

MEDITATIONS & READINGS

ST. ALPHONSUS

VOLUME III – PART I

PENTECOST CORPUS CHRISTI

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Meditations and Readings

FOR
EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

Selected from the Spiritual Writings of
SAINT ALPHONSUS

*Doctor of the Church and Founder of the Congregation
of the Most Holy Redeemer.*

VOLUME THREE
PART I.

FOREWORD

BY
THE ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM

Edited by

JOHN BAPT. COYLE, C.S.S.R.

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PRAYER. By St. ALPHONSUS. Jubilee Edition.

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL SUCCOUR AND IRELAND. (An mairé-
vean Siótt-Cábhac ír Éire). S. uá C., O'AP-
TÍÚS.

*Sisters of St. Francis
Maryville, Mo.*

MEDITATIONS & READINGS
FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

VOLUME III.—PART I.

PENTECOST :: CORPUS CHRISTI
ETC.

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Superioris Generalis et Rectoris Majoris.

Romæ,

die 7 Martii, 1928.

FOREWORD

As a boy I read with great profit the popular spiritual works of St. Alphonsus Liguori. I am delighted to know that Fr. Coyle is having them republished in an enlarged edition and in the new form of "Meditations and Readings for Every Day of the Year."

I do not know of any religious books at once so sane, so spiritual and so adapted to the intelligence of the ordinary reader. They go straight to the root of normal spirituality. They are commonsense founded on the Truths of Faith. Such books were never so much needed as at the present day. We are living in an age of secularism. Never before did life offer so many attractions to divert the mind from the consideration of the Eternal Truths. Never before was there such an output of purely secular books, magazines, and newspapers, so smoothly written and so beautifully illustrated that the temptation to read them is universal and almost irresistible. Some of them are mere covers for sensuality, and others are hostile to the Faith, and all have a demoralising influence on the mind. To counteract the resulting influence we want a corresponding output of wholesome Catholic literature, including books that advertise the attractions of the spiritual life: We want books that will bring home to our youth that there is no

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happiness comparable to the humble joy of the good Christian. We want books that will, with flashes from the Beyond, dissipate the spell that the prospect of sensual pleasure casts over the imagination of youth. We want books, too, that will terrorise the hardened sinner and confirm the struggling aspirant to the higher life in the grim determination to walk in the narrow way. Now such are the ascetic works of St. Liguori that Father Coyle is engaged in having re-published. From my heart I wish him success in this apostolic mission. From my heart I pray that these volumes may have a wide circulation.

It is recognised that St. Liguori was one of the greatest missionaries of all time. He was himself a great preacher of the Gospel. He founded the Congregation of the Redemptorists who have been in the thick of the fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil for well-nigh two hundred years, and who are only growing more vigorous with time. The Saint was a classical writer of Moral Theology. And while his Moral Theology holds the scales evenly between laxity and rigorism, his spiritual writings hold the scales between sentimental piety and cold ascetical teaching, with a like evenness, which attracts and converts the sinner, encourages the weak, and confirms the strong.

T. P. GILMARTIN,

Archbishop of Tuam.

ST. JARLATH'S,

28th April, 1928.

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LETTER FROM HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL LOGUE TO THE EDITOR.

ARA COELI,

ARMAGH,

16th March, 1924.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

I have put off writing to thank you for your interesting and edifying volume, *Meditations and Readings for Every Day of the Year*, till I should find time to look through it. I have done so now, and I can congratulate you on undertaking a very useful work; and I hope you will be spared till you complete it.

The Ascetic Works of St. Alphonsus have done wonders in conveying solid instruction, nourishing piety, and exciting fervour among the people in every state and stage of life. They have been an ever enduring source of piety, especially in inspiring love of our Holy Redeemer and tender devotion to His Blessed Mother. It is a question whether his great Theological Works have contributed more to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Hence it was not without regret I noticed that these Spiritual Works were not so common among the people as they were in my early days. They seemed to be giving place to more showy and more superficial modern works which are far from breathing the fervent spirit of the great Doctor and Saint. One of the chief fruits which I expect from the work you have undertaken is the redress of this serious spiritual loss.

You have commenced well, and I trust you will be

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able to continue till the Spiritual Works of St. Alphonsus are again as extensively circulated among the people as they were in the past. The scheme you have sketched out for yourself will familiarize the people with the beauty and fervour of St. Alphonsus' Works, and from using your volumes for casual reading they will be likely to drink more deeply of the source of fervour the Saint has opened up to them.

Wishing you every blessing and success in your useful work,

I am,

Dear Father Coyle,
Yours gratefully,

✠ MICHAEL CARDINAL LOGUE.

LETTER OF APPROBATION AND BLESSING FROM
MOST REV. PATRICK MURRAY, C.S.S.R.,

Superior-General and Rector Major.

J.M.J.A.T. SANT' ALFONSO—VIA MERULANA,
ROMA,
23rd October, 1928.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

I am very glad to hear that you have the first part of your "Meditations and Readings for every Day of the Year from the Writings of St. Alphonsus" ready for publication, and I wish this and the succeeding Volumes every success. It is difficult to exaggerate the value of these "Meditations and Readings" as is seen from the following statements of two Popes :

His Holiness Pope Pius IX, in speaking of the writings of St. Alphonsus, wrote : "The works of this most holy and learned man, written with extraordinary tender piety and devotion, breathe in every page a great love for Jesus Christ and great confidence in His mercy and merits. They also inspire their readers with the most ardent devotion to the Virgin Mother of God and to the Saints, and they inflame the hearts of men with the desire of receiving the Sacraments, as well as furnish a most abundant supply of excellent admonitions, counsels and directions to those who labour for the salvation of souls."

Pope Benedict XV also wrote recently, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Doctorate of St. Alphonsus, that the excellence and utility of his teaching are becoming every day more apparent, and that his writings are helpful, not only to Theologians and Professors of the

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HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL O'DONNELL wrote :

It is a pleasure to me to subscribe my name to the beautiful letter written by my lamented predecessor, his Eminence Cardinal Logue, to commend Father Coyle's publications from the Spiritual Works of St. Alphonsus Liguori.

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL O'DONNELL,
Archbishop of Armagh.

Armagh, 20th February, 1926.
viii.

Sacred Sciences, but also to the faithful of every condition of life, to whom he points out the way to solid virtue, and smooths for them the way to the highest Christian perfection. His Holiness adds that the Saint's one great ambition in all his writings was to make known to all men the infinite amiability of Jesus Christ.

It is unnecessary for me to add anything to these words of two Popes. I wish only to say that this infinite amiability of Jesus Christ is particularly well shown in the present volume, for, in addition to the Meditations and Readings on the Religious State and on other subjects, there are given about forty Meditations on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, in which are contained some of the most beautiful and devotional pages written by the Saint. Moreover the division of the ascetic writings of the Saint into two Meditations and a Spiritual Reading for every day of the year, and this arranged in such a way as not to interrupt the sequence of any work of the Saint, will please many, both in the Cloister and in the world, who desire to know and follow in their spiritual life the teachings of this great Doctor of the Church and Director of Souls.

In conclusion, in the name of St. Alphonsus I bless you and these Meditations and Readings with the hope that they may be everywhere known and read and well thought on, so that all may know the infinite amiability and mercy of Jesus Christ and the unspeakable amiability and mercy of His Blessed Mother, and that they may thus seek and love and serve Them alone.

Your devoted servant and confrère,

PATRICK MURRAY, C.S.S.R.,
Sup. Gen. and Rector Major.

REV. J. B. COYLE, C.S.S.R.,
ST. JOSEPH'S,
DUNDALK.

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THE EDITOR'S FOREWORD

THIS first Part of Volume III. of MEDITATIONS AND READINGS from St. Alphonsus, extends from the Ascension to the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, and consequently embraces the Ecclesiastical Season most closely associated with the celebration of Feasts and devout exercises in honour of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist. For this reason, therefore, as well as for the joy and comfort of all who use these Spiritual Writings of St. Alphonsus, we have aimed at making this, as far as possible, a *Blessed Sacrament Volume*. The Meditations and Readings on Jesus, our Eucharistic King, and on the love of His Sacred Heart, are the tenderest and sweetest things St. Alphonsus ever wrote.

We have thought it well to give as Readings *Coram Sanctissimo* for the greater part of these weeks, St. Alphonsus' well-known *Visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin Mary*. These Readings can, of course, be made at home, but, better still, as the title of these Readings implies, *Coram Sanctissimo*, before the Most Blessed Sacrament in some church or oratory. In this way we hope that those who use these volumes may be induced to make more frequent Visits to Jesus in the Tabernacles of our Churches, where the beautiful affections and prayers of St. Alphonsus will open up to all the Divine fountain of graces in the Sacred Heart of our Eucharistic King and

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God. "You will find," the Saint writes, "that all the Saints were enamoured of this most sweet devotion; and, indeed, it is not possible to find on earth a more precious gem, or a treasure more worthy of all our love, than Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament. . . . Do not, then, O devout soul, refuse to begin this devotion. Leave the conversation of men, and from this time forward spend each day half, or, at least, a quarter of an hour in some church in the presence of Jesus Christ under the Sacramental species. *Taste and see how sweet is the Lord!* . . . Oh, how sweet a joy it is to remain with Faith and tender devotion before the altar, and converse familiarly with Jesus Christ, Who is there for the express purpose of listening to, and graciously hearing those who pray to Him! . . . But why say more? *Taste and see!*"

In accordance with St. Alphonsus' own spirit, which is also that of the Church, we have with the Visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament given the Visit and Prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary. "Be careful," says the Saint, "always to join to your daily Visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament a Visit to the most holy Virgin Mary in the same church, or before a devout image of her in your own home. . . . The great Queen says: *With me are riches . . . that I may enrich them that love me.*"

—THE EDITOR.

CLONARD MONASTERY, BELFAST,
Feast of St. Patrick, March 17, 1928.

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MEDITATIONS AND READINGS

Friday after Ascension

Morning Meditation

DIVINE LOVE IS A FIRE THAT INFLAMES THE HEART.

“*Tui amoris in eis ignem accende.*”

We know from our Faith that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son through their mutual love for each other, and therefore that the gift of love which the Lord infuses into our souls, and which is the greatest of all gifts, is particularly attributed to the Holy Ghost. *The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us—(Rom. v. 5).* Hence in this Novena we should especially consider the great excellence and value of Divine love that we may desire it, and labour to obtain it by devout exercises, but particularly by fervent prayer, for Jesus has said: *Your Father from heaven will give the good Spirit to them that ask him—(Luke xi. 13).*

I.

God ordained in the Old Law that fire should be kept continually burning upon His altar: *The fire on the altar shall always burn—(Lev. vi. 12).* St. Gregory says that

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our hearts are the altars of God on which He desires that the fire of His love should always be burning. And hence the Eternal Father, not satisfied with having given us His Son Jesus Christ, to save us by His death, would also give us the Holy Ghost, to dwell in our hearts, and keep them continually inflamed with His love. And Jesus Himself declared that it was in order to influence our hearts with this holy love that He came into the world, and that He desired nothing more than to see it kindled : *I am come to send fire upon the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?*—(Luke xii. 49). Hence, forgetting the injuries and ingratitude He received from men in this world, when He had ascended into Heaven, He sent down upon us the Holy Ghost. O most loving Redeemer, dost Thou, then, love us not only in Thy sufferings and ignominies, but also in Thy Heavenly glory?

Hitherto, O my God, I have done nothing for Thee Who hast done such great things for me! Alas, my lukewarmness may deserve that Thou shouldst vomit me out of Thy mouth! O Holy Spirit, *warm what is cold*, deliver me from my tepidity, and enkindle within me a great desire of pleasing Thee.

II.

Hence it was that the Holy Ghost chose to appear in the form of fiery tongues. *And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire*—(Acts ii. 3). Wherefore the Church instructs us to pray : “ May the Holy Ghost, we beseech Thee, O Lord, inflame us with that fire which our Lord Jesus came to cast upon the earth, and which He ardently desired to be enkindled.” This was the holy Fire which has inspired the Saints to do such great things for God, to love their enemies, to desire contempt, to renounce all worldly goods, and to embrace with cheerfulness, even torments and death. Love cannot remain idle, and never says : *It is enough*. The soul that loves God, the more she does for her Beloved, the more she desires to do for Him, in order to please Him, and to

draw down His love the more. This holy love is enkindled in mental prayer : *In my meditation a fire shall flame out*—(Ps. xxxviii. 4). If, therefore, we desire to be on fire with the love of God, we must delight in prayer; this is the blessed furnace in which this Divine ardour is enkindled.

O Lord, I now renounce all self-gratification, and would rather die than displease Thee. Thou didst appear in the shape of fiery tongues : I consecrate my tongue to Thee, that I may never use it to offend Thee. Thou gave me my tongue, O God, to praise Thee, and I have made use of it to offend Thee, and to draw others into offences against Thee! I am sorry for these things with my whole soul. Oh, for the love of Jesus Christ, Who in His mortal life honoured Thee so much with His tongue, grant that I also from this day forward may honour Thee, by always proclaiming Thy praises, by frequently invoking Thy assistance, and by speaking of Thy goodness and of the infinite love which Thou deservest! I love Thee, my sovereign Good; I love Thee, O God of love! O Mary, my most dear spouse of the Holy Ghost, obtain for me this holy fire.

Spiritual Reading

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

For every high-priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins—(Heb. v. 1). The priest, then, is placed by God in the Church in order to offer sacrifice. This office is peculiar to the priests of the Law of grace, to whom has been given the power of offering the great Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of the

Son of God—a Sacrifice sublime and perfect in comparison with the ancient sacrifices, the entire perfection of which consisted in being the shadow and figure of our Sacrifice. They were sacrifices of calves and oxen, but the Sacrifice of the Mass is the Sacrifice of the eternal Word made Man. Of themselves they had no efficacy, and were therefore called by St. Paul *weak and needy elements*—(Gal. iv. 9). But the Mass has power to obtain the remission of temporal penalties due to sins, and to procure an increase of grace, and more abundant helps for those in whose behalf it is offered.

Jesus Christ performed no action on earth greater than the celebration of Mass. In a word, of all actions that can be performed, the Mass is the most holy and dear to God, as well on account of the oblation presented to God, that is, Jesus Christ, a Victim of infinite dignity, as on account of the first Offerer, Jesus Christ, Who offers Himself on the altar by the hands of the priest. “The same now making the offering,” says the Council of Trent, “by the ministry of priests, Who then offered Himself on the Cross.” St. John Chrysostom said: “When you see a priest offering, do not believe that this is done by the hand of a priest; the offering is made rather by the hand of God invisibly stretched out.”

All the honours that the Angels by their homage, and men by their virtues, penances, and martyrdoms, and other holy work, have ever given to God, could not give Him as much glory as a single Mass. For all the honours of creatures are finite honours, but the honour given to God in the Sacrifice of the altar, because it proceeds from a Divine Person, is an infinite honour. Hence we must confess that of all actions the Mass, as the Council of Trent says, is the most holy and divine: “We must needs confess that no other work can be performed by the faithful so holy and divine as this tremendous Mystery itself.” It is, then, as we have seen, an action the most holy and dear to God—an action that appeases most efficaciously the anger of God against sinners, that beats down most effectually the powers of hell, that brings to men on

earth the greatest benefits, and that affords to the souls in Purgatory the greatest relief. It is, in fine, an action in which, as St. Udo, Abbot of Cluny, has written, consists the entire salvation of the world: “Of all the favours granted to me, this is the greatest: it is truly by this mystery, without which there would be no salvation the most generous ardour of His love that God instituted in this world.” And, speaking of the Mass, Timothy of Jerusalem said that by it the world is preserved. But for the Mass the earth should have long since perished on account of the sins of men.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Charity dealeth not perversely.”

I.—HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST AVOIDS LUKEWARMNESS, AND SEEKS PERFECTION.

I.

St. Gregory, in his explanation of these words, “dealeth not perversely,” says that Charity, giving herself up more and more to the love of God, ignores whatever is not right and holy. The Apostle had already written to the same effect, when he called Charity a bond that unites the most perfect virtues together in the soul. *Have charity, which is the bond of perfection*—(Col. iii. 14). And whereas Charity delights in perfection, she consequently abhors that lukewarmness with which some persons serve God, to the great risk of losing charity, divine grace, their very souls and their all.

At the same time it must be observed that there are two kinds of tepidity or lukewarmness; the one unavoidable-

able, the other avoidable. From that which is unavoidable, the Saints themselves are not exempt; and this comprises all the failings which are committed by us without full consent, but merely from our natural frailty. Such are, for example, distractions at prayers, interior disquietudes, useless words, vain curiosity, the wish to appear, tastes in eating and drinking, the movements of concupiscence not instantly repressed, and such like. We ought to avoid these defects as much as we possibly can; but, owing to the weakness of our nature, caused by the infection of sin, it is impossible to avoid them altogether. We ought, indeed, to detest them after committing them, because they are displeasing to God; but as we have already remarked, we ought to beware of making them a subject of alarm or disquietude. St. Francis of Sales writes as follows: "All such thoughts as create disquietude are not from God, Who is the Prince of Peace; but they proceed always from the devil, or from self-love, or from the good opinion we have of ourselves."

II.

Such thoughts, therefore, as disturb us, must be straightway rejected, and made no account of. It was said also by the same Saint Francis regarding indeliberate faults, that, as they were involuntarily committed, so are they cancelled involuntarily. An act of sorrow, an act of love, is sufficient to cancel them. The venerable Sister Mary Crucified, a Benedictine nun, saw once a globe of fire, on which a number of straws were cast, and were all forthwith reduced to ashes. She was given to understand by this figure, that one act of Divine love, made with fervour, destroys all the defects we may have in our soul. The same effect is produced by the Holy Communion, according to what we find in the Council of Trent, where the Eucharist is called "an antidote by which we are freed from daily faults." Thus the like faults, though they are indeed faults, do not hinder perfection; that is,

our advancing to perfection; because no one attains perfection before he arrives at the kingdom of the Blessed.

Saturday after Ascension

Morning Meditation

DIVINE LOVE IS A LIGHT THAT ENLIGHTENS
THE SOUL.

"O *Lux Beatissima*."

O Lux beatissima! The Holy Ghost, who is called most blessed Light, is He Who not only inflames our hearts to love Him, but also dispels all darkness and reveals to us the vanity of earthly things. O Holy Spirit, visit me by Thy grace, and grant me the gift of understanding, that by the contemplation of Heavenly things I may detach my thoughts and affections from all the vanities of this miserable world.

I.

One of the worst effects of Adam's sin in us, was its blinding our reason by means of the passions which darkened the mind. Oh, how miserable is the soul that allows itself to be ruled by any of the passions! Passion is a vapour, a veil, which will not suffer us to see the

truth. How can he fly from evil who knows not what is evil? This obscurity increases in proportion as our sins increase. But the Holy Ghost, Who is called *Light most blessed*, with His Divine rays, not only inflames our hearts to love Him, but also dispels our darkness, and reveals to us the vanity of all worldly things, the worth of eternal goods, the importance of salvation, the value of grace, the goodness of God, the infinite love He deserves from us, and the immense love He has shown to us.

O Holy Spirit, Divine Consoler, I adore Thee as my true God, as I adore God the Father and God the Son. I beseech Thee to visit me by Thy grace and Thy love, and to grant me the gift of understanding in order that I may be able to understand the Divine Mysteries, and, by the contemplation of Heavenly things, may detach my thoughts and affections from all the vanities of this miserable world.

II.

The sensual man perceiveth not those things that are of the spirit of God—(1 Cor. ii. 14). Man, absorbed in the pleasures of the earth, knows but little of these truths, and hence he unhappily loves that which he should hate, and hates that which he should love. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi exclaimed: "O love not known, O love not loved!" And hence St. Teresa said, that God is not loved because He is not known. Wherefore the Saints ever sought light from God: *Send forth thy light; illumine my darkness; open thou my eyes.* Yes, because without light, precípices cannot be avoided, nor God be found.

O Holy and Divine Spirit, I believe that Thou art truly God, and one God with the Father and with the Son. I adore and acknowledge Thee as the Giver of those lights by which Thou hast discovered to me the evil I have done by offending Thee, and the obligation I am under of loving Thee. I thank Thee for them, and am exceedingly sorry for having offended Thee. I have deserved to be

abandoned by Thee in my darkness, but I am sensible Thou hast not yet abandoned me. Continue, O Eternal Spirit, to enlighten me, and make me know still more and more Thy infinite goodness, and give me strength to love Thee for the future with my whole heart. Add grace upon grace, that so I may be sweetly overcome, and constrained to love no other but Thee. I thank Thee through the merits of Jesus Christ. I love Thee, my sovereign Good; I love Thee more than myself. I desire to be all Thine; accept of me, and suffer me not to depart from Thee any more. O Mary, my Mother, assist me always by thy holy intercession.

Spiritual Reading

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

St. Bonaventure says that in each Mass God bestows on the world a benefit not inferior to that which He conferred by His Incarnation. This is conformable to the celebrated words of St. Augustine: "O venerable dignity of the priests, in whose hands, as in the womb of the Virgin, the Son of God becomes incarnate!" Moreover, St. Thomas teaches that since the Sacrifice of the altar is nothing else than the application and renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross, a single Mass brings to men the same benefits and salvation that were produced by the Sacrifice of the Cross. St. John Chrysostom says: "The celebration of a Mass has the same value as the death of Christ on the Cross." And of this we are still more assured by the holy Church in the Collect for the Sunday after Pentecost: "As many times as this commemorative Sacrifice is celebrated, so often is the work of our Redemption performed." The same Redeemer Who once offered Himself on the Cross is immolated on the altar by the ministry of His priests. "For the Victim is one

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and the same," says the Council of Trent: "the same now offering by the ministry of priests, Who then offered Himself on the Cross, the manner alone of offering being different."

In a word, the Mass is, according to the prediction of the Prophet, "the good and the beautiful thing" of the Church: *For what is the good thing of him, and what is his beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect and wine springing forth virgins*—(Zach. ix. 17). In the Mass, Jesus Christ gives Himself to us by means of the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, which is the end and object of all the other Sacraments, says the angelic Doctor. Justly, then, has St. Bonaventure called a Mass a complementum of all God's love and of all His benefits to men. Hence the devil has always sought to deprive the world of the Mass by means of the heretics, constituting them precursors of Antichrist, whose first efforts will be to abolish the holy Sacrifice of the altar, and, according to the Prophet Daniel, in punishment of the sins of men, his efforts shall be successful: *And strength was given him against the continual sacrifice on account of sins*—(Dan. viii. 12).

Most justly, then, does the holy Council of Trent require of priests to be most careful to celebrate Mass with the greatest possible devotion and purity of conscience: "It is sufficiently clear that all industry and diligence is to be applied to this end, that it (the Mystery) be performed with the greatest possible inward cleanness and purity of heart." And in the same place the Council justly remarks, that on priests who celebrate this great Sacrifice negligently, and without devotion, shall fall the malediction threatened by the Prophet Jeremias: *Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord negligently*—(Jer. xlviii. 10). A servant of God used to say that the life of a priest should be nothing else than preparation and thanksgiving for Mass.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

II.—HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST AVOIDS LUKEWARMNESS AND SEEKS PERFECTION.

I.

The tepidity, then, that does hinder perfection, is that tepidity which is avoidable when a person commits deliberate venial faults; because all these faults committed with open eyes can effectually be avoided by Divine grace if we have the desire. Wherefore St. Teresa said: "May God deliver you from deliberate sin, however small it may be." Such, for example, are wilful untruths, little detractions, imprecations, expressions of anger, derisions of one's neighbour, cutting words, words of self-esteem, animosities nourished in the heart, inordinate attachments to persons of a different sex. "These are a sort of worm," wrote the same Saint, "which is not detected before it has eaten into the virtues." Hence, in another place, she gave this admonition: "By means of small things the devil goes about making holes for great things to enter."

We should, therefore, tremble at such deliberate faults; since they cause God to close His hands from bestowing upon us His clearer lights and stronger helps, and deprive us of spiritual sweetnesses; and the result of such is to make the soul perform all spiritual exercises with great weariness and pain; and so, in the course of time, she begins to leave off Prayer, Communions, Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and Novenas; and, in the end, she will probably leave off all piety, as has not infrequently been the case with many unhappy souls.

II.

This is the meaning of that threat which our Lord makes to the tepid: *Thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot; but because thou art lukewarm . . . I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth—* (Apoc. iii. 15, 16). How wonderful! He says, *I would thou wert cold!* What! And is it better to be cold, that is, deprived of grace, than to be tepid? Yes, in a certain sense it is better to be cold; because a person who is cold may more easily change his life, being stung by the reproaches of conscience; whereas a tepid person contracts the habit of slumbering on in his faults, without bestowing a thought, or taking any trouble to correct himself; and thus he makes his cure, as it were, desperate: St. Gregory says, “Tepidity, which has cooled down from fervour, is a hopeless state.” The Venerable Father Lewis da Ponte said that he had committed many defects in the course of his life; but that he had never made a truce with his faults. Some there are who make friends with their faults, and from that springs their ruin; especially when the fault is accompanied with some passionate attachment, of self-esteem, of ambition, of liking to be seen, of heaping up money, of resentment against a neighbour, or of inordinate affection for a person of a different sex. In such cases there is great danger of those threads, as it were, becoming chains, as St. Francis of Assisi said, which will drag down the soul to hell. At all events, such a soul will never become a saint, and will forfeit that beautiful crown, which God had prepared for her, had she faithfully corresponded to grace. The bird no sooner feels herself loosed from the snare, than she immediately flies; the soul, as soon as she is loosed from earthly attachments, immediately flies to God; but while she is bound, though it be but by the slightest thread, it is enough to prevent her flying to God. Oh, how many spiritual persons there are who do not become saints, because they will not do themselves the violence to break away from certain little attachments!

Sunday Within the Octave of Ascension

Morning Meditation

DIVINE LOVE A FOUNTAIN THAT SATISFIES.

“*Riga quod est aridum.*”

God, who loves us and desires to see us happy, cries out and makes known to all: *If any man thirst, let him come to me.* I will give him the Holy Ghost Who will make him blessed in this life and in the next. *Riga quod est aridum!* O my Jesus, I beseech Thee, give me the water of Thy love which will make me forget the earth, and live for Thee alone Who art the infinitely amiable One!

I.

Love is called a *living fountain, fire, Charity.* *Fons vivus, ignis, Caritas.* Our Blessed Redeemer said to the Samaritan woman: *But he that shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall not thirst for ever*—(John iv. 13). Love is the water which satisfies our thirst; for he that truly loves God with his whole heart, neither seeks nor desires anything else: because in God he finds every good. Hence, happy in possessing God, he frequently exclaims with joy: *My God and my All!* Almighty God complains of many who seek for fleeting, miserable pleasures from creatures, and leave Him, Who is Infinite Goodness, and the Fountain of all joy: *They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water—*(Jer. ii., 13). Meanwhile God, Who loves.

us and desires to see us happy, cries out and makes known to all : *If any one thirst, let him come to me*—(John vii. 37). He who desires to be happy, let him come to Me, and I will bestow upon him the Holy Ghost, Who will make him blessed, both in this life and in the next.

Domine, da mihi hanc aquam! Lord, give me of this water!—(John iv. 15). O Jesus, with the Samaritan woman I beseech Thee, give me of this water of Thy love, which will make me forget the earth, and live only for Thee alone, Who art the infinitely amiable One. *Riga quod est aridum!* My soul is a barren soil, which produces nothing but the weeds and thorns of sin. Oh, water it with Thy holy grace, that it may yield some fruit to Thy glory, before it leaves this world in death!

II.

He, then, that believes in Jesus Christ, and loves Him, shall be enriched with so many graces, that from his heart shall spring up fountains of holy virtues, which shall not only preserve his life, but also give life to others. And indeed this water is the Holy Ghost, the sustaining love which Jesus Christ promised to send from Heaven, after His Ascension : *Now this he said of the Spirit, which they should receive who believed in him: for as yet the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not glorified*—(John vii. 39).

The key which opens the channels of this blessed water is holy prayer, which obtains all good things in virtue of the promise : *Ask and you shall receive*. We are weak, and blind, and poor, and miserable, but prayer will obtain for us strength, and light, and wealth, and happiness. Theodoret says : "Prayer, though but one, can effect all things." He who prays receives all he asks for. God desires to give us His graces, but He desires that we should pray for them.

O Fountain of living water, O sovereign Good, how often have I deserted Thee for the defiled waters of the earth, which have deprived me of Thy love! O that I

had rather died than offend Thee! But for the future I will seek after nothing but Thee, my God. Succour me, and make me always faithful to Thee. Mary, my hope, keep me always under thy holy protection.

Spiritual Reading

THE SUBLIME DIGNITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

In his Epistle to the Christians of Smyrna, St. Ignatius, Martyr, says that the priesthood is the most sublime of all created dignities : "The apex of dignities is the priesthood." St. Ephrem calls it an infinite dignity : "The priesthood is an astounding miracle, great, immense, and infinite." St. John Chrysostom says, that though its functions are performed on earth, the priesthood should be numbered among the things of Heaven. According to Cassian, the priest of God is exalted above all earthly sovereignties, and above all celestial heights—he is inferior only to God. Innocent III says that the priest is placed between God and man; inferior to God, but superior to man.

St. Denis calls the priest "a divine man." Hence he has called the priesthood "a divine dignity." In fine, St. Ephrem says that the gift of the sacerdotal dignity surpasses all understanding. For us it is enough to know, that Jesus Christ has said that we should treat His priests as we would His own person : *He that heareth you, heareth me; he that despiseth you, despiseth me*—(Luke x. 16). Hence St. John Chrysostom says, that "he who honours a priest, honours Christ, and he who insults a priest, insults Christ." Through respect for the sacerdotal dignity, St. Mary of Oignies used to kiss the ground on which a priest had walked.

The dignity of the priest is estimated by the exalted nature of his office. Priests are chosen by God to

