

MEDITATIONS & READINGS

ST. ALPHONSUS

VOLUME II – PART II
EASTER ASCENSION

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Meditations and Readings

FOR:

EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

Selected from the Spiritual Writings of

SAINT ALPHONSUS

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

VOLUME TWO.

PART II.

Edited by

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



79

THE TALBOT PRESS LIMITED
DUBLIN AND CORK

MCMXXVII.

SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS
MOUNT ALVERNO CONVENT

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

VISITS TO THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT and TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, with Prayers for Mass, Preparation for Communion, Thanksgiving, etc. By ST. ALPHONSUS. From 2/6 to 5/.

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MEDITATIONS & READINGS
FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

VOLUME II.—PART II.

EASTER :: ASCENSION

LETTER FROM HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL LOGUE
TO THE EDITOR.

ARA COELI,
ARMAGH,

16th March, 1924.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

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

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

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

You have commenced well, and I trust you will be 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

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*Archiepiscopus Dublinensis
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*Dublina,
die 4 Aprilis, 1927.*

Permissu Superioris:
PATRIII MURRAY, C.SS.Red.
Superioris Generalis et Rectoris Majoris.

*Romæ,
die 4 Aprilis, 1927.*

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.

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL O'DONNELL writes:

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.

J.M.S.S.S.

**SANT' ALFONSO — VIA MERULANA,
ROMA,**

28th October, 1923.

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.

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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,
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Morning Meditation.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

Let us rejoice at seeing in His risen glory our Saviour, our Father, the best Friend we possess. Let us rejoice, too, for our own sakes, because the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is for us a sure pledge of our own resurrection and of the glory we hope one day to have in Heaven in our soul and body.

I.

Jesus came into the world not only to redeem us, but by His example to teach us all virtues, and especially humility, and holy poverty which is inseparably united with humility. For this it was, He chose to be born in a cave; to live as a poor man in a workshop for thirty years; and at last to die, poor and naked, on a Cross, seeing His garments divided amongst the soldiers before He breathed His last; while, after His death, He receives the winding-sheet for His burial as an alms from others. Let the poor be consoled at seeing Jesus Christ, the King of Heaven and earth, thus living and dying in poverty in order to enrich us with His merits and gifts. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich he became poor for your sakes, that through his poverty you might be rich—(2 Cor. viii. 9). For this cause the Saints, in order to become like unto Jesus in

His poverty, despised all earthly riches and honours, so that one day they might go to enjoy with Jesus Christ the riches and honours prepared by God in Heaven for them that love Him. And speaking of these blessings the Apostle St. Paul says *that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love him*—(1 Cor. ii. 9).

O my Jesus, I beseech Thee by Thy Resurrection, make me rise glorious with Thee on the last day, to be always united with Thee in Heaven, to praise Thee and to love Thee for ever.

II.

Jesus Christ, then, rose from the dead with the glory of possessing all power in Heaven and on earth, not only as God, but as Man. All the angels and all men are therefore subject to Him. Let us rejoice in thus seeing in glory our Saviour, our Father, and the best Friend we possess.

And let us rejoice for ourselves, because the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is for us a sure pledge of our own Resurrection, and of the glory that we may hope one day to have in Heaven in our soul and in our body. This hope gave courage to the Martyrs to suffer with gladness all the evils of life, and the most cruel torments of tyrants. We must rest assured, however, that none will rejoice with Jesus Christ but they who are willing to suffer in this world with Him; nor will he obtain the crown who does not fight as he ought to fight. *He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned except he strive lawfully.*—(2 Tim. ii. 5). At the same time let us be assured by what the same Apostle says: that all the sufferings of this life are short and light in comparison with the boundless and eternal joys we hope to enjoy in Paradise.—(2 Cor. iv. 17). Let us labour the more to continue in the grace of God, and continually to pray for perseverance in God's friendship. Without continual prayer we shall not obtain perseverance, and without perseverance we shall not be saved.

O sweet Jesus, worthy of all love, how hast Thou so loved men that, in order to show Thy love, Thou hast

not refused to die wounded and dishonoured on an infamous tree! O my God, how is it there are so few among men who love Thee with their whole heart? O my dear Redeemer, I wish to be one of these few. Miserable that I am to have forgotten Thy love in the past, and given up Thy grace for miserable pleasures! I know the evil I have done. I grieve over it with my whole heart and would wish to die of grief. O my beloved Redeemer, I love Thee now more than myself and am ready to die a thousand deaths rather than lose Thy friendship. Jesus, I thank Thee for the light Thou hast given me. O Jesus, my Hope, leave me not in my own hands. Help me until death.

O Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

 Spiritual Reading.

THE HEAVEN GOD HAS WON FOR US.

The bliss of Heaven consists in seeing and loving God face to face. "Everything we expect," says St. Augustine, "is expressed in a word of one syllable, namely, *God*." The reward God promises to us does not consist altogether in the beauty, the harmony, and other advantages of the city of Paradise. God Himself, Whom the Saints are allowed to behold, is, according to the promises made to Abraham, the principal reward of the just in Heaven. *I am thy reward exceeding great.*—(Gen. xv. 1). St. Augustine asserts that were God to show His face to the damned, "hell would be instantly changed into a paradise of delights." And he adds that were a departed soul allowed the choice of seeing God and suffering the pains of hell, or of being freed from these pains and deprived of the sight of God, "it would prefer to see God, and to endure those torments."

The delights of the soul infinitely surpass all the pleasures of the senses. Even in this life, Divine love infuses such sweetness into the soul when God communicates Himself to it that the body is raised from the

earth. St. Peter of Alcantara once fell into such an ecstasy of love that, taking hold of a tree, he drew it up from the roots, and raised it with him on high. So great is the sweetness of Divine love, that the holy Martyrs, in the midst of their torments, felt no pain, but were on the contrary filled with joy. Hence St. Augustine says that when St. Laurence was laid on a red-hot gridiron, the fervour of Divine love made him insensible to the burning heat of the fire. Even on sinners who weep for their sins, God bestows consolations which exceed all earthly pleasures. Hence St. Bernard says : " If it be so sweet to weep for Thee, what must it be to rejoice in Thee ! "

How great is the sweetness which a soul experiences when, in the time of prayer, God, by a ray of His own light, reveals to it His goodness and His mercies towards it, and particularly the love Jesus Christ has borne to it in His Passion ! It feels its heart melting and, as it were, dissolved through love. But in this life we do not see God as He really is : we see Him, as it were, in the dark. *We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face.*—(1 Cor. xiii. 12). Here below God is hidden from our view ; we can see Him only with the eyes of Faith. How great shall be our happiness when the veil is raised, and we are permitted to behold God face to face ! We shall then see His beauty, His greatness, His perfection, His amiableness, and His immense love for our souls.

Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.—(Eccles. ix. 1). The fear of not loving God, and of not being loved by Him, is the greatest affliction which souls that love God endure on the earth ; but in Heaven the soul is certain that it loves God and that He loves it ; and sees that the Lord embraces it with infinite love, and that this love shall not be dissolved for all eternity. The knowledge of the love Jesus Christ has shown it in offering Himself in sacrifice for it on the Cross, and in making Himself its Food in the Sacrament of the Altar, shall increase the ardour of its love. It shall also see clearly all the graces God has bestowed upon it, all the helps which He has given it, to preserve it from falling into sin, and to draw it to His love.

It shall see that all the tribulations, the poverty, the infirmities and persecutions which it regards as misfortunes, have all proceeded from love, and have been the means employed by Divine Providence to bring it to glory. It shall see all the lights, loving calls, and mercies which God had granted to it after it had insulted Him by its sins. From the blessed mountain of Paradise it shall see so many souls damned for fewer sins than it had committed, and shall see that it is saved and secured against the possibility of ever losing God.

Justly, then, has St. Augustine said that to gain the eternal bliss and peace of Paradise, we should embrace eternal labour.

Evening Meditation.

“ YOUR SORROW SHALL BE TURNED INTO JOY.”

I.

Oh, happy are we, if we suffer with patience on earth the troubles of this present life ! Distress of circumstances, fears, bodily infirmities, persecutions, and crosses of every kind, will one day all come to an end ; and if we be saved, they will all become for us subjects of joy and glory in Paradise : *Your sorrow, says the Saviour to encourage us, shall be turned into joy.*—(John xvi. 20). So great are the delights of Paradise that they can neither be explained nor understood by us mortals : *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him.*—(1 Cor. ii. 9). Beauties like to the beauties of Paradise, eye hath never seen ; harmonies like unto the harmonies of Paradise, ear hath never heard ; nor hath ever human heart gained the comprehension of the joys God hath prepared for those that love Him. Beautiful is the sight of a landscape adorned with hills, plains, woods, and views of the sea. Beautiful is the sight of a garden abounding with fruits, flowers, and fountains. Oh, how much more beautiful is Paradise !

To understand how great the joys of Paradise are, it is

enough to know that in that blessed realm resides a God omnipotent, Whose care it is to render happy His beloved souls. St. Bernard says that Paradise is a place where "there is nothing thou wouldst not, and everything thou wouldst." There thou shalt not find any thing displeasing to thyself, and every thing thou dost desire thou shalt find: "There is nothing thou wouldst not." In Paradise there is no night; no seasons of winter and summer; but one perpetual day of unvaried serenity, and one perpetual spring of unvaried delight. No more persecutions or jealousies are there; for there all sincerely love one another, and each rejoices in each other's good as if it were his own. No more bodily infirmities or pains are there, for the body is no longer subject to suffering; no poverty is there, for every one is rich to the full, not having anything more to desire; no more fears are there, for the soul being confirmed in grace can sin no more, nor lose that supreme good which it possesses.

II.

"There is everything thou wouldst." In Paradise thou shalt have whatsoever thou desirest. There the sight is satisfied in beholding that city so beautiful, and its citizens all clothed in royal apparel, for they are all kings of that everlasting kingdom. There shall we see the beauty of Mary, whose appearance will be more beautiful than that of all the Angels and Saints together. We shall see the beauty of Jesus, which will immeasurably surpass the beauty of Mary. The smell will be satisfied with the perfumes of Paradise. The hearing will be satisfied with the harmonies of Heaven, and the canticles of the Blessed, who will all with ravishing sweetness sing the Divine praises for all eternity. Ah, my God, I deserve not Paradise, but hell; yet Thy death gives me a hope of obtaining it. I desire and ask Paradise of Thee, not so much in order to enjoy as in order to love Thee for ever, secure that it will never more be possible for me to lose Thee. O Mary, my Mother, O Star of the Sea, it is for thee, by thy prayers, to conduct me to Paradise.

Monday—Easter Week

Morning Meditation.

THE LOVE OF JESUS IN DYING FOR US.

Jesus died for us that by His love for us He might gain the entire dominion of our hearts. *For to this end, wrote St. Paul, Christ died and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.*—(Rom. xiv. 9). Contemplating the death of Jesus Christ, and the love with which He died for men, the Saints esteemed it little to forfeit for His sake, property, honours, and life itself.

I.

Who could have conceived that the Son of God, the Lord of the Universe, to show His love for us, would suffer and die upon the Cross, if He had not really done so? With reason did Moses and Elias on Mount Tabor speak of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ as of an *excess*.—(Luke ix. 31). And what could be greater excess of love than for the Creator to die for His creatures?

To make Thee an adequate return for Thy love, my dear Redeemer, it would be necessary for another God to die for Thee. It would therefore be but little, it would be nothing, were we poor miserable worms of the earth to give up our whole lives for Thee, Who hast given Thine for us.

What should still more excite us to love Him is the ardent desire with which, through the course of His life, He longed for the hour of His death. By this desire He indeed proved how great His love was for us. *I have a baptism, He said, wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.*—(Luke xii. 50). I must be baptized with the Baptism of My own

Blood, to wash away the sins of men, and how am I dying with the desire of My bitter Passion and Death! My soul, lift up your eyes, and behold your Lord hanging upon a disgraceful Cross; behold the Blood which trickles down from His Wounds. Behold His mangled body, all inviting you to love Him. Your Redeemer in His sufferings would have you love Him at least through compassion.

O Jesus, Thou didst not refuse me Thy life and precious Blood, and shall I refuse Thee anything that Thou requirest of me? No, Thou hast given Thyself to me without reserve. I will give myself to Thee without reserve.

II.

St. Francis de Sales, speaking of these words of the Apostle, *The charity of Christ presseth us*—(2 Cor. v. 14), says: “Knowing that Jesus Christ, being true God, has loved us even to the laying-down of His life for us, and this upon a Cross, do we not feel our hearts as it were in a press, forcibly straitened, and love pressed from them by a violence which is the more powerful as it is the more amiable?” And he adds: “Why, therefore, do we not cast ourselves upon Jesus Christ crucified, to die on the Cross for the love of Him Who has willingly died upon the Cross for the love of us? I will cling to Him, should we say, and will never abandon Him; I will die with Him, and be consumed in the fire of His love. My Jesus has given Himself entirely to me, and I will give myself entirely to Him. I will live and die upon His bosom; neither life nor death shall ever separate me from Him. O Eternal Love, my soul seeks Thee and espouses Thee forever!”

Spiritual Reading.

THE HAPPY LIFE OF THOSE WHO LOVE GOD.

Justice and peace have kissed—(Ps. lxxxiv. 11).
Peace resides in every soul in which justice dwells.

Hence David said: *Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the requests of thy heart.*—(Ps. xxxvi. 4). To understand these words we must consider that worldlings seek to satisfy the desires of their hearts with the goods of this earth; but, because these cannot make them happy, their hearts continually make fresh demands; and how much soever they may acquire of these goods, they are not content. Hence the Prophet says: *Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the requests of thy heart.* Give up creatures, seek your delight in God, and He will satisfy all the cravings of your heart.

This is what happened to St. Augustine, who, as long as he sought happiness in creatures, never enjoyed peace; but, as soon as he renounced them and gave to God all the affections of his heart, he exclaimed: “All things are hard, O Lord, and Thou alone art repose.” As if he had said: Ah, Lord! I now know my folly. I expected to find felicity in earthly pleasures; but now I know that they are only vanity and affliction of spirit, and that Thou alone art the peace and joy of our hearts.

The Apostle says that the peace which God gives to those who love Him surpasses all the sensual delights a man can enjoy on this earth. *The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding.*—(Phil. iv. 7). St. Francis of Assisi, in saying “My God and my All!” experienced on this earth an anticipation of Paradise. St. Francis Xavier, in the midst of his labours in India for the glory of Jesus Christ, was so replenished with Divine consolations, that he would exclaim: “Enough, O Lord! Enough!” Where, I ask, has any lover of this world been found, so satisfied with the possession of worldly goods as to say: Enough, O world, enough; no more riches, no more honours, no more applause, no more pleasures? Ah, no! worldlings are constantly seeking after higher honours, greater riches, and new delights; but the more they have of them, the less are their desires satisfied, and the greater their disquietude.

It is necessary to persuade ourselves of this truth, that God alone can give content. Worldlings do not wish to be convinced of it, through an apprehension that, if they give themselves to God, they will lead a

life of bitterness and discontent. But with the Royal Prophet, I say to them : *O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet.*—(Ps. xxxiii. 9). Why, O sinners, will you despise and regard as miserable that life which you have not as yet tried? *O taste and see.* Begin to make a trial of it; hear Mass every day; practise Mental Prayer and the Visit to the Most Holy Sacrament; go to Communion at least once a week; fly from evil conversations; walk always with God; and you shall see that, by such a life, you will enjoy that sweetness and peace which the world, with all its delights, has not hitherto been able to give you.

Evening Meditation.

THOU SHALT BE CROWNED.

I.

Let us imagine to ourselves a soul which, on departing out of this world, enters into eternity in the grace of God. All full of humility and of confidence, it presents itself before Jesus, its Judge and Saviour. Jesus embraces it, gives it His benediction, and causes it to hear these words of sweetness : *Come, my spouse, come!* Purified, He sends it to Purgatory, and, all resigned, it embraces the chastisement, because itself wishes not to enter into Heaven, that land of purity, if it is not wholly purified. The Guardian Angel comes to conduct it to Purgatory; it first returns him thanks for the assistance he has rendered it in its lifetime, and then obediently follows him. Ah, my God, when will that day arrive on which I shall see myself out of this world of perils, secure of never being able to lose Thee any more? Yes, willingly will I go to the Purgatory which shall be mine; joyfully will I embrace all its pains; sufficient will it be for me in that fire to love Thee with all my heart, since there I shall love none else but Thee.

II.

The purgation over, the Angel will return and say to the soul : Come, beautiful soul, the punishment is over; come, and enjoy the Presence of thy God Who is awaiting thee in Paradise. Behold, the soul now passes beyond the clouds, passes beyond the spheres and the stars, and enters into Heaven. O God, what will it say on entering into that beautiful country, and casting its first glance on that city of delights? The Angels and Saints, and especially its own holy advocates, will go to meet it, and with jubilation will they welcome it, saying, Welcome, O companion of our own! Welcome! Ah, my Jesus, do Thou make me worthy of it.

What consolation will the soul not feel in there meeting with relations and friends of its own who have previously entered into Heaven! But greater by far will be its joy in beholding Mary its Queen, and in kissing her feet, and thanking her for the many kindnesses she has done it. The Queen will embrace it, and will herself present it unto Jesus, Who will receive it as a spouse. And Jesus will then present it to His Divine Father, Who will embrace and bless it, saying : *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* And thus will He beatify it with the same beatitude He Himself enjoys. Ah, my God, make me love Thee exceedingly in this life, that I may love Thee exceedingly in eternity. Thou art the object most worthy of being loved; Thou dost deserve all my love; I will love none but Thee. Do Thou help me by Thy grace. And, Mary, my Mother, be thou my protectress.

Tuesday—Easter Week

Morning Meditation.

“YOU ARE BOUGHT WITH A GREAT PRICE.”

We ought to set a higher value on the soul than on all the goods of the earth. To be convinced of this truth

it is enough to know that God Himself condemned His Divine Son to death in order to save our souls. And the Eternal Word has not refused to purchase them with His own Blood. *For God so loved the world as to give his only begotten son . . . that the world may be saved by him.*—(John iii. 16, 17).

I.

The business of eternal salvation is for us the most important of all affairs; but it is also the most neglected by Christians. They are diligent, and lose no time in seeking to gain a lawsuit, or a situation of emolument. How many measures are taken to attain these objects! How many means adopted! They neither eat nor sleep. And what efforts do they make to secure their eternal salvation? How do they live? To save their souls the greater number of Christians do nothing; on the contrary, they do everything to bring their souls to perdition; they live as if *Death, Judgment, Hell, Heaven, and Eternity* were not Truths of Faith, but fables invented by the poets. If a person lose a lawsuit, or a harvest crop, how great is his pain and distress of mind! With what zeal does he labour to repair the loss! If worldlings lose a horse, or a dog, with what diligence do they seek after it? But if they lose the grace of God, they sleep, and jest, and laugh. All blush at being told that they neglect their worldly affairs, but how few are ashamed to neglect the business of eternity, which is the most important of all. The worldling says that the Saints were truly wise, because they sought only the salvation of their souls; and still he himself attends to all worldly business, and utterly neglects the concerns of the soul. *But we entreat you, brethren, says St. Paul, that you do your own business.*—(1 Thess. iv. 10, 11).

Ah, my God, how have I spent so many years, which Thou hast given me in order to secure my eternal salvation? Thou, my Redeemer, hast purchased my soul with Thy Blood, and hast consigned it to me that I may attend to its salvation; and I have laboured only for its perdition by offending Thee Who hast loved me so tenderly. I thank Thee for giving me time to be able to

repair the great loss I have suffered. I have lost my soul and Thy grace. Lord, I am sorry with my whole heart for my past offences, and I resolve, henceforth, to lose everything, even my life, rather than forfeit Thy friendship.

II.

Salvation is the most *important* affair, because if the soul be lost, all is lost. We ought to set a higher value on the soul than on all the goods of the earth. "The soul," says St. Chrysostom, "is more precious than the whole world." To be convinced of this truth it is enough to know that God Himself condemned His Son to death in order to save our souls. The Eternal Word has not refused to purchase them with His own Blood. Hence a holy Father says that man appears to be of as much value as God. And Jesus Christ has asked: *What exchange shall a man give for his soul?*—(Matt. xvi. 26). *For God so loved the world as to give his only begotten son.*—(John iii. 16). If, then, such is the value of the soul, for what earthly good shall a man exchange and lose it?

St. Philip Neri with reason could say that he who does not attend to the salvation of his soul is a fool. Were there on this earth two classes of men, one mortal and the other immortal, and were the former to see the latter seeking after the things of this world, its honours, goods, and amusements, they should certainly exclaim: O fools that you are! You have it in your power to acquire eternal riches, and do you fix your thoughts on those miserable and transitory things? Will you, for these, condemn yourselves to an eternity of torments in the next life? Leave us, for whom all shall end at death, leave us to seek after these earthly goods! But no; we are all immortal. How then does it happen that so many lose their souls for the miserable pleasures of this life? How does it come to pass, says Salvian, that Christians believe in Judgment, Hell, and Eternity, and still live as if they feared them not?

I love Thee above all things, and I resolve always to love Thee, my Sovereign Good, Who art worthy of infinite love. Assist me, my Jesus, that this purpose

may not be like my past resolutions to which I have been always unfaithful. Take me out of life rather than suffer me ever again to offend Thee, or ever to cease to love Thee. O Mary, my hope after Jesus, save me by obtaining for me holy perseverance.

Spiritual Reading.

CONFESSIO.

I.—IMPORTANCE OF FREQUENT CONFESSIO.

I do not intend to treat in this place of the Confessions of those who commit mortal sins, although I shall say something on proximate occasions and on sacrilegious Confessions; but I will principally speak of the Confessions of timorous souls that love perfection and endeavour constantly to purify their souls more and more from the stain of venial sins.

Cesarius relates that a good priest commanded, in the Name of God, a devil who appeared to him, to tell what was most hurtful to him. The demon answered that nothing was more injurious or displeasing to him than frequent Confession. Jesus Christ once said to St. Bridget, that they who wish to preserve fervour should often purify their souls by accusing themselves in Confession of all their defects, and all their negligence in His service. Cassian says that he who aspires to perfection should aim at great purity of conscience; because from purity of conscience the soul passes to perfect love. Hence love corresponds to cleanness of heart. It is, however, necessary to know that in the present state this purity of soul does not consist in a total exemption from all faults; for except our Divine Saviour and His Divine Mother, there neither has been nor will be in this world, any soul free from all stain. *In many things we all offend.*—(James iii. 2). But it consists in two things: first, in a careful guard over the heart, to prevent the commission of every deliberate sin, however venial; and

secondly, in instantly purifying the soul from any fault that it may commit. Now these two are precisely the fruits of frequent Confession.

In the first place, Confession cleanses the soul from the stains it contracts. St. John Climacus relates that a young man, in order to discontinue the scandalous life that he led in the world, went to a Monastery in order to become a Religious. Before his admission the Abbot told him that if he wished to be received, he must make a public confession of all his sins. The young man, who was sincerely resolved to give himself to God, readily obeyed; and behold, while he confessed his faults in the presence of the monks, a holy Religious who was among them saw a man of venerable aspect cancel from a written paper that he held in his hand, every sin the penitent confessed, so that at the end of the Confession all his sins were cancelled. Now, what then took place in a visible manner, happens invisibly to every one that confesses his sins with the requisite dispositions.

Confession not only washes away the stains of the soul, but it also gives it strength against relapse. The angelic Doctor teaches that the virtue of Penance not only destroys the fault that has been committed, but also prevents it from budding forth again. In his Life of St. Malachy, St. Bernard relates that there was a certain woman who was so much given to impatience and to anger that she became insupportable. Hearing from her that she had never confessed her impatience, St. Malachy induced her to make a Confession of all her sins of anger. St. Bernard states that after her Confession she became so meek and patient that she appeared incapable of resenting any injury or insult that she received.

Hence, to acquire purity of conscience, many Saints confessed their sins every day. Such was the practice of St. Catharine of Sienna, of St. Bridget, of Blessed Colletta, of St. Charles Borromeo, of St. Ignatius of Loyola, and of many others. St. Francis Borgia went to Confession even twice a day. If worldlings cannot bear to appear before those whom they love with a stain on the countenance, what wonder is it that souls that love God should endeavour always to purify themselves more and more, in order to render themselves more pleasing

in the eyes of their beloved Lord! Now, I do not intend to require of those who practise frequent Communion to go to Confession every time they communicate; but it is right that they should go to Confession twice or at least once a week, and also when they have committed any deliberate fault.

Evening Meditation.

SEEING AND ENJOYING GOD FOR EVER.

I.

The beauty of the Saints, the heavenly music, and the other delights of Paradise, form but the lesser portion of its treasures. That which gives to the soul its fullness of bliss is seeing a loving God face to face. St. Augustine says that were God to let His beautiful Face be seen by the damned, hell, with all its torments, would become to them a paradise. Even in this world, when God gives a soul in prayer a taste of His sweet Presence, and by a ray of light discovers to it His goodness, and the love He bears it, so great is the contentment that the soul feels itself dissolve and melt away in love; and yet, in this life, it is not possible for us to see God as He is; we behold Him obscured, as if through a thick veil. What, then, will it be, when God will take away that veil from before us, and cause us to behold Him face to face, openly? O Lord, for having turned my back upon Thee no more should I be worthy to behold Thee; but, relying on Thy goodness, I hope to see Thee, and to love Thee in Paradise for ever. I speak thus, because I am speaking with a God Who has died in order to give Paradise to me.

Although the souls that love God are the happiest in this world, yet they cannot, here below, enjoy a happiness full and complete; that fear, which arises from not knowing whether they be deserving of the love or the hatred of their beloved Saviour, keeps them, as it were, in perpetual suffering. But in Paradise the soul is cer-

tain that it loves God, and is loved by God; and it sees that that sweet tie of love which holds it united with God will never be loosened throughout all eternity. The flames of its love will be increased by the clearer knowledge the soul will then possess of what the love of God has been in being made Man, and having willed to die for it; and in having, moreover, given Himself to it in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Its love will be increased by then beholding, in all their distinctness, the graces He has given it, in order to lead it to Heaven; it will see that the crosses sent to it in lifetime have all been artifices of His love to render it happy. It will see, besides, the mercies He has granted it, the many lights and calls to penance. From the summit of that blessed Mount will it behold the many lost souls now in hell for sins less than its own, and it will behold itself now saved, possessed of God, and certain that it can never more lose Him throughout all eternity. My Jesus, my Jesus, when will that too happy day for me arrive?

II.

The happiness of the blessed soul will be perfected by knowing with absolute certainty that that God Whom it then enjoys, it will be able to enjoy for all eternity. Were there to be any fear in the Blessed that they might lose that God Whom they now enjoy, Paradise would be Paradise no longer. But no; the blessed soul is certain with the certainty which it has of the existence of God, that that supreme Good which it enjoys, it will enjoy for ever. That joy, moreover, will not grow less with time; it will be ever new. The blessed one will be ever happy, and ever thirsting for that happiness; and, while ever thirsting, will be ever satiated.

When, therefore, we see ourselves afflicted with the troubles of life, let us lift up our eyes unto Heaven, and console ourselves by saying: Paradise! The sufferings will one day come to an end; nay, they will themselves become objects over which to rejoice. The Saints await us; the Angels await us; Mary awaits us: and Jesus stands with the crown in His hand wherewith to crown us, if we shall be faithful to Him. Ah, my God, when

will that day come on which I shall arrive at possessing Thee, and be able to say unto Thee : My Love, I cannot lose Thee more ! O Mary, my hope, never cease from praying for me, until thou seest me safe at thy feet in Paradise !

Wednesday—Easter Week

Morning Meditation.

“THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH THY WHOLE HEART.”

For to this end Christ died and rose again, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and of the living.—(Rom. xiv. 9). The Saints, contemplating the death of Jesus Christ, thought it little to give their life and all things for the love of so loving a God. How many Martyrs have sacrificed their lives for Him ! How many tender Virgins, renouncing the nuptials of the great, have gone with joy to death to make some return for the affection of a God Who died for their sake ! And what have you done for Jesus' sake ?

I.
But one thing is necessary.—(Luke x. 42). What is this one thing necessary ? It is not necessary to acquire riches, nor to obtain dignities, nor to gain a great name. The only thing necessary is to love God. Whatever is not done for the love of God is lost. This is the greatest and the First Commandment of the Divine Law. To the Pharisee who asked which was the great Commandment of the Law, Jesus Christ answered : *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart . . . This is the greatest and first commandment.*—(Matt. xxii. 37, 38). But this, the greatest of the commandments, is

the most despised by men : there are few who fulfil it. The greater part of men love relatives, friends, and even brute animals, but do not love God. Of these St. John says that they have not life—that they are dead. *He that loveth not abideth in death*—(1 Jo. iii. 14). St. Bernard says that the reward of a soul is estimated by the measure of her love for God.

Let us consider, then, how dear to us should be this command to love God with our whole heart. What object more noble, more magnificent, more powerful, more rich, more beautiful, more bountiful, more merciful, more grateful, more amiable, or more loving than Himself could God give us to love ?

Who more noble than God ? Some boast of a family nobility of five hundred or a thousand years ; but the nobility of God our Father is eternal. He is the Lord of all. Before God all the Angels in Heaven, and all the nobles on earth are but as a drop of water or a grain of dust. *Behold the islands are but as a drop of a bucket—behold the islands are as a little dust*—(Is. xl. 15).

Who more powerful than God ? He can do whatsoever He wills. By an act of His will He created this world, and by another act He can destroy it when He pleases.

Who more wealthy ? He possesses all the riches of Heaven and earth.

Who more beautiful ? Before the beauty of God all the beauties of creatures fade away.

Who more bountiful ? St. Augustine says that God has a greater desire to do good to us than we have to receive it.

Who more merciful ? If the most impious sinner on earth humble himself before God, and repent of his sins, God instantly pardons and embraces him.

Who more grateful ? He does not leave unrewarded the smallest act we perform for His sake.

Who more amiable ? God is so amiable that, by barely seeing and loving Him in Heaven, the Saints feel a joy which makes them perfectly happy and content for all eternity. The greatest of the torments of the damned arises from knowing that this God is so amiable, and that they cannot love Him.

O Infinite Goodness ! O Infinite Love ! My enamoured

Jesus, fill my heart with Thy love so that I may forget myself, and think of nothing but of loving and pleasing Thee. I now consecrate to Thee my body, my soul, my will, my liberty. Till now I have sought to gratify myself to Thy great displeasure. I am exceedingly sorry, my crucified Love. I will henceforth seek nothing but Thee, my God and my All.

II.

And who is more *loving* than God? In the Old Law men might doubt whether God loved them with a tender love; but, after seeing Him die on a Cross for us, how can we doubt the tenderness and the ardent affection with which He loves us? Let us raise our eyes and look at Jesus, the true Son of God, fastened with nails to a gibbet, and let us consider the intensity of the love which He bears us. That Cross, those Wounds, says St. Bernard, cry out, and proclaim to us that He truly loves us. And what more could He do to convince us of His great love than to lead a life of sorrow for thirty-three years, and afterwards die in torments on the infamous tree of the Cross, in order to wash away our sins with His own Blood? *Christ also hath loved us, and hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*—(Apoc. i. 5). “How,” says St. Philip Neri, “is it possible for him who believes in God to love anything but God?” Contemplating God’s love towards men, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi began one day to ring the bell, saying that she wished to invite all nations of the earth to love so loving a God. St. Francis de Sales used to say with tears: “To love our God it would be necessary to have an infinite love; and we throw away our love on vain, contemptible things.”

Alas, my Jesus, how many times have I renounced Thy friendship and made myself a slave of Satan, dishonouring Thy Infinite Majesty! I grieve above all things for having so grievously insulted Thee. Ah, my God, bind my will to Thy feet with the sweet cords of Thy holy love, that it may wish for nothing but what

pleases Thee. May I take Thy Will as the sole guide of my life. I renounce everything. Thou alone art sufficient for me.

Spiritual Reading.

CONFESSION.

II.—EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

Every one knows that for a good Confession three things are necessary: an Examination of Conscience, Sorrow, and the Purpose to Avoid Sin.

As to the *examination of conscience*, for those that frequent the Sacraments, it is not necessary to distress the head by efforts to find out all the minute circumstances of venial sins. I would rather see such persons careful to discover the causes and roots of their attachments and tepidity. Some there are who have the same story to tell, and recite the same faults without sorrow, and without any thought of amendment.

For spiritual souls that go frequently to Confession, and guard against deliberate venial sins, it is not necessary to spend a long time in the examination of conscience. With regard to grievous sins, they need not scrutinize the conscience, for had they committed any mortal sin, they would know it without examination. With regard to venial sins, if they have been fully deliberate, they, too, by the remorse that they cause, would make themselves known to the soul. Besides, there is no obligation of confessing all our venial transgressions; consequently we are not obliged to make a strict search after them, and much less after the number; the circumstance, the manner, or the causes of them; it is enough to confess those that are most grievous, and most opposed to perfection, and to tell the rest in general terms. And when you have not certain matter for the Sacrament, tell some sin of your past life for which you have great sorrow; and say, for example: I accuse myself in a special manner of all the faults I have committed in my past life against Charity, Purity, or

Obedience. How consoling is the doctrine of St. Francis de Sales on this point. "Be not troubled," he says, "if you do not remember all your little faults at Confession; for as you often fall imperceptibly, so you are often raised up imperceptibly," that is, by the acts of love, or by the other good acts that devout souls are accustomed to perform.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.—HOW DESERVING JESUS CHRIST IS OF OUR LOVE ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN HIS PASSION.

I.

The whole sanctity and perfection of a soul consists in loving Jesus Christ our God, our sovereign Good, and our Redeemer. Whoever loves Me, says Jesus Christ Himself, shall be loved by My Eternal Father : *The Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me.*—(John xvi. 27). Some, says St. Francis de Sales, make perfection consist in an austere life; others in prayer; others in frequenting the Sacraments; others in alms-deeds. But they deceive themselves : perfection consists in loving God with our whole heart. The Apostle wrote : *Above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection.*—(Col. iii. 14). It is charity which keeps united and preserves all the virtues that render a man perfect. Hence St. Augustine said : "Love God, and do whatever you please"; because a soul which loves God is taught by that same love never to do anything that will displease Him, and to leave nothing undone that may please Him.

But perhaps God does not deserve all our love? I have loved thee with an everlasting love.—(Jer. xxxi. 8). O man, says the Lord, behold I was the first to love thee. Thou wast not yet in the world, nay, the world itself was not, and I already loved thee. As long as I am God, I love thee; as long as I have loved Myself, I have also

loved thee. With good reason, therefore, did St. Agnes, that young holy virgin, reply to those who wished to unite her to an earthly spouse : "I am engaged to another Lover." "Go," said she, "O lovers of this world, cease to ask my love; my God was the first to love me. He has loved me from all eternity : it is but just, then, for me to give Him all my affections, and to love none other but Him."

II.

As Almighty God knew that man is won by kindness, He determined to lavish His gifts upon him, and so take captive the affections of his heart. For this reason He said : *I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love*—(Osee, xi. 4). I will catch men by those very snares by which they are naturally caught, that is, by the snares of love. And such exactly are all the favours of God to man. After having given him a soul created to His own image, with memory, understanding, and will, and a body with its senses, He created Heaven and earth for him; yes, all that exists, all for the love of man,—the firmament, the stars, the planets, the seas, the rivers, the fountains, the hills, the plains, metals, fruits, and a countless variety of animals : and all these God made that they might minister to the uses of man, and that man might love Him in gratitude for so many admirable gifts. "The heavens and the earth and all things tell me to love Thee," says St. Augustine. "My Lord," he said, "whatever I behold on the earth, or above the earth, all speak to me and exhort me to love Thee; because all assure me that Thou hast made them for the love of me." The Abbot de Rancé, founder of La Trappe, when from his hermitage he stood and surveyed the hills, the fountains, the birds, the flowers, the planets, and the skies, felt himself animated by each one of these creatures to love that God Who had created all through love for him.

Morning Meditation.

“ SHE IS AN INFINITE TREASURE TO MEN.”

The earth, the heavens, and all nature with astonishment beheld Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, the Lord of the Universe, die of intense pain and anguish, on a disgraceful Cross—and why? *He hath loved us and hath delivered himself for us*—(Eph. v. 2). And do men believe this and not love God?

I.

O inestimable value of Divine love which makes us rich before God! It is the treasure by which we gain His friendship. *She is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God*—(Wis. vii. 14). The only thing we ought to fear, says St. Gregory of Nyssa, is the loss of God's friendship; and the only object of our desires should be its attainment. It is love that obtains the friendship of God. Hence, according to St. Laurence Justinian, by love the poor become rich, and without love the rich are poor. “No greater riches than to have charity. With charity the poor man is rich, and without charity the rich man is poor.”

How great is the joy a person feels in thinking he is loved by a man of exalted rank! But how much greater must be the consolation a soul derives from the conviction that God loves her! *I love them that love me*—(Prov. viii. 17). In a soul that loves God the Three Persons of the Adorable Trinity dwell. *If any one love me he will keep my word; and my Father will abide with him; and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him*—(John xiv. 23). St. Bernard writes that among all the virtues charity is the one that

unites us to God. St. Catharine of Bologna used to say that love is the golden chain that binds the soul to God. St. Augustine says that “love is a link connecting the lover with the beloved.” Hence were God not immense, where should He be found? Find a soul that loves God, and there God is certainly found. Of this St. John assures us. *He that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him*—(1 Jo. iv. 16). A poor man loves riches, but he does not therefore enjoy them; he may love a throne, but he does not therefore possess a kingdom. But the man that loves God possesses God. *He abideth in God and God in him*.

It is true, O my Jesus, that I am so wretched as to have often offended Thee after so many special lights and graces. I am no longer worthy to be consumed in those blessed flames with which the Saints are inflamed. I ought rather to burn in hell fire. But Thou dost command me to love Thee, and I will obey Thee. I will love Thee, Jesus, with my whole heart.

II.

St. Thomas says that love draws in its train all other virtues, and directs them all to unite us more closely to God. Hence, because from charity all virtues are born, St. Laurence Justinian called it *the mother of all virtues*. Hence St. Augustine used to say: “Love, and do what you wish.” He that loves God can only do what is good; if he does evil he shows that he has ceased to love God. And when he ceases to love God, all things can profit him nothing. If, said the Apostle, I gave all my possessions to the poor, and my body to the flames, and have not charity, I am nothing. *And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing*—(1 Cor. xiii. 3).

Love also prevents us from feeling the pains of this life. St. Bonaventure says that the love of God is like honey; it sweetens the bitterest things. And what more sweet to a soul that loves God than to suffer for Him? She knows that by cheerfully embracing sufferings she pleases God, and that her pains shall be the brightest

jewels in her crown in Paradise. And who is there that will not willingly suffer and die in imitation of Jesus Christ, Who has gone before us, carrying His Cross, to offer Himself in sacrifice for the love of us, and inviting us to follow His example. *If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me*—(Matt. xvi. 24). For this purpose He has condescended to humble Himself to death, and to the opprobrious death of the Cross, for the love of us. *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross*—(Phil. ii. 8).

O Jesus, I have believed all this, and yet not only have I not loved Thee, but I have frequently offended Thee. Pardon me, I beseech Thee, and keep me ever mindful of the death Thou hast suffered for me, that I may never more offend Thee, but may always love Thee. Holy Mary, Mother of God, enable me to love Jesus : this is the only favour I ask of thee.

Spiritual Reading.

CONFESSION.

III.—CONTRITION.

In the second place, *sorrow* is necessary ; this is the principal condition necessary for obtaining the pardon of sins. The most *sorrowful*, not the *longest* Confessions, are the best. The proof of a good Confession is found, says St. Gregory, not in the multitude of the words of the penitent, but in true compunction of heart. But let those who go frequently to Confession, and abhor even venial faults, banish all doubts regarding the sincerity of their sorrow. Some are troubled because they do not *feel* sorrow ; they wish to shed tears, and to feel a tender sorrow every time they receive the Sacrament of Penance ; and, because with all their efforts they are unable to excite this tender sorrow, they feel always uneasy about their Confessions. But you must be per-

sued that true sorrow consists not in feeling it, but in wishing for it. All the merit of virtue is in the will ; hence, speaking of the Virtue of Faith, Gerson has said that sometimes a person who wishes to believe has more merit than another who believes. Speaking of sorrow, St. Thomas says that the essential sorrow necessary for Confession is a displeasure at having committed sin ; and this sorrow is not in the sensitive part of the soul, but in the will ; for sensible sorrow is an effect of the displeasure of the will, which effect we are not always able to produce, because the inferior part does not always follow and obey the superior part of the soul. Whenever the will is displeased, above all things, at having committed sin, the Confession is a good one.

Be careful to abstain from forced efforts to excite sensible sorrow. Remember that, with regard to interior acts, the best are those that we perform with the least violence, and with the greatest sweetness ; for the Holy Ghost ordereth *all things sweetly and peacefully*—(Wis. viii. 1). Hence the holy penitent Ezechias said of the sorrow that he felt for his sins : *Behold in peace is my bitterness most bitter*—(Is. xxxviii. 17). He felt great sorrow, but it was accompanied with peace.

When you wish to receive absolution, be careful in your preparation for Confession, first to ask of Jesus Christ, and of the sorrowful Mother Mary, a true sorrow for your sins. Make afterwards, as has been already said, a short examination of conscience, and then as to the sorrow, it is enough for you to say with sincerity :

My God, I love Thee above all things ; I hope, through the Blood of Jesus Christ, for the pardon of all my sins, for which I am sorry with my whole heart, because by them I have offended and displeased Thine infinite Goodness ; I abhor them above every evil, and I unite my abhorrence of them to the abhorrence that Jesus had for them in the Garden of Gethsemani. I purpose, with Thy grace, never more to offend Thee.

And as often as you have sincerely wished to make these acts, go in peace to receive absolution, without fear or scruple. St. Teresa gave another excellent means of removing anxiety about sorrow for sins. "See," said the Saint, "whether you have a sincere

purpose not to commit the sins that you confess; if you have, doubt not that you also have true sorrow."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

II.—HOW DESERVING JESUS CHRIST IS OF OUR LOVE ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN HIS PASSION.

I.

St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, when she held any beautiful flower in her hand, was enkindled by the sight of it with love for God, and would say: "And God, then, has thought from all eternity of creating this flower for love of me!" Thus did that flower become, as it were, a dart of love, which sweetly wounded her, and united her more and more to her God. On the other hand, St. Teresa, at the sight of trees, fountains, rivers, lakes, or meadows, declared that all these fair things upbraided her for her ingratitude in loving so coldly a God Who created them that they might draw her to His love. To the like purpose it is related of a pious hermit, that when walking through the country, it seemed to him the plants and flowers in his pathway reproached him for the cold return of love he made to God; so that he went along gently striking them with his staff, and saying to them: "Oh, be silent, be silent! You call me an ungrateful wretch; you tell me God has made you for love of me, and yet I do not love Him; but now I understand you, be silent, be silent; do not reproach me more."

II.

But God was not satisfied with giving us so many beautiful creatures. He has gone to such lengths to gain our love, as to give us Himself. The Eternal Father did not hesitate to give us even His only-begotten Son: *For God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son*—(John iii. 16). When the Eternal Father saw that

we were all dead, and deprived of His grace by sin, what did He do? For the immense love, nay, as the Apostle writes, for the *exceeding* love He bore us, He sent His beloved Son to make atonement for us; and so restore to us that life of which sin had robbed us: *Who through his exceeding charity with which he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ*—(Eph. ii. 4, 5). And in granting us His Son (not sparing His Son, that He might spare us), He has granted us every good together with Him, His grace, His love and Paradise, since assuredly all these gifts are much less than that of 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).

Friday—Easter Week

(First Friday of April)

Morning Meditation.

“THE CLEFTS OF THE ROCK.”

Oh, what a safe place of refuge shall we not find in the sacred “clefts of the rock;” that is to say, in the Wounds of Jesus Christ? “The clefts of the rock,” says St. Peter Damian, “are the Redeemer’s Wounds; in these my soul has placed its hope.”

I.

There is no means which can more surely kindle in us Divine love than to consider the Passion of Jesus Christ. St. Bonaventure says that the Wounds of Jesus Christ, because they are Wounds of love, are darts which wound

hearts the most hard, and flames which set on fire souls the most cold : "O Wounds, wounding stony hearts, and inflaming frozen minds !" It is impossible that a soul which believes and thinks on the Passion of the Lord should offend Him and not love Him, nay, rather that it should not run into a holy madness of love, at seeing a God as it were mad for love of us : "We have seen," says St. Laurence Justinian, "Wisdom infatuated by too much love." Hence it is that the Gentiles, as the Apostle says, when hearing him preach the Passion of Jesus crucified, thought it a folly : *We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews indeed a scandal, but to the Gentiles foolishness*—(1 Cor. i. 23). How is it possible, said they, that a God, almighty and most happy, such as He Who is preached to us, could have been willing to die for His creatures ?

Ah, my Jesus, if I gaze upon Thy body, without I see only Wounds and Blood. If within in Thy Heart, I find nothing but bitterness and anguish which make Thee suffer the agonies of death. Ah, God enamoured of men, how is it possible that goodness so great, and such a love, should remain so badly corresponded to by men ? It is wont to be said that love is repaid by love ; but Thy love—with what manner of love can it be ever repaid ? It would be necessary that a God should die for Thee to make recompense for the love which Thou hast borne towards us in dying for us. O Cross, O Wounds, O Death of Jesus, you bind me closely to love my loving Jesus !

II.

Behold your Redeemer expiring, and with His dying breath saying : *It is consummated* (John xix. 30). As if He had said : O men, all has been completed and done for your redemption. Love Me, then, since I have nothing more that I can do to make you love Me. My soul, look up at thy Jesus Who is now going to die. Look at those eyes growing dim, that face grown pale, that Heart which is beating with languid pulse, that Body which is now abandoning itself to death : and look at that beautiful Soul which is just on the point of forsaking that Sacred Body. The heavens are darkened, the earth

trembles, the sepulchres are opened ; signs that now the Maker of the world is about to die. Lo, at last, Jesus, after having commended His Blessed Soul to His Father, first giving a deep sigh from His afflicted Heart, and then bowing His head in sign of the offering of His life, which at this moment He renewed for our salvation, at length, by the violence of His sorrow, expires and renders up His Spirit into the hands of His beloved Father.

Approach, my soul, to this holy Cross. Embrace the feet of thy dead Saviour, and think that He is dead through the love which He bore to thee. Ah, my Jesus, to what has Thy affection towards me reduced Thee ? And who, more than I, has enjoyed the fruits of Thy death ? Make me, I beseech Thee, understand what love that must have been that a God should die for me, to the end that from this day forth I may love none other than Thee. I love Thee, O greatest Good ; O true Lover of my soul, into Thy hands I here commend it. I beseech Thee, by the merits of Thy death, make me to die to all earthly loves, in order that I may love Thee alone, Who art alone worthy of all my love. Mary, my hope, pray to Jesus for me.

Hail, Jesus, our Love, and Mary, our hope !

"O riven Heart, O Love for me now crucified !

Give to my soul repose within Thy wounded side !"

Spiritual Reading.

CONFESSIO.

IV.—PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT—FIRM, UNIVERSAL, EFFICACIOUS.

In the third place, a purpose to sin no more is necessary for a good Confession ; and this purpose must be firm, universal, and efficacious.

First, it must be firm. Some say : I would wish never more to commit this sin : I would wish, never more to offend God. Alas ! this expression, *I would wish* ; denotes that the purpose is not firm. In order to have

a firm purpose, you must say with a resolute will : *I will never more commit this sin: I will never more deliberately offend God.*

Secondly, it must be *universal*. The penitent must purpose to avoid all sins without exception, that is, all mortal sins. With regard to venial sins, it is sufficient for the validity of the Sacrament to have sorrow for one species of them, and to have a firm purpose to avoid it. Spiritual souls should purpose to avoid all deliberate venial sins; and with regard to indeliberate venial sins, it is enough to resolve to guard against them according to the best of their ability; for it is impossible to avoid all indeliberate sins.

Thirdly, the purpose of avoiding sin must be *efficacious*; that is, it must make the penitent adopt the means of not relapsing into the sins that he confesses, and must make him avoid the proximate occasions of a relapse. An occasion is called proximate in which a person has frequently fallen into grievous sin, or has been, without a just cause, an occasion of sin to others. It is not enough for penitents to purpose merely to renounce sin: it is necessary also to resolve to remove the occasion of it; otherwise all their confessions, though they should receive a thousand absolutions, will be invalid: for not to remove the proximate occasion of mortal sin is in itself a mortal sin. And, as I have already shown in my *Moral Theology* (Lib. 6, n. 454), he that receives absolution without a firm purpose of removing the proximate occasion of mortal sins, commits a new mortal sin, and is guilty of sacrilege.

But some one may say: If I separate from such a person, if I give up such a familiarity, scandal will be the consequence, and it will be an occasion of talk. I answer: You are wrong; you will, on the contrary, give scandal by not removing the occasion, to those who are aware of the friendship; and be assured, that although they may not speak in your presence, they think your conduct deserving of blame. But you will say: To separate from such a one would be an act of incivility, and even of ingratitude, for such a one assists, serves me, and relieves me. Yes, such a one helps to remove

you from God, and to make you lead an unhappy life here, and a more unhappy life hereafter. Is it incivility or ingratitude to avoid such a person?

Civility and gratitude are first due to Jesus Christ, Who is a Sovereign of infinite Majesty, and from Whom we have received immense benefits. Do you not then see that it is passion makes you speak in this manner, and makes you seek pretexis in order to bring you to eternal perdition? Ah! give no more pain to the Heart of Jesus Christ. To St. Ludgard, while she was miserably entangled in a dangerous friendship, Jesus appeared, and showed her His Heart grievously wounded. The Saint began to weep over her fault, and took leave of her friend, saying that she could love no other than Jesus Christ, to Whom she had been espoused. Thenceforward she consecrated herself entirely to the love of her Spouse, and became a Saint.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

III.—HOW DESERVING JESUS CHRIST IS OF OUR LOVE ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN HIS PASSION.

I.

The Divine Son of God, through His love towards us, has given Himself wholly to us: *Who loved me, and delivered himself for me*—(Gal. ii. 20). In order to redeem us from everlasting death, and to recover for us the Divine grace and Heaven which we had forfeited, He became Man, and assumed flesh like our own: *Et verbum caro factum est; And the word was made flesh*. Behold, then, a God reduced to nothingness: *But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant . . . and in habit found as a man*—(Philipp. ii. 7). Behold the Sovereign Lord of the world humbling Himself so low as to subject Himself to all the miseries which the rest of men endure.

But what is more astonishing still is that He could

very well have saved us without dying and without suffering at all; and yet He chose a life of sorrow and contempt, and a death of bitterness and ignominy even so far as to expire on a Cross—the gibbet of infamy, the award of vilest criminals: *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross*—(Philipp. ii. 8). But why, if He could have ransomed us without suffering, why should He choose to die, and to die on a Cross? To show us how He loved us. *Who loved me, and delivered himself for me.* He loved us, and because He loved us He delivered Himself up to sorrows, and ignominies, and to a death more cruel than ever any man endured in this world.

II.

That great lover of Jesus Christ, St. Paul, has written: *The charity of Christ presseth us*—(2 Cor. v. 14); wishing to show us by these words that it is not so much the sufferings themselves of Jesus Christ as His love in enduring them that obliges us and, as it were, constrains us to love Him. Let us hear what St. Francis de Sales says on this text: “When we remember that Jesus Christ, true God, has loved us to such an excess as to suffer death, and the death of the Cross for us, our hearts are, as it were, put in a wine-press, and suffer violence, until love be extorted from them; but a violence which, the stronger it is, becomes the more delightful.” He then goes on to say: “Ah! why do we not therefore cast ourselves on Jesus crucified, to die on the Cross with Him, Who has chosen to die for love of us? I will hold Him, we should say, and I will never let Him go; I will die with Him, and will be consumed in the flames of His love. One flame shall consume this Divine Creator and His miserable creature. My Jesus gives Himself unreservedly to me, and I will give myself unreservedly to Him. I will live and die on His loving Breast; neither life nor death shall ever separate me from Him. O eternal Love, my soul longs after Thee, and makes choice of Thee for ever! Come, O Holy Spirit, and inflame our hearts with love. O love, O death, to die to all other loves, to live solely to that of

Jesus Christ! O Redeemer of our souls, grant that we may eternally sing: ‘Live, Jesus! I love Jesus; live, Jesus, Whom I love! Yes, I love Jesus, Who reigns for evermore.’”

Saturday—Easter Week

Morning Meditation.

THE LOVE OF MARY'S HEART FOR GOD.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart. In Mary Divine love was so ardent that well might even the Seraphim have descended from Heaven to learn in the heart of Mary how to love God.

I.

St. Anselm says that “wherever there is the greatest purity, there is also the greatest charity.” The more a heart is pure, and empty of itself, the greater is the fullness of its love towards God. The most holy Mary, because she was all humility, and had nothing of self in her, was filled with Divine love, so that “her love towards God surpassed that of all men and Angels,” as St. Bernardine writes. Therefore St. Francis de Sales with reason called her “the Queen of love.”

God has indeed given men the precept to love Him with their whole heart: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart*—(Matt. xxii. 37); but, as St. Thomas declares, “this commandment will be fully and perfectly fulfilled by men only in Heaven, and not on earth, where it is only fulfilled imperfectly.” On this subject Blessed Albert the Great remarks, that, in a certain sense, it would have been unbecoming had God given a precept that was never to have been perfectly fulfilled. But this would have been the case had not the

Divine Mother perfectly fulfilled it. The Saint says: "Either some one fulfilled this precept, or no one; if any one, it must have been the most Blessed Virgin." Richard of St. Victor confirms this opinion, saying: "The Mother of our Emmanuel practised virtues in their very highest perfection. Who has ever fulfilled as she did that first commandment, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart?* In her Divine love was so ardent that no defect of any kind could have access to her." "Divine love," says St. Bernard, "so penetrated and filled the soul of Mary, that no part of her was left untouched; so that she loved with her whole heart, with her whole soul, with her whole strength, and was full of grace." Therefore Mary could well say: My Beloved has given Himself all to me, and I have given myself all to Him: *My Beloved to me, and I to him*—(Cant. ii. 16). "Ah! well might even the Seraphim," says Richard, "have descended from Heaven to learn, in the heart of Mary, how to love God."

O Mary, my Mother, thou desirest nothing else but to see Jesus loved; do thou obtain for me this grace above all others. I do not ask of thee for earthly goods, or honours, or riches. I ask for what thy own heart desires most for me. I wish to love my God.

II.

God, Who is love, came on earth to enkindle in the hearts of all the flame of His Divine charity; but in no heart did He enkindle it so much as in that of His Mother; for her heart was entirely pure from all earthly affections, and fully prepared to burn with this blessed flame. Thus St. Saphronius says that "Divine love so inflamed her that nothing earthly could enter her affections; she was always burning with this heavenly flame, and, so to say, inebriated with it." Hence the heart of Mary became all fire and flames, as we read of her in the sacred Canticles: *The lamps thereof are fire and flame*—(Cant. viii. 6); fire burning within through love, as St. Anselm explains it; and flames shining without by the example she gave to all in the practice of virtues. When Mary, then, was in this world, and

bore Jesus in her arms, she could well be called, "fire carrying fire"; and with far more reason than the woman spoken of by Hippocrates, who was thus called because she carried fire in her hand. Yes, for St. Ildephonsus said that "the Holy Ghost heated, inflamed, and melted Mary with love, as the fire does iron; so that the flame of the Holy Spirit was seen, and nothing was felt but the fire of the love of God." St. Thomas of Villanova says that the bush seen by Moses, which burnt without being consumed, was a real symbol of Mary's heart. Therefore with reason, says St. Bernard, was she seen by St. John clothed with the sun: *and there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun*—(Apoc. xii. 1); "for," continues the Saint, "she was so closely united to God by love, and penetrated so deeply the abyss of Divine wisdom, that, without a personal union with God, it would seem impossible for a creature to have a closer union with Him."

O most beautiful Mary, O most amiable Mary, thou hast gained the Heart of God! Take also my heart, and make me a saint. I love thee. In thee is my confidence. Most amiable Mother, pray for me.

Spiritual Reading.

CONFESSION.

V.—FALSE SHAME.

O God, how many souls shall, on account of this accursed shame, burn and burn forever in the very depths of hell! Some Christians, through human respect, and through fear of losing the esteem of others, easily continue for months and years to make sacrilegious Confessions and Communions. In the Chronicles of the Discalced Carmelites it is related that a young girl of great virtue consented to a sin against chastity; she concealed the sin three times in Confession, and went to Communion; after the third Communion she

suddenly fell dead. Because she was regarded as a Saint her body was laid in a particular part of the church of the Jesuits; but after the obsequies were finished, and the Church closed, the confessor was conducted by two Angels to the place of interment; she came forth, fell on her knees, and threw from her mouth into a chalice prepared for them, the three consecrated Hosts which had been sacrilegiously received, and miraculously preserved in her breast. The Angels stripped her of the scapular; the miserable girl instantly presented a horrible aspect, and was carried out of sight by two devils.

But how can a Christian that has been so daring as to sin grievously against the Divine Majesty, and has thus merited hell, where he should suffer eternal shame, find an excuse before God for concealing a sin in Confession, in order to avoid the momentary and trifling confusion that would arise from confessing it to a priest? If he wishes to be pardoned by God, and to deliver himself from the hell he has deserved, the shame caused by the confession of his sin disposes him to receive pardon. It is but just that the man that has despised God should humble and confound himself. Adelaïde, the sinner, gave a beautiful answer to the devil. Being called by God to a change of life, she was converted, and instantly resolved to make a good Confession; the devil placed before her eyes the shame that she should suffer in confessing all her sins, and said to her: "Adelaïde, where are you going?" She courageously answered: "Filthy beast, do you ask me where I am going? I am going to confound myself and to confound you."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

IV.—HOW DESERVING JESUS CHRIST IS OF OUR LOVE ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN HIS PASSION.

I.

The love of Jesus Christ towards men created in Him a longing desire for the moment of His death, when His

love should be fully manifested to them; hence He went to say in His lifetime: *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!*—(Luke xii. 50). I have to be baptized in My own Blood; and how do I feel Myself straitened with the desire that the hour of My Passion may soon arrive; for then man will know the love I bear him! Hence St. John, speaking of that night in which Jesus began His Passion, writes: *Jesus knowing that his hour was come, that he should pass out of this world to the Father; having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*—(John xiii. 1). The Redeemer called that hour His own hour (*hora ejus*), because the time of His death was the time desired by Him, as it was then that He wished to give men the last proof of His love, by dying for them upon a Cross, overwhelmed by sorrows.

But what could have ever induced a God to die as a malefactor upon a Cross between two sinners with such insult to His Divine Majesty? "What did this?" asks St. Bernard. He answers: "It was love, careless of its dignity." Ah, love indeed, when it tries to make itself known, does not seek what is becoming to the dignity of the lover, but what will serve best to declare itself to the object loved. St. Francis of Paula, therefore, had good reason to cry out at the sight of a Crucifix: "O charity! O charity! O charity!" And in like manner, when we look upon Jesus on the Cross, we should all exclaim: O love! O love! O love!

II.

Ah, if Faith had not assured us of it, who could have ever believed that a God, almighty, most happy, and the Lord of all, should have condescended to love man to such an extent that He seems to go out of Himself for the love of him? We have seen Wisdom itself, that is the Eternal Word, become foolish through the excessive love He bore to man! So spoke St. Laurence Justinian. "We see Wisdom itself infatuated through excess of love." St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi said the same. One day, being in an ecstacy, she took a wooden

Crucifix in her hands and cried out: "Yes, my Jesus, Thou art mad with love! I repeat it, and I will say it for ever: My Jesus, Thou art mad with love!" But no, says St. Denis the Areopagite: "No, it is not madness, but the ordinary effect of Divine love, which makes him who loves go out of himself in order to give himself up entirely to the object of his love: Divine love causes ecstasy."

Oh, if men would only pause and, looking at Jesus on the Cross, consider the love He has borne each one of them! "With what love," says St. Francis de Sales, "would not our souls become enkindled at the sight of those flames which are in the Redeemer's breast! And oh, what happiness, to be able to be consumed by that same fire with which our God burns for us! What joy, to be united to God by the chains of love!" St. Bonaventure called the Wounds of Jesus Christ, Wounds which pierce the most senseless hearts, and which inflame the most icy souls. How many darts of love come forth from those Wounds, to wound the hardest hearts! Oh, what flames issue from the burning Heart of Jesus Christ to inflame the coldest souls! And chains, how many, from that wounded side, to bind the most stubborn wills!

Low Sunday

Morning Meditation.

"THIS IS THE VICTORY THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, OUR FAITH."

A false balance is in his hand—(Osee xii. 7). In these words the Holy Spirit warns us not to be deceived by the world, because the world weighs its goods in a false balance; we should weigh them in the true balance of

Faith, which will show us what are the true goods. Oh, how wretched I have been, O Lord, in having, for so many years, gone after the vanities of the world, and left Thee, the Sovereign Good!

I.

The thought of the vanity of the world, and that all things that the world values are but falsehood and deceit, has made many souls resolve to give themselves wholly to God. *What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?*—(Matt. xvi. 26). How many young persons has this great maxim of the Gospel brought to leave relatives, country, possessions, honours, and even crowns, to go to shut themselves up in cloisters or deserts, there to think of God alone! The day of death is called the day of destruction: *The day of destruction is at hand*—(Deut. xxxii. 35). It is a day of destruction, because all the goods we have gained on earth must be left on the day of our death. Wherefore St. Ambrose wisely says that we falsely call these good things *our* good things, for we cannot carry them with us into the other world, where we must dwell forever. It is our holy deeds alone that accompany us, and they alone will comfort us in eternity.

All earthly fortunes, the highest dignities, gold, silver, the most precious jewels, when contemplated from the bed of death lose their splendour; the dark shadow of death obscures even sceptres and crowns, and makes us see that whatever the world values is but smoke, dust, vanity, and misery. And, in truth, at the time of death, what profit is there in all the riches acquired by the dying person, if nothing belongs to him after death except a wooden box, in which he is placed to grow corrupt? For what will vaunted beauty of body serve when there remains of it only a little polluted dust and four fleshless limbs?

What is the life of man upon earth? Behold it, as described by St. James: *It is a vapour which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards will pass away*—(James iv. 15). To-day this great man is esteemed, feared, praised; to-morrow he is despised, contemned, and

abused. *I have seen the wicked highly exalted and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus. And I passed by and, lo, he was not!*—(Ps. xxxvi, 35, 36). He is no longer to be found in his beloved house, in this great palace which he built; and where is he? He is become dust in the grave!

A false balance is in his hand—(Osee xii, 7). In these words the Holy Spirit warns us not to be deceived by the world, because the world weighs its goods in a false balance; we ought to weigh them in the true balance of Faith, which will show us what are the true goods which never end. St. Teresa said we should never take account of anything that ends with death. O God, what greatness has remained to those many first ministers of state, commanders of armies, princes, Roman emperors, now that the scene is changed, and they find themselves in eternity! *Their memory has perished with a noise*—(Ps. ix, 7). They made a great figure in the world, and their names resounded among all; but when they were dead, for them was changed rank, name, and everything. It is useful here to notice an inscription placed over a certain cemetery in which many great men and ladies are buried: “See where end all greatness, all earthly pomp, all beauty. Worms, dust, a worthless stone, a little sand, close the brief scene at the end of all.”

Oh, how wretched I have been, O Lord, in having for so many years gone after the vanities of the world, and left Thee, the Sovereign Good!

II.

The fashion of this world passeth away—(1 Cor. vii, 31). Our life is but a scene that passes away and speedily ends; and it must end for all, whether nobles or commoners, kings or subjects, rich or poor. Happy he who, in this scene, has played his part well before God. Philip III., King of Spain, died a young man, at the age of forty-two years; and before he died he said to those who stood by: “When I am dead proclaim the spectacle that you now see; proclaim that, in death, to have been a king serves only to make one feel the pain of having reigned.” And then he lamented, saying:

“Oh that during this time I had been in a desert, becoming a Saint, that now I might appear with more confidence before the tribunal of Jesus Christ!”

We know the change of life of St. Francis Borgia at the sight of the corpse of the Empress Isabella, who, in life, was most beautiful, but, after death, struck horror into all who saw her. Borgia, when he saw her, exclaimed, “Thus, then, end the good things of this world!” and he gave himself wholly to God. Oh, that we could all imitate him before death comes upon us! But let us make haste, because death runs towards us, and we know not when it will arrive. Let us not so act that the light that God will then give us will cause us nothing but remorse, when we hold in our hands the candle of death. Let us resolve to do now what we shall then wish to have done, and shall not be able to do.

No, my God, it is not enough that Thou hast hitherto borne with me; I do not wish that Thou shouldst wait longer to see me give myself wholly to Thee. Thou hast warned me many times to have done with this world, and to give myself all to Thy love. Now Thou callest to me to turn to Thee; behold, I come, receive me into Thy arms. I abandon myself wholly to Thee. O spotless Lamb, sacrificed on a Cross for me, wash me first with Thy Blood, and pardon all the injuries Thou hast received from me; and then inflame me with Thy holy love. I love Thee above everything; I love Thee with all my heart. And what can I find in the world more worthy of love than Thou art, or that has loved me more? O Mary, Mother of God, and my advocate, pray for me; obtain for me a true and lasting change of life. In thee I trust.

Spiritual Reading.

CONFESSION.

VI.—DELUSIONS AND VAIN FEARS.

Along with false shame, the devil endeavours to fill the mind of sinners with many delusions and vain fears.

Such a one says : My confessor will rebuke me severely if I tell this sin. Why should he rebuke you ? Tell me, were you a confessor, would you speak harshly to a poor penitent who should come to manifest his miseries to you, in the hope of being raised up from his fallen state ? How, then, can you imagine that a confessor, who is bound by his office to show charity to those that come to the tribunal of penance, should treat you with harshness and severity, if you confess your sin to him ?

Another says : But the confessor will, at least, be shocked at my sin, and will conceive a dislike for me. All false ! He will be edified when he sees the good disposition that makes a sinner confess his sins with sincerity, in spite of the shame that he feels. And will he not have heard from other penitents similar or perhaps more grievous sins ? Oh, would to God that you were the only sinner in the world ! Neither is it true that he will conceive a dislike for those that disclose their guilt to him ; on the contrary, he will entertain a greater esteem for them, and will labour more zealously to assist them when he sees the confidence that they place in him, and that has made them reveal their miseries to him.

Alas ! what do certain sinners say ? I will go to Confession, but not till another confessor comes. And will they, for the sake of avoiding shame, live in the meantime at enmity with God ? In danger of being lost forever, in an actual hell caused by the remorse of conscience that lacerates the soul, and that leaves them without peace night or day ? And will they remain in sin, or add several sacrifices to the sin they have committed ? Do they not know that sacrilege is a horrible sin ? Will they change into the poison of eternal death the remedy that Jesus Christ has prepared for them by His Blood, in the Sacrament of Penance ? They say they will go to Confession afterwards. But what will become of them for eternity if they meet a sudden death, which is now so frequent that we hear almost every day that someone has died suddenly.

But, some one will say, I have not confidence in my confessor. Go then to another. But should a person not be able to procure a strange confessor,

would it not be madness to conceal his sin ? Were he afflicted with an ulcer that might cause death, would he not, if there were no other remedy, instantly call for a surgeon and, however great his shame, would he not make known his disease ? And in order to recover the life of the soul and to escape hell a Christian cannot bring himself to open his conscience to a Spiritual Father.

You, then, should have courage, and generously conquer this shame that the devil magnifies so much in your mind. It will be enough to begin to reveal the sin that you have committed ; all your vain apprehensions will instantly vanish. And you may be persuaded that after Confession you will feel more happy at having confessed your sins than if you were made monarch of all the earth. Recommend yourself to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and she will obtain for you strength to overcome all repugnance. And if you have not courage to disclose your sins at once to the confessor, say to him : Father, assist me, for I stand in need of help ; I have committed a certain sin which I cannot bring myself to confess. The confessor will adopt an easy means of dragging from its den the wild beast that devours you. It will be enough for you to answer " yes " or " no " to his interrogations. Should a person be unwilling to tell his sin in words, he may write it on paper, and show it to the confessor, saying, " I accuse myself of this sin that you have read." And, behold ! the eternal and temporal hell has disappeared, the grace of God is recovered, and with it peace of conscience. The greater the violence a person does himself in order to conquer shame, the greater will be the affection with which God will embrace him. Father Paul Segneri the Younger relates that a certain person made such an effort to confess certain sins committed in her infancy that, in disclosing them to her confessor, she swooned away. But in return for the violence that she had done herself the Lord gave her such fervent compunction that thenceforward she gave herself up to a life of perfection and of great austerities, and died with the reputation of a Saint.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

V.—HOW DESERVING JESUS CHRIST IS OF OUR LOVE ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN HIS PASSION.

I.

The Blessed John of Avila, who was so enamoured with the love of Jesus Christ that he never failed in any of his sermons to speak of the love which Jesus Christ bears towards us, in a treatise on the love this most loving Redeemer bears to men, has expressed himself in sentiments so full of the fire of devotion and of such beauty that I desire to insert them here. He says :

“Thou, O Redeemer, hast loved man in such a manner that whoso reflects upon this love cannot do less than love Thee; for Thy love offers violence to hearts : as the Apostle says : *The charity of Christ presseth us*—(2 Cor. v. 14). The source of the love of Jesus Christ for men is His love for His Eternal Father. Hence He said on Maundy Thursday : *That the world may know that I love the Father, arise, let us go hence*—(John xiv. 31). But whither? To die for men upon the Cross!

“No human intellect can conceive how strongly this fire burns in the Heart of Jesus Christ. As He was commanded to suffer death once, so, had He been commanded to die a thousand times, His love had been sufficient to endure it. And if what He suffered for all men had been imposed upon Him for the salvation of each single soul, He would have done the same for each in particular as He did for all. And as He remained three hours upon the Cross, so, had it been necessary, His love would have made Him remain there even to the Day of Judgment. So that Jesus Christ loved much more than He suffered. O Divine love, how far greater wert Thou than Thou didst outwardly seem to be; for though so many wounds and bruises tell us of great love, still they do not tell all its greatness. There was far more within than that which appeared externally.

That was but as a spark which bounded forth from the vast ocean of infinite love. The greatest mark of love is to lay down our life for our friends. But this was not a sufficient mark for Jesus Christ wherewith to express His love.”

II.

“This is the love which causes holy souls to lose themselves, and to stand amazed when once they have been allowed to know it. From it spring those burning sentiments of ardour, the desire of Martyrdom, joy in sufferings, exultation under the storms of distress, the strength to walk on burning coals as if they were roses, a thirst for sufferings, rejoicing in what the world dreads, embracing that which it abhors. St. Ambrose says that the soul which is espoused to Jesus Christ upon the Cross thinks nothing so glorious as to bear upon itself the marks of the Crucified One.

“But how, O my Lover, shall I repay this Thy love? It is right that blood should be compensated by blood. May I behold myself dyed in this Blood and nailed to this Cross! O holy Cross, receive me also! O crown of thorns, enlarge thyself, that I too may place thee on my head! O nails, leave those innocent hands of my Lord, and come and pierce my heart with compassion and with love! For Thou, my Jesus, didst die, as St. Paul says, in order to gain dominion over the living and the dead, not by means of chastisements but by love. *For to this end Christ died and rose again: that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living*—(Rom. xiv. 9).”

(Monday after Low Sunday

(April 25th)

Morning Meditation.

“THE LORD IS A LITTLE ONE AND EXCEEDINGLY TO BE LOVED.”

The Son of God wished to present Himself under the form of a sweet little Child that thus He might the more

readily and the more forcibly draw to Himself the love of men. Little children of themselves are loved at once. To see them and to love them is the same thing. Thus, then, would He be born Who willed to be loved and not feared.

I.

“O souls,” exclaims St. Bernard, “love this little Child, for He is exceedingly to be loved! *The Lord is great and greatly to be praised*—(Ps. cxliv. 3). The Lord is a little one and greatly to be loved! Yes, says the Saint, this God has existed from all eternity and is worthy of all praise and reverence for His greatness, as David has sung: *The Lord is great and greatly to be praised!* But now that we behold Him become a little Infant, needing milk, and unable to move, trembling with cold, moaning and weeping, looking for someone to take and warm and comfort Him; ah, now indeed does He become the most cherished One of our hearts! “The Lord is a little One, and exceedingly to be loved!”

We ought to adore Him as our God, but our love ought to keep pace with our reverence towards a God so amiable, so loving.

St. Bonaventure reminds us that a child finds its delight with other children, with flowers, and to be in the arms. The Saint’s meaning is, that if we would please this Divine Infant, we too must become children, simple and humble; we must carry to Him flowers of virtue, of meekness, of mortification, of charity; we must clasp Him in the arms of our love.

And, O man, adds St. Bernard, what more do you wait to see before you give yourself wholly to God? See with what labour, with what ardent love, your Jesus has come down from Heaven to seek you. Hearken, he goes on to say, how, scarcely yet born, His wallings call to you, as if He would say: O soul, O soul, it is thee I am seeking; for thee, and to obtain thy love, I am come from Heaven to earth.

O God, even the very brutes, if we do them a kindness, if we give them some trifle, are so grateful for it they come near us, they do our bidding after their own fashion, and they show symptoms of gladness at our approach. And

how comes it, then, that we are so ungrateful towards God, the same God Who has bestowed His whole Self upon us, Who has descended from Heaven to earth, and become an Infant to save us, and to be loved by us? Come, then, let us love the Babe of Bethlehem, is the enraptured cry of St. Francis; let us love Jesus Christ, Who has sought in the midst of such sufferings to attach our hearts to Himself.

St. Augustine says: “For this reason chiefly did Jesus Christ come, that man should know how much God loves him.”

But, my Jesus, even now that Thou hast come, how many men are there who truly love Thee? Wretch that I am, Thou knowest how I have hitherto loved Thee! Thou knowest what contempt I have had for Thy love! Oh, that I might die of grief for it! I repent, my dear Redeemer of having despised Thee. Ah, pardon me and give me the grace to love Thee!

II.

And for love of Jesus Christ we ought to love our neighbours, even those who have offended us. The Messias is called by Isaias, *Father of the world to come*—(Is. ix. 6). Now, in order to be the Sons of this Father, Jesus admonishes us that we must love our enemies, and do good to those who injure us: *Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you . . . that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven*—(Matt. v. 44, 46). And of this He Himself set us the example on the Cross, praying His Eternal Father to forgive those who were crucifying Him.

“He who pardons his enemy,” says St. John Chrysostom, “cannot but obtain God’s pardon for himself”; and we have the Divine assurance of it: *Forgive and you shall be forgiven*—(Luke vi. 37). There was a certain Religious who otherwise had not led a very exemplary life, but who at death bewailed his sins not without great confidence and joy, “because,” said he, “I have never avenged an injury done me.” As much as to say: “It is true that I have offended the Lord, but He has engaged to pardon him who

pardons his enemies; I have pardoned all who offended me, so then I am confident God will likewise pardon me.²

But pardon is not enough for me, O my Jesus; Thou dost merit my love. Thou hast loved me even unto death; unto death will I also love Thee. I love Thee, O Infinite Goodness, with all my soul; I love Thee more than myself. I love my neighbour for the love of Thee. Yes, my Jesus, I love Thee; I will always love Thee, my Treasure, my Life, my Love, my All.

Spiritual Reading

CONFESSION.

VII.—DOUBTS.

I do not wish that any soul be disturbed by what has been said in regard to concealing sins through a false shame. What I have said is applicable only to those who have a consciousness of grievous and certain sins, and who, through shame, will not confess them. With regard to doubts, which some may have of having committed certain sins, or of having made bad confessions, if they wish to disclose them to a confessor for their greater tranquillity, they will do well, unless they have a scrupulous conscience. For the scrupulous, it is not advisable to confess their doubts. It may be useful for the timid to know certain doctrines approved by Theologians, that may save them from a great deal of disquiet of conscience, and give them peace of mind.

First, it is a solid and very probable opinion of Theologians that there is no obligation of confessing doubtful mortal sins, as, for instance, when a person doubts whether he had full advertence, or whether he gave a perfect and deliberate consent. The divines add that at death there is an obligation either of making an act of perfect contrition lest the doubtful sin should have been really grievous, or to tell, not the doubtful sin, but any certain sin (a venial sin is sufficient), and

to receive the Sacrament of Penance. But this is necessary only when a person after the doubtful sin, had never received sacramental absolution. Many Theologians of high authority also say that persons who have for a long time led a spiritual life, when doubtful whether they have consented to mortal sin, may remain certain of not having lost the grace of God; because it is morally impossible that a person well confirmed in good purposes should be suddenly changed and yield to mortal sin without clearly perceiving that he had consented to it. For mortal sin is a monster so horrible that it cannot enter a soul that for a long time has abhorred it without producing on the mind a clear knowledge of its entrance into the soul. This is fully proved in my work on Moral Theology.*

Secondly, when it is certain that a mortal sin has been committed, and when there is a doubt whether it has been ever confessed, then, if the doubt be a negative one—that is, if there be no reason to judge that it has been confessed—it is certainly necessary to tell the sin in Confession. But when there is reason to believe, or a well-founded presumption that the sin has been once told, then according to the common opinion of divines, there is no obligation of confessing it. Hence, divines commonly teach that if a person who has made his general or particular confessions with sufficient diligence doubts whether he has forgotten in confession a certain sin, or circumstance of sin, he is not bound to confess it; because he can prudently judge that it has been already sufficiently confessed.† He need not confess the sin, though he should feel a great unwillingness to close the doubt that tormented him. But such a person may say: If I were bound to tell such a thing I should feel great shame. But what does it matter that you are ashamed to tell it? As long as you are not obliged to confess it be not troubled. The confession of certain natural actions should also cause shame, but you are not therefore obliged to mention them. Thus, for example, you are not obliged to confess certain acts of levity or immodest jests that occurred in your childhood without a knowledge of their malice. Nor is your

* Lib. 6. n. 450 et 476.

† Lib. 6. n. 477.

having done these acts in secret a certain proof of malice; for children do certain natural actions secretly, though these actions are not sins. Hence we are not bound to accuse ourselves in particular of such things, unless we remember that we committed them with an impression, or at least with a doubt, that they were grievous sins. It is, then, enough for a person to say within himself: Lord, if I really knew that I was bound to confess these things I would readily confess them, though I should suffer every pain.

This is intended for the comfort of timorous souls that feel great anxiety arising from a fear that they did not well know how to explain all their doubts in Confession. But it is useful for all, at least for their humiliation, to make known to their director the doubts by which they are troubled. I except the scrupulous, for they should not speak of their doubts. What I would advise is that all would explain to their confessors their passions, attachments, and the causes of their temptations, that he may be able to cut off the roots which, if not extirpated, will never cease to cause temptations, and will expose the soul to great danger of consenting to sin, when it can but will not remove the cause. It will also be very profitable to some to disclose the temptations that are most humiliating, particularly thoughts against chastity, though there should be no consent. St. Philip Neri used to say that a temptation disclosed is half-conquered. I have said that it is very profitable to some: for with regard to others of tried virtue, who are too timid on this point and are always afraid of having consented to sin, it is sometimes useful to forbid them to confess such temptations, unless they are certain of having yielded to them. For by the very examination that such persons make in order to ascertain whether they have consented or not, and thinking of the manner in which they will explain the temptation, the images of the bad objects presented to the mind become more vivid, and the soul becomes more agitated by repeated apprehensions of consent. Obey your confessor on this point, and be ruled by his advice.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

VI.—HOW DESERVING JESUS CHRIST IS OF OUR LOVE ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN HIS PASSION.

I.

“O Jesus, stealer of hearts, the strength of Thy love has broken the exceeding hardness of our hearts! Thou hast inflamed the whole world with Thy love. O most loving Lord, inebriate our hearts with this wine, consume them with this fire, pierce them with this dart of Thy love! Thy Cross is indeed an arrow which pierces hearts. May all the world know that my heart is smitten! O sweetest Love, what hast Thou done? Thou hast come to heal me and Thou hast wounded me. Thou hast come to teach me, and Thou hast made me well nigh mad. O madness full of wisdom, may I never live without thee! All, O Lord, that I behold upon the Cross, invites me to love Thee: the wood, the figure, the Wounds of Thy Body; and, above all, Thy love engages me to love Thee, and never more to forget Thee.

II.

But in order to arrive at the perfect love of Jesus Christ we must adopt the means of doing so. The means which St. Thomas Aquinas gives us: (1) To have a constant remembrance of the benefits of God, both general and particular; (2) To consider the infinite goodness of God Who is ever waiting to do us good, and Who ever loves us and seeks from us our love; (3) To avoid even the smallest thing that could offend Him; (4) To renounce all the sensible goods of this world, riches, honours, and sensual pleasures. Father Thaulers says that meditation on the Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ is a great means also for acquiring His perfect love.

Who can deny that, of all devotions, devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ is the most useful, the most tender, the most agreeable to God—one that gives the

greatest consolation to sinners, and at the same time most powerfully enkindles loving souls? Whence is it that we receive so many blessings, if it be not from the Passion of Jesus Christ? Whence have we hope of pardon, courage against temptations, confidence that we shall go to Heaven? Whence come so many lights to know the truth, so many loving calls, so many spurings to change our life, so many desires to give ourselves to God, as from the Passion of Jesus Christ? The Apostle therefore had but too great reason to declare him to be excommunicated who did not love Jesus Christ: *If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema*—(1 Cor. xvi. 22).

Tuesday after Low Sunday

Morning Meditation.

PURITY OF INTENTION.

In the estimation of men, the value of an act increases in proportion to the length of time spent in the performance of it; but with God, the value of an act depends on the purity of intention with which it is performed. Men look only to the external act; God regards the heart, that is, the intention with which the act is done. *For man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart*—(1 Kings xvi. 7).

I.

Purity of intention consists in doing everything from a simple desire to please God. Jesus Christ has said that according to the intention, whether it be good or evil, so is our work judged before God. *If thine eye be single, thine whole body shall be lightsome; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome*—(Matt.

vi. 22, 23. The *single eye* signifies a pure intention of pleasing God; the dark and *evil eye* signifies a want of such honest and holy intention—when our actions are done from a motive of vanity, or from a desire to please ourselves.

Can any action be more noble than for a man to give his life for the Faith? And yet St. Paul says that he who dies from any motive but that of a pure desire to do God's will, gains nothing by his martyrdom.

If, then, martyrdom avails nothing unless it be endured for the sake of God alone, of what value will be all the preaching, all the labour of good works, and also all the austerities of penitents, if they are done to obtain the praise of men or to satisfy one's own inclination?

The Prophet Aggræus says that works, even the holiest, if not done for God, are put in bags full of holes; which means that they are all lost directly, and that no good comes of them. On the contrary, every action done with an intention of pleasing God, of however little value in itself, is worth more than many great works done without such pure intention.

We read in St. Mark that the poor widow cast into the alms-box of the temple only two mites; but yet of her the Saviour said: *This poor widow hath cast in more than all*—(Mark xii. 43). St. Cyprian remarks on this, that she put in more than all the others because she gave those two little pieces of money with the pure intention of pleasing God.

One of the best signs by which we may know whether a person's work is done with the right intention is that if the work has not the effect desired he will not be at all disturbed. Another good sign is that when a person has completed any work and is spoken ill of because of it, or is repaid with ingratitude, he nevertheless remains contented and tranquil. On the other hand, if it happen to any one to be praised for his work, he must not disquiet himself with the fear of being filled with vainglory; but should such a temptation come upon him only let him despise it in his heart and

say with St. Bernard, "I did not begin it for thee, nor because of thee will I leave it."

When, O my Jesus, shall I begin to love Thee truly? Miserable that I am! If I seek among my works for any that are good—for one work done only to please Thee, my Saviour—I shall not find it. Alas! then, have pity on me, and suffer not that I continue to serve Thee so ill up the time of my death.

II.

To work with an intention of acquiring more glory in Heaven is good, but the most perfect is the desire to give glory to God. Let us be sure that the more we divest ourselves of our earthly interest, so much the more will our Saviour increase our joy in Paradise. Blessed is he who labours only to give glory to God, and to follow His holy will. Let us imitate the love of the Blessed, who, in loving God, seek only to please Him. St. Chrysostom says: "If we can attain to the fulfilment of God's pleasure, what more can we desire? If thou art counted worthy to do anything that pleases God, dost thou ask any other reward?"

This is that single eye which pierces the Heart of God with love towards us; as He says to the holy Spouse: *Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast wounded my heart with one of thine eyes—* (Cant. iv. 9). This single eye signifies the one end that holy souls have in all their actions—that of pleasing God. And this was the counsel that the Apostle gave to his disciples: *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God*—(1 Cor. x. 31). The Venerable Beatrice of the Incarnation, the first daughter of St. Teresa, said: "No price can be put on anything, however small, that is done entirely for God." And with great reason she said this, for all works done for God are acts of Divine love. Purity of intention makes the lowest actions become precious, such as eating, working, recreation, when they are done from obedience and from a desire to please God.

We must, then, in the morning direct to God all the

actions of the day; and it will be very useful to us to renew this intention at the beginning of every action, at least of the most important, such as Meditation, Communion, and Spiritual Reading—pausing a little in the beginning of these, like the holy hermit who, before beginning anything, lifted his eyes to Heaven and remained still; and when he was asked what he was doing, replied: "I am making sure of my aim."

My God, grant me Thy help that what remains of life I may spend only in serving and loving Thee. Make me overcome all, that I may please Thee, and do all only to fulfil Thy good pleasure; through the merits of Thy Passion, I ask it. O my great advocate, Mary, obtain for me this grace by thy prayers!

Spiritual Reading.

**SALVE REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL,
HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!**

I.—HOW GREAT SHOULD BE OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY,
WHO IS THE QUEEN OF MERCY.

As the glorious Virgin Mary has been raised to the dignity of Mother of the King of kings, it is not without reason that the Church honours her, and wishes her to be honoured by all, with the glorious title of Queen.

"If the Son is a King," says St. Athanasius, "the Mother who bore Him is rightly and truly considered a Queen and a Sovereign." "No sooner had Mary," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "consented to be Mother of the Eternal Word, than she merited by this consent to be made Queen of the world and of all creatures." "Since the flesh of Mary," remarks the Abbot Arnold of Chartres, "was not different from that of Jesus, how can the royal dignity of the Son be denied to the Mother?" "Hence we must consider the glory of the Son, not only as being common to His Mother, but as one with her."

"And if Jesus is King of the Universe, Mary is also its

Queen. "And as Queen," says the Abbot Rupert, "she possesses, by right, the whole kingdom of her Son." Hence St. Bernardine of Sienna concludes that "as many creatures as there are who serve God, so many there are who serve Mary: for as Angels and men, and all things that are in Heaven and on earth are subject to the empire of God, so are they also under the dominion of Mary!" The Abbot Guericus, addressing himself to the Divine Mother on this subject, says: "Continue Mary, continue to dispose with confidence of the riches of thy Son; act as Queen, Mother, and Spouse of the King: for to thee belongs dominion and power over all creatures!"

Mary, then, is a Queen; but, for our common consolation, be it known that she is Queen so sweet, so clement, and so ready to help us in our miseries, that the holy Church wills that we should salute her in this prayer under the title of Queen of Mercy.

"The title of Queen," remarks Blessed Albert the Great, "differs from that of Empress, which implies severity and rigour, in signifying compassion and charity towards the poor." "The greatness of kings and queens," says Seneca, "consists in relieving the wretched," and whereas tyrants when they reign have their own good in view, kings should have that of their subjects at heart. For this reason it is that, at their consecration, kings have their heads anointed with oil, which is the symbol of mercy, to denote that, as kings, they should above all things nourish in their hearts feelings of compassion and benevolence towards their subjects.

Kings should, then, occupy themselves principally in works of mercy, but not so as to forget the just punishments that are to be inflicted on the guilty. It is, however, not thus with Mary, who, although a Queen, is not a Queen of Justice intent on the punishment of the wicked, but a Queen of Mercy, intent only on comforting and pardoning sinners. And this is the reason for which the Church requires that we should expressly call her "the Queen of Mercy." The great Chancellor of Paris, John Gerson, in his commentary on the words

of David, *These two things have I heard, that power belongeth to God, and mercy to thee, O Lord*—(Ps. lxi. 12), says that the kingdom of God, consisting in justice and mercy, was divided by our Lord: the kingdom of justice he reserved for Himself, and that of mercy He yielded to Mary, ordaining at the same time that all mercies that are dispensed to men should pass through the hands of Mary, and be disposed of by her at will. These are Gerson's own words: "The kingdom of God consists in power and mercy; reserving power to Himself, He, in some way, yielded the empire of mercy to His Mother." This is confirmed by St. Thomas in his preface to the Canonical Epistles, saying, "that when the Blessed Virgin conceived the Eternal Word in her womb, and brought Him forth, she obtained half the kingdom of God; so that she is Queen of Mercy, as Jesus Christ is King of Justice."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

VII.—HOW DESERVING JESUS CHRIST IS OF OUR LOVE ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN HIS PASSION.

I.

St. Bonaventure says there is no devotion more fitted for sanctifying a soul than meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ; hence he advises us to meditate every day upon the Passion, if we would advance in the love of God. "If you would make progress, meditate daily on the Passion of the Lord; for nothing works such an entire sanctification in the soul as the meditation of the Passion of Christ." And before him St. Augustine, as de Bustus relates, said that one tear shed in memory of the Passion is worth more than fasting weekly on bread and water. Wherefore the Saints were always occupied in considering the sorrows of Jesus Christ: it was by this means that St. Francis of Assisi became a seraph. The Seraphic Saint was one day found shedding tears

and crying out with a loud voice. Being asked the cause, "I weep," he replied, "over the sorrows and ignominies of my Lord; and what causes me the greatest sorrow is, that men, for whom He suffered so much, live in forgetfulness of Him." And on saying this he wept the more, so that this gentleman began also himself to weep.

O Jesus, bring continually to my remembrance, I beseech Thee, all that Thou hast suffered for me, so that I may never more forget to love Thee. O cords that bound my Jesus, bind me to Jesus; thorns that crowned my Jesus, pierce me with the love of Jesus; nails that transfixed my Jesus, nail me to the Cross of Jesus, that I may live and die united to Jesus. O Blood of Jesus, inebriate me with His holy love! O death of Jesus, make me die to every earthly affection!

Pierced feet of my Lord, I embrace you! Deliver me from hell which I have deserved. My Jesus, in hell I could no more love Thee, and yet I desire to love Thee always. Save me, my dearest Saviour; bind me to Thyself, that I may never again lose Thee. O Mary, refuge of sinners and Mother of my Saviour, help a sinner who wishes to love God, and who recommends himself to you: succour me for the love you bear to Jesus Christ.

II.

When St. Francis heard the bleating of a lamb, or saw anything which reminded him of the Passion of Jesus, he immediately shed tears. On one occasion, being sick, he was told to read some pious book. "My book," he replied, "is Jesus crucified." Hence he did nothing but exhort his brethren to be ever thinking of the Passion of Jesus Christ. Tiepoli writes: "He who becomes not inflamed with the love of God by looking on Jesus dead upon the Cross, will never love at all."

O Eternal Word, Thou hast spent three-and-thirty years in labours and fatigues; Thou hast given Thy life and Thy Blood for man's salvation; in short, Thou hast spared nothing to make men love Thee; and how is it possible that there should be those who know this, and yet do not love Thee? O God, among these ungrateful

ones I also may be numbered! I see the wrong I have done Thee; O my Jesus have pity upon me! I offer Thee this ungrateful heart—ungrateful, it is true, but penitent. Yes, I repent above every other evil, O my dear Redeemer, for having despised Thee! I repent, and I am sorry with my whole heart.

O my soul, love a God Who is bound like a criminal for thee; a God scourged like a slave for thee; a God made a mock king for Thee; a God, in short, dead upon a Cross, as the vilest outcast for thee! Yes, my Saviour, my God, I love Thee, I love Thee!

Wednesday after Low Sunday

Morning Meditation.

CHARITY TOWARDS THE NEIGHBOUR.

An act of Charity performed towards a neighbour will be accepted by Jesus Christ as done to Himself. *I say to you*, says the Redeemer, *as long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me*—(Matt. xxv. 40). St. Catharine of Genoa used to say our love of God is to be measured by our love for our neighbour.

I.

To love God without at the same time loving our neighbour is impossible. The same precept that prescribes love towards God imposes a strict obligation of brotherly Charity. *And this commandment we have from God that he who loveth God love also his brother*—(1 John iv. 21). Hence St. Thomas teaches that the love of God and the love of our neighbour proceed alike from Charity. For Charity makes us love God and our

neighbour, because such is the will of God. Such, too, was the doctrine of St. John the Evangelist. St. Jerome relates that being asked by his disciples why he frequently recommended fraternal love, that holy Apostle replied: "Because it is the precept of the Lord, and the fulfilment of it alone is sufficient."

St. Catharine of Genoa once said to the Lord: "My God, Thou dost command me to love my neighbour; and I can love none but Thee." "My child," answered Jesus, "he that loves Me, loves whatsoever I love." Indeed, when we love a person we also love his relatives, his servants, his likeness, and even his clothes, because we know he loves them. And why do we love our neighbours? It is because God loves them. Hence St. John says that *if any man say I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar*—(1 John iv. 20). But as hatred towards our neighbours is incompatible with the love of God, so an act of Charity performed in their regard will be accepted by Jesus Christ as done for Himself. *Amen, I say to you, says the Redeemer, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren you did it to me*—(Matt. xxv. 40). St. Catharine of Genoa used to say that our love of God is to be measured by our love for our neighbour.

Ah, my Redeemer, how unlike I am to Thee! Thou wast all Charity towards Thy persecutors, and I am all rancour and hatred towards my neighbour. Thou didst pray with so much love for those who crucified Thee, and I immediately seek revenge against those who offend me. O God of love, give me Thy love.

II.

Oh, what a Paradise where Charity reigns! It is the delight of God Himself. *Behold, says the Psalmist, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*—(Ps. cxxxii. 1). The Lord looks with complacency on the Charity of brethren and sisters who dwell together in unity, who are united by one will of serving God, and who seek only to sanctify one another that they may be all united one day in the land of bliss. The highest praise bestowed by St. Luke

on the first Christians was that they had but one heart and soul. *And the multitude of the believers had but one heart and one soul*—(Acts. iv. 32). This unity was the fruit of the prayer of Jesus Christ Who before His Passion besought His Eternal Father to make His disciples one by holy Charity, as He and the Father are one. *Holy Father, keep them in thy name . . . that they may be one as we also are*—(John xvii. 11). This unity is one of the principal fruits of Redemption, as may be inferred from the prediction of Isaiah: *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. They shall not hurt, nor shall they kill in all my holy mountain*—(Is. xi. 6, 9). Yes, the followers of Jesus, though of different countries and of different dispositions, shall live in peace with one another, each seeking by holy Charity to accommodate himself to the wishes and inclinations of the other. (And as a certain author has well remarked, what does a community of religious mean but a union of many by will and desire so as to form but one person?) It is Charity that maintains union; for it is not possible that all should have congenial dispositions. It is Charity that unites the hearts of all, and makes them bear one another's burdens, and conform to the will of each other.

St. John Climacus relates that in the vicinity of Alexandria there was a celebrated monastery, where, because they loved one another so cordially in holy Charity, all the Religious enjoyed the peace of Paradise. In general the first that perceived a disagreement between two of the Religious was able to restore peace by a mere sign. But if they could not be reconciled, both were sent as exiles to a neighbouring house, and were told at their departure that the abode of two demons in the monastery could be no longer profitable to the Community.

O Lord, abandon me not to my passions. Give me strength to love and to do good to all who injure me. For the sake of Thy Blood, O Jesus, permit me not to be separated from Thee. O Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Spiritual Reading.

**SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL,
HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!**

II.—HOW GREAT SHOULD BE OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY,
WHO IS THE QUEEN OF MERCY.

The Eternal Father made Jesus Christ the King of Justice, and consequently universal Judge of the world: and therefore the Royal Prophet sings: *Give to the King thy judgment, O God, and to the King's Son thy justice*—(Ps. lxxi. 2). Here a learned interpreter takes up the sentence, and says: "O Lord, Thou hast given justice to Thy Son because Thou hast given mercy to the King's Mother." And on this subject St. Bonaventure, paraphrasing the words of David, thus interprets them: "Give to the King Thy judgment, O God, and Thy mercy to the Queen His Mother." Ernest, Archbishop of Prague, also remarks, "that the Eternal Father gave the office of Judge and Avenger to the Son, and that of showing mercy and relieving the necessitous to the Mother." This was foretold by the Prophet David, for he says that God, so to speak, consecrated Mary Queen of Mercy, anointing her with the oil of gladness: *God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness*—(Ps. xlv. 8), in order that we miserable children of Adam may rejoice, remembering that in Heaven we have this great Queen, overflowing with the unction of mercy and compassion towards us: and thus we can say with St. Bonaventure, "O Mary, thou art full of the unction of mercy and of the oil of compassion."

And how beautifully does not Blessed Albert the Great apply to this subject the history of Queen Esther, who was herself a great type of our Queen Mary!

We read, in the fourth chapter of the Book of Esther, that in the reign of Assuerus, a decree was issued by which all Jews were condemned to death. Mardochai, who was one of the condemned, addressed himself to Esther, in order that she might interpose with Assuerus

and obtain the revocation of the decree, and thus be the salvation of all. At first Esther declined the office, fearing that such a request might irritate the king still more; but Mardochai reproved her, sending her word that she was not to think only of saving herself, for God had placed her on the throne to obtain the salvation of all the Jews: *Think not that thou mayest save thy life only, because thou art in the king's house, more than all the Jews*—(Esth. iv. 13). And so can we poor sinners address our Queen Mary, should she show any repugnance to obtain of God our delivery from the chastisement we have justly deserved: "Think not, O Lady, that God has raised thee to the dignity of Queen of the world only to provide for thy own good; but in order that, being so great, thou mightest be better able to compassionate and assist us miserable creatures."

As soon as Assuerus saw Esther standing before him he asked her, with love, what she came to seek. *What is thy request?* The Queen replied: *If I have found favour in thy sight, O King . . . give me my people, for which I request*—(Esth. vii. 2, 3). Assuerus granted her request, and immediately ordered the revocation of the decree. And now, if Assuerus, through love for Esther granted, at her request, salvation to the Jews, how can God refuse the prayers of Mary, loving her immensely as He does, when she prays for poor miserable sinners who recommend themselves to her, and says to Him: "My King and my God, if ever I have found favour in Thy sight *give me my people, for which I ask*. The Divine Mother well knows that she was the blessed, the holy one, the only one of the human race, who found the grace lost by all mankind; well does she know that she is the beloved one of her Lord, loved more than all the Saints and Angels together. Is it possible, then, that God should refuse her? And who is ignorant of the power of the prayers of Mary with God? *The law of clemency is on her tongue*—(Prov. xxxi. 26). Each of her prayers is, as it were, an established law for our Lord, that He should show mercy to all for whom she intercedes. St. Bernard asks why the Church calls Mary "the Queen of Mercy"? And he replies that "it is

because we believe that she opens the abyss of the mercy of God to whomsoever she wills, when she wills, and as she wills; so that there is no sinner, however great, who is lost if Mary protects him."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

VIII.—HOW MUCH JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE LOVED BY US ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN INSTITUTING THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

I.

Jesus, knowing that his hour was come, that he should pass out of this world to the Father; having loved his own . . . he loved them unto the end—(John xiii. 1). Our most loving Saviour, knowing that His hour was now come for leaving this earth, desired before He went to die for us, to leave us the greatest possible mark of His love; and this was the gift of the most Holy Sacrament. St. Bernardine of Sienna remarks that men remember more continually, and love more tenderly, the signs of love which are shown to them at the hour of death. Hence it is the custom that friends, when about to die, leave to those persons they have loved some gift, such as a garment or a ring, as a memorial of their affection. But what hast Thou, O my Jesus, left us, when quitting this world, in memory of Thy love? Not, indeed, a garment or a ring, but Thine own Body, Thy Blood, Thy Soul, Thy Divinity, Thy whole Self, without reserve. "He gave thee all," says St. John Chrysostom; "He left nothing for Himself."

II.

The Council of Trent says that in this gift of the Eucharist Jesus Christ desired, as it were, to pour forth all the riches of the love He had for men. And the Apostle observes that Jesus desired to bestow this gift upon men on the very night itself when they were planning

His death: *The same night in which he was betrayed, he took bread; and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat; this is my body—*(1 Cor. xi. 23—24). St. Bernardine of Sienna says that Jesus Christ, burning with love for us, and not content with being prepared to give His life for us, was constrained by the excess of His love to perform a greater work before He died; and this was to give His own Body for our Food.

This Sacrament, therefore, was rightly named by St. Thomas, "*the Sacrament of love; the pledge of love.*" induced Jesus Christ to give us in It His whole Self. *Pledge of love*, so that if we had ever doubted His love, we should have in this Sacrament a pledge of it: as if our Redeemer, in leaving us this gift, had said: O souls, if you ever doubted My love, behold I leave you Myself in this Sacrament; with such a pledge you can never any more doubt that I love you, and love you to excess.

Thursday after Low Sunday

Morning Meditation.

CHARITY IN OUR THOUGHTS AND SENTIMENTS.

Put ye on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy—(Col. iii. 12). The followers of Jesus Christ should be clothed, not only with Charity, but with the bowels of charity, so that in all their actions they should be clothed and encompassed around with Charity. They should love each one as if for each they had the tenderest

affection. "Charity," says St. Augustine, "does not grieve much even when she thinks well of the bad."

I.

To practise charity in thought, you must, in the first place, endeavour to banish all rash judgments, suspicions, and doubts. To entertain a rash doubt regarding another is a defect; to indulge a positive suspicion is a greater fault, and to judge with certainty without certain grounds that another has sinned is still more criminal before God. Whoever judges rashly of his neighbour shall be judged with severity. *Judge not, that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge you shall be judged*—(Matt. vii. 1). But although it is sinful to judge evil of others without certain grounds, still it is not a violation of the Divine law to suspect or even to judge evil of them when we have certain motives for such suspicions or judgments. However, the safest and most charitable rule is to think well of all, and to banish all such judgments and suspicions. *Charity*, says the Apostle, *thinketh no evil*—(1 Cor. xiii. 5). If by your office you are not charged with the correction of others, endeavour always to judge favourably of all. St. Jane Frances de Chantal used to say that "in our neighbour we should observe only what is good." Should you sometimes through mistake praise in others what is censurable, you will never have reason to repent of your error. "Charity," says St. Augustine, "does not grieve much even when she thinks well of the bad." St. Catharine of Bologna once said: "I have lived for many years in religion, and have never thought ill of any of my sisters; because I know that a person who appears to be imperfect may be more dear to God than another whose conduct is much more exemplary." Be careful, then, not to indulge in observing the defects and concerns of others, nor to imitate the example of those who go about asking what others say of them, and thus fill their minds with suspicions, and their hearts with bitterness and aversions. Listen not to them who tell you that others

have spoken of your defects, and ask not from them the names of those who dispraised you. In such tales there is, in general, a great deal of exaggeration. Let your conduct be such as deserves praise from all, but regard not what is said of you. When told that anyone has charged you with a certain fault, let your answer be that others know you but little; and that, were they aware of all your defects, they would say a great deal more of you; or you may say that only God is to be your judge.

II.

When our neighbour is visited with any infirmity, loss, or other calamity, charity obliges us to regret his misfortune at least with the superior will. I say with the *superior will*, for concupiscence always appears to take a certain delight in hearing that a calamity has befallen an enemy. But that delight is not culpable as long as it is resisted by the will. Whenever the inferior appetite solicits the will to rejoice at the misfortune of others, pay no more attention to its criminal solicitations than you would to a dog that barks without reason; but endeavour to excite in the superior will sentiments of regret at their distress. It is indeed sometimes lawful to rejoice at the good effects that are likely to result from the temporal afflictions of others. For example, it is not forbidden to be glad from a motive of his conversion, or of the cessation of scandal, that a notorious and obstinate sinner has been visited with sickness. However, should he have offended us, the joy occasioned by his infirmity may be the fruit of passion as well as of zeal. "It may indeed often happen," says St. Gregory, "that, without losing charity, we rejoice at the ruin of an enemy; and that without incurring the guilt of envy we feel sorrow at his exaltation, when by his downfall we think that others will be justly exalted, and when we fear that by his prosperity many will be unjustly oppressed."

Spiritual Reading.

*SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL,
HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!*

III.—HOW GREAT SHOULD BE OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY
WHO IS THE QUEEN OF MERCY.

May it not, perhaps, be feared that Mary would not deign to interpose for some sinners because they are so overloaded with crimes? Or perhaps we ought to be overawed at the majesty and holiness of this great Queen? "No," says St. Gregory VII, "for the higher and more holy she is, the greater is her sweetness and compassion towards sinners who have recourse to her with the desire to amend their lives." Kings and queens, with their ostentation of majesty, inspire terror, and cause their subjects to fear to approach them: but what fear, says St. Bernard, can the miserable have of approaching this Queen of Mercy? "Why should human frailty fear to go to Mary? In her there is no austerity, nothing terrible: she is all sweetness, offering milk and wool to all." Mary is not only willing to give, but she herself offers milk and wool to all: the milk of mercy to animate our confidence, and the wool of her protection against the thunderbolts of Divine justice.

Suetonius relates of the Emperor Titus that he could never refuse a favour, so much so that he sometimes promised more than he could grant; and when admonished of this he replied that a prince should never send away any person whom he admitted to his audience dissatisfied. Titus spoke thus, but in reality he must often have deceived or failed in his promises. Our Queen cannot deceive, and can obtain all that she wills for her clients. Moreover, "our Lord has given her so benign and compassionate a heart," says Lanspergius, "that she cannot send away any one dissatisfied who prays to her." But how, to use the words of St. Bonaventure, canst thou, O Mary, who art the Queen of Mercy, refuse to succour the miserable? And "who," asks the Saint,

"are the subjects for mercy, if not the miserable? And since thou art the Queen of Mercy," he continues, "and I am the most miserable of sinners, it follows that I am the first of thy subjects. How, then, O Lady, canst thou do otherwise than exercise thy mercy on me?" Have pity on us, then, O Queen of Mercy, and take charge of our salvation.

"Say not, O holy Virgin," says St. George of Nicomedia, "that thou canst not assist us on account of the number of our sins, for thy power and thy compassion are such, that no number of sins, however great, can outweigh them. Nothing resists thy power, for our common Creator, honouring thee as His Mother, considers thy glory as His own"; and the Son, "exulting it, fulfils thy petitions as if He were paying a debt"; meaning thereby, that although Mary is under an infinite obligation to the Son for having chosen her to be His Mother, yet it cannot be denied that the Son is under great obligation to her for having given Him His humanity; and therefore Jesus, to pay as it were what He owes to Mary, and glorying in her glory, honours her in a special manner by listening to and granting all her petitions.

How great, then, should be our confidence in this Queen, knowing her great power with God, and that she is so rich and full of mercy that there is no one living on the earth who does not partake of her compassion and favour. This was revealed by our Blessed Lady herself to St. Bridget, saying: "I am the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of Mercy; I am the joy of the just and the door through which sinners are brought to God. There is no sinner on earth so accursed as to be deprived of my mercy; for all, if they receive nothing else through my intercession, receive the grace of being less tempted by devils than they would otherwise have been." "No one," she adds, "unless the irrevocable sentence has been pronounced" (that is, the one pronounced on the damned), "is so cast off by God, who will not return to God and enjoy His mercy, if he invokes my aid. I am called by all the Mother of Mercy, and truly the mercy of my Son towards men has made me

thus merciful towards them." She concludes by saying that miserable will he be, and miserable will he be for all eternity, who, in this life, having it in his power to invoke her, who is so compassionate to all, and so desirous to assist sinners, is miserable enough not to invoke her, and so is damned.

Let us, then, have recourse, and always have recourse, to this most sweet Queen, if we would be certain of salvation; and if we are alarmed and disheartened at the sight of our sins, let us remember that, it is in order to save the greatest and most abandoned sinners who recommend themselves to her that Mary is made the Queen of Mercy. Such have to be her crown in Heaven, according to the words addressed to her by her Divine Spouse: *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). And what are these dens of beasts but miserable sinners whose souls have become the home of sin, the most frightful monster that can be found. "With such souls," says the Abbot Rupert, addressing our Blessed Lady, "saved by thy means, O great Queen Mary, wilt thou be crowned in Heaven; for their salvation will form a diadem worthy of, and well-becoming, a Queen of Mercy."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

IX.—HOW MUCH JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE LOVED BY US ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN INSTITUTING THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

I.

St. Bernard calls the Eucharist "the love of loves"; because this gift comprehends all the other gifts bestowed upon us by our Lord—creation, redemption, predestination to glory—so that the Eucharist is not only a pledge of the love of Jesus Christ, but of Paradise, which

He desires also to give us. "In this Divine Banquet," says the Church, "a pledge of future glory is given us." Hence St. Philip Neri could find no other name for Jesus Christ in this Sacrament save that of *Love*: and so, when the Holy Viaticum was brought to him he was heard to exclaim: "Behold my Love! Give me my Love!"

The Prophet Isaias desired that the whole world should know the tender inventions our God has made use of wherewith to make men love Him. And who could ever have thought—if He Himself had not done it—that the Incarnate Word would hide Himself under the appearance of bread, in order to become Himself our Food? "Does it not seem folly," says St. Augustine, "to say: Eat My Flesh; drink My Blood?" When Jesus Christ revealed to His disciples the Sacrament He desired to leave them they could not bring themselves to believe Him; and they left Him, saying: *How can this man give us his flesh to eat? . . . This saying is hard, and who can hear it?*—(John vi. 53, 61). But that love of Jesus Christ hath thought of and accomplished. *Take ye and eat*, said He to His disciples before He went to die; and through them to us all. Receive and eat; but what food shall that be, O Saviour of the world, which You desire to give us before You die? *Take ye, and eat; this is my body*. This is not earthly food; it is I Myself who give Myself entirely to you.

II.

And oh, with what desire does Jesus Christ pant to come into our souls in the Holy Communion! *With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer*—(Luke xxii. 15). So He spoke on that night in which He instituted this Sacrament of love. *With desire I have desired*: so did the excessive love He bore us cause Him to speak, as St. Laurence Justinian remarks: "These are the words of most burning love." And in order that every one might easily receive Him, He desired to leave Himself under the appearance of bread; for if He had left Himself under the appearance of some rare or very costly food, the poor would have been deprived of Him:

but no, Jesus would hide Himself under the form of bread, which costs but little, and can be found everywhere, in order that all in every country might be able to find Him and receive Him.

Friday after Low Sunday

Morning Meditation.

THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST OUR HOPE.

Jesus is the only hope of our salvation. *Neither is there salvation in any other*—(Acts iv. 12). Oh, what a secure place of refuge shall we ever find in those sacred clefts of the rock, that is to say, in the Wounds of Jesus Christ! There shall we be set free from that feeling of distrust which the sight of our sins may produce. There shall we find weapons of defence against temptations; there shall we find sufficient strength to resist the assaults of the world.

I.

Jesus is the only hope of our salvation: *There is no salvation in any other but him*—(Acts iv. 12). I am the only door, says He; and he that shall enter in through Me shall assuredly find life eternal: *I am the door; if any one enter by me, he shall be saved*—(John x. 9). And what sinner would ever have been able to hope for pardon if Jesus had not, by His Blood and by His Death, made satisfaction to the Divine justice for us? *He shall bear their iniquities*—(Is. liii.). It is by this that the Apostle encourages us, saying: *If the blood of goats and of oxen sanctify such as are defiled to the cleansing of the flesh, how much more shall the blood*

of Christ, who, through the Holy Ghost, offered himself up to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God!—(Heb. ix. 13). If the blood of goats and of bulls offered up in sacrifice removed from the Jews the outward defilements of the body, that so they could be admitted to the worship of the Sanctuary, how much more shall the Blood of Jesus Christ, Who for love offered Himself up as a satisfaction for us, remove sin from our souls to enable us to serve our God Most High!

Our loving Redeemer, having come into the world for no other end than that of saving sinners, and beholding the sentence of condemnation already recorded against us for our sins, what was it, then, He did? He, by His own Death, paid the penalty that was due to ourselves; and with His own Blood cancelling the sentence of the condemnation in order that the Divine justice might no more seek from us the satisfaction due, He nailed it to the same Cross whereon He died: *Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And the same he took out of the way, fastening it to the cross*—(Col. ii. 14).

Christ entered once into the holy place, having found eternal redemption—(Heb. ix. 12). Ah, my Jesus, hadst Thou not found this mode of obtaining pardon for us, who would ever have been able to find it? It was with reason that David cried out, *Declare his ways*—(Ps. ix. 12). Make known, O ye blessed, the loving contrivances which our God has employed in order to save us. Since then, O my sweet Saviour, Thou hast had such a love for me, cease not from exercising mercy towards me. Thou, by Thy Death, hast rescued me from the hands of Lucifer: into Thy hands do I consign my soul; it is for Thee to save it: *Into thy hands I commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth.*

II.

Little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin: but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just, and he is the propitiation for our sins—(1 John ii. 1). Jesus Christ

did not with His Death bring to an end His intercession for us with the Eternal Father : even at the present moment He is acting as our Advocate ; and it seems as if He knew not what else to do in Heaven, as St. Paul writes, but to move the Father to exercise mercy towards us : *ever living to make intercession for us*—(Heb. vii. 25). And the Apostle adds that this is the end for which our Saviour is ascended into Heaven : *that he may now appear in the presence of God for us*—(Heb. ix. 24). As rebels are driven away from the presence of their king, so should we sinners have never more been deemed worthy of admission into the Presence of our God, even so much as to ask His pardon ; but Jesus, as our Redeemer, makes appearance for us in the Divine Presence, and, through His merits, obtains for us the grace that we had lost : *You are come to Jesus the Mediator, and to the sprinkling of blood, which speaketh better than Abel*—(Heb. xii. 24). Oh, with how much greater effect does the Blood of the Redeemer implore for us the Divine mercy, than did the blood of Abel plead for chastisement on Cain ! My justice, said God to St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, is transformed into mercy by the vengeance taken on the innocent flesh of Jesus Christ. The Blood of this My Son pleads not with Me for vengeance, like the blood of Abel, but pleads only for mercy and pity ; and at the sound of this voice My justice cannot but rest appeased. This Blood so binds the hands of Justice that, so to speak, it cannot stir to take that vengeance upon sins which it used to take before.

Forget not the kindness of thy surety—(Eccclus. xxix. 19). Ah, my sweet Saviour, Jesus, I was already incapable, after my sins, of making satisfaction to the Divine justice, when Thou, by Thy Death, wert willing to make satisfaction for me. Oh, what ingratitude would mine be now were I to be unmindful of this Thy so great mercy ! No, my Redeemer, never will I be unmindful of it ; I desire to be ever thanking Thee for it, and to show forth my thankfulness by loving Thee, and doing

all that I can to please Thee. Do Thou aid me by that grace which Thou hast, by so many sufferings, merited for me. I love Thee, my Jesus, my Love, my Hope !

Spiritual Reading.

**SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ ! HAIL,
HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY !**

IV.—HOW MUCH OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY SHOULD BE INCREASED BECAUSE SHE IS OUR MOTHER.

It is not without a meaning, nor by chance, that Mary's clients call her Mother ; and indeed they seem unable to invoke her under any other name, and never tire of calling her Mother. Mother, yes ! for she is truly our Mother ; not indeed carnally, but spiritually, that is of our souls and of our salvation.

Sin, by depriving our souls of Divine grace, deprived them also of life. Jesus, our Redeemer, with an excess of mercy and love, came to restore this life by His own death on the Cross, as He Himself declared : *I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly*—(John x. 10). He says *more abundantly* ; for, according to theologians, the benefit of Redemption far exceeded the injury done by Adam's sin. So that by reconciling us with God He made Himself the Father of souls in the law of grace, as it was foretold by the Prophet Isaias : *He shall be called the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace*—(Is. ix. 6). But if Jesus is the Father of our souls, Mary is also their Mother ; for she, by giving us Jesus, gave us true life ; and afterwards, by offering the life of her Son on Mount Calvary for our salvation, she brought us forth to the life of grace.

On two occasions, then, according to the holy Fathers, Mary became our spiritual Mother.

The first, according to Blessed Albert the Great, was when she merited to conceive in her virginal womb the

Son of God. St. Bernardine of Sienna says the same thing more distinctly, for he tells us "that when at the Annunciation the most Blessed Virgin gave the consent which was expected by the Eternal Word before becoming her Son, she from that moment asked our salvation of God with intense ardour, and took it to heart in such a way that from that moment, as a most loving Mother, she bore us in her womb."

In the second Chapter of St. Luke, the Evangelist, speaking of the birth of our Blessed Redeemer, says that *Mary brought forth her first-born son*—(Luke ii. 7). Then, remarks an author, "since the Evangelist asserts that on this occasion the most Holy Virgin brought forth her first-born, must we suppose that she had afterwards other children?" But then he replies to his own question, saying, "that as it is of Faith that Mary had no other children according to the flesh than Jesus, she must have had other spiritual children, and we are those children." This was revealed by our Lord to St. Gertrude, who was one day reading the above text, and was perplexed and could not understand how Mary, being the Mother of Jesus only, could be said to have brought forth her first-born. God explained it to her, saying that Jesus was Mary's first-born according to the flesh, but that all mankind were her second-born according to the spirit.

From what has been said we can understand that passage of the sacred Canticles: *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat, set about with lilies*—(Cant. vii. 2). This is explained by St. Ambrose, who says: "Although in the most pure womb of Mary there was but one grain of corn, which was Jesus Christ, yet it is called a heap of wheat, because all the elect were virtually contained in it"; and as Mary was also to be their Mother, in bringing forth Jesus, He was called, and truly was, the First-born of many brethren. And the Abbot William writes in the same sense, saying: "that Mary, in bringing forth Jesus, our Saviour and our Life, brought forth many unto salvation; and by giving birth to Life itself, she gave life to many."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

X.—HOW MUCH JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE LOVED BY US ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN INSTITUTING THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

I.

In order to excite us to receive Him in the Holy Communion, Jesus not only exhorts us to do so by many invitations—*Come, eat my bread; and drink the wine which I have mingled for you*—(Prov. ix. 5); *Eat, O friends, and drink*—(Cant. v. 1)—speaking of this Heavenly Bread and Wine—but He even gives us a formal precept: *Take ye, and eat; this is my body. And more than this; that we may eat and receive Him, He entices us with the promise of Paradise. He that eateth my flesh hath everlasting life*—(John vi. 55). *He that eateth this bread shall live for ever*—(John vi. 59). And, still more, He threatens us with hell, and exclusion from Paradise if we refuse to communicate. *Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man you shall not have life in you*—(John vi. 54). These invitations, these promises, these threats, all proceed from the great desire He has to come to us in this Sacrament.

But why is it that Jesus so desires that we should receive Him in the Holy Communion? Here is the reason. St. Denis says that love always sighs after and tends to union; and so also says St. Thomas: "Lovers desire to become one." Friends who really love each other would like to be so united as to become one person. Now this is what the infinite love of God for man has done; that He should not only give us Himself in the eternal kingdom, but even in this life permit men to possess Him in the most intimate union, by giving them Himself, whole and entire, under the appearance of bread in this Sacrament. He stands as though behind a wall, and looks, as it were, through a closed lattice:

Behold he standeth behind our wall, looking through the windows, looking through the lattices—(Cant. ii. 9). It is true we do not see Him; but He sees us, and is there really present: He is present in order that we may possess Him: but He hides Himself from us to make us desire Him: and as long as we have not reached our true country, Jesus desires to give Himself wholly to us, and to remain united with us.

II.

He could not satisfy His love by giving Himself to the human race by His Incarnation and by His Passion, dying for all men upon the Cross; but desired to find out a way whereby He might give Himself entirely to each one of us in particular; and for this end He instituted the Sacrament of the Altar in order to unite Himself wholly to each: *He that eateth my flesh, He said, abideth in me and I in him—(John vi. 57).* In the Holy Communion Jesus unites Himself to the soul, and the soul to Jesus; and this is not a union of mere affection, but it is a true and real union. Hence St. Francis de Sales says: "In no other action can the Saviour be considered more tender or more loving than in this, in which He annihilates Himself, so to say, and reduces Himself to food, in order to penetrate our souls and to unite Himself to the hearts of His faithful." St. John Chrysostom says that Jesus Christ, through the ardent love He bore us, desired so to unite Himself with us as to become one and the same thing with us. "He mingled Himself with us that we might be one thing; for this is the property of those who ardently love."

Saturday after Low Sunday

Morning Meditation.

MARY'S CHARITY TOWARDS HER NEIGHBOUR.

All who love Me love what I love, said Jesus to St. Catharine of Genoa. Now, as there never was and never will be any one who loved God as much as Mary loved Him, so there never was and never will be anyone who loved her neighbour as much as she did. Great was the mercy of Mary towards the wretched when she was an exile here on earth, but far greater is it now that she reigns in Heaven.

I.

Love of God and love of our neighbour are commanded by the same precept: *And this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God love also his brother—(1 John iv. 21).* St. Thomas says that the reason for this is that he who loves God loves all that God loves. St. Catharine of Genoa one day said: "Lord, Thou willest that I should love my neighbour, and I can love none but Thee." God answered her in these words: "All who love Me love what I love." But as there never was, and never will be, any one who loved God as much as Mary loved Him, so there never was, and never will be, any one who loved her neighbour as much as she did.

Father Cornélius à Lapide, on these words of the Canticles, *King Solomon hath made him a litter of the wood of Libanus . . . the midst he covered with charity for the daughters of Jerusalem—(Cant. iii. 9, 10),* says "this litter was Mary's bosom, in which the Incarnate Word dwelt, filling it with charity for the daughters of Jerusalem; for Christ, Who is love itself, inspired the Blessed Virgin with charity in its highest degree, that she might succour all who had recourse to her."

So great was Mary's charity when on earth that she succoured the needy without even being asked; as was the case at the marriage-feast of Cana, when she told her Son that family's distress, *They have no wine*—(John i. 3), and asked Him to work a miracle. Oh, with what speed did she fly when there was question of relieving her neighbour! When she went to the house of Elizabeth to fulfil an office of charity, *she went into the hill-country with haste*—(Luke i. 39). She could not, however, more fully display the greatness of her charity than she did in the offering which she made of her Son to death for our salvation. On this subject St. Bonaventure says: "Mary so loved the world as to give her only-begotten Son." Hence St. Anselm exclaims: "O blessed amongst women, thy purity surpasses that of the Angels, and thy compassion that of the Saints!" "Nor has this love of Mary for us," says St. Bonaventure, "diminished now that she is in Heaven; but it has increased, for now she better sees the miseries of men." And therefore the Saint goes on to say: "Great was the mercy of Mary towards the wretched when she was still in exile on earth; but far greater is it now that she reigns in Heaven."

O Mother of mercy, thou wast all filled with the love of God, obtain for me His pure and holy love. Thou wast all love towards thy neighbour, obtain for me charity towards my neighbour. O Mary, make me a Saint.

II.

St. Agnes assured St. Bridget that "there was no one who prayed without receiving grace through the charity of the Blessed Virgin." Unfortunate, indeed, should we be, did not Mary intercede for us! Jesus Himself, addressing the same Saint, said: "Were it not for the prayers of My Mother, there would be no hope of mercy."

Blessed is he, says the Divine Mother, who listens to my instructions, pays attention to my charity, and, in imitation of me, exercises it himself towards others: *Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth*

daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors—(Prov. viii. 34). St. Gregory Nazianzen assures us that "there is nothing by which we can with greater certainty gain the affection of Mary than by charity towards our neighbour." Therefore, as God exhorts us, saying, *Be ye merciful, as your Father is also merciful*—(Luke vi. 36), so also does Mary seem to say to all her children: "Be ye merciful, as your Mother is also merciful." It is certain that our charity towards our neighbour will be the measure of that which God and Mary will show us: *Give, and it shall be given to you. For with the same measure that you shall mete without, it shall be measured to you again*—(Luke vi. 38). St. Methodius used to say, "Give to the poor, and receive Paradise." For the Apostle writes that charity towards our neighbour renders us happy both in this world and in the next: *But piety is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*—(1 Tim. iv. 8). St. John Chrysostom, on these words of Proverbs, *He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord*—(Prov. xix. 17), makes a remark to the same effect, saying, "He who assists the needy makes God his debtor."

O Mother of Mercy, thou art full of charity for all; forget not my miseries; thou seest them full well. Recommend me to God, who denies thee nothing. Obtain for me the grace to imitate thee in holy charity, as well towards God as towards my neighbour. Amen.

Spiritual Reading.

**SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL,
HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!**

V.—HOW MUCH OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY SHOULD BE INCREASED BECAUSE SHE IS OUR MOTHER.

The second occasion on which Mary became our spiritual Mother, and brought us forth to the life of grace, was when she offered to the Eternal Father the life of her beloved Son on Mount Calvary, with so bitter sorrow

and suffering. So that St. Augustine declares that "as she then co-operated by her love in the birth of the faithful to the life of grace, she became the spiritual Mother of all who are members of the one Head, Christ Jesus." This we are given to understand by the following verse of the sacred Canticles, and which refers to the most Blessed Virgin: *They have made me keeper in the vineyards; my vineyard I have not kept*—(Cant. i. 5). St. William says that "Mary, in order that she might save many souls, exposed her own to death"; meaning that to save us she sacrificed the life of her Son. And who but Jesus was the soul of Mary? He was her life, and all her love. And therefore the Prophet Simeon foretold that *a sword of sorrow would one day trans-pierce her own most blessed soul*—(Luke ii. 35). And this was precisely the lance which transpierced the side of Jesus, Who was the soul of Mary. Then it was that this most Blessed Virgin brought us forth by her sorrows to eternal life: and thus we can all call ourselves the children of the sorrows of Mary. Our most loving Mother was always, and in all things, united to the will of God. "And therefore," says St. Bonaventure, "when she saw the love of the Eternal Father towards men to be so great that, in order to save them He willed the death of His very own Son; and, further, seeing the love of the Son in wishing to die for us, in order to conform herself to this excessive love of both the Father and the Son towards the human race, she also with her entire will offered, and consented to, the death of her Son, in order that we might be saved."

It is true that, according to the Prophecy of Isaias, Jesus in dying for the redemption of the human race, chose to be alone. *I have trodden the winepress alone*—(Is. lxiii. 3), but, seeing the ardent desire of Mary to aid in the salvation of man, He disposed it so that she, by the sacrifice and offering of the life of her Jesus, should co-operate in our salvation, and thus become the Mother of our souls. This our Saviour signified, when, before expiring, He looked down from the Cross on His Mother and on the disciple St. John, who stood at its foot, and, first addressing Mary, He said: *Behold thy*

son—(John xix. 26); as it were, saying: Behold, the whole human race, which by the offer thou makest of My life for the salvation of all, is even now being born to the life of grace. Then, turning to the disciple, Jesus said, *Behold thy mother*—(John xix. 27). "By these words," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "Mary, by reason of the love she bore them, became the Mother, not only of St. John, but of all men." And Silveira remarks that St. John himself, in stating this fact in his Gospel, says: "After that He saith to the disciple *Behold thy mother*." Here observe well that Jesus Christ did not address Himself to St. John, but to the disciple, in order to show that He then gave Mary to all who are His disciples, that is to say to all Christians, that she might be their Mother. "John is but the name of one, whereas the word disciple is applicable to all; therefore our Lord makes use of a name common to all, to show that Mary was given as a Mother to all."

The Church applies to Mary these words of the sacred Canticles: *I am the mother of fair love*—(Ecclesi. xxiv. 24); and a commentator explaining them says that the Blessed Virgin's love renders our souls beautiful in the sight of God, and also makes her, as a most loving Mother, receive us as her children, "she being all love towards those whom she has thus adopted." And what Mother, exclaims St. Bonaventure, loves her children and attends to their welfare as thou lovest us and carest for us, O most sweet Queen! "For dost thou not love us and seek our welfare far more without comparison than any earthly mother?"

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XI.—HOW MUCH JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE LOVED BY US ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN INSTITUTING THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

I.

"It was Thy wish, in short," says St. Laurence Justinian, "O God, enamoured of our souls, to make, by

means of this Sacrament, Thine own Heart, by an inseparable union, one and the same heart with ours !” St. Bernardine of Siena adds that “the gift of Jesus Christ to us as our food was the last step of His love, since He gives Himself to us in order to unite Himself wholly with us, in the same way as food becomes united with him who partakes of it.” Oh, how delighted is Jesus Christ to be united with our souls ! He one day said to His beloved servant, Margaret of Ypres, after Communion : “ See, my daughter, the beautiful union that exists between Me and thee ! Come, then, love Me ; and let us remain ever united in love, and let us never separate again.”

We must, then, be persuaded that a soul can neither do, or think of doing, any thing which gives greater pleasure to Jesus Christ, than to communicate frequently with dispositions suitable to the great Guest Whom she has to receive into her heart. I have said *suitable*, not indeed *worthy* dispositions ; for if worthy were necessary who could ever communicate ? Another God would alone be worthy to receive God. By *suitable* I mean such dispositions as become a miserable creature clothed with the unhappy flesh of Adam. Ordinarily speaking, it is sufficient if a person communicates in a state of grace, and with a great desire of growing in the love of Christ. St. Francis de Sales said : “ It is by love alone that we must receive Jesus Christ in the Communion, since it is through love alone that He gives Himself to us.” For the rest, with regard to the number of times a person should communicate, in this he should be guided by the advice of his spiritual father. Nevertheless, we should be aware that no state of life or employment, neither the married state nor business, prevents frequent Communion, when the director thinks it advisable, as Pope Innocent XI. has declared in his Decree of 1679, when he says : “ Frequent Communion must be left to the judgment of the confessors . . . who, for lay persons in business or in the married state, must

recommend it according as they see it will be profitable for their salvation.”*

II.

We must next understand that there is nothing from which we can derive such profit as from Holy Communion. The Eternal Father has made Jesus Christ the Possessor of all His own heavenly treasures. *The Father hath given all things into his hands*—(John xiii. 3). Hence, when Jesus Christ comes to a soul in the Holy Communion, He brings with Him boundless treasures of grace ; and consequently after Communion we can justly say, *Now all good things came to me together with it.*

St. Denis says that the Sacrament of the Eucharist is far more powerful for the sanctification of souls than all other spiritual means of grace ; and St. Vincent Ferrer, that one Communion does more for the soul than a week’s fasting on bread and water.

In the first place, as the Council of Trent teaches, Communion is that great remedy which frees us from daily faults, and preserves us against mortal sins. It is said *from daily faults*, because, according to St. Thomas, a man is excited by means of this Sacrament to make acts of love, by which venial sins are forgiven. And it is said that we are *preserved from mortal sins*, because Communion increases grace, which will preserve us from great faults. Hence, Innocent III says that Jesus Christ delivered us from the *power of sin* by His Passion, but that by the Eucharist He delivers us from the *power of sinning*.

* “ Frequent and daily Communion, inasmuch as it is most pleasing to Christ Our Lord and to the Catholic Church, is open to all the faithful of every class and condition ; so that nobody who is in the state of grace, and approaches the Sacred Table with a pure and devout intention should be prohibited therefrom. The right intention consists in this :—That whoever approaches the Sacred Table should do so—not from habit or vainglory, or impelled by human respect, but from a desire to please God, and to be closely united to Him, and to provide a Divine remedy for their infirmities and defects . . .

In order that daily Communion should be promoted with greater prudence and more fruitful results, it is necessary that the advice of the confessor should previously be obtained. Let confessors beware, however, lest they should persuade anyone from daily Communion who is in the state of grace and approaches it with a right intention . . .” — *Extract from the Decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council on the Reception of Daily Communion which was fractionally ratified, confirmed and ordered to be issued by His Holiness Pope Pius X, December 17, 1905.*

Second Sunday after Easter

Morning Meditation.

“I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD.”
(Gospel of Sunday. John x. 11, 16).

Jesus said of Himself : *I am the good shepherd.* The work of a good shepherd is nothing more than to guide his flock to good pastures, and to guard them from wolves. But what shepherd, O sweet Redeemer, ever had mercy like Thee ! What shepherd would ever give his life for his sheep ? Thou alone, because Thou art a God of infinite love, canst say : *I lay down my life for my sheep.*

I.

Thus spoke Jesus of Himself : *I am the good Shepherd*—(John x. 11). The work of a good shepherd is nothing more than to guide his flock to good pastures, and to guard them from wolves ; but what shepherd, O sweet Redeemer, ever had mercy like Thee ? What shepherd has ever given his life to save his flocks and deliver them from the punishment they had deserved ?

Who in his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree ; that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice ; by whose stripes you were healed—(1 Peter ii. 24). To heal us of our sicknesses this good Shepherd took upon Himself all our ills, and paid our debts in His own person, dying in agony upon a Cross. It was this excess of love towards us, His sheep, which made St. Ignatius, the Martyr, burn with desire to give his life for Jesus Christ, saying : “ My Love is crucified ! What ! has my God been willing to die on a Cross for me, and cannot I desire to die for Him ? ” And, in truth, was it a great thing the Martyrs did in giving their lives for Jesus

Christ, when He died for love of them ? Oh, how that death endured for them by Jesus Christ made sweet to them all their torments—stripes, piercing nails, fiery plates of iron, and most agonizing deaths !

But the love of this Good Shepherd was not satisfied with giving His life for His sheep ; He desired also, after His death, to leave them His flesh itself, first sacrificed upon the Cross, that it might be food and pasture of their souls. “ The burning love He bore to us,” says Saint John Chrysostom, “ induced Him to unite and make Himself one thing with us.”

Remember, then, my Jesus, that I am one of those sheep for whom Thou hast given Thy life. Ah ! cast on me one of those looks of pity with which Thou didst once regard me, when Thou wast dying on the Cross for me. Look on me and change me, and save me. Thou hast called Thyself the loving Shepherd, Who, finding the lost sheep, takes it with joy and carries it on His shoulders, and then calls His friends to rejoice with Him. I love Thee, my Good Shepherd ; never permit me to be again separated from Thee.

II.

When this Good Shepherd sees a sheep lost, what does He not do, what means does He not take, to recover it ? He does not cease to seek it until He finds it. *If he shall lose one of them doth he not go after that which was lost until he find it*—(Luke xv. 4). And when He has found it, rejoicing He places it upon His shoulders, that it may be lost no more ; and, calling to Him His friends and neighbours, i.e., the Angels and Saints, He invites them to rejoice with Him for having found the sheep that was lost. Who, then, will not love with all his affections this good Lord Who shows Himself thus loving to sinners who have turned their backs upon Him, and destroyed themselves of their own accord ?

O my Saviour, worthy of all love, behold at Thy feet a sheep that was lost ! I had left Thee, but Thou hast not abandoned me ; Thou hast left no means untried to recover me. What would have become of me if Thou hadst not thought of seeking me ? Woe is me ! How

long a time have I lived far from Thee! Now, through Thy mercy, I trust that I am in Thy grace; and as I first fled from Thee, now I desire nothing but to love Thee, and to live and die embracing Thy feet. But while I live I am in danger of leaving Thee; oh, bind me, chain me with the bond of Thy holy love, and cease not to seek for me so long as I live on this earth. *I have gone astray like a sheep that was lost; seek thy servant*—(Ps. cxviii. 176) O Mary, thou advocate of sinners, obtain for me holy perseverance.

Spiritual Reading.

**SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL,
HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!**

VI.—HOW MUCH OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY SHOULD BE INCREASED BECAUSE SHE IS OUR MOTHER.

O blessed are they who live under the protection of so loving and powerful a Mother! The Prophet David, although she was not yet born, sought salvation from God by dedicating himself as a son of Mary, and thus prayed: *Save the son of thy handmaid*—(Ps. lxxxv. 16). “Of what handmaid?” asks St. Augustine, and he answers, “Of her who said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord.*” “And who,” says Blessed Cardinal Bellarmine, “would ever dare to snatch us from the bosom of Mary, when we have taken refuge there? What power of hell, or what temptation, can overcome us if we place our confidence in the patronage of this great Mother, God’s Mother and ours?” There are some who say that when the whale sees its young in danger, either from tempests or pursuers, it opens its mouth and swallows them. This is precisely what Novarinus asserts of Mary: “When the storms of temptations rage, the most compassionate Mother of the faithful, with maternal tenderness, protects them as it were in her own bosom until she has brought them into the harbour of salvation.”

O most loving Mother! O most compassionate Mother!

Be thou ever blessed! And ever blessed be God, Who has given thee to us for our Mother, and for a secure refuge in all dangers of this life! Our Blessed Lady herself, in a vision, addressed these words to St. Bridget: “As a mother, on seeing her son in the midst of the swords of his enemies, would use every effort to save him, so do I, and will do, for all sinners who seek my mercy.” Thus it is that in every engagement with the infernal powers we shall always certainly conquer by having recourse to the Mother of God, who is also our Mother, saying and repeating again and again: “We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God.” Oh, how many victories have not the faithful gained over hell by having recourse to Mary with this short but most powerful prayer! Thus it was that the great servant of God, Sister Mary Crucified, of the Order of St. Benedict, always overcame the devils.

Be of good heart, then, all you who are children of Mary. Remember that she accepts as her children all those who choose to be so. Rejoice! Why do you fear to be lost when such a Mother defends and protects you? “Say, then, O my soul, with great confidence: I will rejoice and be glad; for whatever the judgment to be pronounced on me may be, it depends on and must come from my Brother and Mother.” “Thus,” says St. Bonaventure, “it is that each one who loves this good Mother, and relies on her protection, should animate himself to confidence, remembering that Jesus is our Brother, and Mary our Mother.” The same thought makes St. Anselm cry out with joy, and encourage us, saying: “O happy confidence! O safe refuge! The Mother of God is my Mother! How firm, then, should be our confidence, since our salvation depends on the judgment of a good Brother and a tender Mother.” It is, then, our Mother who calls us, and says, in these words of the Book of Proverbs: *He that is a little one, let him come to me*—(Prov. ix. 4). Children have always on their lips their mother’s name; and in every fear, in every danger, they immediately cry out: Mother! Mother! Ah, most sweet Mary! Ah, most loving Mother, this is precisely what thou desirest: that

we should become children, and call on thee in every danger, and at all times have recourse to thee, because thou desirest to help and save us, as thou hast saved all who have had recourse to thee.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XII.—HOW MUCH JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE LOVED BY US ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN INSTITUTING THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

I.

This Sacrament of the Eucharist, above all others, inflames our souls with Divine love. *God is love*—(1 John iv. 8). And He is a fire which consumes all earthly affections in our hearts. *He is a consuming fire*—(Heb. xii. 29). It was for this very purpose, namely, to enkindle this fire, the Son of God came upon earth. *I am come to cast fire on the earth*; and He added that He desired nothing but to see this fire enkindled in our souls: *And what will I but that it be kindled?*—(Luke xii. 49). And oh, what flames of love does not Jesus Christ light up in the heart of every one who receives Him devoutly in this Sacrament! St. Catherine of Sienna once saw the Host in a priest's hand as a globe of fire; and the Saint was astonished that the hearts of all men were not burned up and, as it were, reduced to ashes by such a flame. Such brilliant rays issued from the face of St. Rose of Lima, after Communion, as to dazzle the eyes of those who saw her; and the heat from her mouth was so intense that a hand held near it was scorched. It is related of St. Wenceslaus that by merely visiting the churches where the Blessed Sacrament was kept, he was inflamed by such an ardour that his servant, who accompanied him, did not feel the cold if, when walking on the snow, he trod in the footsteps of the Saint. And St. John Chrysostom says that the most Holy

Sacrament is a burning fire; so that when we leave the altar we breathe forth flames of love which make us objects of terror to hell.

O God of love, O infinite Lover, worthy of infinite love; tell me what more canst Thou do to make men love Thee? It was not sufficient for Thee to become Man, and to subject Thyself to all our miseries; not sufficient to shed all Thy Blood for us in torments, and then to die overwhelmed with sorrow, upon a Cross, destined for the most shameful malefactors. Thou didst, at last, oblige Thyself to be hidden under the species of bread and wine, to become our Food, and be united with each one of us. Tell me, I repeat, what more canst Thou do to make Thyself loved by us? Ah, wretched shall we be if we do not love Thee in this life! And when we shall have entered into eternity what remorse shall we not feel for not having loved Thee! My Jesus, I will not die without loving Thee, and loving Thee exceedingly!

II.

The spouse of the Canticles said: *He brought me into the cellar of wine, he set in order charity in me*—(Cant. ii. 4). St. Gregory of Nyssa says that Communion is precisely this cellar of wine in which the soul becomes so inebriated with Divine love that she forgets and loses sight of creatures; and this is that languishing with love of which the spouse again speaks: *Stay me up with flowers: compass me about with apples, because I languish with love*—(Cant. ii. 5). Some one will say: But this is the very reason why I do not communicate frequently, because I see that I am so cold in the love of God." Gerson answers such a one by saying: "Do you, therefore, because you are cold, willingly keep away from the fire? Rather, because you feel yourself cold, should you so much the more frequently approach this Sacrament, if you really desire to love Jesus Christ." "Although it be with lukewarmness," wrote St. Bonaventure, "still approach, trusting in the mercy of God. The more one feels himself sick, the greater need has he of a physician."

In like manner, St. Francis de Sales: "Two sorts of

persons ought to go frequently to Communion : the perfect in order to remain so ; and the imperfect, in order to become perfect." But for frequent Communion it is at least necessary to have a great desire to become a Saint and to grow in the love of Jesus Christ. Our Lord said once to St. Matilda : " When you go to Communion desire all the love which a soul has ever had for Me, and I will receive your love according to your desire."

My Jesus, I am sorry and am pained for having so greatly offended Thee. But now I love Thee above all things. I love Thee more than myself, and I consecrate to Thee all my affections. Do Thou, who inspirest me with this desire, give me also grace to accomplish it. My Jesus, my Jesus, I desire nothing of Thee but Thyself. Now that Thou hast drawn me to Thy love, I leave all, I renounce all, and I bind myself to Thee : Thou alone art sufficient for me. O Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me, and make me a Saint ! Add this also to the many wonders you have done in changing sinners into Saints.

Monday—Second Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

CHARITY TO BE PRACTISED IN WORDS.

St. Bernard says the tongue of a detractor is a three-edged sword. It destroys the reputation of the neighbour ; it wounds the souls of those who listen to the detraction ; and it kills the soul of the detractor himself by depriving him of Divine grace. *If a serpent bite in silence, he is nothing better than backbiteth secretly*—(Eccles. x. 11).

I.

To practise fraternal charity in words, you must, above all, abstain from every species of detraction. *The tale-bearer, says the Holy Ghost, shall defile his own soul, and shall be hated by all*—(Eccles. xxi. 31). Yes ; he shall be an object of hatred to God and to men, and even to those who for their own amusement applaud and encourage his slanderous language. Even they shall shun him ; because they justly fear that as in their presence he has detracted others, so before others he will slander them. St. Jerome says that some who have renounced other vices cannot abstain from this. " They who have abandoned other sins continue to fall into the sin of detraction." Would to God that even amongst those consecrated to God there were not to be found some whose tongues are so sharp that they cannot speak without wounding the character of a neighbour ! God grant that such people may not meet the fate of a certain slanderer, who, according to Thomas Cantimprensis, died in a fit of rage, and in the act of lacerating his tongue with his teeth. St. Bernard speaks of another slanderer who attempted to defame the character of St. Malachy ; his tongue instantly swelled and became filled with worms. In this miserable state the unhappy man died after seven days.

But how dear to God and to men are those who speak well of all ! St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi used to say that if she knew anyone who had never in his whole life spoken ill of a neighbour, she would have him canonised. Be careful, then, never to utter a word that savours of detraction. Above all, be on your guard against every expression that is in the slightest degree apt to injure the character of your Superiors. By speaking ill of them, you would destroy in your companions the spirit of obedience, as you would diminish respect for their judgment and authority.

The sin of detraction is committed, not only by imputing to others what is not true, by exaggerating their defects, or by making known their hidden faults, but also by representing their virtuous actions as defective, or by ascribing them to a bad motive. It is also

detraction to deny the good works of others, or to question their claims to the just praise bestowed upon them. To render their calumnies more credible, some people begin by praise and end with slander. Such a person, they say, has a great deal of talent, but he is proud; he is very generous, but at the same time very vindictive.

Ah, my God, look not upon my sins, but upon Jesus, Thy Son, Who has sacrificed His life for my salvation. For Jesus' sake have pity upon me, and pardon all the offences I have committed against Thee, but especially those I have committed by my want of charity towards my neighbour. Destroy in me, O Lord, whatever displeases Thee, and give me a sincere desire to please Thee in all things.

II.

Let it be your care ever to speak well of all. Speak of others as you would wish to be spoken of by others. With regard to the absent, observe the excellent rule of St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi: "Never to utter in their absence what you would not say in their presence." And should you ever hear someone speak ill of others, be careful neither to encourage his uncharitableness nor to appear pleased with his language; otherwise you will partake of his guilt. You should either reprove him, or change the subject of conversation, or withdraw, or, at least, pay no attention to him. *Hedge in thy ears with thorns*, says the Holy Ghost; *hear not a wicked tongue*—(Ecclus. xxviii. 28). Against detraction, hedge in your ears with thorns, that it may not enter. Whenever, then, you hear a person speak ill of others, it is necessary to show, at least by silence, by your countenance, or by downcast eyes, that you are not pleased with the conversation. Conduct yourself always in such a way that no one will in future dare attack the character of another in your presence. And when it is in your power, charity requires of you to take the part of the person who is detracted. *Thy lips are as a scarlet lace*—(Cant. iv. 3). My spouse, says the Lord, I will have thy lips as a scarlet lace; that is, according to the explanation of

St. Gregory of Nyssa, your words must be full of charity, so as to cover as much as possible the defects of others, or at least to excuse their intention, if their actions be inexcusable. "Excuse the intention," says St. Bernard, "if you cannot excuse the act." The Abbot Constable, as Surinus relates, was called "The covering of his brethren." For this holy monk, as often as he heard any one speak of the defects of others, sought to cover and excuse them. Such, too, was the practice of St. Teresa. Of her her Religious used to say that in her presence their character was secure, because she would defend them.

Spiritual Reading.

*SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL,
HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!*

VII.—THE GREATNESS OF THE LOVE THIS MOTHER BEARS US.

Since Mary is our Mother, we may consider how great is the love she bears us. Love towards our children is a necessary impulse of nature; and St. Thomas says that this is the reason why the Divine law imposes on children the obligation of loving their parents, but gives no express command that parents should love their children; for nature itself has so strongly implanted it in all creatures that, as St. Ambrose remarks, "we know that a mother will expose herself to danger for her children," and even the most savage beasts cannot do otherwise than love their young. It is said that even tigers, on hearing the cry of their cubs taken by hunters, will go into the sea and swim until they reach the vessel in which they are. Since the very tigers, says our most loving Mother Mary, cannot forget their young, how can I forget to love you, my children? And even, she adds, were such a thing possible as that a mother should forget to love her child, it is not possible that I should cease to love a soul that has become my child: *Can a woman*

forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee—(Is. xlix. 15).

Mary is our Mother, not, as we have already observed, according to the flesh, but by love: *I am the mother of fair love—(Ecclus. xxiv. 24)*; hence it is the love only that she bears us that makes her our Mother; and therefore a writer remarks that “she glories in being a Mother of love, because she is all love towards us whom she has adopted for her children.” And who can ever tell the love that Mary bears us miserable creatures? Arnold of Chartres tells us that “at the death of Jesus Christ she desired with immense ardour to die with her Son, for love of us”; so much so, adds St. Ambrose, that whilst “her Son was hanging on the Cross, Mary offered herself to the executioners,” to give her life for us.

But let us consider the reason of this love; for then we shall be better able to understand how much this good Mother loves us.

The first reason for the great love that Mary bears to men is the great love that she bears to God; love towards God and love towards our neighbour belong to the same commandment, as expressed by St. John: *this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother—(1 John iv. 21)*; so that in proportion as the one becomes greater the other also increases. What have not the Saints done for their neighbour in consequence of their love towards God! Read only the account of the labours of St. Francis Xavier in the Indies, where, in order to aid the souls of these poor barbarians and bring them to God, he exposed himself to a thousand dangers, clambering amongst the mountains, and seeking out these poor creatures in the caves in which they dwelt like wild beasts. See a St. Francis de Sales, who, in order to convert the heretics of the province of Chablais, risked his life every morning for a whole year, crawling on his hands and knees over a frozen beam, in order that he might preach to them on the opposite side of a river; a St. Paulinus, who delivered himself up as a slave in order that he might obtain liberty for the son of a poor

widow; a St. Fidelis, who, in order to draw the heretics of a certain place to God, persisted in going to preach to them, though he knew it would cost him his life. The Saints, then, because they loved God much, did much for their neighbour; but who ever loved God as much as Mary? She loved Him more in the first moment of her existence than all the Saints and Angels ever loved Him, or will love Him. Our Blessed Lady herself revealed to Sister Mary Crucified that the fire of love with which she was inflamed towards God was such that if the heavens and earth were placed in it they would be instantly consumed; so that the ardours of the Seraphim, in comparison with it, were but as fresh breezes. And as amongst all the blessed spirits there is not one that loves God more than Mary, so we neither have, nor can have, any one who, after God, loves us as much as this most loving Mother; and if we concentrate all the love that mothers bear their children, husbands and wives one another, all the love of Angels and Saints for their clients, it does not equal the love of Mary towards a single soul. Father Nieremberg says that the love that all mothers have ever had for their children is but a shadow in comparison with the love that Mary bears to each one of us; and he adds that she alone loves us more than all the Angels and Saints put together.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XIII.—ON THE GREAT CONFIDENCE WE OUGHT TO HAVE IN THE LOVE JESUS CHRIST HAS SHOWN US AND IN ALL HE HAS DONE FOR US.

I.

David placed all his hope of salvation in his future Redeemer, and said: *Into thy hands, O Lord I commend my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth—(Ps. xxx. 6)*. But how much more ought

we to place our confidence in Jesus Christ, now that He has come and has accomplished the work of Redemption! Hence each one of us should say, and repeat again and again with greater confidence: *Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth.*

If we have great reason to fear everlasting death on account of our sins against God, we have on the other hand far greater reason to hope for everlasting life through the merits of Jesus Christ, which are infinitely more powerful for our salvation than our sins are for our damnation. We have sinned, and have deserved hell; but the Redeemer has come to take upon Himself all our offences, and to make satisfaction for them by His sufferings: *Surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows*—(Is. liii. 4).

In the same unhappy moment in which we sinned, God had already written against us the sentence of eternal death; but what has our merciful Redeemer done? *Blotting out the handwriting of the decree which was against us . . . the same he took out of the way, fastening it to the cross*—(Col. ii. 14). He cancelled by His Blood the decree of our condemnation, and then fastened it to the Cross, in order that, when we look at the sentence of our damnation for the sins we have committed, we may at the same time see the Cross on which Jesus Christ died and blotted out this sentence by His Blood, and so regain hope of pardon and everlasting life.

II.

Oh, how far more powerfully does the Blood of Jesus Christ speak for us, and obtain mercy for us from God, than did the blood of Abel speak against Cain! *You are come to Jesus, the mediator of the New Testament, and to the sprinkling of blood, which speaketh better than that of Abel*—(Heb. xii. 24). As if the Apostle had said: "O sinners, happy are you to be able, after you have sinned, to have recourse to Jesus crucified, Who has shed all His Blood in order to become the Mediator of peace between sinners and God, and to obtain pardon for them! Your iniquities cry out against you, but the

Blood of the Redeemer pleads in your favour; and the Divine justice cannot but be appeased by the voice of this Precious Blood."

It is true that we shall have to render a rigorous account to the Eternal Judge of all our sins. But who is to be our Judge? *The Father hath committed all judgments to the Son*—(John v. 22). Let us comfort ourselves; the Eternal Father has committed our judgment to our own Redeemer. Therefore St. Paul encourages us, saying: *Who is he that shall condemn Christ Jesus who died . . . who also maketh intercession for us*—(Rom. viii. 34). Who is the Judge to condemn us? It is that same Saviour Who, in order not to condemn us to everlasting death, vouchsafed Himself to be condemned and to die; and not content with this, at this moment intercedes with His Father for our salvation. Hence St. Thomas of Villanova says: "What do you fear, O sinner, if you detest your sin? How will He condemn you, Who died in order not to condemn you? How will He cast you from Him, if you return to His feet, He Who came from Heaven to seek you at the very time you were flying from Him?"

 Tuesday—Second Week after Easter

 Morning Meditation.

CHARITY TO BE PRACTISED IN WORDS.

The sowers of discord are objects of abomination in God's sight: *Six things there are which the Lord hateth and the seventh his soul detesteth . . . him that soweth discord among brethren*—(Prov. vi. 16, 19). An uncharitable word that proceeds from passion may be excusable, but how can the Almighty bear with him

who sows discord and disturbs the peace of a community? *Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbour? Let it die within thee*—(Eccclus xix. 10).

I.

Be careful never to mention to anyone that another has spoken ill of him: for tale-bearing of this kind sometimes occasions disputes and aversions which last for a long time. Oh! how frightful the account which tale-bearers must render to God! The sowers of discord are objects of abomination in His sight. *Six things there are which the Lord hateth, and the seventh his soul detesteth . . . him that soweth discord among brethren*—(Prov. vi. 16, 19). An uncharitable word that proceeds from passion may be excusable. But how can the Almighty bear with him who sows discord and disturbs the peace of a community? Listen to the advice of the Holy Ghost: *Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbour? Let it die within thee*—(Eccclus. xix. 10). The words that you hear against another must not only be kept to yourself, but must even die and be buried within you. You must be careful, then, never to give the slightest intimation of what you have heard. For a single word, a nod, a simple hint, may lead others to a knowledge, or at least to a suspicion, of the faults that were mentioned to you.

Some appear to suffer the pangs of death until they have disclosed the secrets communicated to them; as if these secrets were so many thorns that wound their very heart until they are drawn out. You should never mention the hidden defects of others to any one except to Superiors, and not even to them unless the reparation of the injury done to the community, or the good of the one who has committed the fault, require that it should be made known to the Superior.

Moreover, in your conversation you must be careful never to wound, even by jests, the feelings of another. Jestings that offend a neighbour are opposed to charity, and to the words of Jesus Christ: *All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them*—(Matt. vii. 12). You certainly would not like to

be made an object of derision and of mockery before your companions. Abstain then from casting ridicule on others.

Endeavour also to avoid as much as possible all disputes. Sometimes trifles give occasion to arguments that end in disputes and injurious language. There are some who violate charity by proposing, through the spirit of contradiction, certain topics of debate which give rise to useless disputation. *Strive not, says the Wise Man, in a matter which doth not concern thee*—(Eccclus. xi. 9).

II.

But some will say that in every debate they defend the right side of the question, and that they cannot listen in silence to assertions utterly destitute of foundation. I answer in the words of Blessed Cardinal Bellarmine: "An ounce of charity is of more value than a hundred cartloads of reason." Blessed Egidius used to say that in such controversies to submit is to conquer; because submission evinces a superiority in virtue and preserves peace. Surely the preservation of peace is of far greater importance than the empty honour of a wordy victory. Hence St. Ephrem used to say that to maintain peace he always yielded to his adversary in disputation. St. Joseph Calasanctius, therefore, advises "all who desire peace never to contradict anyone."

But, if you love charity, endeavour to be affable and meek to all. Meekness is the characteristic virtue of the lamb; it is the beloved virtue of Jesus Christ. Who, through a love of meekness, took the appellation of *Lamb*. In your conversation and intercourse with others be agreeable not only to those over you, but to all, and particularly to those who have offended you, who oppose your wishes, or displease you by their roughness of manner, or by their forgetfulness of past favours. *Charity is patient: beareth all things*—(1 Cor. xiii. 4, 7). Whoever, then, bears not with the defects of his neighbour cannot have true charity. The most perfect souls are not free from all defects. You yourself are subject to faults; and notwithstanding your manifold imperfections you expect to be treated with charity and compassion.

You therefore should, according to the advice of the Apostle, compassionate the defects of others. *Bear ye one another's burdens*—(Gal. vi. 2). A mother, because she loves them, submits in patience to the insolence of her children. It is by the manner in which you bear the burdens others impose on you that you are to judge whether you love your neighbour with true charity.

Oh! with what charity did the Redeemer bear with the rudeness and imperfections of His disciples during the whole time He lived with them! With what charity did He wash the feet of the traitor Judas! With what patience has He borne even to the present moment with your sinfulness and ingratitude! And will you refuse to bear with the defects of your neighbours? The physician while he loves a patient loathes his disease; and if you have charity you must love your neighbours and at the same time hate their faults. But you will say: What am I to do? I have a natural repugnance to the society of such a person, and feel it painful to hold intercourse with him. My answer is: Have more fervour and more charity, and all such antipathies will vanish.

Spiritual Reading.

**SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL,
HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!**

VIII.—THE GREATNESS OF THE LOVE THIS MOTHER BEARS US.

Our Mother Mary loves us much, because we were recommended to her by her beloved Jesus when He, before expiring, said to her: *Woman, behold thy son!* for we were all represented in the person of St. John, as we have already observed: these were His last words; and the last recommendations left before death by persons we love are always treasured and never forgotten.

But again, we are exceedingly dear to Mary on account of the sufferings we cost her. Mothers generally love those children most the preservation of whose lives has

cost them the most suffering and anxiety; we are those children for whom Mary, in order to obtain for us the life of grace, was obliged to endure the bitter agony of herself offering her beloved Jesus to die an ignominious death, and had also to see Him expire before her own eyes in the midst of the most cruel and unheard-of torments. It was, then, by this great offering of Mary that we were born to the life of grace; we are therefore her very dear children, since we cost her so great suffering. And thus, as it is written of the love of the Eternal Father towards men, in giving His own Son to death for us, that *God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son*—(John iii. 16). "So also," says St. Bonaventure, "we can say of Mary that she has so loved us as to give her only-begotten Son for us." And when did she give Him? She gave Him, says Father Nierenberg, when she granted Him permission to deliver Himself up to death; she gave Him to us when, others neglecting to do so, either out of hatred or from fear, she might herself have pleaded for the life of her Son before the judges. Well may it be supposed that the words of so wise and loving a Mother would have had great weight, at least with Pilate, and might have prevented him from sentencing a man to death whom he knew and had declared to be innocent. But no, Mary would not say a word in favour of her Son, lest she might prevent that death on which our salvation depended. Finally, she gave Him to us a thousand and a thousand times during the three hours preceding His Death and which she spent at the foot of the Cross; for during the whole of that time she unceasingly offered with the extreme of sorrow and the extreme of love, the life of her Son on our behalf, and this with such constancy that St. Anselm and St. Antoninus say that if executioners had been wanting she herself would have crucified Him in order to obey the Eternal Father Who willed His Death for our salvation. If Abraham had such fortitude as to be ready to sacrifice with his own hands the life of his son, with far greater fortitude would Mary, far more holy and obedient than Abraham, have sacrificed the life of hers. But let us return to the consideration of

the gratitude we owe to Mary for so great an act of love as was the painful sacrifice of the life of her Son, which she made to obtain eternal salvation for us all. God abundantly rewarded Abraham for the sacrifice he was prepared to make of his son Isaac; but we, what return can we make to Mary for the life of her Jesus, a Son far more noble and beloved than the son of Abraham? "This love of Mary," says St. Bonaventure, "has indeed obliged us to love her; for we see that she has surpassed all others in love towards us, since she has given to us her only Son, Whom she loved more than herself."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XIV.—ON THE GREAT CONFIDENCE WE OUGHT TO HAVE IN THE LOVE JESUS CHRIST HAS SHOWN US AND IN

ALL HE HAS DONE FOR US.

I.

Now, if we fear, on account of our frailty to fall under the assaults of our enemies, against whom we must continually wage war, behold what we have to do, as the Apostle admonishes us: *Let us run to the fight proposed unto us: looking on Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who having joy proposed unto him, underwent the cross, despising the shame*—(Heb. xii. 1, 2). Let us go out to the battle with great courage, looking at Jesus crucified, Who from His Cross offers us His assistance, the victory, and crown. In past times we fell into sin because we did not consider the wounds and the pains endured by our Redeemer, and so we did not have recourse to Him for help. But if for the future we set before our eyes all He has suffered for love of us, and how He ever stands ready to assist us when we have recourse to Him, it is certain that we shall not be conquered by our enemies. St. Teresa said, with her wonted generosity: "I do not understand the fears of certain persons who say: *The*

devil, the devil! so long as we can say: *God, God!*—and make Satan tremble." On the other hand, the Saint assures us that if we do not place all our confidence in God, all our own exertions will be of little or no avail. "All our exertions"—these are her own words—"are of little use if we do not give up entirely all trust in ourselves, and place it altogether in God."

Oh, what two great Mysteries of hope and love for us are the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Sacrament of the Altar!—Mysteries which we could have never believed, had not Faith assured us of them. That God Almighty should deign to become Man, shed all His Blood, and die of sorrow upon a Cross—and why? To pay for our sins and gain salvation for us rebellious worms! And then His own very Body, once sacrificed upon the Cross for us, this He vouchsafes to give us for our Food in order to become wholly united with us! O God, how should not these two Mysteries consume with love the hearts of all men! And what sinner is there, be he ever so abandoned, who can despair of pardon, if he repent of the evil he has done, when he sees a God so full of love for men and so inclined to do them good? Hence St. Bonaventure, full of confidence, said: "I will have great confidence, firmly hoping that He Who has done and suffered so much for my salvation will deny me nothing that I have need of." How can He refuse to give me the graces necessary for my salvation, Who has done and suffered so much to save me?

II.

Let us go therefore, the Apostle exhorts us, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid—(Heb. iv. 16). The Cross is the throne of grace on which Jesus sits to dispense graces and mercy to all who come to Him. But we must have recourse to Him at once if we would find seasonable aid for our salvation: for there will come a time, perhaps, when we shall no longer be able to find it. Let us go quickly, then, and embrace the Cross of Jesus Christ, and let us go with great confidence. Let us not be frightened by the sight of our miseries; in Jesus cruci-

fied we shall find all riches, all grace : *In all things you are made rich in him . . . so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace*—(1 Cor. i. 5, 7). The merits of Jesus Christ have enriched us with all the Divine treasures, and have made us capable of every grace we can desire.

St. Leo says that " Jesus has brought us by His death more good than the devil has done us harm by sin." And by these words he explains what St. Paul said before him, that the gift of Redemption is greater than sin, and that grace has overcome the offence. *Not as the offence, so also is the gift: where sin abounded, grace hath abounded more*—(Rom. v. 15, 20). From this the Saviour encourages us to hope for every favour and every grace through His merits. And see how He teaches us the way to obtain all we want from His Eternal Father : *Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you*—(John xvi. 23). Whatever you desire, He says, ask for it of the Father in My Name, and I promise that you shall be heard. And, indeed, what shall the Father be able to deny us when He has given us His only-begotten Son, whom He loves as Himself? *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). The Apostle says, *all things*; so that no grace is excepted, neither pardon, nor perseverance, nor holy love, nor perfection, nor Paradise—" all, all, He has given us." But we must pray to Him. God is all liberality to those who call upon Him : *Rich unto all that call upon him*—(Rom. x. 12).

Wednesday—Second Week after Easter

(Solemnity of St. Joseph).

Morning Meditation.

THE PATRONAGE OF ST. JOSEPH.

To understand how powerful is the intercession of St. Joseph with Jesus Christ, we need only know what the Gospel says, and *he was subject to them*—(Luke ii. 51). For thirty years, then, the Son of God most carefully obeyed Joseph and Mary. Joseph had only to indicate his will by a word or a sign, and he was immediately obeyed by Jesus. This humility of Jesus in obeying teaches us that the dignity of St. Joseph was above that of all the Saints, with the exception of the Divine Mother.

I.

Let us consider what St. Teresa says of the confidence we should have in the protection of St. Joseph; she says : " Our Lord seems to have granted power to other Saints to help in one necessity; experience proves that this Saint helps us in all; and our Lord wishes us to understand that, as on earth He was subject to Joseph, so also in Heaven He refuses him nothing that he asks. Other persons whom I advised to recommend themselves to St. Joseph have experienced this. I never knew any one who served him, by practising some particular devotion in his honour, who did not always make progress in virtue. I entreat those who do not believe what I say to try it themselves. I cannot understand how it is possible to think of the Queen of Angels, and of all the labours she underwent during the childhood of Jesus,

without returning thanks to St. Joseph for all the services he rendered at that time to the Mother and the Son." We can, therefore, imagine that we hear our Lord, when He sees us afflicted in the midst of our miseries, address us all in the words in which Pharaoh addressed his people at the time of the famine in Egypt: *Go to Joseph*—(Gen. xli. 55) if you desire consolation.

My holy patron, St. Joseph, I choose thee, after Mary, for my principal advocate and protector. I promise to honour thee every day by some special devotion, and by placing myself under thy protection. I am unworthy of being thy servant; but through the love which thou dost bear to Jesus and Mary, accept me for thy perpetual servant. Through the sweet company of Jesus and Mary which thou dost enjoy during life, protect me during my whole life, that I may never be separated from God by losing His grace.

II.

We should especially be devout to St. Joseph in order that the Saint may obtain us a good death. He, on account of having saved the Infant Jesus from the snares of Herod, has the special privileges of delivering dying persons from the snares of the devil. Moreover, on account of the services he rendered for so many years to Jesus and Mary, having by his labours provided them a dwelling and food, he has the privilege of obtaining the special assistance of Jesus and Mary for his devout clients at death.

My holy protector, St. Joseph, on account of my sins I deserve a bad death; but if thou defendest me I shall not be lost. Thou wast not only a great friend of my Judge, but thou wast also His guardian and adopted father; recommend me to thy Jesus, Who loves thee so much. I place myself under thy protection; accept me for thy perpetual servant. And by that holy company of Jesus and Mary which thou dost enjoy on earth, obtain that I may never more be separated from their love; and, in fine, by the assistance of Jesus and Mary, which thou hadst at death, obtain for me, that at my death I also may have the special assistance of Jesus and

Mary. Most holy Virgin, by the love which thou didst bear to thy holy spouse St. Joseph, help me at the hour of my death.

Spiritual Reading.

**SALVE, REGINA. MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL,
HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!**

IX.—THE GREATNESS OF THE LOVE THIS MOTHER BEARS US.

Another motive for the love of Mary towards us arises from the fact that in us she sees souls that have been purchased at the price of the death of Jesus Christ. If a mother knew that a servant had been ransomed by a beloved son at the price of twenty years of imprisonment and suffering, how greatly would she esteem that servant on this account alone! Mary well knows that her Son came into the world only to save us poor creatures, as He Himself protested: *I am come to save that which was lost*—(Luke ix. 10). And to save us He was pleased even to lay down His life for us: *becoming obedient unto death*—(Phil. ii. 8). If, then, Mary loved us but little, she would show that she valued but little the Blood of her own Son, which was the price of our salvation. To St. Elizabeth of Hungary it was revealed that Mary, from the time she dwelt in the Temple, did nothing but pray for us, begging that God would hasten the coming of His Son into the world to save us. And how much more must we suppose that she loves us, now that she has seen that we are valued to such a degree by her Son, that He did not disdain to purchase us at such a cost!

Because all men have been redeemed by Jesus, therefore Mary loves and protects them all. It was she who was seen by St. John in the Apocalypse, clothed with the sun: *And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun*—(Apoc. xii. 1). She is said to be clothed with the sun because, as there is no one on earth who can be hidden from the heat of the sun, so there is no one living who can be deprived of the love of Mary.

There is no one that can hide himself from its heat—(P's. xviii. 7), that is, as Blessed Raymond Jordano applies the words, "from the love of Mary." "And who," exclaims St. Antoninus, "can ever form an idea of the tender care that this most loving Mother takes of all of us," "offering and dispensing her mercy to every one"; for our good Mother desired the salvation of all, and co-operated in obtaining it. "It is evident," says St. Bernard, "that she was solicitous for the whole human race." Hence the custom of some of Mary's clients, which consists in asking our Lord to grant them the graces that our Blessed Lady seeks for them, succeeds most advantageously. They say: Lord, grant me that which the most Blessed Virgin Mary asks for me. "And no wonder," says Cornelius à Lapide, "for our Mother desires for us better things than we can possibly desire ourselves." The devout Bernardine de Buis says that Mary "loves to do us good and dispense graces to us far more than we to receive them." On this subject Blessed Albert the Great applies to Mary the words of the Book of Wisdom: *She preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them*—(Wis. vi. 14). Mary anticipates those who have recourse to her by making them find her before they seek her. "The love that this good Mother bears us is so great," says Richard of St. Laurence, "that as soon as she perceives our want she comes to our assistance. She comes before she is called."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XV.—ON THE GREAT CONFIDENCE WE OUGHT TO HAVE IN THE LOVE JESUS CHRIST HAS SHOWN US AND IN ALL HE HAS DONE FOR US.

I.

The Blessed John of Avila has left us many beautiful thoughts on the great confidence we should have in the merits of Jesus Christ.

"Do not forget" he says "that Jesus Christ is the Mediator between the Eternal Father and ourselves; and that we are beloved by Him, and united to Him by such strong bonds of love that nothing can break them, so long as a man does not himself dissolve them by some mortal sin. The Blood of Jesus cries out and asks mercy for us; and cries out so loudly that the noise of our sins is not heard. The death of Jesus Christ hath put to death Those who are lost are not lost for want of means of satisfaction, but, because they do not avail themselves of the Sacraments as the means of profiting by the satisfaction made by Jesus Christ."

"Jesus has taken upon Himself the affair of remedying our evils, as if it had been personally His own affair. So that He has called our sins His own, although He did not commit them, and has sought pardon for them; and with the most tender love has prayed, as if He were praying for Himself, that all who should have recourse to Him might become objects of love. And as He sought, so He found, because God has so ordained that Jesus and ourselves should be so united in one, that either He and we not and cannot be hated, in the same way, if we remain united by love to Jesus, we also shall be loved. By His being loved by God, we are also loved, seeing that Jesus Christ can do more to make us loved than we can do to make ourselves hated; since the Eternal Father loves Jesus Christ far more than He hates sinners."

My God, I love Thee; and because I love Thee I repent above all things for having offended Thee. In order not to lose a passing satisfaction, I have been willing, wretch that I am, to lose Thee so often, O Infinite Good! This thought torments me more than any pain: but it is a consolation to me to think that I have to do with infinite goodness, that knows not how to despise a heart that truly loves. Oh, that I could die for Thee, Who didst die for me! My dear Redeemer, I confidently hope for eternal salvation in the life to come, and in this life I hope for holy perseverance in Thy love; and therefore I propose always to ask it of Thee. And do Thou, by the

