regularity or obedience. This is the unquestionable rule of perfection and the infallible indicator of the Divine Will. He who follows this rule and this indicator, cannot depart from the right path. But in such illumination (which one seems to have received during prayer) the danger of

deception is always present. Therefore, it is very wrong to follow them to the prejudice of regularity, unless God in a special way should deign to make known His good pleasure also to the superior, or we otherwise have the latter's permission. For on other grounds it is not safe or advisable to discard God's certain will (made known by obedience) to follow a doubtful expression of God's will" (*Inst. Myst.* II, tr. 4, c. 1).

III. The following are the means to acquire discernment of spirits: 1, Prayer, since such a gift cannot come except from above, from the Father of lights; 2, study of the spiritual life, since only he who knows the spiritual life theoretically and practically, is able to discern things that belong to the spiritual life; 3, one's own, as well as others' experience. Hence, a constant practice of the spiritual life is required; 4, humility, by which in mistrust of ourselves, we frequently implore heavenly lights and freely ask and accept advice from others; 5, separation from creatures and holy indifference, lest our mind becomes clouded by passion; 6, peace of soul and self-restraint, lest we pass judgment precipitately or prematurely.

IV. It is also of great importance to know how to conduct ourselves during consolation and desolation. By consolation, according to St. Ignatius of Loyola (*Spiritual Exercises,* Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, I, 4), we understand every interior excitement toward God, the all-lovable, every increase of the theological virtues, and every interior joy by which the soul is moved to love God; by desolation, however, an opposite state, every interior darkness, disturbance or movement toward low and earthly things, sadness, depression by which the soul finds itself slothful, tepid, sad, as it were removed from God, and the like.

In the first place we should know that these states frequently alternate in the spiritual life of every one. Therefore, during consolation it is not right to grow proud or to give one's self to presumption, nor during desolation, to despair (Cf. *Im. Chr.,* II, c. 9).

Besides, spiritual writers warn us never during desolation to make any change in our mode of life or to make a new resolution, but we should as far as possible faithfully carry out what we have before decided, until interior light is restored (Cf. nn. 170-175).

If we do our part, God will not refuse grace or light.

EPILOGUE

We should strive, therefore, and labor to observe our holy vows as diligently as possible, to make serious efforts toward perfection in order that we may by little and little offer God a heart holy and free from every stain of actual sin. As far as is permitted, let us commune with God, that being aflame with love for Him, we may ascend to higher things day by day.

For this reason we have entered the order dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel. For, as Father Dominic of St. Albert counsels us: "Freed (through the religious vows) from earthly bonds, we must try to re-unite and intimately join our soul to its God, not merely by an habitual union, which is found in the state of grace, but also by an actual and continuous effort toward God by our interior functions of knowledge and love" (*Anal.* VIII, 295). Father Michael of St. Augustine proposes the same to us, taking the mystical life in a wider sense; "Lest anyone should persuade himself that this science (of mystical theology) is too sublime, subtle or difficult to acquire, he should know that it is divided into two parts, viz., the practice of faith in the presence of God Who is everywhere and in every creature, and a practical conformity of our will with the divine. Or is this too subtle and too difficult to comprehend? Are not these all that is necessary to commune unhindered and continually with God, which is the best heritage of us Carmelites?" (*Introductio in terram Carmeli,* 1659, III, 7). Father Maurus of the Child Jesus on the other hand, comprises the entire spiritual life and effort for perfection in this very brief formula, "The more we allow God to take possession of us and the more we depend on God in our actions and sufferings, the more perfect we are" (*Intr. in div. sap.* II, 5).

If we faithfully observe all this, even though we may perhaps never be admitted to mystical or infused contemplation strictly so called, yet without doubt we shall taste how sweet the Lord is and we shall see that to serve God is to reign. Likewise, we shall be true sons of her to whom we have entirely consecrated ourselves, i. e., the blessed Virgin Mary, Mother and Splendor of Carmel.

At the same time the true apostolic spirit will drive deeper roots within us that burning with the holy zeal of our holy Father Elias and assisted by the generous blessing of heaven we may strive, by our sacrifices and labors, with a pure intention for the salvation of our neighbor. Together with the glory of God we shall proclaim the glory of her, whom we greet most fittingly in the words, "Thou art the

glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of thy people, O Mary!."

Finally we can recommend to our brethren no better rule of a truly Carmelite Life and wish them nothing better than that which we are taught to strive after and to implore on the feast of All Saints of our Order:

Omnipotent and merciful God, propitiously grant that through the examples and merits of the saints of the Order of the most Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel, we may live solely for Thee in the constant meditation of Thy law and in perfect self-denial, and that we may be enabled to attain with them the happiness of eternal life. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Controni, John Dominic, O. Carm., *Regole sicure e fedeli raccolte da ottimi e provati autori della vita mistica,* Lucca, 1718. The author belongs to the Congregation of Mantua. He died September 9, 1727. He also published *Compendio istorico della vita del Venerabile Servo di Dio Pedre Giovanni Domenico Lucchesi, Carmelitano,* Lucca, 1718.

Daniel of the Virgin Mary, *Ars artium sive Methodus bene orandi.* This booklet first appeared in Antwerp in 1669, written in Flemish. It has been republished recently by Rev. Father Rumoldus of St. Elias, O.C.D., Bruges, Desclee, 1938, under the title *Z. E. P. Daniel a Virgine Maria Ord. Carm., Het Gebed of the Kunst der Kunsten.* The author is the famous historian of the Order (1615-1678), Cf. *Anal.* VI, 135-139 and *Bibliotheca Carmelitana* I, 375-379.

Directoires des Novices, ou Traité de la Conduite spirituelle des Novices pour les Convents Réformés de l'Ordre de Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel. This book was first written by Father Bernard of St. Magdalen. It was put into its final form and published at Paris in 1650 by Father Marcus of the Nativity of the Virgin. It is composed of four volumes in 12mo, which bear the titles:

1 Preparation for Religious Life; 2 A Christian or Catechetical Instruction for Novices; 3 The Regular Life, or Necessary Instructions for Holily Performing all Religious Acts; 4 A Clear and Easy Method of Making Mental Prayer and of Fruitfully Practicing the Presence of God (Cf. *Bibl. Carm.* II, 316 ff). Two Italian translations have appeared, done by Father Jerome Aimo—the first at Venice in 1686 and the second at Venice and Turin in 1757. There is also a Latin translation of the third and fourth parts of which we shall speak later. The second Italian translation also mentions a Flemish or German translation, no trace of which, however, has been found.

Dominic of St. Albert, 1596-1634, beloved disciple of Brother John of St. Samson, who has imbibed his master's spirit more than anybody else. Concerning him cf. *Bibl. Carm.* I, 404-406, and especially the *Anal.* VIII, 261-327 and ibid. IX, 69-84. In the latter are found not only his life and writings, but also an exposition of his entire doctrine.

So far there has appeared only his *Exercitatio spiritualis Fratrum tum Novitiorum tum Professorum in nostro Carmeli Rhedonensis novitiatu degentium,* Paris, 1650 (?) and 1665 (according to the *Bibl. Carm,* I, 406, no. 1). Unfortunately it has not yet been found. Nothing remains except a manuscript text of an Italian translation made by Father Seraphim Mary Potenza (Cf. *Bibl. Carm.* II, 736 ff), in the third part of his *Introduttione nella Mistica Terra del Carmelo o'sia Il Novitio Carmelitano istruito nella perfettione della sua Regola, e nell'santo esercitio dell'oratione. Con le Regole de' Noviziati Carmelitani. S. Maria della Vita,* Naples, 1721.

Recently there has appeared his *Theologia mystica* with annotations drawn from a similar treatise *De Oratione* in the *Études Carmélitaines,* April, 1937, under the title *Dominique de Saint-Albert, Grand Carme, Théologie mystique. De Institutione Primorum Monachorum in lege veteri exortorum et in nova perseverantium, ad Caprasium Monachum, seu etiam Regula Joannis* 44. *Cf. Bibl. Carm.* II, 27-40; *Anal.* III, 346-367, for its ascetical features; also VII, 180-211. This book which establishes a certain rule or mode of life for Carmelites is of great importance because it indicates in clear words the end for which we must principally strive in our Order. We employ the text found in the *Analecta.*

John of the Cross, Mystical Doctor, 1542-1591. The principal works used in this *Directory* are:—

1 *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*
2 *TheDark Night*
3 *The Spiritual Canticle.* Two versions are extant, a short one, which comprises 39 strophes; and a long one, in which the eleventh verse has been added and the order of the strophes changed.
4 *The Living Flame of Love.* There are three recent editions:
(a) Gerard of St. John of the Cross, *Obras de Místico Doctor San Juan De La Cruz,* Toledo, 3 vol., 1912-1914.
(b) *Obras De San Juan De La Cruz,* Madrid, *Apostolado de la Prensa,* 1926. This is a popular edition, based on the preceding.
(c) *Obras De San Juan De La Cruz,* Silverio de Santa Teresa, C. D., Burgos, 5 vol., 1929-1931. A critical edition.

John of Jesus-Mary, C. D., (Cf. *Bibl. Carm.* II, 13-17). In this *Directory* we quote his *Theologia mystica* and bis *Epistola Christi ad Hominem* found in the *Bibliotheca Ascetica Mystica,* Freiburg i. B., 1912. Also his *Instructio Novitiorum* according to the *Opera omnia,* 1717-1774.

John of St. Samson, 1571-1636, a lay-brother of the Province of Tours; renowned mystic and leader of that celebrated school of spirituality upon whom the rest of its writers more or less depend. Concerning him cf. *Bibl. Carm.* II, 89-92, and especially *Anal.* VII, 225-258, where a full bibliography can be found, and ibid. VIII, 11-64, where the spirit of Carmel is explained according to his teaching.

In this *Directory* the following are quoted:

1 *Theoremata,* i. e., precepts of the spiritual life according to the edition *Vita, Theoremata et Opuscula insignis Mystae, Venerablis Fratris Joannis a S. Samsone, coeci ab incunabilis, Laici Ordinis Carmelitarum Reformatorum, Provinciae Turoniae.* By Father Mathurin of St. Anne of the same Province, Lyons, 1654. This edition is a Latin translation of the book published in French by Father Donatien of St. Nicholas in 1650.
2 *Les Oeuvres spirituelles et mystiques du divin contemplatif F. Jean de S. Samson, Religieux Carme de la Réforme et Observance de Rennes, en la Province de Touraine. Avec un Abbregé de sa vie. Recueilly et composé par le P. Donatien de S. Nicolas, Religieux de la mesme Province.* Rennes, 1658-1659. Two volumes in folio, pp. 1044, and pp. 10 *Poesies Mystiques.* This edition does not contain all his works but besides the *Life,* selected precepts almost identical with the preceding book. We shall indicate by the abbreviation *Opp.* tbe passages we quote and translate.
3 There is another selection of precepts in Sernin-Marie de Saint-Andre, O. C. D., *Maximes spirituelles du V. F. Jean de Saint-Samson, Religieux Carme.* Paris, 1883, VI 243 in 8vo. There is also a Dutch translation of this book by Father Albertus Groeneveld, Ord. Carm., *Carmellicht. Kernachtige gezegden en raadgevingen . . . van den Eerbiedigen Dienaar Gods Joannes van H. Samson, geschoeiden Carmeliet. Met een Inleidung van*

Prof. Dr. Titus Brandsma, Ord. Carm. Alberts' Drukkerijen, Sittard, 1939.

John Soreth, Bl., Prior General and Reformer of the Carmelites, 1471. Cf. *Bibl. Carm.* II, 99 ff. *Expositio Paraenetica in Regulam Fratrum Beatissimae Viriginis Dei Genitricis Mariae de Monte Carmeli.* It is found in *Speculum Carmelitanum,* II, Antwerp, 1680, Part II, pp. 689-736.

De Lezana, John Baptist, *Expositio Regulae Carmelitarum in Summa quaestionum regularium,* Lyons, 1646, t. III, pp. 192-214.

Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, St., 1556-1607. In addition to what is found in the AAS, May 5, 643-817, we are using the *Avertimenti di Santa Maddalena de' Pazzi a diverse religiose coll'aggiunta di alcune regole do perfezione che ella riceveda Gesu Cristo,* Turin-Rome, Marietti, 1923, pp. 112 in 12mo. There is a Hollandish translation by Father Vincent van Wijk, O. Carm., *Geestelijke Raadgevingen van de H. Maria Magdalena de Pazzi.* Amsterdam, R. K. Boekcentrale, 1938.

Maurus of the Child Jesus, 1618-1696, a disciple of Bro. John of St. Samson. He was a member of the Tours Province, but was sent to the Province of Vasconia in 1650 to introduce the Reform (of Touraine) and remained there until his death. Prominent among his works is *L'Entrée à la Divine Sagesse,* which comprises several tracts on Mystical Theology, Bordeaux, 1652. This book has recently been re-edited by Father Pascal Du T. S. Sacrement, Carme Déchaussé, *L'Entrée à la Divine Sagesse,* 4 vol. in the edition of *Chroniques du Carmel,* Soignies, Belgium, 1921. The latter also contains *Traité de la fidelité de l'âme à son Dieu.* Concerning the author cf. *Bibl Carm.,* II, 426 f. Concerning the work quoted cf. *Anal.* VIII, 212-215.

Methodus clara et facilis vacandi orationi mentali atque exercendi se cum fructu in praesentia Dei. Cui pro majori animum in praesentia Dei continendi facilitate in fine additur Spiritus Actionum Religionis, Cologne, 1687, pp. XIV—686 in 12mo. This is a Latin translation made by a member of the Province of Lower Germany of part four of the *Directoires* mentioned above and of a booklet in which Father Mark of the Nativity has condensed part three. We quote this book by the word *Methodus,* and for the sake of clearness indicate the first part by adding the number I, and the second part by adding II, although in the book itself the pages are number consecutively throughout.

Michael of St. Augustine, 1621-1684, Cf. *Bibl. Carm.* II, 446 ff. The work we are chiefly using is the *Institutionum mysticarum libri IV, quibus anima ad apicem perfectionis et ad praxim mysticae unionis per gradus deducitur.* Antwerp, 1671, pp. 298—195 in 4to. The Indexes are without pagination.

It comprises four tracts:

1 A Devout Life in Christ for beginners, proficients and perfect.
2 Temptations.
3 An Introduction to the Mystical Life and its successful practice.
4 Perfect Denial of Self and of Creatures; the Divine and Marian Life; and the Adoration of God in Spirit.

The book collects and publishes for general use the works which the author has written for Carmelites.

Usually we quote the larger work; but when the difference of texts is of some importance to us we use *Introductio in terram Carmeli et gustatio fructuum illius seu Introductio ad vitam vere Carmeliticam, et fruitive praxis ejusdem, per quattuor tractatus distincta.* Brussels, 1659, pp. 592, with an index of Chapters not numbered. This book corresponds to the third book of the larger and later edition.

Finally Father Wessells has printed Father Michael of St. Augustine, O. Carm., *Introductio ad vitam internam et fruitiva praxis vitae mysticae.* Rome, 1925, pp. XL—402 in 8vo. Besides the *Life* written by Father Timothy of the Presentation, it contains Book III, and as an appendix, Tract IV of Book IV of the large edition, *De vita mariae-formi et mariana in Maria propter Mariam.*

Father Michael of St. Augustine also wrote in Flemish and published the Life of the Ven. Mother Marie of St. Theresa (Petit), 1623-1677, of the Third Order of Carmel, Brussels, 1681; Ghent, 1683. It contains the letters of the Venerable Mother written to the author, her spiritual director. From it Father Seraphim Potenza drew a compendium of her life and translated it into Italian. Cf. *Archives of the Post. Gen.,* Codex IX ff, 361-381.

Excerpts are found in *Maria a Sancta Teresia, Vie Mariale* (Fragments translated from the Flemish by Louis van den Bossche). Taken from *Vie Spirituelle,* Feb. 1928, pp. 48 in 12mo.

Likewise, *De la vie "marie-forme" au mariage mystique,* in *Étude Carmèlitaines,* 1931, II, 236-250 and 1932, I, 279-294.

Likewise, *Le grand silence du Carmel,* in *Études Carmèlitaines,* 1935, II, 233-247 (With a portrait of Marie of St. Theresa).

Philip of the Most Holy Trinity, O.C.D., *Summa Theologiae Mysticae.* A new edition by Father Berthold-Ignatius of St. Anne, O.C.D., 3 vol., Freiburg i, B., 1874. Cf. among others Heribert Kuemmet, O. Carm., *Die Gotteserfahrung in der Summa Theologiae Mysticae des Karmeliten Philippus a SS. Trinitate, Wuerzburg,* 1938. C. J. Becker, Universitaetsdruckerei, pp. XIV-123 in 8vo.

Schram, Dominic, O. S. B., *Institutiones Theologiae Mysticae,* 2 vol. Liege, 1848.

Scupoli, Lawrence, O. Cler. Reg., *Spiritual Combat, Pugna Spiritualis in Bibl. Ascet. Myst.,* Freiburg i, B., 1912.

Theresa of Jesus, St., 1515-1582. Her principal works are:—*Life or Autobiography, The Way of Perfection, Foundations* and *The Interior Castle.*

For the understanding of the mystical doctrine of the Saint her *Relations* (Reports) to her spiritual directors concerning her state and experiences are also of importance.

There is a critical edition by Father Silverio de Santa Teresa, C. D., *Obras de Santa Teresa de Jesus,* 6 vol., 1915-1920, to which must be added her *Letters,* 3. vol., 1926.

There is a smaller edition, Burgos, 1922.

Vita Carmelitana. The doctrine of the novice-masters of the Carmelite Order assembled in Rome, October 3-8, 1932, pp. 169 in 8vo. There is an English translation, *Life in Carmel,* Chicago, The Carmelite Press, 1934.

Besides the older authors, the following modern authors may also be consulted.

A. The Carmelite School

Titus Brandsma, Rev., O. Carm., *Carmelite Mysticism,* Chicago, The Carmelite Press, 1936. Carmelite mysticism is explained historically.

By the same author, an article *Carmes* in *Dictionnaire De Spiritualité,* fasc. VII, Paris, Beauchesne, 1937, 156-171.

Gabriel a S. Maria Magdalena, Rev. O. C. D., *La Mystica Teresiana* (Florence, *Vita Christiana,* 1934); *Santa Teresa di Gesu Maestra di Vita Spirituale* (Milan, 1935); *S. Giovanna della Croce Dottore dell'Amore Divino* (Florence, *Vita Christiana,* 1937); *La Contemplazione Acquisita* (ibid. 1938). By

the same author, *Les Carmes Déchaussés,* in *Dict. de Spiritualité,* fasc. VII, 1937, 171-209. A clear exposition of the mystical theology of St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross.

B. Outside the Carmelite School

Poulain, Aug. S. J., *Des grâces d'oraison,* Paris, 1922.

Tanquerey, Ad., *Précis de Théologie ascétique et mystique,* Paris, 1925.

Naval, Francis, I. C. M., *Theologiae asceticae et mysticae cursus,* Turin, 1925.

Zimmerman, Otto, S. J., *Lehrbuch der Aszetik,* Freiburg i. B., 1932. Indicates copious sources for every question concerning spiritual theology.

De Guibert, Joseph, S. J., *Theologia spiritualis ascetica mystica,* Rome, 1937.

Hertling, Louis, S. J., *Lehrbuch der ascetischen Theologie,* Innsbruck, 1930, and *Theologiae asceticae cursus brevior,* Rome, 1939.

N. B. Since the purpose of this work is strictly practical, there is no intention of giving a complete list of authors.

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