

MEDITATIONS & READINGS

ST. ALPHONSUS

VOLUME IV – PART II
AFTER PENTECOST
XVIII TO XXIV SUNDAY

Edited by Rev. J. B. Coyle, C.S.S.R.

VISITS TO THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT and TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (ST. ALPHONSUS). Paper Artistic Cover in two colours.

THE VISITS, with MASS and COMMUNION Prayers. Morocco, Reindeer Padded, etc., etc.

PRAYER. By ST. ALPHONSUS. Jubilee Edition.

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL SUCCOUR AND IRELAND. (Ár mairé-
vean Siort-ádhraic ir Éire). S. Ua C., O'Áir-
tuis.

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 FOUR
PART II.

FOREWORD

BY

HIS EMINENCE JOSEPH CARDINAL MACRORY

Edited by

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

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MEDITATIONS & READINGS
FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

VOLUME IV—PART II
AFTER PENTECOST
(XVIII TO XXIV SUNDAY)

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PATRITII MURRAY, C.S.S.R.

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FOREWORD

BY

HIS EMINENCE JOSEPH CARDINAL MACRORY

THE present volume completes the series of **MEDITATIONS AND READINGS** from the spiritual writings of St. Alphonsus. The complete series in eight volumes will be for sale early in the coming year. That year will be an *Annus Mirabilis* for Irish Catholics by reason of the great International Eucharistic Congress to be held in Dublin, and because it will be the fifteen-hundredth anniversary of the coming of our National Apostle; but it will also have a very special additional interest for Redemptorists as the Bicentenary of their Congregation's foundation.

Father Coyle, the able and zealous Editor of the series, has been striving hard to have the work completed for 1932. Irrespective of business considerations, he has been anxious to be able to make this offering of labour and love to his Congregation on the occasion of its Bicentenary, and desirous that the devotion of our people in that memorable year may be warmed and stimulated by the glowing fervour of the spiritual writings of St. Alphonsus. He is, therefore, to be congratulated on having the work completed; and I trust it will serve to nourish and kindle devotion not only in 1932, but for generations to come.

There is no need for me or anyone else to sound the praises of St. Alphonsus or extol the merits of his books. On his sanctity and learning the Church has set her

seal; while Popes and Professors and the simple faithful have vied with each other for two centuries in admiration of his writings. I will, therefore, content myself with saying that in *MEDITATIONS AND READINGS*. Father Coyle has given us the chief portions of the great Saint's devotional works, and in a handy and most attractive form and a much improved English translation. For each day of the year there are two *Meditations* and a *Spiritual Reading*, which taken together cover usually from eight to ten or eleven pages, all suitable for the faithful as well as for Clergy and Religious. Thus the work will be a vast storehouse of devotion, admirably arranged for daily use, while its orthodoxy is guaranteed by the authority of a great Saint and Doctor of the Church.

Who does not see that such a work is of very great importance in the fight against evil and dangerous literature? If we are to succeed in the fight—and no success is more important at the present time—we must create and foster a taste for good reading, and to this end the present work seems admirably adapted. I trust, therefore, that it will be diligently and devoutly read and re-read in many homes. I feel sure that neither St. Alphonsus nor Father Coyle would ask any better reward for his labour.

✠ JOSEPH CARDINAL MACRORY.

ARA COELLI,

ARMAGH.

November 6th, Feast of All the Saints of Ireland, 1931.

*LETTER FROM HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL LOGUE
TO THE EDITOR.*

ARA COELLI,

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.

AS FOREWORD TO VOLUME III. PART II.
HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM

wrote :—

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 happiness comparable to the humble joy of the good

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.
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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, 1929.

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AS FOREWORD TO VOLUME IV., PART I., HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CASHEL

wrote:—

I WELCOME with special pleasure "MEDITATIONS AND READINGS FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR." These beautiful volumes provide the clergy and laity with salutary illustrations and inspirations. Immersed in affairs of the world we are in danger of forgetting the things that really matter. The lure of excessive amusement and the attractions of morbid literature create an unhealthy atmosphere. Our minds are turned away from heavenly thoughts and are coloured by the evil influences that surround us. In these "MEDITATIONS AND READINGS" we have the means of filling our minds with holy thoughts and our wills with fruitful resolutions that will enable us to live in a world of supernatural ideals.

The "MEDITATIONS AND READINGS" are selected from the spiritual writings of St. Alphonsus, Doctor of the Church, and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. In St. Alphonsus we have a guide whose spiritual outlook on life, wonderful gift of sane advice, and unquestioned supremacy in the sacred science are a guarantee of religious perfection. His writings have been models of spiritual instruction and have won many souls to the life of grace. Their publication in new form deserves high praise.

The "MEDITATIONS AND READINGS" are edited by Fr. Coyle, C.S.S.R., whose experience as a missionary has

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given him an insight into the needs of the day, and whose experience as an editor has fitted him for the loving task of publishing the Works of the great Founder of his great Congregation.

I bless Fr. Coyle and his work. I hope that his "MEDITATIONS AND READINGS" will be widely known and properly appreciated. We are indebted to him for volumes that cannot fail to help us in the important and difficult task of saving our souls.

✠ J. M. HARTY.

Archbishop of Cashel.

*Feast of the Blessed Oliver Plunket,
11th July, 1930.*

**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

Sacred Sciences, but also to the faithful of every condition of life, to whom he points out the way to solid virtue, and smoothes 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.

THE EDITOR'S WORD OF THANKS

The publication of the present part (Pt. 2, Vol. 4) completes this Series of *Meditations and Readings for Every Day of the Year*, from the Ascetic Writings of St. Alphonsus de Liguori. It was a labour of many years but, needless to say, a labour of love. I thank Almighty God and His Holy Mother I have been able to complete the work for a Commemoration in 1932 of the Bi-Centenary of the Foundation of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Five thousand Redemptorists to-day in all parts of the world praise and thank the Lord God for all He has done for their Congregation since its Foundation in lowliness and poverty by St. Alphonsus in 1732.

In this final volume I take the opportunity of tendering my heartfelt thanks to those who have helped with useful suggestions and in the preparation of proofs.

To His Eminence Cardinal MacRory I return my sincere thanks for the very gracious words with which he prefaces the present volume. His illustrious predecessors, Cardinal Logue and Cardinal O'Donnell, also gave cordial encouragement from the beginning, and both have my grateful prayers.

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I thank His Grace the Archbishop of Tuam, and His Grace the Archbishop of Cashel, for their kindly Foreword to previous volumes.

To the publishers I tender very grateful acknowledgments and thanks for unvarying courtesy, and I think I should add, patience, and for the excellence of their workmanship.

Finally, I thank Most Rev. Patrick Murray, Superior-General and Rector Major. It was exceedingly helpful and inspiring to have his blessing and encouragement from the very beginning. As a token of filial thanks and gratitude, I place these volumes in his hands, and ask him to be pleased to lay them at the feet of our holy Father and Founder, St. Alphonsus, as our Act of Thanksgiving, Loyalty and Affection in this Bi-Centenary Year, 1932.

J. B. C., C.S.S.R.,
St. PATRICK’S, ESKER,
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MEDITATIONS AND READINGS

Achtzehnter Sonntag after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL.

(September 29.)

The Church assures us that St. Michael has been given as our defender, and that he comes to the aid of all who have recourse to him. Beseech him that he may be thy special protector with God Who loves him so much.

I.

Among the angels in Heaven none surpass St. Michael in glory; and, according to St. Basil and others, none, indeed, equal him. St. Michael was chosen before all others to subdue the pride of Lucifer and of all the rebel angels, and to expel them from Heaven. If thou lovest this Archangel, who has so great love for men, rejoice at the glory he enjoys in Heaven, and beseech him, that, as he is the protector of the whole Church and of all the faithful, he will be thy special protector with God, Who loves him so much, and Who rejoices in beholding one who is so faithful to Him and so zealous for His honour, so much glorified by all.

In the Mass for the Dead, the Church prays: "*Let the standard-bearer, St. Michael, bring them into the holy light.*" The learned explain this prayer, and say that St. Michael has the honourable office of presenting

to Jesus Christ the Judge, all the souls that depart out in this world in the grace of God.

Protect me, therefore, O holy Archangel, and by thy protection enable my soul to become worthy to be presented by thy hands on the day of my death, clothed with Divine grace, before my Judge Jesus Christ.

II.

St. Laurence Justinian says that our holy mother the Church honours St. Michael as her own special protector and faithful intercessor. and the holy Church herself declares she venerates St. Michael, as the ancient Synagogue venerated him, as protector and patron. The holy Archangel, then, as the protector of the whole Church continually intercedes with God in favour of Christians, and obtains for them all the help they need. He also aids the Sovereign Pontiff and all the bishops in the government of souls, and most carefully watches over the defence of the faithful against the attacks of those demons whom he formerly expelled from the heavenly kingdom.

The Church prays to St. Michael, in the name of all the faithful, to defend us from the assaults of the wicked enemy at the hour of our death, that we may not be conquered and may not lose our souls: *Holy Michael, Archangel, defend us in the battle, that we may not perish in the dreadful Judgment.*

O holy Archangel, the devil has many weapons to employ against me at the hour of my death; these weapons are my sins, by which he will then endeavour to cast me into despair. He is also preparing furious assaults of temptation, to cause me to fall again into sin. Do thou, who hast conquered him, and expelled him from Heaven, conquer him now for me, and drive him far away from me at the hour of my death; I beseech thee to hear my prayer, for the love of that God Who so much loves thee, and Whom thou dost so much love. O Mary, Queen of Heaven, procure for me the assistance of St. Michael at the hour of my death.

Spiritual Reading.

ST. MICHAEL PROTECTS US AGAINST THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE DEVIL.

Mankind being lost through the fall of Adam, God sent on earth His only Son to redeem it, and He at the same time charged St. Michael, as a valiant combatant, to repress the powers of hell. He moves through the whole world with great rapidity in order to strengthen men against the temptations of the devil.

We should take care to honour and invoke this great minister of God, for the Church assures us that St. Michael has been given to us as our defender, and that he comes to the aid of every one who has recourse to him. He is specially prompt in succouring those who are tempted by the devil. Pantaleon says that he discloses to us the snares of our enemy, and that he baffles his artifices. The evil spirit often tempts us to regard a bad action as permissible, and even as good, and seeks by this means to destroy us; but St. Michael permits us to see the danger, and thus enables us to avoid the dangers that threaten us.

Father Nierenberg relates that the servant of a great lord, after having, during many years, led a wicked life, was at the point of death. The devil placing inwardly before his mind all his sins, strongly tempted him to despair, and succeeded in making him say that he did not wish to make his Confession, nor to receive any other Sacrament, because he was damned. But as this unfortunate sinner in the midst of his disorders had never ceased to keep up some sentiment of devotion towards St. Michael, and to recommend himself to him, the good Archangel appeared to him at the moment of death and revealed to him that he had prayed for him, adding that the Lord, through his intercession, had granted him three hours more to live in order that he might confess and receive the Sacraments, so as to be able to die in the grace of God. Thereupon the dying man with tears in his eyes, thanked his heavenly

benefactor for having obtained for him so great a favour. He then called his brother and begged him to go at once and bring him a confessor. His brother set out at once and directed his steps towards a Dominican convent that was not far away. On the road he met two of these Religious, who told him that they had been called by an unknown person to hear the Confession of the sick man, and that they were going to his house for this purpose. It is presumed that the holy Archangel himself gave them this information and requested them to seek out the dying man. When they arrived the sick man made his Confession and received the Sacraments with lively sentiments of compunction; and after the lapse of the three hours, the man died, giving every hope that he had saved his soul.

Evening Meditation.

ST. MICHAEL BATTLES FOR US AGAINST THE INFERNAL DRAGON.

I.

The Deacon Pantaleon assures us that St. Michael not only obtains for his pious servants the courage and the strength to resist the temptations of hell, but comes in person to fight when he sees any one hard pressed by the devil, and exposed to the proximate danger of falling into sin. Moreover, St. Bruno, bishop of Segni, who lived at the end of the Eleventh Century, says that this generous Archangel loves us so much that he does not cease day or night to give battle for us against the infernal dragon, and that he even calls together those angels under him to combat with him, so that we may not be overcome by our enemy. Pantaleon also adds that St. Michael is always encamped, as it were, near God's people, that is to say, he comes with his angels and places his guards around Christians, in order that they may not become the prey of hell, especially when they implore him to come to their aid.

II.

St. Michael comes to the assistance of his pious servants if they happen to fall into sin. He obtains for them the grace to know the baseness of their faults, and to detest them. This is the reason why the Church wishes us to confess ourselves guilty, first to God, then to the Blessed Virgin, and then to St. Michael. Here we see that the holy Archangel is also specially asked to help us to recover the grace of God.

St. Saphronius, patriarch of Jerusalem in the Seventh Century, in a discourse in which he greatly eulogizes St. Michael, calls him the guide of those who go astray; that is to say, he brings back to the path of duty sinners who live far from God, and helps them to find the means of obtaining pardon. The Archangel is also described by the same Saint as the one who raises up those who have fallen; for the holy Archangel by means of salutary inspirations induces sinners to rise out of the unhappy state in which they find themselves.

The Deacon Pantaleon pronounces the same eulogy: "The Archangel leads them forth to the road of penance, and procures for them the remission of sins." St. Michael, who ardently loves our souls, when he sees them lying in the abyss of sin, seeks in different ways to conduct them to penance, which is the only way to return to the state of grace. He adds that the generous Archangel goes so far as to make himself responsible for sinners; that is, seeing one of his pious clients in disgrace with God, he supplicates the Lord to wait for him till he does penance, and he becomes in some way surety for him by promising God that this sinner will offend Him no more, because he will take care to aid him when he sees him in danger of relapsing into sin.

God is never angered, since anger is passion, and passion is incompatible with God. He is always tranquil; and even in the act of punishing, His tranquillity is not in the least disturbed. *But thou being master of power, judgest with tranquillity*—(Wis. xii. 18). But the malice of mortal sin is so great, that if God were capable of wrath and affliction, it would anger and afflict Him. This is what sinners do as far as in them lies, according to the words of Isaiah: *But they provoked to wrath, and afflicted the spirit of his holy One*—(Is. lxiii. 10). Moses writes, that when God was about to send the Deluge, He declared Himself to be so much afflicted by the sins of men as to be obliged to exterminate them from the earth. *And being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart, he said: I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth*—(Gen. vi. 6, 7).

I.

God commanded Jonas to go and preach to Ninive. Instead of obeying God, Jonas fled by sea towards Tharsis. But, behold, a great tempest threatened to sink the ship; and Jonas knowing that the tempest was raised in punishment of his disobedience, said to the crew of the vessel: *Take me up and cast me into the sea, and the sea shall be calm to you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you*—(Jon. i. 12). And they actually cast him into the sea, and the tempest ceased. *And the sea ceased from raging*—(Jon. i. 15). If Jonas had not been thrown into the sea the tempest would not have ceased. What do we learn from all this? We may learn that if we do not cast sin out of our souls, the tempest, that is, the scourge of God, will not cease. The tempest is excited by our sins; the tempest which is hurrying us to destruction. *Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away*—(Is. lxiv. 6). We may practise many external devotions, but to what purpose if we be not converted, if we do not rid our souls of sin? If we do not abandon our sins, we cannot please God.

It is said that the pain is not removed before the thorn has been plucked out. St. Jerome writes that

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Monday—Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

TO PLEASE GOD WE MUST ABANDON SIN.

The man sick of the palsy besought Jesus Christ to restore the health of his body; but before doing so the Lord first restored health to his soul. *Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee*. (Matt. ix. 2). The pain will not be removed till the thorn has been taken out.

II.

St. John Chrysostom says that sin alone is the cause of all our sufferings and chastisements. Commenting upon these words in Genesis which the Lord spoke after the deluge: *I will set my bow in the clouds*—(Gen. ix. 13), St. Ambrose remarks that God does not say: *I will set My arrow, but My bow, in the clouds*; giving us thereby to understand that it is always the sinner who fixes the arrow in the bow of God by provoking Him to chastise.

If we wish to please the Lord, we must remove the cause of His anger, which is sin. The man sick of the palsy besought Jesus Christ to restore the health of his body; but, before granting his request, our Lord first restored his soul's health by giving him sorrow for his sins, and then saying to him: *Be of good heart, son; thy sins are forgiven thee*—(Matt. ix. 2). St. Thomas says that the Redeemer first removed the cause of his infirmity—namely, his sins, and then freed him from the infirmity itself. "He asked for the health of the body, and the Lord gave him the health of the soul; because, like a good physician, He wished to remove the cause of the disease." Sin is the root of every evil, and

hence the Lord, after having healed him, warned him against sin in these words : *Sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee*—(John v. 14). Ecclesiastics had said the same : *My son, in thy sickness . . . turn away from sin . . . and then give place to the physician*—(Eccclus. xxxviii. 9-11). You must first apply to the physician of the soul in order that he may free you from your sins, and then to the physician of the body that he may cure you of your disease.

Spiritual Reading.

“BE NOT DECEIVED, GOD IS NOT MOCKED.”

Oh, surely *God is not mocked!* (Gal. vi. 7). I never commanded you, God says, to perform those devotions and acts of penance : *For I spoke not to your fathers . . . concerning the matter of burnt offering and sacrifices, but this thing I commanded them, saying : Hearken to my voice, and I will be your God*—(Jer. vii. 22-28). What I wish of you, says God, is that you hear My voice and change your life, and make good Confessions with real sorrow, for you must know yourselves, that your other Confessions, followed by so many relapses, have been worth nothing. I wish that you should do violence to yourselves in breaking with that danger, with that company. I wish that you should endeavour to restore that property, to make good to your neighbour such a loss. *Hearken to my voice, and I will be your God*. I will then be to you the God of mercy, such as you would have Me to be. Cardinal Hugo, in his commentary upon these words of our Lord, in the Gospel according to St. Matthew—(Matt. xi. 15) : *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*, says : “Some have ears, but not ears to hear.” How many attend sermons and receive admonitions from the confessor, in which they are told all that they must do in order to please God ; but they leave the church only to live worse than before. How can God be appeased by such ? or

how can such be delivered from Divine chastisements ? *Offer up the sacrifice of justice, and trust in the Lord*—(Ps. iv. 6)—says David. Honour God not in appearance, but by your deeds. It is that which is meant by “the sacrifice of justice” ; honour God by bewailing your sins, by the frequentation of the Sacraments, by a change of life and then hope in the Lord. But to hope while you continue the state of sin, is not hope—it is rashness, it is a snare of the enemy, and renders you more odious in the sight of God, and more deserving of punishment.

You see that the Lord is angry, that He already has His hand lifted to strike with the scourge which threatens us. How do you think to escape ? *Who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of penance*—(Matt. iii. 7, 8), thus spoke St. John the Baptist, preaching to the Jews of his day. You must do penance, but penance deserving of pardon. It must be true and resolute. Your anger must be changed into meekness, by forgiveness of those who offend you ; your intemperance must become abstinence, by observing the fasts of the Church, and by abstaining from the immoderate use of intoxicating drink which changes man into a beast. Therefore you must avoid the public house. Chastity must reign and all impurity be cast out. Resist evil thoughts ; use no bad words, and flee from bad companions and dangerous conversation. *Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of penance*, and the bringing forth of such fruit implies also that you attend to the service of God, and endeavour to serve Him more than you have offended Him ; *For, as you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity . . . so now yield your members to love justice*—(Rom. vi. 19). Thus did St. Mary Magdalen live after her conversion, and St. Augustine, St. Mary of Egypt, St. Margaret of Cortona who by their works of penance and sanctification rendered themselves more dear to God than others who had sinned less. St. Gregory says : “For the most part, a fervent life after sin is the more pleasing to God than a life which, though innocent, is tepid.” And thus does the Saint explain

the following passage of the Gospel: *There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance*—(Luke, xv. 7). This is understood of the sinner who, after having risen from sin, sets about serving God with greater fervour than others who have long been just.

This is truly to bring forth fruit worthy of penance. To content one's self with hearing sermons and going to devotions in the church, without abandoning sin, or avoiding the occasion of it, is rather a mockery of God, and calculated to provoke His greater wrath. *And, think not*, as St. John the Baptist warned sinners, *think not to say within yourselves: We have Abraham for our father*—(Matt. iii. 9). It will not do to say, we have the Mother of God to assist us, we have our Patron Saints to deliver us; because if we do not abandon our sins the Saints cannot help us. The Saints are the friends of God; hence they not only have no inclination, but they would even be ashamed to succour the obstinate. Let us tremble, because the Lord has already pronounced the sentence: *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire*—(Matt. vii. 19). How many years have you been in the world? Tell me what fruit of good works have you hitherto borne, what glory have you rendered to God by your life? Sin, outrage, contempt, such are the fruit you have borne, such the glory you have rendered to God! God now in His mercy gives you time for penance, in order that you may bewail the injuries you have done Him, and love Him the remainder of your days. What have you resolved to do? Resolve at once to give yourself to God. What do you expect but that unless you turn at once to God, you shall be cut down and cast into the fire of hell?

Let those, then, tremble who have not yet resolved to change their lives. But, on the other hand, be joyful if you mean to turn in good earnest to God. *Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord*—(Ps. civ. 8), because God is all tenderness and love for those that seek Him. *The Lord is good . . . to the soul that*

seeketh him—(Lam. iii. 25). Neither does the Lord know how to reject a humble heart that is sorry for its offences. *A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*—(Ps. l. 19). Let us be joyful, then, if we are determined to change our lives; and if, on seeing ourselves guilty of many sins before the Lord, we stand in fear of the Divine Judgments, let us have recourse to the Mother of Mercy, the most Holy Mary, who defends and screens from the Divine vengeance all those who take refuge under her mantle.

Evening Meditation.

ST. MICHAEL GIVES TO EACH A GUARDIAN ANGEL.

I.

The Deacon Pantaleon teaches that St. Michael, according to the order that God has established, takes care of all the faithful. Hence, though residing in Heaven, he nevertheless does not omit to console here below those Christians who are in tribulation.

St. Bruno de Segni adds that St. Michael having been raised by the Lord to the dignity of Chief of all the Angels, it is his duty to give to each soul on earth a Guardian Angel; and he invites us to consider how much we are indebted to him for this. As St. Michael is the light and the guide of all the Angels, who are all inferior to him, it is he who directs our Guardian Angels by teaching them the best manner of guiding us and of protecting us against our enemies. When, therefore, we see a person who is drawn into ruin by his vices, or who persecutes us, we shall do well to pray to St. Michael to advise the Angel Guardian to whom this person is intrusted by pointing out to him the best manner of enlightening him in order that he may correct himself or that he may cease to persecute us.

Again, Pantaleon assures us that this powerful Archangel, when we invoke him, delivers us from

dangers and even from temporal necessities. He says St. Michael aids his faithful clients to accomplish the Divine will. Every one knows that our salvation consists in the accomplishment of the will of God. Let us, therefore, pray especially to the holy Archangel to aid us through his intercession to fulfil the Divine will.

II.

Our salvation, the life of our souls, consists in doing God's will: *Life in his good will*—(Ps. xxix. 6). Consequently what we should always ask of God, after the example of David, is that He may teach us to do His will: *Teach me to do thy will*—(Ps. cxlii. 10). We should ask this too of the Blessed Virgin, of our Guardian Angel, of our holy Patrons, that they would obtain for us the grace to do the will of God.

But we should well understand that we must conform to the Divine will not only in prosperity, but even in adversity, and in the tribulations that come from those who persecute us. Everything comes from God. Here we have the true means of sanctifying ourselves and of enjoying true peace, which nothing will be able to take from us: *Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad*—(Prov. xii. 21).

Tuesday—Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

Mornings Meditation.

OBSTINACY IN SIN ESPECIALLY BRINGS
PUNISHMENT.

The cause of all our punishment by God is sin, especially obstinacy in sin. If we do not remove the cause of the scourge, how can we escape the scourge itself?

I.

The cause of all our chastisements is sin; and still more than sin, our obstinacy in it. We have offended God, and are, notwithstanding, unwilling to do penance. When God calls us by His chastisements, He desires that we should hear Him; if He be not listened to, He will be compelled by our obstinacy to curse us: *But if thou wilt not hear the voice of the Lord thy God . . . all these curses shall come upon thee; . . . Cursed shalt thou be in the city, cursed in the field . . .*—(Deut. xxviii. 15, 16, 17). When we offend God, we provoke all creatures to punish us. St. Anselm says that in the same manner as a servant, when he offends his master, draws down upon him the wrath, not only of his master, but of the whole family; so we, when we offend God, excite against ourselves the anger of all creatures. And St. Gregory says that we have more especially irritated against us those creatures which we have made use of against our Creator. God's mercy holds back those creatures that they may not afflict us, but when He sees that we make no account of His threats, and continue to live on in our evil ways, He will then make use of those creatures to take vengeance on us for the injuries we have done Him: *He will arm the creature for the revenge of his enemies. And the whole world shall fight with him against the unwise*—(Wis. v. 18-21). "There is no creature," says St. John Chrysostom, "that will not feel anger when it sees its Lord in anger."

If then we do not appease God by a true conversion, we shall never be free from chastisement. What folly, says St. Gregory, could be more extreme than to imagine that God should cease to chastise before we cease to offend? Many now come to the church, and hear a sermon, but go away without Confession, or change of life. If we do not remove the cause of the scourge, how can we expect to be delivered from the scourge itself?

II.

We continue to irritate God, and then wonder that God continues to chastise us. "We wonder why we are so unhappy, we who are so impure," says Salvia. Do we think that God is appeased by the mere circumstance of our appearing at church without repentance of our sins, without restoring the property or character of our neighbour, without avoiding those occasions of sin which keep us at a distance from God? Ah, let us not mock the Lord! *And now do not mock, lest your bonds be tied straight.*—(Is. xxviii. 22). Do not mock God, says the Prophet, lest those bonds which are binding you for hell be tied more tightly. Cornelius à Lapide, in commenting on the above passage of Isaias, says that when the fox is caught in the snare, its efforts to disentangle itself only serve to entangle it the more. "So also will it happen to sinners who while mocking at God's threats and punishments, become more and more involved in them." Let us be done with sin. Let us cease to irritate God. *For I have heard of the Lord the God of Hosts, continues the Prophet, a consumption, and a cutting short upon all the earth.*—(Is. ib.)

Hear what the Lord says to you: *Who required these things at your hands?*—(Is. i. 12). Who asked for your perpetual exercises and your visits of devotion to the church? I will have nothing from you unless you abandon sin: *Offer sacrifice no more in vain.*—(Ib. 18). Of what use are your devotions if you do not amend your lives? *My soul hateth . . . your solemnities.*—(Ib. 14). Know, says the Lord, that your homage and external devotions are hateful to my soul, if you think by these to avert chastisement without removing your offences: *With burnt offerings thou wilt not be delighted; a sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit.*—(Ps. l. 18, 19). Neither devotions, nor alms, nor penitential works are accepted by God from a soul in the state of sin, and without repentance. God accepts the acts of him alone who is sorry for sin, and resolved upon a change of life.

Spiritual Reading.

GOD THREATENS TO CHASTISE IN ORDER
TO SAVE US FROM CHASTISEMENT.

"Heu! Consolabor super hostibus meis!" "Alas! I will comfort myself over my adversaries: and I will be revenged of my enemies."

Such is the language of God when He speaks of punishment and vengeance. He says He is constrained by His Justice to punish His enemies. But mark the word: *Heu! Alas!*—an exclamation by which God would give us to understand how grieved He is when He has to punish creatures whom He so dearly loved as to give His life for love of them. "Heu! Alas!" says Cornelius à Lapide, is uttered by one who is lamenting and not rejoicing; God signifies by this word that He grieves, and is unwilling to punish sinners. This God, Who is the Father of Mercies, and so much loves us, is not One to punish and afflict, but to pardon and console. *For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of affliction.*—(Jer. xxix. 11). But since such is God's merciful spirit, why does He punish us? or appear as if He meant to punish us? Because He wishes to show us mercy; for this anger which He now displays is all mercy and patience.

At present God appears to be angry with us, not with a view to our punishment, but in order that we may cleanse ourselves from our sins, and thus enable Him to pardon us. God threatens to chastise in order to deliver us from chastisement.

The threats of men ordinarily proceed from pride or impotence. If they have it in their power to take vengeance, they make no threats lest they should thereby give their enemies an opportunity of escape. It is only when they have not the power to wreak their vengeance that they betake themselves to threats, in order to gratify their passion, by at least causing alarm to their enemies. Not so the threats of which God makes use.

His threats do not arise from inability to chastise, because He can be avenged when He wills; but He bears with us in order to see us penitent, and thus saved from punishment. *Thou hast mercy upon all, because thou canst do all things, and overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance*—(Wis. xi. 24). Neither does God threaten from hatred, in order to torture us with fear; God threatens from love, in order that we may return to Him, and thereby escape chastisement: He threatens, because He does not wish to see us lost: He threatens, because He loves our souls. *But thou sparest all because they are thine, O Lord, who lovest souls*—(Ibid. 27). He threatens; but notwithstanding, bears with us and delays inflicting the punishment, because He wishes to see us converted and not lost. *He dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance*—(2 Pet. iii. 9). Thus the threats of God are all acts of tenderness, and the loving calls of His goodness, by which He means to save us from the punishment we deserve.

Yet forty days, exclaimed Jonas, and Nineve shall be destroyed—(Jonas, iii. 4). Wretched Ninevites, he cries, the day of chastisement is come; I announce it to you on the part of God: Know that within forty days Nineve shall be destroyed! But how comes it that Nineve was not destroyed? *God saw their works; that they were turned from their evil ways and God had mercy*—(Ibid. 10). Jonas was afflicted at this, and making lamentation before the Lord, said to Him: *I beseech thee, O Lord, is not this what I said when I was in my own country? Therefore, I went before thee into Tharsis, for I knew that thou art a gracious and merciful God, patient and of much compassion, and easy to forgive evil*—(Jonas, iv. 2). He then left Nineve, and sitting down outside the city, was screened from the rays of the burning sun by an ivy which God caused to overshadow his head. But the Lord withered the ivy. Whereat Jonas was so much afflicted that he wished for death. God then said to him: *Thou art grieved for the ivy for which thou hast not laboured,*

nor made it to grow; . . . and shall not I spare Nineve?—(Ibid. 10, 11). Thou grieveest for the ivy which thou hast not created, and shall not I pardon the men who are the creation of My hands?

The destruction which the Lord caused to be held out against Nineve was, according to the explanation of St. Basil, not an actual prophecy, but a simple threat, by which God wished to bring about the conversion of that city. The Saint says, that God often appears in anger because He wishes to deal mercifully with us; and threatens not with the intention of chastising but of delivering us from chastisement. St. Augustine adds, that when any one cries out to you: Look out! Take care! it is a sign he does not mean to injure you. And thus exactly does God act in our regard: He threatens us with chastisement, not that He means to inflict it, but to spare us if we profit by the warning. Thou, O Lord, says the Saint, art severe, but most so when Thou wishest to save us; Thou threatenest, but in threatening, Thou hast no other object than to bring us to repentance. The Lord could chastise sinners by a sudden death without warning, which would not leave them time for repentance; but no, He displays His wrath, He brandishes His scourge, in order that He may see them reformed, not punished.

Evening Meditation.

ST. MICHAEL ASSISTS US AT DEATH AND IN PURGATORY.

I.

St. Michael is specially charged by the Lord to assist us at the hour of death. Every one knows that then the assaults of the devil become more terrible, whilst our strength diminishes and our minds are weighed down by great anguish. Three causes chiefly torment those who are at the point of death: first, the remembrance of sins committed; secondly, the fear of eternal

damnation; and thirdly, the attacks of hell. This is the reason why the Church wishes us to pray to St. Michael that he may protect us in the great conflict that we must sustain at the hour of death against the devil. She prays: "Holy Michael Archangel, defend us in battle, that we may not perish in the dreadful Judgment." And in the recommendation of a soul departed, she wishes that those present should pray to the holy Archangel that he may take it under his protection: "May St. Michael the Archangel receive him." Moreover, we read in the Office these words as having been said by the Lord himself: "Michael Archangel, I have appointed thee prince over the ingathering of souls." It is, therefore, to St. Michael that God has confided the care of those souls that pass from this life to eternity.

Many examples prove that St. Michael obtains for his pious servants a happy death. A Religious of the Capuchin Order, named Ivo, cherished a great devotion to the glorious Archangel. The latter one day appeared to him and warned him to prepare himself for death, which was near. From that moment Ivo thought only of preparing himself to die well by numerous acts of virtue, and so he died in the odour of sanctity, as is related by Father Palocci, who wrote his Life. We also read in the Life of St. Galtan, written by Father Falcone, that in his last moments the devils appeared to him and tormented him by temptations, but St. Michael, to whom he was greatly devoted, also appeared to him and delivered him from all the anxieties caused by the evil spirits.

II.

St. Michael is also charged with the care of consoling the Souls in Purgatory. In his Office it is said that God confides to him all the souls that are saved, in order that he may conduct them to Paradise: "To whom God has confided the souls of the saints that he may lead them into the Paradise of joy." And in the Mass of the Dead the Church prays to the holy Archangel: "Let the standard-bearer, St. Michael, bring them into

the blessed light." Also, full of a tender solicitude for these holy souls that have been intrusted and recommended to him, he does not fail to assist and to succour them by procuring for them many alleviations of the pains they suffer in Purgatory. And as for those persons who have a devotion to this heavenly prince, I said that even in this life he consoles them in all their tribulations; how much more should we not believe that he is anxious to help them and console them in Purgatory, where their sufferings are much greater than all the sufferings of this life!

James Massi informs us that a priest in the Mass one day specially recommended some souls by pronouncing the words quoted above: "Let the standard-bearer, St. Michael, bring them into the blessed light." At the same moment he saw the glorious Archangel descend from Heaven into Purgatory to deliver them.

The same author relates that a monk of Cîteaux appeared after his death to a priest, his friend, and told him that he was still in Purgatory, but that he would be delivered if at the Mass he would recommend him to St. Michael. The priest did as he had been requested, and saw, what others also saw, the soul of his friend conducted to Heaven by the holy Archangel.

From all this we infer that it is most pleasing to St. Michael to apply ourselves by good works and devotions to the relief of the Souls in Purgatory, that they may be delivered from their sufferings. This is also most pleasing to Jesus Christ, Who, full of love for these Holy Souls, His eternal spouses, desires very much that we assist them by our prayers.

Wednesday—Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

THE FEAST OF THE GUARDIAN ANGELS.
(October 2.)

He hath given his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.—(Ps. xc. 11).

St. Bernard says there are three ways by which we ought to honour our Angels: by *Reverence*, by *Devotion* and by *Confidence*.

I.

He hath given his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. St. Bernard says that there are three ways by which we should honour our Guardian Angels: by *Reverence*, by *Devotion*, and by *Confidence*.

By *Reverence*; because these holy spirits and princes of Heaven are always present with us, and assist us in all our actions. And on this account, out of regard for our Guardian Angels, we should carefully refrain from every action that can displease them. St. Frances of Rome saw that the Angel who attended her in a human form used to cover his face every time he observed in any one anything improper in word or action.

O my holy Guardian Angel, how many times have I by my sins obliged thee to cover thy face! I ask thy forgiveness, and I beseech thee to implore pardon for me from God, for I am resolved not to offend God or thee any more by my negligences.

We ought to honour our good Angels by *Devotion* to them, because of the respect they deserve, and the love they bear us. No love of father, brother, or friend can equal the love our good Angels have for each one of us. Our worldly friends often love us from motives of interest, and on this account very easily forget us when we are in adversity, and much more when we offend them. Our Angel Guardians love us solely from

motives of charity, and hence when we are in difficulties, they assist us more particularly, and will not cease to help us after we have rebelled against God. Then will they endeavour to enlighten us, in order that we may soon return to God by repentance.

O how much I should thank thee, my holy Guardian Angel, for the lights thou hast bestowed upon me! O that I had always obeyed thee! Continue to enlighten me; rebuke me when I fail, and do not forsake me even unto the last moment of my life.

II.

We ought, lastly, to have great *Confidence* in the assistance of our good Angels. God's love for us was not satisfied with giving us His Son Jesus for our Redeemer, and Mary for our advocate; He has been pleased to give us also His Angels to be our Guardians, and has commanded them to assist us during the course of our lives: *He hath given his angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways*—(Ps. xc. 11.)

O God of infinite mercy, what more canst Thou do for me that I may be saved? I thank Thee, O my Lord; and I thank thee also, O Prince of Paradise, my good Angel, who for so many years hast assisted and protected me. I have been unmindful of thee, but thou hast not forgotten me. Who knows how much longer I may have to live before I enter eternity? O my good Angel, guide me in the way to Heaven, and cease not to assist me, until thou seest me thy companion for ever in the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

Spiritual Reading.

“BECAUSE THEY ARE HUMBLED I WILL NOT DESTROY THEM.”

The Lord said to Jeremias: *Speak to all the cities of Juda; if so be they will hearken and be converted*

every one from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil that I think to do unto them—(Jer. xxvi. 2, 3).

Go, God says, and tell sinners that if they cease from their sins I will spare them from sentence of punishment. St. Jerome says: "God is wroth, not with us, but with our sins"; and St. John Chrysostom adds, that if we remember our sins God will forget them. He desires that we being humbled should reform, and crave pardon of Him.—*Because they are humbled I will not destroy them*—(2 Par. xii. 7).

In order to amend, we must fear punishment, otherwise we shall never be brought to change our lives. True it is, God protects him who hopes in His mercy. *He is the protector of all who trust in Him*—(Ps. xvii. 31). But he who hopes in the mercy of the Lord always fears His justice. *They that fear the Lord have hoped in the Lord: He is their helper and their protector*—(Ps. cxiii. 11). The Lord often speaks of the rigour of His judgment, and of hell, and of the great number who go thither. *Be not afraid of them who kill the body: . . . cast ye him who, after he hath killed, hath power to leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in theret*—(Matt. vii. 13). And why does God so often speak thus? In order that fear may keep us from vice, and from following our passions, and from occasions of sin; and that thus we may reasonably hope for salvation which is only for the innocent, and for the penitent who hope and fear.

Oh, what strength has not the fear of hell to hold us back from sin! To that end has God created hell. He created us, and redeemed us by His death, that we might be happy with Him. He has imposed upon us the obligation of hoping for eternal life, and on that account encourages us, by saying that all those who hope in Him shall be saved. *For none of them that wait on thee shall be confounded*—(Ps. xxiv. 3). But it is His wish, too, and command that we should be in fear of eternal damnation. Some heretics hold, that all who are not in sin should consider themselves as justified and predestined; but these have with reason been condemned by the

Council of Trent, because such a presumption is as perilous to salvation as fear is profitable. *And let him be your dread, and he shall be a sanctification to you*—(Is. viii. 13, 14). The holy fear of God makes man holy. Wherefore David begged of God the gift of fear, in order that fear might destroy in him the inclinations of the flesh. *Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear*—(Ps. cxviii. 120).

We should, then, fear on account of our sins, but this fear ought not to deject us: it should rather excite us to confidence in the Divine Mercy, as was the case with the Prophet himself. *For thy name's sake, O Lord, thou wilt pardon my sin; for it is great*—(Ps. xxiv. 11). How is this? Pardon me because my sin is great? Yes, because the Divine Mercy is most conspicuous where there is the greatest misery; and he who has been the greatest sinner is he who glorifies most the Divine Mercy, by hoping in God, Who promises to save all those who hope in Him. *He will save them, because they have hoped in him*—(Ps. xxxvi. 40). For this reason Ecclesiasticus says: *The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy and gladness and length of days*—(Ecclus. i. 12). Thus this very fear leads to the acquisition of a firm hope in God, which makes the soul happy: *He that feareth the Lord shall tremble at nothing, and shall not be afraid, for he is his hope. The soul of him that feareth the Lord is blessed*—(Ecclus. xxxiv. 16, 17). Yes, blessed, because fear drives sin away from man. *The fear of the Lord driveth out sin*—(Ecclus. i. 27), and at the same time infuses a great desire of observing the commandments: *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord: he shall delight exceedingly in his commandments*—(Ps. cxi. 1).

We must, then, persuade ourselves that God is not inclined by nature to punish. Because by His nature He is infinite goodness, says St. Leo, and has no other desire than to bless us, and to see us happy. When He punishes, He is obliged to do so in order to satisfy His justice, not to gratify His inclination. Isaias says that punishment is a work strange to the Heart of God. *The Lord shall be angry . . . that he may do his work, his*

strange work; . . . his work is strange to him—(Is. xxviii. 21). And therefore does the Lord say, that He sometimes almost feigns the intention of punishing us. And why does He do so? He does so for our reformation, and consequently to exempt us from the chastisement we deserve. God wishes to love us, but we force Him to condemn us. He calls Himself the Father of mercies, not of vengeance. Whence it comes that His tenderness all springs from Himself, and His severity from us.

Evening Meditation.

LOVE OF SOLITUDE.

I.

God does not allow Himself to be found in the midst of the world's tumults, and hence the Saints have been wont to seek Him in the most rugged deserts and in solitary caves, that there they might converse with God alone. St. Hilarion made trial of many desert places, going from one to another, ever seeking the loneliest, where none could communicate with him. In the end he died in a desert in Cyprus, after having lived there for five years. When called by God to leave the world, St. Bruno went with his companions to find St. Hugh of Grenoble that he might assign them some desert place in his diocese. St. Hugh assigned them a district so wild and lonely as to be more fitted for the beasts of the forest than for men. There they went with joy to build themselves each a little cell at a distance from one another.

The Lord once said to St. Teresa: "I would willingly speak to many souls, but the world makes such a noise in their hearts they cannot hear My voice." God does not speak to us in the midst of the clamours and affairs of the world, knowing that if He were to speak He would not be heeded. The voice of God are the holy inspirations and lights He sends. By these the Saints are enlightened and inflamed with Divine love, but those

who are not lovers of solitude will not be able to hear these messages from God.

God Himself says: *I will lead her into the wilderness and I will speak to her heart*—(Osee, ii. 14). When God desires to raise a soul to a high degree of perfection, He inspires it to retire to some solitary place, far from the converse of creatures, and there He speaks to the ears, not of the body, but of the heart; and thus He enlightens and inflames it with His Divine love.

St. Bernard said that he learned much more of the love of God in the midst of the oaks and beeches of the forest, than from books and from the servants of God. Therefore, St. Jerome left the pleasures of Rome, and shut himself up in the Cave of Bethlehem. Then it was he exclaimed: "O solitude, in which God speaks and converses familiarly with His own!" In solitude God converses familiarly with His beloved souls, and there He makes them hear words that melt their hearts with holy love, as the sacred spouse said: *My heart melted when my Beloved spoke*—(Cant. v. 6).

II.

We see by experience that conversing with the world, and occupying ourselves in the acquisition of earthly goods, lead us to forget God; but at the hour of death what do we get from all the toil and time we have spent on the things of earth, except pain and remorse of conscience? Our only comfort then will be what we have done and suffered for God. Why, then, do we not separate ourselves from the world, before death separates it from us?

He shall sit solitary, and hold his peace, because he hath taken it up upon himself—(Lam. iii. 28). He who lives in solitude is not moved as he was formerly in the midst of worldly affairs; he sits in repose, and is at peace, and asks not for sensual delights to satisfy him, for he is lifted above himself, and above all created things; in God he finds every good, and all his contentment.

Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly,

and be at rest?—(Ps. liv. 7). David desired to have the wings of a dove, that he might leave this earth, and not touch it even with his feet, and thus give rest to his soul. But while we are in this life, it is not given to us to leave this earth. We must, however, take care to love retirement, so far as it is practicable, conversing alone with God; and thus gaining strength to avoid those defects that arise from our being obliged to have intercourse with the world; as David said, at the very time he was ruling his kingdom: *Lo, I have gone far off flying away, and abode in the wilderness*—(Ps. liv. 3).

Oh that I had ever kept my thoughts on Thee, O God of my soul, and not on the goods of this world! I curse those days in which I went about seeking earthly pleasures, and offended Thee, my greatest Good. Oh that I had ever loved Thee! Oh that I had died, and not caused Thee displeasure! Miserable that I am, death draws near, while I find myself still attached to the world! No, my Jesus, from this day I resolve to leave all, and to be wholly Thine. Thou art almighty; Thou must give me strength to be faithful to Thee. O Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me!

Thursday—Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

“CEASE TO DO PERVERSELY: LEARN TO DO WELL.”

Who has ever been able to comprehend the greatness of the Divine Mercies? Even when God is angry with us because of our sins, He feels compassion for us. O merciful wrath thou art enkindled but to succour; thou threatenest but to pardon!

I.

Who has ever been able to comprehend the greatness of the Divine Mercies? David says that God, even while

yet angry, feels compassion for us: *Thou hast been angry, and hast mercy on us*—(Ps. lix. 8). “O merciful wrath, thou art enkindled but to succour, thou threatenest but to pardon!” exclaims the Abbot Beroncosius. God shows Himself to us armed with a scourge, but He does so in order that we may become penitent and contrite for the offences we are committing against Him: *Thou hast given a warning to them that fear thee: that they may flee before the bow: that thy beloved may be delivered*—(Ps. lix. 6). He appears with the bow already bent, upon the point of speeding the arrow, but He waits, because He wishes that our fear may bring about amendment, and that thus we may escape chastisement. *That thy beloved may be delivered. Give us help from trouble*—(Ps. lix. 18). This was the prayer of David; and thus ought we to pray. Grant, O Lord, that our afflictions may open our eyes, so that we depart from sin. The Lord is angry. Our sins increase, says St. John Chrysostom, and the scourges of God increase likewise. God is wroth: but with all His anger He says: *Turn ye to me, and I will turn to you*—(Zach. i. 3). Sinners, saith the Lord, you have turned your backs upon Me, and therefore you have constrained Me to deprive you of My grace. Do not oblige me to drive you forever from My face, and punish you in hell without hope of pardon. Have done with sin! Abandon sin and be converted to Me, and I promise to pardon you all your offences, and once more to embrace you as My children.

II.

Turn ye to me . . . and I will turn to you. Why do you wish to perish? Oh, how tenderly the Lord speaks. And why will you die, O house of Israel—(Ezech. xviii. 31). Why will you fling yourselves into the burning furnace of hell? *Return ye and live*—(Ib. 32). Return to Me, I await you with open arms, ready to receive and pardon you. Doubt not this, O sinner. *Cease to do perversely. Learn to do well And then come and accuse me, saith the Lord: if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow*—(Is. i. 16, 17). Take

courage; change your life; come to Me, and if I do not pardon you, *accuse Me*. Accuse Me of lying and bad faith. But, no, I shall not be unfaithful: your soul now so black will by My grace become as white as snow. I will not punish you if you reform, says the Lord, because I am God, not man. *I will not execute the fierceness of my wrath, . . . because I am God, and not man*—(Osee, xi. 9). Men never forget an injury, but when God sees a sinner repentant, He forgets all his offences. *I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done*—(Ezech. xviii. 22) Let us then at once return to God, but let it be *at once*. We have offended Him too much already, let us not tempt Him any further. Behold, He calls us, and is ready to pardon us if we repent of our evil deeds, and promise to change our lives.

Spiritual Reading.

SINNERS WILL NOT BELIEVE THE DIVINE THREATS TILL IT IS TOO LATE.

After the Lord had commanded our First Parents not to eat of the forbidden fruit, unhappy Eve approached the tree and was addressed by the Serpent, who said to her: Why has God forbidden you to eat of this delightful fruit? *Why hath God commanded you that you should not eat?* Eve replies: *God hath commanded us that we should not eat, and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die*—(Gen. iii. 3). Behold the weakness of Eve! The Lord had absolutely threatened them with death, and she now begins to look upon it as doubtful: *Lest perhaps we die*. If I eat of it, I might perhaps die. But the devil, seeing that Eve was still somewhat in fear of the Divine threat, proceeded to encourage her, saying: *No, you shall not die the death*—(Ibid. 4), and thus he deceived her, and caused her to prevaricate, and she ate the apple. Thus, even now, does the enemy continue to deceive many poor sinners. God threatens: Sinners, do penance, because if not, you will damn yourselves,

as so many others have done. *Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish*—(Luke xiii. 5). The devil says to them: No, you shall not perish. Fear nothing: sin on; continue to enjoy yourselves; God is merciful; He will pardon you by and by, and you will be saved. "God," says St. Procopius, "inspires us with fear, the devil robs us of it." God desires by His threats to inspire fear only in order that men may give up sin, and thus be saved. The devil wishes to destroy that fear, in order that they may persevere in sin, and so be lost. Innumerable the wretches who believe the devil rather than God, and are thus miserably damned. At present the Lord displays His anger and threatens us with chastisement. Who knows how many there may be in this place who have no thought of changing their lives, and live in the hope that God will be appeased; who will not believe in the Divine threats until chastisement has come upon them. If we do not amend, chastisement will come; if we do not put an end to our crimes, God will put an end to them.

When Lot was warned by the Lord that He was about to destroy Sodom, Lot at once informed his sons-in-law: *Arise! get you out of this place, because the Lord will destroy this city*—(Gen. xix. 14). But they would not believe him: *And he seemed to them to speak as it were in jest*. They imagined that God wished to sport with their fears, by terrifying them with such a threat. But the punishment overtook them, and they remained to be the sport of the flames in the burning city. God warns us that chastisement will come. Let us put an end to sin, or shall we wait for God to do it? Hear what St. Paul says to you: *See, then, the goodness and severity of God—towards them, indeed, that are fallen, the severity; but towards thee, the goodness of God, if thou abide in goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off*—(Rom. xi. 22). Consider, says the Apostle, the justice which the Lord has exercised towards so many whom He has punished, and condemned to hell; *towards them, indeed, that are fallen, the severity*. Consider the mercy with which He has treated you; *but towards thee, the goodness of God*. You must

abandon sin; if you change your ways, avoid the occasions of sin, frequent the Sacraments, and continue to lead a Christian life, the Lord will remit your punishment, if you abide in goodness; if not, *thou also shalt be cut off*. God has already borne with you too long, He can bear with you no longer. God is merciful, but He is also just; He deals mercifully with those who fear Him; He cannot act thus towards the obstinate.

Such a person laments when he sees himself punished, and asks: Why has God deprived me of my health? Why has He taken from me this child? What do you say? *It is your sins have withholden good things from you*—(Jer. v. 25). It was not the wish of God to deprive you of any blessing, of any gain, of your son, or your father or mother: it was the wish of God to make you happy in all things, but your sins have not allowed Him. In the book of Job we read these words: *Is it a great matter that God should comfort thee? but thy wicked words hinder this*—(Job, xv. 11). The Lord would fain console you, but your sins have prevented Him. It is not God, but accursed sin, that renders us miserable and unhappy. *Sin maketh nations miserable*—(Prov. xiv. 34). We are wrong, says Salvian, in complaining of God when He deals severely with us. Oh! how cruelly do we deal with Him, repaying with ingratitude the favours He has bestowed upon us!

Sinners imagine that sin procures them happiness; but on the very contrary it is sin which makes them miserable, and afflicted in every respect. *Because thou didst not serve the Lord thy God, saith the Lord, with joy and gladness of heart . . . thou shalt serve thy enemy, whom the Lord will send upon thee, in hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, and in want of all things . . . till he consume thee*—(Deut. xxviii. 47, 48). David says that the sinner himself by his crimes digs the pit into which he falls. *He is fallen into the hole he made*—(Ps. vii. 16). Recall the Prodigal Son. In order to live without restraint, and feast as he pleased, he left his father; but then very soon he is reduced to tend swine; reduced to such a degree of misery, that

he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him—(Luke, xv. 16).

Evening Meditation.

SOLITUDE OF THE HEART.

I.

St. Gregory asks: "What does solitude of body profit, if solitude of heart be wanting?" We have considered how much solitude assists recollection of mind; but, as St. Gregory says, it profits us little or nothing to be in a desert if the heart be full of worldly thoughts and earthly affections. That a soul may be wholly given to God, two things are necessary: to detach ourselves from the love of created things, and to consecrate all our affections to God alone. This is implied in true solitude of the heart.

We must, then, detach our heart from every earthly affection. St. Francis de Sales said: "If I knew there was a single fibre in my heart which was not given for God, I would instantly pluck it out." If we do not purify and strip the heart of everything earthly, the love of God cannot enter in and possess it all. God would reign with His love in our hearts, but He would reign there alone. He will have no companions to rob Him of a portion of that affection which He justly claims to have all his own.

Some souls lament that, in all their spiritual exercises, in Meditations, Communion, Spiritual Readings, Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, they do not find God, and know not by what means to find Him. To these St. Teresa suggests the right means when she says: "Detach thy heart from all created things, seek God, and thou shalt find Him."

There are many persons who cannot leave the world and go to live in deserts, as they would wish, in order to converse with God alone, but we must remember that deserts and caves are not necessary in order to

enjoy solitude of the heart. Those who, from necessity, are obliged to converse with the world, should remember that as long as their hearts are free from worldly attachments, even in the public streets, in places of resort, and public assemblies, they can possess solitude of heart, and continue united with God. All those occupations we undertake in order to fulfil the Divine will have no power to prevent solitude of the heart. St. Catharine of Sienna truly found God in the midst of the household labours in which her parents kept her employed in order to draw her from devotional exercises; but in the midst of these affairs she preserved a place of retirement in her heart, which she called her cell, and there ceased not to converse alone with God.

Be still, and see that I am God—(Ps. xlv. 11). In order to possess that Divine light which enables us to know the goodness of God, the knowledge of which draws to itself all our affections, our hearts must be emptied of all those earthly attachments that hinder us from knowing God. As a crystal vase, when filled with sand, cannot receive the light of the sun, so a heart attached to riches, worldly honours, or sensual pleasures, cannot receive the Divine light; and, not knowing God, it does not love Him. In every condition in which a man is placed by God, if creatures are not to draw him from God, it is necessary that he give attention to perform his duties according to the pleasure of God, and then in everything else act as if there were no other beings in existence except himself and God.

We must detach ourselves from everything, and especially from ourselves, by continually thwarting our self-love. In a word, we must desire, or not desire, what God desires or does not desire, without any attachment to our own will, because we do not know that what we ourselves will is the will of God.

II.

Oh how easily he finds God who detaches himself from creatures in order to find Him! *The Lord is good . . . to the soul that seeketh him—*(Lam. iii. 25)

St. Francis de Sales wrote, "The pure love of God consumes everything that is not God, in order to convert everything into itself." We must, therefore, offer ourselves as an enclosed garden, as the holy spouse in the Canticles is called by God, *My sister, my spouse, is a garden inclosed—*(Cant. iv. 12). The soul that keeps itself shut against earthly affections is called an inclosed garden. It is God Who has given us everything we have, and it is right that He should require of us all our love. When, then, any creature would enter to take a portion of our love, we must altogether deny it entrance, and, turning to God, we must say, with all our heart: *What have I in heaven, and besides thee what do I desire upon earth? . . . Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever—*(Ps. lxxii. 25, 26). O my God! Who but Thyself can satisfy my soul? After Thee I desire nothing either in Heaven or on earth; Thou alone art sufficient for me, O God of my heart, and my portion forever!

Oh! happy is he who can say: "I have despised the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory thereof, for the love of my Lord Jesus Christ." Truly, that great servant of God, Sister Margaret of the Cross, the daughter of the Emperor Maximilian II, could say this, when, at her Profession, she put off her rich garments and gems, to clothe herself in the poor woollen habit of the Daughters of St. Clare; and when, as the author of her Life relates, she cast them away with such contempt as to move to tears of devotion all who were present at the function.

O my Jesus, I do not desire that creatures should have any part in my heart; Thou must be my only Lord, by possessing it altogether. Let others seek the delights and grandeurs of this life; Thou alone, both in the present and future life, must be my only portion, my only good, my only love. And, as Thou lovest me, help me to detach myself from everything that can draw me from Thy love. Grant that my soul may be wholly taken up with pleasing Thee, as the only object of all my affections. Take possession of all my heart; I would be no longer my own. Do Thou rule me, and

make me ready to follow Thy will in all things. O Mary, Mother of God, in thee I trust. Thy prayers can make me belong wholly to Jesus.

Friday—Eighteenth Week after Pentecost (First Friday of October.)

Morning Meditation.

THE HEART OF JESUS LONGING FOR OUR LOVE.

Jesus has no need of us. He is equally happy, rich and powerful, with or without our love, and yet He loves us so intensely that He desires our love as much as if man were His God. This so filled Job with astonishment that he cried out: *What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? Or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?*

I.

Jesus has no need of us. He is equally happy, rich, and powerful with or without our love; and yet, as St. Thomas says, He loves us so intensely that He desires our love as much as if man were His God, and His felicity depended on that of man. This so filled holy Job with astonishment that he cried out: *What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? Or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?*—(Job vii. 17).

What! can God desire or ask with such eagerness for

the love of a worm? It would have been a great favour if God had only permitted us to love Him. If a vassal were to say to his king: "Sire, I love you!" he would be considered impertinent. But what would one say if the king were to tell his vassal, "I desire you to love me"? The princes of the earth do not humble themselves to this; but Jesus, Who is the King of Heaven, is He Who with so much earnestness demands our love: *Love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart*—(Matt xxii. 37). So pressing does He ask for our hearts: *My son, give me thy heart*—(Prov. xxiii. 26). And if He is driven from a soul, He does not depart, but stands outside the door of the heart, and calls and knocks to be allowed to return: *I stand at the gate and knock*—(Apoc. iii. 20). Jesus beseeches the soul to open to Him, calling her sister and spouse: *Open to me, my sister, my love*—(Cant. v. 2). In short, Jesus takes delight in being loved by us, and is quite consoled when we say, and repeat often: "My God! My God! I love Thee!"

My dearest Redeemer, I will say to Thee with St. Augustine, Thou dost command me to love Thee, and dost threaten me with hell if I do not love Thee; but what more dreadful hell, what greater misfortune, can happen to me than to be deprived of Thy love! If, therefore, Thou desirest to terrify me, Thou shouldst only threaten me that I should live without loving Thee; for this threat alone will terrify me more than a thousand hells. If, in the midst of the flames of hell, the damned could burn with Thy love, O my God, hell itself would become a Paradise; and if, on the contrary, the Blessed in Heaven could not love Thee, Paradise would become a hell.

I see, indeed, my dearest Lord, that I, on account of my sins, did deserve to be forsaken by Thy grace, and at the same time condemned to be incapable of loving Thee; but still I understand that Thou dost continue to command me to love Thee, and I also feel within me a great desire to love Thee. This my desire is the gift of Thy grace, and it comes from Thee. Oh, give me also the strength necessary to put it into execution, and

make me, from this day forth, say to Thee earnestly, and from the bottom of my heart, and to repeat to Thee always : My God, I love Thee ! I love Thee ! I love Thee !

II.

The great desire of Jesus' Heart to be loved by us is the effect of His own great love for us. He who loves necessarily desires to be loved. The heart requires the heart ; love seeks love : " Why does God love, but that He may be loved ? " said St. Bernard ; and God Himself first said : *What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord thy God . . . and love him ?* — (Deut. x. 12). Therefore, He tells us that He is that Shepherd Who, having found the lost sheep, calls all the neighbours to rejoice with Him : *Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost*—(Luke xv. 6). He tells us that He is that Father Who, when His lost son returns and throws himself at His feet, not only forgives him, but embraces him tenderly. Jesus tells us he that loves Him not is condemned to death : *He that loveth not abideth in death*—(1 John iii. 14). And, on the contrary, that He takes him who loves Him and keeps possession of him : *He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him*—(1 John iv. 16). Oh, will not such invitations, such entreaties, such threats, and such promises move us to love God Who so much desires to be loved by us ?

Thou, then, desirest my love, O Jesus. I also desire Thee. Blot out, therefore, from Thy remembrance, O my Jesus, the offences that in past times I have committed against Thee ; let us love each other henceforth forever. I will not leave Thee, and Thou wilt not leave me. Thou wilt always love me, and I will always love Thee. My dearest Saviour, in Thy merits do I place my hope ; oh, do Thou make Thyself to be loved forever, and loved greatly, by a sinner who has so greatly offended Thee.

O Mary, Immaculate Virgin, do thou help me ; do thou pray to Jesus for me.

Spiritual Reading.

GOD SENDS AFFLICTIONS FOR OUR GOOD.

And I will give my fear in their heart, that they may not revolt from me—(Jer. xxxii. 40). The Lord says that He infuses His fear into our hearts, in order that He may enable us to triumph over our desires for earthly pleasures, for which in the past we ungratefully left Him. And when sinners have left God, how does He make them look into themselves, and recover grace ? By putting on the appearance of anger, and chastising them in this life ; *In thy anger thou shalt break the people in pieces*—(Ps. lv. 8). Another version, according to St. Augustine, has : " In thy wrath thou shalt conduct the people." The Saint inquiring : What is the meaning of God conducting the people in His wrath ? He replies : " Thou, O Lord, fillest us with tribulations, in order that, being thus afflicted, we may abandon our sins and return to Thee."

When a mother wishes to wean her infant she puts gall upon her breast. Thus the Lord endeavours to draw our souls to Himself, and wean them from the pleasures of this earth, which make them live in forgetfulness of their eternal salvation. He fills with bitterness all their pleasures, pomps, and possessions, in order that, not finding peace in those things, they may turn to God, Who alone can satisfy them. *In their affliction they will rise early to me*—(Osee vi. 1). God says : If I allow those sinners to enjoy their pleasures undisturbed, they will remain in the sleep of sin : they must be afflicted, in order that, recovering from their lethargy they may return to Me. When they will be in tribulation they will say : *Come, let us return to the Lord, for he hath taken us, and he will heal us ; he will strike and he will cure us*—(Is. 1, 2). What shall become of us, those sinners will say, as they enter into themselves, if we do not turn from our evil courses ? God will not be appeased, and will with justice continue to punish us : come, let us retrace our steps, for He

will cure us; and if He afflicts us now, He will upon our return think of consoling us with His mercy.

In the day of my trouble I sought God and I was not deceived—(Ps. lxxxvi. 8), because He raised me up. For this reason does the Prophet thank the Lord that He hath humbled him after his sin; because he was thus taught to observe the Divine laws: *It is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thy justifications*—(Ps. cxviii. 71). Tribulation is for the sinner at once a punishment and a grace, says St. Augustine. It is a punishment inasmuch as it has been drawn upon him by his sins; but it is a grace, and an important grace, inasmuch as it may ward off eternal destruction from him, and is an assurance that God means to deal mercifully with him if he look into himself, and receive with thankfulness that tribulation which has opened his eyes to his miserable condition, and invites him to return to God. Let us, then, be converted and we shall escape from our several chastisements: “Why should he who accepts chastisement as a grace be afraid?” says St. Augustine. He who turns to God, smarting from the scourge, has no longer anything to fear, because God scourges only in order that we may return to Him; and this end once obtained, the Lord will scourge us no more.

St. Bernard says: “It is difficult, even impossible, for any one to enjoy present and future goods; to pass from delights to delights.” Therefore, does the Lord say: *Envy not the man who prospereth in his way, the man who doth unjust things*—(Ps. xxxvi. 7). “Does he prosper?” says St. Augustine; “ay, but ‘in his own way.’ And do you suffer? You do, but it is the way of God.” You who walk before God are in tribulation, but the sinner, evil as is his way, prospers. Mark now what the Saint says in conclusion: “He has prosperity in this life, he shall be miserable in the next; you have tribulation in this life, you shall be happy in the next.” Be glad, therefore, and thank God when He punishes you in this life, and takes vengeance of your sins; because you may know thereby that He means to treat you with mercy in the next. *Thou wast a*

merciful God to them, and taking vengeance on their inventions—(Ps. cxviii. 8). The Lord when He chastises us has not our punishment so much in view as our conversion. God said to Nabuchodonozor: *Thou shalt eat grass like an ox, and seven times shall pass over thee till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men*—(Dan iv. 29). For seven years Nabuchodonozor, shalt thou be compelled to feed on grass like a beast in order that thou mayest know I am the Lord; that it is I Who give kingdoms, and take them away; and that thou mayest thus be cured of thy pride. And in fact this judgment did cause the haughty king to enter into himself and change; so that, after having been restored to his former condition, he said: *Therefore, I, Nabuchodonozor, do now praise and magnify the King of heaven*—(Ibid. 34). And God gave him back his kingdom. “He willingly changed his sentence,” says St. Jerome, “because he saw his life was changed.”

Evening Meditation.

THE LOVE OF JESUS IN SUFFERING FOR US.

I.

Since the coming of Jesus Christ, it is no longer a time of fear, but a time of love, as the Prophet foretold: *Thy time is a time of lovers*—(Ezech. xvi. 8), because God has gone so far as to die for us: *Christ hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us*—(Eph. v. 2). Under the Old Law, before the Word was made flesh, man might, so to speak, have doubted whether God loved him with a tender love; but after having seen Him suffer a bloody and ignominious death on a cross of infamy, we can no longer possibly doubt that He loves us with the utmost tenderness. And who will ever arrive at comprehending the excess of the mercy and the love of the Son of God in being willing to pay the penalty of our sins? And yet this is of faith: *Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows*

... *He was wounded for our iniquities: He was bruised for our sins*—(Is. liii. 4, 5). All this was the work of the great love which God bears us: *He hath loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood*—(Apoc. i. 5). In order to wash us from the defilements of our sins, He was willing to empty His veins of all His Blood, to make of it for us a bath of salvation. O infinite mercy! O infinite love of a God!

Ah, my Redeemer, too truly hast Thou obliged me to love Thee; too truly should I be ungrateful to Thee, if I did not love Thee with my whole heart. My Jesus, I have despised Thee, because I have lived in forgetfulness of Thy love, but Thou hast not forgotten me. I have turned my back on Thee, but Thou hast come near to me. I have offended Thee, and Thou hast so many times forgiven me. I have returned to Thee only to offend Thee again; Thou hast returned to pardon me. Ah, my Lord, by that affection with which Thou didst love me on the Cross, bind me tightly to Thee by the sweet chains of Thy love; but bind me in such wise that I may nevermore see myself separated from Thee. I love Thee, O my chief Good, and I desire to love Thee ever for the time to come.

II.

That which ought most to inflame our love for Jesus Christ is not so much the death, the sorrows, and the ignominies which He suffered for us, as the end which He had in view in suffering for us so many and so great pains; and that was to show us His love and to win our hearts: *In this have we known the charity of God, because he hath laid down his life for us*—(1 Jo., iii. 16). For it was not absolutely necessary in order to save us that Jesus should suffer so much and die for us; it were enough that He should pour forth but one drop of Blood, should shed but one tear for our salvation; this drop of Blood, this tear shed by a Man-God, were sufficient to save a thousand worlds: but He willed to pour out all His Blood, He willed to lose His life in a sea of sorrows and contempt, to make us

understand the great love He has for us, and to oblige us to love Him. *The charity of Christ presseseth us*, says St. Paul—(2 Cor. v. 15). He does not say that the Passion or the death, but the LOVE of Jesus Christ constrains us to love Him.

And what were we that Thou, O Lord, wert willing at so great a price to purchase our love? *Christ died for all, that they also who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them*—(Ibid. 15). Hast Thou, then, my Jesus, died for us, that we might live wholly for Thee alone, and for Thy love? But, my poor Lord, permit me so to call Thee, Thou art so full of love that Thou hast suffered so much in order to be loved by men, and, after all, what is the number of those who love Thee? I see men intent on loving—some their riches, some honours, some pleasures, some their relatives, some their friends, some, in fine, the very animals; but of those who truly love Thee, Who alone art worthy of love, oh, how few such do I see! O God, how few indeed they are! Among these few, nevertheless, I too desire to be, who at one time, just like the rest, offended Thee by loving filth; now, however, I love Thee above every other good. O my Jesus, the pain Thou hast suffered for me urges and obliges me to love Thee; but that which binds me to Thee the more and enkindles my love is hearing of the love which Thou hast shown in suffering so much in order that Thou mightest be loved by me. O my Lord, most worthy of love, through love Thou hast given Thyself wholly to me; I, through love, give myself wholly to Thee. Thou for love of me didst die; I for love of Thee am willing to die when and as it shall please Thee. Accept of my love, and help me by Thy grace to do so worthily.

Jesus Christ on account of His Divine majesty, God has given you an advocate with Jesus Himself, and that advocate is Mary, His own Mother.

Thus Mary has been given to the world as a mediatrix between God and sinners. Hear the words which the Holy Ghost makes her speak in the Divine Canticles: *I am a wall, and my breasts are as a tower, since I am become in his presence as one finding peace*—(Cant. viii. 10). I am, she says, the refuge of those who fly to me; my breasts, that is, my mercy, are like a tower of defence to every one who has recourse to me; and he who is the enemy of God, let him know that I am the mediatrix of peace between God and sinners. "She finds peace for enemies, salvation for the lost, mercy for those who are in despair," says Cardinal Hugo. For this reason is Mary called *beautiful . . . as the curtains of Solomon*—(Cant. i. 4). In the tents of David naught was to be heard of but war; in the tents of Solomon naught but peace. By this we are to understand that Mary has no other ministry in Heaven than that of peace and pardon. Hence St. Andrew Avellino calls her "the pleader of Paradise"; but what are those occupations in which Mary is engaged? "Mary," says Venerable Bede, "stands in the presence of her Son, praying unceasingly for sinners." And Blessed Amadeus says that "Mary, all-powerful by her prayers, stands before the face of God, continually interceding for us." Thus Mary never ceases to implore of God by her all-powerful prayers all the graces we wish to receive. And are there any found to refuse the graces obtained for them by this Divine Mother? Yes, there are found such—yes, those who will not abandon sin, who will not give up this friendship, this occasion of sin; who will not restore their neighbour's property—these are they who will not receive the graces offered to them by Mary. Holy Mary wishes to bestow upon them the grace to break off this connection, to fly this occasion of sin, and they will not have it. And such as will not do it, positively refuse the graces sought for them by Mary. From Heaven she sees well all our miseries and dangers; and oh, how deeply is she touched with

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Saturday—Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

MOST HOLY MARY THE MEDIATRIX OF SINNERS.

If the sinner fears to approach Jesus Christ on account of His Divine Majesty, God has given him an advocate with Jesus Himself, and that advocate is His own Mother Mary. She finds peace for sinners, salvation for the lost, mercy for those who are in despair.

I.

Divine grace is an infinite treasure, because it makes us friends of God. *For she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God*—(Wis. vii. 14). Hence it follows, that as there cannot be a greater happiness than to enjoy the grace of God, so there cannot be a greater misery than to incur God's displeasure by sin, which makes us His enemies. *But to God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike*—(Wis. xiv. 9). But if you have had the misfortune to forfeit Divine grace by sin, do not despair, but console yourself with the reflection, that you have in Jesus Christ Himself a Mediator, Who can obtain pardon for you, and restore you the grace you have lost. *And he is the propitiation for our sins*—(1 Jo., ii. 2).

What have you to fear, says St. Bernard, when you can have recourse to so great a Mediator? He is all powerful with His eternal Father. He has satisfied Divine justice for you, and has nailed your sins to the Cross, having taken them away from your soul. But if, notwithstanding all this, you fear to approach

compassion for us! With what motherly affection is she always endeavouring to assist us! "For she sees our dangers," says the Blessed Amadeus, "and, as our merciful Sovereign, compassionates us with maternal affection."

II.

One day St. Bridget heard Jesus Christ saying to Mary: "My Mother, ask of Me what you will." And Mary answered Him: "I ask mercy for the miserable." As if she were to say to Him: Son, since Thou hast made me the Mother of Mercy, and Advocate of Sinners, can I ask aught else of Thee than mercy for poor miserable sinners. In a word, St. Augustine says, that amongst all the Saints, we have not one who is so solicitous for our salvation as Mary.

Isaïas complains in his day: *Behold, Thou art angry; . . . there is none who riseth up and taketh hold of Thee*—(Is. lxiv. 5-7). Lord, Thou art justly angry with us for our sins, and there is no one to appease Thee, or hold Thee from chastising us. St. Bonaventure says that the Prophet had reason to speak thus, since there was no Mary then. But at present, if Jesus Christ wishes to chastise a sinner, and the sinner recommends himself to Mary, she by her prayers for him restrains her Son, and averts the chastisement from him. There is no one so well able to hold back the sword of the Lord. Justly, then, is Mary called the peace of the Lord with men. And St. Justin called her the Arbitress, saying, "The Word uses the Virgin as arbitress—an arbitress, to whose decision disputants bind themselves to yield." By which St. Justin means to say, that Jesus lays before Mary all His reasons for punishing such a sinner, that she may negotiate a peace; and the sinner, on the other side, places himself in her hands. Thus Mary on the one side obtains for the sinner the grace of amendment and penance: on the other, she obtains pardon for him of her Son, and thus is peace concluded. Such is the ministry in the exercise of which Mary is continually occupied as Mediatrix of Sinners.

Spiritual Reading.

THE HOLY ROSARY.

In the Thirteenth Century St. Dominic was greatly afflicted at the deplorable state of the Christian world. Vices and heresies filled Germany and France, and had penetrated into Italy and Rome itself. Desiring to oppose a barrier to such a flood of errors and sins, he had recourse to the august Mother of God, who approved of his zealous intentions, and revealed to him as a remedy for so great an evil the devotion of the Rosary. The Saint at once began to preach this devotion, and he did so with so much fruit that large numbers of people, even entire cities, were thoroughly reformed. Conversions were so astonishing and so universal, that, as the History of the Dominicans attests, when the people heard of the members of any family leading bad lives, they usually said that they either did not recite the Rosary or they recited it badly.

Now in order that we may profit by this devotion and know how to recite the Rosary, we shall consider how the Rosary should be recited in order that it may be meritorious.

The Rosary is a prayer. Prayer is defined by St. John Damascene: "As an elevation of the mind to God." Without a raising or elevation of the mind to God there is no true prayer. It is divided into mental prayer and vocal prayer: mental prayer consists wholly in the interior exercise of the mind; vocal prayer consists in praising God and praying to Him with the tongue and the mind. If one speaks to God only with the tongue, this would be a prayer without fruit and without merit, like that of a parrot which articulates words without knowing what it says. "Whoever prays merely with the voice," says St. Bonaventure, "without any application of the mind and without knowing what he says, acts like a parrot."

The elevation of the mind required in the recitation of the Rosary should be a pious meditation on the

Joyous, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries; hence, while we are reciting with the voice the "Our Fathers," and the "Hail Marys," which compose the Rosary, we should consider the Mystery that belongs to each decade.

It is true that a vocal prayer, like the Rosary, may be meritorious without the application of the mind to the consideration of the designated Mysteries; it is sufficient that one reflects either on the Presence of God, His Omnipotence, His Mercy, or some of His other perfections; on the temporal or eternal chastisements which one merits, or on other subjects that refer to God; but if one recites the Rosary with such thoughts, and does not consider its Mysteries, he does not gain the Indulgences granted by the Sovereign Pontiff, as Benedict XIII has expressly declared.

We err, then, if we think that we shall have some merit when during the recitation of the Rosary we permit ourselves to listen to those that speak; to look at what is done; to interrupt our prayer in order to speak of what we see or to give answers to questions put to us. We should then deserve the reproach of the Lord: *This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me*—(Matt. xv. 8). And would to God that we only gave ourselves up to distractions without going so far as to meditate revenge, harbour feelings of hatred, or occupy ourselves with wicked thoughts; for then, very far from acquiring merit, we should make ourselves worthy of eternal chastisements!

If, therefore, we wish to find in the devotion of the Rosary a sure support in the hope that we have of saving our souls by the means of it, it should produce in us true amendment, a true reform of our lives, according to what the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God, expects of us. But we shall never obtain this fruit, if in the recitation of the Rosary there is not united to our words a pious meditation on these Mysteries, which place before our eyes the loving inventions, the labours, the humiliations, and the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

There are some that deceive themselves still more. They are those who imagine that in carrying with them

the Rosary they will be fortified with a formidable arm against the devil, and thus promise themselves a good death. They rely on antiquated examples of sinners, who, after a life full of crimes, because they recited and carried with them the Rosary, obtained through the intercession of Mary the grace of dying repentant. But these examples, if true, are miraculous; and I do not think that you love your soul so little that you wish to save it only by a miracle. What is certain is that one often sees sinners die without the Sacraments and without any sign of contrition, although they had carried about with them the Rosary and recited it as you do. Should not these examples, which are so frequent, fill us with terror? And as to the miraculous examples, which are very rare, do they take from you all fear of dying a bad death, and give you the assurance that you will die well? If I must say to you what I think, I should say: As for those Christians that live without the fear of God, and that rest their hope of salvation on the Rosary, which they recite through habit and without the least devotion, I very much fear that at their death the devil may frighten them with this very Rosary, by representing to them the little devotion they had in the manner of reciting it, and the life they led—a life altogether contrary to the Mysteries that they should have honoured and to the end for which the Rosary was established by the Blessed Virgin.

If, then, you wish to be saved through the protection of Mary, it is fitting you should make a better use of the devotions instituted in her honour; for we know that by the devotions badly performed, or undertaken in order to live without the fear of the justice of God, far from obtaining the protection of the Blessed Virgin, we only merit her disfavour.

Evening Meditation.

THE MOST FAITHFUL MEDIATRIX.

I.

When Noe judged that the Deluge ought to have ceased, he sent forth the dove from the Ark. The dove returned with an olive branch significant of the peace which God had concluded with the world. This dove was a figure of Mary. "Thou art," says St. Bonaventure, "that most faithful dove of Noe which became the most faithful Mediatrix between God and the world submerged by a spiritual deluge." Pelbart inquires how it happens that in the Old Law, the Lord was so rigorous in His chastisements, of universal deluge, of fire from Heaven, of fiery serpents, and such like punishments; whereas He now deals so mercifully with us, who have sinned more grievously than those of old. And he answers that God is thus merciful for love of Mary, who intercedes for us. "Oh, how long since should the heavens and the earth have been destroyed," says St. Fulgentius, "if Mary had not interposed."

Wherefore the Church wishes that we should call this Divine Mother our hope. The impious Luther could not endure that the Church should teach us to call Mary our hope. He said that our hope ought to rest only in God—not in the creature; and that God curses him who places his confidence in creatures: *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man.*—(Jer. xvii. 5). True, but that is understood of those who trust in creatures, in contempt of God, or independently of Him. But we hope in Mary, as our Mediatrix with the Lord. In the same manner as Jesus is our Mediator of right with His Eternal Father, because by the merits of His Passion He obtains pardon for penitent sinners, so Mary is Mediatrix by Divine favour with her Son, and is such a Mediatrix that her Son grants her every request; nay, that He wishes that every grace should pass through her hands. "The Lord," says St. Bernard, "has placed in Mary the plenitude of all good; so that if

aught of hope or grace or salvation is in us, we know that we derive it from Mary." The Lord has confided to Mary the treasure of mercies which He wishes to have dealt out to us, and therefore wishes that we should acknowledge every grace as coming through her. Whence the Saint calls her his chief confidence, and the principal ground of his hope. For which reason he exhorts us to look for grace always through the intercession of Mary. And for the same reason the Church, despite Luther, calls Mary our hope—*Spes nostra salve.*

II.

The Saints call Mary the ladder, the moon, and the city of refuge. She is called by St. Bernard the ladder of sinners. It is sin which separates us from God. *But your iniquities have divided between you and your God.*—(Is. lix. 2). A soul in the state of grace is in union with God, and God in union with it. *He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him.*—(1 Jo. iv. 16). But when the soul turns its back upon God, then is it separated from Him—plunged into an abyss of misery, and as far removed from God as sin itself. But where shall this wretched soul find a ladder by which to mount once more to God, and be again united to Him? Mary is that ladder, to whom if the sinner has recourse, no matter what his misery, or how great the filth of his sins, he can come out of the pit of perdition. "Thou," says St. Bernard, "dost not abhor the sinner, however loathsome he be; if he once sigh to thee, thou reachest out to him thy hand to draw him out of the gulf of despair." For the same reason is she called the moon: *Fair as the moon.*—(Cant. vi. 9).—"As the moon," says St. Bernard, "is placed between the sun and earth, so is Mary stationed between God and us, to pour out His graces continually upon us." Hence, also, she is called the City of refuge, as she is made to call herself by St. John Damascene. "I am the city of all those that have recourse to me." In the ancient law there were five Cities of Sanctuary; to which, if any one

fled, he was secure of not being pursued by justice, no matter what his crime. At present we have not so many Cities of Sanctuary—we have only Mary, to whom if any one shall have fled he may rest secure of not being pursued by the Divine justice. In the cities of the Old Law every delinquent was in danger, nor could all his crimes escape unpunished; but Mary is a city of refuge which receives every criminal. “There is no one so cast off by God,” said this Blessed Mother to St. Bridget, “who, if he have recourse to me, shall not return to God, and receive pardon.”

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

THE GREAT FAITH OF ST. TERESA AND HER DEVOTION TOWARDS THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

St. Teresa received from God the gift of Faith in so full a measure that she has written in her Life: “The devil never had power to tempt me in any way against the Faith. It even seemed to me that the more impossible, naturally speaking, a truth of Faith was, the more firmly did I believe it, and the more difficult of belief, the more did it inspire me with devotion.”

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more firmly did I believe it, and the more difficult of belief, the more did it inspire me with devotion.”

One day she was told she might be denounced to the Holy Office as a heretic. “This made me smile,” she writes, “knowing so well that for the things of holy Faith, or for the least of the ceremonies of the Church, I would give my life a thousand times.”

This love for the Faith gave her the fortitude, when but seven years of age, to set out from her father’s house with her little brother, to go amongst the Moors, in order that she might sacrifice her life for the Faith. Later on in life, such was her conviction of the truth of our Faith, that she felt as if she could convince all the Lutherans and bring them to an acknowledgment of their errors.

In a word, the satisfaction she experienced at seeing herself among the number of the children of the Church was such, that at the hour of her death she could not often enough repeat to herself these words: “After all, I am a child of the Holy Church! After all, I am a child of the Holy Church!”

Let the fruit of this consideration be that of continual thanksgiving, in union with the Saint, to the Lord, for having bestowed upon us the great gift of the Faith, in making us children of the Holy Church, from which so many millions of souls, perhaps less guilty than ourselves, in the sight of Divine justice, remain separated.

My most loving Jesus, Who, although thou didst foresee my ingratitude, hast never ceased to bestow upon me an abundance of graces, above all, the grace of the Faith—ah, of Thy mercy enkindle such a flame within my heart, that my daily life may be always conformable to my Faith. O Divine, true and only Lover of my soul, when will the day at length arrive on which I shall begin to love Thee with my whole heart? Oh, would to God that to-day were this day of happiness for me, the day on which I have, in the present Novena, begun to honour Thy dear spouse and my tender advocate, Teresa! Ah! my Redeemer, by the merits of Thy Blood; by the merits of Mary, Thy

most holy Mother and by those of Thy beloved Teresa, grant me, I pray Thee, so burning a love for Thee as may make me continually deplore the sins I have committed, and may urge me, henceforth, to study nothing but Thy good pleasure, in order that I may please Thee only, as Thou dost deserve. Amen.

II.

From the wonderful gift of Faith which the Saint possessed arose the great love she bore towards the Most Holy Sacrament, which is pre-eminently the *Mystery of Faith*. She used to say that God has conferred upon us a greater grace in giving us the Holy Eucharist than in becoming man; and so, one of the principal virtues the Saint possessed was her special affection towards Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, as she herself revealed after her death. When the Saint heard someone say he wished he lived at the time Jesus was upon earth, she would smile and say: "And what more do we want, having Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament? Surely, if it was enough, while He was upon earth, to touch His raiment, in order to be healed of infirmities, what will He not do for us now when He is within us in Holy Communion?" "Oh, how sweet it is," she wrote, "to see the Shepherd become a Lamb. He is a Shepherd, because He gives food. He is a Lamb, because He is Himself the food. He is a Shepherd, because He nourishes. He is a Lamb, because He is the nourishment. When, therefore, we pray to Him for our daily bread, we are asking that He, the Shepherd, may be our food and sustenance."

The Divine Lover responded to the love with which she cherished spouse of His desired Him, and with which she disposed herself to receive Him under the sacramental species. As darkness disappears before the sun, so at the moment of Communion the obscurities and troubles of the Saint used to vanish. It then seemed to her that her soul lost all its affections and all its desires, being perfectly united with God and absorbed in Him. Although she was usually pale in consequence of her

penances and infirmities, her biographer says, that no sooner had she communicated than her countenance became shining as crystal, ruddy, extremely beautiful, and with such an air of majesty about it, that it was easy to recognize what a Divine Guest she had received into her heart. At those times her virginal body seemed ready to quit the earth, raising itself in the air in the presence of the Sisters.

O Seraphic Saint, who by thy purity and ardent love, were upon earth the delight of thy God—thou whom He loved so much as one day to tell thee that as Magdalen was His beloved one when He was on earth, so thou wert in the same degree His beloved one now that He is in Heaven—oh thou dear Saint, whom He treated with such tenderness whether He admonished thee as a Father, or conversed with thee as a Spouse communicating Himself to thee so frequently in Holy Communion and with such abundant outpourings of grace—O Teresa, plead with thy God for me who, alas! am not the object of His delights but the cause of His sufferings by my evil life. Pray to Jesus to pardon me and to give me a new heart, a heart pure and full of Divine love like unto thine own. Amen.

Spiritual Reading.

TERESA'S LOVE FOR JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST.

The holy mother Teresa never ceased to deplore the injurious treatment that Jesus received in the Sacrament of His love at the hands of heretics. She would complain to God: "Now how, O my Creator, can such tender love as Thine endure that what was instituted with such ardent affection by Thy Son, and the more to please Thee, should be so undervalued that at this day these heretics despise the Most Holy Sacrament? For they rob it of its home by demolishing the Churches. Was it not enough, O my Father, that whilst Jesus lived on earth He had no place to lay His head, without

now taking from Him the holy places where He deigns to abide, and whereunto He invites His friends, knowing, as He does, their need of such food for their comfort?''

For twenty-three years she communicated every day, and every time with such fervour and desire, that in order to receive Communion, she would, as she said, willingly have made her way against the spears of a whole army.

One Palm Sunday as she was considering that among all those who at Jerusalem had proclaimed Jesus Christ as the Messias, there was not one to receive Him into his house, she invited Him to come and enter her poor heart, and with this pious thought she went to receive Communion. The affectionate invitation of His beloved was so agreeable to the Divine Spouse, that when she received the Sacred Host it seemed to her that her mouth was filled with warm blood, accompanied with a heavenly sweetness. Then she heard the voice of Jesus saying: "My daughter, it is My will that My Blood should be for your profit: I have shed it in great suffering, and you enjoy it, as you see, with great delights."

With regard, therefore, to this greatest of all gifts that Jesus has bequeathed to us in the Sacrament of the Altar, in leaving Himself, whole and entire, to be our Food, our Companion and our Shepherd, let us practise the excellent instruction that the holy mother once revealed from Heaven to a certain soul: "The inhabitants of Heaven and those of earth should be one and the same in purity and in love: we, in a state of joy; you, in that of suffering. And, what we do in Heaven with the Divine Essence, you ought to do on earth with the Most Holy Sacrament. You will mention this to all my children." "Treating of the love and tender devotion that are due to Jesus in the Holy Sacrament, she has again left us in her works the following directions: "Let us act so as not to be at a distance from our Shepherd, nor lose sight of him, because the sheep that keep near their shepherd are always more caressed and better taken care of than

others, and because he is always giving them some morsels of his own food. If it happens that the shepherd sleeps, the faithful sheep keeps close beside him until he awakes, or it will arouse him, and then he lavishes upon it his caresses anew."

St. Philip Neri, that other seraph of love, on seeing Jesus entering his room to be his Viaticum, could not refrain from crying out in a holy transport: "Behold my Love! Behold my Love!" So let us, when we see the King and Spouse of our souls coming to meet us in Holy Communion, cry out and say: Behold my Love! Behold my Love! And we know that God wishes us to give Him this appellation. *God is love*—(1 John iv. 16). He does not wish to be merely called a Lover, but to be Love itself, to make us understand that, as there is no love that does not love, so He, the Divine Goodness, is of His own nature so loving, that He cannot live without loving His creatures.

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.*

I.—EXCELLENCE OF THIS VIRTUE.

Our whole perfection consists in loving God Who is in Himself most lovely: *Charity is the bond of perfection*—(Col. iii. 14). But, then, all perfection in the love of God consists in the union of our own with His most holy will. This, indeed, is the principal effect of love, as St. Dionysius the Areopagite observes, "such a union of the wills of those who love as makes them one and the same will." And, therefore, the more united a person is with the Divine will, so much greater will be his love. It is quite true that mortifications, medita-

* This is a golden treatise that seems rather to have been inspired from Heaven than to have emanated from the human mind. The holy author himself, St. Alphonsus, used often to read it. He constantly practised the wise maxims it contains and always endeavoured to inculcate its practice on others. He was accustomed to say: "The Saints became Saints because they always remained united to the will of God." When the Saint's eyesight began to fail, him, he took care to have this little treatise read to him.—Ed.

tions, Communion, and works of charity towards others are pleasing to God. But when is this the case? When they are done in conformity to God's will; for otherwise, not only does He not approve them, but He abominates and punishes them. Take the case of two servants, one of whom labours hard and incessantly all day long, but does everything after his own fashion; while the other may not work as hard, but acts always in obedience to orders. Is it not certain that it is the latter, and not the former, who pleases his master? In what respect can any works of ours tend to the glory of God, where they are not done according to His good pleasure? It is not sacrifices that the Lord desires, says the Prophet to Saul, but *obedience* to His will: *Doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed—* (1 Kings, xv. 22). To refuse to obey is like the crime of idolatry. He who will act according to his own will, and independently of God's, commits a kind of idolatry; since instead of worshipping the Divine will, he, in a certain sense, worships his own.

II.

The greatest glory, then, that we can give to God is the fulfilment of His holy will in everything. This is what our Redeemer, Whose purpose in coming upon earth was the establishment of the glory of God, principally came to teach by His example. See how Jesus addresses His Eternal Father: *Sacrifice and oblation, thou wouldst not; but a body thou hast fitted to me: . . . then said I: Behold, I come—that I should do thy will, O God—* (Heb. x. 5). Thou hast refused to accept the victims which mankind have offered Thee. It is Thy will that I should sacrifice to Thee the body which Thou hast given Me; lo, I am ready to perform Thy will! And hence it is that Jesus so often declares He had come upon earth not to fulfil His own, but His Father's will only: *I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me—* (Jo. vi. 38). And on this account Jesus

wished that the world might know the love He bore His Father, from the obedience to His will which He manifested in sacrificing Himself upon the Cross for the salvation of mankind; just as He said Himself in the Garden when going forth to meet His enemies who had come to take Him and lead Him away to death: *That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father hath given me commandment, so do I; Arise, let ye go hence!* (Jo. xiv. 31). And for this reason, too, He said He would recognize as His very own brother him who acted according to the Divine will: *Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, he is my brother—* (Matt. xii. 50).

Monday—Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

THE GIFT OF HOPE WITH WHICH ST. TERESA WAS ENDOWED.

The mercies of the Lord are in proportion to the confidence a soul places in Him; so that when the Lord wishes to enrich a soul with graces, He first enriches it with confidence. So great was Teresa's confidence in God that she accomplished all she undertook for the glory of her Spouse, and was commonly styled *the Omnipotent Teresa*.

I.

The mercies of the Lord are in proportion to the confidence a soul places in Him: so that when the Lord wishes to enrich a soul with graces, He first enriches it with confidence.

So great was the confidence with which the holy

mother Teresa was gifted by God, that by it she gained the accomplishment of all that she undertook for the glory of her Spouse, so that she was commonly styled *the Omnipotent Teresa*.

Ever bearing in mind that God is faithful, as the Apostle says, and that He cannot fall short of His word, she drew from this reflection the great courage that fortified her in every storm. "Oh, my Lord," she used to exclaim, "who shall sufficiently declare how faithful Thou art to Thy friends? May everything fail me provided Thou dost not abandon me; me, who have found by experience how great is the gain of those who trust only in Thee."

With this strong anchor to support her she undertook the great work of reforming the Religious of both sexes in the Carmelite Order, and of founding a vast number of Religious houses, in spite of innumerable obstacles raised by men and devils, without aid, without money, having nothing to support her except her confidence in God. She was accustomed to say, that in order to found a monastery, nothing more was requisite than to hire a house and set up a bell.

Whenever the strength of the opposition increased, her courage would increase also, and she would say that this was a sign that the seed sown would produce the more abundant fruit; and so all turned out successfully. She writes: "The true way of escaping a fall is to attach oneself to the Cross, and to confide in Him Who has been suspended thereon. I find Him alone a true friend; so overpowered am I with a sense of this, that it seems to me that, with the grace of God, I could withstand the whole universe contending against me." Hence her great dislike in having to deal with persons who relied on human judgments and resources.

My holy advocate, Teresa, thou givest me to understand that thy Spouse has promised thee to grant everything thou asked of Him, and that a great number of souls have received help through thy prayers. Make me, too, one of the number. Recommend me to Jesus, and change me entirely as thou hast changed so many others through thy prayers.

II.

One day when Teresa was pleading for a special grace from God and feared His refusal on account of her unworthiness, Jesus appeared to her. Showing the Wound in His left hand, "He told me," she says, "that I ought not to doubt that He Who had suffered so much for me would most willingly grant me all that I would ask of Him; that He had promised to grant me all I would ask of Him; that I ought to remember that even at the time when I served Him not, I had never asked Him for anything without receiving it, and more than I had known how to ask for, and that with much greater reason now when He knew my love for Him, would He hear me, and finally that I ought not to doubt His word."

She then goes on to assure us that, by virtue of His promise, she had ever obtained from God more than she could have asked of Him in a lifetime. For the consolation of those devoted to her, she has left upon record the following words: "I should be wearisome to myself and to my readers if I were to recount all the graces God has conferred upon me; if I were to say how many souls have been extricated from sin by my prayers, and how many others have been advanced to higher degrees of perfection." One night, while the saint was returning thanks to God for a grace she had received, He lovingly made her this answer: "And what can you ask of me, my daughter, that I would not grant you?" Another day he said to her: "You are aware of the espousals contracted between you and Me: it is for this reason that I make over to you all the sufferings I have undergone. You can offer these sufferings to My Father as your own, and ask in exchange all that you desire."

The Saint has written for our instruction: "Oh! how small is the confidence that we repose in Thee, O Lord God! And yet what greater riches, what more beautiful treasures couldst Thou have handed over to us? Thou hast given us three-and-thirty years of Thy Son's hard toil, and then His most painful death.

Knowing beforehand how ungrateful we would be, Thou hast even confided to us the priceless treasure of that same Son in the Most Holy Sacrament, that there might be nothing in Thee of which we might not, through Him, gain possession, O merciful Father! O ye souls of the Blessed, who have so well known how, at this price, to purchase to yourselves so precious and so permanent an inheritance, declare to us how it was that you made use of so infinite a good? Succour us now that you are standing so near its source, and draw water thence for us who are here dying of thirst."

Spiritual Reading.

"THE LORD IS CAREFUL FOR ME."

When the holy mother was at Toledo, a priest told her that the accomplishment of the Reform was a hopeless undertaking; but Teresa with dauntless courage, consoled every one, and confiding in God, replied, that in spite of opposition, all would prosper for the best. When, on her journeys, she came to any dangerous part of the road, she would be the first to pass over it, encouraging the rest by her example. Full of confidence in her Lord, she was not afraid even of hell itself; she used to say, she no more feared the demons than the flies. She was never known to grieve or to rejoice at any occurrence, whether favourable or unfavourable, but was ever calm and equable, in the midst of a profound peace; ever constant in her sweet hope, persuaded that God cannot fail one that serves Him, and puts his confidence in Him. It was, then, upon this hope that Teresa rested all the prayers she addressed to God. And as she did not know how to ask Him for anything but what might contribute to the good pleasure of her Lord, the prayers of this His holy spouse were so acceptable to God, that He even went so far as to promise to grant her everything she would ask of Him.

Learn, O devout soul, how God listens to the prayer that is offered with confidence. Ask, then, with con-

fidence and you shall receive whatever you desire. Heaven and earth may fail you, but the Word of God Who has said: *Everyone that asketh, receiveth*—(Matt. vii. 8), cannot fail. He that asks, obtains, even when he does not at all deserve to obtain what he asks, as St. Thomas says. On the other hand, he who does not ask, does not obtain. Behold then, on what our victory, in time of temptation, depends: *Praising I will call upon the Lord and I shall be saved from my enemies*—(Ps. xvii. 4). Let us have recourse to God and we shall be conquerors. Behold, on what all our good depends: *Ask, and you shall receive*—(Jo. xvi. 24). Let us ask, and it will be given us. Our Saint used to say: "For gaining Divine graces, prayer is the only gate: shut this, and I know not how God shall bestow them. Let us observe that our Father and God not only takes care of us, but that He is ever full of anxiety for our good, as He gives us to understand in the Holy Scriptures." Let us pray, then, with confidence; let us pray to God in the Name of Jesus Christ, His Son, Who has made us this promise: *If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you*—(Jo. xvi. 28). God always takes care of us. *The Lord is careful for me*—(Ps. xxxix. 18). And the Prophet says it is easier for a mother to forget her child than for God to forget us. It will be enough to show God our miseries and say to Him with the leper in the Gospel: *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*—(Matt. viii. 2); or with the Sister of Lazarus: *He whom thou lovest is sick*—(Jo. xi. 3); but *we ought always to pray and not to faint*—(Luke xviii. 1). The day we leave off prayer, we shall fall.

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

II.—EXCELLENCE OF THE VIRTUE.

I.

All the Saints have ever kept steadfastly in view the fulfilment of the Divine will, thoroughly understanding

that herein consists the entire perfection of a soul. The Blessed Henry Suso used to say : " God does not desire that we should abound in knowledge, but that in all things we should submit ourselves to His will." And St. Teresa : " All that one who devotes himself to prayer has need to acquire, is conformity of his own will to the Divine will ; and he may rest assured that herein consists the highest perfection. Whoever practises this best will receive from God the greatest gifts, and will make most progress in the interior life." The Dominican nun the Blessed Stephana of Soncino, being carried one day in vision into Heaven, saw certain persons with whom she had been acquainted in life, placed amongst the Seraphim ; and it was told her that they had been raised to so high a place in glory through the perfect conformity to God's will which they had practised when on earth. And the Blessed Suso already mentioned used to say, when speaking of himself : " I would much rather be the vilest worm of earth through God's will than a Seraph through my own."

While we are in this world, we should learn from the Blessed in Heaven the way we have to love God. The pure and perfect love which the Blessed in Heaven entertain for God lies in their own perfect union with the Divine will. Should the Seraphim understand it to be His will that they must employ themselves for all eternity in gathering into a heap the sands of the seashore, or in plucking up the grass from the fields, they would willingly do it with all possible pleasure. Nay, more : if God were to give them to understand that they should go to burn in the flames of hell, they would immediately precipitate themselves into that abyss, in order to accomplish the Divine will. And it is for this that Jesus Christ taught us to pray—namely, that we perform the Divine will on earth as the Saints perform it in Heaven : *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*—(Matt. vi. 10). The Lord calls David a man after His own heart, because David accomplished all His desires : *I have found a man according to my own heart, who shall do all my wills*—(Acts xiii. 22). David was ever prepared to embrace the Divine will, as

he frequently declared : *My heart is ready, O God ; my heart is ready*—(Ps. lvi. 8, and cvii. 1). And, on the other hand, the only prayer which he made to the Lord was that He would teach him to do His Will : *Teach me to do thy will*—(Ps. cxlii. 10).

II.

A single act of perfect conformity to the Divine will is sufficient to make one a Saint. Look at Saul whom Jesus Christ illuminates and converts, while he is persecuting the Church. What does Saul do? What does he say? He simply makes an offering of himself to do the Divine will : *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*—(Acts, ix. 6). And, behold, the Lord declares him to be a vessel of election and Apostle of the Gentiles : *This man is to me a vessel of election to carry my name before the Gentiles*—(Acts, ix. 15). Yes, for he who gives his will to God gives Him everything. He who gives God his goods in alms, his blood by disciplines, his food by fasting, gives to God a part of what he possesses ; but he who gives God his will gives Him the whole ; so that he can say to Him : Lord, I am poor, but I give Thee all that is in my power ; in giving Thee my will, there remains nothing for me to give Thee. But this is precisely all that our God claims from us : *My son, give me thy heart*—(Prov. xxiii. 26). That is to say, thy will. " There is no offering," says St. Augustine, " more acceptable to God than to say to him : Take possession of us ! " O Lord, we give our whole will to Thee ; make us understand what Thou desirest of us, and we will perform it.

If then we would give full satisfaction to the heart of God, we must in everything bring our own will into conformity with His ; and not only into conformity but into *uniformity*, too, as regards all that God ordains. Conformity signifies the conjoining of our own will to the will of God ; but uniformity signifies, moreover, our making of the Divine will and our own will one will only, so that we desire nothing but what God desires, and His sole will becomes ours. This is the sum and

substance of that perfection to which we ought to be ever aspiring. This must be the aim of all our works, and of all our desires, meditations and prayers. For this we must invoke the assistance of our Patron saints and of our Guardian Angels, and, above all, of our Divine Mother Mary, who was the most perfect of all the Saints, for the reason that she ever embraced most perfectly the Divine will.

Tuesday—Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

ST. TERESA'S GREAT LOVE FOR GOD.

The heart of this seraph was so on fire with the love of God that all her thoughts and all her sighs were of Divine love and the good pleasure of God. "Behold what I am always saying," she writes in her Life, "and it seems to me I say it with all my heart: 'O Lord, I do not think of self: I wish for nothing but for Thee alone!'"

I.

The heart of this seraph was so on fire with the love of God, that all her thoughts and all her sighs were nothing but love, and had reference only to the good pleasure of God. Her confessor used to say that when speaking to her, he seemed to have before him a seraph of love. The sacred flame of the love of God burned within her soul ever since the moment when, only seven years of age, she had the courage to leave her native country,

her father and mother, in order to go amongst the infidels, that she might sacrifice her life for Jesus Christ," as it is stated in the Bull of her canonization.

Her love increased as she advanced in age, and although it grew somewhat cool for some years, yet when God, by a fresh illumination, called her to a love of greater perfection, her correspondence to His grace was such as to merit to hear from the very lips of her Spouse, that if He had not already created Paradise, He would have created it expressly and entirely for her. And on another occasion, He even told her that He was all hers, because she was all His: "Now I am all thine, and thou art all Mine"—(Bull of Canon).

In short, so completely was she given up to God, that, inebriated with the Divine love, she knew not how to speak of anything save of her Beloved. She knew not how to think of anything save of her Beloved. She could not even hold converse with any one save of her Beloved. For, accustomed as she was to hold sweet converse with her God, she could not lend herself to hold intercourse with creatures, excepting with those who were wounded, as she expressed herself, with the same love.

So strongly was she drawn to God by love, that she declared herself to be incompetent for the management of worldly affairs. So that, one day, she said: "If the Lord keeps me in my present state, I shall render but a bad account of the affairs that He has entrusted to my charge; for it seems that I am continually being drawn towards God, as if by chains." Everything that tended to interrupt her continual union with God was a burden to her, even the taking of her meals: "It is often a very great punishment on me," she writes, "to be obliged to eat. It makes me weep, and give utterance to complaints, almost without being aware of what I say."

But let us listen to the beautiful sentiments that she has recorded for us in reference to her love for God, and let us warm our hearts with the blessed flame that burned in the heart of our seraphic Saint.

She writes: "Behold what I am always saying, and,

as it seems to me, with all my heart : O Lord, I do not think of myself, I wish for nothing but for Thee alone !”

II.

Although she was exceedingly humble, she does not shrink from saying : “ I am nothing but imperfection, excepting in desire and in love ; I think that I do love my Lord well, but my works make me sad.”

So ardently did she desire to advance, as far as she possibly could, in the love of God, that she expresses herself elsewhere in the following terms : “ If I were to have my choice of undergoing all the sufferings of the world even to the end of time, and of obtaining afterwards a small additional degree of glory, or without afflictions of any kind, to settle down in a degree of glory less exalted, I would willingly prefer to bear all the sufferings for the smallest possible additional knowledge of the greatness of God ; because I see that they who know God best love Him most.” On seeing that she loved God so much, and that she was so much beloved by Him, she wrote in holy transport : “ Oh ! what a beautiful exchange it is to give our love to God, and to receive from Him His own.”

We are also aware what consolations she found in the loving petition she was so frequently addressing to God : *Lord, either to suffer or to die !* It seemed to her that the desire of suffering for God was so sweet to her loving heart, that she could gain no merit by it. And she goes on to say, that the only reason why we should love the present life is for the opportunity it affords us of suffering for God. “ Since the desire of sufferings brings me no merit, and life seems to me to be worthless without sufferings, I pray to God for them most fervently. I say, then, to Him with all my heart : Lord, either to suffer or to die : I ask Thee for nothing more.”

It was by this that she merited to be united to Jesus Christ, Who, on presenting her with a nail, declared her to be His spouse of love and of the cross. The Lord, stretching His right hand towards her, as we read in the

appendix to her Life, proceeded to say to her : “ Behold this nail : it is a token that henceforth you shall be my spouse ; you have not merited this until now. For the future you shall not look upon My honour merely as that of your Creator, of your King, and of your God, but since you are now My true spouse, My honour is yours, and your honour is Mine.”

She said, one day, in a transport of love, that it would give her real joy to see others in Paradise rejoicing in a higher degree of glory than her own ; but that she did not know whether she could rejoice at seeing a soul have a greater love for God than she had.

In conclusion, her whole employment consisted in whatever could procure glory for God ; but her great love for Him caused her to regard all that she did as nothing. “ O Lord !” she said, “ I fear that I am not serving Thee ; I cannot discover anything that can be sufficient to pay Thee the smallest part of what I owe Thee.” The only thing that contented her in this life, and the prayer that she continually offered up to God, was this : “ Ah, my Lord, enable us all to become worthy of loving Thee ; since live we must, let us live for Thee, ever leaving our own selfish interests out of sight. What greater gain can we have than that which consists in being pleasing in Thy sight. O my Joy, my God, what can I do to please Thee ?”

O scraphic Teresa, beloved spouse of Jesus crucified, thou who wast all on fire while upon earth with so burning a love for thy God and mine, who art now burning with a still purer and brighter flame in Heaven, obtain for me, I entreat thee, one spark of this heavenly flame, which may enable me to forget the world, its creatures, and even myself, in order to devote all my thoughts, all my desires, and all my affections to the accomplishment, whether in joy or pain, of the will of this Sovereign Good Who deserves to be obeyed and loved. Do this, O my dear Saint, for thou art able to do it. Make me burn wholly and entirely, like thyself, with Divine love.

Spiritual Reading.

“MERIT CONSISTS IN SUFFERING AND IN LOVING.”

The whole life of Teresa was one continual exercise of the love of God, and a constant study of what might best please her Beloved. Her very life was terminated through the violence of her love, consumed as indeed her heart was in a furnace of Divine Charity. But we are to remember what our Lord said one day to our Saint, in order to give her to understand that true love of God in this life does not consist in any sensible sweetnesses, but in the accomplishment of the will of God, and in the undergoing of sufferings with calmness:

“Thinkest thou, My daughter,” He said to her, “that such gratifications constitute merit? No; merit consists in doing, in suffering, and in loving. Consider My life, altogether filled up, as it was, with sufferings: when thou lookest at My Mother holding Me in her arms, do not suppose that she enjoys this satisfaction without suffering the cruel torment that St. Simeon had predicted to her, when he said to her: ‘A sword shall pierce thine own soul’; My Father having from that time enlightened her in order that she might understand all that I was to suffer.”

“Believe me, My daughter,” He added, “that he who is most beloved of My Father is also he on whom He lays the heaviest crosses, and that love on the one side corresponds to the sufferings on the other. How could I testify this love, save in desiring for thee what I have desired for Myself? Behold these Wounds! No pains of thine will ever be so great. Thou wilt thus participate in My lamentations for the loss that men of the world sustain, whose desires are bent on the acquisition of precisely the contrary. To suppose that My Father admits any one to His friendship without sufferings, is folly; for those for whom He entertains a great love He leads on by the way of sufferings, and the sufferings

He sends are the greater in proportion to the greatness of His love.”

If, then, it is our wish to love our dearest Lord with a genuine love, and to study how to give satisfaction to His Heart rather than to gratify our own, we must put in practice the excellent instruction that our Saint used to give to others and to observe herself: “Ever march forward with the desire of suffering everything, on every occasion, for the love of Jesus.” Everyone should at least seek to conform himself perfectly to the will of God in all adversities. This is what St. Teresa one day came down from Heaven to say to a devout soul: “Endeavour to have the fervent desire for the accomplishment of the Divine will that I had for death as long as I lived.” To practise, therefore, what the Saint suggests, one should offer oneself wholly to God fifty times every day, with great fervour and the desire of Him. By acting in this manner, we shall be very pleasing in the sight of God, and shall not feel the crosses He sends us, for, as the Saint used to say, “the weight of the Cross is felt by him who drags it along, but not by him who embraces it.” Just as a miser, instead of being fatigued, feels joy as he carries his load of gold, and rejoices the more in proportion to the greatness of its weight; so does a loving soul rejoice the more she has to suffer for God, because she perceives that in offering up her sufferings to her Beloved, she becomes exceedingly dear to Him.

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

III.—CONFORMITY IN ALL THINGS.

I.

The important thing is to embrace the will of God in all things which befall us, not only when they are favourable, but when they are *contrary to our desires*. When things go on well even sinners find no difficulty

in being conformed to the Divine will; but the Saints are in conformity even under circumstances which run counter, and are mortifying, to self-love. It is herein that the perfection of our love for God is shown. The Blessed Father John of Avila used to say: "A single *Blessed be God!* when things go wrong, is of more value than a thousand acts of thanksgiving when things are to our liking."

Moreover, we must bring ourselves into conformity to the Divine will, not only as regards those adverse circumstances which come to us *directly* from God—such, for instance, as infirmities, desolation of spirit, poverty, the death of relatives, and other things of a similar nature—but also as regards those which come to us through the instrumentality of men, such as contempt, reproaches, acts of injustice, thefts, and persecutions of every kind. On this point, we must understand that when we suffer injury from any one in our reputation, our honour, or our property, although the Lord *does not will the sin* which such a one commits, He nevertheless does will the humiliation, the poverty, or the mortification that comes to us. It is certain and of faith, that nothing comes to pass in the world but by the Divine will: *I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil*—(Is. xiv. 7). From God come all things that are good and all things that are evil; that is to say, all things that are contrary to our liking, and that we falsely call evil, for, in truth, they are good, when we receive them as from His hands: *Shall there be an evil in the city which the Lord hath not done?* said the Prophet Amos (iii. 6). As the Wise Man had already said: *Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God*—(Eccles. xi. 14). It is true, as I observed above, that whenever any one unjustly treats you, God does not will the sin such a person commits, nor concur in the malice of his intentions; but He does indeed concur by a general concurrence in regards to the material action by which such a one wounds, plunders, or injures you; so that what you have to suffer is certainly willed by God, and comes to you from His hands. Hence it was that the

Lord told David that He was the Author of the injuries which Absalom would inflict upon him, and that in punishment for his sins: *Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thy own house*—(2 Kings, xii. 11). Hence, too, He told the Jews that it would be as a punishment for their wickedness that He would command the Assyrians to spoil and destroy them. *The Assyrian, he is the rod of my fury . . . I will give him a charge to take away the spoils, and to lay hold on the prey*—(Is. x. 5), which St. Augustine explains: "The wickedness of these men is made, as it were, the sword of God." God uses the iniquity of the Assyrians, like a sword, to chastise the Jews. And Jesus Himself said to St. Peter that His Passion and Death did not come to Him so much from men, as from His Father: *The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*—(Jo. xviii. 11.)

II.

When the messenger (who is thought to have been Satan) came to tell Job that the Sabeans had taken away all his goods and had put his sons to death, what is the holy man's reply? *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away*—(i. 21). He did not say: the Lord hath given me sons and property, and the Sabeans have taken them away; but, *the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away*; because he perfectly understood that his loss was willed by God; and therefore he added: *As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord*. We must not, then, look upon the troubles that befall us as happening by chance or merely through the fault of others; we should rest assured that everything that happens to us comes to pass through the Divine will. "You should know," says St. Augustine, "that whatever happens in this world contrary to our will does not happen but by the will of God." Epictetus and Atho, two blessed Martyrs of Jesus Christ, when subjected to the torture by the tyrant, torn with hooks of iron and burnt with blazing torches, only said: "Lord, let Thy will be accomplished in us"; and on arriving at the place of their suffering,

they exclaimed, in a loud voice: "Blessed be Thou, O eternal God, because Thy will has been fully accomplished in us!"

Cesarius relates that a certain Religious, although there was in no respect any external difference between himself and the others, had nevertheless arrived at such a degree of sanctity as to heal the sick by the mere touch of his garments. His Superior, in astonishment at this, one day asked him how he could ever perform such miracles, while his life was not more exemplary than that of others. In reply, he said that it was a matter of astonishment to himself also, and that he did not know how to account for it. "But what devotions do you practise?" asked the Abbot. The good Religious replied that he did but little or nothing in this respect, except that he had ever taken great care to will only what God willed, and that the Lord had granted him the grace to keep his own will thoroughly conformed to that of God. "Prosperity," he said, "does not elate me, nor does adversity cast me down, because I receive everything from the hands of God; and to this end I direct all my prayers—namely, that God's will may be perfectly accomplished in me." "And with respect to that loss," rejoined the Superior, "which our enemy caused us the other day, by depriving us of our means of subsistence, setting fire to our farm-buildings where our corn and cattle were housed, did you not feel some resentment in consequence?" "No, my Father," was his reply; "but, on the contrary, I returned thanks to God for it, as is my custom in similar cases, knowing that God does, or permits, all for His own glory and for our greater good; and with this conviction, I am always content whatever may come to pass." Understanding all this, and seeing in that soul so great a conformity to the Divine will, the Abbot was no longer surprised at his performing such great miracles.

Wednesday—Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

THE GREAT PERFECTION ATTAINED BY ST. TERESA.

An ardent desire for sanctity is a great means for becoming a saint. God does not bestow the abundance of His graces except on those souls who hunger for them. Our Saint says we must not set bounds to our desires, but must hope by God's grace to reach the heights the Saints have reached.

I.

An ardent desire for sanctity is a great means towards becoming a saint; for, on the one hand, God does not bestow the abundance of His graces except on those souls that hunger for them, as the most Holy Mary says, in her sublime canticle: *He has filled the hungry with good things*—(Luke, i. 53). And, on the other hand, this desire is necessary as regards ourselves, to the end that we may have the power of persevering under the hardships that we must endure if we would gain the great treasure of perfection. For, that which is but little desired, men make but little exertion to obtain; whereas, on the contrary, to compass the acquisition of what is much desired, there is no toil, however arduous, that they do not find easy and sweet. On this account it is that God gives the appellation of "blessed" to those that have not the desire merely, but a hunger, that is, an ardent desire for sanctity: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice*—(Matt. v. 6).

Teresa, whom we may compare to an eagle of heaven, and to whom the desire of fulfilling the perfect will of God gave wings wherewith to fly rapidly forward to perfection, has left us on record the following words:

“Let us entertain great thoughts, for from them proceeds our good.” And she says elsewhere: “We must not limit our desires, but we must hope that in relying on God we shall be able, through the efforts we make, gradually to reach the heights that many of the Saints by His grace have reached.” She used to say that the Divine Majesty loves generous souls, provided only that they put no trust in themselves; and she testified, speaking from experience, that she had never known a faint-hearted soul to make as much progress even in several years as generous souls make within the space of a few days: “For,” said she, “the Lord is as pleased with desires as with their effects.”

Oh! how great, in truth, was her desire of pleasing her Lord! She does not shrink from the avowal, that, full of imperfections as she was, her desires were, nevertheless, great and perfect. She writes: “The desire of serving God comes to me attended with transports I am unable to express. It seems to me that no suffering, not even death, or Martyrdom itself, would be difficult for me to endure.” Indeed, there was nothing, however difficult, she did not undertake and carry to a successful termination, when once she knew that it was pleasing to God. And she testified this of herself: “There is nothing, however painful, that I am not ready to bear as soon as it comes.” Thus the saint, having learned by her own experience, used to say: “I am astonished at what can be done by encouraging oneself to undertake great things, though we may not have the strength for them at once. The soul takes a flight upwards and ascends very high.” And here she adds a lesson of much importance—namely, that there is no humility in not wishing to become a saint. Humility is necessary, she says; but we must understand that the devil strives to make us think it is pride to have great desires, and a wish to imitate the Saints.

II.

In order to acquire perfection, it is not enough merely to *desire* it; we must also have the firm *resolution* of

attaining it; for the desire without the resolution will be of no avail. This is what happens to such a number of souls who are always desiring, and perpetually multiplying their desires, but never come to a determination of setting themselves to the work in good earnest, and so remain ever in their tepidity, without making any progress. Our Saint writes: “I would rather have a short prayer producing great results, than a prayer lasting several years, during which the soul never resolves on performing anything of any real value for God.”

St. Bernard says that many fail to become saints because they lack the courage. And it was the subject of our Saint’s lamentation when she said: “Many remain down at the foot of the mountain who could scale its summit.” On the other hand, she gives the assurance, that when a soul, in order to please God, undertakes anything with resolution, she easily accomplishes her purpose. “It is quite true, O Lord,” she writes: “as is said by Thy Prophet, Thou dost feign there is labour in the observance of Thy law; yet I can perceive none; and I know not why the way that leads to Thee should be called narrow. I have experienced in a variety of circumstances,” she adds, “that when any one from the outset resolves courageously on the accomplishment of anything whatever may be its difficulties, if he does it in order to please God, he has nothing to fear. The devil, has great fear of resolute souls, seeing that every plot he contrives for their hurt turns to their profit.”

O glorious Saint, I rejoice with thee, now that I behold thee in Heaven, where thou art loving thy God with a love that fully contents that heart of thine, which on earth so much desired to love Him. But since, in Heaven thy love for God has increased, assist O holy mother, this miserable soul of mine that desires to burn, like thyself, with holy love for this Infinite God, Who deserves the love of an infinity of hearts. Say for me to Jesus what thou once didst say to Him in this life for one of His servants: “Lord, let us take him to be our friend.” Ask Jesus to inspire me with the resolution of consecrating my whole will, once for all, to Him, and

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of studying in everything that alone which is most pleasing in His sight and which may best promote His glory.

Spiritual Reading.

RESOLUTION TO GIVE ONESELF WHOLLY TO GOD.

St. Teresa herself practised earnestly what she taught to others. When she was called to give herself wholly to God, she gave herself to Him without reserve, and with so strong a resolution, that to oblige herself to search out whatever might give the most pleasure to her Beloved, she went so far as to bind herself by that sublime vow, at which the Saints have been filled with astonishment, and which is styled by the sacred tribunal of the Rota, "a very difficult vow," always to do what she understood to be the most perfect. Herein Teresa exhibits to us the courage and the resolution with which she aimed at the highest perfection to which a soul upon earth can attain, in order that she might please God to the utmost of her power.

Let our resolution, then, be to aim with sincere desire at the highest sanctity, as our Saint did, and to resolve to give ourselves wholly to God, studying to advance every day farther and farther towards perfection.

A great servant of God, Father Hyppolito Durazzo, of the Society of Jesus, used with good reason to say, as we read in his Life, that men of the world never think that they have enough of the good things of this world, and are always endeavouring to possess more; but with respect to the next they say: "The smallest corner of Paradise will do." Whereas, on the contrary, he who truly loves God and not the world, will be contented with the least corner of the earth; but for the good things of Heaven he will always be striving more and more without ever resting. This good Father used also to say that "to become a saint one needs nothing but what is to be obtained through the sole desire of pleasing God."

After the desire is formed, one must then most firmly resolve to give oneself to God without reserve. God has already given us this desire. This desire is His voice distinctly speaking to us and calling us to His love. He has already called us very many times, and why are we hesitating? Do we wish to wait until He ceases to call us, and He abandons us? Now is the time for putting an end, once for all, to our hesitations, and for renouncing everything that is not for God. It is not a time for prolonging our resistance to the love of that Lord Who alone deserves to be loved. We must, then, break every earthly attachment that hinders us from belonging entirely to God. Resolution! resolution! God! God alone! And nothing else!

And Thou, O my Lord, tell me what it is that Thou dost look for from me in bestowing upon me so many graces! Ah! I understand Thee—I understand Thee, my Treasure, my All, my true Lover! Since Thou lovest me greatly, Thou dost wish me to love Thee greatly, and to become all Thine. Thou dost wish that my heart may be no longer divided, but that its whole attention may be devoted to loving Thee alone. Yes, Thee alone. But, in truth, if Thou art the only one that deserves to be loved, it is no more than just that Thou only be loved by me and by all mankind. Since, then, O my Beloved, Thou dost inspire me with this desire of loving Thee, so overrule me that I may put it in practice, and may love Thee as much as Thou desirest. If Thou wilt have my heart, behold, here it is. I take it from the love of creatures to give it wholly to Thee. If Thou dost wish me to desire and to ask for Thy love, yea, my God, I ask it of Thee, and I desire to love Thee more than even the Seraphim do. Hearken to my prayer. I ask this of Thee, not in order to become distinguished amongst the Saints, nor to gain a high degree of glory in Paradise, but only in order to be pleasing in Thy sight. Provided that I may love Thee the more, I even offer myself to suffer pain of every description, and for all eternity, if such be Thy good pleasure. Hearken to me my Lord, for the love of Jesus Christ, and for the love of St. Teresa.

O blessed and holy Virgin Mary, thou art my hope;
I hope for all good things through thee.

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

IV.—HAPPINESS THAT COMES FROM PERFECT CONFORMITY.

I.

He who acts in perfect conformity to God's will not only becomes a saint but he enjoys, even in this world, a perpetual peace. Alphonsus the Great, King of Arragon, and a most wise prince, on being one day asked whom he considered to be the happiest man in the world, replied that it was he who abandons himself to the will of God, and receives all things, prosperous or adverse, as from His hands.

To those who love God, all things work together unto good—(Rom. viii. 28). Those who love God are ever content because their whole pleasure lies in the accomplishment of the Divine will, even in things that run counter to their own desires. Hence even afflictions bring them contentment, by the thought that in the acceptance of them they are giving pleasure to their Lord. Whom they love: *Whatsoever shall befall the just man it shall not make him sad*—(Prov. xii. 21). And, in truth, what greater contentment can a man ever experience than in seeing the accomplishment of all he desires? Now, whenever any one wills only what God wills or permits, then everything such a one wills does consequently come to pass. There is a story in the *Lives of the Fathers* of a certain countryman whose land was more productive than that of others, and who, on being asked how it happened replied that no one should be surprised at it, because he always had the weather he desired. "And how so?" he was asked. "Because," replied he, "I desire no weather but that which God desires; and as I desire what God desires, so does He give me the fruits of the earth as I desire them."

II.

Souls that are truly resigned, says Salvian, if they are in a state of humiliation, desire humiliation; if they suffer poverty, they desire to be poor; in short, whatever happens to them, they desire it all, and therefore they are, in this life, happy. When cold or heat, rain or wind, prevails, he who is in a state of union with the Divine will says: I wish it to be cold, I wish it to be hot; I wish the wind to blow, the rains to fall, because God wishes it so. Does poverty, persecution, sickness, death come, I also wish to be poor, persecuted, sick; I wish even to die, because God wishes it so.

This is the blessed liberty the sons of God enjoy, worth more than all the lands and kingdoms of this world. This is that great peace the Saints experience, which *surpasseth all understanding*—(Phil. iv. 7), and with which all the pleasures of sense; all gayeties, festivities, distinctions, and all other worldly satisfactions, cannot be compared; for these being unsubstantial and transitory, although, while they last, fascinating to the senses, do not bring peace, but affliction, to the spirit that desires true contentment. Hence it was Solomon, after having enjoyed worldly pleasures to the full, cried out in his affliction: *But this also is vanity and vexation of spirit*—(Eccles. iv. 16).

Thursday—Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

THE HUMILITY OF ST. TERESA.

Humble hearts are the targets at which the arrows of Divine love are aimed. It was because God found the heart of Teresa most humble that it pleased Him to bestow upon her such a multitude of graces.

I.

Humble hearts are the targets at which the arrows of Divine love are aimed; and so, as St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say, the practice suitable for us, in order to obtain Divine love, is that of self-humiliation. It was because God found the heart of Teresa most humble that it pleased Him to bestow upon her such a multitude of graces. The Saint, in speaking of herself, declares that the most precious graces with which the Lord enriched her were those that she received at the very time when she was humbling herself most before Him.

Our Saint was in reality so humble that, although the Lord treated her as His beloved spouse, as we have already observed, she nevertheless treated with her Lord only in the character of an ungrateful and faithless one. For this reason it was that however many might be the favours heaped upon her by Jesus Christ, and how great soever the commendations she received from men, she could never be persuaded to think well of herself. Although God Himself had conveyed to her an assurance that her visions were not illusions, but gifts of His love, so that in receiving them it was impossible for her to doubt that they came from God, nevertheless the opinion that she entertained of herself was so mean that she was perpetually fearing lest she might be mistaken, being unable to believe that God would grant such favours to a soul so unworthy as she believed herself to be.

One day, as the Saint was on her way to Burgos to found a convent, a Religious mentioned to her the reputation for sanctity she enjoyed. In reply, she said: "Three things have been said of me: that when I was a little child I had a good disposition; that I was discreet; and now there are some persons who say of me that am a saint. In times gone by I believed the two former of these, and I have accused myself in Confession of having yielded to this vanity; but I have never practised upon myself so great a deception as to give credence to the third."

In the account of her life that she addressed to her confessor she says, when speaking of the graces the

Lord bestowed upon her: "Formerly it seemed to me I felt confusion that they were known, but it now seems to me that so far from being better I am much worse on their account; for with so many graces I do so little. For this reason it seems to me that from every point of view there is not in the whole world a creature worse than myself." Elsewhere she says: "I do nothing but receive graces without profiting by them, as if I were the most useless thing in the world. All others bear fruit; it is I only that am good for nothing."

A certain person, on seeing how many favours she received from God, and how great her reputation for sanctity was in the world, said to her: "My mother, be on your guard against vainglory." Teresa, all astonishment, replied: "Vainglory? On what account I know not. Seeing what I am, I shall have much to do to keep myself from falling into despair."

II.

The light God gave Teresa to see the greatness of His Majesty and the love He bore her made her regard as grave faults the little defects into which she used to fall—defects that others like ourselves would not consider defects at all. In consequence, she used continually to exclaim, full of confusion: "Lord, consider what Thou art doing! How is it that Thou hast so quickly forgotten my ingratitude?"

In writing the account of her life for her confessor, she prays him in one place to publish her sins everywhere, "in order that," she said, "I may no longer impose upon people who think that there is some good in me." And when those to whom she made a manifestation of her bad life would not share the opinion that she entertained of herself she betook herself to her Spouse and laid her complaint before Him, saying: "Lord, why is it that these people do not believe me? Do Thou look to it. For my part, I know not what more I can do."

On the other hand, when she thought that others might have a knowledge of the graces that God bestowed

upon her, this thought alone caused her so much affliction that as she says in her Life, she would have wished to be buried alive, so as not to be seen any longer in the world. Wherefore it was that the Lord, in order to tranquillize her in this affliction, one day said to her: "Teresa, of what art thou afraid? If men were to know the graces I bestow upon thee, one of two things would happen: they would either give glory to Me, or speak ill of thee." The Saint tells us that these words restored tranquillity to her.

O my holy Advocate, Teresa, who didst wound the Heart of thy God by thy beautiful humility, I beg thee by the love thou bearest towards thy dear Mother Mary, and thy beloved Spouse Jesus, to obtain for me holy humility, in order that being transformed like thee into the likeness of my Jesus in His state of humiliation upon earth, I may one day be able to see and to love Him with thee in Paradise.

Spiritual Reading.

*ALL WISH TO BE "HUMBLE," BUT FEW TO BE
"HUMBLED."*

The humility of St. Teresa was not the sort that some possess, who, although entertaining, in some instances, a lowly opinion of themselves, and expressing it also before others, yet cannot bear that others should publish their defects and subject them to contempt. No. The Saint, like all souls that are really humble, regarded herself, and wished to be regarded and treated by others as a vile creature. She even went so far as to say that there was no music more pleasing to her ears than the reproaches addressed to her in regard to her defects. She was frequently the object of contempt and of opprobrious treatment; and on such occasions her soul, truly humble as it was, took greater delight in seeing herself despised than if she had been praised and honoured. How often, in establishing those monasteries, whereby

she procured so much glory to God, how often were insults heaped upon her as a hypocrite, a liar, a proud woman, and one filled with illusions! And this, too, as it once happened, from the pulpit, and in her own presence. The Pope's Nuncio, in a fit of anger, went so far as to enjoin upon her to retire into a monastery, and not to go out of it any more, telling her that she was a restless and vagabond woman. She shut herself up, as she was bidden, without making any defence, satisfied in having met with contempt and confusion.

On another occasion an accusation was brought before the Inquisition against her as a sorceress and a witch. Having also heard a certain Religious laying many evils to her charge, she answered: "If this Father had known me, he might have said much more against me." On her entrance into Seville, she was at first an object of contempt and displeasure, whereupon she said: "Blessed be God! Here they know me to be what I am." Elsewhere she writes: "So far am I from wishing ill to any of those that spoke evil of me, it seems to me as if I entertained for them even a greater love than I did before."

While the Saint was arranging about the foundation at Burgos, she was one day passing along a narrow footpath, on which there happened to be a certain woman. She asked her permission to pass by; but this woman, seeing her clad in raiment that bespoke the greatest poverty, said to her, "Go along, you hypocrite"; and then, with a rough push, caused her to fall into the muddy channel. The Saint's companions wished to rebuke the woman, but she took her part, saying: "My daughters, hold your peace. Do you not perceive that this woman has acted very rightly?" On another occasion she was in a church, and certain persons wishing to pass by, she did not take heed to rise sufficiently soon from the place where she was kneeling, whereupon they kicked against her, and so made her move to another part of the church. Another woman who had lost one of her shoes, fancying that Teresa had stolen it from her, had the impudence to strike her on the face with the other shoe. All this the Saint tranquilly

received, better contented with these insults than a man of the world would be at receiving the greatest honours. The tribunal of the Rota has even attested that the greater the offences she received from others, the more they drew her love upon themselves. So much so, indeed, was this the case that it was a common saying that, in order to be loved by Teresa, it was necessary to treat her in a humiliating and injurious manner.

All wish to be *humble*, but there are few who wish to be *humbled*. St. Ignatius of Loyola was sent from heaven by the Most Holy Virgin, to give the following counsel to St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi: "Humility is the joy that we feel at everything that leads us to despise ourselves." This is what is meant by being humble of heart, as Jesus Christ teaches us to be—namely, to regard ourselves as what we really are, and to wish that others may look upon us and treat us in the same way.

Behold, then, for the practice of humility, the following most important maxims, which are borrowed from the Saint herself:

1. To avoid every occupation and every conversation that can in any way have to do with self-love, unless some notable utility oblige us to enter upon it. The Saint enjoins, nevertheless, that we should never put ourselves forward, excepting under obedience, or from motives of charity.
2. Never to manifest our interior devotion, unless through some great necessity; and never to affect outwardly a devotion that is not in the heart.
3. To rejoice on beholding ourselves the object of complaints, of insults and of mockeries, without seeking to justify ourselves, unless this be necessary for some greater good; "and when we are reproved," says the Saint, "let us receive the reproof with interior as well as exterior humility, offering up a prayer to God for him by whom we are reprimanded."
4. To ask unceasingly of God what St. John of the Cross prayed for—to be despised for His love.
5. Finally, not to expect that the senses and the inferior part of the soul should find satisfaction in this;

but to act according to reason, contenting ourselves with pleasing God; and for this it is especially useful to exercise ourselves during prayer in preparing ourselves for contempt of every description; and to pray earnestly to Jesus and Mary to grant us the fulfilment of our good resolutions on the occasions that may present themselves.

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

V.—HAPPINESS THAT COMES FROM PERFECT CONFORMITY.

I.

A holy man continueth in wisdom as the sun, but a fool is changed as the moon—(Eccclus. xxvii. 12). The fool—that is to say the sinner—is ever changing, changing like the moon. To-day you will see him laughing, to-morrow weeping; to-day quiet, to-morrow furious like the tiger. And why so? Because his peace depends on the prosperity or the adversity that comes to him; and, therefore, he varies as circumstances vary. Whereas the just man is like the sun, ever uniform in his serenity how-ever circumstances may vary; because his contentment lies in his conformity to the Divine will, and therefore he enjoys a peace that nothing can disturb: *And on earth peace to men of good will—(Luke, ii. 14),* said the Angel to the Shepherds. And who can these *men of good will* be but those whose wills are at all times in union with the will of God, which is supremely good and perfect? *The will of God is good, delightful, and perfect—(Rom. xii. 2).* Yes, because God wills only that which is best and most perfect.

The Saints, through their conformity to the Divine will, enjoyed in this world a paradise in anticipation. St. Dorotheus tells us that it was thus that the ancient Fathers kept themselves in profound peace, receiving all things from the hands of God. When St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi heard only mention of the will of

God, she used to experience so intense consolation that she fell into an ecstasy of love. And although the blow of adverse circumstances will not fail to make itself felt, yet it will touch only our lower nature; for in our higher nature, in the soul, there will reign peace and tranquillity for the will remains in union with that of God. *Your joy*, said the Redeemer to the Apostles, *no man shall take from you . . . That your joy may be full—*(John, xvi. 22-24). He who is ever in conformity with the Divine will possesses a full and perpetual joy—full, because he has all that he wishes for; him, for he wills what God wills, and no one can deprive that which God wills from coming to pass.

II.

Father John Tauler relates of himself that after having for many years prayed the Lord to send some one to instruct him in the spiritual life, he one day heard a voice saying to him: "Go to such a church, and you will find what you ask for." On reaching the church, he found at the gate a beggar, barefooted and with scarcely a rag to cover him. He saluted him: "Good day, my friend." The poor man replied: "Sir, I do not remember ever to have had a bad day." The Father rejoined: "God grant you a happy life!" To this he answered: "But I have never been unhappy." And then he goes on to say: "Listen, my Father; it is not without reason that I have told you that I have never had a bad day; because, when I suffer hunger, I praise God; when it snows or rains, I bless God; if I am treated with contempt or repulsed, or experience misfortunes of any other kind, I always give glory to my God for it. I said, besides, that I have never been unhappy, and this also is true; because it is my habit to desire, without reservation, all that God desires; therefore, in all that happens to me, whether it be pleasant or painful, I receive it from God's hands with joy, as being what is best for me; and herein lies my happiness." "And if it should ever happen," says Tauler, "that God willed

you to be damned, what would you do then?" "If God were to will this," replied the beggar, "I would, with all humility and love, lock myself so fast in my Lord's embrace, and hold Him so tight, that if it were to be His will to cast me down into hell, He would be obliged to come with me; and thus, with Him, it would then be sweeter to me to be in hell than, without Him, to possess all the enjoyments of Heaven." "Where was it that you found God?" said the Father. "I found Him where I took leave of creatures," was the reply. "Who are you?" The poor man answered: "I am a king." "And where is your kingdom?" "It is within my soul, where I keep everything in due order; the passions are subjected to the reason, and the reason to God." In conclusion, Tauler asked him what it was that had led him on to so high a degree of perfection? "It was silence," he said, "observing silence with man, in order to hold converse with God; and also the union with my God which I have always maintained, and in which I have found, and still do find, all my peace." Such, in short, had this poor man become through his union with the Divine will; and certainly he was, in all his poverty, more wealthy than all the monarchs of the earth, and in his sufferings more happy than all the men of the world in the midst of their earthly pleasures.

Friday—Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

THE WOUND OF LOVE WHEREWITH GOD PIERCED THE HEART OF ST. TERESA.

Ever since the time Jesus lovingly declared Teresa to be His Spouse, she remained so wrapt up in her

Beloved that she could think of nothing but of pleasing Him. *I adore you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love*—(Cant. v. 8).

I.

Ever since the time Jesus lovingly declared Teresa to be His Spouse, she remained so wrapt up in her Beloved, that she could think of nothing but of pleasing Him. Perceiving herself to be so highly favoured by her Divine Lover, and at the same time so destitute of the means of corresponding to so many graces, she cried out in the tenderness of her soul, with the spouse in the Canticles: *Stay me up with flowers; compass me about with fruits, for I languish with love*—(Cant. ii. 5). She animated herself then, sometimes by the desire of suffering that she might please God the more, and at other times by ardently longing for death that she might love Him more perfectly: such were her *flowers*. But besides this, she made it her study to fortify her languishing heart with the *fruits* of love, such as good works, penances, humiliations, and, more particularly, the labours she undertook in the great work of the reform of her Order. She founded thirty-two convents, although she was poor, destitute of all human aid, and opposed even by the great ones of this world, as the Church commemorates in the Lessons for her Office.

All this, however, was too small to satisfy her fervent desires of pleasing her heavenly Spouse, and she protested to her Beloved that she could not endure to see herself so much enriched by the gifts she received, and so niggardly in the return she made. Consequently, enveloped as she was in the holy flames of Divine love, and altogether detached from herself, she was frequently all on fire and languishing in the tenderness of her soul. Oh! what a beautiful sight for the blessed spirits that assisted her was this generous spouse of the Crucified, who in her languishings cried out: *I adore you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you*

tell him that I languish with love—(Cant. v. 8). The effect of this holy languishing, as explained by the Doctors of the Church, is that the soul forgets itself and all its concerns, so as to have no love for anything but for its Beloved, and to have no thoughts but how to please Him. Such is the love of a spouse, as is observed by St. Bernard in the following words, in which he represents a soul raised to this happiness, as thus speaking: “The servant fears; the son honours; the mercenary hopes; and I, because I am a spouse, I love to love, I love to be beloved, and I love love itself.” Precisely such was our seraphic Saint: languishing in her happiness; forgetting everything that had not a reference to Divine love; loving and being beloved, she made God’s pleasure her only study; the only recompense that she desired was to add to her love for Him.

II.

As the hunter, to obtain possession of his prey, endeavours to make sure of it by inflicting upon it numerous wounds, so does the Divine Archer seem to have acted in like manner towards Teresa, sending to her on several occasions a Seraph to wound that heart of hers which He willed to be wholly His. Let us listen to the Saint herself in the description that she gives us of this grace: “Our Lord was pleased I should have at times a vision of this kind—I saw an Angel close by me on my left side in bodily form. He was not large, but small of stature, and most beautiful—his face burning, as if he were one of the highest Angels, who seem to be all of fire. . . . I saw in his hand a long golden spear, the point of which seemed to be tipped with fire. He appeared to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart and to pierce my very vitals, a part of which he drew forth, and to leave me all on fire with a great love of God. The pain was so great that it caused me to utter plaintive cries, and yet so surpassing was the sweetness of this excessive pain, that I could not wish to be rid of it. The soul is then satisfied with nothing less than God. . . . It is a

caressing of love so sweet which now takes place between the soul and God, that I pray God of His Goodness to make him experience it who may think I do not speak the truth.”

O lovely wound! must we, then, exclaim, O sweet pain! O desirable fire! Wound that makes Him loved by Whom it is inflicted; Sweet art thou, because thy sweetness excels all the pleasures of the world! O fire, more to be desired than all the kingdoms of the earth! Thou art the most precious gift the Divine Lover can bestow upon His faithful and beloved spouses, a gift directly proceeding from the loving Heart of God; a gift whose effect, as the Saint said, is to make the soul dissatisfied with everything short of God.

He whose heart is greatly wounded cannot be prevented from thinking of Him by Whom the wound was made; and if he wished to forget Him, the pain he experienced would recall Him to his remembrance. The soul that is wounded with the love of Jesus cannot exist without loving Jesus, and without thinking of Him. Should it happen that the world or creatures have attracted her attention, the wound in her heart sweetly constrains her to return and to languish in love for Him Who has wounded her.

But, O my God, who is there that would not accept this pain, if that can be called pain which is occasioned by this delicious fire of love, the very fire of love which constitutes the happiness of the Saints in Heaven, and which will fill them with joy for all eternity! To prepare the heart, however, for the reception of this fire and of these wounds, it is necessary to resolve, once for all, to banish far away everything that is not God, and generously to say farewell to all creatures, addressing them thus:

World, honours, riches, creatures, what would you have of me? I utterly renounce you! I take my leave of you! Farewell! My God has set me on fire with love; He has wounded me; by His love He has, at last, gained my whole heart; He has made me know He will not be content unless He has entire possession of it. Depart, then, far from me, ye creatures. You cannot

satisfy me, and I no longer desire such gratification as you bestow. Go and content him that seeks you, for I no longer wish for you. I wish for God alone! With God I rest content. God alone! Yes, God alone is enough for me. Too long, alas, have I loved Creatures. The time I have still to spend upon earth, whatever its duration may be, I wish to employ wholly and solely in loving that God, Who was first to love me, and Who deserves and demands of me all my love.

O my seraphic virgin, St. Teresa of Jesus, thou in whom thy Spouse so affectionately enkindled His fire, and wounded with His love, pray, pray for me, that, wounded by my God, and henceforth burning for Him, Who alone deserves to be loved, I may so forget all creatures as to love my Creator alone.

Spiritual Reading.

“DETACH YOUR HEART FROM ALL THINGS;
SEEK GOD AND YOU WILL FIND HIM.”

We are apt to complain that, seeking God, we do not find Him. “Detach your heart from all things,” St. Teresa used to say, “Seek God, and you will find Him.” Otherwise, the things we love will be continually drawing us off, and will prevent us from finding God. The Lord one day said to our Saint: “Oh! how much would I willingly say to a great number of souls! But the world makes a great noise around their hearts, and in their ears so that My voice cannot be heard! Oh! if they would but separate themselves a little from the world!”

There are many souls given to prayer, in whom Divine love finds little, if any, place, because they go to prayer with a heart filled with earthly affections. For this reason it is that St. Ignatius of Loyola says that a soul that is detached will profit more in a quarter of an hour’s prayer than a soul that is not detached will in several hours. No sooner has the bird escaped from the net, than it flies away; so, in like manner, no sooner is

the soul set free from earthly affections, than it flies quickly to God. The masters of the spiritual life teach that defects do not prevent us from advancing to perfection, provided the soul endeavours to rise with humility and peace, as soon as it has fallen; but the smallest attachment, were it only a fine thread, does prevent us.

The Roman Senate, as St. Augustine relates, sanctioned the payment of Divine honours to thirty thousand deities, that is, to all that were recognized as such in the world; but it refused to decree Divine worship to the God of the Christians, Whom it styled a jealous God, since He desired to be adored exclusively. And the Roman Senate had good reason for what they thus alleged; not because God is proud, but because He is the true God. The thief is satisfied if he obtains a share, but the owner is not satisfied without the whole. God desires then, to be the sole possessor of our heart; and, therefore, He enjoins upon each of us this command: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart*—(Matt. xxii. 37). "Let us act in such a way," said St. Teresa to a certain Superior, "as to detach souls from everything created, in order that they may become the spouses of a King, Who is so jealous that He would have them forget everything, and even themselves." Let us, then, set to work to detach our heart from riches by the love of holy poverty; from pleasures, by mortification; from honours, by humility; from relatives, by detachment; and, lastly, from self-will by obedience to superiors; frequently offering up to God that excellent prayer: *Create a clean heart in me, O God!*—(Ps. l. 12). Give me, O God, a heart that is empty and detached, that it may be filled with Thy holy love.

Evening Meditation.

"GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON."

I.

God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son—(Jo. iii. 16). God, says Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, loved the world to such a degree that He gave His very Own and only Son that the world might be saved by Him. Let us consider—Who is the Giver; and what is the Gift that is given; and how great the love is with which it is given. We all know that the more exalted the donor is, the more to be prized is the gift. One who receives a flower from a monarch will set a higher value on that flower than on a large amount of money. How much ought we not, then, to prize this gift, coming to us, as it does, from the hands of One Who is God! And what is it that He has given us? His own Son. The love of this God did not content itself with having given us so many good things on this earth, until it had reached the point of giving us its whole self in the Person of the Incarnate Word: "He gave us not a servant, not an Angel, but His own Son," says St. John Chrysostom. Wherefore Holy Church exultingly exclaims: "O wondrous condescension of Thy mercy in our regard! O inestimable love of charity! That Thou mightest redeem a slave, Thou didst deliver up Thy Son."

O infinite God, how couldst Thou condescend to exercise towards us so wondrous a compassion! Who shall ever be able to understand an excess so great, that in order to ransom the slave, Thou wert willing to give us Thine only Son? Ah, my kindest Lord, since Thou hast given me the best that Thou hast, it is but just that I should give Thee the best I can. Thou desirest my love: I desire nothing else, but only Thy love. Behold this miserable heart of mine; I consecrate it wholly to Thy love. Depart from my heart, all ye creatures; give place to my God, Who deserves and

desires to possess it wholly, and without companions. I love Thee, O God of love; I love Thee above everything : and I desire to love Thee alone, my Creator, my Treasure, my All.

II.

God has given us His Son, and why? For love! Yes, for love alone! For fear of men Pilate gave Jesus up to the Jews : *He delivered him up to their will*—(Luke, xxiii. 25). But the Eternal Father gave His Son to us for the love He bore us : *He delivered him up for us all*.—(Rom. viii. 32). St. Thomas says that : “ love has the nature of a first gift.” When a present is made us, the first gift we receive is that of the love which the donor offers us in the thing that he gives : because, observes the Angelic Doctor, the one and only reason of every voluntary gift is love; otherwise, when a gift is made for some other end than that of simple affection, the gift can no longer rightly be called a true gift. The gift which the Eternal Father made us of His Son was a true gift, perfectly voluntary, and without any merit of ours; and therefore it is said that the Incarnation of the Word was effected through the operation of the Holy Spirit : that is, through love alone; as the same holy Doctor says : “ Through God’s supreme love it was brought to pass, that the Son of God assumed to Himself flesh.”

But not only was it out of pure love that God gave us His Son, He also gave Him to us with an immense love. This is precisely what Jesus wished to signify when He said : *God so loved the world*—(Jo. iii. 16). The word “ so,” says St. John Chrysostom, signifies the greatness of the love wherewith God made us this great gift : “ The word ‘ so,’ signifies the vehemence of the love.” And what greater love could One Who was God have been able to give us than was shown by His condescending to death His innocent Son in order to save us miserable sinners? *Who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*.—(Rom. viii. 32). Had the Eternal Father been capable of suffering pain, what pain would He not have then experienced, when He

saw Himself compelled by His justice to condemn that Son, Whom He loved with the same love wherewith He loved Himself, to die by so cruel a death in the midst of so many ignominies? *And the Lord willed to bruise him in infirmity*—(Is. liii. 10). He willed to make Him die consumed by torments and sufferings.

Imagine, then, to yourself that you behold the Eternal Father, with Jesus dead in His arms, and saying to us : This, O men, is My beloved Son, in Whom I have found all My delights : *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*.—(Matt. iii. 17). Behold how I have willed to see Him ill-treated on account of your iniquities : *For the wickedness of my people have I struck him*.—(Is. liii. 8). Behold how I have condemned Him to die upon this Cross, afflicted, and abandoned even by Myself, Who love Him so much. This have I done in order that you may love Me.

O infinite goodness ! O infinite mercy ! O infinite love ! O God of my soul, since Thou didst will that the object most dear to Thy Heart should die for me. I offer to Thee in my own behalf that great sacrifice of Himself which this Thy Son made Thee; and for the sake of His merits I pray Thee to give me the pardon of my sins, Thy love, and Thy paradise. Great as are these graces which I ask of Thee, the offering which I present unto Thee is greater still. For the love of Jesus Christ, O my Father, pardon me and save me. If I have offended Thee in time past, I repent of it above every evil. I now prize Thee, and love Thee, above every good.

Saturday—Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

ST. TERESA'S DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND THE GLORIOUS ST. JOSEPH.

It was given to St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi to behold Divine love under the form of a sweet liquid in a precious

vessel, being dispensed by the hands of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As all graces come to men through Mary, it is also through her that the gift of gifts Divine love, is bestowed on the faithful. From Mary let us seek it.

I.

It was given to St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi to behold Divine love under the form of a sweet liquid in a precious vessel, being dispensed by the hands of the most Holy Mary. As all God's graces come to men through the hands of Mary, it is also through her that the gift of gifts, Divine love, is bestowed on the faithful.

Our Saint well knew that she had received all her graces, and above all, the gift of love, which made her beautiful soul so rich, through the hands of this most sweet Mother. And so, in order to testify her thankfulness to her most holy Mother, she thought she could never do enough for her love and honour. From her early childhood, while still an inmate of her parental home, she would go in quest of secluded spots to honour Mary by saying the Rosary and other pious prayers. On the death of her mother, she hastened to offer herself to her heavenly Queen with confidence and love to be her daughter, and protesting that from that moment she should be her only and her dearest Mother. In truth, in all her tribulations and in all her needs, the Saint ever had recourse to Mary, as to her most loving Mother. It was with the special object of seeing her honoured everywhere that she undertook the work of reforming the Carmelite Order, whose glory it is to fight under the banner and the especial protection of the Queen of Heaven.

Mary, on her part, who cannot do otherwise than love those that love her, or rather in the words of St. Ignatius the Martyr, "is always more loving towards them than they towards her, not wishing to be outdone by her children in this combat of love," this august Queen well knew how to return and to exceed the love that her dearest daughter bore towards her, by obtaining for her a great abundance of graces. On the day on which she

condescended to come down so lovingly from Heaven, and with her own hands to decorate our Saint with a precious mystical necklace, she made her clearly understand how much satisfaction she felt at seeing her become, through her mediation, the most cherished spouse her Jesus had. It appears still more evident from the circumstances attending her death, how greatly she was loved by this affectionate Mother, for Mary then appeared standing beside her beloved daughter, to fortify her for her departure, and to receive into her arms her blessed soul.

O my Saint, address thyself to that Divine Mother whose power is universal: and because it is her glory to be the refuge of sinners, tell her that I am a sinner and the most wretched of them all. Entreat her henceforth to look with compassion upon me, commended to her as I am by thee, to succour me in my temptations, and to come to my assistance at the hour of my death. Tell her that I hope for eternal salvation through her hands. Tell her this, my Saint, and she will certainly listen to what thou sayest; for, loving thee so tenderly while thou wast upon earth, how much greater is her love for thee now in Heaven where thou dost honour and love her more than ever. As Mary is my advocate with Jesus mayest thou, O Teresa, be my advocate with Mary.

II.

Our Saint had also a great devotion to the glorious spouse of Mary, St. Joseph. It may even be said, that the glory of kindling in the world devotion towards that great Saint was hers. She had felt, from her early childhood, an extreme affection for St. Joseph. She never took any affair in hand without commending it to St. Joseph, her father and her lord—styling him thus on account of the affection and reverence she bore him. All the convents she founded she consecrated under his invocation; and when she herself came to be honoured by the Church as a Saint, and some of her Religious substituted the title of St. Teresa for that of St. Joseph at Avila, she appeared to Sister Isabella of St. Dominic

and enjoined upon her to restore the title of St. Joseph, as speedily as possible, bearing her testimony from Heaven itself that the glory of her beloved Saint was an object of greater concern to her than her own.

"How glad should I be if I could prevail upon all men," she says in her Life, "to cultivate a devotion towards this glorious Saint, by the results of my own experience of the great favours that he obtains from God. I have never known any persons that had this devotion who did not make uninterrupted progress in virtue. I only ask, for the love of God, that he that does not give credence to what I say would be at the pains of giving it a trial."

I rejoice, O Teresa, at thy being in Heaven in company with thy holy father St. Joseph, who loved thee so tenderly and conferred so many favours on thee upon earth. Now that thou art returning him thanks and enjoying the contemplation of that great glory wherewith Jesus has enriched him, commend me to the care of this powerful intercessor. Pray to him to take me also, miserable as I am, under his protection.

Spiritual Reading.

THE PROTECTION OF HOLY MARY AND

ST. JOSEPH.

St. Francis de Sales used to say that next after the merits of Jesus Christ, the protection of the Blessed Virgin is so powerful and so beneficial to the soul that he looked upon it as the firmest support we can have with God. Father Suarez asserts that according to the received opinion of the Church, the protection of Mary is profitable and necessary, because God has determined to bestow all graces through her. Let us, then, love Mary, and ever have recourse to her protection if we wish to save and sanctify our souls. Let us with St. Bernard address her as the "whole foundation of our hope"; with St. Bonaventure, as "the salvation of him

who calls upon her"; with St. Germanus, as "the life of Christians"; with St. Augustine, as "the only refuge of sinners"; and let us crown all by saluting her with the whole Church militant as "our life, our sweetness and our hope."

St. Teresa used, moreover, to say she could not understand how it was possible to have devotion to the Queen of Angels without having, at the same time, an especial affection for her spouse St. Joseph, who was so assiduous on earth in the service of holy Mary and her dear Son, Jesus.

In spite of Teresa's humility, and her great reserve in regard to any manifestation of the graces she received from Heaven, she did not hesitate to make known the extraordinary favours she had obtained through St. Joseph as their channel—and all for the purpose of glorifying her beloved Saint. In the history of her life she writes as follows: "I took for my patron and lord the glorious St. Joseph and recommended myself earnestly to him . . . and he has rendered me greater services than I knew how to ask for. I cannot call to mind that I have ever asked him at any time for anything which he has not granted; and I am filled with amazement when I consider the great favours God has given me through this blessed Saint—the dangers from which he has delivered me, both of body and of soul. To other Saints, Our Lord seems to have given grace to succour men in some special necessity; but to this glorious Saint, I know by experience, God gives the power to help us in all. Our Lord would have us understand that, as He was Himself subject to Joseph on earth . . . so now in Heaven He grants all his requests. I have asked others to recommend themselves to St. Joseph and they, too, know this by experience. . . . Would that I could persuade all men to be devout to this glorious Saint, for I know by long experience what blessings he can obtain for us from God. I have never known anyone who was really devout to him, and who honoured him by particular services, who did not visibly grow more and more in virtue. . . . I only ask, for the love of God, that he who does not believe me will

make the trial for himself—when he will see by experience the great advantages that will come to him from commending himself to this glorious Patriarch, and being devout to him. He who cannot find anyone to teach him how to pray, let him take this glorious Saint for his Master”—(Life, ch. vi.) Let us go, then, to our Saint herself the great Teresa, and ask her to obtain for us devotion to most holy Mary and St. Joseph.

Evening Meditation.

“O GRACIOUS ADVOCATE.”

MARY AN ADVOCATE WHO IS ABLE TO SAVE ALL.

I.

So great is the authority that mothers possess over their sons, that even if they are monarchs, and have absolute dominion over every person in their kingdom, yet never can mothers become the subjects of their sons. It is true that Jesus now in Heaven sits at the right hand of the Father, that is, as St. Thomas explains it, even as Man, on account of the hypostatic union with the Person of the Divine Word. He has supreme dominion over all, and also over Mary; it will nevertheless be always true that for a time, when He was living in this world, He was pleased to humble Himself and to be subject to Mary, as we are told by St. Luke: *And he was subject to them.*—(Luke, ii. 51). And still more, says St. Ambrose, Jesus Christ having deigned to make Mary His Mother, inasmuch as He was her Son, He was truly obliged to obey her. And for this reason, says Richard of St. Laurence, while “of other Saints we say that they are with God; but of Mary alone can it be said that she was so far favoured as to be not only herself submissive to the will of God, but even that God was subject to her will.” And whereas of all other virgins, remarks the same author, we must say that *they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth*—

(Apoc. xiv. 4), of the Blessed Virgin Mary we can say that the Lamb follows her, having become subject to her.

And here we say, that although Mary, now in Heaven, can no longer command her Son, nevertheless her prayers are always powerful to obtain whatever she asks. “Mary,” says St. Bonaventure, “has this great privilege, that with her Son she above all the Saints is most powerful to obtain whatever she wills.” And why? Precisely for this reason—they are the prayers of His Mother.

II.

St. Peter Damian says the Blessed Virgin can do whatever she pleases both in Heaven and on earth. She is able to raise even those who are in despair to confidence; and he addresses her in these words: “All power is given to thee in Heaven and on earth, and nothing is impossible to thee who canst raise those who are in despair to the hope of salvation.” And then he adds that “when the Mother goes to seek a favour for us from Jesus Christ,” Whom the Saint calls the Golden Altar of Mercy, at which sinners obtain pardon, “her Son esteems her prayers so greatly, and is so desirous to satisfy her, that when she prays it seems as if she rather commanded than prayed, and was rather a queen than a handmaid.” Jesus is pleased thus to honour His beloved Mother who honoured Him so much during her life by immediately granting all that she asks or desires. This is beautifully confirmed by St. Germanus, who, addressing our Blessed Lady, says: “Thou art the Mother of God, and all-powerful to save sinners, and with God thou needest no other recommendation; for thou art the Mother of true Life.”

“At the command of Mary, all obey, even God.” St. Bernardine fears not to utter this sentence; meaning, indeed, to say that God grants the prayers of Mary as if they were commands. And hence St. Anselm addressing Mary says: “Our Lord, O most holy Virgin, has exalted thee to such a degree that by His favour all things that are possible to Him should be possible to

thee." "For thy protection is omnipotent, O Mary," says Cosmas of Jerusalem. "Yes, Mary is omnipotent," repeats Richard of St. Laurence; "for the queen by every law enjoys the same privileges as the king. And as," he adds, "the power of the son and that of the mother is the same, a mother is made omnipotent by an omnipotent Son." "And thus," says St. Antoninus, "God has placed the whole Church, not only under the patronage, but even under the dominion of Mary."

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

ST. TERESA'S DESIRE FOR DEATH.

Death is an object of the greatest terror to souls attached to this world. Those who love God especially desire it. St. Teresa in thinking of the danger she ran as long as life lasted, of offending God and losing Him, used to say that a single day, even a single hour was too long to have to live. "Alas! Lord, as long as we remain in this miserable life, life eternal is in jeopardy."

I.

If the worldly-minded have a fear of losing their goods, fleeting and miserable as they are, much greater is the fear the Saints have of losing God, Who is a Good infinite and eternal, and Who promises to bestow Himself in Heaven as a recompense upon him who has loved Him on earth, admitting him to the enjoyment of His beauty and of His own happiness. Hence as their whole fear during life has been simply the fear

of sinning, and thus losing the friendship of that Lord Whom they have loved so well, so their whole desire has been to die in the grace of God, and by death to gain the assurance of loving and possessing Him forever.

Death, then—that object of the greatest terror to souls attached to this world—is what those that love God especially desire: for, says St. Bernard, it is for these happy souls both the termination of their labours and the gate of life. Hence we see that among the Saints, one would call this life a prison and pray the Lord to deliver him out of it: *Deliver my soul from this prison*—(Ps. cxli. 8). Another, like St. Paul, would call it a real death: *Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*—(Rom. vii. 24).

But how are we to express the grief and the extreme anguish that our Saint experienced through her desire for death, more especially after the time when the Lord called her to His perfect love? She protests, in her *Life*, written in obedience to her confessor, that the desire that she had of dying, in order to see God, was so great, that it did not even afford her the leisure to think of her sins. This humble spouse of Jesus crucified spoke in this manner because she was continually bewailing those imperfections in her love of her Spouse into which she had formerly fallen—imperfections she pronounced to be monstrous and deserving of hell, but in reality, as her biographers declare, her failings never amounted to a mortal sin.

The Saint, in thinking, moreover, of the danger she was in, as long as life should last, of offending God and losing Him, used to say that a single day, and even a single hour, seemed to her too long to have to live. Hence she would exclaim: "Alas! Lord, as long as we remain in this miserable life, life eternal is ever in jeopardy. O life! enemy of my welfare, who will be able to bring thee to an end? I endure thee, because God endures thee. I preserve thee, because thou dost appertain to Him; may I never prove treacherous or ungrateful. Oh! when will that day of benediction arrive on which I shall behold thee, O life, swallowed

up in the boundless ocean of the sovereign truth, when thou wilt no longer possess the liberty to sin?"

O beautiful fatherland! O blessed fatherland of God-loving souls! where they love Him without fear of losing Him; without tepidity, and for ever! I greet thee from afar, from this valley of tears, and I sigh for thee, because I hope that in thee I shall love my God with all my powers for evermore.

II.

To our Saint's fear of the possibility of offending God in this life was joined the great desire that this loving soul entertained of seeing face to face the only object of her love, that she might thus gain the power of loving Him more perfectly, and of altogether uniting herself to Him. For this reason she could not endure to see herself at such a distance from the country of the Blessed; with abundance of tears, she would thus utter her complaint before her Spouse: "Alas! alas! Lord, this banishment is long indeed! What shall a soul confined in this prison do? Oh! Jesus, the life of man is long indeed! It is short, when considered as a means of gaining the life that is the true one; but it is long for that soul that desires to behold herself in the presence of her God." At other times, blending with her loving pains her distrust in her own merits and her hope in God, she would occupy herself in the composition of the following beautiful harmony of ejaculations so pleasing to her Beloved: "O life!" she would say, "O life! how canst thou keep thyself apart from thy Life? O death! O death! I know not who can fear thee, because in thee is life! Yet who shall not fear thee after having spent a part of this life without the love of his God? O my soul! serve thy God, and hope that in His mercy He will heal thy miseries."

But in order to understand the extent of the burning desire our Saint had for death, it is necessary that we should have a knowledge of the pain she experienced in continuing in life. She related to her confessor that

this was such that it seemed already to destroy and bring her life to an end. Under its influence, too, she would even fall into an ecstasy. To give vent to her affections, she drew up on this subject those burning words of which that celebrated hymn of hers is composed, which thus begins:

"I live, from myself am far away:

And hope to reach a life so high,

That I'm for ever dying because I do not die!"

Elsewhere she says: "When will it be, O my God, that I shall at last see my whole soul perfectly united to Thee, so that all its faculties may have complete fruition of Thee?"

In a word, the only relief and consolation she found in this life was in thinking of her death. So she used to comfort herself, while on earth, with words like these: "Then, then, O my soul, you will have entered into your rest, when you shall be holding converse with that sovereign Good and shall know what He knows: when you shall love what He loves, and enjoy all that constitutes His blessedness; for then you will be rid of your own wretched will." Thus, it may be said, that the life of our Saint was sustained by the hope of that life eternal, for which she had sacrificed all the goods of this world; "I had rather live and die," she tells us, "hoping for the life eternal, than have all the goods of the earth in my possession. Do not Thou abandon me, O Lord, for I hope in Thee. If only I may serve Thee without intermission, do with me whatsoever Thou pleasest."

O my holy advocate, Teresa, I rejoice with thee that thou hast reached the haven, the termination of thy sighs! Now thou dost no longer believe, thou beholdest the beauty of God! Thou no longer hopest, thou art possessed of the Sovereign Good! Thou art now rejoicing in the clear vision of that God Whom thou hast so long desired and loved! Thy love is now satiated! There is nothing for thy loving heart to long for more! O my Saint, have compassion on me who am still in the midst of the storm. Pray for me

that I may obtain salvation and go to join thee in loving that God Whom thou so greatly desirest to see loved.

Spiritual Reading.

“PARADISE! PARADISE!”

When the dignity of Cardinal was offered to St. Philip Neri, he cast his biretta into the air, and, looking up to Heaven, replied: “Paradise! Paradise!” The Blessed Giles would fall into an ecstasy, when the children, out of frolic, said to him: “Brother Giles, Paradise! Paradise!”

It is an opinion among theologians, that in Purgatory there is a peculiar pain called *the pain of languor*, which is inflicted upon those who had but little desire for Paradise during life on earth, and reasonably so, for we have but little love for God if we desire but little to enjoy His infinite beauty unveiled before our eyes, and the more so as it is impossible for us here in life not to be continually offending Him, at least in venial matters. Even if we do love Him here below, our love is, nevertheless, so imperfect, that we scarcely know that we love Him at all.

Let us, then, yearn for Paradise, where we shall offend God no more, and where we shall ever love Him with all our powers. When the troubles of this life press heavily upon us, let us animate ourselves by the hope of Paradise in order to bear them with tranquillity. When the world or the devil presents for our acceptance fruits that are forbidden, let us with good courage turn our back upon them, and lift up our eyes to Paradise. If the dread of God’s judgments alarms us, let us nerve ourselves by hoping in the goodness of our God, Who to make us understand how ardently He desires to give Paradise to us, has commanded us, under pain of damnation, to hope for it through His mercy. He even willed to purchase it at the cost of His Blood, and His Death, that so

He might obtain that great blessedness for us; and to assure us of it the more, He has been pleased to give us a pledge of it in the gift of Himself to us in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar.

If our weakness terrifies us, let us fortify our hope by the same goodness of our Lord, Who, after having given us His merits to entitle us to Paradise, will likewise give us the strength to persevere in His grace even to our life’s end, if we have recourse to His mercy, and pray to Him for that strength and perseverance.

The holy Mother Teresa used to say:

“Let your desire be to see God; your fear, to lose Him; your joy, whatever can bring you to Him.”
Burning with the desire of seeing God, the Saint composed her famous “Canticle,” “I die because I cannot die!” and on this text she wrote many beautiful stanzas, of which the following are two:—

Ah, Lord, my Light, and living Breath!
Take me, Oh, take me from this death,
And burst the bars that sever me

From my true Life above:

Think how I die, Thy face to see,
And cannot live away from Thee,

O my eternal Love!

And ever, ever weep and sigh,
Dying because I cannot die.

I weary of this endless strife;

I weary of this dying life—

This living death—this heavy chain;

This torment of delay,

In which her sins my soul detain;

Ah, when shall it be mine? Ah, when,

With my last breath to say—

“No more I weep—no more I sigh!

I’m dying of desire to die.”

HYMN IN HONOUR OF ST. TERESA.

Ye Angels most inflamed
 With fires of heavenly love,
 Bright Seraphim, descend
 From your high thrones above;
 To this most chosen soul
 Your loving succour bring—
 To her, the spouse belov'd
 Of Christ your God and King.

Jesus, your Love, your Life,
 Who loves the pure of heart,
 Has pierced Teresa's soul
 With love's own flaming dart;
 And lo! she pines away,
 She languishes, she sighs;
 For Him Who gave the wound,
 Of very love she dies.

.

To see her loving Spouse
 So fierce is her desire
 That evermore she burns,
 Consuming in its fire.
 That sweet and longing wish
 Into His arms to fly,
 Is but a living death,
 Because she cannot die.

No angels come to aid;
 Come Thou, Who in this breast
 Hast kindled flames so dear,
 Come Thou, and give her rest;
 Sick is her soul with love,
 And wounded is her heart;
 Thou didst inflict the wound,
 Then, Jesus, cure its smart.

Thy spouse was ever true,
 To please Thy Heart Divine,
 All earth could give she left,
 All she could give is Thine;
 And now, she loves Thee well,
 And sighs to come to Thee;
 She longs to take her flight,
 Ah! set her spirit free.
 (ST. ALPHONSUS.)

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

VI.—GOD WISHES ONLY OUR GOOD.

I.

Oh, how great indeed is the folly of those who resist the Divine Will! They will have to endure sufferings, for no one can ever prevent the accomplishment of the Divine decrees. *Who resisteth his will?*—(Rom. ix. 19). And, besides, they will have to bear the burden of their sorrows without deriving benefit from them; nay, they will draw down upon themselves even greater chastisements in the next life, as well as greater quietude in this: *Who hath resisted him, and hath had peace?*—(Job ix. 4). Let the sick man make as great an outcry as he will about his pains; let him who is in poverty murmur and rage and blaspheme against God as much as he pleases—what will he gain by it all, but the doubling of his afflictions? "What are you in search of, O foolish man," says St. Augustine, "when seeking good things? Seek that one Good in Whom are all things that are good." What are you going in search of, poor foolish man, outside your God? Find God, unite yourself to His holy will, bind yourself up with it; and you will be ever happy, both in this life and in the next.

In short, what does God will but our good? Whom can we ever find to love us more than He? It is His will, not merely that no one should perish, but that

all should save and sanctify their souls : *Not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance*—(2 Peter iii. 9). *This is the will of God, your sanctification*—(1 Thess. iv. 8). It is in our good that God has placed His own glory, being, as St. Leo says, of His own nature, goodness infinite. And as it is of the nature of goodness to desire to spread itself abroad, God has a supreme desire to make the souls of men partakers of His own bliss and glory. And if, in this life, He sends us tribulations, they are all for our own good : *All things work together unto good*—(Rom. viii. 28). Even chastisements, as was observed by the holy Judith, do not come to us from God for our destruction, but in order to secure our amendment and salvation : *Let us believe that they have happened for our amendment, and not for our destruction*—(Judith, viii. 27).

II.

In order to save us from evils that are eternal, the Lord throws the shield of His good will around us : *O Lord, thou hast crowned us as with a shield of thy good will*—(Ps. v. 18). He not only desires, but is eager for our salvation : *The Lord is careful for me*—(Ps. xxxix. 18).—For what is there that God will ever refuse us, says St. Paul, after having given us His own Son? *He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also with him given us all things?*—(Rom. viii. 32). This, then, is the confidence in which we ought to abandon ourselves to the Divine dispensations, all of which have our good for their object. Let us therefore repeat, whatever circumstances may happen to befall us : *In peace, in the self-same, I will sleep and I will rest; for thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope*—(Ps. iv. 10). Let us also place ourselves entirely in God's hands, for He will certainly take care of us : *Casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you*—(1 Peter v. 7). Then, let our thoughts be fixed on God, and on the fulfilment of His will, that He may think of us and of our good. "Daughter," said

the Lord to St. Catharine of Sienna, "do thou think of Me, and I will ever think of thee." Let us frequently repeat with the sacred spouse, *My Beloved to me, and I to him*—(Cant. ii. 16). The thoughts of my Beloved are for my welfare; I will think of nothing but of pleasing Him, and bringing myself into perfect conformity with His holy will. The holy Abbot Nilus used to say that we ought never to pray to God to make our will succeed, but to accomplish His will in us. And whenever things befall us that are not according to our wishes, let us accept them all, as from God's hands, not merely with patience, but with joy, as did the Apostles when they went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus—(Acts, v. 41).

Monday—Twentieth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

ST. TERESA'S PRECIOUS DEATH.

The dying Saint conversed lovingly with her Divine Spouse : "O my Lord, and my Spouse, the hour so earnestly longed for has at last arrived! It is time now that we should see each other, O Lord! The day has dawned at last when I am to leave my place of exile to go to share with Thee in that joy which I have so ardently desired."

I.

The holy Mother Teresa, on leaving Burgos, was desirous of going to her dear convent of Avila, that she might rest awhile in that her first and favourite abode, where she began her reform; but her heavenly Spouse summoned her to another home, and to eternal repose.

The Lord wished to have her in the land of the Blessed; therefore He permitted that, as she was on her way, her Provincial should send her an order to repair to the convent of Alba. There God was awaiting her, to deliver her from the prison of this life, and to conduct her to the everlasting nuptials.

Come, O my Saint! Come! your Spouse deems that your labours have now been sufficient; and His Heart is touched with compassion by your sighs. Come to the repose that you desire; come to the haven after having encountered the storm. Come to begin that new life of love which you will enter by a death of love, which the Lord is preparing for you in this favoured spot.

The Saint obeyed, and reached Alba on St. Matthew's Day, at six o'clock in the evening, in the year 1582. Her daughters welcomed her with great reverence and great affection, perhaps not without some presentiment that they should lose her before long. They received her benediction and kissed her hand, whilst the Saint was tenderly and affectionately speaking with them.

When she arrived she was fatigued from her journey, and unwell from an attack of fever; so that she retired immediately to her bed at the entreaty of her children with these words: "Oh! may God assist me, my dear daughters, as I feel quite overpowered! It is now more than twenty years since I retired to rest at so early an hour. Blessed be the Lord that my sickness has fallen upon me while I am amongst you."

During the eight subsequent days her illness continued, but she never allowed it to prevent her from rising to receive her Jesus in Holy Communion, Who was to her the only Life of her life.

But, on St. Michael's day, still suffering from the sickness that was to bring her to her grave, she took to her bed in the infirmary, never more to leave it. There she remained for a day and a night in an ecstasy of prayer, and having learned then through a revelation, the hour and the moment of her decease, she told the Venerable Sister Ann of St. Bartholomew, her beloved companion in all her travels, that the hour

of her departure had come. Three days before her death, when Father Anthony of Jesus had come to hear her confession, he told her to pray to God to preserve her life for the good of the Reform; but the Saint replied that there was no longer any need to think of this, because her death was a certainty, and her presence upon earth was no longer necessary. The doctors ordered her to be bled, and to this she willingly submitted, not out of any desire for recovery, but from the fervent wish she had to suffer, and to close her life in the midst of sufferings, as she had ever desired, for the love of her dearest Spouse, Whose will it had been to expire amidst so many torments on the Cross.

On the eve of the Feast of St. Francis, she asked for the Most Holy Viaticum, and whilst they were bringing it, all her Religious being assembled in her chamber, she burst into tears, and clasping her hands together, said to them: "My daughters and my mothers, pardon me for the bad example I have set you, and do not imitate me who am the greatest sinner in the world, and who have observed my Rule less than all others. For the love of God, my children, I pray you to observe that Rule perfectly, and to be obedient to your Superiors." She who had been so great a lover of obedience, recommended nothing but this virtue when at the point of death, knowing, as she did, that the perfection of Religious depends on the perfection of their obedience.

II.

The Holy Viaticum having been brought, she had the courage, at the coming of her Spouse, to raise herself into a sitting posture, although her feebleness was such that she could scarcely stir. The ardour with which her love inspired her was so great that she appeared ready to throw herself from her bed to go to meet the only Beloved of her soul, and receive Him. Her countenance became so inflamed and radiant that they could not gaze upon her. She clasped her hands together, burning, like the phoenix, with the liveliest

ardour the nearer she approached the end of her life, and the more she lovingly conversed with her Spouse, so that she drew tears from all present. Amongst other things, she said: "O my Lord and my Spouse, the hour so earnestly longed for has at last arrived! It is time now that we should see each other, O Lord! The day has dawned at last when I am to leave my place of exile to go to share with Thee in that joy which I have so ardently desired."

What gave her most consolation in that hour, and chiefly called forth her thankfulness towards God, was the fact of her being a child of the Holy Church. She could not refrain from saying over and over again: *After all, O Lord, I am a daughter of the Church.* She also frequently repeated the versicle of David: *A contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*—(Ps. l. 19). On the following day, after receiving Extreme Unction, she held the Crucifix tight in her embrace, and remained fourteen hours in an ecstasy, with a countenance shining like fire, and immovable, beginning from that time to experience a foretaste of the great glory God had prepared for her in Heaven, where her Spouse was summoning her in these words: *Arise, make haste, my love . . . and come*—(Cant. ii. 10). Then it was that, before the Saint expired, Sister Ann, her companion, saw her Spouse, Jesus, and a multitude of angels, come and take up their position at the foot of her bed, awaiting the moment when they should conduct her to Heaven. Beside Teresa's bed was her sweet Mother Mary and St. Joseph, her beloved Father. Lastly, she saw a multitude of persons, clothed in white and all shining with light, entering with great joy into the cell of the dying Saint. It is supposed that these were the Ten Thousand Martyrs* who had promised her that they would accompany her to Paradise. They drew near at the moment when Teresa, her beautiful life being consumed in a furnace of love, expired sweetly through the force of that love. Her blessed soul issued forth from its prison and flew away like a dove to its

* Of whom mention is made in the Martyrology on June 22.—Ed.

Beloved in Paradise. Indeed, at the very moment they saw her soul, as a white dove, flying to Heaven. At the same time she appeared in glory to Sister Catharine of Jesus, and told her that her life had been terminated through the vehemence of her love, and that she had gone to rejoice in God. Her virgin body forthwith exhaled a delightful fragrance, which diffused itself throughout the whole convent.

Behold what a blessed reward the labours of the Saints receive at the hour of death! While sinners experience at death sadness, confusion, remorse, despair—the foretaste of their damnation—the Saints, on the contrary, are filled with confidence, peace, light and joy—a foretaste of Paradise. Come, ye senseless ones, come and see in this poor cell of Teresa, how contentedly those die, and leave this earth, who have already abandoned the world to give themselves wholly to God.

Oh, devout soul, fail not to keep your eyes on the closing scenes that will take place at the hour of your own death. Do now what you will wish to have done, but will not have the power to do then, and you will become a saint, and your death will be a happy one.

Behold, then, O Teresa, thy sighs are heard, thy desires are fulfilled, thy love satisfied! Thou art now released from banishment and hast reached thy place of rest. Thou art now rejoicing with that Good Who was the object of thy love, loving that God Whom thou didst sigh after. But amidst thy splendours, do not be unmindful of us, wretched as we are. Have compassion on us who go on our way weeping as travellers in this valley of tears, and ever in danger of losing God. For pity sake, address thy Jesus in our behalf that He may pardon the many sins we have committed. Pray to Him to deliver us from every attachment to the things of this world which would hinder us from going to join thee in loving God in Paradise.

Spiritual Reading.

LITTLE CHAPLET IN HONOUR OF ST. TERESA.

(To be recited every day during the Novena.)

I.

O most amiable Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the great gift of Faith and of devotion to the Holy Sacrament, which Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy faithful spouse, to grant us the gift of a lively Faith and of a fervent devotion towards the most Holy Sacrament of the altar where Thou, O infinite Majesty, hast obliged Thyself to abide with us even to the end of the world, and wherein Thou dost so lovingly give Thy whole self to us.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love
Teresa's beauteous heart,
Of her sweet love upon my soul
Let fall a flaming dart.

II.

O most merciful Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the great gift of Hope which Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy holy spouse, to give us a great confidence in Thy goodness, by reason of Thy Precious Blood, that Thou hast shed to its last drop for our salvation.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love
Teresa's beauteous heart,
Of her sweet love upon my soul
Let fall a flaming dart.

III.

O most loving Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the great gift of Love which Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy most loving spouse, to give us the great, the crowning gift of Thy perfect Charity.
Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love
Teresa's beauteous heart,
Of her sweet love upon my soul
Let fall a flaming dart.

IV.

O most sweet Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the gift of great desire and resolution which Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa, that she might love Thee perfectly. We pray Thee, by Thy merits and by those of Thy most generous spouse, to give us a true desire and a true resolution of pleasing Thee to the utmost of our power.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love
Teresa's beauteous heart,
Of her sweet love upon my soul
Let fall a flaming dart.

V.

O most kind Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the great gift of humility that Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy most humble spouse, to grant us the grace of a true humility, which may make us ever find our joy in humiliations, and prefer contempt to every honour.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love
Teresa's beauteous heart,
Of her sweet love upon my soul
Let fall a flaming dart.

VI.

O most bountiful Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the gift of devotion towards Thy sweet Mother, Mary, and her holy spouse, Joseph, which Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy most dear spouse, to give us the grace of a special and tender devotion towards Thy most holy Mother, Mary, and towards Thy beloved foster-father, Joseph.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love
Teresa's beauteous heart,
Of her sweet love upon my soul
Let fall a flaming dart.

VII.

O most loving Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the wonderful gift of the wound in the heart that Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy seraphic spouse, to grant us also a like wound of love, that, henceforth, we may love Thee, and give our mind to the love of nothing but Thee.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love
Teresa's beauteous heart,
Of her sweet love upon my soul
Let fall a flaming dart.

VIII.

O most beloved Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the eminent gift of the desire for death which Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy most constant spouse, to grant us the grace of desiring death, in order to go and possess Thee eternally in the country of the Blessed.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love
Teresa's beauteous heart,
Of her sweet love upon my soul
Let fall a flaming dart.

IX.

Lastly, O dearest Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the gift of the precious death which Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa, giving her to die a sweet death of love. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy most affectionate spouse, to grant us a good death; and that if we do not die of love, we may, at least, die burning with love for Thee, that so dying, we may be able to go and love Thee for evermore with a perfect love in Heaven.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love
Teresa's beauteous heart,
Of her sweet love upon my soul
Let fall a flaming dart.

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

VII.—GOD WISHES ONLY OUR GOOD.

I.

What greater satisfaction can a soul enjoy than in knowing that by suffering with a good will whatever it may have to suffer, it gives to God the greatest pleasure it can give Him? The masters of the spiritual life teach that, though the desire which certain souls have of suffering to give God pleasure is acceptable to Him, He is yet more pleased with the conformity of those who wish for neither joy nor pain, but, in perfect resignation to His holy will, have no other desire than to fulfill whatever the will of God may be.

If, then, O devout soul, you would please God, and live a life of contentment, unite yourself always and in everything to the Divine will. Consider that all the sins you have committed, when leading a life of disorder and unhappiness, have come to pass in consequence of having separated yourself from the will of God. Unite yourself from this day forward, with His good pleasure; and always say, in everything that may befall you: *Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in thy sight*—(Matt. xi. 26). So may it be, O Lord, as it is pleasing unto Thee. Whenever you are troubled on account of some adversity, consider that it has come from God; and therefore say at once: "God wills it so"—and remain in peace. *I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth, because thou hast done it*—(Ps. xxxviii. 10). To this end you must direct all your thoughts and prayers to God, in Meditations, in Communion, in Visits to the Most Holy Sacrament, that He would make you accomplish His will. Strive to make continually an offering of yourself, saying: O my God, behold, here I am; do what Thou wilt with me, and with all that I have. This was St. Teresa's continual exercise; fifty times a day at least did the Saint offer herself to the Lord, that He might dispose of her according to His pleasure.

II.

Oh, happy will you be if you act ever thus! You will certainly become a saint; your life will be peaceful, and your death most happy. When any one is passing to the other life, our hopes of his salvation depend on whether he has died resigned or not. If, after having during life welcomed all things as coming from God, you in like manner embrace death also in order to accomplish the Divine will, you will certainly secure your salvation and die the death of a saint. Let us, then, abandon ourselves in everything to the good pleasure of that Lord Who, being most wise, knows what is best for us; and being most loving, since He has sacrificed His life through love of us, wills also that

which is most for our good. Let us be thoroughly assured and convinced that God works for our good incomparably beyond all we can do or desire for ourselves.

Tuesday—Twentieth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

FEAST OF ST. TERESA.

(OCTOBER 15.)

What makes the holy Mother, Teresa, an object of our admiration is the steadfastness of soul with which she strove to accomplish whatever she knew was acceptable to God. She taught her children that "Divine love is to be acquired by a determination to work and suffer for God."

I.

Let us consider the burning love which this seraphic Saint entertained for God.

To her it seemed impossible that there could be in the world a single person who did not love God; and she would say: "My God, art not Thou exceedingly lovable on account of Thine infinite perfections, and of the infinite love Thou bearest towards us? How, then, can there be any one that does not love Thee?" Most humble though she was, yet in speaking of love she did not shrink from saying: "I am all imperfection, excepting in desires and in love." The Saint has left us on record the following excellent instruction: "Detach your heart from everything: seek God and you will find Him." On the other hand, she used to say, that it is easy for those who love God to detach

themselves from the earth: "Ah! my God, we only need to love Thee truly, for Thee to make everything easy to us." Again, she writes: "Since live we must, let us live for Thee, so that our selfish interests may at last disappear. What greater advantage can any one gain than that which is to be found in pleasing Thee! O my delight and my God, what shall I do in order to please Thee?" She even went so far as to say that she would not be made sorry at seeing others in Heaven more happy than herself; but that she could not make up her mind to see any one love God more than she should love Him.

What makes this Saint an object of our admiration, is the steadfastness of soul with which she strove to accomplish everything she knew to be acceptable to God. She used to say: "There is nothing, however painful, that I am not prepared courageously to undertake, if it were set before me to do." Hence she gave as her instruction, that "Divine love is to be acquired by a determination to act and to suffer for God." "For," said she in another place, "the devil has no fear of irrisolute souls." To please God, she even went so far, as is well known, as to make a vow of performing whatever was the most perfect. And since sufferings endured for God are the strongest proofs of love, she desired to live for nothing but to suffer. Therefore she wrote: "It seems to me that there is no reason to live, except it be to suffer; and this it is for which I most fervently pray to God. To Him I say with my whole heart: Lord, either to suffer or to die! I ask of Thee for this, and nothing more." Her love became so ardent, that Jesus Christ one day appeared to her and said: "Teresa, you are all Mine, and I am all yours."

II.

So dear did Teresa become to her Spouse Jesus, that He sent one of the Seraphim to wound her heart with a dart of fire. At length she died as she had lived, all inflamed with love. When the end of her life was drawing near, all her sighs were for death, that she

might go to unite herself to her God: "O death!" she said, "I know not who can dread thee, for in thee is life. Serve thy God, O my soul, and hope that He will bring thee a remedy for thy pains." For this reason she composed the affectionate Canticle of love: that opens with the following words:—

"I live, but from myself am far away:

And hope to reach a life so high,

That I'm forever dying because I cannot die."

When the Holy Viaticum was brought to her, she exclaimed: "O my Saviour, the longed-for moment is at last come! Now begins the time when we shall see each other face to face." Then she died of love, as she herself revealed after her death.

O my seraphic Saint, thou art now rejoicing in thy God, Whom thou didst love so much during thy lifetime, when in constant danger of losing Him. Obtain for us, by thy prayers, the grace that we may go to love our God in Paradise with thee for evermore. Amen.

ACT OF CONSECRATION TO ST. TERESA.

O seraphic virgin, well-beloved spouse of the Divine Word, St. Teresa of Jesus! I, (N.N.) though very unworthy to be thy servant, yet encouraged by thy great goodness and by the desire I have to serve thee, in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity, of my Guardian Angel, and of the whole heavenly court, choose thee to-day, after Mary, for my mother, my mistress, and my special patroness, and I take the firm resolution always to serve thee, and to do all I possibly can that others may serve thee. Therefore, O my seraphic Saint, I supplicate thee, by the Blood thy Divine Spouse shed for me, to receive me among the number of thy devoted servants. Assist me in my necessities, and obtain for me the grace to imitate thy virtues by walking in the true road of Christian perfection. Aid me particularly in prayer, and ask God to give me this glorious gift that thou didst receive in

so eminent a degree, in order that, contemplating and loving the sovereign Good, I may avoid, in my thoughts, words, and deeds, all that might offend, or be even in the least displeasing to thee and to my God. Accept this little offering as a mark of my engagement to thy service, and assist me during my life, and above all at the hour of my death. Amen.

Spiritual Reading.

THE TEACHING OF ST. TERESA ON THE LOVE OF GOD AND OUR NEIGHBOUR.

I.—We must love God perfectly; that is,

We must love Him above all things, so as to be willing to die rather than commit the least wilful sin. St. Teresa says: "May God deliver you from deliberately committing even the most trivial sin!" "For," she adds, "the devil, by means of the smallest things, opens a way through which greater things may enter." Again, she has this admonition: "True devotion consists in not offending God and in being resolved to do nothing but what is good and holy."

We must love God with our whole heart, ever desiring to arrive at a higher degree of perfection in order to please Him. St. Teresa observes: "God will not suffer any good desire to go unrewarded even in this life." And she also says that our Lord, ordinarily, does not confer many signal favours, "except upon those who have greatly desired to love Him." But to desires we must add actions, by overcoming with fortitude human respect, our own repugnances, and all worldly interests.

We must love God continually, and on all occasions; and for this end we must direct and offer all to Him, even our indifferent actions, such as our eating, diversions, walking, working, every breath we breathe, uniting all with the actions of Jesus Christ and of the Blessed Virgin when on earth. Moreover we must cheerfully suffer all adverse and painful things, conforming

ourselves and uniting ourselves to the will of God in whatever He is pleased to do in us and for us. Upon this St. Teresa has left the following excellent sentiments: "And what more can we wish to gain than the testimony of doing what is pleasing to God?" And she explains what this testimony is: "Whilst we live, our gain does not consist in endeavouring to enjoy God, but in doing His will. Great is the fruit of this giving of our will to God, for it induces God to unite Himself to our lowliness. True union is the union of our will with the will of God."

To promote this and keep alive the flame of Divine love, we must make frequent acts of love during the course of the day, but particularly when we approach holy Communion, and during the time of Meditation, saying to God: My most beloved and only Treasure, my God, my All, I love Thee with my whole heart. I give my whole self to Thee without reserve, and I consecrate to Thee all my thoughts, desires, and affections. I desire, I sigh, I seek for nothing but Thee alone, my only life. To please Thee is my only delight. Do in me and with me whatever Thou pleasest. My God and only good, grant me but to love Thee, and I ask for nothing more.

II.—In order to maintain the union of the soul with God, we must exercise charity towards our neighbour.

As regards the *interior*, it consists in wishing the neighbour the same good that we wish ourselves; in not wishing him the evil we do not wish ourselves; in rejoicing in his good, and regretting the evil which befalls him, although we may naturally experience some repugnance in so doing.

As regards the *exterior*:

1. We must not murmur against the neighbour, deride or laugh at him, but speak always well of him, and defend, or at least excuse his intention.
2. We must console him under afflictions.
3. We must succour him in his necessities of soul and body, particularly in sickness.

4. We must condescend to the neighbour, as Saint Teresa expresses it, in all that is not sin.
5. We must not give our neighbour bad counsel or bad example.
6. We must occasionally reprove him, but mildly and seasonably, but not when we are agitated with passion. We must above all endeavour to render good for evil, at least to speak well of those who injure us, treat them with meekness, and recommend them to God, turning away our thoughts from the annoyances, harshness, and provocations which we consider we have received from them.

As a conclusion to this short practice we must note, amongst others, the following maxims on perfection which St. Teresa has left us in various parts of her works :

“All our efforts produce little result, if we do not get rid of self-confidence, so as to place our confidence wholly in God.

“Because we do not interiorly give all our affection to God, so neither does God give us all the treasures of His love.

“May God deliver us from ostentatious devotion.

“I have often found that there is nothing more efficacious than holy water for driving away the devils.

“All that we can do is but nothing compared with a single drop of the Blood which the Saviour shed for us.

“If we do not put an obstacle, God will not hesitate to grant us the assistance necessary in order to become saints.

“God does not leave without reward a single glance towards Heaven accompanied by the remembrance of Him.

“The Lord wishes for nothing from us but a resolute will, in order to go on to accomplish all that remains to be done on His part.

“God never sends a pain which He does not afterwards repay by some favour.

“If the soul does not keep itself apart from the pleasures of the world, it will soon become careless in the way of the Lord.

“Do not mention your temptations to imperfect souls, for you will do an injury both to them and to yourself. Communicate them only to the perfect.

“Let your desire be to see God; your fear be to lose God; your joy be whatever can conduct you to God.”

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa, now and forever. Amen.

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

VIII.—SPECIAL PRACTICES OF THIS VIRTUE.

I.

Let us come to the practice of this virtue of conformity to God's will, and consider in what we have to bring ourselves into conformity with the will of God.

In the first place, we must have this conformity as regards those things that come to us from without, such as great heat, great cold, rain, scarcity, pestilence, and the like. We must take care not to say : What intolerable heat ! What terrible cold ! What a misfortune ! How unlucky ! What wretched weather ! or other words expressive of disagreement with the will of God. We ought to will everything to be as it is, since God it is Who wills it so. St. Francis Borgia, on going one night to a house of the Society when the snow was falling, knocked at the door several times ; but, the Fathers being asleep, the door was not opened. They made great lamentations in the morning for having kept him so long waiting in the open air, but the Saint said that during the time he had been greatly consoled by the thought that it was God Who was casting the snowflakes down upon him.

In the second place, we must have this conformity as regards things that happen to us from within, as in the

sufferings consequent on hunger, thirst, poverty, desolation, or disgrace. In all things, let us ever say: "Lord, Thine it is to make and to unmake; I am content, I will only what Thou dost will." And thus, too, we ought, as F. Rodriguez says, to reply to those imaginary cases which the devil occasionally suggests to the mind, in order at least to dishearten us. If such a person were to say so-and-so to you, or if he were to do so-and-so to you, what would you say? What would you do? Let your answer always be: "I would say and do that which God wills." And by this means we shall keep ourselves free from all fault and be at peace.

II.

In the third place, if we have any natural defect either of mind or body—a bad memory, slowness of apprehension, mean abilities, a crippled limb, or weak health—let us not, therefore, make lamentation. What were our deserts, and what obligation was God under to bestow upon us a mind more richly endowed, or a body more perfectly framed? Could He not have created us mere brute animals? or have left us in our own nothingness? Who is there that ever receives a gift and tries to make bargains about it? Let us, then, return God thanks for what, through a pure act of His goodness, He has bestowed upon us; and let us rest content with the manner in which He has treated us. Who can tell whether, if we had had better abilities, more robust health, or greater personal attractions, we should not have possessed them to our destruction? How many there are whose ruin has been occasioned by their talents and learning, of which they have grown proud, and in consequence of which they have looked upon others with contempt—a danger which is easily incurred by those who excel others in learning and ability! How many others there are whose personal beauty or bodily strength have furnished the occasions of plunging them into innumerable acts of wickedness! And, on the contrary, how many there are who, in consequence of their poverty, infirmity, or ugliness, have sanctified

themselves and been saved, who, had they been rich, strong, or handsome, might have been damned! And thus let us rest content ourselves with that which God has given us: *But one thing is necessary*—(Luke x. 42). Beauty is not necessary, nor health, nor keenness of intellect; that which alone is necessary is the salvation of our soul.

Wednesday—Twentieth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

EVIL DOERS SHALL BE CUT OFF.

When the tower of Siloe fell and killed eighteen persons, the Lord said to those who were present: *Think you that they also were debtors above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem? No, I say to you: but except you do penance you shall all likewise perish.*

I.

Oh, how just God is when the time of vengeance arrives! He causes the sinner to be ensnared and strangled in the net his own hands have woven. *The Lord shall be known when he executeth judgments; the sinner hath been caught in the works of his own hands*—(Ps. ix. 17). Baronius relates how Herodias died, who caused St. John the Baptist to be beheaded. As she was crossing frozen water one day the ice broke under her, and she remained with her head above the ice. In her violent struggling for life, the head was severed from the body, and thus she died.

Let us tremble when we see others punished, knowing as we do, that we ourselves have deserved the same punishments. When the Tower of Siloe fell and killed

eighteen persons, the Lord said to those who were present: *Think you that they also were debtors above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem?* Do you think that these poor creatures alone were in debt to God's justice on account of their sins? *No, I say to you: but except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish*—(Luke, xiii. 4-5). O, how many unfortunate men damn themselves by false hope in the Divine mercy? Yes, God is merciful, and therefore assists and protects those who hope in His mercy: *He is the protector of all that trust in him*—(Ps. xvii. 31). But He assists and protects those only who hope in Him, with the intention of changing their lives, not those whose hope is accompanied by a perverse intention of continuing in sin. The hope of the latter is not acceptable to God; He abominates and punishes it: *Their hope, the abomination of the soul*—(Job. xi. 20). Poor sinners, their greatest misery is, that they are on their way to hell, and do not know their state. They jest, and they laugh, and they despise the threats of God, as if God had assured them that He would not punish them. "Whence," exclaims St. Bernard, "this accursed security?" *Unde hæc securitas maledicta?* Accursed security which brings you to hell! *I will come to them that are at rest, and dwell securely*—(Ezech. xxxviii. 11). The Lord is patient, but when the hour of chastisement arrives, then will He justly condemn to hell those wretches who continue in sin, and live in peace, as if there were no hell at all for them.

Let there be no more sin. Let us be converted if we wish to escape the scourge which hangs over us! If we do not cease from sin, God will be obliged to punish us: *For evil-doers shall be cut off*—(Ps. xxxvi. 9). The obstinate are not only finally shut out from Paradise, but hurried off the earth, lest their example should draw others into destruction. *Now the axe is laid to the root of the trees*—(Luke, iii. 9). It is said that the axe is laid, not to the branches, but to the root, so that it will be irreparably exterminated. When the branches are lopped, the tree continues still to live; but when the tree is torn up from the root, it then dies,

and is cast into the fire. *The axe is laid to the root.* We should tremble lest God make us die in our sins, for if we so die we shall be cast into the fire of hell, where our ruin shall be eternal.

II.

But, you will say: I have committed many sins during the past, and the Lord has borne with me. I may, therefore, hope that He will deal mercifully with me in the future. Do not speak so. *Say not: I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me? for the Most High is a patient rewarder*—(Ecclesi. v. 4). God bears with you now, but He will not always bear with you. *Now, therefore, stand up, that I may plead in judgment against you . . . concerning all the kindness of the Lord*—(1 Kings, xii. 7), said Samuel to the Hebrews. Oh how terribly does not the abuse of the Divine mercies assist in procuring the damnation of the ungrateful! *Gather them together as sheep for a sacrifice; and prepare them for the day of slaughter*—(Jer. xii. 3). In the end those who will not be converted shall be victims of Divine justice, and the Lord will condemn them to eternal death, *when the day of slaughter, the day of His vengeance shall have arrived.* We have reason always to be in dread, as long as we are not resolved to abandon sin, lest that day should be already at hand. *God is not mocked; for what things a man shall sow, these also shall he reap*—(Gal. vi. 7-8). Sinners mock God by confessing at Easter, or two or three times a year, and then returning to the vomit, and yet hoping after all that to obtain salvation. "He is a mocker, not a penitent," says St. Isidore, "who continues to do that for which he says he is penitent"; but, *God is not mocked!* They hope for salvation!

What do they dare to expect? *What things a man shall sow, these also shall he reap.* What things do men sow? Blasphemy, revenge, theft, impurity: what then do they hope for? He who sows in sin can hope to reap nothing but chastisements and hell. *For he that soweth in his flesh, continues the same Apostle, of the flesh also shall reap corruption*—(Ib.)

Spiritual Reading.

“ ONLY PRETENDING NOT TO SEE.”

St. John Chrysostom says there are some who are only pretending not to see. They see the chastisements for sin, but pretend not to see them. There are others, says St. Ambrose, who fear not, because chastisements have not overtaken themselves. To all these it will happen, as it did to mankind, at the time of the Deluge. The Patriarch Noe foretold and announced to them the punishments God had prepared for their sins; but the sinners would not believe him, and notwithstanding that the Ark was being built before their eyes, they did not change their lives, but went on sinning until the punishment was upon them, until they were drowned in the Deluge. *And they knew not until the flood came and took them all away*—(Matt. xxiv. 39). The same happened to the great Babylon, in the Apocalypse, who said: *I sit a queen, . . . and sorrow I shall not see*—(Apoc. xviii. 7). She persevered in her impurity in the hope of not being punished, but the chastisement at length came as had been predicted. *Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning, and famine, and she shall be burnt with the fire*—(ib. 8).

Who knows whether this is not the last call which God may give you? Our Lord says that a certain owner of a vineyard, finding a fig-tree for the third year without fruit, said: *Behold, for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none. Cut it down, therefore, why cumbereth it the ground?*—(Luke xiii. 7). Then the dresser of the vine replied: *Lord, let it alone this year also . . . and if happily it bear fruit—but if not, then, after that, thou shalt cut it down*—(Luke, xiii. 7-9). Let us enter into ourselves. For years has God been visiting our souls, and has found no other fruit than thorns and thistles, that is to say, sins. Hear how the Divine justice exclaims: *Cut it down, therefore, why cumbereth it the ground?* but Mercy

pleads, *Let it alone this year also*. Let us give it one trial more; let us see whether it will not be converted at this other call. But tremble lest mercy may not have granted to justice that if you do not now amend, your life should be cut off, and your soul condemned to hell. Tremble and take measures that the mouth of the pit close not over you. Such was the prayer of David: *Let not the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me*—(Ps. lxxviii. 16). This is what sin does. It causes the mouth of the pit, that is, the state of damnation into which the sinner has fallen, to close over him by degrees. As long as that pit is not entirely closed, there is some hope of escape; but if it be once shut, what further hope remains? By the closing of the pit, I mean the sinner's being shut out from every glimmer of grace, and he stops at nothing. Thus is accomplished what the wise man has said: *The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth*—(Prov. xviii. 3). He despises the laws of God, admonitions, sermons, excommunications, threats—he despises hell itself! Such a man can be saved, but his salvation is morally impossible. Perhaps you have yourself come to despise the chastisements of God? If it be so, what should you do? Should you despair? No; you know what you have to do. Have recourse to the Mother of God. Although you should be in despair, and abandoned by God, remember that Mary is the hope of the despairing, and the succour of the most abandoned. St. Bernard says the same thing: “Let him who despairs hope in thee!” But if God wishes that I should be lost, what hope can there be for me? But God says: No, my son, I do not wish to see you lost: *I desire not the death of the wicked*—(Ezech. xxxiii. 11). And what then do you desire, O Lord? I wish the sinner to be converted, and recover the life of My grace—*that the wicked turn from his way and live*—(Ibid.). Fling yourself then at once at the feet of Jesus Christ; behold Him with His arms open to embrace you!

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

IX.—SPECIAL PRACTICES OF THIS VIRTUE.

I.

We must be particularly conformed to God's will, and resigned under pressure of corporal infirmities; and we must embrace them willingly, both in the manner, and at the time, God wills. Nevertheless, we must employ the usual remedies, for this also is what the Lord wills; but if they do us no good, let us unite ourselves to the will of God, and this will do us much more good than health. O Lord, let us then say, I have no wish either to recover or to remain sick: I will only what Thou dost will. Certainly virtue is greater, if, in times of sickness, we do not complain of our sufferings; but when these press hard upon us, it is not a fault to make them known to our friends, or even to pray to God to liberate us from them. I am speaking now of sufferings that are really severe; for there are many who, with very great fault in every trifling pain or weariness, would have the whole world come to compassionate them, and shed tears of pity for them. Even Jesus Christ, on seeing the near approach of His most bitter Passion, manifested to His disciples what He suffered: *My soul is sorrowful even unto death*—(Matt. xxvi. 38), and He prayed the Eternal Father to liberate Him from it: *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me*—(Ibid. 39). But Jesus Himself has taught us what we ought to do after praying in like manner—namely straightway to resign ourselves to the Divine will, adding, as He did: *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wiltest*.

II.

How foolish those are who say that they wish for health in order to render greater service to God, by the

observance of the rules, by serving the community, by going to church, by receiving Holy Communion, by doing penance, by study, by employing themselves in the saving of souls, or by hearing Confessions, and by preaching! But, I wish you would tell me why it is that you desire to do these things. You will say it is to please God. And why go out of your way in order to do this; certain, as you are, that what pleases God is not that you keep the rules, receive Communion, do acts of penance, study, or preach sermons, but that you suffer with patience the infirmity or the pains which He sees fit to send you? Unite your own sufferings, then, to those of Jesus Christ. But, you may answer: I am troubled that, in consequence of being such an invalid, I am useless and burdensome to everybody. But as you resign yourself to the will of God, so you ought to believe that your Superiors, too, resign themselves, seeing, as they do, that it is not through any laziness of yours, but through the will of God, that this burden is upon the house. Ah, these desires and regrets do not spring from our love of God, but from our love of self, which is hunting after excuses for departing from the will of God! Is it our wish to give pleasure to God? Let us say, then, whenever we are ill: *Fiat voluntas Tua. They will be done*. And let us be ever repeating it, even for the hundredth or thousandth time; and by this alone we shall give more pleasure to God than by all the mortifications and devotions we might perform. There is no better way of serving God than by cheerfully embracing His will. The Blessed Father Avila wrote thus to a priest who was an invalid: "My friend, do not stop to think of all you might do if you were well, but be content to remain unwell as long as God shall please. If your object be to do the will of God, how can it be of more consequence for you to be well than ill?" And certainly this was wisely said; for God is not glorified so much by our works as by our resignation and conformity to His holy will. And therefore St. Francis de Sales used to say that we serve God more by *suffering* than by *working*.

remembered even by beasts," says Seneca. The very brutes are grateful to their benefactors. See how that dog serves and obeys, and is faithful to his master, who feeds him; even the wild beasts, the tiger and the lion are grateful to those who feed them. And God, Who till now has provided us with everything; Who has given us food and raiment; Who kept us in existence up to the moment we were offending Him—how have we treated Him?

II.

Do we think we can live on as we have been living? Do we perhaps think that there is no punishment, no hell for us? But hearken and know that as the Lord cannot but hate sin, because He is holy, so He cannot but chastise it when the sinner is obstinate, because He is just.

When God does chastise, it is not to please Himself, but because we force Him to it. The Wise Man says that God did not create hell, through a desire of condemning man thereto, and that He does not rejoice in their damnation, because He does not wish to see His creatures perish: *For God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living; for he created all things that they might be*—(Wis. i. 13). No gardener plants a tree in order to cut it down and burn it. It is not God's desire to see us miserable and in torments, and therefore, says St. John Chrysostom, He waits so long before He takes vengeance on the sinner. He waits for our conversion, that He may then be able to use His mercy in our regard. *Therefore the Lord waiteth, that he may have mercy on you*—(Is. xxx. 18). Our God, says the same St. John Chrysostom, is in haste to save, and slow to condemn. When there is question of pardon, no sooner has the sinner repented than he is forgiven by God. Scarcely had David said: *Peccavi, Domine!* when he was informed by the Prophet that his pardon was already granted: *The Lord also hath taken away thy sin*—(2 Kings, xii. 13). Yes, because "we do not desire pardon as eagerly as God desires to pardon us," says the same holy Doctor. On the other hand,

Thursday—Twentieth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

GOD IS MERCIFUL TILL FORCED TO CHASTISE.

Thou hast been favourable to the nation, O Lord, thou hast been favourable to the nation; art thou glorified?—(Is. xxvi. 15).

Yes, O Lord, Thou hast dealt mercifully with Thy people, and what hast Thou received in return? Have thy people abandoned sin and changed their lives? No; they have gone from bad to worse! But let us remember, God must hate sin because He is holy: He must chastise it because He is just.

I.

We must persuade ourselves that God cannot do otherwise than hate sin; He is holiness itself, and therefore cannot but hate that monster, his enemy, whose malice is altogether opposed to the perfection of God. And if God hate sin, He must necessarily hate the sinner who makes league with sin. *But to God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike*—(Wis. xiv. 9). O God, with what grief and with what reason dost Thou not complain of those who despise Thee, to take part with Thy enemy! *Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have brought up children, and exalted them; but they have despised me*—(Is. i. 2). Hear, O ye heavens, He says, and give ear, O earth, and witness the ingratitude with which I am treated by men! I have brought them up, and exalted them as My children, and they have repaid Me with contempt and outrage. *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel hath not known me*—(Ibid. 3). But how is this? "Services are

when there is question of punishment, He waits, He admonishes, He sends us warning of it beforehand: *For the Lord God doth nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the Prophets*—(Amos, iii. 7).

Spiritual Reading.

THE DESIRE OF PERFECTION.

An ardent desire of perfection is the first means we should adopt if we wish to acquire sanctity and to belong wholly to God. To hit a bird in flight, the sportsman must take aim in advance of his prey, so, too, a Christian, to make progress in virtue, should aspire to the highest degree of holiness which it is in his power to attain. *Who will give me wings like a dove, says David, and I will fly and be at rest?*—(Ps. liv. 7). Who will give me the wings of the dove to fly to my God, and, divested of all earthly affections, to repose in the bosom of the Divinity? Holy desires are the blessed wings with which the Saints, bursting every worldly tie, flew to the mountain of perfection, where they found that peace which the world cannot give.

But how do fervent desires make the soul fly to God? "They," says St. Laurence Justinian, "supply strength, and render pains light." On the one hand, good desires give strength and courage, and on the other they diminish the labour and fatigue there is in ascending the mountain of God. Whosoever, through diffidence of attaining sanctity, does not ardently desire to become a saint, will never arrive at perfection. A man who is desirous of obtaining a valuable treasure which he knows is to be found at the top of a lofty mountain, but who, through fear of fatigue and difficulty, has no desire of ascending, will never, of course, advance a single step towards the wished-for object, but will remain below in careless indifference and inactivity.

He that does not desire, and does not strenuously endeavour, always to advance in holiness, will go back-

ward in the path of virtue, and be exposed to great danger of eternal misery. *The path of the just, says Solomon, as the shining light, goeth forwards and increases even to perfect day. The way of the wicked is darkness: they know not where they fall*—(Prov. iv. 18). As light increases constantly from sunrise to full day, so the path of the Saints always advances; but the way of sinners becomes continually more dark and gloomy, till they know not where they go, and at length walk over a precipice. "Not to advance," says St. Augustine, "is to go back." St. Gregory beautifully explains this maxim of the spiritual life by comparing a Christian who seeks to remain stationary in the path of virtue to a man who is in a boat on a rapid river, and striving to keep the boat always in the same position. If the boat be not continually propelled against the current, it will be carried away in an opposite direction, and consequently, without continual exertion, its position cannot be maintained. Since the fall of Adam man is naturally inclined to evil from his birth. *For the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth*—(Gen. viii. 21). If he do not push forward, if he do not endeavour, by incessant efforts, to increase in sanctity, the very current of his passions will carry him back. "Since you do not wish to proceed," says St. Bernard, addressing a tepid soul, "you must recede." "By no means," she replied; "I wish to live, and to remain in my present state. I will not consent to be worse; and I do not wish to be better." "Then," rejoins the Saint, "you wish to do the impossible." Because, in the way of God, a Christian must either go forward and advance in virtue, or go backward into vice.

In seeking eternal salvation, we must, according to St. Paul, never rest, but run continually in the way of perfection, that we may win the prize, and secure an incorruptible crown. *So run that you may obtain*—(1 Cor. ix. 24). If we fail, the fault will be ours; for God wills that all should be holy and perfect. *This is the will of God—your sanctification*—(1 Thess. iv. 8). He even commands us to be perfect and holy. *Be you there-*

fore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect—(Matt. v. 48). *Be holy because I am holy—* (Lev. xi. 44). He promises and gives abundant strength, as the holy Council of Trent teaches, for the observance of all His commands, to those who ask it from Him. “God does not command impossibilities; but by His precepts He admonishes you to do what you can, and to ask what you cannot do; and He assists you, that you may be able to do it.” God does not command impossibilities; but by His precepts He admonishes us to do what we can by the aid of His ordinary grace; and when greater helps are necessary, He exhorts us to ask for them by humble prayer. He will infallibly answer our petitions, and enable us to observe all, even the most difficult, of His commandments. Take courage, then, and adopt the advice of the Venerable Father Torres to one of his penitents: “Let us, my child, put on the wings of strong desires, that quitting the earth, we may fly to our Spouse and our Beloved, Who expects us in the blessed kingdom of eternity.”

St. Augustine teaches that the life of a Christian is made up of holy desires. He, then, that cherishes not in his heart the desire of sanctity, may be a Christian, but he will not be a good one..

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

X.—SPECIAL PRACTICES OF THIS VIRTUE.

I.

It will often happen we shall find ourselves without doctor or medicine; or, again, our medical attendant may not clearly understand our complaint; and here, too, we must be in a state of conformity to the Divine will, which ordains it to be so for our good. It is related of one who had a devotion to St. Thomas of Canterbury, that, being unwell, he went to the tomb of the Saint to obtain his recovery. He returned home

in good health; but then he said within himself: But if the sickness would have been a greater help towards my salvation, what benefit shall I gain from the health I now have? With this thought in his mind, he went back to the tomb, and prayed the Saint to ask for him of God that which was the more expedient for his eternal salvation; and after doing this, he relapsed into the sickness, and bore it with perfect contentment, holding it for certain that God ordained it to be so for his good. There is a similar anecdote related by Surius, of a certain blind man who received his sight through the intercession of the Bishop St. Vedast; but afterwards prayed that, if his sight was not expedient for his soul, he might return to his former state of blindness; and after this prayer he continued blind as before. In times of sickness, then, it is best to abandon ourselves to the will of God, that He may dispose of us as pleases Him. But if we wish for good health let us ask for it with resignation at least, and on the condition that health of the body be for the health of the soul; otherwise a prayer to this effect will be faulty, and rejected, because the Lord does not listen to such prayers when not accompanied by resignation.

II.

I call the time of sickness the touchstone by which souls are tried, for then is ascertained a man's real virtue. If he does not lose his tranquillity, makes no complaints, and is not over-anxious, but obeys his medical adviser and his superiors, preserving throughout the same peacefulness of mind, in perfect resignation to the Divine will, it is a sign that he possesses great virtue. But what, then must one say of the sick person who laments and says that he receives but little assistance from others; that his sufferings are intolerable; that he can find no remedy to do him good; that his medical man is ignorant; at times complaining even to God that His hand presses too heavily upon him? St. Bonaventure relates of St. Francis, that when the Saint was suffering pains of an extraordinary severity, one of his Religious, who was somewhat artless, said to him: “My Father, pray to

God to treat you with a little more gentleness; for it seems that He lays His hand upon you too heavily." St. Francis, on hearing this, cried aloud, and said to him in reply: "Listen; if I did not know that you spoke from your simplicity, I would never see your face again—daring, as you have done, to find fault with the judgments of God." And after saying this, extremely enfeebled and emaciated through his sickness though he was, he threw himself from his bed upon the floor and kissing it, said: "Lord, I thank Thee for all the sufferings Thou sendest me. I pray Thee to send me more, if it so please Thee. It is my delight for Thee to afflict me, and not to spare me in the least, because the fulfillment of Thy will is the greatest consolation I can receive in this life."

Friday—*Twentieth Week after Pentecost*

Morning Meditation.

THE SWEAT OF BLOOD AND AGONY OF JESUS.

There is no means that can more surely kindle Divine love in us than to consider the Passion of Jesus Christ. St. Bonaventure says that the Wounds of Jesus, because they are the Wounds of love, are darts which pierce the hardest hearts, and flames which set on fire the coldest souls. "O wounds, wounding stony hearts and inflaming frozen minds!"

I.

Our loving Redeemer, as the hour of His death was approaching retired into the Garden of Gethsemani, where of His own will He made a beginning of His most bitter Passion, by giving free way to fear and weariness and sorrow: *He began to fear, and to be heavy—to grow*

sorrowful, and to be sad—(Mark xiv. 38; Matt. xxvi. 37). He began, then, to feel a great fear and weariness of death, and of the pains which must accompany it. At that moment there were represented to His mind most vividly the scourges, the thorns, the nails, the cross, which, not one after the other, but every one together, came to afflict Him; and specially there stood before Him the desolate death He must endure, abandoned by every comfort, human and Divine; so that, terrified by the sight of the horrid vision of such torments and ignominies, He besought His Eternal Father to be freed from them: *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me*—(Matt. xxvi. 39). But how is this? Was it not this same Jesus Who had so much desired to suffer and die for men, saying: *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!*—(Luke xii. 50). How then, does He fear these pains and this death? It was with good-will indeed He was going to die for us: but to the end that we might not suppose that through any virtue of His Divinity He could die without pain, He made this prayer to His Father that we might fully know that He not only died for love of us, but that the death He was to die did terrify Him greatly.

II.

To torment our afflicted Saviour there was added a great sorrowfulness—so great that, as He said, it was enough to cause death: *My soul is sorrowful even unto death*—(Matt. xxvi. 38). But, Lord, to deliver Thyself from the death men are preparing for Thee is in Thy own hands, if it so please Thee; why, then, afflict Thyself? Ah, it was not so much the torments of His Passion as our sins which afflicted the Heart of our loving Saviour. He had come on earth to take away our sins; but seeing that, in spite of His Passion, there would be committed such iniquities in the world—this was the pang which before dying reduced Him to death, and made Him sweat living blood in such abundance that the ground all round about was bathed therewith: *And His*

sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground—(Luke xxii. 44). Yes, Jesus then saw before Him all the sins men were going to commit after His death, all the hatred, the impurities, thefts, blasphemies, sacrileges, and each sin, with its own malice, came like a cruel wild beast to rend His Heart. So that He seemed to say: Is this, then, O men, the recompense you make to my love? Ah, if I could see you grateful to Me, with what gladness should I now go to die; but to see, after so many sufferings of mine, so many sins; after so great love, so much ingratitude—this it is which causes Me to sweat blood.

Were they, then, my sins, my beloved Jesus, which in that hour so greatly afflicted Thee? If, therefore, I had sinned less, Thou wouldst have suffered less. The more pleasure I have taken in sinning, so much the more sorrow did I cause Thee. How is it that I do not die of grief in thinking that I have repaid Thy love by increasing Thy pain and sorrow? Have I, then, afflicted that Heart which has so much loved me? With creatures I have been grateful enough; with Thee only have I been ungrateful. My Jesus, pardon me; I repent with all my heart.

Seeing Himself burdened with our sins, Jesus *fell upon his face*—(Matt. xxvi. 39), as if ashamed to lift up His eyes to Heaven, and lying in the agony of death He prayed a long time: *Being in an agony he prayed the longer*—(Luke, xxii. 48).

Ah, my Lord, Thou didst pray then to the Eternal Father to pardon me, offering Thyself to die in satisfaction for my sins. O my soul, how is it that thou dost not surrender thyself to such great love? Believing this, how canst thou love aught else than Jesus? Come! cast thyself at the feet of thy Saviour in His agony, and say to Him: My dear Redeemer, how is it that Thou couldst love one who had so offended Thee? How couldst Thou suffer death for me, seeing my ingratitude? Make me, I pray Thee, partaker of this sorrow which Thou didst feel in the Garden. Now I abhor all my sins, and unite this abhorrence to that which Thou hadst for them. O love of my Jesus, Thou art my love! Lord, I love

Thee, and for love of Thee I offer myself to suffer any pain, any kind of death. Ah, by the merits of the agony which Thou didst suffer in the Garden, give me holy perseverance! Mary, my hope, pray to Jesus for me.

Spiritual Reading.

THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING PERFECTION.

The first means is Mental Prayer, and particularly Meditation on the claims God has on our love, and on His love for us, especially in the great work of our Redemption. To redeem us, God even sacrificed His life in a sea of sorrows and contempt; and to obtain our love, He has gone so far as to make Himself our food. To inflame the soul with the fire of Divine love, these truths must be frequently meditated upon. *In my meditation*, says David, *a fire shall flame out*—(Ps. xxxviii. 4). When I contemplate the goodness of my God, the flames of charity fill my whole heart. St. Aloysius used to say, that to attain eminent sanctity a high degree of mental prayer is necessary.

We should frequently renew our resolution of advancing in Divine love. In this renewal we shall be greatly assisted by considering each day, that it is only now you begin to walk in the path of virtue. This was the practice of holy David: *And I said: Now have I begun*—(Ps. lxxvi. 11). And this was the dying advice of St. Anthony to his monks: "My dear children, consider that each day is the day you begin to serve God."

We should search out continually and scrupulously the defects of the soul. "Brethren," says St. Augustine, examine yourselves with rigour; be always dissatisfied with what you are, if you desire to become what you are not yet. To arrive at that perfection which you have not attained, you must never be satisfied with the virtue you possess; "for," continues the Saint, "where you say you are pleased with yourself, there you remain." Wherever you are content with the degree of sanctity

to which you have arrived, there you will stop, and, taking complacency in yourself, you will lose the desire of further perfection. Hence the holy Doctor adds, what should terrify every tepid soul, who, content with her present state, has but little desire of spiritual advancement: "But if you say: It is enough, you are lost!" If you say you have already attained sufficient perfection, you are lost; for not to advance in the way of God is to go back. And, as Saint Bernard says, "not to wish to go forward, is certainly to fail." Hence St. John Chrysostom exhorts us to think continually on the virtues we do not possess, and never to reflect on the little good we have done; for the thought of our good works "generates indolence and inspires arrogance," and serves only to engender sloth in the way of the Lord, and to swell the heart with vain-glory, which exposes the soul to the danger of losing the virtues she has acquired. "He who runs," continues the Saint, "does not count the distance he has gone, but the distance he has still to go." He that aspires after perfection does not stop to calculate the proficiency he has made, but directs all his attention to the virtue he has still to acquire. Fervent Christians, as they that dig for a treasure—(Job, iii. 21), advance in virtue as they approach the end of life. Saint Gregory says in his commentary on this passage of Job, that the man who digs for a treasure, the deeper he has dug the more he exerts himself in the hope of finding it; so the soul that seeks after holiness multiplies its efforts to attain it in proportion to the advance it has made.

The fourth means is that which St. Bernard employed to excite his fervour. "He had," says Surius, "this always in his heart, and frequently in his mouth: *Bernarde, ad quid venisti?*"—Bernard, to what purpose hast thou come hither? Those especially who have consecrated themselves to God should continually ask themselves the same question: Have I not left the world and all its riches and pleasures, to live in the cloister, and to become a saint, and what progress do I make? Do I advance in sanctity? Am I not, by my tepidity, exposing myself to the danger of

eternal perdition? It will be useful to introduce, in this place, the example of the Venerable Sister Hyacinth Mariscotti, who at first led a very tepid life, in the convent of St. Bernardine in Viterbo. She confessed to Father Bianchetti, a Franciscan, who came to the convent as extraordinary confessor. That holy man thus addressed her: "Are you a nun? Are you not aware that Paradise is not for vain and proud Religious?" "Then," she replied, "have I left the world to cast myself into hell?" "Yes," rejoined the Father, "that is the place which is destined for Religious who live like seculars." Reflecting on these words of the holy man, Sister Hyacinth was struck with remorse; and, bewailing her past life, she made her Confession with tearful eyes, and began from that moment to walk resolutely in the way of perfection. Oh! how salutary is the thought of having abandoned the world to become a saint! It awakens the tepid soul, and encourages us all to advance continually in holiness, and to surmount every obstacle to our ascent up to the mountain of God.

Evening Meditation.

THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST IS OUR CONSOLATION.

I.

Who can ever give us as much consolation in this valley of tears as Jesus crucified? What can sweeten the prickings of remorse, arising from the remembrance of our past sins, better than the consideration that Jesus Christ has voluntarily suffered death in order to atone for our sins? *He*, says the Apostle, *gave himself for our sins*—(Gal. i. 4).

In all the persecutions, calumnies, insults, loss of property and honour, which may come to us in this life, who is better able to give us strength to bear them with patience and resignation than Jesus Christ, Who was

despised, calumniated, and poor; Who died on a Cross, naked, and abandoned by all?

What more consoling in infirmities than the sight of Jesus crucified? In our sickness we find ourselves on a comfortable bed; but when Jesus was sick on the Cross on which He died, He had no other bed than a hard tree, to which He was fastened by three nails; no other pillow on which to rest His head than the Crown of Thorns, which continued to torment Him till He expired.

In our sickness we have around our bed, friends and relatives to sympathize with us and to entertain us. Jesus died in the midst of enemies, who insulted and mocked Him as a malefactor and seducer, even when He was in the very agony of death. Certainly, there is nothing so well calculated as the life of Jesus crucified to console a sick man in his sufferings, particularly if he finds himself abandoned by others. To unite, in his infirmity, his own pains to the pains of Jesus Christ is the greatest comfort that a poor sick man can enjoy.

II.

In the anguish caused at death by the assaults of hell, the sight of past sins, and the account to be rendered in a short time at the Divine tribunal, the only consolation a dying Christian, combating with death, can have consists in embracing the Crucifix, saying: "My Jesus and my Redeemer, Thou art my love and my hope."

In a word, all the graces, lights, inspirations, holy desires, devout affections, sorrow for sin, good resolutions, Divine love, hope of Paradise, that God bestows upon us, are fruits and gifts which come to us through the Passion of Jesus Christ.

Ah, my Jesus, if Thou, my Saviour, hadst not died for me, what hope could I, who have so often turned my back upon Thee and so often deserved hell, entertain of going to behold Thy beautiful countenance in the land of bliss, among so many innocent Virgins, among so many holy Martyrs, among the Apostles and Seraphs? It is Thy Passion, then, that gives me hope, in spite of my sins, that I too shall one day reach the society of

the Saints and of Thy holy Mother, to sing Thy mercies, and to thank and love Thee forever in Paradise. Such, O Jesus, is my hope. *The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever*—(Ps. lxxxviii. 2). Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Saturday—Twentieth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

MOST HOLY MARY, ADVOCATE OF SINNERS.

So far is the Blessed Virgin Mary from disdaining to assist sinners, she ever takes pride in her office as Advocate of Sinners. "Next to the dignity of Mother of God," she herself once said, "there is nothing I value so much as my office of Advocate of sinners."

I.

So far is the Blessed Virgin Mary from disdaining to assist sinners, she ever takes pride in her office as Advocate of Sinners. "Next to the dignity of Mother of God," she herself once said, "there is nothing I value so much as my office of Advocate of sinners."

It was for this end that Mary was chosen from eternity to be God's Mother that those whose sins should exclude them from participation in the merits of her Son might be made partakers of them by her intercession. This was the principal office for the fulfilment of which God created Mary, and placed her in this world: *Feed thy kids*—(Cant. i. 7). By kids He means sinners, and those kids are given to Mary's care, in order that they who on the Day of Judgment should by their sins have deserved to stand upon the left, may by her intercession stand upon the right. "Feed thy kids," says William

of Paris, "whom thou shalt convert into sheep, that they who should have been placed to the left may through thy intercession take their stand upon the right."

St. Bridget one day heard Jesus Christ saying to His Mother: "Thou givest assistance to every one endeavoring to ascend to God." Mary assists every one who does himself violence to abandon his evil life and turn to God, or who at least prays to her that he may receive strength to do so; if he have not that desire, the Divine Mother herself cannot assist him. Mary then assists only those sinners who honour her by some special devotion, and who, if they yet remain in disgrace with God, have recourse to her that she may obtain pardon for them, and work their deliverance from their present unfortunate condition. The sinner who acts thus from his heart is cured, because Mary, as we have said before, has been created that she might have charge of sinners, and lead them to God. The Lord revealed this to St. Catherine of Sienna: "She is chosen by me as a most delicious food, so as to attract and capture men, especially sinners." And the Blessed Mother herself said to St. Bridget, that as the magnet attracts iron, so she draws the hard hearts of men to herself and to God. But we must always bear in mind that these hearts, notwithstanding their hardness, must desire liberation from their unhappy state.

II.

"How can he fear he shall be cast away," asks the Abbot Adam, "to whom Mary offers herself for a Mother and an Advocate?" He inquires again, "Could it be possible that you, the Mother of Mercy, should not intercede with the Redeemer for the soul He has redeemed?" He answers: "Ah, thou must intercede, because God, Who has placed His Son as Mediator between man and Heaven, has placed thee Mediatress between His Son and guilty man."

Then, O sinner, says St. Bernard, give thanks to God Who has provided you with such a Mediatress. Thank your God, Who, in order to manifest His mercy towards

you, has given you not only His Son for a Mediator in His own right, but that you may have more confidence, has given you Mary as a Mediatress with that Son. Therefore, it is that St. Augustine calls her the only hope of sinners. And St. Bonaventure: "If by reason of your iniquities you see the Lord in anger, and fear to approach Him, have recourse to the hope of sinners, who is Mary." She will not reject you because you are too wretched, for "it is her office to assist the wretched." Hence, when we have recourse to Mary, let us say to her with St. Thomas of Villanova: "Come, therefore, thou our advocate, and fulfil thy office." Since thou art Mother of God, and advocate of the wretched, assist me who am so wretched; if thou dost not assist me I shall be lost! Let us address her in the words of St. Bernard: "Remember, O most pious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful; O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions; but in thy clemency hear and answer me. Amen."

Spiritual Readings.

I.—MORTIFICATION OF THE EYES.

Almost all our rebellious passions spring from unguarded looks; for, generally speaking, it is by the sight that all inordinate affections and desires are excited. Hence, holy Job said: *I made a covenant with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin*—(Job, xxxi. 1).—Why did he say that he would not so much as think upon a virgin? Should he not have said that he made a covenant with his eyes not to look upon a virgin? No; he very properly said that he would not think upon a virgin; because thoughts are so connected with looks, that the former cannot be separated from the

latter, and therefore, to escape the molestation of evil imaginations, he resolved never to fix his eyes on a woman.

St. Augustine says : " The thought follows the look : delight comes after the thought ; and consent after delight." From the look proceeds the thought ; from the thought the desire. If Eve had not looked at the forbidden apple, she should not have fallen ; but because she saw that *the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat*—(Gen. iii. 6). The devil tempts us to look first, then to desire ; and afterwards to consent.

St. Jerome says that Satan requires " only a beginning on our part." If we begin, he will complete our destruction. A deliberate glance at a person of a different sex often enkindles an infernal spark, which consumes the soul. " Through the eyes," says St. Bernard, " the deadly arrows of love enter." The first dart that wounds and frequently robs chaste souls of life finds admission through the eyes. By them David, the beloved of God, fell. By them was Solomon, once the inspired of the Holy Ghost, drawn into the greatest abominations. Oh ! how many are lost by indulging their sight !

The eyes must be carefully guarded by all who expect not to be obliged to join in the lamentation of Jeremias : *My eye hath wasted my soul*—(Lam. iii. 51). By the introduction of sinful affections, my eyes have destroyed my soul. Hence St. Gregory says, that " the eyes, because they draw us to sin, must be cast down." If not restrained, they will become instruments of hell, to force the soul to sin almost against its will. " He that looks at a dangerous object," continues the Saint, " begins to will what he wills not." It was this the inspired writer intended to express when he said of Holofernes, that the beauty of Judith *made his soul her captive*—(Judith xvi. 11).

Seneca says that " blindness is a part of innocence." And Tertullian relates that a certain pagan philosopher, to free himself from impurity, plucked out his eyes. Such an act would be unlawful in us : but he that desires

to preserve chastity must avoid the sight of objects that are apt to excite unchaste thoughts. *Gaze not about, says the Holy Ghost, upon another's beauty ; . . . hereby lust is enkindled as a fire*—(Ecclus. ix. 8, 9). Gaze not upon another's beauty ; for from looks arise evil imaginations, by which an impure fire is kindled. Hence St. Francis de Sales used to say, that " they who wish to exclude an enemy from the city must keep the gates locked."

Hence, to avoid the sight of dangerous objects, the Saints were accustomed to keep their eyes almost continually fixed on the earth, and to abstain even from looking at innocent objects. After being a novice for a year, St. Bernard could not tell whether his cell was vaulted. In consequence of never raising his eyes from the ground, he never knew that there were but three windows to the church of the monastery, in which he spent his novitiate. He once, without perceiving a lake, walked along its banks for nearly an entire day ; and hearing his companions speak about it, he asked when they had seen it. St. Peter of Alcantara kept his eyes constantly cast down, so that he did not know the brothers with whom he conversed. It was by the voice, and not by the countenance, that he recognised them.

Evening Meditation.

" O GRACIOUS ADVOCATE."

1.

Since the Mother should have the same power as the Son, rightly has Jesus, Who is Omnipotent, made Mary also Omnipotent ; though, of course, it is always true that where the Son is Omnipotent by nature, the Mother is only so by grace. But that she is so, is evident from the fact, that whatever the Mother asks for, the Son never denies her ; and this was revealed to St. Bridget, who one day heard Jesus speaking to Mary, and thus address her : " Ask of Me what thou wilt, for no petition

of thine can be void." As if He had said, "My Mother, thou knowest how much I love thee; therefore, ask all thou wilt of Me; for it is not possible that I should refuse thee anything." And the reason our Lord gave for this was beautiful: "Because thou never didst deny Me anything on earth, I will deny thee nothing in Heaven." My Mother, when thou wast in the world, thou never didst refuse to do anything for the love of Me; and now that I am in Heaven, it is right that I should deny thee nothing thou askest. Holy Mary, then, is called omnipotent in the sense in which it can be understood of a creature who is incapable of a Divine attribute. She is omnipotent, because by her prayers she obtains whatever she wills.

With good reason, then, O great advocate, does St. Bernard say: "Thou wiltest, and all things are done." And St. Anselm: "Whatever thou, O Virgin, wiltest can never be otherwise than accomplished." Thou wiltest, and all is done. If thou art pleased to raise a sinner from the lowest abyss of misery to the highest degree of sanctity, thou canst do it. Blessed Albert the Great, on this subject, makes Mary say: "I have to be asked that I may will; for if I will a thing, it is necessarily done."

II.

St. Peter Damian, reflecting on the great power of Mary, and begging her to take compassion on us, addresses her, saying: "O let thy nature move thee, let thy power move thee; for the more thou art powerful, the greater should thy mercy be." O Mary, our own beloved advocate, since thou hast so compassionate a heart that thou canst not even see the wretched without being moved to pity, and since, at the same time, thou hast so great power with God, that thou canst save all whom thou dost protect—disdain not to undertake the cause of us poor miserable creatures who place all our hope in thee. If our prayers cannot move thee, at least let thine own benign heart do so; or, at least, let thy power do so, since God has enriched thee with so great power, in order that the richer thou art in power to

help us, the more merciful thou mayest be in the will to assist us. St. Bernard reassures us on this point; for he says that Mary is as immensely rich in mercy as she is in power; and that, as her charity is most powerful, so also it is most clement and compassionate, and its effects continually prove it to be so. He thus expresses himself: "The most powerful and merciful charity of the Mother of God abounds in tender compassion and in effectual succour; it is equally rich in both."

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

GOD WILL PUNISH SINNERS "IN THE FULLNESS OF THEIR SINS."

When God, at length, sees that we will not respond to benefits, nor threats, nor admonitions, nor amend our lives, He is forced by our own very selves to punish us. God will then chastise us because we ourselves force Him to chastise us.

I.

When God, at length, sees that we will not respond to benefits, nor threats, nor admonitions, nor amend our lives, He is forced by our own very selves to chastise us, but while punishing us, He will place before our eyes the great mercies He has extended to us: *Thou thoughtest unjustly that I shall be like to thee; but I will reprove thee, and set before thy face*—(Ps. xlix. 20). He will then say to the sinner: Think you, O sinner, that I had forgotten, as you had done, the outrages you put upon Me, and the graces I dispensed to you? St. Augustine says that God does not hate but loves us, and that He only hates our sins. He is not wroth with men, says St. Jerome, but with their sins. The Saint says, that

by His nature God is inclined to benefit us, and that it is we ourselves who oblige Him to chastise us, and assume the appearance of severity, which He has not of Himself. St. Jerome, reflecting on those words which Jesus Christ on the day of the General Judgment will address to the reprobate: *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels*—(Matt. xxv. 41), inquires, who has prepared this fire for sinners? God, perhaps? No, because God never created souls for hell, as the impious Luther taught: this fire was kindled for sinners by their own sins. He who sows in sin, shall reap chastisement. *He that soweth iniquity shall reap evils*—(Prov. xxii. 8). When the soul commits sin, it voluntarily obliges itself to pay the penalty thereof, and thus condemns itself to the pains of hell. *For you have said; we have entered into a league with death, and we have made a covenant with hell*—(Is. xxviii. 15). Hence, St. Ambrose well says, that God has not condemned any one, but that each one is the author of his own punishment. And the Holy Ghost says, that the sinner shall be consumed by the hatred which he bears himself: *with the rod of his anger he shall be consumed*—(Prov. xxii. 8). He, says Salvian, who offends God has no more cruel enemy than himself, since he himself has caused the torments which he suffers. God, he continues, does not wish to see us in affliction, but it is we who draw down sufferings upon ourselves, and by our sins enkindle the flames in which we are to burn. God punishes us, because we oblige Him to punish us.

II.

You will say the mercies of the Lord are great: no matter how manifold my sins, I have in view a change of life by and by, and God will have mercy upon me. God does not wish you to speak thus. *Say not the mercy of the Lord is great, he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins*—(Ecclus. v. 6). The reason is this, *for mercy and wrath quickly come from him*—(Ibid. 7). Yes, it is true, God has patience, God waits for some sinners; I say some, for there are some whom God does not wait

for at all: how many has He not sent to hell immediately after the first transgression? Others He does wait for, but He will not always wait for them; He spares them for a certain time and then punishes. *The Lord patiently expecteth, that when the day of judgment shall come, he may punish them in the fulness of their sins*—(2 Mach. vi. 14). Mark well, *when the day of judgment shall come: when the day of vengeance shall arrive, in the fulness of their sins*. When the measure of sins which God has determined to pardon is filled up, He will punish. Then the Lord will have no mercy, and will chastise to the full.

The city of Jericho did not fall during the first circuit made by the Ark, it did not fall at the fifth, or at the sixth, but it fell at last at the seventh. And thus it will happen with thee, says St. Augustine, “at the seventh circuit made by the Ark the city of vanity will fall.” God has pardoned you your first sin, your tenth, your seventieth, perhaps your thousandth; He has often called you, He now calls you again; tremble lest this should be the last circuit of the ark, that is, the last call, after which, if you do not change your life, it will be over with you. *For the earth, says the Apostle, that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it and which bringeth forth thorns and briars is reprobate, and very near unto a curse, whose end is to be burned*—(Heb. vi. 7). That soul, he says, which has often received the waters of Divine light and grace, and instead of bearing fruit produces nought but the thorns of sin, is nigh unto a curse, and its end will be to burn eternally in hell fire. In a word, when the time comes, God punishes.

Spiritual Reading.

II.—MORTIFICATION OF THE EYES.

The Saints were particularly cautious not to look at persons of a different sex. St. Hugh, bishop, when compelled to speak with women, never looked at them

in the face. St. Clare would never fix her eyes on the face of a man. She was greatly afflicted because, when raising her eyes at the elevation to see the consecrated Host, she once involuntarily saw the countenance of the priest. St. Aloysius never looked his own mother in the face. It is related of St. Arsenius, that a noble lady went to visit him in the desert, to beg of him to recommend her to God. When the Saint perceived that his visitor was a woman, he turned away from her. She then said to him: "Arsenius, since you will neither see nor hear me, at least remember me in your prayers." "No," replied the Saint, "but I will beg of God to make me forget you, and never more think of you."

From these examples may be seen the folly and temerity of those who, though they have not the sanctity of a St. Clare, still gaze around upon every object that presents itself, even on persons of a different sex. And notwithstanding their unguarded looks, they expect to be free from temptations and from the danger of sin. For having once looked deliberately at a woman, the Abbot Pastor was tormented for forty years by temptations against chastity. St. Gregory states that the temptation, to conquer which St. Benedict rolled himself in thorns, arose from one incautious glance at a woman. St. Jerome, though living in a cave at Bethlehem, in continual prayer and macerations of the flesh, was terribly molested by the remembrance of ladies whom he had long before seen in Rome. Why should not similar molestations be the lot of those who wilfully and without reserve fix their eyes on persons of a different sex?

"It is not," says St. Francis de Sales, "the seeing of objects so much as the fixing of our eyes upon them that proves most pernicious." "If," says St. Augustine, "our eyes should by chance fall upon others, let us take care never to fix them upon any one." Father Manareo, when taking leave of St. Ignatius for a distant place, looked steadfastly in his face: for this look he was corrected by the Saint. From the conduct of St. Ignatius on this occasion, we learn that it is not becoming in those who aspire to sanctity, to fix their eyes on

the countenance of a person even of the same sex, particularly if the person is young. But I do not see how looks at young persons of a different sex can be excused from the guilt of a venial fault, or even from mortal sin, when there is proximate danger of criminal consent. "It is not lawful," says St. Gregory, "to behold what it is not lawful to covet." The evil thought that proceeds from looks, though it should be rejected, never fails to leave a stain upon the soul. Brother Roger, a Franciscan of singular purity, being once asked why he was so reserved in his intercourse with women, replied, that when men avoid the occasions of sin, God preserves them; but when they expose themselves to danger, they are justly abandoned by the Lord, and easily fall into some grievous transgressions.

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

XI.—SPECIAL PRACTICES OF THIS VIRTUE.

I.

We may at times have to suffer the loss of persons who, in either a temporal or spiritual point of view, happen to be of service to us. This is a matter in regard to which devout people are often very faulty, through their want of resignation to the Divine dispensations. Our sanctification must come, not from spiritual directors, but from God. It is, indeed, His will that we should avail ourselves of directors as spiritual guides, when He gives them to us; but when He takes them away, He wills that we should rest content, and increase our confidence in His goodness, saying at such times: Lord, it is Thou Who hast given me this assistance; now Thou hast taken it from me; may Thy will be ever done; but I pray Thee now to supply my wants Thyself, and to teach me what I ought to do to serve Thee. And in the same way ought we to receive all other crosses from the hands of God. But so many

troubles, you say, are chastisements. But, I ask in reply, are not the chastisements God sends us in this life acts of kindness and benefits? If we have offended Him, we have to satisfy Divine justice in some way or other, either in this life or in the next. Therefore we ought all of us to say with St. Augustine, "Here burn, here cut, here do not spare; that so Thou mayest spare in eternity"; and again, with holy Job: *And that this may be my comfort, that, afflicting me with sorrow, he spare not*—(Job vi. 10). It should, too, be a consolation to one who has deserved hell to see that God is punishing him in this world; because this will give him good hopes that it may be God's will to deliver him from punishment eternal. Let us, then, say when suffering the chastisements of God what was said by Heli the high priest: *It is the Lord; let him do what is good in his sight*—(1 Kings, iii. 18).

II.

We must be conformed to God's will in times of spiritual desolation. When a soul begins to lead a spiritual life, the Lord is accustomed to heap consolations on it in order to wean it from the pleasures of the world; but afterwards, when He sees it more settled in spiritual ways, He holds His hand, in order to try its love, and to see whether it serves and loves Him uncompensated and deprived of spiritual joys. "While we are living here below," St. Teresa writes, "our gain does not consist in any increase of enjoyment of God, but in the performance of His will." And in another passage: "The love of God does not consist in tenderness, but in serving Him with constancy and humility." And again, elsewhere: "By means of dryness and temptations the Lord tries the fidelity of those who love Him." Let the soul then thank the Lord when He caresses it with sweetness; but not torment itself by acts of impatience, when it finds itself left in desolation. This is a point which should be well attended to; for some foolish persons, finding themselves in a state of aridity, think that God has abandoned them; or, that the spiritual

life was not for them; and so they leave off prayer, and lose all they have gained. There is no time better for exercising resignation to the will of God than the time of dryness. I am not saying that you will not suffer pain at seeing yourself bereft of the sensible presence of God, for it is impossible for a soul not to feel such pain as this. Neither can we refrain from lamentation, when our Redeemer Himself upon His Cross complained: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*—(Matt. xxvii. 46). But, in its sufferings, it should ever resign itself perfectly to the will of its Lord. This spiritual desolation and abandonment is what all the Saints have suffered. "What hardness of heart," said St. Bernard, "do I not experience! I no longer find any delight in reading, no longer any pleasure in meditation or in prayer."

Monday—Twenty-first Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

"BEHOLD YOUR HOUSE SHALL BE LEFT TO YOU DESOLATE."

When the Lord wishes to punish He is able to do so. *The daughter of Sion shall be left . . . as a city that is laid waste.* How many cities have been destroyed and levelled to the ground because of the sins of the inhabitants whom God could not bear with any longer! How often, says God, have I called you and you would not listen? You have been deaf to My call. *Behold your house shall be left to you desolate.*

I.

When the Lord wishes to punish He is able to do so. *The daughter of Sion shall be left . . . as a city that*

is laid waste—(Is. i. 8). How many cities have been destroyed and levelled with the ground because of the sins of the inhabitants whom God could no longer bear with. One day as Jesus Christ beheld the city of Jerusalem, He thought of the ruin her crimes were to draw down upon her, and full of compassion for her miseries, He began to weep: *Seeing the city he wept over it, saying . . . They shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation*—(Luke xix. 41, 44). Unfortunate city, there shall not be left in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not been willing to know the grace which I gave thee in visiting thee with so many benefits, and bestowing upon thee so many tokens of My love. Thou hast ungratefully despised Me, and driven Me away. *Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children . . . and thou wouldst not, behold your house shall be left to you desolate*—(Luke xiii. 34, 35). Who knows whether God does not at this moment look upon your soul and weep? Perhaps He sees that you will not turn to account this visit which He now pays you, this grace which He gives you to change your life. How often, says the Lord, have I wished to draw you to Me by the lights I have given you? How often have I called you and you would not hear Me? You have been deaf to Me and fled from Me. *Behold your house shall be left to you desolate*. Behold I am already on the point of abandoning you, and if I abandon you, your ruin will be inevitable and irreparable.

We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed; let us forsake her—(Jer. li. 9). The physician when he sees that the patient will not adopt his remedies, which he himself carries to him with so much kindness, and which the patient flings away—what does he do at length? He turns his back upon him and abandons him. But by how many remedies, by how many inspirations, by how many calls, has not God endeavoured to avert damnation from you? What more can He do? If you lose your soul, can you complain of God Who has called you in so many different ways? *Because I*

called and you refused . . . and have neglected my rephensions, I will also laugh in your destruction and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared—(Prov. i. 24). You, says God, have laughed at My words, My threats, and My chastisements, your last chastisement shall come, and then I will laugh at your destruction. *The rod was turned into a serpent*—(Exod. iv. 3). St. Bruno says the rod of correction is turned into a serpent when sinners will not amend. The eternal will succeed the temporal punishment.

II.

Oh how well does God know how to chastise! *By what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented*—(Wisd. xi. 17). The Jews put Jesus Christ to death for fear the Romans should seize on their possessions. *If we let him alone, said they, all will believe in him, and the Romans will come, and take away our place and nation*—(John xi. 48). But the very sin of putting Jesus Christ to death was the cause of their being shortly after despoiled of everything by the Romans. "They feared they should lose temporal possessions," says St. Augustine, "and thought not of eternal life, and so lost both." In trying to save their possessions, they lost their souls; the punishment came, and they lost both. Thus it falls out with many; they give their souls for the things of earth; but God often condemns them to beggary in this world, and reprobation in the next.

Are we to despair, then? No, God does not wish us to despair. *Let us go with confidence to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid*—(Heb. iv. 16). Let us at once go to the throne of grace that we may receive the pardon of our sins, and the remission of the punishment which threatens. *By seasonable aid* the Apostle means to convey that the aid which God may be willing to lend us to-day He may deny to-morrow. Let us go at once, then, to the throne of grace.

But what is the throne of grace? Jesus Christ is the

throne of grace. *And he is the propitiation for our sins*—(1 John ii. 2). Jesus it is Who by the merits of His Blood can obtain pardon for us, but we must go to Him immediately. During His preaching in Judea, Jesus cured the sick, and dispensed other favours as He went along. Whoever was on the spot to ask a favour obtained it; but whoever was negligent, and allowed Jesus to pass, remained as he was. It was this caused St. Augustine to say: "I fear Jesus passing by"; by which he meant to express that when the Lord offers us His grace, we must immediately correspond, otherwise He will pass on and leave us without it. *To-day, if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts*—(Ps. xciv. 8). To-day God calls; give yourself to God to-day; if you wait for to-morrow, intending to give yourself to Him then, perhaps He will have ceased to call; He will have passed by, and you will remain forsaken.

Mary, the Queen and Mother of Mercy, is also a throne of grace. She is called *the mother of holy hope*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 24). But we must take notice that *holy hope* is the hope of the sinner who repents of his evil ways, and determines upon a change of life; but if any one pursues an evil course in the hope that Mary will succour and save him, such a hope is false, such a hope is wicked and rash. Let us, then, repent of our sins and resolve to amend, and then have recourse to Mary with a confidence that she will assist and save us.

Spiritual Reading.

III.—MORTIFICATION OF THE EYES.

The indulgence of the eyes, if not the cause of any other evil, will at least destroy recollection at prayer. The images and impressions caused by the objects seen before, or by the wandering of the eyes, during prayer, will occasion a thousand distractions, and banish all recollection from the soul. It is certain that without recollection we can pay but little attention to the practice

of humility, patience, mortification, or of the other virtues. Hence it is our duty to abstain from all looks of curiosity which distract our mind from holy thoughts. Let the eyes be directed only to objects which raise the soul to God. St. Bernard used to say, that to fix the eyes upon the earth contributes to keep the heart in Heaven. "Where," says St. Gregory, "Christ is, there modesty is found." Wherever Jesus Christ dwells by love, there modesty is practised. However, I do not mean to say that the eyes should never be raised or never fixed on any object. No, but they ought to be directed only to what inspires devotion, to sacred images, and to the beauty of creation, which elevate the soul to the contemplation of the divinity. Except in looking at such objects, we should in general keep the eyes cast down, and particularly in places where they may fall upon dangerous objects. In conversing with people, we should not roll the eyes about to look at them, and much less to look at them a second time.

To practise modesty of the eyes is the duty of religious souls, not only because it is necessary for their own improvement in virtue, but also because it is necessary for the edification of others. God only knows the human heart: man sees only the exterior actions, and by them he is edified or scandalised. *A man*, says the Holy Ghost, *is known by his look*—(Ecclus. xix. 26). By the countenance the interior is known. Hence, like St. John the Baptist, a Christian should be a *burning and shining light*—(John v. 35). He ought to be a torch burning with charity, and shining resplendent by his modesty, to all who behold him. *We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men*—(1 Cor. iv. 9). And again: *Let your modesty be known to all men: the Lord is nigh*—(Phil. iv. 5). Oh! what devotion does a modest religious person inspire, what edification does he give, by keeping his eyes always cast down! St. Francis of Assisi once said to his companion, that he was going out to preach. After walking to the town, with his eyes fixed on the ground, he returned to the convent. His companion asked him when he would preach the sermon. We have, replied the Saint, by the

modesty of our looks, given an excellent instruction to all who saw us. It is related of St. Aloysius, that when he walked through Rome the students would stand in the streets to observe and admire his great modesty.

St. Ambrose says, that to men of the world the modesty of the Saints is a powerful exhortation to amendment of life. "The look of a just man is an admonition to many." The Saint adds: "How beautiful to do good to others by the very sight of you." It is related of St. Bernardine of Sienna, that even when a secular, his presence was sufficient to restrain the licentiousness of his young companions, who, as soon as they saw him were accustomed to give one another notice that he was coming. On his arrival they became silent or changed the subject of their conversation. It is also related of St. Gregory of Nyssa, and of St. Ephrem, that their very appearance inspired piety, and that the sanctity and modesty of their exterior edified and improved all that beheld them. When Innocent II visited St. Bernard at Clairvaux, such was the exterior modesty of the Saint and of his monks, that the Pope and his cardinals were moved to tears of devotion. Surlius relates a very extraordinary fact of St. Lucian, a monk and Martyr. By his modesty he induced so many pagans to embrace the Faith, that the Emperor Maximian, fearing that he should be converted to Christianity by the appearance of the Saint, would not allow the holy man to be brought within his view, but spoke to him from behind a screen.

That our Redeemer was the first Who taught, by His example, modesty of the eyes, may, as a learned author remarks, be inferred from the holy Evangelists who say that on some occasion He raised His eyes. *And he, lifting up his eyes on his disciples*—(Luke vi. 20). *When Jesus therefore had lifted up his eyes*—(John vi. 5). From these passages we may conclude that the Redeemer ordinarily kept His eyes cast down. Hence the Apostle, praising the modesty of the Saviour, says: *I beseech you, by the mildness and modesty of Christ*—(2 Cor. x. 1).

I shall conclude this subject with what St. Basil said

to his monks: If, my children, we desire to raise the soul towards Heaven, let us direct the eyes towards the earth. From the moment we awake in the morning, let us pray continually in the words of holy David: *Turn away my eyes, that they may not behold vanity*—(Ps. cxviii. 37).

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

XII.—SPECIAL PRACTICES OF THIS VIRTUE.

I.

The lives of the Saints have been ordinarily full of dryness and not of sensible consolations. These are favoured the Lord does not bestow, excepting on rare occasions, and to perhaps the weaker sort of spirits, in order to prevent their coming to a standstill in their spiritual course. The joys He proposes to us as reward, He prepares in Paradise. This world is the place for meriting, where we merit by suffering; Heaven is the place for recompense and enjoyment. Wherefore, what the Saints have desired and sought for in this world has been, not a sensible fervour with rejoicing, but a spiritual fervour with suffering. The Blessed John of Avila used to say, "Oh, how much better is it to be in dryness and temptation by the will of God, than in contemplation without it!"

But, you will say: If I could only know that this desolation came from God, I should be content; but what afflicts and disquiets me so is the fear that it may have come by my own fault, and as a punishment for my tepidity. Well, then, put away your tepidity and employ greater diligence. But will you, because you are under a cloud—will you therefore disquiet yourself and leave off prayer, and thus double the evil of which you complain? Let it be, as you say, that the dryness has come upon you as a chastisement. Then accept it as a chastisement on one who so much deserves to be

chastised, and unite yourself to the Divine will. Do you not say that you deserve hell? And why, then, are you complaining? Is it because you deserve that God should give you consolations? Ah, go and be content with the manner in which God is dealing with you; persevere in prayer, and in the way on which you have entered; and henceforth let it be your fear that your complaints may arise rather from your little humility and your want of conformity to the will of God. When a soul applies itself to prayer, it can derive no greater benefit from it than the union of itself with the Divine will. Therefore, make an act of resignation, and say: Lord, I accept this pain from Thy hands, and I accept it for as long as may please Thee. If it be Thy will that I should be thus afflicted for all eternity, I am content. And in this way your prayer, painful though it may be, will be a greater help to you than any spiritual consolations however sweet.

II.

We must ever bear in mind that dryness is not always a punishment, but is occasionally ordained by God for our greater good, and in order to keep us humble. That St. Paul might not grow proud of the gifts he had received, the Lord permitted him even to be tormented by temptations to impurity: *Lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me*—(2 Cor. xii. 7). No great thanks to him who prays in times of sweetness. *There is a friend, a companion at table, and he will not abide in the day of distress*—(Ecclus. vi. 10). You would not esteem him a true friend of yours who was with you at table; but he is the true friend who assists you in time of trouble, and without advantage to any interests of his own. When God sends darkness and desolations, it is then that He tries who are His true friends. Palladius suffered great weariness in prayer; and when he went to tell St. Macarius, the latter said to him: "When the thought suggests itself to leave off prayer, let this be your reply: I am content, for the

love of Jesus Christ, to remain here as guardian of the walls of this cell." This, then, is your answer, whenever you feel tempted to leave off prayer, because it appears to you no better than a mere waste of time: "I am here in order to give pleasure to God." St. Francis de Sales used to say that if in time of prayer we did no more than drive away distractions and temptations, our prayer would, nevertheless, be well made. Nay, Tauler says that on him who perseveres in prayer in a state of aridity, God will bestow greater graces than if he had prayed much with great sensible devotion. F. Rodriguez tells us of a certain person who said that during forty years of prayer he had never experienced any consolation; but that on the days he prayed he found himself strong in virtue; whereas, on the contrary, whatever day he omitted prayer he experienced such a weakness as made him unfit for anything good. It has been observed by St. Bonaventure, and by Gerson, that many serve God better when deprived of that sensible devotion they long for, than when they possess it, because they thus live in a state of greater diligence and humility; whereas had they spiritual consolations they might perhaps become proud and more tepid, thinking that they had already gained the object of their desires. And what is said with regard to aridity must also be said regarding temptations. We should try to avoid temptations, but if God wills or permits us to be tempted against the Faith, against purity, or against any other virtue, we should not complain, but resign ourselves in this also to the Divine will. To St. Paul who prayed to be released from his temptation, the Lord made answer: *My grace is sufficient for thee*—(2 Cor. xii. 9). And so, if we see that God does not listen to us, and release us from some troublesome temptation, let us likewise say: Lord, do and permit that which pleaseth Thee; Thy grace is sufficient for me; only grant me Thy assistance, that I may never lose it. It is not temptations, but the consenting to temptations, that causes us to lose Divine grace. Temptations, when we overcome them, keep us more humble, gain for us greater merits,

force us to have recourse to God more frequently; and thus keep us further from offending Him, and unite us more closely to His holy love.

Tuesday—Twenty-first Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

“WE ARE CHASTISED BY THE LORD THAT WE
MAY NOT BE CONDEMNED WITH THIS
WORLD.”

God is as clement and kind when He chastises as when He bestows favours. His chastisements are the effects of His love. They are most certainly punishments, but punishments which ward off eternal penalties, and bring us to eternal happiness. *We are chastised by the Lord that we may not be condemned with this world.*

I.

We have not been created for this earth: We have been created for the blessed kingdom of Paradise. For this reason it is, says St. Augustine, that God mingles so much bitterness with the delights of the world in order that we may not forget Him and eternal life. If, living as we do amid so many thorns in this life, we are strongly attached to it, and long so little for Paradise, how little should we not value Paradise if God were not to embitter continually the pleasures of this earth?

If we have offended God, we must needs be punished for it either in this world or in the next. St. Ambrose says that God is merciful as well when He punishes as when He does not punish. The chastisements of God are the effect of His love; they are, to be sure, punishments, but only temporal punishments which ward off from us eternal punishment, and bring us to everlasting

happiness. *But whilst we are judged, we are chastised by the Lord, that we be not condemned with this world—(1 Cor. xi. 32).* And Judith reminded the Hebrews of the same truth when they were under the scourge of the Lord: *Let us believe that these scourges have happened for our amendment, and not for our destruction—(Judith viii. 27).* Sara, the wife of Tobias, says the same: *But this every one is sure of that worshipping thee . . . if his life be under correction, it shall be allowed to come to thy mercy, for thou art not delighted in our being lost—(Tob. iii. 21, 22).* Lord, she said, Thou chastisest us here in order that Thou mayest spare us in the other life, for Thou dost not desire our destruction.

II.

God Himself tells us that those whom He loves in this life He chastises, in order that they may be converted: *Such as I love I rebuke and chastise—(Apoc. iii. 19).* Where God loves, says St. Basil of Seleucia, severity is usually the pledge of His graces. Unhappy are the sinners who, living in the state of sin, prosper in this life: it is a sign that God reserves them for everlasting punishment. *The sinner hath provoked the Lord; according to the multitude of his wrath, he will not seek him—(Ps. ix. 25).* St. Augustine says, speaking of the passage quoted, behold the most grievous chastisement! When God does not appear to take notice of the sinner, and leaves him unpunished, it is a sign that He is very wroth. I call you, says God to him whom He chastises, and will you be deaf to my voice? Son, be converted, otherwise you shall confirm My anger, since I shall cease to regard your salvation, and allow you to live on in your sins without punishment, and only that I may punish you in the life to come. *And my indignation shall rest in thee; and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will cease and be angry no more—(Ezech. xvi. 42).* The Apostle warns you not to be deaf to the voice of God, for that on the Day of Judgment your obstinacy will be rewarded with a

dreadful chastisement, and that chastisement eternal. *But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works—*(Rom. ii. 5, 6).

Spiritual Reading.

HOLY HUMILITY.

I.—THE ADVANTAGES OF HUMILITY.

Humility has been regarded by the Saints as the basis and guardian of all virtues. Although in point of excellence the virtue of humility does not hold the highest rank, still, according to St. Thomas, because it is the foundation of all virtues it has obtained the first place among them. Hence, as in the structure of an edifice, the foundation takes precedence of the walls, and even of the golden ornaments, so, to expel pride, which God resists, humility must, in the edification of the spiritual man, precede all other virtues. "Humility," says the angelic Doctor, "holds the first place, inasmuch as it expels pride, which God resists." Hence, St. Gregory asserts that "he who gathers virtues without humility is like the man who carries chaff against the wind." His virtues shall be scattered.

There was in the desert a certain hermit who had a high character for sanctity. At the hour of death he sent for the abbot, and asked from him the Viaticum. During the administration of the Holy Sacrament a public robber ran to the cell; but seized with compunction for his sins, he esteemed himself unworthy to enter, or to be present at so sacred a ceremony, and in the humility of his soul exclaimed: "Oh that I were what you are!" Thy dying monk heard the words, and, swelled with pride, said: "Happy, indeed, should you be were you as holy as I am." After these words he expired: the robber immediately ran off from the place for the purpose of going to Confession, but on his way

he fell over a precipice and was killed. At the death of the hermit his companion burst into tears; but at the fate of the robber he exulted with joy. Being asked why he wept over the death of the former and rejoiced at the melancholy end of the latter, he replied: Because the robber was saved by contrition for his past sins, but my companion is damned in punishment of his pride. Do not imagine that the hermit yielded to pride only at the hour of death: from his last words it is clear that pride had long before taken root in his heart; by its baneful influence he was brought to a miserable eternity. "Unless," says St. Augustine, "humility shall have preceded, shall be continued, and shall have followed, pride will wrest the whole from our hands." Yes, the rapacious grasp of pride will tear from us every good work which is not preceded, accompanied, and followed by humility.

This sublime virtue was but little known, but little loved, and greatly abhorred on earth, where pride, the cause of the ruin of Adam and of his posterity, enjoyed universal sway. Therefore, the Son of God came down from Heaven to teach it to men by His example as well as by His preaching. To instruct them in humility he came upon earth in the likeness of flesh and in the form of a servant. *He emptied himself*, says the Apostle, *taking the form of a servant—*(Phil. ii. 7). He wished to be treated as the most contemptible of men. *Despised*, says the Prophet Isaias, *and the most abject of men—*(Is. liii. 3). Behold Him in Bethlehem, born in a stable and laid in a manger; in Nazareth, poor, unknown, and employed in the humble occupation of assisting a poor artisan. Look at Him in Jerusalem, scourged as a slave, buffeted as the vilest of men, crowned with thorns as a mock king, and in the end suffering as a malefactor the ignominious death of the Cross. And with all His humiliations before your eyes, hearken to His advice: *I have given you an example, that as I have done so you do also.*—(Jo. xiii. 15). My children, I have embraced so much ignominy that you may not refuse abjection. Speaking of the humiliations of the Son of God, St. Augustine says: "If this medicine cure not

your pride, I know not what will heal it." Hence in one of his epistles to Dioscorus he tells his friends that it is principally by his humility a man is made the disciple of Jesus, and that the soul is prepared for a union with God. "The first," says the Saint, "is humility; the second, humility; the third, humility; and as often as you would ask I should answer, humility."

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

XIII.—SPECIAL PRACTICES OF THIS VIRTUE.

I.

We must above all be conformed to the will of God in regard to our death, as to the time and manner of it. St. Gertrude one day, when climbing a hill, slipped and fell into a ravine. Her companions asked her afterwards whether she would not have been afraid to die without the Sacraments? The Saint answered that it was her great desire to die fortified by the Sacraments, but she considered that the will of God was better, because the best dispositions one can have when dying would be one's submission to all that God should will; consequently, she desired whatever death the Lord would be pleased to allot to her. It is related by St. Gregory, in his *Dialogues*, that the Vandals having condemned to death a certain priest named Santolo, they granted him the choice of the kind of death he would prefer; but the holy man refused to make a selection, saying: "I am in the hands of God, and will suffer the death He permits you to make me suffer; nor do I wish for any other." This act was so pleasing to God that, when these barbarous men had resolved on having his head cut off, He held back the executioner's arm; whereupon they acknowledged the great miracle, and spared his life. As to the manner, then, we should esteem that death the best for us which God may have determined to be ours. Save us, Lord (let us ever say, when think-

ing of our death); and then let us die in whatever manner seemeth good unto Thee.

Then, again, we ought to unite our will to God's will as to the time of our death. What is this world but a prison in which we have to suffer, and every moment run the risk of losing God? It was this that caused David to exclaim: *Bring my soul out of prison*—(Ps. cxli. 8). It was this fear that made St. Teresa sigh for death. On hearing the clock strike, she felt the utmost consolation in the thought that an hour of her life had passed, an hour in which she was in danger of losing God.

II.

Blessed John of Avila used to say that everyone, even those with imperfect dispositions, should desire death, because of the danger in which we live of losing the Divine grace. What is more precious, or more to be desired than a good death whereby we are secure of never losing the grace of our God? But, you say, "I have as yet done nothing. I have gained nothing for my soul." But if it be the will of God that your life should terminate now, what good would you be able to do if you were to remain alive contrary to His will? And who knows whether, in that case, you would die such a death as you can have hope of dying now? Who knows whether, through a change of will, you might not fall into other sins, and lose your soul? And even were there nothing else, you could not live without committing at least venial sins. Hence, St. Bernard exclaims: "Why, oh, why do we wish to live, when the longer we live, the more we sin? And it is certain that one of our venial sins displeases God more than all our good works can please Him.

I say, moreover, that he who has but little desire for Paradise shows that he has but little love for God. One who loves desires the presence of the object loved; but we cannot see God without leaving this world; and therefore it is that all the Saints have sighed for death, in order to go and see the Lord Whom they loved. Thus did Augustine sigh, "Oh, may I die, that I may see

These!" Thus, too, St. Paul: *Having a desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ*—(Phil. i. 23). Thus, again, David: *When shall I come and appear before the face of God?*—(Ps. xli. 3). And thus, speak all those souls that have been enamoured of God. It is related that one day, as a gentleman was out hunting in a forest, he heard a man singing sweetly. On going in that direction, he found a poor leper in a state of semiputrefaction. He asked him if it was he who was singing? "Yes, sir," answered the poor leper, "it was I who was singing." "And how can you sing amid sufferings like these, which are taking your life away?" The leper answered, "There is nothing between my Lord God and myself but this wall of clay, which is my body, and when this obstruction is removed, I shall go to enjoy my God. Seeing, as I do, that it is falling to pieces every day, I therefore rejoice and sing."

Wednesday—Twenty-first Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

"THE ENEMIES OF THE LORD SHALL VANISH LIKE SMOKE."

Holy Job enquires why the wicked are allowed to live, and why are they advanced and strengthened in prosperity? And why instead of dying in poverty and tribulation they continue to enjoy health and honours and riches? The holy man himself gives the answer: *They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell.*

I.

St. Jerome says that there cannot be a greater punishment for a sinner than that he should not be punished in this life. And St. Isidore of Pelusium says that sinners who are punished in this life do not deserve pity, but those only who die without having been punished. It is not so bad, continues the Saint, to be simply sick as to have no one to cure you. St. Augustine says, in another part, that when God does not chastise the sinner in this world, He chastises him most severely; whence he concludes that there is no greater misfortune than impunity for a sinner. After England had rebelled against the Church, God did not visit her with temporal scourges: her riches have been increasing from that time; but her chastisement is all the greater on that account, as she is left to perish in her sin. The absence of punishment is the greatest punishment, says the same holy Doctor. Not to receive chastisement for sin in this life is a great punishment, but prosperity in sin is a still greater punishment.

Why then, Job inquires, do the wicked live, are they advanced and strengthened with riches? How comes it, O Lord, that sinners, instead of being taken out of this life in poverty and tribulation, enjoy health, and honours, and riches? The holy man answers: They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell—(Job xxi. 7, 18). Wretched men! they enjoy their riches for a few days, and when the hour of chastisement comes, when they least expect it, they are condemned to burn forever in that place of torments. Jeremias makes the same inquiry: *Why doth the way of the wicked prosper? and then adds, Gather them together as sheep for a sacrifice*—(Jer. xii. 1-3). Animals destined for sacrifice are kept from all labour, and fattened for slaughter. Thus does God act towards the obstinate: He abandons them, and suffers them to fatten on the pleasures of this life in order to sacrifice them in the other to His eternal justice; for these, says Minutius Felix, are fed like victims for the slaughter.

II.

Poor wretched sinners, says David, shall not be punished in this life, but they shall enjoy their fleeting pleasures. By and by their dream shall cease: *Neither shall they be scourged like other men; . . . they have suddenly ceased to be; as the dream of them that awake, O Lord, so in thy city thou shalt bring their image to nothing*—(lxxii. 5, 18, 20). How painful is not the case of a poor sick man, who dreams that he has grown rich and great, and upon awaking finds himself a miserable and sick creature still? *And the enemies of the Lord shall . . . vanish like smoke*—(Ps. xxxvi. 20). The happiness of sinners is as suddenly dissipated as is smoke by a breath of air. "Smoke," observes St. Gregory, "vanishes in its ascent." And the same is the case with sinners: *I have seen the wicked highly exalted, . . . and I passed by, and lo! he was not*—(Ps. xxxvi. 35). These unhappy men are exalted the higher, that their fall may be the greater. The Lord allows the sinner to be exalted for his greater punishment, in order that his fall may be the more grievous, as is said by David. *When they were lifted up thou hast cast them down*—(Ps. lxxii. 18). If the sick man, says St. John Chrysostom, suffer hunger or thirst by order of his physician, it is a sign that the physician has hope of him; but if the doctor allow him to eat what he pleases, and drink as much as he likes, what are we to conclude from that? It is plain that the physician has given him over. And thus, says St. Gregory, it is a manifest sign that God abandons the sinner to perdition, when He never thwarts his evil purposes: and in the Book of Proverbs we read that *the prosperity of fools shall destroy them*—(Prov. i. 32). As lightning precedes thunder, says St. Bernard, so is prosperity the forerunner of damnation for the sinner.

Spiritual Readings.

HOLY HUMILITY.

II.—ITS ADVANTAGES.

The proud are objects of hatred and abomination before God. *Every proud man, says the Holy Ghost, is an abomination to the Lord*—(Prov. xvi. 5). Yes; for the proud man is a robber, and is blind; he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. He is a robber, because he appropriates to himself what belongs to God. *What hast thou that thou hast not received?*—(1 Cor. iv. 7). Would it not be the extreme of folly in a brute animal, were it gifted with reason, to glory in the gilded trappings of which it knows it may be stripped at the beck of its master? The proud man is blind, as we learn from the Apocalypse of St. John. *Thou sayest: I am rich . . . and knowest not that thou art wretched and blind*—(Apoc. iii. 17). And what has man of his own but nothingness and sin? Even the little good he does, when examined with rigour, will appear full of imperfection. "All our justice," says St. Bernard, "if rigorously judged, will be found to be injustice." Lastly, the proud man is a liar, and the truth is not in him. For all his advantages, whether of nature—such as health, talent, beauty, and the like; or of grace—such as good desires, a docile heart, and an enlightened mind, are all the gifts of God. *By the grace of God, says St. Paul, I am what I am*—(1 Cor. xv. 10). The same Apostle tells us that of ourselves we are not capable of even a good thought. *Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves as of ourselves*—(2 Cor. iii. 5).

To preserve His servants from pride, the Lord sometimes permits them to be afflicted with the shameful solicitations of the flesh; to their repeated prayers to be delivered from the suggestions of Satan and of their own corruption He appears deaf, and leaves them to combat with the temptation. It was thus God treated

St. Paul; and, says the Saint, *lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given to me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me. For which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me, and he said to me, my grace is sufficient for thee*—(2 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9). “To keep him humble,” says St. Jerome, “the Almighty refused to deliver the Apostle from the molestation of the flesh by which he was tormented.” Moreover, to teach them humility, the Lord sometimes permits the elect to fall into sin. Thus David acknowledges that he sinned because he had not been humble. *Before I was humbled, I offended*—(Ps. cxviii. 67).

“God,” says St. Augustine, “sits on high; you humble yourself, and He descends to you; you exalt yourself, and He flies from you.” The royal Prophet says that *the Lord looketh on the low, and the high he knoweth afar off*—(Ps. cxxxvii. 6). He regards the humble with the affectionate eye, but the proud He beholds only at a distance. As we cannot recognize a person whom we see afar off, so the Lord appears to tell the proud, in the words of the Psalmist, that He knows them not.

The proud are hateful before God; He cannot bear them. As soon as the Angels yielded to pride, He banished them from Paradise and sent them into hell, far distant from His presence. The words of God must be fulfilled: *Whosoever, says the Lord, shall exalt himself, shall be humbled*—(Matt. xxiii. 12). St. Peter Damian relates that a certain proud man had resolved to assert his right to an estate by single combat; before the time appointed for the duel he went to Mass, and hearing in the church the above-mentioned words of the Gospel: *Whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be humbled*, he exclaimed: This cannot be true: for had I humbled myself I should have lost my property and my character. But when he came to the combat, his sacrilegious tongue was cut across by the sword of his antagonist, and he instantly fell dead.

God, says St. James, *resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*—(James iv. 6). The Lord has

promised to hear the prayers of all. *Every one that asketh, receiveth*—(Luke xi. 10). The proud God hears not; according to the Apostle, He resists their petitions. But to the humble He is liberal beyond measure: *He giveth grace to the humble*. To them God opens His hands, and grants whatsoever they ask or desire. *Humble thyself to God*, says the Holy Ghost, *and wait for his hands*—(Eccius. xiii. 9). Humble your soul before the Lord, and expect from His hands whatever you seek.

“Give me, O Lord,” exclaims St. Augustine, “the treasure of humility.” Humility is a treasure, because upon the humble the Lord pours every blessing in abundance. A heart full of self cannot be replenished with the gifts of God. To receive the Divine favours, the soul must be first emptied by the knowledge of her own nothingness. *Thou sendest forth*, says David, *springs in the vales: between the midst of the hills the waters shall pass*—(Ps. ciii. 10). God makes the waters of His graces abound in the valleys, that is, in humble souls, but not on the mountains, the emblems of the proud and the haughty. In the midst of these, His graces pass, and remain not on them. *Because*, says Mary, *he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid* *He that is mighty hath done great things to me*—(Luke i. 48, 49). The Lord, looking upon my humility, and my sense of nothingness, hath bestowed great favours on me.

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

XIV.—SPECIAL PRACTICES OF THIS VIRTUE.

I.

We must bring our will into conformity to the Divine Will even as regards our degree of grace and of glory. Highly as we ought to esteem the glory of God, we ought to esteem His will yet more. It would

be good to desire to love God more than the very Seraphim, but it would not be right to desire to ascend to a higher degree of love than what the Lord has determined for us. Blessed John of Avila says: "I do not think there ever was a Saint who succeeded in becoming as holy as he had wished to be. But that never disturbed a Saint, because Saints wish to become holy only to please God, and not for their own satisfaction. Therefore, they were satisfied with that degree of holiness to which God's grace raised them, even though it was not as high as what they aimed at. They believed that there was more true love in being content with what God gave than in wishing for more."

All this means, as Father Rodriguez explains it, that we should be diligent in trying to reach the highest perfection possible so as not to turn our own lukewarmness and laziness into an excuse, as those do who say that God must make them a present of holiness if He wants them to be holy, since they themselves can do little or nothing. Nevertheless, when we fail in our efforts we must not lose our peace of mind, nor our conformity to God's will, nor our courage. God's will permits our fall. What we have to do is to rise at once, to humble ourselves by repentance, and with greater earnest than ever in prayer pursue the way of perfection.

It would, moreover, be but too evident a fault to desire to possess gifts of supernatural prayer—such, especially, as ecstasies, visions, and revelations; whereas, on the contrary, spiritual writers say that those souls on whom God bestows such graces ought to pray to Him to deprive them of them, in order that they may love Him by the way of pure Faith, which is the safest way of all. There are many who have attained perfection without these supernatural favours. Chief amongst the virtues that raise the soul to highest sanctity stands conformity to the will of God. If God does not choose to raise us to a high degree of perfection and of glory, let us conform ourselves in all respects to His holy will, praying that He would at least save us through His mercy. And if we act in this manner, the reward will

not be small which, of His goodness, our good Lord will give us, for above everything He loves those souls that are resigned.

II.

In short, we ought to regard whatever comes to us as proceeding from God's hand, and everything we do we should direct to this one end, the fulfilment of God's will, and to do it simply because God wills it to be done. And in order to proceed with greater security in this, we must follow the guidance of our superiors as regards what is external, and of our directors with regard to what is internal, that so we may, through them, understand what God desires of us, having great faith in those words of Jesus Christ: *He that heareth you heareth me*—(Luke x. 16). And, above all, let it be our study to serve God in the way it is His will that we should serve Him. I say this, that we may not deceive ourselves as many do who say: "Oh, if I were in a desert; if I could enter into a monastery; if I could go somewhere, and not have to remain in this house, away from these relatives or these companions of mine—I would sanctify myself; I would do so much penance; I would say so many prayers." He says: "I would do this; I would do that"; but in the meantime, as he bears with a bad will the cross God sends him, and does not walk in the way God wills, he not only does not sanctify himself, but goes from bad to worse. These desires are mere temptations of the devil, for they are not in accordance with the will of God; we must, therefore, drive them away, and brace ourselves up to the service of God in that one way which He has set before us. By doing His will, we shall certainly sanctify ourselves in any state wherein God places us. Let us, then, ever will only that which God wills, so that He may take and press us to His Heart; and, for this end, let us make ourselves familiar with some of those passages of Scripture that invite us to unite ourselves ever more and more to the Divine will: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*—(Acts ix. 6). My God, tell me what Thou desirest of me; for I desire to do it

all. *I am thine: save thou me—*(Ps. cxviii. 94). O my Lord, I am no longer mine own, but Thine; do with me whatsoever Thou pleasest. And at such times especially as any very grievous calamity befalls us—as in the case of the death of parents, the loss of property, and such like—*Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in thy sight—*(Matt. xi. 26). Yes, my God and my Father, let it be even so; for so it hath pleased Thee. And, above all, let us love that prayer which Jesus Christ has taught us: *Fiat voluntas tua sicut in cœlo et in terra!—Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven!* The Lord told St. Catharine of Genoa that whenever she said the *Our Father*, she was to pay particular attention to these words, and pray that His holy will might be fulfilled by her with the same perfection with which it is fulfilled by the Saints in Heaven. Let us, too, act in this manner, and we shall certainly become saints ourselves.

May the Divine will, and the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, be ever loved and praised. Amen.

O WILL OF GOD! O WILL DIVINE!

'Tis Thy good pleasure, not my own,
In Thee, my God, I love alone;
And nothing I desire of Thee
But what Thy goodness wills for me.
O will of God! O will Divine!
All, all our love be ever thine.

In love no rival canst Thou bear,
But Thou art full of tenderest care;
And fire and sweetness all Divine
To hearts which once are wholly Thine.
O will of God! O will Divine!
All, all our love be ever thine.

In Thee all pure affections live,
To love Thou dost perfection give;
While ever burning with desires
The loving soul to Thee aspires.
O will of God! O will Divine!
All, all our love be ever thine.

Thou makest crosses soft and light
And death itself seem sweet and bright.
No cross nor fear that soul dismays
Whose will to Thee united stays.
O will of God! O will Divine!
All, all our love be ever thine.

To all the glorious choirs of Heaven
Their very bliss by Thee is given;
And Heaven itself deprived of Thee
Would be a land of misery.

O will of God! O will Divine!
All, all our love be ever thine.

Yes, to the lost who burn in hell,
If in their souls Thy love could dwell,
The very flames and torments there
Would seem but sweet and light to bear.

O will of God! O will Divine!
All, all our love be ever thine.

Oh! that one day my life may end
In closest bonds to Thee enchained!
For thus to die is not to die,
But live, and live eternally.

O will of God! O will Divine!
All, all our love be ever thine.

To Thee I consecrate and give
My heart and being while I live;
Jesus, Thy Heart alone shall be
My Love for all eternity.

O will of God! O will Divine!
All, all our love be ever thine.

Alike in pleasure and in pain
To please Thee is my joy and gain;
That, O my Love, which pleases Thee
Shall ever more seem best to me.
May heaven and earth with love fulfil,
My God, Thy ever-blessed will!

are taken in the evil time—(Eccles. ix. 12). Whence St. Augustine says: "Do not rejoice like the fish who is delighted with the bait, for the fisherman has not yet pulled the hook." If you were to see a condemned man making merry at a banquet with the halter round his neck, and every moment awaiting the order for execution, would you envy or pity him? Neither should you envy the sinner who is happy in his vices. That wretched sinner is already on the hook, he is already in the infernal net; when the time of chastisement shall have arrived, then the wretch will know and deplore his damnation, but all to no purpose.

II.

It is a sign of God's mercy when He chastises the sinner here below. It is a sign that God has still merciful views upon him, and that He wishes to substitute a temporal for an eternal punishment in his regard. God, says St. John Chrysostom, when He punishes us on this earth, does not do so out of hatred, but that He may draw us to himself. He chastises for a little while, that He may have you with Himself for eternity. When the physician uses the knife, he does so to cure, says St. Augustine. And God does the same in our regard. God seems to be cruel; but do not fear, for He is a Father Who is never cruel, and does not wish to destroy us. But, does not God say the same Himself? *Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise. Be zealous therefore, and do penance* (Apoc. iii. 19). Son, says God, I love you, and therefore I chastise you. See how good I am to you and endeavour you to act in like manner towards Me. Do penance for your sins, if you wish that I should spare you the chastisement which you deserve: at least, accept with patience and turn to advantage the tribulation I send you. In this cross which now afflicts you hear you My voice calling upon you to turn to Me; to fly from hell, which is close upon you. *Behold! I stand at the gate and knock*—(1b. 20). I am knocking at the door of your heart; open then to Me, and know that when the sinner who has driven Me from his heart opens the

Thursday—Twenty-first Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

"THOSE WHOM I LOVE I REBUKE AND CHASTISE."

The greatest punishment God can inflict on a sinner is to let him sleep on in his sins, buried in that sleep of death. *I will make them drunk that they may . . . sleep an everlasting sleep and awake no more, saith the Lord.* On the contrary, it is a sign of mercy for the sinner when God chastises him here below. When the surgeon uses the knife it is not to kill but to cure.

I.

The greatest punishment God can inflict on a sinner is to let him sleep on in his sins—buried in that sleep of death. *I will make them drunk, that they may . . . sleep an everlasting sleep and awake no more, saith the Lord*—(Jer. li. 89). After murdering his brother, Cain was afraid that he should be killed by everyone he met. *Every one therefore that findeth me shall kill me*—(Gen. iv. 14). But the Lord assured him that he should live, and that no one should kill him; and this very assurance of a long life, according to St. Ambrose, was Cain's greatest punishment. The Saint says, that God treats the obstinate sinner mercifully, when He gives him an early death, because He thus saves him from as many hells as he should have committed sins during a longer life. Let sinners then live on according to the desires of their hearts, let them enjoy their pleasures in peace; there will at length come a time when they shall be caught as fish upon the hook. *As fishes are taken with the hook . . . so men*

door again to me, I will enter, and stay with him forever. *If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me—(Ib. 20).* I shall remain united to him forever on this earth; and if he remain faithful, I shall set him beside Me on the throne of My eternal kingdom. *To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me in my throne—(Ib. 21).*

Spiritual Reading.

HOLY HUMILITY.

III.—ADVANTAGES OF HUMILITY.

St. Teresa relates of herself, that the greatest graces she received from God were infused into her soul when she humbled herself most before the Lord in prayer. *The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds, and he will not depart till the Most High behold—(Eccles. xxxv. 21).* The humble obtain from God whatever they ask: they need not be afraid of being confounded, or of being left without consolation. *Let not, says David, the humble be turned away with confusion—(Ps. lxxiii. 21).* Hence, St. Joseph Calasancius used to say: "If you wish to be a saint, be humble; if you wish to be a very great saint, be most humble." To St. Francis Borgia, while a secular, a holy man once said: "If you desire to be a saint, never let a day pass without thinking on your miseries." Hence the Saint spent every day, the first two hours of prayer in the study of his own nothingness, and in sentiments of self-contempt.

St. Gregory says "that pride is the most evident mark of the reprobate; but humility is, on the contrary, the most evident mark of the elect." Seeing the world covered with the toils of the devil, St. Anthony, with a sigh, exclaimed: "Who can escape so many snares!" "Anthony," replied a voice, "it is only humility that passes through them with security: the humble man is

not in danger of being ensnared." In a word, unless we are like infants, not in years but in humility, we shall never attain salvation. *Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven—(Matt. xviii. 3).* In the life of St. Palemon it is related that a certain monk who walked on burning coals said to his companions: Which of you can tread on red-hot fire without being burnt. The Saint reproved him for his vanity, but the unhappy man did not amend. Puffed up with pride, he afterwards fell into sin, and died without repentance.

To the humble who are despised and persecuted on earth is promised the glory of God's kingdom. *Blessed are ye when they shall revile and persecute you for your reward is very great in heaven—(Matt. v. 11-12).* The humble shall be happy in this life as well as in the next. *Learn of me, says Jesus, because I am meek and humble of heart; and you shall find rest to your souls—(Matt. xi. 29).* The proud never enjoy peace, because they never receive the respect or attention which a vain opinion of their own greatness makes them regard as their due. When loaded with honours, they are not content; either because they see others still more exalted, or, because they desire some unattainable dignity, the absence of which is to them a source of torture, not to be removed by the gratification arising from all the honours they enjoy. Great, indeed, was the glory of Aman, in the court of Assuerus, where he sat at the monarch's table. But, because Mardocheus would not salute him, he was unhappy. *And whereas I have all these things, I think I have nothing so long as I see Mardocheus, the Jew, sitting before the king's gate—(Esth. v. 13).* Being the result of constraint and of human respect, the honour shown to the great does not give true joy. "True glory," says St. Jerome, "like a shadow, follows virtue: it flies from all who grasp at it, and seeks after those who despise it."

The humble man is always content, because whatever respect is paid to him he deems to be above his merits, and whatever contempt may be offered him he regards as far short of what is due to his sins. In all humility

he exclaims with holy Job : *I have sinned, and indeed I have offended, and I have not received what I have deserved*—(Job xxxiii. 27). Previous to a long journey which he was obliged to make, St. Francis Borgia was advised to dispatch a courier, who would secure accommodation for his master at the hotels where he intended to stop. "I never," replied the saint, "fail to send my courier before me. But do you know who he is? My courier is the thought of hell, which my sins have merited; this thought makes every lodging appear to me a palace in comparison of the dungeon to which I deserve to be condemned."

Evening Meditation.

INTERIOR TRIALS.

I.

All the anxiety of scrupulous souls arises from a fear lest in what they do, they should be acting, not with a mere scruple but with a real doubt, and therefore be committing sin. But the chief thing they are to remember is this : that he who acts in obedience to a learned and pious confessor, acts not only with no doubt, but with the greatest security that can be had upon earth, a security that rests on the Divine words of Jesus Christ, that he who obeys His ministers is as though he obeyed God Himself : *He that heareth you heareth me*—(Luke x. 16). Hence St. Bernard says : "Whatever man, in the place of God enjoins, provided it be not certainly displeasing to God, is absolutely to be received as though enjoined by God."

As to the personal direction of conscience, it is certain the confessor is the lawful superior, as St. Francis de Sales, with all spiritual instructors, declares : while Father Pinamonti, in his *Spiritual Director*, says : "It is well to make the scrupulous perceive, that submitting their will to the ministers of the Lord gives them the greatest security in all that is not manifestly sin. Let

them read the Lives of the Saints, and they will find that they knew no safer road than obedience. The Saints plainly relied more on the voice of their confessor than on the immediate voice of God, and yet the scrupulous would lean more on their own judgment than on the Gospel, which assures them : *He that heareth you, heareth me*.

II.

The Blessed Henry Suso used to say that God demands no account from us of things done under obedience. St. Philip Neri says the same : "Let such as desire to advance in the way of God submit themselves to a learned confessor, and obey him in God's stead. Let him who thus acts be assured that he will not have to render an account of his actions to God." He says, moreover, that one should have all faith in one's confessor, on the ground that God would not permit him to err; and that there is nothing that more surely cuts asunder the snares of the devil than to do the will of another in what is good, nor anything more full of danger than to be guiding ourselves according to what seems best to us. This is confirmed by St. John of the Cross, who speaks in the Name of the Lord : "When thou art unfaithful to confessors, thou art so unto Me, Who have said : *He that despiseth you, despiseth me*." And again : "Not to rest satisfied with what the confessor says is pride and failure in faith."

Christ Himself expressed in the institution of the Eucharist when He said, *This chalice is the new testament in my blood*—(1 Cor. xi. 25.) By these words Jesus meant, that the chalice of His Blood was the instrument or written security by which was established the new covenant between God and Jesus Christ, that to men who were faithful to Him should be given the gift of grace and of eternal life.

Hence, by suffering the penalties due to us, the Redeemer, through the love which He bore us, made on our behalf a rigorous atonement to the Divine Justice. *Surely*, says the Prophet, *he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows*—(Is. liii. 4). And all this was the fruit of His love. *Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us*—(Eph. v. 2). St. Bernard says that to pardon us, Jesus Christ did not pardon Himself. "To redeem a slave He spared not Himself." O miserable Jews, why do you still wait for the Messias promised by the Prophets? He has already come: you have murdered Him; but, in spite of your guilt, your Redeemer is ready to pardon you; for He has come to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel: *The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost*—(Matt. xviii. 11).

II.

St. Paul has written that, to deliver us from the malediction due to our sins, Jesus Christ has charged Himself with all the maledictions we merited; and therefore He wished to suffer the death of the accursed, that is, the death of the Cross: *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*—(Gal. iii. 13).

What a source of glory would it not be to a poor peasant captured by pirates, and reduced to slavery, to be ransomed by his sovereign at the cost of a kingdom! But how much greater glory do we derive from having been redeemed by Jesus Christ at the cost of His own Blood, a single drop of which is worth more than a thousand worlds! *You were not redeemed with corrup-*

Friday—Twenty-first Week after Pentecost

(COMMEMORATION OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER,
OCTOBER 23rd.)

Morning Meditation.

THE GREAT OBLIGATIONS WE ARE UNDER TO LOVE THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER.

Forget not the kindness of thy Surety for he hath given his life for thee. By this Surety we understand Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, Who, seeing that we were unable to satisfy Divine Justice, offered Himself to die for us. *He was offered because it was his own will.* He offered to make satisfaction for us, and actually paid our debts in His Blood, and by giving up His life. *He hath given his life for thee.*

I.

Forget not the kindness of thy Surety for he hath given his life for thee—(Ecdus. xxix. 19). By this Surety we understand Jesus Christ, Who, seeing that we were unable to atone to the Divine justice, offered Himself because it was his own will—(Is. liii. 7). He offered to make satisfaction for us, and actually paid our debts by His Blood and by His Death. *He hath given his life for thee.*

To repair the insults which we offered to the Divine majesty, the sacrifice of the life of all men was not sufficient; God alone could atone for an injury done to God; and this Jesus Christ has accomplished. *By so much*, says St. Paul, *is Jesus made a surety of a better testament*—(Heb. vii. 22). By making satisfaction on behalf of man, our Redeemer, man's surety, says the Apostle, obtained by His merits a new compact—that if man should observe the law, God would grant him grace and eternal life. This is precisely what Jesus

tible things as gold or silver . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled— (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). Hence, St. Paul tells us that we commit an act of injustice against our Saviour if we dispose of ourselves according to our own, and not according to His will, or if we indulge our inclinations selves, or, what is worse, if we indulge our inclinations so as to offend our God. For we belong not to ourselves, but to Jesus Christ Who has purchased us with a great price. *Know you not that . . . you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price—*(1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

Ah, my Redeemer, if I had shed all my blood for Thee, and even given for Thee a thousand lives, what compensation would it be for the love of Thee, Who hast given Thy Blood and Thy life for me? Give me strength, O my Jesus, to be entirely Thine during the remainder of my life.

Spiritual Reading.

HOLY HUMILITY.

IV.—HUMILITY OF THE INTELLECT OR JUDGMENT.

Let us examine now what we must do in order to attain humility.

There are two kinds of humility: humility of the intellect, and humility of the will or of the heart. Here we shall speak of the former, without which the latter cannot be acquired.

Humility of the intellect consists in thinking lowly of ourselves; in esteeming ourselves to be vile and miserable creatures, such as we really are. "Humility," says St. Bernard, "is a virtue which, by the knowledge of himself makes a man contemptible in his own estimation." Humility is truth, as St. Teresa has well said, and therefore the Lord greatly loves the humble, because they love the truth. It is too true that we are nothing; that we are ignorant, blind, and unable to do any good.

Of our own we have nothing but sin, which renders us worse than nothing; and of ourselves we can do nothing but evil. Whatever good we have or perform belongs to God and comes from His hands. This truth the humble man keeps continually before his eyes; he therefore calls his own only the evil he has done, and deems himself worthy of all sorts of contempt, and cannot bear to hear others attribute to him what he does not deserve. On the contrary, he delights in seeing himself despised and treated according to his deserts; and thus he renders his soul most pleasing to God. "A Christian," says St. Gregory, "becomes all the more estimable in the eyes of God in proportion as he is despicable in his own." Hence, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say, that the two foundations of Religious perfection are the love of God and the contempt of self. "Because," says the Saint, "he who will have humbled himself most upon earth shall see God most clearly in Heaven."

It is necessary, then, to pray continually in the words of St. Augustine: "May I know myself: may I know Thee, O my God, that thus I may love Thee and despise myself." Make me, O Lord, understand what I am and what Thou art. Thou art the source of every good: I am misery itself. Of myself I have nothing, I know nothing. I can do nothing but evil. It is only the humble that truly honour God. *He*, says the Holy Ghost, *is honoured by the humble—*(Eccles. iii. 21). Yes, it is only the humble that can give glory to the Lord, for they alone acknowledge Him to be the supreme and only Good. If, then, you desire to honour God, keep continually in view all your miseries; confess in the sincerity of your soul, that of yourself you are only nothingness and sinfulness, and that whatsoever you possess belongs to God. And, convinced of your own wretchedness, consider yourself deserving only of contempt and punishment; and offer yourself to accept all the chastisements with which God may visit you.

As a sequence of these principles we give here the following rules:

Be careful never to boast of anything. Far different

from yours was the conduct of the Saints. It is my continual practice to exhort all to read, for their spiritual reading, the Lives of the Saints. The great labours and exertions of the Saints for God's glory will humble our pride, and make us ashamed of the little we do or have done for God. But how is it possible that we should glory in anything, when we know that all the virtues we may possess are the gifts of God? "Who," says St. Bernard, "could abstain from laughing, if the clouds boasted of having begotten rain?" Whoever glories in any good action deserves to be treated with similar derision. Blessed John of Avila relates that a certain rich nobleman who had married a peasant, to prevent her from being puffed up with pride at seeing herself attended by servants and dressed in rich apparel, caused the miserable garment which she wore before her marriage to be preserved as a reminder. You should imitate his example. When you perceive that you have performed a good work or acquired any virtue, look back to your former state, remember what you were, and conclude that all the good you possess is but an alms from the Almighty. "Whosoever," says St. Augustine, "reckons up to Thee, O Lord, his own merits, what else does he reckon up but Thy gifts?" Whenever St. Teresa performed a good work, or saw an act of virtue performed by others, she immediately burst forth into the praises of God, referring the whole to Him as to its Author. Hence the Saint justly observes, that it is not incompatible with humility to acknowledge the special graces that God has given more abundantly to us than to others. Such an acknowledgment, continues the Saint, is not pride; on the contrary, by making us feel that we are more unworthy, and at the same time more favoured, than others, it assists our humility and stimulates our gratitude. The Saint adds that a Christian who does not reflect with gratitude on the sublime graces he has received, will never resolve to do great things for God. But in contemplating the gifts God has bestowed upon us we must always distinguish between what belongs to God and what belongs to us. St. Paul scrupled not to assert

that for the glory of the Lord Jesus he had done more than all the other Apostles. *I have, he says, laboured more abundantly than all they*—(1 Cor. xv. 10). But he immediately confessed that his labours were not his own works, but the fruit of Divine grace, by which he was assisted: *Yet not I, but the grace of God with me*—(1 Cor. v. 10).

Evening Meditation.

"A MAN OF SORROWS AND ACQUAINTED WITH INFIRMITIES."

I.

The Prophet Isaia called our Redeemer a *man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmities*—(Is. liii. 3). Contemplating the sorrows of Jesus Christ, Salviaan exclaimed, "O Love, I know not whether to call Thee sweet or severe: Thou dost appear to be both." O Love of my Jesus, I know not what to call Thee. Thou hast indeed been sweet towards us in loving us after so much ingratitude; but to Thyself Thou hast been cruel to excess, in choosing a life so full of pains, and in suffering a death so full of bitterness, in order to atone for our sins.

St. Thomas, the Angelic Doctor, writes that to save us from hell, Jesus Christ assumed the most extreme pain and the most extreme ignominy. To satisfy the Divine justice, it would be enough for Him to have suffered any pain; but no, He wishes to submit to the most galling insults and to the sharpest pains, in order to make us comprehend the malice of our sins, and the love with which His Heart was inflamed for us.

The God-man assumed the most extreme pain; hence, as we read in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, He said: *A body thou hast fitted to me*—(Heb. x. 5). The body which God gave to Jesus Christ was made on purpose for suffering, and therefore His flesh was most sensitive and delicate. *Sensitive, or capable of*

feeling pain most acutely: *delicate*, or so tender that every stroke which it received left a wound; in a word, His sacred body was made on purpose for suffering.

Besides, all the sorrows that Jesus Christ suffered till He expired on the Cross were always present to His mind from the first moment of His Incarnation. He saw them all, and cheerfully embraced them, in order to accomplish the will of His Father, Who wished that He should be offered in sacrifice for our salvation. *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—* (Heb. x. 7). This, according to the Apostle, was the oblation which obtained for us Divine grace. *In the which will, we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ once.*—(Heb. x. 10).

II.

But what, O my Redeemer, induces Thee to sacrifice Thy life amid so many sorrows for our salvation? St. Paul answers: to this He was led by the love He bore for us—(Eph. v. 2). *He hath delivered himself* love has induced Him to give His body to the scourges, His head to the thorns, His face to the spittle and buffets, His hands and feet to the nails, and His life to death.

Let him who wishes to see a man of sorrows look at Jesus Christ. Behold Him hanging on three nails; behold the entire weight of His body sustained by the wounds in His hands and feet; each member suffers its proper torment without any mitigation of pain. The three hours during which Jesus remained on the Cross are justly called the Three Hours of the Saviour's Agony; for during these three hours He suffered a continual agony and sorrow, which gradually brought Him to death, and in the end took away His life; this Man of Sorrows died of pure pain.

And what Christian, O my Jesus, can believe that Thou hast died for him on the Cross, and not love Thee? And how have I been able to live so many years in such forgetfulness of Thee, as to offend so often and so

grievously a God Who has loved me so intensely? Oh that I had died before I had ever offended Thee! O Love of my soul, O my Redeemer! Oh that I could die for Thee, Who hast died for me! I love Thee, O my Jesus, and I wish to love nothing but Thee.

Saturday—Twenty-first Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

“MARY'S ONLY THOUGHT, TO SUCCOUR THE MISERABLE.”

From the hour Mary came into the world her only thought, after the glory of God, was to succour the miserable. And in order to succour the miserable she enjoys the privilege of obtaining whatever she asks. She has only to speak and her Son immediately grants her her request.

I.

From the hour Mary came into the world her only thought, after the glory of God, was to succour the miserable. And in order to succour the miserable she enjoys the privilege of obtaining whatever she asks. This we know from what occurred at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee. When the wine failed, the most Blessed Virgin, being moved to compassion at the sight of the affliction and shame of the bride and bridegroom, asked her Son to relieve them by a miracle, telling Him that *they had no wine*. Jesus answered: *Woman, what is that to thee and me? My hour is not yet come*—(John ii. 4). Although our Lord seemed to refuse His Mother the favour she asked, yet, as if the favour had already been granted, Mary desired those in attendance to fill

the jars with water, for they would be immediately satisfied. And so it was. To content His mother, Jesus changed the water into the best wine. But how was this? As the time for working miracles was that of the public life of our Lord, how could it be that, contrary to the Divine decrees, this miracle was worked? No, in this there was nothing contrary to the decrees of God; for though, generally speaking, the time for miracles was not come, yet from all eternity God had determined by another decree that nothing that she asked should ever be refused to the Divine Mother. And, therefore, Mary, who well knew her privilege, although her Son seemed to have refused her the favour, yet told them to fill the jars with water, as if her request had already been granted. That is the sense in which St. John Chrysostom understood it; for, explaining these words of our Lord, *Woman, what is it to thee and me?* he says, that "though Jesus answered thus, yet in honour of His Mother He obeyed her wish." This is confirmed by St. Thomas, who says that by the words, *My hour is not yet come*, Jesus Christ intended to show, that had the request come from any other, He would not then have complied with it; but because it was addressed to Him by His Mother, He could not refuse it. St. Cyril and St. Jerome, quoted by Barrada, say the same thing. Also Gaudensis, on the foregoing passage of St. John, says, that "to honour His Mother, our Lord anticipated the time for working miracles."

II.

It is certain that no creature can obtain so many mercies for us as this tender advocate, who is thus honoured by God, not only as His beloved handmaid, but also as His true Mother. And this William of Paris says addressing her: "No creature can obtain so many and so great favours as thou obtainest for poor sinners; and thus without doubt God honours thee not only as a handmaid, but as His most true Mother." Mary has only to speak, and her Son executes all. Our Lord conversing with the spouse in the sacred Canticles—that is Mary—says, *Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the*

friends harken; make me hear thy voice—(Cant. viii. 13). The Saints are *the friends*, and they, when they seek favours for their clients, wait for their Queen to ask and obtain; for, as we said "no grace is granted otherwise than at the prayer of Mary." And how does Mary obtain favours? She has only to let her voice be heard—*make me hear thy voice*. She has only to speak, and her Son immediately grants her prayer. Listen to the Abbot William explaining, in this sense, the above-mentioned text. In it he introduces the Son addressing Mary: "Thou who dwellest in the heavenly gardens, intercede with confidence for whomsoever thou wilt; for it is not possible that I should so far forget that I am thy Son as to deny anything to thee, My Mother. Only let thy voice be heard, for to be heard by Thy Son is to be obeyed." The Abbot Godfrey says, "that although Mary obtains favours by asking, yet she asks with a certain maternal authority, and therefore we should feel confident that she obtains all she desires and asks for us."

I will address thee, O great Mother of God, in the words of St. Bernard: "Speak, O Lady, for thy Son heareth thee, and whatever thou askest thou wilt obtain." Speak, speak, then, O Mary, our advocate, in favour of us poor miserable creatures. Remember that it was also for our good that thou didst receive so great power and so high a dignity. A God was pleased to become thy debtor by taking humanity of thee, in order that thou mightest dispense at will the riches of Divine mercy to sinners.

Obtain for us true conversion; obtain for us the love of God, perseverance, Heaven. We ask thee for much; but what is it? perhaps thou canst not obtain all? It is perhaps too much for the love God bears thee? Ah, no! for thou hast only to open thy lips and ask thy Divine Son; He will deny thee nothing. Pray, then, pray O Mary, for us; pray: thou wilt certainly obtain all: and we shall with the same certainty obtain the kingdom of Heaven.

Spiritual Reading.

“WHAT GOD CAN DO BY HIS POWER, HIS MOTHER CAN DO BY HER PRAYERS.”

Valerius Maximus relates that when Coriolanus was besieging Rome, the prayers of his friends and all the citizens were insufficient to make him desist; but as soon as he beheld his mother Veturia imploring him, he could no longer refuse, and immediately raised the siege. But the prayers of Mary with Jesus are as much more powerful than those of Veturia, as the love and gratitude of this Son for his most dear Mother are greater. Father Justin Micoviensis says that “a single sigh of the most Blessed Mary can do more than the united suffrages of all the Saints.” And this was acknowledged by the devil to St. Dominic, who, as it is related by Father Paciucchelli, obliged him to speak by the mouth of a possessed person; and he said that “a single sigh from Mary was worth more before God than the united suffrages of all the Saints.”

Saint Antoninus says that “the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, being the prayers of a Mother, have in them something of a command; so that it is impossible that she should not obtain what she asks.” St. Germanus, encouraging sinners to recommend themselves to this advocate, thus addresses her: “As thou hast, O Mary, the authority of a Mother with God, thou obtainest pardon for the most enormous sinners; since that Lord in all things acknowledges thee as His true and spotless Mother, He cannot do otherwise than grant what thou askest.” And so it was that St. Bridget heard the Saints in Heaven addressing our Blessed Lady: “O most blessed Queen, what is there that thou canst not do? Thou hast only to will, and it is accomplished.” And this corresponds with that celebrated saying, “That which God can do by His power, thou canst do by prayer, O sacred Virgin.” “To be thus jealous of the honour paid His Mother,” says St. Augustine, “would

indeed ill become that Lord Who declares that He came into the world, not to break, but to observe the law: now this law commands us to honour our parents.” St. George, Archbishop of Nicomedia, says that Jesus Christ, even as it were to satisfy an obligation under which He placed Himself towards His Mother, when she consented to give Him His human nature, grants all she asks: “the Son, as if paying a debt, grants all thy petitions.” And on this the holy Martyr, St. Methodius, exclaims: “Rejoice, rejoice, O Mary, for thou hast that Son thy debtor, Who gives to all and receives from none. We are all God’s debtors for all that we possess, for all is His gift; but God has been pleased to become thy Debtor in taking flesh from thee and becoming Man.”

Therefore, Saint Augustine says that, “Mary, having merited to give flesh to the Divine Word, and thus supply the price of our Redemption, that we might be delivered from eternal death, she is more powerful than all others to help us to gain eternal life.” St. Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, in the time of St. Jerome, left in writing the following words: “The prayers of His Mother are a pleasure to the Son, because He desires to grant all that is granted on her account, and thus recompense her for the favour she did Him in giving Him His body.” St. John Damascene, addressing the Blessed Virgin, says: “Thou, O Mary, being Mother of the most high God, canst save all by thy prayers, which are increased in value by thy maternal authority.”

Let us conclude with St. Bonaventure, who, considering the great benefit conferred on us by our Lord in giving us Mary for our advocate, thus addresses her: “O truly immense and admirable goodness of our God, Who has been pleased to grant thee, O sovereign Mother, to us miserable sinners for our advocate, in order that thou, by thy powerful intercession, mayest obtain all that thou pleasest for us.” “O wonderful mercy of our God,” continues the same Saint, “Who in order that we might not flee away on account of the sentence that might be pronounced against us, has given us His own Mother and the patroness of graces to be our advocate.”

Evening Meditation.

MARY, OUR ADVOCATE, DEFENDS THE CAUSE OF EVEN THE MOST MISERABLE.

I.

Mary is so tender an advocate that she does not refuse to defend the cause of even the most miserable. So many are the reasons we have for loving this our most loving Queen, that if Mary was praised throughout the world; if in every sermon Mary alone was spoken of; if all men gave their lives for Mary; still all would be little in comparison with the homage and gratitude we owe her in return for the tender love she bears to men, and even to the most miserable sinners who preserve the slightest spark of devotion for her.

Blessed Raymond Jordano, who, out of humility, called himself *Idiota*, used to say that "Mary knows not how to do otherwise than love those who love her; and that even she does not disdain to serve those who serve her; and in favour of such a one, should he be a sinner, she uses all her power in order to obtain his forgiveness from her Blessed Son." And he adds that her benignity and mercy are so great, that no one, however enormous his sins may be, should fear to cast himself at her feet; for she never can reject any one who has recourse to her." Mary, as our most loving advocate, herself offers the prayers of her servants to God, and especially those which are placed in her hands; for as the Son intercedes for us with the Father, so does she intercede with the Son, and does not cease to make interest with both for the great affair of our salvation, and to obtain for us the graces we ask."

With good reason, then, does Denis the Carthusian call the Blessed Virgin the special refuge of the lost, the life of the miserable, the advocate of all sinners who have recourse to her.

O great Mother of my Lord, I see full well that my ingratitude towards God and thee, and this too for so many years, has merited for me that thou shouldst justly

abandon me, and no longer have a care of me, for an ungrateful soul is no longer worthy of favours. But I, O Lady, have a high idea of thy great goodness; I believe it to be far greater than my ingratitude. Continue, then, O Refuge of sinners, and cease not to help a miserable sinner who confides in thee. O Mother of mercy, deign to extend a helping hand to a poor fallen wretch who asks thee for pity. O Mary, either defend me thyself, or tell me to whom I can have recourse, and who is better able to defend me than thou, and where I can find with God a more clement and powerful advocate than thou, who art His Mother. Thou, in becoming the Mother of our Saviour, wast thereby made the fitting instrument to save sinners, and wast given me for my salvation. O Mary, save him who has recourse to thee.

II.

Should there be, by any chance, a sinner who, though not doubting Mary's power, might doubt the compassion of Mary, fearing perhaps that she might be unwilling to help him on account of the greatness of his sins, let him take courage from the words of St. Bonaventure. "The great, the special privilege of Mary is, that she is all-powerful with her Son." "But," adds the Saint, "to what purpose would Mary have so great power if she cared not for us?" "No," he concludes, "let us not doubt, but be certain, and let us always thank our Lord and His Divine Mother for it, that in proportion as her power with God exceeds that of all the Saints, so is she in the same proportion our most loving advocate, and the one who is the most solicitous for our welfare."

"And who, O Mother of Mercy," exclaims St. Germanus, in the joy of his heart, "who, after thy Jesus, is as tenderly solicitous for our welfare as thou art?" "Who defends us in the temptations with which we are afflicted as thou defendest us? Who, like thee, undertakes to protect sinners, fighting, as it were, in their behalf?" "Therefore," he adds, "thy patronage,

O Mary, is more powerful and loving than anything of which we can ever form an idea." "For," says the Blessed Raymond Jordano, "whilst all the other Saints can do more for their own clients than for others, the Divine Mother, as Queen of all, is the advocate of all, and has a care for the salvation of all."

Mary takes care of all, even of sinners; indeed she glories in being called in a special manner their advocate, as she herself declared to the Venerable Sister Mary Villani, saying: "After the title of Mother of God, I rejoice most in that of advocate of sinners."

O my Lady, I am a sinner and I do not deserve thy love, but it is thine own desire to save sinners that makes me hope that thou lovest me. And if thou lovest me, how can I be lost? O my own beloved Mother, if by thee I save my soul, as I hope to do, I shall no longer be ungrateful, I shall make up for my past ingratitude, and for the love which thou hast shown me, by my everlasting praises, and all the affections of my soul. Happy in Heaven, where thou reignest, and wilt reign forever, I shall always sing thy mercies, and kiss for eternity those loving hands which have delivered me from hell, when I deserved it by my sins. O Mary, my liberator, my hope, my Queen, my advocate, my own sweet Mother, I love thee. I desire thy glory and to love thee forever. Amen, amen. Thus do I hope.

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

"THOU ART JUST, O LORD, AND THY JUDGMENT IS RIGHT."

By our sins long ago committed, and often since, we have deserved hell. And do we understand what *hell*

means? One moment in hell is more dreadful than a hundred years of most frightful torments. And yet we complain if God sends us sufferings. O Lord, Thou art just! Give us grace to suffer with patience.

I.

Are we to look upon God as a tyrant who takes pleasure in our suffering? He does take pleasure in punishing us, but exactly the same pleasure a father takes in correcting his son: He does not take pleasure in the pain which He inflicts, but in the amendment it will work. *My son, reject not the correction of the Lord; and do not faint when thou art chastised by him, for whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth, and as a father in the son, he pleaseth himself*—(Prov. iii. 11). He chastises you because He loves you; it is not that He wishes to see you afflicted, but converted; and if He takes pleasure in your suffering, He does so inasmuch as it is a means of conversion—just as a father who chastises his son derives pleasure, not from the affliction of his son, but from the amendment which he hopes to see in him, and which will prevent him from working his own ruin. Chastisement makes us return to God, says St. John Chrysostom; and it is to this end God inflicts it, in order that we may not stay away from Him.

Why then do you complain of God when in tribulation? You ought to thank Him prostrate on the earth. If a man condemned to die were to have his sentence changed by the prince from death into one hour's imprisonment, and if he were to complain of that one hour, would his complaint be just? Would he not rather deserve that the prince should reverse the last sentence, and condemn him a second time to death? You have long and often deserved hell by your sins. And do you know all that the word *hell* means? Know that it is more dreadful to suffer for one moment in hell than to suffer for a hundred years the most frightful torments which the Martyrs suffered on earth; and in this hell you should have had to suffer not for a moment, but during all eternity. And yet you complain

if God send you some tribulation, some infirmity, some loss! Thank God, and say: Lord, this chastisement is trifling compared with my sins. I should have been in hell burning, deserted by all, and in despair; I thank Thee for having called me to Thyself by this tribulation which Thou hast sent me. God, says Oleaster, often calls sinners to repentance by temporal chastisements. By earthly chastisements the Lord shows us the immense punishment our sins deserve; and therefore afflicts us on this earth, that we may be converted and escape eternal flames.

II.

Wretched, then, should we poor sinners be if left unpunished; but still more wretched is the sinner who, admonished by affliction, does not amend. It is not a grievous thing to be afflicted by God on this earth after one has sinned; but it is very grievous not to be converted by the affliction sent, and to be like those of whom David speaks, who, although visited by Divine chastisement, still sleep on in their sins. *At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, they have all slumbered*—(Ps. lxxv. 7). As if the sound of the scourges and the thunders of God, instead of rousing them from their lethargy, served only to make them sleep more soundly. *I struck you, yet you returned not to me*—(Amos iv. 9). I have scourged you, says God, in order that you might return to Me; but ye, ungrateful that you are, have been deaf to My calls. Unhappy the sinner who acts like him of whom the Lord says, *He shall send lightnings against him; . . . his heart shall be as hard as a stone, and as firm as a smith's anvil*—(Job xli. 14, 15). God visits him with chastisement, and he, instead of being softened and returning to the Lord by penance, shall be as firm as a smith's anvil; he shall grow more hardened under the blows of God, as the anvil grows harder under the hammer, like the impious Achaz, of whom the Scripture says: *In the time of his distress he increased contempt against the Lord*—(2 Par. xxviii. 22). Unhappy man, instead of humbling himself, he all the more despised God. He deserves all chastisement who, being afflicted

by the Lord for his conversion, continues to provoke the Lord to greater wrath. What can I do, O sinner, to bring about your conversion? the Lord will say: I have called you by sermons and inspirations, and you have despised them; I have called you by favours, and you have grown more insolent; I have called you by scourges, and you continue to offend Me. *For what shall I strike you any more, you that increase transgression . . . and the daughter of Sion shall be left . . . as a city that is laid waste*—(Is. i. 5-8). Do you not wish to hearken even to My chastisements? Do you wish that I should abandon you?

Let us no longer abuse the mercy which God uses towards us. Let us not be like the nettle, which stings him who strikes it. God afflicts us, because He loves us, and wishes to see us reformed. When we feel the chastisement, we should remember our sins, and say with the brethren of Joseph: *We deserve to suffer these things, because we have sinned against our brother*—(Gen. xlii. 21). Lord, Thou punishest us justly, because we have offended Thee, our Father and God. *Thou art just, O God, and thy judgment is right*—(Ps. cxviii. 137). *Everything thou hast done to us, thou hast done in true judgment*—(Dan. iii. 31). Lord, Thou art just, and dost with justice punish us; we accept this tribulation which Thou sendest us; give us strength to suffer it with patience.

Spiritual Reading.

HOLY HUMILITY.

V.—HUMILITY OF THE INTELLECT OR JUDGMENT.

Since without the Divine aid you can do nothing, be careful never to confide in your own strength; but after the example of St. Philip Neri, endeavour to live in continual and utter distrust of yourself. Like St. Peter, who protested that not even death would induce him to deny his Master, the proud man trusts in his

own courage, and therefore yields to temptation. Because he confided in himself, the Apostle had no sooner entered the house of the high-priest than he denied Jesus Christ. Be careful never to place confidence in your own resolutions or in your present good dispositions; but put your whole trust in God, saying with St. Paul: *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me*—(Phil. iv. 13). If you cast away all self-confidence, and place all your hopes in the Lord, you may then expect to do great things for God. *They that hope in the Lord*, says the Prophet Isaias, *shall renew their strength*—(Is. xl. 31). Yes, the humble, who trust in the Lord, shall renew their strength; distrusting themselves, they shall lay aside their own weakness and put on the strength of God. Hence, St. Joseph Calasancius used to say, that “whoever desires to be the instrument of God in great undertakings, should seek to be the lowest of all.” Strive to imitate the conduct of St. Catharine of Sienna, who, when tempted to vainglory, would make an act of humility, and when tempted to despair, would make an act of confidence in God. Enraged at her conduct, the devil began one day to curse her and the person who taught her this mode of resisting his temptations; and added, that he “knew not how to attack her.” When, therefore, Satan tells you that you are in no danger of falling, tremble; and reflect that, should God abandon you for a moment, you are lost. When he tempts you to despair, exclaim in the loving words of David: *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped: let me never be confounded*—(Ps. xxx. 2). In Thee, O Lord, I have placed all my hopes; I trust that I shall not be confounded, deprived of Thy grace, and made the slave of hell.

Should you be so unfortunate as to commit a fault, take care not to give way to diffidence, but humble your soul; repent, and with a stronger sense of your own weakness, throw yourself into the arms of the Lord. To be angry with ourselves after having committed a fault, is not an act of humility, but of pride, which makes us wonder how we could have fallen into such a fault. Yes, it is pride and a delusion of the devil, who seeks to draw us away from the path of perfection, to

cast us into despair of advancing in virtue, and thus precipitate us into more grievous sins. After a fault we should redouble our confidence in God, and thus take occasion from our infidelity to place still greater hopes in His mercy. *To them that love God*, says St. Paul, *all things work together unto good*—(Rom. viii. 28). “Yes,” adds the Gloss, “even sins.” The Lord once said to St. Gertrude: “When a person’s hands are stained he washes them, and they become cleaner than before they were soiled.” So the soul that commits a fault, being purified by repentance, is made more pleasing in the eyes of God than she was before her transgression. To teach them to distrust themselves, and to confide only in Him, God sometimes permits His servants, and particularly those who are not well grounded in humility, to fall into some sin. If, then, you commit a fault, endeavour to repair it immediately by an act of love and of sorrow; resolve to amend, and redouble your confidence in God; say with St. Catharine of Genoa: “Lord, this is the fruit of my garden. If Thou dost not protect me I shall be guilty of still more grievous offences; but I purpose to avoid this fault for the future, and with the aid of Thy grace, I hope to keep this resolution.” Should you ever relapse, act always in the same manner, and never abandon the resolution of becoming a saint.

Should you ever see another commit some grievous sin, take care not to indulge in pride, nor to be surprised at his fall; but pity his misfortune, and trembling for yourself, say with holy David: *Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell*—(Ps. xciii. 17). If the Almighty had not been my Protector, I should at this moment be buried in hell. Beware of even taking vain complacency in being exempt from faults you perceive in others, or else, in chastisement of your pride the Lord will permit you to fall into the sins they have committed. Cassian relates that a certain young monk, being for a long time molested by a violent temptation to impurity, sought advice and consolation from an aged Father. Instead of receiving encouragement and comfort, he was loaded with re-

proaches. "What!" said the old man, "is it possible that a monk should be subject to such abominable thoughts?" In punishment of his pride the Almighty permitted the Father to be assailed by the spirit of impurity to such a degree that he ran about like a madman. Hearing of his miserable condition, the Abbot Apollo told him that God had permitted this temptation to punish his conduct towards the young monk, and also to teach him compassion for others in similar circumstances. The Apostle tells us that in correcting sinners we should not treat them with contempt, lest God should permit us to be assailed by the temptation to which they yielded, and perhaps to fall into the very sin which we were surprised to see them commit. We should, before we reprove others, consider that we are as miserable and as liable to sin as our fallen brethren. *Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault . . . instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted*—(Gal. vi. 1). The same Cassian relates that a certain Abbot called Machete confessed that he himself had miserably fallen into three faults, of which he had rashly judged his brethren to be guilty.

Evening Meditation.

INTERIOR TRIALS.

I.

We are to have this certain confidence that in obeying our Spiritual Father, we are sure of not sinning. "The sovereign remedy for the scrupulous," says St. Bernard, "is a blind obedience to their confessor." John Gerson relates, that the same Saint told one of his disciples, who was scrupulous, to go and celebrate, and take his word for it. He went, and was cured of his scruples. "But a person may answer," says Gerson, "Would to God I had a St. Bernard for my director! Mine is one of indifferent wisdom." And he answers, "Thou dost

err, whoever thou art that so speakest; for thou hast not given thyself into the hands of the man because he is well read, etc., but because he is placed over thee; wherefore obey him not as man, but as God." Hence St. Teresa has well said: "Let the soul accept the confessor with a determination to think no more of personal excuses, but to trust in the words of the Lord: *He that heareth you heareth me.*" Hence St. Francis de Sales, speaking of direction from a Spiritual Father in order to walk securely in the way of God, says: "This is the very counsel of all counsels." "Search as much as you will," says the saintly Father John of Avila, "you will in no way discover the will of God so surely as by the path of that humble obedience which is so much recommended and practised by the devout of former times." Thus, too, Father Alvarez said: "Even if the Spiritual Father should err, the obedient soul is secure from error, because it rests on the judgment of him whom God has given it as a superior." And Father Nierenberg writes to the same effect: "Let the soul obey the confessor; and then, who does it with the intention of obeying him who holds the place of God in his regard, persuading himself, as is, indeed, the case, that he is bound to obey him," who is the interpreter of the Divine will.

II.

St. Francis of Sales gives three maxims which bring great consolation to scrupulous souls.

1. An obedient soul has never been lost; 2. We ought to rest satisfied with knowing from our Spiritual Father that we are going on well, without seeking a personal knowledge of it; 3. The best thing is to walk on blindly through all the darkness and perplexity of this life, under the Providence of God. And therefore all the Doctors of Morals conclude, in general, with St. Antoninus, Navarro, Silvester, etc., that obedience to the confessor is the safest rule for walking securely in the ways of God. F. Tirillo, and F. La Croix say that this is the common

doctrine of the holy Fathers and masters of the spiritual life.

The scrupulous should know that not only are they safe in obeying, but that they are bound to obey their director, and to despise the scruple, acting with all freedom in the midst of their doubts. This is the teaching of Natalis Alexander: That scruples ought to be despised when one has the judgment of a prudent, pious, and learned director; and that one ought to act against them. "He who acts against scruples does not sin," says Father Wigandt, "nay, sometimes it is a precept to do so, especially when backed by the judgment of the confessor." So do these authors speak, although they belong to the rigid school; so, too, theologians in general; and the reason is, that if the scrupulous man goes on in his scruples, he is in danger of placing grievous impediments in the way of satisfying his obligations, or, at least, of making spiritual progress; and, moreover, of even losing his mind, losing his health, and destroying his soul by despair or by relaxation. Hence St. Antoninus agrees with Gerson in thus reproving the scrupulous soul who, through a vain fear, is not obedient in overcoming his scruples: "Beware lest, from overmuch desire to walk securely, thou fall and destroy thyself."

Monday—Twenty-second Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

"WHO WILL HAVE ALL MEN TO BE SAVED."

God wishes that we should all be saved, as the Apostle assures us when he says *God will have all men to be saved*—(1 Tim. ii. 4). And although He sees so many

sinners who deserve hell, He does not wish any of them to be lost but that they be restored to grace by penance and saved. *Not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance*—(2 Peter iii. 9).

I.

He who has a good heart cannot but feel compassion for the afflicted, and wish to see all men happy. But who has a heart as good as the Lord's? He by His nature is infinite goodness, and hence it is that God by His nature has an extreme desire to deliver us from every evil, and render us happy in all things, nay, even to be partakers of His own happiness.

God wishes that we should all be saved, as the Apostle assures us: *God . . . who will have all men to be saved*—(1 Tim. ii. 4). And although He sees so many sinners who deserve hell, He does not wish that any of them should be lost, but that they should be restored to grace by penance, and be saved. *Not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance*—(2 Peter iii. 9). But before delivering us from the punishment we have deserved, and dispensing His graces, God wishes to be besought in prayer. "By prayer," says St. Laurence Justinian, "the wrath of God is suspended, His vengeance is delayed, and pardon finally procured." Oh how great are the promises which God makes to him who prays! *Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee*—(Ps. xlix. 15). *Cry to me, and I will hear thee*—(Jer. xxxiii. 3). *You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you*—(Jo. xv. 7). Theodoret says that Prayer though being but one, can do all things. And let us bear in mind that when we pray and ask things conducive to salvation not even our sins can prevent our receiving the graces which we beg—*For every one that asketh receiveth*—(Matt. vii. 8). Jesus Christ here says that whoever asks, be he just or sinner, shall receive. Wherefore did David say: *For thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee*—(Ps. lxxxv. 5). Hence, in order to excite us to prayer, the Apostle

St. James tells us : *But if any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not*—(James i. 5).

II.

He giveth to all men abundantly. When a man asks a favour of another whom he may have formerly injured, the latter usually reproaches him with the injury that has been done him; but not so God—*He upbraideth not.* When we beg of Him some grace for the good of our souls, He never reproaches us with the offences we have committed; but He hears us, and consoles us as though we had always served Him faithfully. *Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name,* said our Lord one day to His disciples, and to-day He says the same thing to us : *Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full*—(Jo. xvi. 24). As if He were to say : Do you complain of Me? You have only yourselves to blame, for you have not asked graces of Me, and therefore you have not received them. Ask of Me, henceforward, what you please, and it shall be granted you, and if you have not merit sufficient to obtain it, ask it of My Father in My Name, that is, through My merits, and whatever it be, I promise that you shall obtain it. *Amen, amen, I say to you; if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you*—(Jo. xvi. 28). The princes of the earth, says St. John Chrysostom, give audience only to a few, and that seldom; but access can always be had to God by every one, at all times, and with the assurance of a favourable hearing.

Rely, then, upon these great promises, so often repeated by Our Lord in the Scriptures; and let us ever remember to beg of Him those graces which are necessary for salvation—namely, the pardon of our sins, perseverance in grace, His holy love, resignation to His Divine will, a happy death, and Paradise. By prayer we shall attain all; without prayer we shall have nothing. What the holy Fathers and Theologians commonly say—namely, that prayer is necessary for adults, as a means of salvation, comes to this, that it is impossible for any one to be saved without prayer.

Let us pray, then, and pray with great confidence in that Divine promise by which, says St. Augustine, God has made Himself our Debtor. He has promised; He cannot be wanting in His promise. Let us seek and hope, and we must be saved. *No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded*—(Ecclus. ii. 11). There never has been and never will be found any one to hope in the Lord and be lost. *He is the Protector of all who trust in him*—(Ps. xvii. 31).

Spiritual Reading.

HOLY HUMILITY.

VI.—HUMILITY OF THE INTELECT OR JUDGMENT.

Consider yourself the greatest sinner on this earth. They who are truly humble, because they are most perfectly enlightened by God, possess the most perfect knowledge, not only of the Divine perfections, but also of their own miseries and sins. Hence, notwithstanding their extraordinary sanctity, the Saints, not in the language of exaggeration, but in the sincerity of their souls, called themselves the greatest sinners in the world. Thus St. Francis of Assisi called himself the worst of sinners; St. Thomas of Villanova was kept in a state of continual fear and trembling by the thought of the account he was one day to render to God, for his life, though full of virtue, appeared to him very wicked. St. Gertrude considered it a miracle that the earth did not open under her feet and swallow her up alive, in punishment of her sins. St. Paul, the first hermit, was in the habit of exclaiming : “Woe to me, a sinner, who am unworthy to bear the name of a monk.” In the writings of Blessed John of Avila we read of a person of great sanctity who besought the Lord to make known to her the state of her soul. Her prayer was heard; and so deformed and abominable was the appearance of her soul, though stained only with the guilt of venial sins, that, struck with horror, she cried out : “For mercy’s

sake, O Lord, take away from before my eyes the representation of this monster!"

Beware, then, of ever preferring yourself to any one. To esteem yourself better than others, is abundantly sufficient to make you worse than all. "Others," says Tritemius, "you have despised; you have, therefore, become worse than others." Again, to entertain a high opinion of your own deserts, is enough to deprive you of all merit. Humility consists principally in a sincere conviction that we deserve only reproach and chastisement. If, by preferring yourself to others, you have abused the gifts and graces God has conferred upon you, they will only serve for your greater condemnation at the hour of Judgment. But it is not enough to abstain from preferring yourself to any one: it is, moreover, necessary to consider yourself the last and worst of all. First, because in yourself you see with certainty so many sins; but the sins of others you know not, and their secret virtues, which are hidden from your eyes, may render them very dear in the sight of God. You ought to consider also, that by the aid of the lights and graces you have received from God, you should at this moment be a saint. Ah! had they been given to an infidel, he would perhaps have become a seraph, and you are still so miserable and full of defects. The consideration of your ingratitude ought to be sufficient to make you always regard yourself as a fit object of the scorn of all: for, as St. Thomas teaches, the malice of sin increases in proportion to the ingratitude of the sinner. Hence, one of your sins may be more grievous in the sight of God than a hundred sins of another less favoured than you have been. But you know that you have already committed many sins; that your life has been one continued series of voluntary faults; and that whatever good you may have done is so full of imperfection and of self-love, that it is more deserving of punishment than of remuneration.

All these considerations ought to inspire you with the sentiments of humility which St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi inculcated on her spiritual children, with a continual sense of your unworthiness to kiss the ground

on which others walk. You ought to consider that, had you received all imaginable insults, and were cast into hell, under the feet of all the damned, all this would be but little in comparison with what you deserve. And, therefore, from the deep abyss of your own miseries you should continually cry out, with holy David: *Incline unto my aid, O God; O Lord, make haste to help me*—(Ps. lxxix. 1). Lord, hasten to my assistance, otherwise I am lost, and shall offend Thee more than ever, and more than all sinners. But this prayer must be repeated continually—almost every moment. You must cry out: "Assist me, O Lord! Lord have mercy on me!" At the very moment you cease to invoke the Divine aid you may become the most wicked monster in creation. Shun, as death itself, even the most trifling act or thought of pride. I conclude with that great saying of St. Bernard: "In the soul no humiliation, however great, is to be feared; but the least elation is to be regarded with horror." Yes; for the smallest degree of arrogance may lead us into every evil.

Evening Meditation.

INTERIOR TRIALS.

I.

Father Wigandt says that the scrupulous soul should obey the Confessor in all cases where the command is not plainly a sin, and this is the general and undoubted decision among the Doctors of the spiritual life. St. Ignatius Loyola says: "There must be obedience in all things in which no sin is perceived—that is, in which there is no manifest sin." Blessed Humbert, General of the Friar Preachers says: "Unless the command be plainly evil, it is to be received as though enjoined by God." Blessed Denis the Carthusian says: "In things doubtful as to whether or not they are against the Divine precept, one must stand by the precept of the superior; because, although it should be

against the precept of God, yet, in virtue of obedience, the person under direction sins not." St. Bonaventure teaches the same.

"The scrupulous are to act against their scruples," says Gerson, "and plant their feet firmly in resisting. We cannot set scruples at rest better than by despising them; and, as a general rule, not without the advice of another, and especially our Superior. Otherwise, either ill-regulated fear or over-presumption will be our ruin." The remedy St. Philip Neri gave the scrupulous was, to make them despise their scruples. It is told in his Life that, besides the general remedy of committing one's self altogether and for everything to the judgment of the confessor, the Saint gave another: his penitents should despise their scruples. Hence he forbade such persons to confess often; and when, in Confession, they entered upon their scruples, he used to send them to Communion without hearing them.

II.

In conclusion, then, scrupulous persons should take obedience to heart and look upon their fears as vain, and so act with freedom. It is not required that in each particular act he should expressly determine that the thing is a scruple and that he ought to obey the confessor in despising it, for it is enough if he just act against it in virtue of a judgment made beforehand, since the same judgment resides in his conscience habitually or virtually though dim and confused. Hence if the scrupulous person be unable, in the midst of darkness, to lay aside the scruple at once, or even call to mind the obedience laid upon him, he should act, and though in acting there be even a positive fear of sinning, that will be no sin. . . . Gerson says that a person sins by acting in a state of practical doubt, when the doubt proceeds from a *formed conscience*. This *formed conscience* exists when, after examining the circumstances, he deliberately judges and decides what he is obliged to do, and what he is forbidden; and to act against such a conscience is a sin. But when the

mind is doubtful and wavering, and yet would not do anything displeasing to God—this, says Gerson, is not a true state of doubt, but a vain fear, which should as much as possible be cast away and despised. So that when the scrupulous person has the habitual will not to offend God, it is to be taken for granted that while he acts in uncertainty he does not sin, since there is no true doubt, though he may consider it such, for it is only a vain fear. For the commission of mortal sin there is certainly required a full perception on the part of the reason, and complete deliberate consent on the part of the will to will something which grievously offends God. This doctrine is not to be doubted, and is the common teaching of all theologians, even the most rigid.

Let scrupulous souls, then, carry their cross with resignation, and not worry themselves in the midst of the great distresses of conscience which God may send or permit. It is all for their profit, to the end that they may be humble, and more on their guard against such occasions as are undoubtedly serious dangers, and also, that they may commend themselves oftener to God and put more complete trust in the Divine Goodness. Meanwhile, let them have recourse to the most holy Virgin Mary, who is called, and is in truth, the Mother of Mercy, and comforter of the afflicted. Let them, indeed, fear to offend God, wherever they discern what will really offend Him; but if only they are steadfast in resolving rather to die a thousand times than lose the grace of God, then their only fear need be lest they fall in obedience to their directors. As long as they blindly obey, they may assure themselves of not being abandoned by that Lord Who will have all men to be saved, and Who, loving good-will as He does, never suffers a really obedient soul to perish. *No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded*—(Eccclus. ii. 11).

Casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you—(1 Peter v. 7).

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?—(Ps. xxxvi. 1).

In peace in the self same I will sleep and I will rest; for thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope— (Ps. iv. 9, 10).

In thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded— (Ps. xxx. 2).

Tuesday—Twenty-second Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

“YOU RECEIVE NOT BECAUSE YOU ASK
AMISS.”

Many there are who ask graces from God but do not obtain them. And why is this? St. James answers and says they receive not because they do not ask as they should. *You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss*—(iv. 3). How can God hear the sinner who prays to Him to be freed from affliction, when he will not abandon sin which is the cause of all his miseries? We cannot expect to be heard unless our prayer be accompanied by a firm purpose to amend.

1. God desires to deliver us from every evil, and to share His blessings with us, but He wishes us to ask Him in prayer, and so to pray that we may deserve to be heard. How can God listen to the prayer of the sinner who prays to Him that he may be freed from his afflictions, whilst he is unwilling to abandon sin, which is the cause of his afflictions? When the impious Jeroboam stretched out his hand against the Prophet, who reproached him with his wretchedness, the Lord caused his hand to wither up, so that he could not draw

it back. *And his hand which he stretched forth against him withered, and he was not able to draw it back again to him—*(3 Kings xiii. 4). Then the king turned to the man of God, and besought him to beg of the Lord to restore his hand. Theodoret says with regard to this circumstance: “Fool that he was to have asked the Prophet’s prayers for the restoration of his hand, and not pardon of his sins.” Thus do many act; they beg of God to deliver them from their afflictions; they beg of the servants of God to avert by their prayers the threatened chastisements, but they do not seek to obtain the grace of abandoning their sins and changing their lives. And how can such persons hope to be freed from chastisement when they will not remove its cause? It is accursed sin that arms the hand of the Lord with thunders to chastise and afflict us. “Punishment is the fine that is to be paid for sin,” says Tertullian. The afflictions we suffer are a fine which must be paid by him whom sin has subjected to the penalty. St. Basil in like manner says that sin is a note of hand which we give against ourselves. Since we sin, we voluntarily go into debt to God’s justice. It is not God, then, who makes us miserable; it is sin. *Sin maketh nations miserable—*(Prov. xiv. 34). Sin it is which obliges God to create chastisements: *Famine, and affliction, and scourges, all these things are created for the wicked—* (Ecclus. xl. 9).

Jeremias, addressing the sword of the Lord, says: *O thou sword of the Lord, how long will thou not be quiet? Go into thy scabbard, rest and be still—*(Jer. xlvii. 6). But then, he goes on to say: *How shall it be quiet when the Lord hath given it a charge against Ascalon?* How can the sword of the Lord ever be at rest if sinners do not choose to abandon their sins, notwithstanding that the Lord has given a charge to his sword to execute vengeance as long as sinners shall continue to deserve it? But some will say, we make Novenas, we fast, we give alms, we pray to God: why are we not heard? To them the Lord replies, *When they fast, I will not hear their prayers, and if they offer holocausts and victims, I will not receive them; for I*

will consume them by the sword, and by famine, and by the pestilence—(Jer. xiv. 12). The Lord exclaims: How can I hear the prayers of those who beg to be freed from their afflictions, and not from their sins, because they do not wish to reform? What care I for their fasts, and their sacrifices, and their alms, when they will not change their lives? *I will consume them by the sword.* With all their prayers and devotions, and penitential exercises, I shall be obliged by My justice to punish them.

II.

We must not then trust to prayers and other devotions if they are not accompanied by a resolution to amend. You pray, you smite your breast, and call for mercy; but that is not enough. The impious Antiochus prayed, but the Scriptures tell us his prayers failed to obtain mercy from God. *Then this wicked man prayed to the Lord, of whom he was not to obtain mercy.*—(2 Mach. ix. 18). The unhappy man, finding himself devoured by worms, and near his end, prayed for life, but without having sorrow for his sins.

What hope can we have in our Saints if we do not purpose to amend? Some say we have our Patron or some other Saint who will defend us; we have our Mother Mary to procure our deliverance. *Who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance. And think not to say within yourselves: We have Abraham for our father*—(Matt. iii. 7, 8, 9). How can we think to escape punishment if we do not abandon sin? How can the Saints think of assisting us if we persist in exasperating the Lord? St. John Chrysostom asks of what use was Jeremias to the Jews? The Jews had Jeremias to pray for them, but, notwithstanding all the prayers of that holy Prophet, they were chastised, because they did not want to give up their sins. Beyond doubt, says the holy Doctor, the prayers of the Saints contribute much to obtain Divine mercy for us, but when?—when we do penance. They are useful, but only when we do

ourselves violence to abandon sin, to fly occasions, and return to God's favour.

The emperor Phocas, in order to defend himself from his enemies, raised walls and multiplied fortifications, but he heard a voice saying to him from Heaven: "You build walls, but when the enemy is within, the city is easily taken." We must then expel this enemy, which is sin, from our souls, otherwise God cannot exempt us from chastisement, because He is just, and cannot leave sin unpunished. Another time the citizens of Antioch prayed to Mary to avert from them a scourge which was on them; and whilst they were praying, St. Bertoldus heard the Divine Mother's voice from Heaven, saying: "Abandon your sins, and I will be propitious to you."

Let us, then, beg of the Lord to use mercy towards us, but let us pray as David prayed: *Lord, incline unto my aid*—(Ps. lxxix. 2). God wishes to aid us, but He wishes that we should aid ourselves, by doing all that depends upon us. "He who desires to be assisted," says Hilaretus, "must do all he can to assist himself." God wishes to save us, but we must not imagine that God will do all without our doing anything. St. Augustine says: "He who created you without your help, will not save you without your help."

Spiritual Reading.

HOLY HUMILITY.

VII.—HUMILITY OF THE HEART OR WILL.

Humility of the intellect consists, as we have seen, in esteeming oneself worthy of reproach and scorn; while humility of the will is a desire to be despised by others and taking pleasure in contempt. This is the more meritorious because an act of the will is more pleasing to God than an act of the intellect.

Speaking of humility of the will, St. Bernard says: "The first degree is, not to wish for power; the second,

to wish to be in a state of subjection to authority; the third is, in subjection to bear injuries with equanimity." Such is the humility of the will or heart which Jesus Christ wished to teach us by His own example. *Learn of me*, said the Redeemer, *because I am meek and humble of heart*—(Matt. xi. 29). Many have humility on their tongue, but not in their heart. "They, indeed," says St. Gregory, "confess with their lips that they are most wicked and most deserving of all sorts of chastisement; but they believe not what they say. For, when rebuked, they give way to disquietude, and deny that they are guilty of the fault for which they are corrected." To this class belonged a certain monk, who, as Cassian relates, used to say that he was a great sinner, and unworthy to breathe the breath of life. But when the Abbot Serapion corrected him for violating the Rule by idle visits to the cells of the other monks, he became greatly troubled. Seeing him disturbed, the abbot said: "Why, my son, are you so much disquieted? Hitherto you have called yourself a great sinner, and now you cannot bear from me a charitable admonition." Some there are who confess that their sins merit a thousand hells, and yet they cannot bear a word of admonition. Such people possess, indeed, humility in words, but know not the humility recommended by Jesus Christ, which is the humility of the heart.

There is, says the Holy Ghost, *one that humbleth himself wickedly, and his interior is full of deceit*—(Ecclus. xix. 28). There are some who humble themselves, not from desire of being rebuked and despised, but through a motive of being esteemed humble and of being praised for their humility. But, according to St. Bernard, to seek praise for voluntary humiliations is not humility, but the destruction of humility, for it changes humility itself into an object of pride. Speculative humility, says St. Vincent de Paul, presents a very beautiful aspect; but practical humility, because it is nothing else than the love of abjection and contempt, is an object of horror to flesh and blood. Hence St. John Climacus observes that the proof of true humility

consists, not in confessing our sinfulness, but in rejoicing in the contempt due to sinners. "Self-disparagement," says the Saint, "is good, but to confirm the dispraise which others cast upon us, and not to resent it, but to delight in it, is still better." "When," says St. Gregory, "the humble man calls himself a sinner, he will not contradict others who say the same of him." No; when reproved for his faults he reasserts his own sinfulness. In a word, as St. Bernard says, "the truly humble man wishes, indeed, to be held in little estimation, but desires not to be praised for his humility." Instead of seeking to be esteemed for his humility he wishes to be regarded as a man deserving of contempt and full of imperfections; and because he deems himself worthy only of abjection, he delights in the humiliations which are heaped upon him. Hence, as St. Bernard teaches, "he converts humiliation into humility"; so that all the humiliations he receives only serve to render him more humble. St. Joseph Calasancius used to say that "he who loves God seeks not to be reputed a saint, but to attain sanctity."

If you wish, then, to acquire humility of heart, you must, in the first place, shun all self-praise. *Let another praise thee*, says the Wise Man, *and not thy own mouth*—(Prov. xxvii. 2). Self-praise never fails to earn the contempt, but seldom wins the respect of others. Remember that if you indulge in empty boasting, others will say and think of you what you yourself would say and think of a boaster. In speaking of your own concerns, seek always to humble and never to exalt yourself. Self-dispraise can do you no injury; but the smallest portion of unmerited self-commendation may be productive of great evil. "To extol yourself slightly above your deserts is," says St. Bernard, "a great evil." He who in passing through a door bends his head, is free from all danger of injury; but he who carries it too high may get a severe blow. Be careful, then, to speak of yourself humbly rather than boastingly, and to disclose your faults rather than your virtues. The best rule is, never to speak well or ill of yourself, but to regard yourself as unworthy to be even named in conversation. It

frequently happens that in saying what tends to our own confusion we indulge a secret and refined pride. For the confusion arising from the voluntary manifestation of our defects excites within us a desire of obtaining the praise or reputation of being humble. This rule is not to be observed in the tribunal of penance: on the contrary, it will be always useful to make known to the Confessor your defects, your evil inclinations; and, generally speaking, even the evil thoughts that pass through your mind. It is also very profitable to manifest, on some occasions, certain circumstances that redound to your shame. On such occasions be careful not to abstain from humbling your own pride.

Should it ever happen that you are compelled to listen to your own praise, endeavour to humble yourself, at least interiorly, by casting an eye at the reasons for self-contempt that have been already detailed. To the proud, says St. Gregory, praise, however undeserved, is delicious; but to the humble, even well-merited commendation is a source of grief and of affliction. *And being exalted, says the Royal Prophet, I have been humbled and troubled*—(Ps. lxxxvii. 16). Like holy David, the humble man, says St. Gregory, is troubled at hearing his own praises. He sees that he has no claim to the virtues or to the good qualities ascribed to him; and he fears that by taking self-complacency in his good works he may lose whatever merit he has acquired before God, and that the Judge may say to him: *Thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime*—(Luke xvi. 25). Whoever takes pleasure in listening to his own praise has already received his reward: he has no claim to any other remuneration. *As gold, says the Wise Man, is tried in the furnace, so a man is tried by the mouth of him that praiseth*—(Prov. xxvii. 21). Yes, a man's spirit is tried by praise: when the commendation of his virtues excites sentiments, not of pleasure nor of pride, but of shame and confusion, then, indeed, his humility appears. St. Francis Borgia and St. Aloysius were greatly afflicted whenever they heard themselves extolled. When you are praised or treated with respect, humble your soul and tremble lest the

honour you receive should be to you an occasion of sin and of perdition. Consider that the esteem of men may prove your greatest misfortune; by fomenting pride it may contaminate your heart, and thus be the cause of your damnation.

Keep always before your eyes the great saying of St. Francis of Assisi: *What I am before God, that I am, and no more*. Are you so foolish as to think that the esteem of men will render you more pleasing in the sight of God? When you are gratified and elated by the praises bestowed upon you, and are by them induced to think yourself better than others, you may be assured that, while men extol your virtues, God will cut you off. Be persuaded, then, that the praises of others will never make you more holy in the sight of God. St. Augustine says that as the reproach or slander of an enemy cannot deprive a man of the merit of his virtues, so the applause of a friend or admirer will not make him better than he really is. "A bad conscience," says the Saint, "is not healed by the praise of a flatterer, nor a good one wounded by the contumely of the reviler." Whenever, then, you hear your own praises, say in your heart, with St. Augustine: "I know myself better than they do; and God knows me better than I do myself." They, indeed, praise me, but I who see the state of my own soul better than they do, know that these praises are unmerited; God knows it still better than I do; He sees that I deserve neither honour nor respect, but all the contempt of earth and hell.

Evening Meditation.

INTERIOR TRIALS.

I.

God is all goodness to those who seek Him. *The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him*—(Lam. iii. 25). No one has ever put his trust in God, and had to remain abandoned by Him: *None had hoped in the*

Lord, and been confounded—(Eccclus. ii. 11). God lets Himself be found even by those who seek Him not. *I was found by them that did not seek me*—(Rom. x. 20). With how much greater ease will He not allow Himself to be found by one who does seek Him! Let no one say that God has abandoned him; the Lord abandons none but the very obstinate who desire to live in sin; neither does He altogether abandon even these, but is ever going after them up to the time of their death, giving them graces for their succour, that so He may not see them lost.

When a soul is desirous to love Him, God cannot but love it, as He has Himself declared: *I love them that love me*—(Prov. viii. 17). And whenever He hides Himself from these loving souls, He does so for their advantage only, that He may see them yet more desirous of finding His grace, and more closely united with Himself. When St. Catharine of Genoa was suffering aridity to such a degree that it seemed to her as if God had abandoned her, and that nothing remained to her as a ground for hope, it was then that she would say: "How happy I am in this state, deplorable even though it be! May my heart be broken to pieces, provided that my Love be glorified! O my dearest Love, if from this unhappy state of mine is produced but a single atom of glory for Thee, I pray that Thou wouldst leave me thus for all eternity!" And saying this, she would burst into a flood of tears in the midst of her desolation.

II.

You should know that souls that love the Crucified enter, in time of desolation, into a closer union with God in the interior of their heart. Nothing occasions so diligent a search for God as does desolation; neither is there anything that attracts God to the heart so much as desolation, since the acts of conformity to the Divine will which are made in desolation are more pure and perfect than others; and hence, the greater the desolation, the greater is the humility, the purer the resignation, the grander the confidence, the more fervent

the prayers, and consequently the more abundant are the Divine graces and assistance.

Above all else attend to the exercise of Divine love. When God makes our heart His abode, His love itself despoils it of every irregular affection; nevertheless, let it be your endeavour to make frequent repetitions of acts of Divine love, saying: My God, I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee; and I hope to die with these words on my lips: *My God, I love Thee!* The Saints tell us that souls ought to make acts of love as often as they breathe.

In time of prayer, make an unreserved offering of yourself to God many times over. Say to Him in all sincerity: My Jesus, I give myself to Thee without reserve. I wish to be all Thine own, all Thine own; and if I know not how to give myself as I ought, do Thou, my Jesus, take me, and make me all Thine own. St. Teresa made an entire offering of herself to God fifty times every day. This is a practice which even you can follow. Therefore, make a continual offering to Him of your will, in these words of St. Paul: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*—(Acts ix. 6). This one act was enough to transform St. Paul from a persecutor of the Church into a vessel of election. For this purpose, too, pray to God frequently in the words of David: *Teach me to do thy will*—(Ps. cxlii. 10). To this end should be directed all the prayers that you offer to God and to the Mother of God, to your Guardian Angel, and to all your Patron Saints, that they may obtain for you the grace perfectly to do the will of God; in short, let this one expression: *Fiat voluntas Tua!* serve you as a remedy for all your evils, and as a means of attaining all that is good.

Wednesday—Twenty-second Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

THE HAPPINESS THAT COMES FROM CONFORMITY TO GOD'S WILL.

He who is conformed in everything to the Divine will, enjoys perpetual peace even in this life. *Whoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad*—(Prov. xii. 21). At the mere word—the Will of God—St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to feel so much delight she would fall into an ecstasy of love.

I.

He who is conformed in everything to the Divine will, enjoys perpetual peace even in this world. *Whoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad*—(Prov. xii. 21). Yes, for a man cannot enjoy greater happiness than that which arises from the accomplishment of all his wishes. He who wills only what God wills, sees always his own will done; for whatever happens to him happens by the will of God. If such a soul, says Salvian, be humbled, it desires humiliations; if it be poor, it delights in poverty, wishing whatever happens, and thus it leads a happy life. Let cold, heat, wind, or rain come, and he that is united with the will of God, says: I wish for this cold, this heat, this wind, and this rain, because God wills them. If loss of property, persecution, or sickness befall, he says: I wish to be poor, to be persecuted, to be sick, because such is the will of God. He who reposes in the Divine will, and is resigned to whatever the Lord does, is like a man who stands above the clouds, and there, calm and secure, beholds the tempest raging below. This is the peace

which, according to the Apostle, surpasseth all understanding—(Phil. iv. 7), which exceeds all the delights of the world; a perpetual peace, subject to no vicissitudes. *A holy man continueth in wisdom as the sun, but a fool is changed as the moon*—(Eccclus. xxvii. 12). Fools—that is, sinners—are changed like the moon, which increases to-day, grows less to-morrow. To-day they laugh, to-morrow they weep; to-day all joy and meekness, to-morrow, all sadness and disturbed; in a word, they change with every wind. But the just man is like the sun, always the same, and uniformly tranquil whatever happens; for his peace rests on conformity to the Divine will. *And on earth peace to men of good will*—(Luke ii. 14). At the mere words the Will of God, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to feel such delight she would fall into an ecstasy of love. When the will is united with the will of God, crosses may produce some pain in the inferior part, but in the superior part peace will always reign. *Your joy no man shall take from you*—(Jo. xvi. 22). But how great the folly of those who oppose the will of God! What God wishes will certainly happen; for *who resisteth his will?*—(Rom. ix. 19). They, therefore, must bear the cross, but without fruit and without peace. *Who hath resisted him, and hath had peace?*—(Job ix. 4).

And what else but our welfare does God will? *This is the will of your God, your sanctification*—(1 Thess. iv. 8). He wishes to see us saints, that we may be at peace in this life, and happy in the next. Let us remember that the crosses which come to us from God *work together unto good*—(Rom. viii. 28). Even chastisements are inflicted on us in this life, not for our destruction, but that we may amend, and gain eternal beatitude. *Let us believe that these scourges of the Lord . . . have happened for our amendment, and not for our destruction*—(Judith viii. 27). God loves us so ardently, that He not only desires, but is solicitous for the salvation of each of us. *The Lord is careful for me*—(Ps. xxxix. 18). And what will He deny us after having given us His Son? *He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how*

hath he not also with him given us all things—(Rom. viii. 32).

O Jesus, my Redeemer, Thou hast sacrificed Thy life on the Cross in order to become the cause of my salvation; have mercy on me, then, and save me; do not permit a soul Thou hast redeemed with so many pains, and so much love, to hate Thee for eternity in hell. Thou canst do nothing more to oblige me to love Thee. This Thou gavest me to understand, when, before expiring on Calvary, Thou didst utter these loving words: *It is consummated.* But how have I repaid Thy love? In the past, I can truly say I have done all I could to displease Thee, and to oblige Thee to hate me. I thank Thee for having borne with me so patiently, and for now giving me time to repair my ingratitude, and to love Thee before I die. Yes, I wish to love Thee, and I wish to love Thee ardently, my Saviour, my God, my Love, and my All!

II.

Let us, then, abandon ourselves for good into the hands of that God Who is solicitous for our welfare as long as we remain in this world. *Casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you—(1 Peter v. 7).* Think of Me, said our Lord to St. Catharine of Sienna, and I will always think of you. Let us often say with the spouse in the Canticles: *My beloved thinks of my welfare, and I will think only of pleasing Him, and of uniting myself to His holy will.* We ought, says the holy Abbot Nilus, to pray, not that God would do what we wish, but that we may do what He wishes.

He who always acts in this manner will lead a happy life, and die a happy death. He who dies with entire resignation to the Divine will, has a moral certainty of his salvation. But he who is not united with the Divine will during life, will not be united with it at death, and will not be saved. We should endeavour to make ourselves familiar with some sayings of the Scripture, by which we may always keep ourselves united with the will of God. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to*

do?—(Acts ix. 6). Lord, tell me what Thou wishest me to do; I am ready and willing to do it. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord—(Luke i. 38).* Behold! My soul is Thy servant; command, and Thou shalt be obeyed. *I am thine; save me—(Ps. cxviii. 94).* Save me, O Lord, and then do what Thou pleasest with me; save Thine own, O Lord, I am no longer mine. When any serious cross or adversity happens to us, let us say: *Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight—(Matt. xi. 26).* My God, this has pleased Thee; let it be done. Above all, let the third petition of the Lord's prayer be dear to us: *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* Let us repeat it several times and with fervour. Happy we, if we live and die saying: *Thy will be done! Thy will be done!*

O my God, I give Thee my whole will, my entire liberty and all that I possess. From this hour I sacrifice my life to Thee, accepting the death Thou wilt send me, along with all the pains and circumstances that will accompany it. From this moment I unite this sacrifice of mine to the great sacrifice of Thy life, which Thou, my Jesus didst offer for me on the Cross. I wish to die in order to do Thy will. Ah! through the merits of Thy Passion, give me grace to be in life, resigned to the arrangements of Thy Providence. And when death comes, grant that I may embrace, with an entire conformity Thy holy will. I wish to die, O my Jesus, in order to please Thee. I wish to die saying: *Thy will be done.* Mary, my Mother, it was thus thou didst die; ah! obtain for me the grace that I too may die in this manner.

Live, Jesus, our Love, and Mary, our hope!

Spiritual Reading.

HOLY HUMILITY.

VIII.—HUMILITY OF THE HEART OR WILL.

As you ought carefully to abstain from all complacency in the praises that you receive from others, so

you must abstain with still greater caution from seeking any office of rank or dignity. "You must," as St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi says, "avoid with all possible care every exercise that is apt to attract attention, for it is in such exercises that pride delights."

"All worldly honours," says St. Hilary, "are the affairs of the devil." Worldly honours are the means by which Satan gains many souls for hell. And, if the ambition for honours occasions great ruin in a worldling, it is productive of far greater havoc in one who is consecrated to God. Addressing her own Community, St. Teresa said: "Should a Judas be ever found among you, expel her at once, as a source of infection; and deprive for ever of all hope of success in her projects the nun who attempts to seek superiority over others. I would rather see this monastery burnt to the ground than ever see ambition enter into it." Similar were the sentiments of St. Jane Frances de Chantal. "I would," says the Saint, "sooner see my monastery buried in the sea, than ambition or the desire of office enter it."

Listen to the wise remarks of Peter de Blois on this subject. In one of his letters he describes the pestiferous effects of ambition, and its frightful ravages in the souls of Christians. Ambition, he says, though full of uncharitableness, puts on the garb of charity. Charity suffers all things for the attainment of eternal goods: ambition, too, endures every hardship, but only for the acquisition of the miserable honours of this world. Charity is kind, but particularly to the poor and the abject; ambition, too, abounds in benevolence, but only to the rich and powerful, who can gratify its cravings. Charity bears all things to please God; ambition submits to every wrong, but only through the vain motive of obtaining honours or office. O God! to what annoyance, inconvenience, fatigues, fears, expenses, and even reproaches and insults, must the ambitious submit, for the attainment of the dignity to which they aspire! Finally, charity believes and hopes for all that regards the glory of eternity; but ambition believes and hopes only for what regards the empty honours of this life.

But, in the end, what is the fruit of all the labours

of the ambitious? They only attain dignity which contents not the heart, and which renders them, in the eyes of the others, objects of contempt rather than of respect. "By the sole desire of it," says St. Teresa, "your glory is lost: the greater the dignity obtained, the more disgraceful it is to the person who has procured it. For the more he has laboured for its attainment, the more he has shown himself unworthy of it." St. Jane Frances de Chantal said that "they who esteem themselves most deserving of office are the most unworthy of it: because they want humility, which is the best disposition for the fulfilment of an office." God may not be the cause of their eternal ruin. Father Vincent Carafa, of the Society of Jesus, having once visited a dying friend, to whom an office of great emolument, but at the same time of great danger, had been given, was requested by the sick man to obtain from God the restoration of his health. No, my friend, replied the Father, I shall not abuse my affection for you: desirous of your salvation, God calls you to another life while you are in a state of grace. I know not whether, if restored to health, you would save your soul in the office which has been offered to you. The sick man peacefully accepted death, and expired with sentiments of joy and resignation. "It is scarcely possible," says St. Bonaventure, "that he who scarcely in honours should not be in great danger."

St. Francis Xavier used to say that to desire respect and honour or to take complacency in them, is unworthy of a Christian, who should have always before his eyes the ignominies of Jesus Christ. How much more unsuited must such foolish ambition be to those who are consecrated to Christ? St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say that "the honour of such persons consists in being the lowest of all, and in having a horror of being preferred to any." "Let your ambition be to be the most humble and the most dear to Jesus Christ," says St. Thomas of Villanova. And St. Bonaventure says that if you desire to be a saint, you must endeavour to lead a life of obscurity and contempt. "Love,"

says the Saint, "to be unknown and despised," so that no attention whatever may be shown to you.

Envy not those who surpass you in talent and learning, or who are more highly esteemed than you are. Envy those only who are your superiors in charity and humility. Humiliation is preferable to all the applause and honour the world can bestow. The most useful of all sciences is that which teaches you to humble and despise yourself, and to delight in being treated with contempt. God has not given you great abilities, because they might lead you to destruction. Be content, then, with the little talent that you have received: let the want of talent be to you an occasion of practising humility, which is the safest, and indeed the only way to save your soul and to become a saint. If others surpass you in ability, take care to outstrip all in the practice of humility. *But in humility*, says St. Paul, *let each esteem others better than themselves*—(Phil. ii. 3). They who are invested with authority over others are exposed to great danger of being puffed up with pride, of losing the Divine light, and of thus becoming like senseless beasts that seek only the miserable goods of the earth, and never think of the glory of eternity. *Man*, says the Psalmist, *when he was in honour did not understand: he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them*—(Ps. xlvi. 13).

Evening Meditation.

INTERIOR TRIALS.

I.

When you experience more aridity than usual, occupy yourself in the delight of the infinite joy that God enjoys. He is the object of our love, and the most perfect act of love even the Saints in Heaven can perform is to rejoice in the beatitude of God immeasurably more than in their own.

Meditate constantly on the Passion of Jesus Christ.

Jesus suffering out of His love for us is the object which most forcibly attracts our hearts. If, while meditating on the Mysteries of the Passion, the Lord grants you any feeling of tenderness, receive it with thankfulness; but whenever you do not experience this, you must know that you will always derive from the practice great comfort for your soul. Frequently go more especially to the Garden of Gethsemani, after the example of St. Teresa, who used to say that she found Jesus there alone; and on considering Him when in affliction so great that He falls into an agony, sweats blood, and declares His sorrow to be such as to be enough to cause Him to die, you will readily find comfort in any afflictions of your own, seeing that He endures it all out of love for you. And at the sight of Jesus preparing Himself to die for you, do you likewise prepare yourself to die for Him. And when you experience in your distress more affliction than usual, then say what St. Thomas the Apostle said to the other disciples: *Let us also go, that we may die with him*—(Jo. xi. 16). Let us die with Jesus. Go likewise to Calvary, where you will find Him expiring on the Cross, consumed by suffering; and seeing Him in that condition, it will be impossible for you not to be ready willingly to suffer pain of every kind for a God Who is dying of sufferings undergone through His love for you. St. Paul protested that He neither knew nor wished to know anything in this life save Jesus crucified: *For I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*—(1 Cor. ii. 2). Let him who would preserve devotion within his soul, says St. Bonaventure, ever keep the eyes of his heart fixed upon Christ dying upon the Cross. And thus, in all your fears, look at Jesus crucified, and take courage, and brace yourself up to suffer through love for Him.

O Lord, take not Thyself from me, and then take from me all besides, as may seem good in Thy sight. My Love, draw me after Thee, and then it matters not though Thou take from me the consolation of being conscious of it; but let it be forcibly that Thou drawest me out of the mire of my sins. Help Thy servants

whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood. I wish to be all Thine own, cost what it may; I wish to love Thee with all my strength; but what can I do myself? Thy Blood is my hope. O Mary, Mother of God, my refuge, neglect not to pray for me in all my tribulations. First of all in the Blood of Jesus Christ, and then in thy prayers, do I trust for my eternal salvation. In thee, O Lady, have I hoped, I shall not be confounded forever. Obtain for me the grace ever to love my God in this life and in eternity, and I ask for nothing more.

II.

And when in your state of desolation why are you disposed to entertain the suspicion that God is angry? You ought not to grieve, but rather to be consoled, seeing that God is dealing with you as He deals with the souls of those of His servants who are most dear to Him. And how has He not dealt with His own Son, of Whom it is written in Holy Scripture: *The Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity*—(Is. liii. 10). It was His will to see Him consumed and crushed under sufferings and torments.

If you fear that God may abandon you on account of your ingratitude, do that which was done by the two disciples, who, as they were going to Emmaus, were accompanied by Jesus in the guise of a pilgrim. When they were near the place, and Jesus made as though he would go farther—(Luke xxiv.), they constrained Him saying: *Stay with us because it is towards evening*—(Ib.). And then He was pleased to enter into the house, and to remain with them. And thus, when it seems to you as if it were the Lord's will to leave you, constrain Him to remain with you, saying to him: My Jesus, stay with me, remain with me; I wish that Thou wouldst not leave me. If Thou dost leave me, to whom shall I have to go for consolation and salvation? *Lord, to whom shall we go?*—(Jo. vi. 69). And so pray to Jesus lovingly and tenderly; and do not fear but that, to a certainty, He will not leave you. Then say with the Apostle: *Neither death, nor life nor*

any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord—(Rom. viii. 38). Say to Him: My Saviour, show Thyself as much displeased with me as Thou wilt; but know that not the fear of death, nor a desire for life, nor any other of this world's creatures, shall ever have power to separate me from love of Thee. Or, again, say what was said by St. Francis de Sales, when a young man and in a state of aridity, in answer to the devil, who suggested to him that he was destined to go to hell: "And since I shall not be able to love my God in eternity, I wish to love Him at least in this life as far as it lies in my power." And so he recovered his cheerfulness. *O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt*—(Matt. xiv. 31). God is infinite Goodness, and, therefore, he who serves God and is sad does not honour Him but rather dishonours Him. How can you doubt of Jesus pardoning you, says St. Bernard, when He has in fact affixed your sins to the Cross whereon He died for you with the very nails which pierced His own hands and feet.

Ah, my crucified Jesus, Thou dost already know that, out of love for Thee, I have left all; but after that Thou hast caused me to leave my all, I find that Thou Thyself hast left me too. But what am I saying, O my Love? Have pity upon me; it is not I who speak; it is my weakness that makes me speak thus. For myself, I deserve every kind of suffering for such great sins as mine have been. Thou hast left me, as I have deserved, and hast withdrawn from me that loving assistance of Thine wherewith Thou hast so often consoled me; notwithstanding however disconsolate and abandoned I may be, I protest that it is my will ever to love Thee and to bless Thee. Provided that Thou dost not deprive me of the grace of being able to love Thee, deal with me as Thou pleasest. I will say to Thee, in the words of a beloved servant of Thine:

"I love Thee, though I seem

An enemy in Thy sight:

Repel me as Thou wilt,

I will ever follow Thee."

peace. All the perfection that can be attained in this world, which is a place of purification, and consequently a place of pains and troubles, consists in suffering patiently those things that are opposed to our self-love; and, in order to suffer with patience, there is no more efficacious means than a willingness to suffer, in order to do the will of God. *Submit thyself, then, to him, and be at peace*—(Job. xxii. 21). He that agrees with the Divine will in everything is always at peace, and nothing that happens to him can make him unhappy. *Whatever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad*—(Pro. xii. 21). But why is the just man never unhappy under any circumstances? Because he knows well that whatever happens in the world, happens through the will of God.

II.

The Divine will, so to say, draws out all the thorns and bitterness of the tribulations that come upon us in this world. The hymn which speaks of the Divine will thus sings: "Thou changest crosses into joys: Thou makest even death seem sweet; he that can unite himself to Thee knows neither cross nor fear. Oh, how worthy art Thou of love, O will of God!"

Hear the excellent counsel of St. Peter, in order to find a perfect peace in the midst of the toils of this present life: *Casting all your care upon Him; for he hath care for you*—(1 Peter, v. 7). And if it is God Who thus gives thought for our good, why should we weary ourselves with so many anxieties, as if our happiness depended on our own cares, and not rather abandon ourselves into the hands of God, upon Whom all depends? *Cast thy care upon the Lord, says David, and he shall sustain thee*—(Ps. liv. 23). Let us strive to obey God in everything He commands and advises, and then let us leave to Him the care of our salvation, and He will take care to give us all the means that are necessary, in order that we may be saved: *Thy life shall be saved, because thou hast had confidence in me*—(Jer. xxxix. 18). Whosoever places his whole confidence in God is sure of eternal salvation.

(D 831)

17

Thursday—Twenty-second Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

“MY MEAT IS TO DO THE WILL OF HIM THAT SENT ME.”

In this mortal life, *meat* is that which preserves our life. Our Divine Lord said it was His *meat* to do the will of His Father. *Life in his will*—(Ps. xxix. 6). Our life depends upon our doing the Divine will; he that does it not, is dead.

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The Wise Man says: *They that are faithful in love shall rest in him*—(Wis. iii. 9). They who have little love for God will desire that God should agree with them; that He should conform to their pleasure and do whatever they desire. But they who truly love God unite their wills to His will and are satisfied with everything that God does with them. With everything that comes, with every adversity, sickness, dishonour, weariness, loss of property and friends, they have ever on their lips and in their hearts these words: *Thy will be done!*

God desires only that which is best for us, that is our sanctification. Let us take care, therefore, to unite our will ever to the will of God and thus we shall be able to convince and calm our minds, recollecting that everything that God does is the best thing that can befall us. Whosoever neglects this will never find true

In a word, whoever does the will of God enters into Paradise; and he that does it not, shall not be saved. Some people trust their eternal salvation to certain devotions, or to certain outward works of piety, and yet bow not to God's will. But Jesus Christ says: *Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven*—(Matt. vii. 21).

Thus, if we desire to be saved, and to acquire a perfect union with God, let us take care to be ever offering up the prayer of David: *Teach me, O Lord, to do thy will*—(Ps. cxlii. 10). And for this purpose, let us strip ourselves of our own will, and give it wholly to God, without reserve. When we give to God our property in alms, our food in fastings, our blood in scourgings, we give him our possessions; but when we give Him our will, we give Him our whole selves; wherefore he that gives to God his entire will is able to say: Lord, having given Thee all my will, I have nothing more to give Thee. The sacrifice of our own will is the most acceptable sacrifice we can make to God; and God pours forth His graces abundantly upon him who makes it.

Spiritual Reading.

HOLY HUMILITY.

IX.—PATIENCE UNDER CORRECTION.

To preserve humility you must not allow yourself to be disquieted by reproof or correction. He who, when rebuked, yields to disquietude, shows that he has not yet acquired humility, and therefore should beg of God that holy virtue, which is so necessary for salvation. Father Rodriguez says that some resemble the hedgehog: when touched they become all thorns, and instantly break out into words of impatience, of reproach, and even of murmuring. "We have known many," says St. Gregory, "who, when no one accuses them, confess

themselves sinners; but when they have been corrected for a fault, they endeavour with all their might to defend themselves, and to remove the imputation of guilt." Such ought to attend to the words of the Holy Ghost: *He that hateth to be reproved, walketh in the trace of a sinner*—(Ecclus. xxi. 7). Whoever is disturbed by correction, walks not in the way of the just, but in the path of sinners—the road to hell.

St. Bernard says: Some are displeased with the physician who cures them by reproof, and are not angry with the man who wounds them by flattery. Terrible is the threat of the wise man against all who spurn correction: *Because they have hated instruction . . . and despised all my reproof, the prosperity of fools shall destroy them*—(Prov. i. 29). The prosperity of fools consists in their privation, in their contempt of advice, and therefore they are miserably lost.

St. John Chrysostom says that the just man when discovered in a fault weeps for his fall. The sinner, too, says the Saint, if detected in a criminal act, weeps—not for his transgression, but because his guilt is discovered; and instead of repenting, he seeks to defend his conduct, and pours out his indignation on the friend who corrects him. Have you indulged in anger against those from whose charity you have received correction? And if you have, are you disposed to repeat such conduct? Give thanks, says St. Bernard, to him who has rebuked you: be not sad when he shall have shown you the way of salvation. Is it not most unjust to be displeased with him who points out to you the way to eternal life? You know that you are full of miseries and defects. The only remedy for them is to humble your soul when you perceive them, or when others make them known to you. "Humility," says St. Augustine, "is our perfection." Since our manner of practising the virtues of the Gospel is so full of imperfections, let us at least be perfect in humbling ourselves, and in rejoicing under the confusion occasioned by the reproofs we receive for the faults we have committed. It may be here observed, that to our pride undeserved reproach is more tolerable than well-merited censure,

because the latter is more painful to self-love. When justly reprov'd, be careful to offer to God, in atonement for your transgression, the shame and confusion you experience. Make use of that confusion as a means of repairing your fault; crush the scorpion on the wound it has inflicted, and be assured that the mercy of the Lord in granting you pardon will be proportioned to your humility in receiving correction.

When corrected for a fault, be careful never to defend or excuse yourself, and thus you will practise an act of humility highly pleasing to God. St. Teresa says that such an act is more profitable than to be present at ten sermons. Should you, then, ever receive an unmerited reprimand, abstain for the sake of holy humility, from the vindication of your conduct, unless, to prevent scandal, such vindication be necessary. To a Religious who requested her director—Father Anthony Torres—to vindicate her with a certain person who had charged her with a fault, the Father replied: "I am astonished at your request. I pity your weakness. I suppose that the occupations in which you were engaged for the last few days must have soon obliterated from your mind the remembrance of the doleful narrative which you so lately heard of the sorrows of your Spouse, Who had been called a seducer. It is impossible that you can have remembered the calumnies and the blasphemies that were uttered against Him, and at the same time request me to vindicate your character. Filled with sentiments of shame and confusion, and prostrate before the Crucifix, implore of your crucified Spouse the pardon of your infidelity. Resolve neither on this, nor on any other occasion, to justify or excuse your conduct, but always acknowledge, however galling such acknowledgment may be, that you have erred. For your sake the Saviour died on the Cross, saturated with opprobrium; and it is by humiliation that you are to obtain the possession of your Spouse."

Evening Meditation.

THE MEANS TO ACQUIRE THE PERFECT LOVE OF GOD.

I.

To acquire the perfect love of God we must adopt the means of becoming saints.

The first means is, to detach the heart from all creatures, and to banish from the soul every affection which is not for God. The first question which the Ancient Fathers of the Desert used to put to every one who sought admission into their society was: "Do you bring an empty heart, that the Holy Ghost may be able to fill it?" If the world be not expelled from the heart, God cannot enter it. St. Teresa said: "Detach the heart from creatures; seek God, and you shall find Him." St. Augustine writes, that the Romans worshipped thirty thousand gods; but among these gods the Roman Senate refused to admit Jesus Christ. Because, said they, He is a proud God, Who requires that He alone should be adored. This they had reason to say, for our God wishes to have entire possession of our souls. He is, as St. Jerome says, a jealous God. And therefore He will have no rival in the affections of our heart. Hence the spouse in the Canticles is called an enclosed garden. *My sister, my spouse is a garden enclosed*—(Cant. iv. 12). The soul, then, that wishes to belong entirely to God must be closed to all love which is not for God.

Hence the Divine Spouse is said to be wounded by one of the eyes of His spouse. *Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes*—(Cant. iv. 9). One of her eyes signifies, that in all her thoughts and actions the only end of the spouse is to please God, while, in their devout exercises, worldlings propose to themselves different objects—sometimes their own interest, sometimes to please their friends, and sometimes to please themselves. But the Saints seek only to please God, to

Whom they turn, and say: *What have I in heaven? and besides thee, what do I desire upon earth?* . . . *Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever*—(Ps. lxxii. 25). We should do the same if we wished to be saints. If, says St. John Chrysostom, we do a thing to please God, why should we seek any other reward? Or what greater reward can a creature wish for than to please its Creator? Hence, in all we desire or do, we should seek nothing but God. A certain solitary, named Zeno, walking through the desert, absorbed in meditation, met the Emperor Macdonius going to hunt. The Emperor asked him what he was doing. In answer, the solitary said: You go in quest of game; I seek God alone. St. Francis de Sales used to say, that the pure love of God consumes all that is not God.

II.

Moreover, to love God with our whole heart, it is necessary to love Him without reserve. Hence we must love Him with a love of *preference*. We must prefer Him before every other good, and must be resolved to lose a thousand lives, rather than forfeit His friendship. We must say with St. Paul: *Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God*—(Rom. viii. 38). We must also love Him with a love of *benevolence*, desiring to see Him loved by all; and therefore, if we love God, we should seek as much as possible to kindle in others the fire of His love, or, at least, should pray for the conversion of all who do not love Him. We must love Him with a love *sorrowful*, that regrets every offence offered to Him more than any evil we could suffer. We must love Him with a love of *conformity to the Divine will*. The principal office of love is to unite the wills of the lovers, and to make the soul say: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*—(Acts ix. 6). Lord, tell me what Thou dost wish from me; I desire to do it. I have no wish of my own: I will only what Thou wilt. Hence, we ought frequently to offer ourselves to God,

without reserve, that He may do with us, and with all we have, whatever pleases Him. We must love God with a love of *patience*. This is that strong love by which true lovers are known. *Love is strong as death*—(Cant. viii. 6). "There is nothing so difficult," says St. Augustine, "that the fire of love will not conquer it." For, adds the Saint, in doing what we do for the love of God, labour is not felt, or, if it be felt, the very labour is loved. St. Vincent de Paul used to say that love is measured by the desire of the soul to suffer and be humbled, in order to please God.

Let God be pleased, though it should cost us the loss of all things even our life. To gain all, it is necessary to leave all. *All for All*, said Thomas à Kempis. The reason we do not become saints, as St. Teresa says, is because, as we do not give God all our affections, so He does not give us His perfect love. We must, then, say with the spouse in the Canticles: *My Beloved to me, and I to him*—(Cant. ii. 16). My Beloved has given Himself entirely to me: it is but just that I give myself without reserve to Him. St. John Chrysostom says, that when a soul gives herself entirely to God, she no longer frets about ignominies or sufferings; she loses the desire of all things; and not finding repose in any creature, she is always in search of her Beloved; her sole concern is to find her Beloved.

 Friday—Twenty-second Week after Pentecost

 Morning Meditation.

JESUS "DESPISED AND THE MOST ABJECT OF MEN."

We have seen him . . . despised and the most abject of men—(Is. liii. 2, 3). This great prodigy was once

seen upon earth—the Son of God, the Lord of all Creation, the King of Heaven, despised as the most abject of men! Ah, how few there are, even among Christians, who reflect on the sorrows and ignominies which this Saviour endured for our sakes!

I.

We have seen him, says the Prophet Isaias, despised and the most abject of men. This great prodigy was once seen upon the earth—the Son of God, the King of Heaven, the Lord of all Creation, despised as the most abject of men! St. Anselm says that Jesus Christ wished to be humbled and despised in such a manner that it would be impossible for Him to endure greater humiliations or contempt. He was treated as a person of mean condition. *Is not this, said the Jews, the carpenter's son?*—(Matt. xiii. 55). He was despised on account of His country: *Can anything of good come from Nazareth?*—(Jo. i. 46). He was called a madman: *He is mad; why hear you him?*—(Jo. x. 20). He was considered a glutton and a friend of wine: *Behold a man that is a glutton and a drinker of wine*—(Luke vi. 84). He was called a sorcerer: *By the prince of devils he casteth out devils*—(Matt. ix. 84). And also a heretic: *Do we not say well that thou art a Samaritan?*—(Jo. viii. 48).

But during His Passion He suffered still greater insults. He was treated as a blasphemer: when He declared that He was the Son of God, Caiphas said to the other priests: *Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy: what think you? But they answering, said: He is guilty of death*—(Matt. xxvi. 65, 66). As soon as Jesus was declared guilty of blasphemy, some began to spit in His face, and others to buffet Him. Then, indeed, was fulfilled the prediction of Isaias: *I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them; I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spit upon me*—(Is. l. 6). Jesus was treated too as a false prophet: *Prophecy unto us, O Christ; who is he that struck Thee*—

(Matt. xxvi. 68). The injury done Him by His own disciple Peter, who denied Him three times, and swore he had never known Him, added to the pain our Saviour suffered from the ignominies of that night.

Let us, O devout souls, go to our afflicted Lord, in that prison in which He is abandoned by all, and accompanied only by His enemies, who contend with each other in insulting and maltreating Him. Let us thank Him for all He suffers for us with so much patience: and let us console Him by acts of sorrow for the insults we have ourselves offered to Him; for we too have treated Him with contempt, and by our sins have denied Him, and declared that we knew Him not.

Ah, my amiable Redeemer, I would wish to die of grief at the thought of having given so much pain to Thy Heart, which has loved me so ardently. Ah, forget the great offences I have offered Thee, and look at me with that loving look which Thou didst cast on Peter after he denied Thee, and which made him bewail his sins unceasingly till death. O great Son of God, O infinite Love, Who dost suffer for the very men that hate and maltreat Thee! Thou art adored by the Angels, O infinite majesty! Thou wouldst confer too great an honour on men in permitting them to kiss Thy feet! And yet, O God, Thou didst allow Thyself on that night to be made an object of mockery to so vile a rabble! My despised Jesus, make me suffer contempt for Thy sake. How can I refuse insults, when I see that Thou, my God, hast borne so many for the love of me? Ah, my crucified Jesus, make me know Thee and love Thee.

II.

Alas, how shameful is the cold contempt with which men treat the Passion of Jesus Christ! How few are there, even among Christians, who reflect on the sorrows and ignominies which this Redeemer has endured for our sake. We barely remember in a passing way the Passion of Jesus Christ, during the last days of Holy Week, when the Church renews the remembrance of His death by its mournful chant, by the nakedness of its

altars, the darkness of its temples, and by the silence of its bells. But, during the rest of the year, we think as little of the Passion of the Redeemer as if it were a fable, or as if He had died for others and not for us! O God, how great must be the torture of the damned in hell when they see all a God suffered for their salvation, and that they voluntarily brought themselves to perdition!

My Jesus, do not permit me to be among the number of the miserable damned. No; I will never cease to think of the love Thou hast shown me in bearing so many torments and ignominies for me. Help me to love Thee, and always to remember the love Thou hast borne me.

Spiritual Reading.

HOLY HUMILITY.

X.—PATIENCE IN BEARING CONTEMPT.

If you wish to acquire perfect humility, accept in peace all the contempt and bad treatment you may receive. These are easily borne by all who truly believe that in punishment of their sins they merit nothing but scoffs and insults. Humiliation is the touchstone of sanctity. St. John Chrysostom says that to receive affronts with meekness is the most certain proof of virtue. In his History of Japan, Father Crasset relates that during the last persecution, in consequence of having received an insult without resenting it, a certain Augustinian missionary, though disguised, was instantly taken for a Christian, and cast into prison, by the idolaters, who asserted that no one but a Christian could practise such virtue.

Some, says St. Francis of Assisi, imagine that sanctity consists in the recital of many prayers or in the performance of works of penance; but, not understanding the great merit of patience under insult, they cannot bear an injurious word. You will acquire more merit by meekly receiving an affront than by fasting ten days:

on bread and water. It will sometimes happen that a privilege that is refused to you will be conceded to others; that what you say will be treated with contempt, while the words of others are heard with respectful attention; that while the actions of others are the theme of general praise, and they are appointed to positions of honour, you are passed over unnoticed. If you accept in peace all these humiliations, and if you recommend to God those from whom you receive the least respect, then indeed, as St. Dorotheus says, it will be manifest that you are truly humble. To them you are particularly indebted, since by their reproaches they cure your pride—the most malignant of all diseases that lead to spiritual death. Because they deem themselves worthy of all honours, the proud convert their humiliations into an occasion of pride. But because the humble consider themselves deserving only of opprobrium, their humiliations serve to increase their humility. ‘That man,’ says St. Bernard, ‘is truly humble, who converts humiliation into humility.’

Voluntary humiliations, for example, to serve the sick, and such like, are very profitable; but to embrace with cheerfulness, for the love of Jesus Christ, the humiliations that come from others, such as reproofs, accusations, insults, and derision, is still more meritorious. *Gold and silver*, says the Holy Ghost, *are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation*—(Eccclus. ii. 5). As gold is tried in the fire, so a man’s perfection is proved by humiliations. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say that ‘untried virtue is not virtue.’ He who does not suffer contempt with a tranquil mind shall never attain the spirit of perfection. *My spikenard sent forth the odour thereof*—(Cant. i. 11).

The spikenard is an odoriferous plant, whose scent is drawn forth only by friction or bruising. Oh! what an odour of sweetness does that humble soul exhale who embraces in peace all manner of contempt, and delights in seeing herself maltreated and despised. A monk by the name of Zachary, being asked the best means of attaining humility, took his cowl, put it under his

feet, and trampling on it, said : " He who takes pleasure in being treated like this cow! is truly humble."

There are some who imagine that they are humble because they feel a strong conviction of their own miseries and a deep sorrow for their past sins. But they will not submit to humiliations, and cannot endure the slightest want of respect or esteem. They acknowledge that they are worthy of all sorts of ignominy, but cannot bear with the least mark of inattention. On the contrary, they seek continually to be treated with respect and honour. *There is*, says the Holy Ghost, *one that humbleth himself wickedly, and his interior is full of deceit*—(Eclus. xix. 28). There are some who practise external humility, by confessing that they are the worst of sinners, but in their hearts they seek after honours and the esteem of men. I hope you do not belong to that class of Christians.

Be persuaded of the truth of what Father Alvarez used to say, that the time of humiliation is the time for putting off our many miseries and for acquiring great merits. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say that crosses and ignominies are the greatest favours that God is accustomed to bestow upon His own. Hence she fervently exhorted Religious to place all their happiness in being treated with contempt. But, above all, it is necessary to keep before your eyes what the Redeemer has said, that happy is he who is hated and rejected by men. *Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of Man's sake*—(Luke vi. 22). The Apostle St. Peter adds : *If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed: for that which is of the honour, glory, and power of God, and that which is his Spirit, resteth upon you*—(1 Pet. iv. 14). When you are insulted for the sake of Jesus Christ, then shall you be happy; for then shall true honour, true power, and the Spirit of God rest upon you.

Evening Meditation.

THE DESOLATE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

The life of our loving Redeemer was full of desolation, and bereft of every comfort. It was a great ocean of bitterness, without one drop of sweetness or consolation : *For great as the sea is thy destruction*—(Lam. ii. 18). This was revealed by our Lord to St. Margaret of Cortona, when He told her that in His whole life He never experienced sensible consolation.

The sadness which He felt in the Garden of Gethsemani was so great that it was sufficient to take away His life. *My soul, He said, is sorrowful even unto death*—(Matt. xxvi. 38). This sadness afflicted Him not only in the Garden, but it always filled His soul with desolation, from the first moment of His Conception : for all the pains and ignominies He was to suffer until death were always present to Him.

But the extreme affliction He suffered during His whole life arose not so much from the knowledge of all the sufferings He was to endure during life, and especially at death, as from the sight of all the sins men would commit after His death. He came to abolish sin, and to save souls from hell by His death; but, after all His cruel sufferings, He saw all the sins men would commit; and the sight of each sin, being clearly before His mind while He lived here below, was to Him, as St. Bernardine of Sienna writes, a source of immense affliction. This was the sorrow which was always before His eyes, and kept Him always in desolation : *My sorrow is continually before me*—(Ps. xxxvii. 18). St. Thomas teaches that the sight of the sins of men, and of the multitude of souls that would bring themselves to perdition, excited in Jesus Christ a sorrow which surpassed the sorrow of all penitents, even of those who died of pure grief. The holy Martyrs suffered great torments, they bore tortures from iron hooks, and

nails, and red-hot plates : but God always sweetened their pains by interior consolations. But no Martyrdom has been more painful than that of Jesus Christ, for His pain and sadness were pure, unmitigated pain and sorrow, without the smallest comfort. "The greatness of Christ's suffering," says the Angelic Doctor, "is estimated from the pureness of His pain and sadness."

II.

Such was the life of our Redeemer, and such was His death, all full of desolation. Dying on the Cross bereft of all comfort, He sought some one to console Him, but found none. *I looked for one . . . that would comfort me, and I found none*—(Ps. lxxviii. 21). He found only scoffers and blasphemers, who said : *If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. He saved others, himself he cannot save*—(Matt. xxvii. 40, 42). Hence, our afflicted Lord, finding Himself abandoned by all, turned to His Eternal Father; but seeing that His Father too had abandoned Him, He cried out with a loud voice, and sweetly complained of His Father's abandonment, saying : *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*—(Ibid. 46).

Thus our Saviour terminated His life, dying, as David had foretold, immersed in a tempest of ignominies and sorrows : *I am come into the depth of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me*—(Ps. lxxviii. 3).

When we are in desolation, let us console ourselves by meditation on the desolate death of Jesus Christ : let us offer Him our own desolation in union with that which He, the innocent God, suffered on Calvary for the love of us.

Ah, my Jesus, who will not love Thee when he sees Thee die in such desolation, consumed by sorrows, in order to pay our debts? Behold, I am one of the executioners, who have, by sin, so grievously afflicted Thee during Thy whole life. But since Thou dost invite me to repentance, grant that I may feel at least a part of that sorrow which Thou didst feel during Thy Passion, for my sins. How can I, who have, by my sins, so

much afflicted Thee during Thy life, seek after pleasures? No, I will not ask for pleasures and delights; I ask of Thee tears and sorrow : make me, during the remainder of my life, to weep continually for my offences against Thee. I embrace Thy feet, O my crucified and desolate Jesus, and embracing them, I wish to die. O afflicted Mary, pray to Jesus for me.

Saturday—Twenty-second Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

“TURN, THEN, THINE EYES OF MERCY TOWARDS US.”

I.—MARY IS ALL EYES TO PITY AND SUCCOUR US IN OUR NECESSITIES.

St. Epiphanius calls the Divine Mother “many-eyed,” indicating thereby her watchfulness in assisting us poor creatures in this valley of tears. *The eyes of the Lord are on the just*—(Ps. xxxiii. 16). “But the eyes of the Lady are on just and sinners,” says Richard of St. Laurence. “For,” he adds, “the eyes of Mary are the eyes of a mother on her child to save it from falling, and if perchance it falls, to raise it up.”

I.

Jesus Christ one day allowed St. Bridget to hear Him thus addressing His Mother : “My Mother, ask Me what thou wilt !” And so is her Divine Son addressing Mary in Heaven, taking pleasure in gratifying His beloved Mother in all that she asks. But what does Mary ask? St. Bridget heard her reply : “I ask mercy

for sinners." As if she had said: "My Son, Thou hast made me the Mother of mercy, the refuge of sinners, the advocate of the miserable; and now Thou tellest me to ask what I desire; what can I ask except mercy for sinners?"

"And so, O Mary, thou art so full of mercy," says St. Bonaventure; "so attentive in relieving the wretched, that it seems that thou hast no other desire, no other anxiety." And as amongst the miserable, sinners are the most miserable of all, Venerable Bede declares "that Mary is always praying to her Son for them."

"Even whilst living in this world," says St. Jerome, "the heart of Mary was so filled with tenderness and compassion for men, that no one ever suffered so much for his own pains as Mary suffered for the pains of others." This compassion for others in affliction she well showed at the marriage-feast of Cana, when, the wine failing, without being asked, remarks St. Bernardine of Sienna, she charged herself with the office of a tender comfortress: and moved to compassion at the sight of the embarrassment of the bride and bridegroom, she interposed with her Son, and obtained the miraculous change of water into wine.

II.

St. Peter Damian, thus speaks to holy Mary: "Perhaps O holy Virgin, now that thou art raised on high to the dignity of Queen of Heaven, thou forgettest us poor creatures?" "Ah, far be such a thought from our minds," he adds; "for it would little become the great compassion that reigns in the heart of Mary ever to forget such misery as ours." The proverb, that "honours change our manners," does not apply to Mary. With worldlings it is otherwise; for they, when once raised to high dignity, become proud, and forget their former poor friends, but it is not so with Mary, who rejoices in her own exaltation, because she is thus better able to help the miserable.

On this subject St. Bonaventure applies to the Blessed Virgin the words addressed to Ruth: *Blessed art thou*

of the Lord, my daughter, and thy latter kindness has surpassed the former, meaning to say that, "if the compassion of Mary was great towards the miserable when living in this world, it is much greater now that she reigns in Heaven." He then gives the reason for this, saying that "the Divine Mother shows, by the innumerable graces she obtains for us, her greater mercy: for now she is better acquainted with our miseries." Hence he adds that "as the splendour of the sun surpasses that of the moon, so does the compassion of Mary, now that she is in Heaven, surpass the compassion she had for us when in the world." In conclusion, he asks, "who is there living in this world who does not enjoy the light of the sun? And on whom does not the mercy of Mary shine?"

Spiritual Reading.

"TURN, THEN, THINE EYES OF MERCY TOWARDS US."

OUR LADY'S MERCY FILLS THE WHOLE EARTH.

In the Sacred Canticles Mary is called *bright as the sun*—(Cant. vi. 9), "and no one is excluded from the warmth of this sun," says St. Bonaventure, according to the words of the Psalmist. This was also revealed to St. Bridget, by St. Agnes, who told her that "our Queen, now that she is united to her Son in Heaven, cannot forget her innate goodness; and therefore she shows her compassion to all, even to the most impious sinners; so much so, that, as celestial and terrestrial bodies are illumined by the sun, so there is no one in the world, who, if he asks, does not, through the tenderness of Mary, partake of the Divine mercy."

A great sinner, in the kingdom of Valencia, who, having become desperate, and, in order not to fall into the hands of justice, had determined on becoming a Mahometan, was on the point of embarking for the purpose, when, by chance, he passed before a church,

in which Father Jerome Lopez was preaching on the mercy of God. On hearing the sermon he was converted, and made his confession to the Father, who asked him whether he had ever practised any devotion, on account of which God had shown him so great mercy. He replied, that his only devotion was a prayer to the Blessed Virgin, in which he daily begged her not to abandon him. In a hospital the same Father found a sinner, who had not been to confession for fifty-five years; and the only devotion he practised was, that when he saw an Image of Mary he saluted her, and begged that she would not allow him to die in mortal sin. He then told him, that on an occasion, when fighting with an enemy, his sword was broken; and, turning to our Blessed Lady, he cried out: "O I shall be killed and lost for eternity; Mother of sinners, help me." Scarcely had he said the words when he found himself transported to a place of safety. After making a general confession he died, full of confidence.

St. Bernard says that "Mary has made herself all to all, and opens her merciful heart to all, that all may receive of her fulness; the slave redemption, the sick health, those in affliction comfort, the sinner pardon, and God glory; that thus there may be no one who can hide himself from her warmth." "Who can there be in the world," exclaims St. Bonaventure, "who refuses to love this most amiable Queen? She is more beautiful than the sun, and sweeter than honey. She is a treasure of goodness, amiable and courteous to all." "I salute thee, then," continues the enraptured Saint, "O my Lady and Mother, nay, even my heart, my soul! Forgive me, O Mary, if I say that I love thee; for if I am not worthy to love thee, at least thou art all-worthy to be loved by me."

It was revealed to St. Gertrude, that when these words are addressed with devotion to the most Blessed Virgin: "Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us!" Mary cannot do otherwise than yield to the demand of whomsoever thus invokes her.

"Ah, truly, O great Lady," says St. Bernard, "does the immensity of thy mercy fill the whole earth."

"And therefore," says St. Bonaventure, "this loving Mother has so earnest a desire to do good to all, that not only is she offended by those who positively outrage her (as some are wicked enough to do), but she is offended by the conduct of those who do not ask her for favours or graces." So that St. Idelbert addresses her, saying: "Thou, O Lady, teachest us to hope for far greater graces than we deserve, since thou never ceasest to dispense graces far, far beyond our merits."

The Prophet Isaias foretold that, together with the great work of the Redemption of the human race a throne of Divine mercy was to be prepared for us poor creatures: *And a throne shall be prepared in mercy*—(Is. xvi. 5). What is this throne? St. Bonaventure answers: "Mary is this throne, at which all—just and sinners—find the consolations of mercy." He then adds: "For as we have a most merciful Lord, so also we have a most merciful Lady. Our Lord is plenteous in mercy to all who call upon Him, and our Lady is plenteous in mercy to all who call upon her." As our Lord is full of mercy, so also is our Lady; and as the Son knows not how to refuse mercy to those who call upon Him, neither does the Mother. Wherefore the Abbot Guericc thus addresses the Mother, in the name of Jesus Christ: "My Mother, in thee will I establish the seat of My government; through thee will I pronounce judgments, hear prayers, and grant the graces asked of Me. Thou hast given Me My human nature, and I will give thee My Divine nature, that is omnipotence, by which thou mayest be able to help to save all whomsoever thou pleasest."

One day, when St. Gertrude was addressing the words: "Turn thine eyes of mercy towards us," to the Divine Mother, she saw the Blessed Virgin pointing to the eyes of her Son, Whom she held in her arms, and then said: "These are the most compassionate eyes that I can turn for their salvation towards all who call upon me."

A sinner was once weeping before an Image of Mary, imploring her to obtain pardon for him from God, when he perceived that the Blessed Virgin turned towards the Child that she held in her arms, and said, "My Son,

shall these tears be lost?" And he understood that Jesus Christ had already pardoned him.

How, then, is it possible that any one can perish who recommends himself to this good Mother, since her Son, as God, has promised her that for her love He will show as much mercy as she pleases to all who recommend themselves to her? This our Lord revealed to St. Gertrude, allowing her to hear Him make the promise to His Mother in the following words: "In My omnipotence, O revered Mother, I have granted thee the reconciliation of all sinners who devoutly invoke the aid of thy compassion, in whatever way it may please thee."

On this assurance the Abbot Adam Persenius, considering the great power of Mary with God, and, at the same time, her great compassion for us, full of confidence, says: "O Mother of mercy, thy tender compassion is as great as thy power, and thou art as compassionate in forgiving as thou art powerful in obtaining." "And when," he asks, "did the case ever occur in which thou, who art the Mother of mercy, didst not show compassion? O, when was it that thou, who art the Mother of omnipotence, couldst not aid? Ah, yes, with the same facility with which thou seest our misfortunes thou obtainest for us whatever thou wilt."

"O satiate thyself, great Queen," says the Abbot Gueric, "with the glory of thy Son, and out of compassion, though not for any merit of ours, be pleased to send us, thy servants and children here below, the crumbs that fall from thy table."

Should the sight of our sins ever discourage us, let us address the Mother of mercy in the words of William of Paris: "O Lady, do not set up my sins against me, for I oppose thy compassion to them. Let it never be said that my sins could contend in judgment against thy mercy, which is far more powerful to obtain me pardon than my sins are to bring about my condemnation."

Evening Meditation.

*AFTER THIS OUR EXILE SHOW UNTO US THE
BLESSED FRUIT OF THY WOMB, JESUS!*

MARY, OUR SALVATION.

SHE DELIVERS HER CLIENTS FROM HELL.

I.

It is impossible for a client of Mary, who is faithful in honouring and recommending himself to her, to be lost. To some this proposition may appear, at first sight, exaggerated; but any one to whom this might seem to be the case I would beg to suspend his judgment, and, first of all, read what I have to say.

When we say that it is impossible for a client of Mary to be lost, we must not be understood as speaking of those who would take advantage of this devotion that they might sin more freely. And therefore, those who disapprove of the great praises bestowed on the clemency of this most Blessed Virgin, because it causes the wicked to take advantage of it to sin with greater freedom, do so without foundation, for such presumptuous people deserve chastisement, and not mercy, for their rash confidence. It is, therefore, to be understood of those clients who, with a sincere desire to amend, are faithful in honouring and recommending themselves to the Mother of God. It is, I say, morally impossible that such as these should be lost.

St. Anselm says, "it is impossible for one who is not devout to Mary, and consequently not protected by her, to be saved; so is it impossible for one who recommends himself to her, and consequently is beloved by her, to be lost." St. Antoninus repeats the same thing and almost in the same words: "As it is impossible for those from whom Mary turns her eyes of mercy to be saved, so also are those towards whom she turns these eyes, and for whom she prays, necessarily saved and glorified." Consequently the clients of Mary will necessarily be saved.

Let us note particularly what these Saints say, and let those tremble who make but little account of their devotion to this Divine Mother, or from carelessness give it up. They say that the salvation of those who are not protected by Mary is impossible. Many others declare the same thing; such as Blessed Albert, who says, that "all those who are not thy servants, O Mary, will perish." And St. Bonaventure: "He who neglects the service of the blessed Virgin will die in his sins." Again: "He who does not invoke thee, O Lady, will never get to Heaven." And, on the 99th Psalm the Saint even says, "not only those from whom Mary turns her face will not save their souls, but there will be no hope of their salvation." Before him, St. Ignatius the Martyr said, "it is impossible for any sinner to be saved without the help and favour of the most Blessed Virgin; because those who are not saved by the justice of God are with infinite mercy saved by the intercession of Mary." Some doubt as to whether this passage is truly of St. Ignatius; but, at all events, as Father Crasset remarks, it was adopted by St. John Chrysostom. And in the same sense does the Church apply to Mary the words of Proverbs: *All that hate me, love death*—(Prov. viii. 36), that is, all who do not love me, love eternal death. For, as Richard of St. Laurence says on the words of the same book: *She is like the merchant's ship*—(Prov. xxxi. 14), "all those who are out of this ship will be lost in the sea of the world." Even the heretical Ecolampadius looked upon little devotion to the Mother of God as a certain mark of reprobation: and therefore he said: "Far be it from me ever to turn from Mary."

II.

In the words applied to her by the Church, Mary says: *He that hear-kenneth to me shall not be confounded*—(Eccclus. xxiv. 30); that is to say, he that listeneth to what I say shall not be lost. On which St. Bonaventure says: "O Lady, he who honours thee will be far from damnation." And this will still be the case, St. Hilary

observes, even should the person during the past time have greatly offended God. "However great a sinner he may have been," says the Saint, "if he shows himself devout to Mary, he will never perish."

For this reason the devil does his utmost against sinners in order that, after they have lost the grace of God, they may also lose devotion to Mary. When Sara saw Isaac in company with Ismael, who was teaching him evil habits, she desired that Abraham would drive away both Ismael and his mother Agar: *Cast out this bond-woman and her son*—(Gen. xxi. 10). She was not satisfied with the son being turned out of the house, but insisted on the mother going also, thinking that otherwise the son, coming to visit his mother, would continue to frequent the house. The devil, also, is not satisfied with a soul turning out Jesus Christ, unless it also turns out His Mother: *Cast out this bond-woman and her son*. Otherwise he fears that the Mother will again, by her intercession, bring back her Son. "And his fears are well grounded," says the learned Paciucchelli: "for he who is faithful in serving the Mother of God will soon receive God Himself by means of Mary."

Let us thank our Lord if we see that He has given us affection for the Queen of Heaven, and confidence in her, "for," says St. John Damascene, "God grants this favour only to those whom He is determined to save." The following are the beautiful words of the Saint, and with which he rekindles his own and our hope: "O Mother of God, if I place my confidence in thee, I shall be saved. If I am under thy protection, I have nothing to fear, for the fact of being thy client is the possession of a certainty of salvation, and which God grants only to those whom He intends to save." Therefore, Erasmus salutes the Blessed Virgin in these words: "Hail, O terror of hell! O hope of Christians, confidence in thee is a pledge of salvation!"

which makes you doubly sick—in body and soul. You are forgotten? But you have forgotten Jesus Christ Who died abandoned for your sake on the Cross. And what profit do you derive from complaining? Complain of yourself because you have but little love for Jesus Christ, and therefore have so little patience. St. Joseph Calasactius used to say: “If the sick had patience there would be no more complaints.” Salvian writes that there are many persons who, had they good health, could not be Saints. With regard to saintly women, we know from their published Lives that they were almost all continually afflicted with various infirmities. For forty years St. Teresa was not free from pain for a single day.

II.

Some one will say: I do not refuse to accept sickness, but I regret that on account of my infirmities I am not able to go to Communion, or to make mental prayer, and that I am a burden to all. Allow me to answer all these excuses one by one. Tell me, why do you wish to go to the church in order to communicate? Is it not to please God? Well, but if it be God's will and pleasure that you are not to go to the church to communicate, but that you are to remain in bed to suffer, why should you be troubled? Blessed John of Avila wrote to a priest labouring under sickness: “Friend, do not stop to examine what you would do if you had health, but be content to remain sick as long as it shall please God. If you seek the will of God, it matters not whether you are in sickness or in health.” St. Francis de Sales has even said that “we serve God better by sufferings than by works.” You say that in sickness you cannot make Mental Prayer, and why can you not? I grant that you cannot apply the mind to reflection, but why can you not look at the Crucifix, and offer to your crucified Saviour the pains you suffer? And what prayer can be better than to suffer, and to resign yourself to the Divine will, uniting your sufferings to those of Jesus Christ, and presenting them to God in union with the sufferings of His Son? You say that

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Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

PATIENCE IN SICKNESS.

Patience in the time of sickness is the touchstone by which the spirit of a Christian is proved to be pure gold, or only alloy. Some are patient, devout, cheerful as long as they enjoy good health, but when visited by some illness they commit a thousand faults. The gold is found to be only base metal.

I.

We must practise patience in the time of sickness. This is the touchstone by which the spirit of a Christian is proved to be pure gold or only alloy. Some are patient, devout, cheerful as long as they enjoy health, but when visited by some illness they commit a thousand defects: they appear to be inconsolable; they are impatient with all, even with the person who attends them through charity; they complain of every pain or inconvenience they suffer; they complain of everybody and everything, saying that they are treated with neglect and inattention. The gold is found to be base metal. But such a person may say: I suffer so much, and can I not even complain, or tell what I endure? You are not forbidden to make known your pains when they are severe, but when they are trifling, it is a weakness to complain of them to all, and to seek sympathy and compassion from every one who visits you. And should the remedies prescribed not remove your pains, you should not yield to impatience under them, but resign yourself in peace to the will of God.

Another may say: Where has charity gone? See how I am forgotten and abandoned on my bed of sickness! I pity you; not on account of your bodily infirmities, but on account of your want of patience under them,

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in sickness you are useless, and a burden. But as you conform yourself to the Divine will, so you ought to suppose that others also conform to it, when they see that you are a burden, not through your own fault, but by the will of God. Ah! such desires and complaints spring, not from the love of God, but from self-love; for we would want to serve the Lord not in the manner that pleases Him, but in the way that is agreeable to ourselves!

Spiritual Reading.

HOLY HUMILITY.

XII.—PATIENCE IN BEARING CONTEMPT.

The Saints have not been made Saints by applause and honour, but by injuries and insults. St. Ignatius Martyr, a saintly Bishop who won universal esteem and veneration, was sent to Rome as a criminal, and on his way experienced from the soldiers who conducted him nothing but the most barbarous insolence. In the midst of his suffering and humiliations he joyfully exclaimed: "I now begin to be a disciple of Christ." I now begin to be a true disciple of my Jesus, Who endured so many ignominies for my sake. St. Francis Borgia, when travelling, slept one night in the same room with his companion, Father Bustamante, who, in consequence of a severe attack of asthma, coughed much, casting spittle unconsciously on the Saint, and frequently on his face. In the morning Father Bustamante perceived what he had done, and was greatly afflicted at having given so much cause of pain to the Saint. Father, said St. Francis, be not disturbed; for there was no part of this room so fit for the reception of spittle as my face.

Standing once before the Crucifix, Blessed Mary of the Incarnation said to her sisters in Religion: "Is it possible, dear sisters, that we refuse to embrace contempt when we see Jesus Christ reviled and scoffed at." A certain holy Religious having been insulted, went before

the Blessed Sacrament, and said: Lord, I am very poor; I have nothing to present to Thee: but I offer Thee the injury that I have just received. Oh! how lovingly does Jesus Christ embrace all who embrace contempt for His sake! He soon consoles and enriches them with His graces. Father Anthony Torres was once unjustly charged with disseminating false doctrines, and in punishment of his supposed transgression was for many years deprived of faculties to hear Confessions. But in a letter to a certain friend he says: "Be assured that during the whole time I was calumniated the spiritual consolations that the Lord gave me surpassed any I ever received from Him."

To suffer contempt with a serene countenance not only merits a great reward, but also serves to draw others to God. "He," says St. John Chrysostom, "who is meek is useful to himself and to others." For nothing is more edifying to a neighbour than the meekness of a man who receives injuries with a tranquil countenance. Father Maffei relates that a Jesuit Father, while preaching in Japan, having been spat upon by an insolent bystander, removed the spittle with his handkerchief, and continued his sermon as if nothing had happened. One of his auditors exclaimed, that a doctrine that teaches such humility must be true and Divine, and was instantly converted to the Faith.* Thus, also, St. Francis de Sales converted innumerable heretics by his meekness in bearing the insults he received from them.

Let us be persuaded that to be persecuted in this life is the highest glory of the Saints. *And*, says the Apostle, *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*—(2 Tim. iii. 12). The Redeemer says, *If*

* We have a shining example of the same forbearance recorded of one of the Canonized Children of St. Alphonsus' own Congregation, St. Clement Mary Robbauer. Clement entered the Redemptorist Congregation in Rome, 1784. St. Alphonsus, then in extreme old age, sent him encouragement and his blessing. Father Clement became afterwards the Apostle of Warsaw and Vienna, and the renowned Propagator of the Redemptorist Congregations North of the Alps. The story is recorded that while the Saint was one day begging for his poor in Warsaw, he requested an alms of a man sitting at an inn. The man sprang up and after heaping abuse on Father Clement, spat in his face. The priest wiped away the spittle and said: "That was for myself; give me now, please, something for the orphans." The man was astonished at the gentleness of the Saint, as well he might, and gave him generous alms for the poor. He afterwards went to Confession to Father Clement and changed his life.—Ebrtor.

they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you—(Jo. xv. 20).

Some will say: I attend to my own business; I give offence to no one: why should I be persecuted? But all the Saints have been persecuted; Jesus Christ, the Head of the Saints, has been persecuted: and will you not submit to persecution? But what greater favour, says St. Teresa, can God bestow upon us than to send us the same treatment He wished His beloved Son to suffer on earth? "Believe me," says Father Torres, in a letter to one of his penitents, "that one of the greatest graces that God can confer upon you is to make you worthy to be calumniated by all, without being esteemed by any." When, then, you see yourself disregarded and despised, rejoice, and thank Jesus Christ, Who wishes you to be treated in the same manner in which He Himself was treated in this life. And to prepare your soul to accept humiliations when they occur, represent to yourself in the time of Meditation all the contempt, contradictions, and persecutions which may happen to you, and offer yourself, with a strong desire and resolution to suffer them all for the sake of Jesus Christ, and thus you will be better prepared to accept them.

You must not only accept humiliations in peace, but must also be glad and exult under them. The Venerable Louis da Ponte could not at first conceive how a soul could delight in contempt; but when he became more perfect he experienced joy in abjection. By our own strength we certainly cannot rejoice in humiliations, but by the aid of Jesus Christ we can imitate the Apostles, who went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus—(Acts v. 41). There are some, as St. Joseph Calasactius says, who suffer reproach, but not with joy. To teach the perfect spirit of humility to St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, St. Ignatius came down from heaven and assured her that true humility consists in taking pleasure in whatever inspires self-contempt.

Worldlings do not delight as much in honours as the Saints do in contempt. Brother Juniper, of the Order

of St. Francis, received insults as he would the most costly gems. When derided by his companions, St. John Francis Regis was not only pleased with their ridicule, but even encouraged it. Thus from the Lives of the Saints it would appear that sufferings and humiliations were the sole objects of their wishes. With a Cross on His shoulder and a Crown of thorns on His Head the Redeemer once appeared to St. John of the Cross and said: "John, ask of Me what thou wilt." "Lord," replied the Saint, "I desire to suffer and to be despised for Thy sake." Lord, seeing Thee oppressed with sorrow and saturated with opprobrium for the love of me, what can I ask from Thee but pains and ignominies? The Lord once assured St. Angela of Foligno that the surest means by which a soul can ascertain whether its lights are from God is to examine if they have inspired and left behind a strong desire of being despised for His sake. Jesus wishes that under injuries and persecutions we not only be not disquieted, but that we even rejoice and exult in expectation of the great glory that He has prepared for us in Heaven as the reward of our sufferings. *Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven—* (Matt. v. 11, 12).

To those who are about to enter Religion it is my custom to recommend, above all things, the practice of obedience, and of patience under contempt. I have been anxious to treat the latter at full length, because I am convinced that, without bearing contempt, it is impossible for anyone to advance in perfection; and because I hold as certain that the Religious who cheerfully embraces humiliations will become a saint. "He that is humble of heart," says St. Paulinus, "is the Heart of Christ." *Humilis corde Cor Christi est.* He who is humble of heart or who delights in contempt is transformed into the Heart of Jesus Christ. Be assured, then, that if you are to be a saint you must suffer humiliations and contempt. Though all your companions were saints, you will, notwithstanding, by the ordination of God, meet with frequent contradictions; you will be

frequently put below others, held in little esteem, and will have to submit to accusations and reproofs. To render you like Himself, Jesus Christ will easily find the means of making you an object of contempt. Hence, I entreat you to practise, every day, the beautiful advice of Father Torres to his penitents: "Say, every day, a *Pater* and *Ave* in honour of the life and ignominy of Jesus, and offer yourself to suffer, not only in peace, but even with joy, for the love of Him, all the contradictions and reproaches which He will send you, begging always His assistance to be faithful to Him in bearing patiently all injuries and humiliations."

Evening Meditation.

PATIENCE IN SICKNESS.

I.

If you really wish to please God, and at the same time give good example to others, embrace with peace all the infirmities God sends you. Oh, how great is the edification he gives, who in spite of all his pains and even the danger of death with which he may be threatened, preserves a serene countenance, abstains from all complaining, who thanks all for their attention, whether it be much or little, and accepts in the spirit of obedience the remedies applied, however bitter or painful they may be! St. Lidwina, as Surius relates, lay for thirty-eight years on a board, abandoned, covered with sores, and tortured by pains. She never complained of anything, but peaceably embraced all her sufferings. Blessed Humiliana of Florence, a Franciscan nun, being afflicted with several painful and violent diseases, used to raise her hand to Heaven, and say: "Mayest Thou be blessed, my Love! Mayest Thou be blessed!" St. Clare was likewise continually sick for twenty-eight years, and the smallest complaint never escaped her lips. St. Theodore, abbot, had a painful ulcer during his whole life, and he would say that the Lord sent it in order

to give him occasion to thank God unceasingly, as he was accustomed to do. When we suffer any pain, let us cast a glance at so many holy Martyrs, whose flesh was torn in pieces with iron hooks, or burnt with red-hot plates, and let us at the sight of their torments take courage to offer to God the pain by which we are afflicted.

Patience under the severity of the Seasons accompanies patience in infirmities. When cold or heat is intense, some are disturbed and complain, particularly if they have not the clothes or other comforts that they wish for. Be careful not to imitate their example; but bless these creatures as ministers of the Divine will, and say with Daniel: *O ye fire and heat, bless the Lord O ye cold and heat, bless the Lord—* (Dan. iii. 66, 67).

II.

In the time of sickness, we should above all accept death should it come, and the death that God wills. What is this life but a continual tempest, in which we are always in danger of being lost? St. Aloysius, though he died in the flower of youth, embraced death with joy, saying: "Now I find myself, as I hope, in the grace of God: I know not what might happen to me hereafter. I therefore gladly quit this earth, if it now please God to call me." But you will say: St. Aloysius was a Saint, and I am a sinner. But listen to the answer of Blessed John of Avila: Every one who finds himself even moderately well disposed should desire death, in order to escape the danger of losing the grace of God, to which he is always exposed as long as he lives on this earth. What more desirable than, by a good death, to be secure of being no longer able to lose God! But, you reply, hitherto I have gained nothing for my soul: I would wish to live in order to do something before I die. But if God does not call you now to the other life, how do you know that for the future you will not be worse than you were hitherto? And that you will not fall into other sins and be lost?

And if we had no other motive, we ought to embrace death with peace when it comes, because it delivers us from the commission of new sins. In this life no one is exempt from all sins—at least from all venial sins. Hence, St. Bernard says: "Why do we desire life, in which the longer we live the more we sin?" Why do we desire to live, since we know that the greater the number of our days, the more shall our sins be multiplied? Moreover, if we love God, we should sigh to see and to love Him face to face in Heaven. But, unless death opens the gate to us, we cannot enter into that happy country. Hence the enamoured St. Augustine exclaimed: "Oh Lord, may I die, that I may see Thee."

Monday—Twenty-third Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

PATIENCE AMIDST LOSSES AND PERSECUTION.

They who possess God, though they should be in want of everything else, possess all things. They can say: *My God and my All!* Hence the Saints possess all things, though they have nothing. *As having nothing*, says St. Paul, *and possessing all things*—(2 Cor. vi. 10).

I.

It is necessary to practise patience when we have to suffer the inconveniences of poverty, and the want of temporal goods. "What," says St. Augustine "can be sufficient for him for whom God is not sufficient?" They who possess God, though they should want everything else, possess all things. Hence they can say, "My God and my All!" Hence, the Apostle says,

that though the Saints have nothing, they possess all things: *As having nothing, and possessing all things*. When, then, you want medicines in sickness, when you are in need of food, or fire in the winter, or clothes, say: *My God, Thou alone art sufficient for me!* and thus console yourself.

Accept with patience the loss of property, relatives and friends. Some one loses a book and she disturbs the whole house, and cannot keep herself in peace. Another is inconsolable at the death of a relative. She gives up Mental Prayer; she abstains from Communion, she is impatient with everybody; she shuts herself away; will not take food, and sends away those who come to console her. To such I would say: *Is this the true love that you bear to God?* Then, it is not true that God is everything to you, since it is now manifest, that because you have lost a creature, you no longer enjoy peace, and appear almost to care no more about God. Tell me what advantage do you derive from thus abandoning yourself to melancholy? Do you imagine that you please the person who has died? No; you displease God, and also the dead. How much more pleasing would it be to her, if, conforming yourself to the Divine will, you endeavoured to abstain from weeping and groaning; and sought to unite yourself more closely to God, and to pray for the soul if it be in Purgatory. To shed an occasional tear at the death of a relative is a pardonable weakness of nature; but immoderate grief proceeds from weakness of spirit and want of the love of God. Holy people also hear of the death of persons most dear to them; but reflecting that God has willed their death, they instantly resign themselves, and go in peace to pray for them. They then make more frequent Meditations and Communions, and unite themselves more to God, hoping to go one day to enjoy Him in Heaven, along with their departed friends.

II.

It is necessary to practise patience in the midst of accusations and persecutions. You will say: *But I* K 2
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have not failed in anything—why should I receive such an insult? This is not the will of God. But do you not know the answer that Jesus Christ gave to St. Peter, Martyr, who complained of being unjustly imprisoned, saying: O Lord, what evil have I done that I should suffer this mortification? Jesus answered from the Cross: And what evil have I done that I should be nailed to this Cross? If, then, your Redeemer has voluntarily embraced death for the love of you, it is not too much for you to embrace this mortification for the love of Him. It is true that God does not will the sin of the person who insults or persecutes you; but He certainly wishes that you bear this contradiction for His sake, and also for your own welfare. Although, says St. Augustine, we have not committed the fault that is imputed to us, we have been guilty of other sins that deserve the chastisement we now receive.

The Saints have been persecuted in this world. St. Basil was accused of heresy before St. Damasus, Pope. St. Cyril of Jerusalem was condemned as a heretic by forty bishops, and was deprived of his See. St. Athanasius was charged with the crime of sorcery, and St. John Chrysostom with sins against chastity. St. Romuald, at the age of more than a hundred years, was accused of an enormous sin, for which some said that he deserved to be burned alive. St. Francis de Sales was charged with impurity, and remained for three years under the imputation till his innocence was discovered. Of St. Lidwina it is related that one day a woman entered her chamber, and began to insult her in the most atrocious manner; and because the Saint preserved her usual tranquillity, the tigress becoming more furious began to spit in her face, and seeing the Saint still undisturbed, she screamed like a madwoman.

There is no remedy; for, says the Apostle, *all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*—(11 Tim. iii. 12). All who wish to follow Jesus Christ will be persecuted. If, says St. Augustine, you are unwilling to suffer any persecution, tremble lest you have not as yet begun to serve Jesus Christ. Who more innocent and holy than our Saviour? And still He was

persecuted by men until He died on a Cross, covered with wounds, and overwhelmed with shame. Hence, to animate us to bear persecutions with peace, the Apostle exhorts us to keep always before our mind Jesus Christ crucified. *Think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself*—(Heb. xii. 8). Let us rest assured that when we suffer persecution in peace, God will take up our defence; and should He ever permit us to remain in dishonour here, He will reward our patience with greater honours hereafter.

Spiritual Reading.

PATIENCE IN THE MIDST OF SPIRITUAL DESOLATION.

Desolation of spirit is the most sensible and the sharpest pain a soul that loves God can experience on this earth. To a soul assisted by Divine consolations, all insults, sorrows, losses and persecutions are not only not an affliction, but rather a source of consolation, because they give her occasion to offer these pains to her Lord, and by such offerings to unite herself more closely to her Beloved. The severest pain of a loving soul consists in seeing herself without devotion, without fervour, without desires, and in finding nothing but disgust and tediousness in Meditation and Communion. But, according to St. Teresa, God has the best proof of their love, when without relish and even with anguish and pain, they persevere patiently in their accustomed exercises. By aridity and temptations, says the Saint, God tries His lovers. St. Angela of Foligno, finding herself in a state of aridity, complained to God as if He had abandoned her. No, daughter, answered our Lord, I now love you more than before, and I bring you nearer to Myself.

Some there are who, finding themselves in desolation, imagine that God has abandoned them, or that they are not fit for the way of perfection; thus they leave

the road upon which they had entered, begin to give liberty to the senses, and thus lose all they have gained. Do not allow yourself to be deceived by the enemy : when you feel aridity, be constant, and omit none of your ordinary exercises of devotion. Humble yourself, and say that you deserve to be treated in this manner in punishment of your sins. Above all, resign yourself to the Divine will, and trust more than ever in God ; for this is the time for rendering yourself dear to Jesus Christ. Do you imagine that the Saints were always in the enjoyment of consolations and celestial tenderness? Know that the Saints spent the greater part of their life in desolation and darkness. And to speak the truth, which I have learned by experience, I have but little confidence in the soul that abounds in spiritual sweetness without having first passed through the ordeal of internal sufferings ; because it not unfrequently happens that such souls go on well as long as the Divine consolations continue, but when tried by aridity they give up all, and abandon themselves to a life of tepidity.

But some one may say : I do not refuse this cross if it be the will of God ; but what afflicts me is that this abandonment may be the chastisement of my infidelities. But I answer : Let it be a chastisement, if you like ; to you in a special manner I say, that if you have failed by attachment to any creature, God, Who is a jealous Lover, justly withdraws Himself. Let it then be a chastisement ; is it not a just one ? Is it not the will of God that you accept it ? Accept it, then, in peace, and remove the cause of your desolation, take away affections to creatures, take away dissipation of spirit arising from excessive indulgence of the eyes, of the tongue, and the ears : give yourself again entirely to God, and He will restore your former fervour. But seek not to be consoled by the tenderness of former days, but rather ask strength to be faithful to God. Be persuaded that He sends desolation only for our greater profit, and to prove our love. He said to St. Gertrude that He tenderly loves the souls that serve Him at their own expense, that is, in aridity and without sensible sweetness.

Love is not proved so much in following Jesus when He caresses you, as in seeking after Him when He flies from you. But, says St. Bernard, fear not, fear not if the Spouse hides His face for a little ; know that He does all for your good ; He withdraws for your security, lest, finding yourself greatly caressed, you begin to despise others by esteeming yourself better than them ; and He withdraws also that you may desire Him with greater ardour, and seek after Him with greater solicitude. You must in the meantime persevere in your pious exercises, though you should suffer in them the agonies of death : far more painful was the agony your Lord suffered in the Garden of Gethsemani when He was praying for you, and preparing to go to die for you. *Being in an agony he prayed the longer*—(Luke xxii. 48). Be constant, then, in seeking after Jesus ; He will not delay long to come and console you. And should He not come to bestow consolations and tenderness, be content with receiving from Him courage and strength to love Him without the recompense of present delights. God is better pleased with a strong rather than with a tender love.

Evening Meditation.

“CALL UPON ME IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE.”

I.

Let us consider some few practical counsels which will help us to be patient under every trial.

In general, as St. Thomas says, to foresee and reflect upon the trials that may come is a help to bear them with fortitude. Jesus Christ said to His disciples : *In the world you shall have distress : but have confidence, I have overcome the world*—(Jo. xvi. 33). My children, know that in the world you shall be afflicted and despised ; but have confidence in Me Who have conquered the world. The reason is, that by reflecting beforehand on tribulation, and embracing it with patience we form to ourselves an idea of it, not as an evil, but as a conducive to eternal life. Thus,

premeditation takes from us the fear of the evil that the tribulation excites. This has been the practice of the Saints: they embraced their crosses long before they came; and thus they found themselves prepared to bear them in peace whenever they came upon them, no matter how suddenly. Accustom yourself, then, in Mental Prayer to embrace the tribulations which are likely to be your lot.

And when you imagine it to be impossible for you to bear such a tribulation (should it happen), pray to the Lord to give you His aid to submit to it in case it occurs, and have confidence in Him, saying: *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me*—(Phil. iv. 13). And when you do this, doubt not that your prayers will in that case obtain the strength you do not possess. And how have the holy Martyrs obtained courage to bear so many torments, and deaths the most painful, except by prayer and by recommending themselves to God? When you find yourself under the cross have recourse instantly to prayer. *Is any of you sad, says St. James, let him pray*—(James v. 13). Is any of you afflicted with any tribulation or passion, let him pray, and not cease to pray until he finds the peace of his soul restored. *Call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me*—(Ps. xlix. 15). When you are in tribulation invoke My aid, says the Lord, and I will rescue you from difficulties, and you will give glory to Me. When a soul in trouble recommends itself to God, He delivers it from the evil which afflicts it, or gives it grace to bear it with patience, and thus it glorifies the Lord. St. Ignatius of Loyola used to say that the greatest evil that could befall him in this world would be the destruction of the Society; but he hoped that, even should such a calamity happen, his peace of mind would be restored by a quarter of an hour's Mental Prayer.

II.

In the time of trial endeavour to communicate more frequently. The early Christians in the time of perse-

cution prepared themselves for Martyrdom by frequent Communion.

Be careful to ask advice from your director, or from some other spiritual person; for a word of comfort gives great help to bear the cross with patience. But beware of explaining your trials to imperfect souls, for they will add to your troubles and confusion, particularly if you have received an injury, or if you actually suffer persecution.

But above all, I say again, have recourse to prayer; have recourse to Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, and beg of Him to make you in all things conformable to His holy will. He promises to comfort all who are in tribulation when they have recourse to Him. *Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you*—(Matt. xi. 28).

My God, I offer to Thee the pains of Jesus, Thy Son, in satisfaction for my sins. He is the Lamb Whom Thou didst one day behold sacrificed for Thy glory, and for our salvation on the Altar of the Cross. For the love of this Victim, so dear to Thee, pardon me all the offences, whether grievous or venial, which I have offered to Thee: I am sorry for them all with my whole heart, because by them I have offended Thy infinite goodness. Thou, O my God, dost call me to Thy love: behold I leave all things, and I come to Thee, my Treasure and my Life. For the love of Thee, I renounce all the goods and honours and pleasures of the world. I love Thee, O my Sovereign Good, above every other good. Ah, my Jesus, do not permit me to resist any longer, and to be ungrateful to the tender affection Thou hast shown me. Ah! make known to me always more and more the greatness of Thy goodness, that I may be enamoured of Thee Who art infinitely amiable. Thou hast shown Thyself enamoured of my soul, and shall I be able to love anything but Thee? No, my Redeemer: for Thee only do I wish to live; Thee only do I wish to love.

O Mary, my Mother, assist me, and obtain for me grace to be faithful to this my promise.

embrace death rather than deny Jesus Christ; but when tempted he miserably denied his Master, and then he became aware of his weakness. Hence, having favoured St. Paul with celestial revelations, our Lord, in order to preserve him from vainglory, allowed him to be molested with an importunate temptation against chastity, which is of all temptations the most humiliating to man. *And, says the Saint, lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me*—(2 Cor. xii. 7).

II.

God allows temptation to try us in order to make us grow rich in merit. Many are disturbed by scruples, on account of the bad thoughts that molest them. But there is no reason to be disturbed; for it is certain that it is the consent to evil, but not the evil thought itself, that is a sin. Temptations, however violent they may be, leave no stain on the soul when they happen without any fault of ours, and when we drive them away. St. Catharine of Sienna and Blessed Angela of Foligno were strongly tempted against chastity, but the temptations increased rather than diminished their purity. Every time the soul conquers a temptation she gains a degree of grace, for which she will afterwards be rewarded with a degree of glory in Heaven. Hence we shall receive as many crowns as we resist temptations. "As often," says St. Bernard, "as we conquer, we are crowned." And our Lord said to St. Matilda: "He who is tempted, places as many gems on My head as he overcomes temptations."

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. x. 13). St. Jerome says, that for a ship too long a calm is more dangerous than a tempest. So the tempest of temptation prevents a man from rotting in sloth, and makes him unite himself more closely to God, by turning to Him to ask His graces, by renewing

Tuesday—Twenty-third Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

PATIENCE IN THE TIME OF TEMPTATION.

Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation—(Eccclus. ii. 1). The Lord usually permits souls the most dear to Him to be most severely tormented by temptation. But they put all their trust in God and they conquer. He who places you in the combat will not abandon you or let you fall.

I.

The Lord usually permits souls that are most dear to Him to be most severely tormented by temptations. While he lived in the solitude of Palestine, in prayer and penitential works, St. Jerome was greatly afflicted with temptations. He himself described them: "I was alone, and my heart was full of bitterness; my dried and withered members were covered with a sack. My skin became as black as that of a Moor; the hard ground was my bed, which served rather to give pain than rest; my food was very scanty: and still my heart was inflamed against my will with bad desires. I had no other refuge than to have recourse to Jesus, and to implore His aid."

The Lord permits us to be tempted for our greater good. First, that we may be more humble. Ecclesiasticus says: *What doth he know that hath not been tried?*—(Eccclus. xxxiv. 9). In truth, no one is better acquainted with his own weakness than the man that is tempted. St. Augustine remarks, that St. Peter, before he had been tempted, presumed on his own strength, boasting that he would have constancy to

good purposes, by making good acts of humility, of confidence, and of resignation. In the Lives of the Ancient Fathers we read that to a certain young man who was constantly and severely assailed by carnal temptations, his spiritual Father seeing him in great affliction, said: Son, do you wish me to pray to God to deliver you from so many temptations, which do not allow you to live an hour in peace? The young man answered, No, my Father; for though I am greatly molested by these temptations, I derive great advantage from them, for with the Divine aid I thus make continual acts of virtue. I now pray more than I did before, I fast more frequently, I watch more, I endeavour to practise greater mortification of my rebellious flesh. It is better for you to pray to God that He may assist me by His grace to bear these temptations with patience, and thus to advance in perfection. Such temptations, then, we should not, indeed, desire; but we should accept them with resignation, believing that God permits them for our greater good. The Apostle, when molested by similar temptations, several times implored the Lord to deliver him from them. *For which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me. And he said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity*—(2 Cor. xii. 8, 9). You will say: But St. Paul was a Saint. And St. Augustine answers: By what means, think you, did the Saints resist temptations? Was it by their own strength, or by the power of God? The Saints trusted in God, and thus they conquered. Hence the holy Doctor adds: Do you also abandon yourself into the hands of God, and fear not. He who placed you in the combat will not abandon you or let you fall.

Spiritual Reading.

PATIENCE UNDER TEMPTATION.

MEANS OF CONQUERING.

With what arms are we to fight temptations in order to conquer?

The first and principal, and I may say the only, and absolutely necessary means for conquering temptations, is to have recourse to God by prayer. Speaking of the necessity of humility, in order to be true disciples of Jesus Christ, St. Augustine says: "If you ask what holds the first place in the discipline of Christ, I will answer—Humility. What is the second? Humility. What is the third? Humility. And as often as you ask, so often shall I give the same answer." Now, were you to ask what are the means of overcoming temptations, I would answer: The first means is prayer: the second is prayer; the third is prayer; and should you ask me a thousand times, I would always say: Prayer.

This means is particularly necessary for conquering temptations against purity; these, as the Wise Man says, are overcome only by recommending ourselves to God. *And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it . . . I went to the Lord and besought him*—(Wisd. viii. 21). Hence, St. Jerome has written, "As soon as lust assails us, let us instantly say: "Lord, assist me; do not permit me to offend you." Thus the Abbot Isaias exhorted his disciples always to repeat in such temptations: *Incline unto my aid, O God!*—(Ps. lxxix. 1)—and he would add, that this is a secure defence. He was right, for God cannot violate His promises to hear all who pray to Him: *Cry to me, and I will hear thee*—(Jer. xxxiii. 3). *Call upon me . . . I will deliver thee*—(Ps. xlix. 15). *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find*—(Matt. vii. 7). *For every one that asketh, receiveth*—(Luke xi. 10). *You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you*—(Jo. xv. 7). We are told that St. Pachomius related to his disciples that he once heard the devils discoursing

together; one of them said: My monk, when I tempt him, listens to me; he does not turn to God, and therefore I make him fall frequently. Another complained that he could do nothing with his monk, because he instantly asked help from God, and thus was always victorious. Hence, my brothers, concluded the holy Abbot, resist temptations by always invoking the Name of Jesus. But this must be done immediately, without listening to or arguing with the temptation. Another monk, as we find in the Lives of the Fathers, complained to an aged Father of being continually tempted to impurity; the good old man prayed for him, and learned by revelation that the monk did not turn away instantly from the temptation, but used to stop to look at it. The Father corrected him for this fault, and the monk was not molested afterwards as much as before. "While the enemy is small," says St. Jerome, "kill him." A lion when small is easily killed, but not when he has grown big. Unchaste temptations must be instantly shaken off, as we shake from the hand a spark that flies from the fire. The best means of conquering them is, as I have said, to turn away from them, without listening to them. Were a queen tempted by a negro slave, what would she do? Would she not indignantly turn away without giving an answer? Be careful to act in this manner if the devil should molest you; turn away without answering him, and invoke the Names of Jesus and Mary; and if you do this, you will be always sure of not falling into sin. St. Francis de Sales says: "The instant you feel any temptation, imitate children, who, when they see a wolf, run into the arms of their father or mother, or at least cry out to them for assistance. Do you in like manner run with filial confidence to Jesus and Mary."

In temptations it is also very useful to make the Sign of the Cross. St. Augustine says: "All the machinations of the devil are reduced to nothing by the power of the Cross." By giving His life on the Cross, Jesus destroyed the powers of hell; and therefore at the Sign of that sacred symbol all the temptations

of the devil vanish. St. Athanasius relates of St. Anthony, that when the devils assailed him he instantly armed himself with the Sign of the Cross, and, thus armed, would say to them: Of what use is it to labour to injure me when I am rendered secure by this Sign, and by the confidence I have in my Lord? St. Gregory Nazianzen relates what is still more wonderful, that Julian the apostate, knowing the virtue of the Sign of the Cross, used, when terrified by the devils, to make that holy Sign, and the devils would be put to flight.

The second means of conquering temptations is to humble yourself, and to distrust your own strength. To make us humble, the Lord often permits us to be assaulted with temptations, and even frequently with temptations the most shameful. Hence, when we see ourselves thus molested, let us humble ourselves and say: I deserve to be thus tormented for the offences I have hitherto offered to God. In the Lives of the Fathers, it is related that a virgin and anchoress called Sara was cruelly persecuted in the desert by the spirit of impurity. She never asked God to deliver her from the temptation, but humbled herself, and constantly implored strength. The more violently the devil tempted her, the more she laboured to humble herself, and to supplicate the Divine aid. Finally, the enemy, not being able to make her fall into sins of impurity, endeavoured to tempt her to vainglory. So he said with a loud voice: Sara, you have conquered! You have conquered! The humble servant of God answered: No, wicked spirit, I have not conquered you, but Jesus my God has conquered you.

Thus let us humble ourselves, and at the same time let us have recourse with confidence to God Who protects all that hope in Him. *He is the protection of all that trust in him*—(Ps. xvii. 31). He Himself has promised to deliver all those that hope in Him. *Because he hoped in me, I will deliver him*—(Ps. xc. 14). When then, we find ourselves tortured by temptations, and the fear of losing God, let us say with great courage: *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be con-*

founded—(Ps. xxx. 1). In thee, O Lord, have I placed my hopes : do not permit me ever to be confounded, or to incur Thy enmity. With great courage, I say, for according to St. Teresa, when the devils see themselves despised, they are powerless. And when the enemy represents the great difficulty of doing what is necessary to become saints, let us say, with diffidence in ourselves, but with confidence in God : *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me*—(Phil. iv. 13). I can do nothing of myself, but I can do all things with the aid of my Lord.

The third means of overcoming temptations is to make them known to your spiritual Father. Thieves, when discovered, take flight. Hence, St. Philip Neri used to say that a temptation disclosed is half conquered. St. Antoninus relates that Brother Rufinus, the companion of St. Francis, was assailed by a strong temptation to despair, and to believe that all he did was useless. The poor brother concealed the temptation from his Superior, St. Francis; it became more violent, and one day the devil appeared to him in the form of Jesus crucified, and said to him : Know that you and Francis, and all your followers, are damned. Hence, Rufinus regarded himself as lost. This was revealed to St. Francis, who sent for him, but Rufinus refused to come; at length he went to the Saint and disclosed the temptation. The Saint ordered him to despise it. The devil returned, but seeing himself treated with contempt, he fled. And afterwards Jesus crucified appeared to him, and assured him he was in the state of grace.

The fourth means, which is a very important one, of relieving one's self from temptations is to avoid what occasions them. St. Basil says that God assists the man who is engaged in the contest against his own will; but he who voluntarily goes himself into the fight, does not deserve compassion, and is therefore abandoned by God. And, before him, Ecclesiasticus said : *He that loveth danger, shall perish in it*—(Ecclus. iii. 27). He that loves danger, and goes in search of it, shall perish in it : not is it of any use to hope for aid from God; to

trust in God, and to expose one's self voluntarily to the occasion of sin, is not a holy but a rash confidence, which merits chastisement.

Evening Meditation.

PATIENCE UNDER TEMPTATION.

MEANS OF CONQUERING.

I.

There are some temptations which we should conquer by contrary acts. For example, temptations to take revenge must be overcome by seeking to do good to those who have offended us; temptations to vanity by humbling ourselves; to envy by rejoicing at the good of others; similar temptations must be conquered in the same manner. But it is better to resist other temptations, such as those against Faith, or against chastity, or to blasphemy, by despising them, and by making good acts directly opposed to the temptations, such as acts of confidence, of contrition, of charity. St. John Climacus relates that a certain monk was greatly tormented with blasphemous temptations. The miserable man was all in confusion : he went to a good Father, and told him all the execrable blasphemies that passed through his mind. Have confidence, said the Father, I take on myself all these sins; do not think of them any more. The monk followed the advice, and his peace of mind was restored. But with regard to temptations against chastity, it is not advisable for timorous souls to contend directly with the bad thought, saying and repeating : I will not do it; I will not consent. For by endeavouring to make these contrary acts, the image of the bad objects presented to the mind becomes more vivid, and thus the struggle is longer and more severe. It is better to renew, in general, the purpose of dying a thousand times rather than offend God, and turn at once to God for help, making acts of hope and love;

as has been already said, and frequently invoking the most holy Names of Jesus and Mary.

II.

The most dangerous temptations are those that come under the appearance of good, so that a soul, without perceiving it, may find that she has fallen over some precipice. This may easily happen to spiritual persons in particular. "A good man," says St. Bernard, "is never deceived except by the similitude of good." The devil deceives souls that have a good intention only by the appearance of good. St. Bonaventure relates that there was a brother so attached to silence that he would not speak even in Confession, but wished to explain his sins by signs. The Minister-General, in presence of St. Francis, bestowed great praise on the brother for his exact observance of silence. But the Saint said; My Father, you deceive yourself; command him to confess his sins twice a week. The Minister imposed the precept, but the brother refused to obey, and became so obstinate on this point, that on account of his disobedience he in the end abandoned the Religious state.

To overcome temptations there are many excellent means, but the first, and the one that is absolutely necessary, is to have recourse to God by prayer that He may give us light and strength to conquer. Without the Divine aid, it is impossible to overcome temptations; and if we ask it we shall certainly be victorious. *Praising, I will call upon the Lord; and I shall be saved from my enemies*—(Ps. xvii. 4).

Ah, my God, I will no longer resist the love Thou dost entertain for me. This love made Thee bear with me so patiently when I offended Thee. Ah, my Jesus, through Thy merits do not permit me ever more to offend Thee. O make me cease to be ungrateful to Thee, or let me cease to live. I see that Thou dost wish me to be saved, and I wish to be saved, that I may go to sing Thy mercies for eternity in Heaven. Lord, do not abandon me. I know that Thou wilt never abandon me if I do not first abandon Thee, but past

experience makes me afraid of my weakness. Ah! through the painful death that Thou didst one day suffer for me on the Cross, give me strength in my temptations, and especially the grace to have immediate recourse to Thee. I love Thee, O Infinite Goodness, and I hope to love Thee always. Ah! bind me with the sweet chains of Thy love, that my soul may never more be separated from Thee.

O Mary, thou art called the Mother of Perseverance; this great gift is dispensed through thee; thee I ask to obtain it for me; through thy intercession I certainly hope for it.

Wednesday—Twenty-third Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

ST. JOSEPH'S LOVE FOR MARY AND JESUS.

Joseph regarded Mary as the beloved of God chosen to be the Mother of His only-begotten Son. And as God gave St. Joseph the place of father to Jesus, He must have certainly infused into the heart of Joseph the love of a father, and of a father to so amiable a Son, a Son Who was also God.

I.

And (Jesus) went down with them, and came to Nazareth and was subject to them—(Luke ii. 51).

Consider the love Joseph bore to his holy spouse. Of all the women that ever lived Mary was the most beautiful. She was more humble, more meek, more pure, more obedient, more inflamed with the love of God, than all the Angels and men that have been or shall

be created. Hence she merited all the affections of Joseph, who was so great a lover of virtue. Add to all this, the tenderness with which he saw himself loved by Mary, who certainly loved her own spouse above all creatures. Besides, Joseph regarded her as the beloved of God, chosen to be the Mother of His only begotten Son. Consider how great must have been the affection which, for all these reasons, the just and grateful heart of Joseph entertained for so amiable a spouse as Mary.

Oh! how many tears must Mary and Joseph have shed in speaking of Jesus' Passion and Death, which they had already learned from the Sacred Scriptures! What tenderness must they have felt in saying and thinking that their Beloved was, according to Isaiah, to be a Man of sorrows and reproaches; that His enemies would so disgrace Him that His lovely countenance could be no longer recognized; that by their scourges they would lacerate and bruise His flesh to such a degree, that He would appear as a leper all covered with ulcers and wounds; that their beloved Treasure would suffer all with patience, without ever opening His mouth to complain of His torments; that He would be led like a lamb to the slaughter; and that, finally He would die by dint of torments, hanging on an infamous gibbet between two thieves.

II.

Consider, also, the love Joseph bore Jesus. Having given our Saint the place of father to Jesus, God must certainly have infused into the heart of Joseph the love of a father, and of a father to so amiable a Son, a Son Who was also God. Hence the love of Joseph was not purely human, like the love of other fathers, but a superhuman love; for he found in the same person one who behaved like his son, and yet was his very God. Joseph knew from the Angel, by an infallible Divine revelation, that the Child by Whom he was always accompanied was the Divine Word, Who had become Man for the love of men, and especially for the love of him. He knew that he himself had been chosen from among all men to be the guardian of the life of the

Divine Infant, and that the Infant wished to be called his Son. Consider what a flame of holy love must have been kindled in the heart of Joseph by meditating on all these things, and in seeing his Lord performing for him the little offices of a boy, at one time opening and closing the door; at another helping him to saw or to plane; and at another, gathering fragments of wood, or sweeping the house; and finally, in seeing that He obeyed all his commands, and even did nothing without his direction.

What affections must he have felt in carrying Jesus in his arms, caressing Him, and in receiving the caress of that sweet Infant! In hearing from Him the words of eternal life, which, like so many loving darts, wounded his heart! And particularly in witnessing the holy examples of all virtues which the Divine Child gave him. Long familiarity with persons who love one another cools their affection: for the longer men converse together, the more perfectly they learn one another's defects. This was not the case with Joseph: the more he conversed with Jesus, the better he became acquainted with His sanctity. Consider, then, how great was Joseph's love for Jesus, since, according to the authors, he enjoyed His society for the space of twenty-five years.

Spiritual Reading.

“HE WAS SUBJECT TO THEM.”

As long as St. Joseph lived Jesus Christ respected him as a father, and until his death always obeyed him as such: *He was subject to them*. So that during all those years the constant occupation of the Saviour was to obey St. Joseph. During the whole of that time it was Joseph's office to command, as the head of the family; and the office of Jesus was, as a subject, to obey St. Joseph, who had been given to Him by God in place of a father. Hence, on the one hand, Jesus performed no action, did not even take a step, tasted

no food, took no repose, but by the will of St. Joseph; and on the other, was all attention in listening to and executing all St. Joseph imposed upon Him. Our Blessed Lady said to St. Bridget: "My Son was so obedient, that when Joseph said, 'Do this or that,' He immediately did it." Hence John Gerson writes: "He often prepared the food and drink, washed the vessels, brought water from the fountain, and swept the house."

St. Bernard, speaking of St. Joseph, says: "He was a faithful and prudent servant, whom our Lord made the solace of His Mother, the nourisher of His humanity, and, in fine, the one most faithful coöperator in the great Council on earth." Therefore St. Joseph was not only destined as a helper and comforter to the Mother of God, who had so many tribulations on earth; not only was he the supporter of Jesus Christ, but he was also destined to coöperate, in a way, in the Redemption of the world, for this was the work of the great Council of the Three Divine Persons. God having also given him to His Son in the place of a father, He at the same time charged him to feed and defend this Son from the snares of His enemies: *Take the child*—(Matt. ii. 13), as if he had addressed him in the words of the Psalmist: *To thee is the poor man left*—(Ps. x. 14). Joseph, I have sent My Son on earth; and I have sent Him poor and humble, without the splendour of riches or apparent nobility; hence, in the world He will be despised and called the Son of a carpenter: *Is not this the carpenter's Son*—(Matt. xiii. 55), according to thy humble trade; for I have willed that thou shouldst be poor, because I have destined thee to hold the place of a father over My Son Who is poor. He has not come to reign in the world, but to suffer and die for the salvation of men. On earth, then, thou wilt hold My place of father over Him, and be His guardian: *To thee is the poor man left*. I abandon Him into thy hands. He will be persecuted, and thou wilt share in His sufferings; guard Him with care, and be thou faithful to Me. "Therefore," says St. John Damascene, "God gave St. Joseph the love, the care and the authority of

a father over Jesus: He gave him the affection of a father, that he might guard Him with great love; the solicitude of a father, that he might watch over Him with care; and the authority of a father, that he might feel sure that he would be obeyed in all that he arranged as to the Person of this Son."

Having, then, made Joseph, as St. Bernard says, a coöperator in the work of Redemption, God willed that he should be present at the birth of Jesus, that he might be a faithful witness of the glory the Angels gave to God on this occasion; and also of what had been revealed to the shepherds, who, when they came to visit the Saviour, related all to Mary and Joseph. Again, that he might be a witness of the coming of the kings, who, guided by a star, had come from afar to adore the Holy Child, as they themselves said: *for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to adore him*—(Matt. ii. 2). God also willed that Joseph together with Mary, should offer Him the new-born Babe, as they did: *they carried him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord*—(Luke ii. 22), and there offered Him to death for the salvation of the world, according to those Scriptures in which the Passion of Jesus Christ had already been foretold, and which were well known to Mary and Joseph.

God, then, seeing that through jealousy and fear of losing his kingdom, Herod wished to gain possession of the Divine Child to take His life, sent an Angel to St. Joseph, to direct him, in His Name, to take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt; and *take the Child and his Mother, and fly into Egypt; and be there until I shall tell thee: for it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy him*—(Matt. ii. 13). Behold, Joseph, faithful and obedient to the voice of God, arose in the night (the very same night on which he received notice from the Angel, as interpreters explain it), took the Child and His Mother, and journeyed towards Egypt. Joseph, without loss of time, gathered together as many instruments of his trade as he could carry, which were required for the support of the Holy Family in Egypt. Mary, on the other hand,

took the Child in her arms, and the poor linen for the use of her Son; and they set out alone, without a servant, as poor pilgrims on a journey which was so long and full of dangers, having to pass through so many desert places before they could reach Egypt, a country in which they had no relatives or friends, and where they would only find rude and unknown people. When they arrived there, St. Joseph, as St. Bernard says, laboured night and day to support his Holy Spouse and the Divine Child. Having afterwards returned from Egypt, according to the new command of the Angel: *Arise, and take the Child and his Mother, and go into the land of Israel*—(Ibid.)—Joseph at once left Egypt, and returned into Judea. But he was again told by the Angel not to remain in Judea, for fear of Archelaus, who reigned there in the place of Herod his father, who was dead. He went therefore to dwell in Nazareth in Galilee, and remained there in the company of his beloved Jesus, living in poverty on the small profits of his humble trade, until the time of his death.

During this time it was, that, having gone with Mary and Jesus, Who was then about twelve years of age, to visit the Temple, he came a day's journey towards home and met Mary, with whom he believed Jesus to be travelling, but found that Jesus had not returned. During three days Joseph constantly wept, for he was separated from Jesus, the love of his heart; but that which caused him the greatest affliction was the fear that Jesus had left him on account of some displeasure he might have caused Him, and that, therefore, God no longer considered him worthy to have charge of so great a treasure. He was, however, afterwards consoled when he heard from Jesus Himself that He had remained in the Temple for affairs which concerned the glory of God. From that time he attended on Jesus until his death, when it was his happy lot to expire in the arms of Jesus and Mary, who attended upon him in that last moment: hence St. Francis de Sales says, that "it is certain that, like the Blessed Virgin his spouse, he died of love."

Evening Meditation.

THE HONOUR DUE TO ST. JOSEPH.

I.

We should, indeed, honour St. Joseph since the Son of God Himself was graciously pleased to honour him, by calling him His father. "Christ," says Origen, "gave to Joseph the honour due to a parent." He is also thus spoken of in the Gospel: *and his father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning him*—(Luke ii. 33). The Divine Mother also spoke of him under this name. *Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing*—(Ibid. 48). Since, then, the King of Kings was pleased to raise Joseph to so high a dignity, it is right and a duty on our part, to endeavour to honour him as much as we can. He indeed should be greatly honoured by men, whom the King of Kings has been pleased thus to exalt. "What Angel or Saint," says St. Basil, "ever merited to be called the father of the Son of God? Joseph alone was thus called." Hence we can well apply to St. Joseph the words of St. Paul, *being made so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they*—(Heb. i. 4). St. Joseph was more honoured by God, in this name of father, than all the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Pontiffs; for all these have the name of servants, Joseph alone that of father.

II.

He made him master of his house—(Ps. civ. 21). Consider St. Joseph as father and lord of the little Family of Nazareth, little in point of numbers, but great on account of the two illustrious Personages who composed it—the Mother of God and the only-begotten Son of God made Man! Joseph commanded in that house, and the Son of God obeyed: *He was subject to them*. "This subjection," says Gerson, "whilst it shows the humility of Jesus Christ, also shows the great

ness of the dignity of St. Joseph." "And to what greater dignity, to what higher degree of exaltation," continues the same writer, "can a person be raised, than to that of commanding Him Who commands all kings?"

Jesus excited the admiration of the whole world when he commanded the sun to stop in its course, that he might have time to conquer his enemies; and it obeyed. *The Lord obeying the voice of a man*—(Jos. x. 14). But what comparison can there be between Jesus, whom the sun, an inanimate creature, obeyed, and Joseph, who was obeyed by Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

Thursday—Twenty-third Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

(FOR THE 25TH OF OCTOBER.)

"A MERCIFUL HIGH-PRIEST."

The infinite Mercy of God induced Him to descend from Heaven to earth to free us from eternal death. But in order that He might not only save us, but be able to feel compassion for our miseries He willed to become man capable of suffering and similar to other men. *For we have not a High-Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities . . . wherefore, it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful . . . High-Priest*—(Heb. iv. 15; ii. 17).

I.

What a tender compassion Jesus Christ has for poor sinners! This makes Him say, He is that Shepherd who goes after the lost sheep, and on finding it, arranges

a banquet, saying: *Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost. And he lays it upon his shoulders rejoicing*—(Luke xv. 5-6); and thus He carefully keeps possession of it in His fond embrace for fear He should lose it again. His tender compassion caused Him, too, to say that He is that loving Father Who, whenever the prodigal son returns to His feet, does not thrust him away, but embraces and kisses him, and as it were faints away for the consolation and joy He feels in beholding his repentance: *And running to him, he fell upon his neck and kissed him*—(Luke xv. 20). He says: *I stand at the gate and knock*—(Apoc. iii. 20). Although driven away from the soul by sin, He does not abandon her, but places Himself at the door of her heart and pleads and knocks to gain readmittance. He said to His disciples, who with an indiscreet zeal would have called down vengeance on those who repulsed them: *You know not of what spirit you are*—(Luke ix. 55). You see that I have so much compassion on sinners, and do you desire vengeance on them? You are not of My spirit. Finally, this compassion made Jesus say: *Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you*—(Matt. xi. 28). Come to me, all you that are afflicted and weary with the burden of your sins, and I will give you rest.

Oh no, let us not be afraid of Jesus Christ; but let us be afraid of our own obstinacy, if after offending Him we will not listen to His voice, inviting us to be reconciled. If we persist in our obstinacy, Jesus Christ will be constrained to condemn us; but if we repent of the evil we have done, what fear need we have of Jesus Christ? Who has to pronounce sentence on us? Think, says St. Paul, that the self-same Redeemer has to sentence thee Who died just that He might not condemn thee; that self-same One Who, that He might pardon thee, hath given Himself no pardon: "In order to redeem the servant," says St. Bernard, "He hath not spared Himself."

O Redeemer of my soul, my soul is now enamoured of Thee, and loves Thee. Thou hast loved me above measure, so that, overcome by Thy love, I may no

longer resist its winning appeals, but surrender myself, and fix all my love on Thee. I love Thee, then, O infinite Goodness! I love Thee, O most lovable God! Do Thou never cease to enkindle more and more in my heart the flames and fiery darts of love. For Thy own glory cause Thyself to be greatly loved by one who so greatly offended Thee. Mary, my Mother, thou art the hope, the refuge of sinners; assist a sinner who desires to prove faithful to his God; help me to love Him, and to love Him exceedingly.

II.

O sinner, go to the stable of Bethlehem, and thank the Infant Jesus, all shivering with cold in that cave for thy sake, moaning and weeping for thee on a bundle of straw. Give thanks to this thy Redeemer, Who has come down from Heaven to call thee to Himself and to save thee. If thou art desirous of pardon, He is awaiting thee in the Manger to pardon thee. Go quickly, then, and obtain thy pardon; and afterwards do not forget the excessive love Jesus Christ has borne thee: *Forget not the kindness of thy surety*—(Ecclus. xxix. 19). Forget not that high favour He has done thee by making Himself Surety for thy debts to God, in taking on Himself the chastisement deserved by thee; do not forget it, and love Him for it. And know further, that shouldst thou love Him, thy past sins will not stand in the way of thy receiving from God those specially great and choice graces which He is wont to bestow on His most beloved souls: *All things work together unto good*—(Rom. viii. 28). Yes, even the remembrance of the sins he has committed contributes to the advantage of the sinner who bewails and detests them, because this very thing will make him more humble and more pleasing to God, when he sees how God has welcomed him into the loving arms of His mercy: *There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance more than upon ninety-nine just*—(Luke xv. 7).

But of what sinner is it to be understood that he gives more joy to Heaven than a whole multitude of

just ones? It is to be understood of the sinner who, out of gratitude to the Divine goodness, devotes himself wholly and fervently to the love of God, after the example of a St. Paul, a St. Mary Magdalen, a St. Mary of Egypt, a St. Augustine, and a St. Margaret of Cortona. To this last Saint in particular, who had formerly spent several years in sin, God revealed the place prepared for her in Heaven, amongst the Seraphim; and even during her life He showed her many signal favours, inasmuch that, beholding herself so favoured, she one day said to God: "O Lord, how is it that Thou lavishest so many graces on me? Hast Thou, then, forgotten the sins I committed against Thee?" And God thus answered her: "And do you not know that when a soul repents of its faults I no longer remember all the outrages it has been guilty of towards Me?" This same God had long ago announced by His Prophet Ezechiel: *If the wicked do penance . . . I will not remember all his iniquities*—(Ezech. xviii. 21).

Our sins, then, do not prevent us from becoming saints; God offers us every assistance if we only desire it and ask it. It only remains for us to give ourselves entirely to God, and to devote to His love at least the remainder of our days. Come, then, let us bestir ourselves; what are we doing? If we fail, we fail because of ourselves, not because of God. May we never be so unfortunate as to turn all these mercies and loving calls of God into subjects of remorse and despair upon our death-bed, at that last moment when no more time is left to do anything, when the night sets in and *no man can work*—(Jo. ix. 4).

O my Redeemer and my God, and who am I that Thou shouldst have loved me, and still continuest to love me, so much? What hast Thou ever received from me that has obliged Thee to love me so much? What except slight and provocations, which were a reason for Thee to abandon me, and to banish me forever from Thy face? Pardon me, O my beloved Infant, for I am sorry with my whole heart for every displeasure I have given Thee. But know that I shall not be content with a simple pardon; I desire also the grace to love Thee ardently;

I wish to make compensation by my love as much as possible for the past ingratitude which I have shown Thee.

Spiritual Reading.

“IN SILENCE AND IN HOPE SHALL YOUR STRENGTH BE.”

There are three means of acquiring the habit of continual prayer—namely, silence, solitude and the presence of God. These were the means that the Angel suggested to St. Arsenius when he said: “If you wish to be saved, fly into solitude, observe silence, and repose in God by always keeping yourself in His presence.” We shall speak of each of these means.

I.—SILENCE.

In the first place, silence is a great means of acquiring the spirit of prayer, and of disposing the soul to converse continually with God. We rarely find a spiritual soul that speaks much. All men of prayer are lovers of silence. It is called the guardian of innocence, the shield against temptations, and the fountain of prayer. For by silence devotion is preserved, and in silence good thoughts spring up in the soul. St. Bernard says: “Silence and the absence of noise in a certain manner force the soul to think of God and of things eternal.” Hence, the Saints fled to the mountains, to caves, and to deserts, in order to find silence, and escape the tumults of the world for, as was said to Elias: *The Lord is not in the earthquake*—(3 Kings, xix. 11). Theodosius the monk observed silence for thirty-five years. St. John the Silent, who gave up his bishopric and became a monk, observed silence for forty-seven years before his death; and all the Saints, even they who were not solitary, have been lovers of silence.

Oh, how great are the blessings silence brings the soul! It saves us from a multitude of sins by destroying the

root of disputes, detractions, resentments, and curiosity; and besides this, it helps us to acquire many virtues. How well does he practise humility who when others speak, listens with modesty and in silence! How well does he practise mortification by not yielding to his inclinations or desire to tell a certain anecdote, or to use a witty expression suggested by the conversation! It is an excellent practice of meekness to remain silent when unjustly censured or offended. Hence the holy Prophet said: *In silence and in hope shall your strength be*—(Is. xxx. 15). Your strength shall be in silence and in hope; for by silence we shun the occasions of sin, and by hope we obtain the Divine aid to lead a holy life.

But, on the other hand, immense evils flow from speaking much. As devotion is preserved by silence, so it is lost by a multitude of words. However recollected the soul may have been in prayer, if it afterwards indulge in long discourses it will find the mind as distracted and dissipated as if it had not made Meditation. When the mouth of the burning furnace is opened the heat soon evaporates. St. Dorotheus says: “Beware of much speaking, for it banishes from the soul holy thoughts and recollection with God.” Speaking of those Religious who cannot abstain from inquiring after worldly news, St. Joseph Calasanctius says: “The curious Religious shows that he has forgotten himself.” It is certain that he who speaks too much with men converses but little with God, for the Lord says: *I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart*—(Osee ii. 14). If, then, the soul wishes that God speak to it, it must seek solitude; but this solitude will never be found by those who do not love silence. “If,” said the Venerable Margaret of the Cross, “we remain silent, we shall find solitude.” And how will the Lord ever condescend to speak to him, who, by seeking after the conversation of creatures, shows that conversation with God is not sufficient to make him happy?

Besides, the Holy Ghost tells us that in speaking much we shall not fail to commit some fault. *In the*

multitude of words there shall not want sin—(Prov. x. 19). While they speak and prolong conversation without necessity, certain persons think that they are not guilty of any defect; but if they carefully examine themselves they will find some fault against modesty, of detraction, of curiosity, or at least some superfluous words. *But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment*—(Matt. xii. 36).

I have used the words *some fault*; but when we speak much we shall find that we have committed a thousand faults. St. James has called the tongue a universal evil: *The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity*—(James iii. 6). For, as a learned author remarks, the greater number of sins arises from speaking, or from listening to others. *A man full of tongue shall not be established in the earth*—(Ps. cxxxix. 12).

Evening Meditation.

THE PATIENCE OF GOD IN WAITING FOR SINNERS TO RETURN TO HIM.

I.

Let us consider the Patience of God in waiting for sinners to return. That great Servant of God, Sancia Carillo, a penitent of Blessed John of Avila, used to say that the consideration of God's patience with sinners made her wish to build a church, and entitle it "The Patience of God." Ah, who could ever bear with what God has borne with from you? If the offences which you have committed against God had been offered to your best friends, they surely would have sought revenge. When you insulted the Lord He was able to chastise you; you repeated the insult, and He did not punish your guilt, but preserved your life, and provided you with sustenance. He, as it were, pretended not to see the injuries you offered to Him, that you might enter into yourself, and cease to offend. *Thou overlookest*

the sins of men for the sake of repentance—(Wis. xi. 24). But how, O Lord, does it happen, that Thou canst not behold a single sin, and yet Thou dost bear in silence with so many? *Thy eyes are too pure to behold evil, and thou canst not look on iniquity. Why lookest thou upon them that do unjust things, and holdest thy peace?*—(Habac. i. 13).

All creatures—the earth, fire, air, water—because they all obey God, would, by a natural instinct, wish to punish the sinner, and to avenge the injuries he does to the Creator; but God, through His mercy, restrains them. *For the creature serving thee the Creator is made fierce against the unjust*—(Wis. xvi. 24). But, O Lord, Thou waitest for the wicked that they may enter into themselves; and dost Thou not see that they abuse Thy mercy to offer new insults to Thy majesty? *Thou hast been favourable to the nation, O Lord, thou hast been favourable to the nation: art thou glorified?*—(Is. xxvi. 15). Thou hast waited so long for sinners; what hast thou abstained from inflicting punishment; but what glory hast Thou reaped from Thy forbearance? They have become more wicked. Why so much patience with such ungrateful souls? Why dost Thou continue to wait for their repentance? Why dost Thou not chastise their wickedness? The same Prophet answers: *The Lord waiteth that he may have mercy on you*—(Is. xxx. 18). God waits for sinners that they may one day repent, and that after their repentance He may pardon and save them. *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. xxxiii. 11).

II.

St. Augustine goes so far as to say that the Lord, if He were not God, would be unjust on account of His excessive patience towards sinners. By waiting for those who abuse His patience to multiply their sins, God appears to do an injustice to the Divine honour. We sin, continues the Saint, we cling to sin, we glory in sin, and yet Thou art not angry! We provoke Thee

to anger—Thou dost invite us to mercy! God and ourselves appear to be, as it were, engaged in a contest, in which we labour to provoke Him to chastise us, and He labours to bring us to repentance.

Lord, exclaimed holy Job, what is man, that Thou dost entertain so great an esteem for him? Why dost Thou love him so tenderly? *What is a man that thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?*—(Job. vii. 17). Ah, sinners, says St. Teresa, remember that He who now calls and seeks after you, is that God Who will one day be your Judge. If you are lost, the great mercies which He now shows you, will be the greatest torment you shall suffer in hell.

Friday—Twenty-third Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

THE FAITHFUL HEART OF JESUS.

(FOR FIRST FRIDAY OF NOVEMBER.)

The faithfulness of the Heart of Jesus gives us confidence to hope for all things, although we deserve nothing. *God is faithful*, says St. Paul. Oh, how faithful is the beautiful Heart of Jesus towards those He calls to His love!

I.

Oh, how faithful is the beautiful Heart of Jesus towards those He calls to His love: *He is faithful who hath called you, who also will perform*—(1 Thess. v. 24). The faithfulness of God gives us confidence to hope all things, although we deserve nothing. If we have driven God from our heart, let us open the door to Him, and He will immediately enter, according to the promise He has made: *If any man open to me the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him*—(Apoc. iii.

20). If we wish for graces, let us ask for them of God, in the Name of Jesus Christ, and He has promised us that we shall obtain them: *If you shall ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you*—(Jo. xvi. 28). If we are tempted, let us trust in His merits, and He will not permit our enemies to strive with us beyond our strength: *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able*—(1 Cor. x. 13). Oh, how much better is it to have to do with God than with men! How often do men promise and then fail, either because they tell lies in making their promises, or because, after having made the promise, they change their minds: *God is not as man*, says the Holy Spirit, *that he should lie; or as the son of man, that he should be changed*—(Numb. xxiii. 19).

I know my ingratitude, O my Jesus, and I abhor it. I know that Thou art infinite Goodness, Who deservest an infinite love, especially from me, whom Thou hast so much loved, even after all the offences I have committed against Thee. Unhappy me if I should damn myself; the graces Thou hast vouchsafed to me, and the proofs of the singular affection which Thou hast shown me, would be, O God, the hell of hells to me. Ah, no, my Love, have pity on me; suffer me not to forsake Thee again, and then by damning myself, as I should deserve, continue to repay in hell with injuries and hatred the love that Thou hast borne me. O loving and faithful Heart of Jesus, inflame, I beseech Thee, my miserable heart, so that it may burn with love for Thee, as Thine does for me. My Jesus, it seems to me that now I love Thee, but I love Thee too little. Make me love Thee exceedingly, and keep me faithful to Thee until death. I ask of Thee this grace, together with that of always praying to Thee for it. Grant that I may die rather than ever betray Thee again. O Mary, my Mother, help me to be faithful to thy Son.

II.

God cannot be unfaithful to His promises, because, being Truth itself, He cannot lie; nor can He change

His mind, because all that He wills is just and right. He has promised to receive all that come to Him, to help those who call upon Him, to love those who love Him; and shall He, then, not do it? *Hath he said, then, and will he not do?* Oh, that we were as faithful with God as He is with us! Oh, how often have we, in times past, promised Him to be His, to serve Him and to love Him, and then have betrayed Him, and, renouncing His service, have sold ourselves as slaves to the devil! Oh, let us beseech Him to give us strength to be faithful to Him for the future! Oh, how blessed shall we be if we are faithful to Jesus Christ in the few things that He commands us to do; He will, indeed, be faithful in remunerating us with infinitely great rewards; and He will declare to us what He has promised to His faithful servants: *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. xxv. 21).

Oh, that I had been as faithful towards Thee, my dearest Redeemer, as Thou hast been faithful to me. Whenever I have opened my heart to Thee, Thou hast entered in, to forgive me and to receive me into Thy favour; whenever I have called Thee, Thou hast hastened to my assistance. Thou hast been faithful with me, but I have been exceedingly unfaithful towards Thee. I have promised Thee my love, and then have many times refused it to Thee; as if Thou, my God, Who hast created and redeemed me, wert less worthy of being loved than Thy creatures and those miserable pleasures for which I have forsaken Thee. Forgive me, O my Jesus.

Spiritual Reading.

“MAKE A BALANCE FOR THY WORDS.”

Whenever you have to speak, be careful, in conformity with the advice of the Holy Ghost to *make a balance for thy words*—(Eccclus. xxviii. 29), and examine

what you ought to say. Make a balance for your words that you may weigh them before you give expression to them. Hence St. Bernard says that “before your words come to the tongue, let them pass twice under the file of examination,” that you may suppress what you should not utter. The same was said by St. Francis de Sales in other words—namely, that to speak without sin every one should keep a lock on his lips, that in opening his mouth to speak he may reflect well on what he wishes to say.

Before speaking you should consider—

1. Whether what you intend to say can injure charity, modesty, or the exact observance of God’s law.
2. Examine the motive that impels you to speak; for it sometimes happens that what a persons says is good, but the intention is bad.
3. Be careful to speak with *simplicity*, avoiding all affectation; with *humility*, abstaining from all words of pride or vainglory; with *sweetness*, never uttering a word that savours of impatience, or that tends to the discredit of a neighbour; with *moderation*, by not being the first to give your opinion on any question that may be proposed, particularly if you are younger than the others; with *modesty*, by not interrupting another while he is speaking; and also by abstaining from every word that savours of the world, from all improper gestures, and immoderate laughter, and by speaking in a low tone of voice. When it is the proper time for unbending the mind, speak when the others are silent, but endeavour as often as you can to speak on something that has reference to God. “Let us speak of the Lord Jesus,” says St. Ambrose, “let us always speak of Him.” He who has an ardent love for another, appears unable to speak of anything but of him. They who speak little of Jesus Christ, show that they have but little love for Jesus Christ. At the conversations of the servants of God, says St. Teresa, Jesus Christ is always present. Of this, Father Gisolfo, of the Congregation of the “Pious Workers,” relates a memorable example, in the Life of the Venerable Father Anthony de Collelis. He says

that Father Constantine Rossi, the Master of novices, saw one day two of his young disciples, Anthony Torres, and Philip Orilia, conversing together, and with them a young man of most beautiful aspect. The Master of novices was surprised that two novices, whom he regarded as most exemplary, should speak to a stranger without permission: he therefore asked who was the young man whom he had seen conversing with them. They said there was no one conversing with them. But he afterwards learned that they were speaking of Jesus Christ, and understood that the person he saw in their company was our Divine Saviour.

Let us always remember that time is given to us not to be spent unprofitably in idle conversation, but to be employed for God, and in acquiring merit for eternity. St. Bernardine of Sienna used to say that a moment of time is of as much value as God, because in each moment we can gain His friendship, or greater degrees of grace.

Evening Meditation.

THE IGNOMINIES JESUS SUFFERED IN HIS PASSION.

I.

The greatest ignominies Jesus had to suffer were those of His Passion. In the first place He then had to see Himself abandoned by His beloved disciples. One of them betrayed Him, another denied Him, and when He was captured in the Garden, all fled and abandoned Him: *Then his disciples leaving him, all fled away*—(Mark, xiv. 50). Afterwards the Jews presented Him to Pilate as a malefactor who deserved to be crucified. *If, said they, he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee*—(Jo. xviii. 30). Herod treated him as a fool: *Herod, says St. Luke, with his army, set him at nought and mocked him, putting on him a white garment*—(Luke xxiii. 11).

Barabbas, a robber and murderer, was preferred

before Him. When Pilate gave the Jews the choice of rescuing Jesus Christ or Barabbas from death, they exclaimed, *Not this man, but Barabbas*—(Jo. xviii. 40). He was chastised with the lash, a punishment inflicted only on slaves: *Then, therefore, says St. John, Pilate took Jesus and scourged him*—(Jo. xix. 1). He was treated as a mock king; for after having through mockery crowned Him with thorns, they saluted Him as king and spat in His face: *They mocked him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews. And spitting upon him, they took the reed, and struck his head*—(Matt. xxvii. 29, 30). He was afterwards, as Isaias had foretold, condemned to die between two malefactors: *He was reputed with the wicked*—(Is. liii. 12)

II.

Finally, Jesus died on a Cross. That is the most opprobrious death which was then inflicted on malefactors, for the man whom the Jews condemned to the death of the cross was, as we read in Deuteronomy, said to be an object of malediction to God and man. Hence St. Paul has said, *Being made a curse for us, for it is written: Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*—(Gal. iii. 13). Our Redeemer, says the same Apostle, renouncing the life of splendour and happiness which He might have enjoyed on earth, chose for Himself a life of tribulations, and a death accompanied with so much shame: *Who, having joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame*—(Heb. xii. 2).

Thus in Jesus Christ was fulfilled the prediction of Jeremias, that He should live and die saturated with opprobrium. *He shall give his cheek to him that striketh him, he shall be filled with reproaches*—(Lam. iii. 30). Hence, St. Bernard exclaims: O grandeur! O abasement! Behold the Lord, Who is exalted above all, become now the most contemptible of all! And all this proceeded from the love which Jesus Christ bore to us.

O my Jesus, save me; do not permit me, after being redeemed by Thee with so much pain and so much love,

to lose my soul and go to hell, there to hate and curse the very love Thou hast borne me. This hell I have indeed so often deserved; for, though Thou couldst do nothing more than Thou hast done to oblige me to love Thee, I have done everything in my power to compel Thee to chastise me. But since, in Thy goodness, Thou hast waited for me, and even still dost continue to ask me to love Thee, I wish to love Thee: I wish henceforth to love Thee with my whole heart and without reserve. Give me strength to carry out this wish, O Mary, Mother of God, assist me by thy prayers.

Saturday—Twenty-third Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

MARY SUCCOURS HER CLIENTS IN PURGATORY.

Fortunate, indeed, are the clients of this most compassionate Mother, for not only does she succour them in this world, but even in Purgatory she succours and comforts them. She herself once spoke these words to St. Bridget: "I am the Mother of all the souls in Purgatory, for all the pains they have deserved for their sins are, every hour as long as they are detained there, mitigated in some way by my intercession."

I.

Fortunate, indeed, are the clients of the most compassionate Mother, for not only does she succour them in this world, but even in Purgatory she succours and comforts them. As in that prison the Poor Souls are in the greatest need of assistance, since in their torments they cannot help themselves, our Mother of Mercy does proportionately more to relieve them. St. Bernardine

of Sienna says, that "in that prison, where souls who are spouses of Jesus Christ are detained, Mary has a certain dominion and plenitude of power, not only to relieve them, but even to deliver them from their pains."

And, first, with respect to the relief she gives. The same Saint, in applying those words of Ecclesiasticus, *I have walked in the waves of the sea*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 8), says she does so "by visiting and relieving the necessities and torments of her clients, who are her children." He then says that "the pains of Purgatory are called waves, because they are transitory, unlike the pains of hell, which never end; and they are called waves of the sea, because they are so bitter. The clients of Mary, thus suffering, are often visited and relieved by her." "See, therefore," says Novarinus, "of what consequence it is to be the servant of this good Lady, for her servants she never forgets when they are suffering in those flames; for though Mary relieves all suffering souls in Purgatory, yet she always obtains far greater indulgence and relief for her own clients."

The Divine Mother once addressed these words to St. Bridget: "I am the Mother of all Souls in Purgatory; for all the pains they have deserved for their sins are every hour, as long as they remain there, in some way mitigated by my prayers." The compassionate Mother even condescends to go herself occasionally into that holy prison, to visit and comfort her suffering children. St. Bonaventure, applying to Mary the words of Ecclesiasticus: *I have penetrated into the bottom of the deep*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 8), says, "the deep, that is, Purgatory, to relieve by my presence the Holy Souls detained there." "O, how courteous and benign is the most Blessed Virgin," says St. Vincent Ferrer, "to those who suffer in Purgatory! Through her they constantly receive comfort and refreshment."

II.

What other consolation have they in their sufferings than Mary, and the relief they receive from this Mother of Mercy? St. Bridget once heard Jesus say to His holy Mother: "Thou art My Mother, the Mother of Mercy,

and the consolation of Souls in Purgatory." The Blessed Virgin herself told the Saint, that "as a poor sick person, bedridden, suffering, and abandoned, is relieved by words of encouragement and consolation, so are the Souls in Purgatory consoled and relieved by only hearing her name." The mere name of Mary, that name of hope and salvation, and which is frequently invoked by her beloved children in their prison, is a great source of comfort to them; "for," says Novarinus, "that loving Mother no sooner hears them call upon her than she offers her prayers to God, and these prayers, as a heavenly dew, immediately refresh them in their burning pains."

Mary not only consoles and relieves her clients in Purgatory, but she delivers them by her prayers. Gerson says, that "on the day of her Assumption into Heaven Purgatory was entirely emptied." Novarinus confirms this, saying, that "it is maintained by many grave authors, that when Mary was going to Heaven, she asked as a favour from her Son to take all the Souls then in Purgatory with her." "And from that time forward," says Gerson, "Mary had the privilege of delivering her servants." St. Bernardine of Sienna also positively asserts that "the Blessed Virgin has the power of delivering souls from Purgatory, but particularly those of her clients, by her prayers, and by applying her merits for them." Novarinus says, that "by the merits of Mary, not only are the pains of those souls lessened, but the time of their sufferings is shortened through her intercession." She has only to ask, and all is done.

O Queen of Heaven and earth, O Mother of the Lord of the world, O Mary, of all creatures the greatest, the most exalted, and the most amiable, it is true that there are many in this world who neither know thee nor love thee; but in Heaven there are many millions of Angels and blessed Spirits, who love and praise thee continually. Even in this world, how many happy souls are there not who burn with thy love, and live enamoured of thy goodness! O, that I also could love thee, O Lady worthy of all love! O that I could always remember to serve thee, to praise thee, to honour thee, and bring all to

love thee! Thou hast attracted the love of God, Whom, by thy beauty, thou hast, so to say, drawn from the bosom of His Eternal Father to become Man, and be thy Son. And shall I, a poor worm of the earth, not be enamoured of thee? No, my most sweet Mother, I also will love thee much, and will do all that I can to make others love thee also.

Spiritual Reading.

"LET US SEEK FOR GRACE AND LET US SEEK IT THROUGH MARY."

To be convinced of the desire Our Blessed Mother has to be of service to all, we need only consider the Mystery of the Visitation, or the visit made by Mary to St. Elizabeth. The journey from Nazareth, where the most Blessed Virgin lived, to the city of Hebron, which St. Luke calls a city of Judæa, and in which according to Baronius and other authors, St. Elizabeth resided, was at least sixty-nine miles. Notwithstanding the arduousness of the undertaking, the Blessed Virgin, tender and delicate as she then was, and unaccustomed to such fatigue, did not delay her departure. And what was it that impelled her? It was that great charity with which her most tender heart was ever filled that forced her, so to say, to go, and at once begin her great office of dispenser of graces. Precisely thus does St. Ambrose speak of her journey: "She did not go in incredulity of the prophecy, but glad to do what she had undertaken; it was joy that hastened her steps, in the fulfilment of a religious office." The Saint means by these words, that Mary did not undertake the journey to inquire into the truth of what the Angel had pronounced to her of the pregnancy of St. Elizabeth, but exulting in the greatness of her desire to be of service to that family, she hastened for the joy she felt in doing good to others, and wholly intent on that work of charity: *Rising, she went with haste*. Here, let it be observed, the Evangelist,

in speaking of Mary's departure for the house of Elizabeth, says, that *she went with haste*; but when he speaks of her return, he no longer says anything of haste, but simply that *Mary abode with her about three months; and she returned to her own house*—(Luke i. 56). What other object, then, asks St. Bonaventure, could the Mother of God have had in view, when she hastened to visit the house of St. John the Baptist, if it was not the desire to render service to that family? "What caused her to hasten in the performance of that act of charity but the charity which burnt in her heart?"

This charity of Mary towards men certainly did not cease when she went to Heaven; nay more, it greatly increased there, for there she better knows our wants, and has still greater compassion for our miseries. Bernardine de Buis writes that "Mary desires more earnestly to do us good and grant us graces than we desire to receive them." So much so, that St. Bonaventure says that she considers herself offended by those who do not ask her for graces: "Not only those, O Lady, offend thee who outrage thee, but thou art also offended by those who neglect to ask thy favours." For Mary's desire to enrich all with graces is, so to say, a part of her nature, and she superabundantly enriches her servants, as Blessed Raymond Jordano affirms: "Mary is God's treasurer, and the treasurer of His graces, and she plentifully endows her servants with choice gifts."

Hence the same author says, that "he who finds Mary finds every good." And he adds, that every one can find her, even the most miserable sinner in the world; for she is so benign that she rejects none who have recourse to her: "Her benignity is such, that no one need fear to approach her. And her mercy is so great, that no one meets with a repulse." Thomas à Kempis makes her say: "I invite all to have recourse to me; I expect all, I desire all, and I never despise any sinner, however unworthy he may be, who comes to seek my aid." Richard of St. Laurence says, that whoever goes to ask graces from Mary "finds her always prepared to

help"; that is, she is always ready, and inclined to help us, and to obtain for us every grace for eternal salvation by her powerful prayers.

I say, by her powerful prayers; for another reflection, which should increase our confidence, is, that we know and are certain that she obtains from God all that she asks for her clients. Observe especially, says St. Bonaventure, in regard to the visit of Mary to St. Elizabeth, the great power of her words. According to the Evangelist, at the sound of her voice the grace of the Holy Ghost was conferred on St. Elizabeth, as well as on her son St. John the Baptist: *And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost*—(Luke i. 41). St. Bonaventure says: "See how great is the power of the words of our Lady; for no sooner has she pronounced them, than the Holy Ghost is given."

Theophilus of Alexandria says, that Jesus is greatly pleased when Mary intercedes with Him for us; for all the graces which He is, so to say, forced to grant through her prayers, He considers as granted not so much to us as to herself. And remark the words, "forced by the prayers of His Mother." Yes, for as St. Germanus attests, Jesus cannot do otherwise than graciously accede to all that Mary asks; wishing, as it were, in this to obey her as His true Mother. Hence the Saint says, that "the prayers of this Mother have a certain maternal authority with Jesus Christ; so that she obtains the grace of pardon even for those who have been guilty of grievous crimes, and commend themselves to her"; and then he concludes: "for it is not possible that thou shouldst not be graciously heard; for God always acts towards thee as His true and spotless Mother." This is fully confirmed, as St. John Chrysostom observes, by what took place at the marriage-feast of Cana, when Mary asked her Son for wine when it had failed: *They have no wine*. Jesus answered: *Woman, what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come*—(Jo. ii. 3, 4). But though the time for miracles was not yet come, as St. Chrysostom and

Theophylact explain it, yet, says St. Chrysostom, "the Saviour, notwithstanding His answer, and to obey His Mother, worked the miracle she asked for," and converted the water into wine.

Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, says the Apostle exhorting us, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid—(Heb. iv. 16). "The throne of grace is the Blessed Virgin Mary," says Blessed Albert the Great. If, then, we wish for graces, let us go to the throne of grace, which is Mary; and let us go with the certain hope of being heard; for we have Mary's intercession, and she obtains from her Son whatever she asks. "Let us seek for grace," I repeat with St. Bernard, "and let us seek it through Mary," trusting to what the Blessed Virgin Mother herself said to St. Mechtild, that God the Holy Ghost, filling her with all His sweetness, has rendered her so dear to God, that whoever seeks graces through her intercession is certain to obtain them.

If we credit that celebrated saying of St. Anselm, that "salvation is occasionally more easily obtained by calling on the name of Mary than by invoking that of Jesus," we shall sometimes obtain graces sooner by having recourse to Mary than by having directly recourse to our Saviour Jesus Himself; not that He is not the Source and Lord of all graces, but because, when we have recourse to the Mother, and she prays for us, her prayers have greater efficacy than ours, as being those of a Mother. Let us, then, never leave the feet of this treasurer of graces; but ever address her in the words of St. John Damascene: "O Blessed Mother of God, open to us the gate of Mercy; for thou art the salvation of the human race." O Mother of God, open to us the door of thy compassion, by always praying for us, for thy prayers are the salvation of all men. When we have recourse to Mary, it would be advisable to entreat her to ask and obtain us the graces she knows to be the most expedient for our salvation. This is precisely what the Dominican Brother Reginald did, as is related in the Chronicles of the Order. This servant of Mary was ill, and he asked her to obtain him the

recovery of his health. His sovereign Lady appeared to him, accompanied by St. Cecily and St. Catharine, and said with the greatest sweetness: "My son, what dost thou desire of me?" The Religious was confused at so gracious an offer on the part of Mary, and knew not what to answer. Then one of the saints gave him this advice: Reginald, I will tell thee what to do; ask for nothing, but place thyself entirely in her hands, for Mary will know how to grant thee a greater grace than thou canst possibly ask. The sick man followed this advice, and the Divine Mother obtained the restoration of his health.

But if we also desire the happiness of receiving the visits of this Queen of Heaven, we should often visit her by going before her image, or praying to her in churches dedicated to her honour.

Evening Meditation.

"WITH ME ARE RICHES."

I.

We should have recourse to the Divine Mother with the greatest confidence. Why did Jesus Christ deposit in the hands of His Mother all the riches of Mercy that He intends for us, unless it was that Mary might therewith enrich all her clients who love and honour her and have recourse to her with confidence. *With me are riches . . . that I may enrich them that love me—(Prov. viii. 18, 21).* Thus the Blessed Virgin herself assures us that it is so, in this passage which the Holy Church applies to her on so many of her Festivals. Therefore, for no other purpose than to serve us, says the Abbot Adam, are those riches of eternal life kept by Mary, in whose breast our Lord has deposited the treasury of the miserable, and that the poor being supplied from it may become rich: "The riches of salvation are in custody of the Blessed Virgin for our use. Christ has made Mary's womb the treasury of the poor; thence the poor are enriched." And St.

Bernard says, "that she is a full aqueduct, that others may receive of her plenitude." Mary was therefore given to the world that her graces might continually descend from Heaven upon men.

Hence the same holy Father goes on to ask: "But why did St. Gabriel, having found the Divine Mother already full of grace, according to his salutation, *Hail, full of grace!* afterwards say, that the Holy Ghost would come upon her to fill her still more with grace? If she was already full of grace, what more could the coming of the Divine Spirit effect?" The Saint answers: "Mary was already full of grace; but the Holy Ghost filled her to overflowing, for our good, that from her superabundance we miserable creatures might be provided." For this same reason Mary was called the moon of which it is said, "She is full for herself and others."

He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord—(Prov. viii. 35). Blessed is he who finds me by having recourse to me, says our Mother Mary. He will find life, and will find it easily; for as it is easy to find and draw as much water as we please from a great fountain, so it is easy to find graces and eternal salvation by having recourse to Mary. A holy soul once said: "We have only to seek graces from our Blessed Lady to receive them." St. Bernard also says, that "it was because the Blessed Virgin was not yet born that in ancient times the great abundance of grace which we now see flow on the world was wanting; for Mary, this desirable channel, did not then exist." But now that we have this Mother of Mercy, what graces are there that we need fear we shall not obtain when we cast ourselves at her feet? "I am the city of refuge" (thus St. John Damascene makes her speak) "for all those who will have recourse to me. Come, then, to me my children; for from me you will obtain graces, and these in greater abundance than you can possibly imagine."

II.

What the Venerable Sister Mary Villani saw in vision has been experienced by many. This servant of God

beheld the Divine Mother as a great fountain, to which many went, and from it they carried off the waters of grace in great abundance. But what then happened? Those who had sound vessels preserved the graces they received; but those who brought broken vessels, that is to say, those whose souls were burdened with sin, received graces, but did not long preserve them. It is, however, certain that men, even those who are ungrateful sinners and the most miserable, daily obtain innumerable graces from Mary. St. Augustine, addressing the Blessed Virgin, says: "Through thee do the miserable obtain mercy, the ungrateful grace, sinners pardon, the weak strength, the worldly heavenly things, mortals eternal life, and pilgrims their country."

Let us then, O devout clients of Mary, rouse ourselves to greater and greater confidence each time that we have recourse to her for graces. That we may do so, let us always remember two great prerogatives of this good Mother; her great desire to do us good, and the power she has with her Son to obtain whatever she asks.

Immaculate and Blessed Virgin, since thou art the universal dispenser of all Divine graces, thou art the hope of all, and my hope. I will ever thank my Lord for having granted me the grace to know thee, and for having shown me the means by which I may obtain graces and be saved. Thou art this means, O great Mother of God, for I now understand that it is principally through the merits of Jesus Christ, and then through thy intercession, that my soul must be saved. Ah! my Queen, thou didst hasten so quickly to visit, and by that means didst sanctify the dwelling of St. Elizabeth; deign, then, to visit, and visit quickly, the poor house of my soul. Ah! hasten, then, for thou well knowest, and far better than I do, how poor it is, and with how many maladies it is afflicted, with disordered affections, evil habits, and sins committed, all of which are pestiferous diseases, which would lead it to eternal death. Thou canst enrich it, O treasurer of God; and thou canst heal all its infirmities. Pray for me, O Mary, and commend me to thy Son. Amen.

bonds of Thy holy love, so that I may enter into Thy kingdom and praise and love Thee forever. *The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever*—(Ps. lxxxviii. 2).

Morning Meditation.

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

“COME YE BLESSED OF MY FATHER.”

Come ye blessed of my Father! Such will be the glorious sentence which in the day of triumph God will pronounce in favour of those who have loved Him. O faithful souls, who love God, be not troubled if you are despised and humiliated in this world. *Your sorrow shall be turned into joy!*

I.

Come ye blessed of my Father! (Matt. xxv. 34). Such will be the glorious sentence which in the day of triumph God will pronounce in favour of those who have loved Him. St. Francis of Assisi having had it revealed to him that he was one of the predestinate, almost died of the consolation which such a revelation afforded him. What, then, will be the joy of the elect when they hear Jesus Christ inviting them: Come, ye blessed children, come and possess the inheritance of your Divine Father! Come and reign with Him forever in Heaven!

How often, O God, have I, through my own fault, forfeited Thy blessed kingdom! But, O Jesus, Thy precious merits encourage me to hope that I shall regain it. My dear Redeemer, I trust in Thee and love Thee.

Oh, how will the Blessed congratulate one another when they behold themselves placed upon thrones and united in the enjoyment of God for all eternity, without the least fear of ever being again separated from Him! What joy and glory will be theirs to enter on that day crowned into Heaven, singing together songs of gladness and the sweet praises of God! Happy souls, that are destined to such a blessed lot!

O God of my soul, bind me to Thee with the sweet

II.

Let us arouse our slumbering Faith! It is certain that we shall one day be judged, and that we shall receive sentence either of eternal life or of eternal death. If we be not secure of obtaining the sentence of life, let us endeavour now to make it certain. Let us fly from all those occasions which may expose us to the loss of our souls; and unite ourselves to Jesus Christ by frequently approaching the Sacraments, by pious meditations, by spiritual reading and continual prayer. The practice or neglect of these means will be the sign of our salvation or of our perdition.

My beloved Jesus, and my Judge, I hope through Thy Precious Blood that Thou wilt on that day bless me. Do Thou bless me now, and pardon me all the offences I have committed against Thee. Grant me to hear the same consoling words that Thou didst address to Magdalen: *Thy sins are forgiven thee*—(Luke vii. 48). I am sorry with my whole heart for having offended Thee; pardon me, and at the same time give me grace always to love Thee. I love Thee, my sovereign Good; I love Thee more than myself, my Treasure, my Love, my All. *Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever*—(Ps. lxxii. 26). O my God! Thee alone do I desire. Holy Mary, by thy powerful intercession thou canst procure my salvation, and thou desirest to do so. In thee do I confide.

Spiritual Reading.

LOVE OF SOLITUDE.

Whosoever loves God, loves solitude. There the Lord communicates Himself more familiarly to souls, because

there He finds them less entangled in worldly affairs, and more detached from earthly affections. Hence, St. Jerome exclaimed: "O solitude, in which God speaks and converses familiarly with His servants." O blessed solitude, in which God speaks and converses with His beloved ones with great love and confidence! *The Lord is not in the earthquake*—(8 Kings, xix. 11). But where is He found? *I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart*—(Osee ii. 14). He is found in solitude and there He speaks to the heart in words that inflame it with holy love, as the sacred spouse attests: *My soul melted when my Beloved spoke*—(Cant. v. 6). St. Eucherius relates that a certain man, desirous of becoming a saint, asked a servant of God where he should find God. The servant of God conducted him to a solitary place, and said: "Behold where God is found!" By these words he meant to say that God is found not amid the tumults of the world, but in solitude.

Virtue is easily preserved in solitude; and, on the other hand, it is easily lost by intercourse with the world, where God is but little known, and therefore His love, and the treasures He gives to those who leave all things for His sake, are but little esteemed. St. Bernard says that he learned more among the trees of the forest than from books and masters. Hence the Saints, in order to live in solitude and far from tumult, have so ardently loved the caves, the mountains, and the woods. *The land that was desolate and impassable shall be glad, and the wilderness shall rejoice, and shall flourish like the lily; it shall bud forth and blossom . . . They shall see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of our God*—(Is. xxxv. 1, 2). The wilderness shall be a perennial fountain of joy and gladness to the soul that seeks it; it shall flourish like the lily in whiteness and innocence of life, and shall produce fruits of every virtue. These happy souls shall in the end be raised on high to see the glory and infinite beauty of the Lord. It is certain that to keep the heart united with God we must preserve in the soul the thought of God, and of the immense reward He prepares for those who love Him. But when we hold intercourse with the world, it presents

to us earthly things that obliterate spiritual impressions and pious sentiments.

Worldlings shun solitude, and with good reason; for in solitude they feel more acutely the remorse of conscience, and therefore they go in search of the conversations and bustle of the world, that the noise of these occupations may stifle the stings of remorse. It is true that man loves society; but what society is preferable to the society of God? Ah! to withdraw from creatures and to converse in solitude with our Creator brings neither bitterness nor tediousness. Of this the Wise Man assures us: *For her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness*—(Wisd. viii. 16). The Venerable Father Vincent Carafa, General of the Society of Jesus, said that he desired nothing in this world, and that were he to desire anything he would wish only for a little grotto, a morsel of bread, and a spiritual book, in order to live there always in solitude.

It is not true that a life of solitude is a life of melancholy: it is a foretaste and beginning of the life of the Saints in bliss, who are filled with an immense joy in the sole occupation of loving and praising their God. St. Jerome tells us that flying from Rome he went to shut himself up in the Cave of Bethlehem, in order to enjoy solitude. Hence he afterwards wrote: "To me solitude is a paradise." The Saints in solitude appear to be alone, but they are not alone. St. Bernard said: "I am never less alone than when I am alone"; for I am then in the company of my Lord, Who gives me more content than I could derive from the conversation of all creatures. They appear to be in sadness, but they are not sad. The world, seeing them far away from earthly amusements, regards them as miserable and disconsolate; but they are not so; they, as the Apostle attests, enjoy an immense and continual peace. *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing*—(2 Cor. vi. 10). The Prophet Isaias attested the same when he said: *The Lord therefore will comfort Sion, and will comfort all the ruins thereof; and he will make her desert as a place of pleasure, and her wilderness as the garden of*

the Lord. *Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of praise*—(Is. li. 8). The Lord well knows how to console the solitary soul, and will give a thousandfold compensation for all the temporal pleasures which it has forfeited: He will render its solitude the garden of His delights. There joy and gladness shall be always found, and nothing will be heard but the voice of thanksgiving and praise of the Divine goodness. Cardinal Petrucci describes the happiness of a solitary heart in the following words: "It appears to be sad, and it is filled with celestial joy. Though it treads on the earth, its dwelling is in Heaven. It asks nothing for itself, because in its bosom it contains an immense treasure. It appears to be agitated and overwhelmed by the tempest, and it is always in a secure harbour."

In order to find this happy solitude, it is not necessary to hide yourself in a cave or in a desert. David found it, even in the midst of the great concerns of a kingdom, and therefore he said: *Lo, I have gone far off, flying away; and I abode in the wilderness*—(Ps. liv. 8). St. Philip Neri desired to retire into a desert, but God gave him to understand that he should not leave Rome, but that he should live there as in a desert.

Hitherto we have spoken of the solitude of the body; we must now say something on the solitude of the heart, which is more necessary than the solitude of the body. "Of what use," says St. Gregory, "is the solitude of the body without the solitude of the heart?" That is, of what use is it to live in the desert if the heart is attached to the world? A soul detached and free from earthly affections, says St. Peter Chrysologus, finds solitude even in the public streets and highways. On the other hand, of what use is it to observe silence if affections to creatures are entertained in the heart, and by their noise render the soul unable to listen to the Divine inspirations? I here repeat the words of our Lord to St. Teresa: "Oh, how gladly would I speak to many souls, but the world makes such a noise in their hearts that My voice cannot be heard. Oh that they would retire a little from the world!"

Let us then understand what is meant by solitude of the heart. It consists in expelling from the soul every affection that is not for God, by seeking nothing in all our actions but to please His Divine eyes. It consists in saying with David: *What have I in heaven? and besides thee, what do I desire upon earth? . . . Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever*—(Ps. lxxii. 25, 26). Except Thee, O my God, what is there on earth or in Heaven that can content me? Thou alone art the Lord of my heart, and Thou shalt always be my only Treasure. In fine, solitude of the heart implies that you can say with sincerity: My God, I wish for Thee alone, and for nothing else.

Someone complains that he does not find God; but listen to what St. Teresa says: "Detach the heart from all things—seek God, and then you will find Him." God can neither be sought nor found if He is not first known; but what can a soul attached to creatures know of God and His Divine beauty? The light of the sun cannot enter a crystal vessel filled with earth; and in a heart occupied with attachment to pleasures and wealth and honours, the Divine light cannot shine. Hence the Lord says: *Be still, and see that I am God*—(Ps. xlv. 11). The soul, then, that wishes to see God must remove the world from her heart, and keep it shut against all earthly affections. This is precisely what Jesus Christ gave us to understand under the figure of a closed chamber, when He said: *But when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret*—(Matt. vi. 6). That is, the soul, in order to unite itself with God in prayer, must retire into its heart, which, according to St. Augustine, is the chamber of which our Lord speaks, and shut the door against all earthly affections.

This is also the meaning of the words of Jeremias: *He shall sit solitary, and hold his peace; because he hath taken it up upon himself*—(Lam. iii. 28). The solitary soul, that is, the soul that is free from all attachments, and in which earthly affections are silent, will unite itself with God in Mental Prayer by holy

desires, by oblations of itself, and by acts of love: and then it will find itself raised above all created objects, so that it will smile at the worldling who sets so high a value on the goods of this earth, and submits to so many toils in order to secure enjoyment of them, while it regards them as trifles, and utterly unworthy of the love of a heart created to love God, the infinite Good.

Evening Meditation.

CHRIST, THE KING OF LOVE.

(FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING. LAST SUNDAY OF OCTOBER.)

I.

Through fear of losing his kingdom the wicked Herod sought the life of the Divine Child. St. Fulgentius contemplating little Jesus flying into Egypt, tenderly exclaims: "Why art thou troubled, O Herod? The King Who is just now born comes not to overthrow other kings by force of arms, but to subjugate them by dying for them." As though he had said: The King of Heaven is not come to conquer us by war, but by love; He is not come to put us to death, but to rescue us from death by dying for us. Hence it is that Jesus may indeed be styled the King of Love.

Oh that I had always loved Thee, O Jesus, my sovereign King, and that I had never offended Thee! Thou didst spend thirty-three years in pain and labour to save me, and I have wilfully renounced Thee, my sovereign Good, for the sake of momentary pleasures! Father of mercy, forgive me, and embrace me with the kiss of peace.

Ungrateful Jews! why did you refuse to acknowledge for your King One so lovely and so loving towards you? Why did you exclaim: *We have no king but Cæsar?*—(Jo. xix. 15). Cæsar did not love you, nor desire to die for you; while your true King Jesus descended from Heaven upon the earth to die for the love of you.

O sweet Saviour Christ, if others will not receive Thee as their King, I will have no other King but Thee: "Jesus, Thou art my King." I know that Thou alone lovest me; Thou alone hast redeemed me with Thy Blood; where then shall I find one who has loved me as Thou hast loved me? I am grieved for having hitherto rejected Thee as my King by rebelling against Thee! Pardon me, O Jesus, my King! for Thou hast died to purchase pardon for me.

II.

To this end Christ died and rose again; that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living—(Rom. xiv. 9).

My beloved King, dearest Jesus, since Thou earnest upon earth to gain our hearts to Thyself, if hitherto I have resisted Thy loving calls, I will now no longer resist them. Do not disdain to accept me; I now give myself to Thee, I give Thee my whole self. Take, O my King, possession of my whole will, and of my whole self. Make me loyal to Thee; and grant that I may rather die than betray Thee any more, O my King, my Love, my only Good. O Queen, and Mother of my King, O Mary, obtain for me that I may be faithful to what I this day promise to thy Divine Son.

O KING OF HEAVEN.

O King of Heaven, from starry throne descending,

Thou takest refuge in this wretched cave;

O God of bliss! I see Thee cold and trembling!

What pain it cost Thee fallen man to save!

Thou, of a thousand worlds the great Creator,

Dost now the pain of cold and want endure;

Thy poverty but makes Thee more endearing,

For well I know 'tis love has made Thee poor.

I see Thee leave Thy Heavenly Father's bosom,

But whither has Thy love transported Thee?

Upon a little straw I see Thee lying;

Why suffer thus? 'Tis all for love of me.

But if it is Thy will for me to suffer,
 And by these sufferings my heart to move,
 Wherefore, my Jesus, do I see Thee weeping?
 'Tis not for pain Thou weapest, but for love.

Thou weapest thus to see me so ungrateful;
 My sins have pierced Thee to the very core;
 I once despised Thy love, but now I love Thee,
 I love but Thee; then, Jesus, weep no more.

Thou sleepest, Lord, but Thy Heart ever watches,
 No slumber can a heart so loving take;
 But tell me, darling Babe, of what Thou thinkest,
 "I think," He says, "of dying for thy sake."

Is it for me that Thou dost think of dying!
 What, then, O Jesus! can I love but Thee?
 Mary, my hope! If I but love Him little—
 Be not indignant—love Him thou for me.

Monday—Twenty-fourth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

THE FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN THE TEMPLE.

(NOVEMBER 21st.)

Mary offered herself to God promptly and entirely, for she well understood the voice of God calling her to devote herself as a perpetual victim in His honour. *Arise! Make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one and come!*—(Cant. ii. 10). Let us this day present ourselves to Mary without delay and without reserve, and let us entreat her who was the delight of her God to offer us to her Divine Son, Jesus Christ.

I.
 Let us consider how prompt Mary was in offering herself to God. In her infancy, having scarcely attained the age of three years, knowing that her parents had made a vow to consecrate her to God, she was the first to request them to accomplish their promise by assuring them that the time had already come. She also it was who obtained from God the strength for her parents to fulfil such a promise; for certainly very great was the violence that the holy parents had to do to themselves to deprive themselves so soon of a daughter whom they had so much desired to have, and who from the tenderest age had charmed them so much by her amiability.

Behold now Joachim and Anne generously sacrificing to the Lord that which was dearest to their hearts, setting out from Nazareth, accompanied by few relatives, indeed, but by choirs of Angels. They had to carry their well-beloved little daughter by turns, on account of the length of journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem.

Having reached Jerusalem they brought their cherished little daughter to the Temple. The holy child immediately ascended to the first step, and turning to her parents, on her knees kissed their hands and asked them to bless her and to recommend her to God. After having received the blessing, and being strengthened by the love with which she was going to serve her God, Who had deigned to call her to His house, she ascended all the steps of the Temple, and did so with so much haste and zeal that she turned back no more, not even to look on her parents who remained there deeply afflicted, and at the same time filled with wonder at the sight of so much strength and courage in so young a child.

Ah! holy child, it is thou who art the happy daughter of the prince of the earth praised by Holy Scripture: *How beautiful are thy steps, O prince's daughter!*—(Cant. vii. 1). Indeed, very dear and very pleasing in the eyes of thy Lord and thy God have been the generous steps that thou didst take in the tenderest years of thy life, leaving thy parents, thy house, and thy relatives to go to consecrate thyself entirely to God's honour and

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service. Go thou, O Sovereign Lady, will I say with St. Germanus, go with joy into the house of God, to prepare thyself for the coming of the Holy Spirit, Who is to come to make thee the Mother of God Himself. O happy Virgin, who didst begin so soon to serve God, and who didst always serve Him so faithfully, cast a look on me, returning to Him with such tardiness after so many years lost in the love of creatures, and obtain for me the grace to give God at least the remainder of my life, be it long or short. I know that I have very many times deserved to die in sin; I know that it is thou who didst obtain for me the time to do penance—a grace that has not been granted to so many others. Ah, my most amiable Queen, may my life, so unlike to thine, excite in thee not the disgust that it deserves, but rather thy compassion. Since thou hast already done so much for me, finish the work of my salvation; do not abandon me till thou seest me safe at thy feet in Paradise.

II.

Let us consider that which was the most beautiful part in Mary's offering was that she consecrated herself not only at an early age, but also entirely and without the least reserve.

Already from the first moment of her existence in the womb of her mother, when by a singular privilege she received the use of reason, with the great light with which at the same time the Lord enriched it, she gave herself up entirely to God. Yet her holy soul was waiting with great longing for the day in which she might consecrate herself to God more effectively and thoroughly by becoming detached from all earthly things, even from every innocent affection for her parents, who loved her so tenderly. Hence we may understand the consolation she felt when at her entrance into the holy Temple, by a new act of the most ardent love, she devoted herself entirely to the glory of the Divine Majesty.

Let us consider that this wonderful child, as soon as she found herself in the Temple, first presented herself to her mistress, and on her knees humbly besought her

to teach her all that she had to do. Afterwards she saluted her companions and begged them to condescend to admit her into their society.

After these acts of reverence and humility, the youthful Mary turned all her thoughts towards God. She prostrated, and kissed the floor for joy of being in the house of the Lord. She adored His infinite Majesty, and thanked Him for the great favour she was receiving from Him—namely, that He had so sweetly arranged for her to come to live for a time in His house. Then it was that she offered herself entirely to God, without the least reserve, by consecrating to Him all her faculties and all her senses, her whole mind and her whole heart, her whole soul and her whole body. For at this time, in order to please God the more, she made the vow of virginity, a new vow, unusual at that time, and regarded by the Jews rather as a disgrace. But if Mary was the first to make such a vow, she was not the only one to do so; for, as David had foretold, *After her shall virgins be brought to the King*—(Ps. xlv. 15). Oh, how many very pure virgins have followed the example of Mary their Queen!

Again, Mary offered herself thus entirely without limitation of time; for by this offering of herself she had the intention of devoting herself to the service of God in the Temple during her whole life, if such should be the good pleasure of the Lord, and never to depart from this holy place. Behold me now before Thee, O Lord, this holy child must have said; I come into Thy house only to be Thy servant; accept the desire I have of rendering Thee all the honour I can render, and receive me into Thy service by giving me grace to be faithful to Thee. The Blessed Virgin revealed to St. Elizabeth, a Benedictine nun, that when she was placed in the Temple she resolved in her heart to think of nothing but of God alone.

O Virgin full of sweetness, when will the day come for me, on which, detached from all earthly affections, I shall give myself entirely to God, Who during so many years has been waiting for me and calling me to His love? My most holy Mother, to-day at last,

animated by thy example, I give myself with thee to God entirely and without reserve; I give Him my soul, my body, my will; but I desire that thou first unite this offering of mine to that which in thy infancy thou didst make in the Temple: and then that thou present it to the Lord with thy own hand. Still, this is not enough; obtain for me, besides, grace to be faithful to God as thou hast been thyself, in order that I may never take back what I give Him to-day.

Spiritual Reading.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN THE TEMPLE.

St. Anselm speaks of the life of the Blessed Virgin in the Temple, and says that "Mary was docile, spoke little, was always composed, did not laugh," and that her mind was never disturbed. She also persevered in prayer, in the study of the Sacred Scriptures, in fastings, and all virtuous works.

St. Jerome and St. Bonaventurè enter more into detail. They say that Mary thus regulated her life: In the morning until the third hour she remained in prayer; from the third hour until the ninth she employed herself with work; and from the ninth hour she again prayed until the Angel brought her food, as he was wont to do. She was always the first in watchings, the most exact in the observance of the Divine law, the most profoundly humble, and the most perfect in every virtue. No one ever saw her angry: her every word carried such sweetness with it that it was a witness to all that God was with her.

We read in St. Bonaventurè's *Life of Christ*, that the Divine Mother herself revealed to St. Elizabeth of Hungary that "when her father and mother left her in the Temple she determined to have God alone for her Father, and often thought how she could please Him best." Moreover, as we learn from the Revelations of St. Bridget, "she determined to consecrate her virginity

to God, to possess nothing in the world, and to give God her entire will." Besides this, she told St. Elizabeth that of all the Commandments to be observed she especially kept this one before her eyes: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*; and that at midnight she went before the Altar of the Temple to beg that God would grant her the grace to observe them all, and that she might live to see the birth of the Mother of the Redeemer, entreating God at the same time to preserve her eyes to behold her, her tongue to praise her, her hands and feet to serve her, and her knees to adore her Divine Son in her womb. St. Elizabeth, on hearing this, said: "But, Lady, wast thou not full of grace and virtue?" Mary replied: "Know that I considered myself most vile and unworthy of Divine grace, and therefore thus earnestly prayed for grace and virtue." And finally, that we might be convinced of the absolute necessity under which we all are of asking the graces that we require from God, she added: "Dost thou think that I possessed grace and virtue without effort? Know that I obtained no grace from God without great effort, constant prayer, ardent desire, and many tears and mortifications."

But above all we should consider the Revelation made to St. Bridget of the virtues and practices of the Blessed Virgin in her childhood, in the following words: "From her childhood Mary was full of the Holy Ghost, and as she advanced in age she advanced also in grace. Thenceforward she determined to love God with her whole heart, so that she might never offend Him, either by her words or actions; and therefore she despised all earthly goods. She gave all she could to the poor. In her food she was so temperate, that she took only as much as was barely necessary to sustain the life of her body. Afterwards, on discovering in the Sacred Scriptures that God was to be born of a Virgin, that He might redeem the world, her soul was to such a degree inflamed with divine love, that she could desire and think of nothing but God; and finding pleasure in Him alone, she avoided all company, even that of her parents, lest their presence might deprive her of His remembrance.

She desired, with the greatest ardour, to live until the time of the coming of the Messias, that she might be the servant of that happy Virgin, who merited to be His Mother." Thus far the Revelations of St. Bridget.

Ah, yes, for the love of this exalted child the Redeemer did indeed hasten His coming into the world; for whilst she, in her humility, looked upon herself as unworthy to be the servant of the Divine Mother, she was herself chosen to be this Mother; and by the sweet odour of her virtues and her powerful prayers she drew the Divine Son into her virginal womb. For this reason Mary was called a turtle-dove by her Divine Spouse: *The voice of the turtle is heard in our land*—(Cant. ii. 12). Not only because as a turtle-dove she always loved solitude, living in this world as in a desert, but also because, like a turtle-dove, which always sighs for its companions, Mary always sighed in the temple, compassionating the miseries of the lost world, and seeking from God the redemption of all. O, with how much greater feeling and fervour than the Prophets did she repeat their prayers and sighs, that God would send the promised Redeemer! *Send forth, O Lord, the Lamb, the ruler of the earth*—(Is. xvi. 1). *Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just*—(Ib. xlv. 8). *O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, and wouldst come down*—(Ib. lxiv. 1).

Evening Meditation.

THE PROGRESS OF THE HOLY CHILD MARY IN VIRTUE.

I.

Let us consider how holy and pleasing to God was the life of Mary in the Temple. She progressed without intermission in the perfection of every virtue, as *the morning rising*—(Cant. vi. 9). Who can describe how from day to day all her virtues appeared more beautiful—especially her modesty, silence, mortification, humility,

sweetness? St. Anselm says she was accustomed to speak little, was affable, charitable towards every one, and most obliging. In fact, as was revealed to St. Bridget, the virtues she practised most in the Temple were humility, charity, and obedience.

She did not walk, she flew, in the way of the Lord. St. Jerome says that her blessed soul was the abode of every virtue. She spent a certain time as it is related, in doing some work that had been assigned to her. But the greatest part of the day and of the night she consecrated to prayer and to close communion with God in solitude; for this was the most cherished and most desired occupation of her heart that was burning with love; it was her sweetest delight. Oh, how well did Mary in the Temple know how to treat with God of the great work of the Redemption of the world! Seeing clearly the miserable condition of the world, in which so many souls were lost, in which so few knew the true God, and among this number so few who loved Him—ah! how much better than Patriarchs and Prophets did she pray: Come, O Lord, do not delay! Show us Thy mercy, and send us the Lamb that is to rule the world. Ye heavens, let your rain descend and send down the Just, that the earth may bring forth the Saviour.

II.

It was a delight to the Lord to behold this tender Virgin always ascending towards the highest perfection, like a pillar of smoke, rich in the sweet odour of all virtues, as the Holy Ghost Himself clearly describes her in the sacred Canticles: *Who is she that goeth up by the desert as a pillar of smoke, of aromatical spices, of myrrh and frankincense, and of all the powers of the perfumer?*—(Cant. iii. 6). "This child," says St. Saphronius, "was truly God's garden of delights; for He found in her every kind of flower, and all the sweet odours of virtues." Hence St. John Chrysostom affirms, that God chose Mary for His Mother in this world, because He did not find on earth a Virgin more holy and more perfect than she was, nor any dwelling more worthy

than her most sacred womb. St. Bernard also says, "that there was not on earth a more worthy place than the temple of the Virgin's womb." This also agrees with the assertion of St. Antoninus, that the Blessed Virgin, to be chosen for, and destined to the dignity of Mother of God, was necessarily so great and consummate in perfection as to surpass all other creatures: "The last grace of perfection is that which prepared her for the Conception of the Son of God."

As, then, the holy child Mary presented and offered herself to God in the Temple with promptitude and without reserve, so let us also present ourselves this day to Mary without delay and without reserve; and let us entreat her to offer us to God, Who will not reject us when He sees us presented by the hand of that blessed creature, who was the living Temple of the Holy Ghost, the delight of her Lord, and the chosen Mother of the Eternal Word. Let us also have unbounded confidence in this high and gracious Lady, who rewards with the greatest love the homage she receives from her clients.

O thou most holy Child, mistress of virtue and of love, since it was through thy love that the Eternal Word was drawn from the Bosom of His Father to thy own, be ever blessed and ever thanked! How many beautiful lessons dost thou give by thy example, if we are only attentive in considering the life that thou didst lead in the Temple! Ah, sweet Queen, have compassion on me; thou knowest the bad use I have made of my past life; thou knowest the severe account I am to render to Jesus Christ, thy Son and my Judge. O kindest teacher, since thou hast been so good to me in helping me when I little thought of imploring thy aid and thy counsel, I do not fear that thou wilt abandon me now that I wish to obey thee, and that I ask thy assistance. Do not banish me from thy school in which thou trainest so many souls to sanctity. Teach me what I should do to belong entirely to God, and thus to repair the time I have lost. Should I fail in my duty, O my Sovereign Lady, be so kind as to correct me and chastise me as thou mayest think fit. The chastisements coming from thy sweet hand, to make me a saint, will always be

very dear to me. For pity's sake, O Mary, do not abandon me till thou seest me become thy perfect disciple in love towards my God: for I know that it is only in order to love Him that the time I have yet to live has been granted to me. My Sovereign Lady, I ask this favour of thee, and it is from thee that I hope to receive it. Amen.

Tuesday—Twenty-fourth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD PRESERVES FROM SIN.

The Practice of the presence of God is justly called the foundation of the spiritual life. The spiritual life consists of three things: the avoidance of evil, the practice of virtue, and union with God. The practice of the presence of God preserves the soul from sin, leads it to virtue and unites it to God in holy love.

I.

The Practice of the presence of God preserves the soul from sin. Indeed, there is no more efficacious means of subduing the passions, of resisting temptations, and consequently of avoiding sin, than the remembrance of God's presence. The angelic Doctor says: "If we thought that God was looking at us, and saw all, we would never, or scarcely ever, commit a sin." And St. Jerome has written that the remembrance of God's presence closes the door against all sins. "The remembrance of God," says the holy Doctor, "shuts out all sins." And if men will not dare in their presence to transgress the commands of princes, parents, or superiors, how could they ever violate the laws of God if they thought that He was looking at them? St. Ambrose relates that a page of Alexander the Great, who held

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in his hand a lighted torch whilst Alexander was offering sacrifice in the temple, suffered his hand to be burnt sooner than be guilty of irreverence by allowing the torch to fall. The Saint adds, that if reverence to his sovereign could conquer nature in a boy, how much more will the thought of the Divine presence make a faithful soul overcome every temptation, and suffer every pain rather than insult the Lord before His face!

All the sins of men flow from their losing sight of the Divine presence. "Every evil," says St. Teresa, "happens to us because we do not reflect that God is present, but imagine that He is afar off." And David said the same: *God is not before his eyes; his ways are filthy at all times*—(Ps. x. 26). Sinners forget that God sees them, and therefore they offend Him at all times. The Abbot Diocles went so far as to say that "he who puts away the remembrance of the presence of God becomes either a beast or a devil." And justly; for he shall be instantly assailed by carnal or diabolical desires which he will not have strength to resist.

II.

On the other hand, by the very thought that God was looking upon them, the Saints bravely repelled all the assaults of their enemies. This thought gave courage to holy Susanna to resist the temptations of the Elders, and even to despise their threats against her life. Hence she courageously said to them: *It is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it than to sin in the sight of the Lord*—(Dan. xiii. 23). It is better to fall into your hands and to die without sin than to offend God before His face. This thought also converted a wicked woman who dared to tempt St. Ephrem; the Saint told her that if she wished to sin she must meet him in the middle of the city. But, said she, how is it possible to commit sin before so many persons? And how, replied the Saint, is it possible to sin in the presence of God Who sees us in every place? At these words she burst into tears, and falling prostrate on the ground asked pardon of the Saint, and besought him to

point out to her the way of salvation. St. Ephrem placed her in a monastery, where she led a holy life, weeping over her sins till death. The same happened to the Abbot Paphnutius and a sinner called Thais. She tempted him one day, saying that there was no one to see them but God. The Saint with a stern voice said to her: "Then you believe that God sees you, and will you commit sin?" Thais was thunderstruck, and filled with horror for her sinful life: she gathered together all her riches, clothes, and jewels which she had earned by her infamous practices, burned them in the public square, and retired into a monastery, where she fasted on bread and water every day for three successive years, always repeating this prayer: "O Thou Who hast made me, have mercy on me!" After these three years she happily ended her life by a holy death. It was afterwards revealed to Paul, a disciple of St. Anthony, that this happy penitent was placed among the Saints on an exalted throne of glory.

Behold the efficacy of the remembrance of the Divine presence to make us avoid sins. Let us then always pray to the Lord, saying with Job: *Set me beside thee, and let my man's hand fight against me*—(Job. xvii. 3). My God, place me in Thy Presence: that is, remind me in every place that Thou seest me, and then let all my enemies assail me: I shall always defeat them. Hence St. Chrysostom concludes: "If we keep ourselves always in the presence of God, the thought that He sees all our thoughts, that He hears all our words, and observes all our actions will preserve us from thinking any evil, from speaking any evil and from doing any evil."

Spiritual Reading.

**THE PRESENCE OF GOD LEADS THE SOUL TO
VIRTUE AND UNITES IT TO GOD IN HOLY
LOVE.**

What valour does not the soldier show when fighting under the eyes of his Sovereign! The sole thought that

his prince by whom he shall be punished or rewarded is present, inspires him with great courage and strength. Hence, if men only reflected that God was looking at all their actions, they would do all things well, with a pure intention, without seeking to please any one but God, and without any regard to human respect. St. Basil says that were a person to find himself in the presence of a king and a peasant, his sole concern would be to please the king without any regard to the wishes of the peasant. Thus he that walks in the Divine presence is regardless of the pleasure of creatures, and seeks only to please God, Who sees him always.

Finally, as to the third effect of the Divine presence, that is, to unite the soul to God, it is an infallible rule that love is always increased by the presence of the object loved. This happens even among men, although the more they converse together, the more their defects are discovered. How much more shall the love of a soul for God increase if it keep Him before its eyes! For the more it converses with Him, the better it comprehends His beauty and amiableness. The morning and the evening Meditation are not sufficient to keep the soul united with God. St. John Chrysostom says, that even water, if removed from the fire, soon returns to its natural temperature; and therefore after prayer it is necessary to preserve fervour by the presence of God, and by renewing our affections.

St. Bernard says of himself, that in the beginning of his conversion, when he found himself disturbed, or his fervour cooling, peace and the ardour of Divine love were instantly restored by the remembrance of a deceased or absent Saint. Now, how much greater the effect which must be produced on a soul that loves God, by remembering that He is present, and that He is asking her love! David said that by the remembrance of his God he was filled with joy and consolation. *I remembered God, and was delighted*—(Ps. lxxvi. 4). However great the affliction and desolation of a soul may be, if it loves God it will be consoled and freed from its affliction by remembering its beloved Lord. Hence, souls enamoured of God live always with a tranquil heart and in continual

peace; because, like the sunflower that always turns its face to the sun, they in all events and in all their actions seek always to live and act in the presence of God. "A true lover," says St. Teresa, "always remembers her Beloved."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

I.

The exercise of the presence of God consists partly in the operation of the intellect and partly in the operation of the will. The intellect represents God as present, and the will unites the soul to God by acts of adoration, of love, of humility and the like. In regard to the intellect, the presence of God may be practised in various ways.

We can imagine that Our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, is present; that He is in our company, and that He sees us in whatsoever place we may be. We can at one time represent Him in one Mystery, and again in another: for example, now an Infant lying in the Manger of Bethlehem, and again a Pilgrim flying into Egypt; now a Boy working in the shop of Nazareth, and again suffering as a criminal in His Passion in Jerusalem, scourged, or crowned with thorns, or nailed to a Cross. St. Teresa praises this method of practising the presence of God. But it is necessary to remark, that though this method is good, it is not the best, nor is it always profitable. Hence, should you wish to practise it, you must do it sweetly, only when you find it useful, and without labouring to represent in the mind the peculiar features of our Saviour, His countenance, His stature, or colour. It is enough to represent Him in a general manner, and as beholding all we do.

The second method, which is more secure and more excellent, is founded on the truth of Faith, and consists in beholding with eyes of Faith God present with us

in every place, in considering that He encompasses us, that He sees and observes whatever we do. We indeed do not see Him with the eyes of the flesh. Nor do we see the air, yet we know for certain that it surrounds us on every side, that we live in it; for without it we could neither breathe nor live. We do not see God, but our holy Faith teaches that He is always present with us. *Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?*—(Jer. xxiii. 24). And as a sponge in the midst of the ocean is encompassed and saturated with water, so, says the Apostle, in God *we live and move and are*—(Acts xvii. 28). And our God, says St. Augustine, observes every action, every word, every thought of each, as if He forgot all His other creatures, and had to attend only to us. Hence, observing all we do, and say, and think, He marks and registers all, in order to demand an account on the day of Judgment, and to give us then the reward or the chastisement we have deserved.

This second way of practising the Divine presence does not fatigue the mind; for the exercise of it we need only enliven our Faith with an affectionate act of the will, saying: *My God, I believe firmly that Thou art here present.* To this act we can easily add the acts of love, or of resignation, or of purity of intention, and the like.

II.

The third way of preserving the remembrance of God's presence is to recognize Him in His creatures, which have from Him their being, and their power of serving us. God is in the water to wash us, in the fire to warm us, in the sun to give us light, in food to nourish us, in clothes to cover us, and in like manner in all other things that He has created for our use. When we see a beautiful object, a beautiful garden, or a beautiful flower, let us think that there we behold a ray of the infinite beauty of God, Who has given existence to that object. If we converse with a man of sanctity and learning, let us consider that it is God Who imparts to him a small portion of His own holiness and wisdom. Thus, also, when we hear sweet sounds, when we feel

a fragrant odour, or taste delicious meat or drink, let us remember that God is the Being Who by His presence imparts to us these delights, that by them we may be induced to aspire to the eternal delights of Paradise.

Let us accustom ourselves to behold in every object God, Who presents Himself to us in every creature; and let us offer Him acts of thanksgiving and of love, remembering that from eternity He has thought of creating so many beautiful creatures to bring us to His love. St. Augustine says: Learn to love your Creator in creatures; and fix not your affection on what God has made, lest you should become attached to creatures and lose Him by Whom you, too, have been created. This was the practice of the Saint. At the sight of creatures he was accustomed to raise his heart to God;—hence he exclaimed with love: Heaven and earth and all things tell me to love Thee. When he beheld the Heavens, the stars, the fields, the mountains, he seemed to hear them say: Augustine, love God, for He has created us for no other end than that you might love Him.

Thus, likewise, St. Teresa, when she beheld the plains, the sea, the rivers, or other beautiful creatures, felt as if they reproached her with ingratitude to God. Thus also St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, holding in her hand a flower or an apple, and looking at it, became enraptured with Divine love, saying within herself: Then my God has thought from eternity of creating this fruit for my sake, and to give me a proof of the love He bears me! It is also related of St. Simon Salo, that when walking through the fields he saw flowers or herbs, he would strike them with his staff, saying: "Be silent! Be silent! You reproach me with not loving that God Who has made you so beautiful for my sake, that I might be induced to love Him: I hear you! Cease! Reprove me no longer; be silent!"

there to establish an everlasting habitation. *If any one love me . . . my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him—*(Jo. xiv. 23).

The kings of the earth, though they have their great palaces, have, notwithstanding, their particular apartments in which they generally live. God is in all places; His presence fills Heaven and earth; but He dwells in a particular manner in our souls, and there, as He Himself tells us by the mouth of the Apostle, He delights to remain as in so many gardens of pleasure. *I will dwell in them, and walk among them, and I will be their God—*(2 Cor. vi. 16). There He wishes us to love Him and to pray to Him: for He remains in us full of love and mercy, to hear our supplications, to receive our affections, to enlighten us, to govern us, to bestow on us His gifts, and to assist us in all that can contribute to our eternal salvation.

II.

Let us often endeavour to enliven our Faith in the great truth that God is present in our souls, and let us annihilate ourselves at the sight of the great majesty that condescends to dwell within us; and let us also be careful to make acts at one time of confidence, at another of oblation, and again of love of His infinite goodness; now thanking Him for His favours, at another time rejoicing in His glory; and again asking counsel in our doubts; consoling ourselves always in the possession of this Sovereign Good within us, certain that no created power can deprive us of Him, and that He will never depart from us unless we first voluntarily banish Him.

This was the little cell that St. Catharine of Sienna built within her heart, in which she lived always retired, she defended herself against the persecution of her parents, who had forbidden her to retire any more to her own room for the purpose of praying. And in this little cell the Saint made greater progress than she did by retiring to her room; for she would have to leave her chamber several times a day, while this interior

Wednesday—Twenty-fourth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

The most perfect way of living in the Divine Presence is to consider God present within us. We need not ascend to Heaven to find God. We shall find Him within ourselves. *Know ye not that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* St. Teresa writes: For myself, I confess I never knew what it was to pray with satisfaction till our Lord taught me this way, and I have always found great advantages from this custom of recollection and entering within myself.”

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cell she never left, but remained in it always recollected with God. Hence St. Teresa, speaking of the Divine presence in our interior, said: "I believe that they who are able to lock themselves up in this little heaven in their souls, where He Who created them is always present, walk in an excellent path, because they make great progress in a short time."

Spiritual Reading.

APPLICATION OF THE WILL TO THE HOLY EXERCISE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

We have spoken of the operation of the intellect; we will now say a few words on the application of the will to the holy exercise of the Divine Presence. And it is necessary to understand that to remain always before God, with the mind continually fixed on Him, is the happy lot of the Blessed; but in the present state it is morally impossible to keep up the thought of the presence of God without interruption. Hence we should endeavour to practise it to the best of our ability, not with a solicitous inquietude and indiscreet effort of the mind, but with sweetness and tranquillity.

There are three means of facilitating the application of the will to this exercise.

1. The first method consists in frequently raising the heart to God, by short but fervent ejaculations, or loving affections towards God present with us. These may be practised in all places and at all times, in walking, at work, at meals, and at recreation. These affections may be acts of election, of desire, of resignation, of oblation, of love, of renunciation, of thanksgiving, of petition, of humility, of confidence, and the like. In whatever occupation you find yourself, you can very easily turn to God from time to time and say to Him:

My God, I wish for Thee alone, and nothing else. I desire nothing but to be all Thine. Dispose as Thou pleasest of me, and of all that I possess. I give myself

entirely to Thee. Thy will alone be done! I renounce all things for the love of Thee. I thank Thee for the great graces Thou hast bestowed upon me. Give me Thy holy love. But for Thy mercy, O Lord, I should be at this moment in hell. I delight in Thy felicity. I would that all men loved Thee! Never permit me to be separated from Thee. In Thee I place all my hopes. When shall I see Thee and love Thee face to face? Let all that I do and suffer be done and suffered for Thee. Thy holy will be always done!

The ancient Fathers set great value on all these short prayers, by which we can practise the presence of God more easily than by long prayers. And St. John Chrysostom used to say, that he that makes use of these short prayers or acts shuts the door against the devil, and prevents him from coming to molest him with bad thoughts.

At certain special times it is necessary more particularly to enliven our Faith in the Divine presence. First, in the morning when we awake, by saying: My God, I believe that Thou art here present, and that Thou wilt be present with me in every place to which I shall go this day; watch over me, then, in all places, and do not permit me to offend Thee before Thy Divine eyes. Secondly, at the beginning of all our prayers, whether mental or vocal. The Venerable Cardinal Caracciolo, Bishop of Aversa, used to say, that he who makes Mental Prayer with distractions, shows that he has been negligent in making the Act of Faith in the presence of God. Thirdly, on occasion of any temptation against patience or chastity; for example, if you are seized with any sharp pain, or receive any grievous insult, or if any scandalous object be presented to you, instantly arm yourself with the Divine presence, and excite your courage by remembering that God is looking at you. It was thus that David prepared himself to resist temptations. *My eyes are ever towards the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare*—(Ps. xxiv. 15). I will keep my eyes on my God, and He will deliver me from the snares of my enemies. You must do the same when you have occasion to perform any very

difficult act of virtue. You should imitate the valorous Judith, who, after having unsheathed the sword, turned to God before she gave the stroke, and said : *Strengthen me, O Lord God, in this hour*—(Judith, xiii. 9).

2. The second method of preserving the presence of God by acts of the will is to renew always in distracting employments the intention of performing them all with the intention of pleasing God. And therefore, in the beginning of every action or occupation, whether you apply yourself to work, go to table, or to recreation, or to repose, say : Lord, in this work I do not intend my own pleasure, but only the accomplishment of Thy will. In the course of the action endeavour to renew your intention, saying : My God, may all be for Thy glory ! By these acts the presence of God is preserved without fatiguing the mind ; for the very desire of pleasing God is a loving remembrance of His presence. It is also useful to fix certain times, or particular signs, in order to remember the Divine presence ; as when the clock strikes, when you look at the Crucifix, when you enter or leave your room. Some are accustomed to keep in their room some particular sign, to remind them of the presence of God.

3. The third method is, when you find yourself very much distracted during the day, and the mind oppressed with business, to retire at least for a little in order to recollect yourself with God. Were you on any day to feel bodily weakness, arising from excess of labour and long fasting, would you not take some refreshment in order to be able to proceed with the work ? How much more careful should you be to treat the soul in a similar manner, when it begins to fail in courage, and to grow cold in Divine love, in consequence of being a long time without food ; that is, without prayer and recollection with God ? I again repeat what Father Balthasar Alvarez used to say, that a soul out of prayer is like a fish out of water ; the soul is, as it were, in a violent state. Hence, after being a long time engaged in business and distracting occupations, a Christian should retire, if I may say so, to take breath in solitude, recollecting himself there with God, by affections and

petitions. The life of bliss in Heaven consists in seeing and loving God, and therefore I infer that the felicity of a soul on this earth consists also in loving and seeing God, not openly as in Paradise, but with the eyes of Faith, by which it beholds Him always present with it ; and thus acquires great reverence, confidence, and love towards its beloved Lord. He that lives in this manner begins, even in this valley of tears, to live like the Saints in Heaven who always see God's face, and therefore cannot cease to love Him. Thus he that lives in the Divine presence will despise all earthly things, knowing that before God, such things are misery and smoke ; and will begin in this life to possess that Sovereign Good Who contents the heart more than all other goods.

Evening Meditation.

PRAYER.

ITS NECESSITY AND ITS EFFICACY.

I.

We must all be persuaded that we cannot perform any good action without the actual graces of God. But the Lord declares that these graces He gives only to those who ask them of Him : *Ask and it shall be given you*—(Matt. vii. 7). He, then, says St. Teresa, who does not ask, will not receive.

For adults, prayer is necessary, as a matter of strict precept. *We ought*, says Jesus Christ, *always to pray*—(Luke xviii. 1). *Pray that you enter not into temptation*—(Mark xiv. 38). *Ask, and you shall receive*—(Jo. xvi. 24). The words, *we ought, pray, ask*, according to St. Thomas, and the generality of Theologians, imply a strict precept that binds under pain of grievous sin. “ Every man,” says the angelic Doctor, “ is bound to pray, because he is bound to procure spiritual goods, which cannot be obtained unless they are asked.” A

person is obliged to pray, particularly in three cases: when he finds himself in the state of sin; when he is in danger of death; when he is assailed by any violent temptation.

Prayer is necessary, not only as a matter of strict precept, but, according to St. Basil, St. Augustine, and others, it is also necessary as a means of salvation, without which it is absolutely impossible for us to preserve ourselves in the grace of God, and to be saved. "It is simply impossible," says St. John Chrysostom, "without the aid of prayer, to lead a virtuous life."

The angelic Doctor teaches that "after Baptism continual prayer is necessary for a man, in order to enter Heaven." Because, adds the Saint, though sins are cancelled by Baptism, we still have temptations to conquer, which we shall not have strength to overcome without prayer. Hence he says in another place: "After a person is justified by grace, he requires to ask of God the gift of perseverance, that he may be preserved from evil to the end of life."

To understand the reason of this doctrine, it is necessary to know, first, that without special aid from God we cannot continue for a long time in His grace without falling into mortal sin. For we have so many enemies that continually combat against us, and we are at the same time so weak, that if God does not assist us with special helps, or if He gives us only the common graces given to all, we shall not have strength to resist. This is even a Dogma of Faith defined by the Council of Trent in the following words: "If any one shall say that a person who has been justified can, without special aid from God, persevere in the justice which he has received, or cannot persevere with such aid, let him be anathema." It is necessary to know also, that this special aid to persevere in grace is given, at least ordinarily speaking, only to those who ask it. "It is evident," says St. Augustine, "that God gives, even to those who do not pray, some gifts, such as the beginning of Faith; and that He prepares other graces, such as perseverance to the end, only for those who ask them."

From all that has been said we must conclude that prayer is strictly necessary for the attainment of salvation. All the reprobate have been damned in consequence of their neglect of prayer; had they prayed they would not have been lost; and the Saints have become Saints by prayer; had they neglected prayer they would not have become Saints, and could not have been saved. We must be persuaded, as St. John Chrysostom says that to neglect prayer, and to lose the life of the soul or the grace of God, are one and the same thing. Lord assist me, and hasten to my aid, for if Thou delay Thy assistance, I shall fail, and lose Thy grace. If we pray, then, we shall be certainly saved; if we neglect to pray, we shall be certainly lost.

II.

Consider the efficacy of holy Prayer. "Prayer, though one, can do all things," says Theodoret. He who prays, obtains whatsoever he wishes. And in this it appears to me that God displays the immense love He bears us, and His ardent desire to promote our welfare. What greater love can a person show to a friend than to say to him; Friend, ask what you wish from me, and I will grant your petition. This God says to each of us: *Ask, and it shall be given you*—(Luke xi. 9). He makes no exception: *You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you*—(Jo. xv. 7). He tells us to ask whatsoever we desire, and promises that our prayer shall be heard. St. John Climacus asserts that prayer is so powerful before God, that it, as it were, constrains Him to give us all the graces we ask. Devout prayer does violence to God. We are, as David says, poor mendicants: *But I am a beggar and poor*—(Ps. xxxix. 18). But to be rich depends on ourselves: let us ask graces of God, and they will be given us: let us ask them frequently, and they will be poured out upon us abundantly. David blessed the Lord in a special manner for His goodness in always uniting His mercy to our prayers. *Blessed be God who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me*—

(Ps. lxxv. 20). St. Augustine explains this passage in these words: "When you see that your prayer has not been turned away, be assured that the mercy of God is not turned away from you." When you see that you pray, be certain that the Divine mercy will not fail to assist you. And St. John Chrysostom says that when we pray, the Lord hears us before the conclusion of our prayer. For this we have even God's own promise: *As they are yet speaking I will hear*—(Is. lxxv. 24).

Thursday—Twenty-fourth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

"ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD."

It will be the very Paradise of the Blessed to rejoice in the joy of the Lord. Thus he who in this life rejoices in the blessedness that God enjoys, and will enjoy for all eternity, can say that even here below on earth, he enters into the joy of the Lord and begins to share in the bliss of Paradise.

I.

Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!—(Matt. xxv. 21). When the soul enters the Kingdom of the Blessed, and the barrier which hinders its sight is taken away, it will see openly and without a veil the infinite beauty of God; and this will be the joy of the Blessed.

Every object that the soul will then see in God Himself will overwhelm it with delight. It will see the rectitude of His judgments, the harmony of His regulations for every soul, all ordained to His Divine glory, and the soul's own good.

The soul will especially perceive, in respect to itself, the boundless love God has entertained towards it in becoming Man, and sacrificing His life upon the Cross through love of it. Then will it know what an excess of goodness is comprehended in the Mystery of the Cross; in the sight of a God become a servant, and dying condemned upon an infamous tree; and in the Mystery of the Eucharist, God beneath the species of bread, and made the food of His creatures!

In particular the soul will perceive all the graces and favours shown to it, which, until then, had been hidden from it. It will see all the mercies God bestowed on it, in waiting for it, and pardoning its ingratitude. It will see the many calls, and lights, and aids that had been granted to it in abundance. It will see that those tribulations, those infirmities, those losses of property or of kindred, which it counted punishments, were not really punishments, but loving arrangements of God for drawing it to His perfect love.

In a word, all these things will make the soul know the infinite goodness of its God, and the boundless love He deserves. Wherefore, as soon as it has reached Heaven, it will have no other desire but to behold Him in His blessedness and content; and, at the same time, comprehending that the happiness of God is supreme, infinite, and eternal, it will experience a joy that is not infinite only because a creature is not capable of anything that is infinite. It will enjoy, nevertheless, a pleasure extreme and full, which inundates it with delight, and with that kind of delight that belongs to God Himself; and thus will be fulfilled in it the words: *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

II.

The Blessed are blessed not so much through the delight which they experience in themselves as in the joy with which God rejoices; for the Blessed love God so immeasurably more than themselves that the blessedness of God delights them immeasurably more than their own blessedness, through the love which they bear

Him. Their love of God makes them forget themselves, and all their delight is to please their Beloved.

And this is that holy and loving inebriation which causes the Blessed to lose the memory of themselves, to give themselves wholly to praise and love the dear object of all their love, which is God. *They shall be inebriated with the fulness of thy house*—(Ps. xxxv. 9). Happy from their first entrance into Heaven, they continue, as it were, lost, and, so to say, swallowed up in love, in that boundless ocean of the goodness of God.

Wherefore every blessed soul will lose all its desires, and will have no other desire but to love God, and to be loved by Him; and knowing that it is sure of ever loving Him, and of being ever loved by Him, this very thing will be its blessedness, filling it with joy, and making it throughout eternity so satisfied with delights that it will desire nothing more.

In a word, the Paradise of the Blessed will be to rejoice in the joy of God. And thus, he who in this life rejoices in the blessedness that God enjoys, and will enjoy through eternity, can say that even in this life he enters into the joy of God, and begins to enjoy Paradise.

Yet, O my sweet Saviour, and my soul's Love, in this vale of tears I still see myself surrounded by enemies, who would separate me from Thee. O my beloved Lord, suffer me not to perish; make me love Thee for ever in this life and in the next, and then do with me what Thou wilt. O Queen of Paradise, if thou prayest for me, assuredly I shall be with thee eternally, to be in thy company, and to praise thee in Paradise.

Spiritual Reading.

PRAYER: THE CONDITIONS.

HUMILITY—CONFIDENCE—PERSEVERANCE.

1. We must pray with *humility*. St. James says: *God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble*—

(Jas. iv. 6). God rejects the prayers of the proud, and does not listen to them; their pride is a wall that hinders the Lord from hearing their petitions. But, on the other hand, Ecclesiasticus says that *the prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds . . . and he will not depart till the Most High behold*—(Eccelus. xxxv. 21). The prayer of a soul that esteems itself unworthy of being heard penetrates the Heavens, and is presented at the throne of God; and it departs not till God beholds and hears the petition. When, therefore, we ask Divine graces, we must first cast a glance at our own unworthiness, particularly at the frequent infidelities into which, because we trusted too much in our own strength, we have fallen, after so many resolutions and promises. And, full of diffidence in ourselves, we should pray and implore of the Divine mercy the aid of which we stand in need.

2. It is necessary to pray with *confidence*. Ecclesiasticus says that no one ever trusted in the Lord and was confounded or not heard. *No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded*—(Eccelus. ii. 11). We should, as St. James says, pray without wavering, and with a secure confidence of being heard. *Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering*—(James, i. 6). The Apostle adds: *For he that wavereth, is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore, let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord*—(Ibid. 6, 7). He says that the man who prays with a want of confidence, being tossed like a wave of the sea, encouraged by one thought and disheartened by another, shall receive nothing from the Lord. We must, then, trust in the Divine mercy, and believe that if we pray we shall certainly receive the graces we ask. Our prayer will be certainly heard, and, as our Saviour assures us, the objects of our petitions will surely be granted. *All things whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive: and they shall come unto you*—(Mark xi. 24).

But, you will say, I am a sinner, I deserve chastisement, and not favours; and therefore I am afraid, because I am not worthy to be heard. But St. Thomas

answers that the efficacy of prayer to obtain the Divine graces depends not on our merits, but on the mercy of God. Hence Jesus Christ has said : *Ask and it shall be given you . . . for every one that asketh receiveth*—(Luke xi. 9). Every one, whether he be a just man or a sinner. But to remove every apprehension, our loving Redeemer has said : *Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you*—(Jo. xvi. 23). As if He would say : Sinners, you have no claim to be heard by My Father; but ask His grace in My Name, that is, through My merits, and I promise that He will give whatsoever you ask. How consoling the words of St. James : *If any want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not*—(Jas. i. 5), that is, when we ask God for His gifts, He does not reject our petition, and upbraid us with the insults we have offered to Him, but appears then to forget all our ingratitude; He accepts our homage and hears our prayer.

§. It is finally necessary to pray with *perseverance*. St. Hilary says that to obtain Divine grace depends on our continuance in prayer. The Lord wishes to hear some the first time, others the second, and others the third time. Hence, since we know not how often we are to present our supplications in order to be heard, we must always continue to ask the graces of which we stand in need, and particularly the gift of final perseverance, which, as the Council of Trent teaches, we cannot merit. But St. Augustine says that it may be merited in a certain manner by prayer; that is, by praying for it it is infallibly obtained. But to obtain this gift and to be saved, it is necessary, as St. Thomas observes, for every one to ask it continually of God. The Apostle says : *Pray without ceasing*—(1 Thess. v. 17). It is not enough, says Cardinal Bellarmine, to ask the gift of perseverance once, or a few times. In order to obtain it every day, we must ask it every day. On the day we neglect to pray for it, we may fall into sin and be lost.

St. Gregory teaches that God wishes to give us perseverance, but in order to give it, He wishes to be

importuned, and as it were forced by our prayers. “God,” says the holy Doctor, “wishes to be asked, He wishes to be forced; He wishes, in a certain manner, to be overcome by importunity.” This appears from the repeated exhortations of our Lord : *Ask and it shall be given; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you*—(Luke xi. 9). *Ask, seek, knock*: this is necessary especially to obtain strength to conquer violent temptations; we must pray and multiply prayers until we are freed from the temptations. Let us continually repeat : My Jesus, mercy; Lord assist me; do not permit me to be separated from Thee.

It is also necessary to ask always the spirit of prayer, or the grace to pray continually—that great gift that God had promised to the family of David. *And I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and of prayers*—(Zach. xii. 10). Mark the words, *of grace, and of prayers*; which mean, that prayer is always united to the grace we desire. He who perseveres in prayer will always be certain to escape the snares of his enemies. *A net is spread in vain before the eyes of them that have wings*—(Prov. i. 17). In vain, says the Wise Man, is the net cast before the eyes of the bird; for it instantly flies away and escapes the snare. Thus, they that pray escape all temptations; for by prayer they instantly fly to God, and He delivers them.

And here let us remember that there never can be any excuse for a sinner, who says that he fell because he had not strength to resist; for the Council of Trent has declared that “God does not command impossibilities, but by His precepts He admonishes you to do what you can, and to ask what you cannot do, and He assists you that you may be able to do it.”

The Lord then hears the prayers of all, because He has promised to hear them; but it is necessary to know that this promise does not extend to temporal favours—such as bodily health, the acquisition of wealth, or the attainment of a post of honour, and the like. For God frequently, and justly, refuses these gifts, because He knows that they would be injurious to the soul. “The

physician," says St. Augustine, "knows better than the patient what is useful for him." If these temporal favours be the object of prayer, they should be asked with resignation, and on condition that they will be conducive to our eternal salvation; if we ask them without this resignation, the Lord will not listen to our prayers. But in praying for spiritual blessings, we must pray not conditionally, but absolutely, and with a firm confidence of obtaining them. Behold how our Saviour encourages us to ask such graces: *If you, then, He says, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good spirit to them that ask him—*(Luke xi. 13).

O God, how often are the prayers of certain persons offered for temporal graces only! The time of prayer, says St. Teresa, is not a time for treating with God on matters of little importance. Let us ask for virtues, for Divine light in order to fulfil the Divine Will. Let us ask for meekness, for patience under crosses, for perseverance, and for Divine love, which, as St. Francis de Sales says, contains all other good gifts. Let us ask the grace to pray always, and to recommend ourselves continually to God. "If," says St. Augustine, "Thou dost not hear these prayers of Thy servants, what wilt Thou hear?" Ah! the Lord desires ardently to enrich us with His gifts, because He is Infinite Goodness! So great is His desire that, as St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi says, when we ask His graces, He, in a certain manner, considers Himself under an obligation to us, and thanks us, because we then give Him an opportunity of satisfying His desire of promoting our welfare. If He does not bestow His graces upon us, the fault is ours; it is because we do not ask them of Him. He, then, that remains in his poverty, is undeserving of compassion: he is poor because he does not wish to ask of God the graces that are necessary for him. Hence, St. Teresa used to say, that she would have wished to ascend a mountain, from which she could be heard by all men, and from which she would continually exclaim: *O men, pray! pray! pray!*

I will not dilate more on this subject, because, as I have said in the beginning, I have written at length on it in several places, and particularly in the little book on Prayer, which is now in the hands of many, and therefore I will not weary those who have read it, by repeating the same things.

But I would wish to do nothing else than write, and speak always on this great means of prayer: for I see that the Scriptures, the Old as well as the New Testament, exhort us so often to pray, to ask, and cry out, if we wish for the Divine graces. *Cry to me and I will hear thee—*(Jer. xxxiii. 3). *Call on me . . . and I will deliver thee—*(Ps. xlix. 15). *Ask and it shall be given you—*(Matt. vii. 7). *All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive; and they shall come unto you—*(Mark xi. 24). *You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you—*(Jo. xv. 7). *If you shall ask me anything in my name, that I will do—*(Jo. xiv. 14).

There are a thousand similar passages. The holy Fathers of the Church, also, are continually exhorting us to pray. And to speak the truth, I complain of preachers, of confessors, and of spiritual writers, for I see that neither preachers, confessors, nor spiritual writers speak as much as they ought of the *Great Means of Salvation—Prayer*. Hence I have written at length on this subject in so many of my little works; and when I preach, I do nothing else but say: *Pray! Pray, if you wish to be saved and to become saints.*

Our Lord wishes us to *ask*, to *seek*, to *knock*—to pray and pray again and never cease to pray, that God may keep His hand over us, and never permit us to be separated from Him by sin. Let us not forget to recommend ourselves to the Divine Mother. "Let us ask for grace and let us ask it through Mary" (St. Bernard).

Evening Meditation.

“THE PRINCE OF PEACE.”

I.

St. Thomas of Villanova gives us excellent encouragement, saying: “What art thou afraid of, O sinner? . . . How shall He reject thee if thou desirest to retain Him Who came down from Heaven to seek thee?” Let not the sinner, then, be afraid, provided he will be no more a sinner, but will love Jesus Christ; let him not be dismayed, but have full trust; if he abhor and hate sin, and seek God, let him not be sad, but full of joy: *Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord*—(Ps. civ. 3). The Lord has sworn to forget all injuries done to Him, if the sinner is sorry for them: *If the wicked do penance . . . I will not remember all his iniquities*—(Ezech. xviii. 21). And that we might have every motive for confidence, our Saviour became an Infant: “Who is afraid to approach a Child?” asks the same St. Thomas of Villanova.

“Children do not inspire terror or aversion, but attachment and love,” says St. Peter Chrysologus. It seems that children know not how to be angry; and if perchance at odd times they should be irritated, they are easily soothed; one has only to give them a fruit, a flower, or bestow on them a caress, or utter a kind word to them, and they have already forgiven and forgotten every offence.

A tear of repentance, one act of heart-felt contrition, is enough to appease the Infant Jesus. “You know the tempers of children,” St. Thomas of Villanova goes on to say, “a single tear pacifies them, the offence is forgotten. Approach, then, to Him, while He is a little One, while He would seem to have forgotten His majesty.” He has put off His Divine majesty, and appears as a Child to inspire us with more courage to approach His feet.

“He is born as an Infant,” says St. Bonaventure, “that neither His justice nor His power might intimidate

you.” In order to relieve us from every feeling of distrust, which the idea of His power and of His justice might cause in us, He comes before us as a little Babe, full of sweetness and mercy. “O God!” says Gerson, “Thou hast hidden Thy wisdom under a Child’s years, that it might not accuse us.” O God of mercy, lest Thy Divine wisdom might reproach us with our offences against Thee, Thou hast hidden it under an Infant’s form. “Thy justice under humility, lest it should condemn.” Thou hast concealed Thy justice under the most profound abasement, that it might not condemn us. “Thy power under weakness lest it should punish.” Thou hast disguised Thy power in feebleness, that it might not visit us with chastisement.

II.

St. Bernard makes this reflection: “Adam, after his sin, on hearing the voice of God: *Adam, where art thou?*—(Gen. iii. 9), was filled with dismay”—*I heard thy voice, and was afraid*—(Gen. iii. 10). But, continues the Saint, the Incarnate Word now made Man upon earth, has laid aside all semblance of terror: “Do not fear; He seeks thee, not to punish, but to save thee. Behold, He is a Child; the voice of a child will excite compassion rather than fear. The Virgin Mother wraps His delicate limbs in swaddling-clothes: and art thou still alarmed?” That God Who should punish thee is born an Infant, and has no voice to terrify thee, since the accents of a child, being sounds of weeping, move us rather to pity than to fear; thou canst not fear that Jesus Christ will stretch out His hands to chastise thee, since His Mother is occupied in swathing them in linen bands.

“Be of good cheer, then, O sinners,” says St. Leo, “the Birthday of the Lord is the Birthday of peace and joy.” *The Prince of peace*—(Is. ix. 6), was He called by Isaias. Jesus Christ is a Prince, not of vengeance on sinners, but of mercy and of peace, constituting Himself the Mediator betwixt God and sinners. If our sins, says St. Augustine, are too much for us, God does not

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despise His own Blood. If we cannot ourselves make due atonement to the justice of God, at least the Eternal Father knows not how to disregard the Blood of Jesus Christ Who has made atonement for us.

We have offended God; already has sentence of everlasting death been passed upon us; Divine justice requires satisfaction, and rightly. What have we to do? Should we despair? God forbid! Let us offer up to God this Infant, Who is His own Son, and let us address Him with confidence: O Lord, if we cannot of ourselves render Thee satisfaction for our offences against Thee, behold this Child, Who weeps and moans, Who is benumbed with cold on His bed of straw in this cavern; He is here to make atonement for us, and He pleads for Thy mercy on us. Though we ourselves are undeserving of pardon, the tears and sufferings of this Thy guiltless Son merit it for us, and He entreats Thee to pardon us.

If we would have still another means to secure our forgiveness, let us obtain the intercession of this Divine Mother Mary in our behalf; she is all-powerful with her blessed Son to promote the interests of repentant sinners, as St. John Damascene assures us. Yes, for the prayers of Mary, adds St. Antoninus, have the force of commands with her Son, in consideration of the love He bears her: "The prayer of the Mother of God has the force of a command." Hence St. Peter Damien wrote that when Mary entreats Jesus Christ in favour of one who is dearest to her, "she appears in a certain sense to command as a mistress, not to ask as a handmaid, for the Son honours her by denying her nothing." For this reason St. Germanus says Mary can obtain the pardon of the most abandoned sinners. "Thou, by the power of thy maternal authority, gainest for the most enormous sinners the most excellent grace of pardon."

Friday—Twenty-fourth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

JESUS CRUCIFIED!

Jesus Crucified! Oh, what a spectacle to the Angels in Heaven to behold a God Crucified! And we? What sentiments should we conceive when we behold the King of Heaven hanging on a gibbet, covered with wounds, agonising, dying of pure unmitigated pain! O death of Jesus! O love of Jesus, take possession of all my thoughts and affections!

I.

Jesus Crucified! Oh, what a spectacle to the Angels in Heaven to behold a God Crucified! And we? What sentiments should we not conceive when we behold the King of Heaven hanging on a gibbet, covered with wounds, agonizing and dying of pure, unmitigated pain! O God, why does this Divine Saviour, this innocent and Saintly One, suffer such torments? Ah, He suffers them to expiate the sins of men. And who has ever seen such an example? The Lord suffering for His slaves! The Shepherd dying for His sheep! The Creator immolated and offered as a holocaust for His creatures!

Jesus on the Cross! Behold Him on that infamous tree, full of exterior and interior sorrows. In His body He is torn with scourges, thorns, and nails: blood flows from every wound, and each member suffers its own torment. In His soul He is afflicted with sadness and desolation; He is abandoned by all, even by His very Father. But what tormented Him most severely was the horrid sight of all the sins that the very men, redeemed by His blood, would commit after His death.

Ah, my Redeemer, among these ungrateful ones Thou

didst see me, and all my sins. Then I too had a great part in all Thy afflictions on the Cross, when Thou wast dying for me. Oh that I had died, and had never offended Thee!

II.

Oh, Jesus, my Hope, death terrifies me. I know I shall then have to render an account of all the insults I have offered to Thy love. But Thy death encourages me, and makes me hope for pardon. I am sorry with my whole heart for having offended Thee. If I have not hitherto loved Thee, I now wish to love Thee during the remaining days of my life, and I wish to do and suffer all things in order to please Thee. O my Redeemer, Who died on a Cross for me, assist me.

Lord, Thou hast said that when Thou wouldst be exalted on the Cross, Thou wouldst draw all hearts to Thee. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself*—(Jo. xii. 32). By dying on the Cross for us, Thou hast already drawn to Thy love so many who, for Thy sake, have forsaken all things, their goods, their country, their relatives, and their life. Ah, draw also my poor heart, which, through Thy grace, now longs to love Thee. Permit me not to love mire, as I have hitherto done. O my Redeemer, would that I could see myself stripped of every worldly affection, so as to forget all things, to remember only Thee, and to love Thee alone! I hope for all things from Thy grace. Thou knowest my inability to do any good: through the love which made Thee submit to so cruel a death on Calvary for my sake, I pray Thee to assist me. O death of Jesus, O love of Jesus, take possession of all my thoughts and affections, and grant that, for the future, Thy pleasure, O Jesus, may be the sole object of all my thoughts and desires. O most amiable Lord, hear my prayer, through the merits of Thy death.

O thou, too, O Mary, who art the Mother of Mercy, hear me: pray to Jesus for me. Thy prayers can make me a saint. Such is my hope.

Spiritual Readings.PRAYERS TO JESUS

TO HEAR US BY THE MERITS OF EACH PARTICULAR PAIN HE SUFFERED IN HIS PASSION.

O my Jesus, by that humiliation which Thou didst practise in washing the feet of Thy disciples, I pray Thee to bestow upon me the grace of true humility, that I may humble myself to all, especially to such as treat me with contempt.

My Jesus, by that sorrow which Thou didst suffer in the garden, sufficient, as it was, to cause Thy death, I pray Thee to deliver me from the sorrow of hell, from living evermore at a distance from Thee, and without the power of ever loving Thee again.

My Jesus, by that horror which Thou hadst of my sins, which were then present to Thy sight, give me a true sorrow for all the offences I have committed against Thee.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst experience at seeing Thyself betrayed by Judas with a kiss, give me the grace to be ever faithful unto Thee, and nevermore to betray Thee, as I have done in time past.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst feel at seeing Thyself bound like a culprit to be taken before the judges, I pray Thee to bind me to Thyself by the sweet chains of holy love, that so I may nevermore see myself separated from Thee, my only Good.

My Jesus, by all those insults, buffetings, and spittings which Thou didst on that night suffer in the house of Caiphas, give me the strength to suffer in peace, for love of Thee, all the affronts I shall meet with from men.

My Jesus, by that ridicule which Thou didst receive from Herod in being treated as a fool, give me the grace to endure with patience all that men shall say of me, treating me as base, senseless, or wicked.

My Jesus, by that outrage which Thou didst receive from the Jews in seeing Thyself placed after Barabbas,

give me the grace to suffer with patience the dishonour of seeing myself placed after others.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst suffer in Thy most holy Body when Thou wast so cruelly scourged, give me the grace to suffer with patience all the pains of my sickness, and especially those of my death.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst suffer in Thy most sacred head when it was pierced with the thorns, give me the grace never to consent to thoughts displeasing unto Thee.

My Jesus, by that act of Thine by which Thou didst accept of the death of the Cross, to which Pilate condemned Thee, give me the grace to accept of my death with resignation, together with all the other pains which shall accompany it.

My Jesus, by the pain which Thou didst suffer in carrying Thy Cross on Thy journey to Calvary, give me the grace to suffer with patience all my crosses in this life.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst suffer in having the nails driven through Thy hands and Thy feet, I pray Thee to nail my will to Thy feet, that so I may will nothing save that which Thou dost will.

My Jesus, by the affliction which Thou didst suffer in having gall given Thee to drink, give me the grace never to offend Thee by intemperance in eating and drinking.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst experience in taking leave of Thy holy Mother upon the Cross, deliver me from an inordinate love for my relatives, or for any other creature, that so my heart may be wholly and always Thine.

My Jesus, by that desolation which Thou didst suffer in Thy death in seeing Thyself abandoned by Thy Eternal Father, give me the grace to suffer all my desolations with patience, without ever losing confidence in Thy goodness.

My Jesus, by those Three Hours of affliction and agony Thou didst suffer upon the Cross, give me the grace to suffer with resignation, for love of Thee, the pains of my agony at the hour of death.

My Jesus, by that great sorrow which Thou didst feel

when expiring, and Thy most holy soul separated itself from Thy most sacred body, give me the grace to breathe forth my soul in the hour of my death, offering up my sorrow then to Thee, together with an act of perfect love, that so I may go to love Thee in Heaven, face to face, with all my strength, and for all eternity.

And thou, most holy Virgin, and my Mother Mary, by that sword which pierced thy heart when thou didst behold thy Son bow down His head and expire; do thou assist me in the hour of my death, that so I may go to praise thee and to thank thee in Paradise for all the graces thou hast obtained for me from God. Amen.

Evening Meditation.

JESUS DEAD UPON THE CROSS.

O Christian, lift up your eyes, and behold your Jesus dead on the gibbet of the Cross. Look at His body full of wounds and streams of blood flowing. Faith teaches you that He is your Creator, your Saviour, your Life, your Deliverer; and that He, Whose love for you exceeds the love of all others, is the only Being that can make you happy.

Yes, my Jesus, I believe it; Thou hast loved me from eternity, without any merit of mine; and even with the foreknowledge of my constant ingratitude, Thou hast, through Thine own goodness, given me existence. Thou art my Saviour, Who, by Thy death, hast delivered me from hell, which I have so often deserved. Thou art my Life, by the grace Thou hast given me, without which I should have remained dead in hell. Thou art my Father, and a loving Father, Who hast pardoned me with so much mercy the many insults I have offered Thee. Thou art my Treasure, enriching me with so many lights and favours, instead of chastising me as I deserved. Thou art my Hope, for I can hope for no good from any one but from Thee. Thou art my true and only Lover; it is enough to say that Thou

hast even died for me. In fine, Thou art my God, my sovereign Good, my All.

II.

O men ! let us love Jesus Christ ! Let us love a God Who sacrificed Himself entirely for the love of us. He has sacrificed the honours which were due to Him on this earth ; He has sacrificed all the riches and pleasures He could have enjoyed, and was content to lead an abject life in poverty and tribulations ; and finally in order to atone by His sufferings for our sins, He has voluntarily sacrificed His blood and His life, dying in an ocean of sorrows and ignominies.

Son, exclaims the Redeemer from the Cross to each of us—son, what more could I do than die for you, in order to gain your love ? See if any one in this world has loved you more than I, your Lord and God, have loved you. Love Me, then, at least in return for the love which I have borne you.

Ah, my Jesus, how can I remember that my sins have made Thee die through pain on an infamous gibbet, and not weep unceasingly for having thus despised Thy love ? And how can I behold Thee hanging on this Cross for my sake, and not love Thee with all my power ?

But, O Lord, how does it happen that Thou hast died for all, that no one might live any longer to himself, and that afterwards, instead of living only to love Thee and give Thee glory, I have lived only to afflict and dishonour Thee ? *Christ died for all, that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again*—(2 Cor. v. 15).

Ah, my crucified Lord, forget the insults I have offered Thee ; I am sincerely sorry for them : draw me, by Thy grace, entirely to Thyself. I wish to live no longer to myself, but only to Thee, Who hast loved me so tenderly, and Who dost merit all my love. I give Thee myself and all that I possess, without reserve. I renounce all the honours and pleasures of this life, and I offer myself to suffer for Thy sake whatsoever Thou pleasest. I entreat Thee, Who dost give me this good will, to grant me strength to execute it. O Lamb of God, immolated

on the Cross, O Victim of love, O enamoured God, would that I could die for Thee as Thou hast died for me !

O Mary, Mother of God, obtain for me the grace to sacrifice all the remaining hours of my life to the love of thy most amiable Son.

Saturday—Twenty-fourth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

MARY LEADS HER CLIENTS TO HEAVEN.

Oh, what an evident sign of predestination have the servants of Mary ! St. Bonaventure says the gates of Heaven open to all who confide in Mary's protection. St. Ambrose prays : " Open to us, O Mary, the gate of Paradise, for thou hast its keys ! " And Holy Church prays to Mary : " Gate of Heaven, pray for us ! "

I.

Oh, what an evident sign of predestination have the servants of the Blessed Virgin ! The holy Church, for the consolation of Mary's clients, puts the words of Ecclesiasticus on her lips : *In all these I sought rest, and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord*—(Eccles. xxiv. 11). Cardinal Hugo explains these words, and says : " Blessed is he in whose house the most holy Virgin finds repose." Mary, out of the love she bears to all, endeavours to excite in all devotion towards herself ; yet many either do not admit it into their souls, or do not preserve it. But blessed is he that receives and preserves it, *He shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord*. Devotion towards the Blessed Virgin reigns in all who are the inheritance of our Lord ; that is to say, in all

who will praise God eternally in Heaven. Mary continues, speaking in the words of Ecclesiasticus: *He that made me rested in my tabernacle, and he said to me: Let thy dwelling be in Jacob, and thy inheritance in Israel, and take root in my elect*—(Ib. 12, 13). My Creator has descended to come and repose in my bosom, and His will is, that I should dwell in the hearts of all the elect, and that devotion and confidence in me should take root in all the predestined.

O, how many blessed souls are there now in Heaven who would never have been there had not Mary, by her powerful intercession, led them thither: *I made that in the heavens there should rise light that never faileth*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 6). Cardinal Hugo, in his commentary on the above text of Ecclesiasticus speaks in the name of Mary: "I have caused as many lights to shine eternally in Heaven as I have clients"; and then he adds, "There are many Saints in Heaven through Mary's intercession, who would never have been there but through her."

II

Saint Bonaventure says that "the gates of Heaven will open to all who confide in the protection of Mary." Hence St. Ephrem calls devotion to the Divine Mother "the unlocking of the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem." The devout Blossius also, addressing our Blessed Lady, says: "To thee, O Lady, are committed the keys and the treasures of the kingdom of Heaven." And therefore we ought constantly to pray to her, in the words of St. Ambrose: "Open to us, O Mary, the gates of Paradise, since thou hast its keys." Nay, more, the Church calls her: "the Gate of Heaven": *Janua coeli*.

For the same reason, again, is the great Mother called by the Church the Star of the Sea, "Hail, Star of the Sea!" "For," says the angelical St. Thomas, "as sailors are guided by a star to the port, so are Christians guided to Heaven by Mary."

And finally, Mary is called by St. Fulgentius, "the heavenly ladder." "For," says the Saint, "by Mary

God descended from Heaven into the world, that by her men might ascend from earth to Heaven." "And thou, O Lady," says St. Athanasius, "wast filled with grace, that thou mightest be the way of our salvation, and the means of ascent to the heavenly kingdom."

Spiritual Reading.

"THEY THAT WORK BY ME SHALL NOT SIN."

St. Bernard calls the Blessed Virgin "the heavenly Chariot." St. John Geometra salutes her: "Hail! resplendent car!" signifying that she is the car in which her clients mount to Heaven. "Blessed are they who know thee, O Mother of God," says St. Bonaventure; "for the knowledge of thee is the high road to everlasting life, and the proclaiming of thy virtues is the way of eternal salvation."

In the Franciscan Chronicles it is related that Brother Leo once saw a red ladder, on the summit of which was Jesus Christ; and a white one, on the top of which was His most holy Mother; and he saw some who tried to ascend the red ladder, and they mounted a few steps and fell—they tried again, and again fell. They were then advised to go and try the white ladder, and by that one they easily ascended, for our Blessed Lady stretched out her hand and helped them, and so they got safely to Heaven—(*Wadding, Ann.* 1232, n. 28).

Denis the Carthusian asks: "Who is there that is saved? Who is there that reigns in Heaven?" And he answers: "They are certainly saved and reign in Heaven for whom this Queen of mercy intercedes." And this Mary herself confirms in the book of Proverbs: *By me kings reign*—(Prov. viii. 15), through my intercession souls reign, first in this mortal life by ruling their passions, and so come to reign eternally in Heaven, where, says St. Augustine, "all are kings." "Mary, in fine," says Richard of St. Laurence, "is the Mistress of Heaven; for there she commands as she wills, and

admits whom she wills." And applying to her the words of Ecclesiasticus: *And my power was in Jerusalem*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 15), he makes her say: "I command what I will, and introduce whom I will." Our blessed Lady, being Mother of the Lord of Heaven, it is reasonable that she should also be sovereign Lady of that kingdom, according to Rupert, who says that "by right she possesses the whole kingdom of her Son."

St. Antoninus tells us that "this Divine Mother has already, by her assistance and prayers, obtained Heaven for us, provided we put no obstacle in the way." Hence, says the Abbot Gueric, "he who serves Mary, and for whom she intercedes, is as certain of Heaven as if he was already there." St. John Damascene also says, that "to serve Mary and to be her courtier is the greatest honour we can possibly possess; for to serve the Queen of Heaven is already to reign there, and to live under her commands is more than to govern." On the other hand, he adds, that "those who do not serve Mary will not be saved; for those who are deprived of the help of this great Mother are also deprived of that of her Son and of the whole court of Heaven."

"May the infinite goodness of our Lord be ever praised," says St. Bernard, "for having been pleased to give us Mary as our advocate in Heaven, that she, being at the same time the Mother of our Judge and a Mother of Mercy, may be able, by her intercession, to conduct to a prosperous issue the great affair of our eternal salvation." St. James, a Doctor of the Greek Church, says that, "God destined Mary as a bridge of salvation, by using which we might with safety pass over the stormy sea of this world, and reach the happy haven of Paradise." Therefore St. Bonaventure exclaims: "Give ear, O ye nations, and all you who desire Heaven! Serve and honour Marý, and certainly you will find eternal life."

Nor should those even who have deserved hell be in the least doubtful as to obtaining Heaven, provided they are faithful in serving this Queen. "O how many sinners," says St. Germanus, "have found God and have been saved by thy means, O Mary!" Richard of

St. Laurence remarks, that St. John in the Apocalypse says that Mary was crowned with stars: *And on her head a crown of twelve stars*—(Apoc. xii. 1). In the sacred Canticles, she is said to be crowned with wild beasts, lions, and leopards: "*Come from Libanus, my spouse, come from Libanus, come; thou shalt be crowned . . . from the dens of the lions, from the mountains of the leopards*"—(Cant. iv. 8). How is this? He answers, that "these wild beasts are sinners, who by the favour and intercession of Mary have become stars of Paradise, and adapted to the head of this Queen of mercy than all the material stars of heaven."

We read in the Life of the servant of God, Sister Seraphina of Capri, that once during the Novena of the Assumption of Mary she asked our Blessed Lady for the conversion of a thousand sinners, but afterwards thought that she had asked too much; and then the Blessed Virgin appeared to her, and corrected her for her ungrounded anxiety, saying: "Why dost thou fear? Is it that I am not sufficiently powerful to obtain from my Son the conversion of a thousand sinners? See, I have already obtained the favour." With these words, she took her in spirit to Heaven, and there showed her innumerable souls which had deserved hell, but had been saved through her intercession, and were already enjoying eternal happiness.

It is true that in this world no one can be certain of his salvation: *Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred*, says Ecclesiastes—(Ecclus. ix. 1). But St. Bonaventure, to the words of King David, *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle?*—(Ps. xiv. 1), answers, "Sinners, let us follow Mary closely, and casting ourselves at her feet, let us not leave them until she has blessed us; for her blessing will ensure our salvation."

"It suffices, O Lady," says St. Anselm, "that thou willest it, and our salvation is certain." And St. Antoninus says that "souls protected by Mary, and on which she casts her eyes, are necessarily justified and saved."

"With reason, therefore," observes St. Ildephonsus, "did the most Holy Virgin predict that all generations

would call her blessed; for all the elect obtain eternal salvation through the means of Mary." "And thou, O great Mother," says St. Methodius, "art the beginning, the continuation, and the end of our happiness";—the beginning, for Mary obtains us the pardon of our sins; the continuation, for she obtains for us perseverance in Divine grace; and the end, for she finally obtains us Heaven. "By thee, O Mary, was Heaven opened," says St. Bernard; "by thee was hell emptied; by thee was Paradise restored; and through thee, in fine, is eternal life given to so many miserable creatures who deserved eternal death."

But that which above all should encourage us to hope with confidence for Heaven, is the beautiful promise made by Mary herself to all who honour her, and especially to those who, by word and example, endeavour to make her known and honoured by others: *They that work by me shall not sin; they that explain me shall have life everlasting*—(Eccles. xxiv. 30). "O happy they who obtain the favour of Mary!" exclaims St. Bonaventure; "they will be recognised by the Blessed as their companions, and whoever bears the stamp of a servant of Mary is already enrolled in the Book of Life."

Evening Meditation.

HOLY MARY IS OUR SALVATION.

I.

The servants of Mary are protected by her, and their names are written in the Book of Life. St. John Damascene says that God gives the grace of devotion to His Mother only to those whom He will save. This is also clearly expressed by our Lord in St. John: *He that shall overcome . . . I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God*—(Apoc. iii. 12). And who but Mary is this city of God? observes St. Gregory on the words of David: *Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God*—(Ps. lxxxvi. 3)

Correctly, then, can we here say with St. Paul: *Having this seal, the Lord knoweth who are his*—(2 Tim. ii. 19). That is to say, whoever carries with him the mark of devotion to Mary is recognized by God as His own. Hence St. Bernard writes that devotion to the Mother of God is a most certain mark of eternal salvation. Blessed Alan, speaking of the "Hail Mary," also says, that "whoever often honours our Blessed Lady with this Angelical Salutation has a very great mark of predestination." He says the same thing of perseverance in the daily recital of the Rosary—"that those who do so have a very great assurance of salvation." Father Nieremberg says that "the servants of the Mother of God are not only privileged and favoured in this world, but even in Heaven they are more particularly honoured." He then adds: "in Heaven they will be recognized as servants of its Queen, and as belonging to her court, by a distinguishing and richer garment," according to the words of the Proverbs: *All her domestics are clothed with double garments*—(Prov. xxxi. 21).

Ah, my most beloved Mother, never allow a servant of thine to become the enemy of God Whom thou lovest so much! Alas, there was a time when I offended God. But then, O Lady, I loved thee but little! O my Mother, pray to Jesus for me. Nothing else is needed. Thou hast to save me. Thou art my hope. I will sing for ever: O Mary, thou hast to save me!

II.

St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi saw a vessel in the midst of the sea, and in it were all the clients of Mary, and this Blessed Mother herself steered it safely into the port. By this the Saint understood, that those who live under the protection of Mary are secure, in the midst of the dangers of this life, from the shipwreck of sin, and from eternal damnation; for she guides them safely into the haven of salvation. Let us then enter this blessed ship of the mantle of Mary, and there we can be certain of the Kingdom of Heaven; for the Church says: "O holy Mother of God, all those who will be

partakers of eternal happiness dwell in thee, living under thy protection."

Most holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God, I (N.N.), although most unworthy to be thy servant, yet moved by thy wonderful compassion, and by my desire to serve thee, now choose thee, in presence of my Guardian Angel and of the whole celestial court, for my especial Lady, Advocate, and Mother: and I firmly purpose always to love and serve thee for the future, and to do all in my power to induce others to love and serve thee also. I beseech thee, O Mother of God, and my most compassionate and loving Mother, by the Blood which thy Son shed for me, to receive me into the number of thy servants, to be thy child and servant forever. Assist me in all my thoughts, words, and actions in every moment of my life, so that every step I take, and every breath I draw, may be directed to the greater glory of my God; and through thy most powerful intercession, may I never more offend my beloved Jesus, but may glorify Him and love Him in this life, and love thee, my most beloved and dear Mother, and thus love thee and enjoy thee in Heaven for all eternity.

AMEN.

DEO GRATIAS ET MARIAE

DE PERPETUO SUCCURSU!