

MEDITATIONS & READINGS

ST. ALPHONSUS

VOLUME III – PART I

PENTECOST CORPUS CHRISTI

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Meditations and Readings

FOR
EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

Selected from the Spiritual Writings of
SAINT ALPHONSUS

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

VOLUME THREE
PART I.

FOREWORD

BY
THE ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM

Edited by

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

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PRAYER. By St. ALPHONSUS. Jubilee Edition.

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL SUCCOUR AND IRELAND. (An mairé-
vean Siolta-Cabhac i' Éire). S. u. a. c., O'AP-
TINÉ.

*Sisters of St. Francis
Maryville, Mo.*

MEDITATIONS & READINGS
FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

VOLUME III.—PART I.

PENTECOST :: CORPUS CHRISTI
ETC.

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Superioris Generalis et Rectoris Majoris.

Romæ,

die 7 Martii, 1928.

FOREWORD

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

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

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

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

T. P. GILMARTIN,
Archbishop of Tuam.

ST. JARLATH'S,
28th April, 1928.

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LETTER FROM HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL LOGUE TO THE EDITOR.

ARA COELI,
ARMAGH,
16th March, 1924.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

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

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

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

You have commenced well, and I trust you will be

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

Wishing you every blessing and success in your useful work,

I am,

Dear Father Coyle,
Yours gratefully,

✠ MICHAEL CARDINAL LOGUE.

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

Superior-General and Rector Major.

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

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

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

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

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

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HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL O'DONNELL wrote :

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

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL O'DONNELL,
Archbishop of Armagh.

Armagh, 20th February, 1926.
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Sacred Sciences, but also to the faithful of every condition of life, to whom he points out the way to solid virtue, and smoothes for them the way to the highest Christian perfection. His Holiness adds that the Saint's one great ambition in all his writings was to make known to all men the infinite amiability of Jesus Christ.

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

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

Your devoted servant and confrère,

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

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

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THE EDITOR'S FOREWORD

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

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

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

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

—THE EDITOR.

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

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MEDITATIONS AND READINGS

Friday after Ascension

Morning Meditation

DIVINE LOVE IS A FIRE THAT INFLAMES THE HEART.

“*Tui amoris in eis ignem accende.*”

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

I.

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Charity dealeth not perversely.”

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

I.

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

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

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

II.

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

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

Saturday after Ascension

Morning Meditation

DIVINE LOVE IS A LIGHT THAT ENLIGHTENS
THE SOUL.

"O *Lux Beatissima*."

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

I.

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

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

I.

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

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

II.

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

Sunday Within the Octave of Ascension

Morning Meditation

DIVINE LOVE A FOUNTAIN THAT SATISFIES.

“*Riga quod est aridum.*”

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

I.

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading

THE SUBLIME DIGNITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

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

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

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

manage on earth all His concerns and interests. "Divine," says St. Cyril of Alexandria, "are the offices confided to priests." St. Ambrose has called the priestly office "a divine profession." A priest is a minister destined by God to be a public ambassador of the whole Church, to honour Him, and to obtain His graces for all the faithful. The entire Church cannot give to God as much honour, nor obtain so many graces, as a single priest by celebrating a single Mass; for the greatest honour that the whole Church without priests could give to God would consist in offering to Him in sacrifice the lives of all men. But of what value are the lives of all men compared with the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which is a Sacrifice of infinite value? What are all men before God but a little dust? *As a drop of a bucket . . . as a little dust*—(Is. xl. 15, 17). They are but a mere nothing in His sight. *All nations are before him as if they had no being at all.* Thus, by the celebration of a single Mass, in which he offers Jesus Christ in Sacrifice, a priest gives greater honour to the Lord, than if all men by dying for God offered to Him the sacrifice of their lives. By a single Mass he gives greater honour to God than all the Angels and Saints, along with the Blessed Virgin Mary, have given or shall give to Him; for their worship cannot be of infinite value, like that which the priest celebrating on the altar offers to God.

Moreover, in the holy Mass the priest offers to God an adequate thanksgiving for all the graces bestowed even on the Blessed in Paradise; but such a thanksgiving all the Saints together are incapable of offering to God. Hence it is that on this account also the priestly dignity is superior even to all celestial dignities. Besides, the priest, says St. John Chrysostom, is an ambassador of the whole world, to intercede with God and to obtain graces for all creatures. The priest, according to St. Ephrem, "treats familiarly with God." To priests every door is open.

Jesus has died to institute the priesthood. It was not necessary for the Redeemer to die in order to save the

world; a drop of His Blood, a single tear, or prayer, was sufficient to procure salvation for all; for such a prayer, being of infinite value, would be sufficient to save not one but a thousand worlds. But to institute the priesthood, the Death of Jesus Christ has been necessary. Had He not died, where should we find the Victim that the priests of the New Law now offer? Where find a victim altogether holy and immaculate, capable of giving to God an honour worthy of God? As has been already said, all the lives of men and Angels are not capable of giving to God an infinite honour like that which a priest offers to Him by a single Mass.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

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

I.

The evil of tepidity arises from the little love men have for Jesus Christ. They who are puffed-up with self-esteem; those who frequently take to heart occurrences that fall out contrary to their wishes; who practise great indulgence towards themselves on account of their health; who keep their heart open to external objects, and the mind always distracted, with an eagerness to listen to, and to know, so many things that have nothing to do with the service of God, but merely serve to gratify private curiosity; who are ready to resent every little inattention from others, and consequently are often troubled, and grow remiss in prayer and recollection who one moment are all devotion and joy, the next all impatience and melancholy, just as things happen according to or against their humour; all such persons do not love Jesus Christ,

or love Him very little, and cast discredit on true devotion.

But suppose anyone should find himself sunk in this unhappy state of tepidity, what has he to do? Certainly, it is a hard thing for a soul grown lukewarm to resume her ancient fervour; but our Lord has said, that what man cannot do, God can very well do. *The things that are impossible with man, are possible with God*—(Luke xviii. 27). Whoever prays and employs the means is sure to accomplish his desire.

Now, the first means is *the desire of perfection*. Pious desires are the wings which lift us up from earth; for, as St. Laurence Justinian says, desire “supplies strength, and lightens pain.” It gives strength to walk towards perfection, and lightens the fatigue of the journey. He who has a real desire of perfection falls not to advance continually towards it; and so advancing, he must finally arrive at it. On the contrary, he who has not the desire of perfection will always go backwards, and always find himself more imperfect than before. St. Augustine says, that “not to go forward in the way of God is to go backwards.” He that makes no effort to advance will find himself carried backwards by the current of his corrupt nature.

II.

They, then, who say, “God does not wish us all to be saints,” make a great mistake. Yes; for St. Paul says, *This is the will of God, your sanctification*—(1 Thess. iv. 3). God wishes us all to be saints, and each one according to his state of life: the Religious as a Religious; the secular as a secular; the Priest as a Priest; the married as married; the man of business as a man of business; the soldier as a soldier; and so of every other state of life. Most beautiful, indeed, are the instructions which my great patroness, St. Teresa, gives on this subject. She says, in one place, “Let us enlarge our thoughts; for hence we shall derive immense good.”

Elsewhere: “We must beware of having poor desires; but rather put our confidence in God, in order that, by forcing ourselves continually onwards, we may by degrees arrive where, by the Divine grace, so many Saints have arrived.” And in confirmation of this she quoted her own experience, having known how courageous souls make considerable progress in a short period of time. “Because,” said she, “The Lord takes as much delight in our desires, as if they were put into execution.” In another place she says: “Almighty God does not confer extraordinary favours, except where His love has been earnestly sought after.” Again, in another passage, she remarks: “God does not fail to repay every good desire even in this life, for He is the Friend of generous souls, provided only they do not trust in themselves.” This Saint herself was endowed with just such a spirit of generosity; so that she once even said to our Lord, that were she to behold others in Paradise enjoying Him more than herself, she would not care; but were she to behold any one loving Him more than she should love Him, this she declared she knew not how she could endure.

We must, therefore have great courage: *The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him*—(Lam. iii. 25). God is surpassingly good and liberal towards a soul that heartily seeks Him. Neither can past sins prove a hindrance to our becoming Saints, if only we have the sincere desire to become so. St. Teresa remarks: “The devil strives to make us think it pride to entertain lofty desires, and to wish to imitate the Saints; but it is of great service to encourage ourselves with the desire of great things, because, although the soul has not all at once the necessary strength, yet she nevertheless makes a bold fight, and rapidly advances.” The Apostle writes: *To them that love God, all things work together unto good*—(Rom. viii. 28). And the Gloss adds “even sins”; even past sins can contribute to our sanctification, inasmuch as the recollection of them keeps us more humble, and more grateful, when we witness the favours God lavishes upon us, after all our outrages against Him. I

am not capable of anything, the sinner should say, nor do I deserve anything; I deserve nothing but hell; but I have to deal with a God of infinite bounty, Who has promised to listen to all that pray to Him. Now, as He has rescued me from a state of damnation, and wishes me to become holy, and now proffers me His help, I can certainly become a saint, not by my own strength, but by the grace of my God, Who strengthens me: *I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me*—(Phil. iv. 13). Once, thus, we have good desires, we must take courage, and trusting in God, endeavour to put them into execution; but if afterwards we encounter any obstacle in our spiritual enterprises, let us repose quietly on the will of God. God's will must be preferred before every good desire of our own. St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi would sooner have remained without perfection than possess it without the will of God.

Monday Within the Octave of Ascension

Morning Meditation

DIVINE LOVE IS A DEW THAT FERTILIZES.

“*In aestu temperies: dulces refrigerium.*”

Divine Love fertilizes the good desires, the holy purposes, and the good works of our souls, and these are the flowers and fruits which the grace of the Holy Ghost produces. O Holy and Divine Spirit, I will no longer live to myself. I will spend all the days that remain to me of life in loving and pleasing Thee.

I.

Divine Love is a dew that fertilizes the soul. Thus does the Holy Church teach us to pray: *May the infusion of the Holy Ghost cleanse our hearts, and fertilize them by the inward sprinkling of his dew.* Love fertilizes our good desires, our holy purposes, and the good works of our souls; these are the flowers, and the fruits which the grace of the Holy Ghost produces. Love is also called dew, because it cools the heat of bad desires and temptations. Hence the Holy Ghost is also called *refrigeration in the excess of heat, and solace in our grief. In aestu temperies: dulces refrigerium.*

O Holy and Divine Spirit, I will live no longer to myself; the days which may remain to me of life, I will spend entirely in loving and pleasing Thee. On this account I beseech Thee to grant me the gift of prayer. Come, Thou, into my heart, and teach me to pray as I ought. Give me strength not to neglect prayer in the time of dryness and weariness; and give me the spirit of prayer; that is, the grace of praying to Thee in such a manner, and of offering Thee such prayers as may be most acceptable to Thee.

II.

This dew descends into our hearts in the time of prayer. A quarter of an hour's prayer is sufficient to appease any passion of hatred or of inordinate love, however ardent it may be: *He brought me into the cellar of wine, he set in order charity in me*—(Cant. ii. 4). Holy meditation is this cellar of wine, where love is set in order, to love God above all things, and our neighbours as ourselves. He who loves God loves prayer; and he who loves not prayer will find it morally impossible to overcome his passions.

I was lost by my sins, O my God, but I now see from the favour which Thou hast shown me, that Thou desirest my sanctification and salvation; and I certainly desire to

become holy, that I may please Thee, and love more ardently Thy infinite Goodness. I love Thee, my sovereign Good, my Love, and my All; and because I love Thee, I give my whole self to Thee. O Blessed Virgin Mary, protect me.

Spiritual Reading

GRANDEUR OF THE PRIESTLY POWER.

The dignity of the priest is also estimated by the power that he has over the real and the mystic body of Jesus Christ.

With regard to the power of priests over the real Body of Jesus Christ, it is of Faith that when they pronounce the words of Consecration the Incarnate Word has obliged Himself to obey and to come into their hands under the sacramental species. We are struck with wonder when we hear that God obeyed the voice of Josue—*The Lord obeying the voice of man*—and made the sun stand when he said: *Move not, O sun, towards Gabaon, . . . and the sun stood still*—(Jos. x. 12-13). But our wonder should be far greater when we find that in obedience to the words of His priests—*Hoc est Corpus MEUM*—God Himself descends on the altar, that He comes wherever they call Him, and as often as they call Him, and places Himself in their hands, even though they should be His enemies. And after having come, He remains entirely at their disposal; they move Him as they please, from one place to another; they may, if they wish, shut Him up in the Tabernacle, or expose Him on the altar, or carry Him outside the church. They may, if they choose, eat His flesh, and give Him as food to others. "Oh, how very great is their power," says St. Laurence Justinian, speaking of priests; "a word falls from their lips and the Body of Christ is there substantially formed from the

matter of bread, and the Incarnate Word come down from Heaven, is found really present on the table of the altar! Never did Divine goodness give such power to the Angels. The Angels abide by the order of God, but the priests take Him in their hands, distribute Him to the faithful, and partake of Him as food for themselves."

With regard to the *mystic* body of Christ, that is, all the faithful, the priest has the power of the keys, or the power of delivering sinners from hell, of making them worthy of Paradise, and of changing them from the slaves of Satan into the children of God. And God Himself is obliged to abide by the judgment of His priests, and either not to pardon or to pardon, according as they refuse or give absolution, provided the penitent is capable of it. "Such," says St. Maximus of Turin, "is this judiciary power ascribed to Peter that its decision carries with it the decision of God." The sentence of the priest precedes, and God subscribes to it, writes St. Peter Damian. Hence St. John Chrysostom thus concludes: "The Sovereign Master of the universe only follows the servant by confirming in Heaven all that the latter decides upon earth."

Priests are the dispensers of the divine graces, and the companions of God. "Consider the priests," says St. Ignatius, Martyr, "as the dispensers of divine graces and the associates of God." "They are," says St. Prosper, "the glory and the immovable columns of the Church; they are the doors of the eternal city; through them all reach Christ; they are the vigilant guardians to whom the Lord has confided the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; they are the stewards of the king's house, to assign to each according to his good pleasure his place in the hierarchy."

Were the Redeemer to descend into a church, and sit in a confessional to administer the Sacrament of Penance, and a priest to sit in another confessional, Jesus would say over each penitent, *Ego te absolvo*. The priest would likewise say over each of his penitents, *Ego te absolvo*, and the penitents of each would be equally

absolved. How great the honour that a king would confer on a subject whom he should empower to rescue from prison as many as he pleased! But far greater is the power that the Eternal Father has given to Jesus Christ, and that Jesus Christ has given to His priests, to rescue from hell not only the bodies but also the souls of the faithful: "The Son," says St. John Chrysostom, "has put into the hands of the priests all judgment; for having been as it were transported into Heaven, they have received this divine prerogative. If a king gave to a mortal the power to release from prison all prisoners, all would pronounce such a one happy; but the priests have received from God a far greater power, since the soul is more noble than the body."

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

IV.—THE MEANS OF AVOIDING LUKEWARMNESS AND ATTAINING PERFECTION.

I.

The second means of perfection is *the resolution to belong wholly to God*. Many are called to perfection; they are urged on towards it by grace, they conceive a desire of it; but because they never really resolve to acquire it, they live and die in the ill-odour of their tepid and imperfect life. The desire of perfection is not enough if it be not followed up by a stern resolve to attain it. How many souls feed themselves on desires alone, but never make withal one step in the way of God! It is of such desires that the Wise Man speaks when he says: *Desires kill the slothful*—(Prov. xxi. 25). The slothful man is ever desiring, but never resolves to take the means suitable to his state of life to become a saint. He says:

"Oh, if I were but in solitude, and not in this house! Oh, if I could but go and reside in another monastery, I would give myself up entirely to God!" And meanwhile he cannot support a certain companion; he cannot put up with a word of contradiction; he is dissipated about many useless cares; he commits a thousand faults of gluttony, of curiosity, and of pride; and yet he sighs out to the wind: "Oh, if I had but . . . !" or "Oh, if I could but . . . !" Such desires do more harm than good; because some regale themselves upon them, and in the meantime go on leading a life of imperfection. It was a saying of St. Francis of Sales: "I do not approve of a person who, being engaged in some duty or vocation, sighs for some other kind of life than is compatible with his actual position, or for other exercises unfitted for his present state; for it merely serves to dissipate his heart, and makes him languish in his necessary duties."

II.

We, must, therefore, desire perfection, and resolutely take the means towards it. St. Teresa says: "God only looks for one resolution on our part, and will afterwards do all the rest Himself: the devil has no fear of irresolute souls." For this reason mental prayer must be used, in order to take the means which lead to perfection. Some make much prayer, but never come to a practical conclusion. The Saint again says: "I would rather have a short prayer, which produces great fruits, than a prayer of many years, wherein a soul never gets further than resolving to do something worthy of Almighty God." And elsewhere she says: "I have learnt by experience that whoever, at the beginning, brings himself to the resolution of doing some great work, however difficult it may be, if he does so to please God, he has no reason to be afraid."

Tuesday Within the Octave of Ascension

Morning Meditation

DIVINE LOVE IS A REPOSE THAT REFRESHES.

“In Labore Requies: in Fletu Solatium.”

Divine Love is called *rest in labour, in mourning comfort*. A soul that loves God finds peace and contentment in all tribulations and adversities, by merely saying: *This is the will of my God.*

I.

Divine Love is also called rest in labour, in mourning comfort. In labore requies, in fletu solatium. Love is a repose that refreshes, because the principal effect of love is to unite the will of the lover with that of the beloved. For a soul that loves God, in every affront it receives, in every grief it endures, in every loss it suffers, it is sufficient to make it resigned to know that such things are permitted to befall it by the will of its Beloved. It finds peace and contentment in all tribulations and adversities, saying: *Such is the will of my God.* This is that peace which surpasseth all the pleasures of sense: *The peace of God which surpasseth all understanding*—(Philipp. iv. 7). St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, by merely repeating: “it is the will of God,” was immediately filled with joy.

O my God, how often, for the sake of following my own will, have I opposed Thy holy will and despised it. I grieve for this evil above every other evil. O Lord, I desire from this day forward to love Thee with my whole heart.

II.

Everyone in this world must carry his cross; but St. Teresa says that the cross is hard to those who drag it, but not to those who embrace it. Thus, the Lord knows well how to strike and how to heal. *He woundeth, saith holy Job, and cureth; he striketh, and his hands shall heal.* The Holy Ghost, by His sweet unction, renders even ignominies and torments sweet and amiable. *Yea, Father: for so hath it seemed good in thy sight (Matt. xi. 26).* Thus ought we to say in all the adversities which befall us: *So be it done, O Lord, for so hath it pleased Thee.* And when the fear of any temporal calamity alarms us, let us always say: “Do with me, O Lord, whatever Thou pleasest; I will accept all as coming from Thee.” It is good, as St. Teresa advises, frequently in the course of the day to offer ourselves in this manner to God.

Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. What wouldst Thou have me to do? I will do all that Thou requirest of me. Thy will shall be my only desire, my only love. Holy Spirit, strengthen my weakness. Thou art goodness itself: how can I love any other but Thee? O do Thou draw all the affections of my heart to Thyself, by the sweet attractions of Thy holy love. I renounce all, to give myself entirely to Thee. Accept of me, and succour me. O Mary, my Mother, pray for me.

Spiritual Readings

THE PRIESTHOOD SURPASSES ALL OTHER CREATED DIGNITIES.

The sacerdotal dignity is the most noble of all the dignities in this world. “Nothing,” says St. Ambrose, “is more excellent in this world.” It transcends, says

St. Bernard, "all the dignities of kings, of emperors, and of Angels." According to St. Ambrose, the dignity of the priest as far exceeds that of kings, as the value of gold surpasses that of lead. The reason is, because the power of kings extends only to temporal goods and to the bodies of men, but the power of the priest extends to the spiritual goods and to the human soul. "Hence," says St. Clement, "as much as the soul is more noble than the body, so much is the priesthood more excellent than royalty." "Princes," says St. John Chrysostom, "have the power of binding, but they bind only the bodies, while the priest binds the soul."

The kings of the earth glory in honouring priests: "It is a mark of a good prince," says Pope St. Marcellinus, "to honour the priests of God." "They willingly," says Peter de Blois, "bend their knee before the priest of God; they kiss his hands, and with bowed down head receive his benediction." "The sacerdotal dignity," says St. Chrysostom, "effaces the royal dignity; hence the king inclines his head under the hand of the priest to receive his blessing." In the Council of Nice, the Emperor Constantine wished to sit in the last place, after all the priests, and on a seat lower than that which they occupied; he would not even sit down without their permission. The holy king, St. Boleslaus, had so great a veneration for priests, that he would not dare to sit in their presence.

The sacerdotal dignity also surpasses the dignity of the Angels. The Angels in Heaven cannot absolve from a single sin. The Guardian Angels procure for the souls committed to their care grace to have recourse to a priest that he may absolve them: "Although," says St. Peter Damian, "Angels may be present, they yet wait for the priest to exercise his power, but no one of them has the power of the keys—that is, to bind and to loose." When St. Michael comes to a dying Christian who invokes his aid, the holy Archangel can chase away the devils, but he cannot free his client from their chains till a priest comes to absolve him. After having given the order of priest-

hood to a holy ecclesiastic, St. Francis de Sales perceived, that in going out he stopped at the door as if to give precedence to another. Being asked by the Saint why he stopped, he answered that God favoured him with the visible presence of his Angel guardian, who before he had received priesthood always remained at his right and preceded him, but afterwards walked on his left and refused to go before him. It was in a holy contest with the Angel that he stopped at the door. St. Francis of Assisi used to say, "If I saw an Angel and a priest, I would bend my knee first to the priest and then to the Angel."

Besides, the power of the priest surpasses that of the Blessed Virgin Mary; for, although this Divine Mother can pray for us, and by her prayers obtain whatever she wishes, yet she cannot absolve a Christian from even the smallest sin. "The Blessed Virgin was eminently more perfect than the Apostles," says Innocent III: "It was, however, not to her, but only to the Apostles, that the Lord entrusted the keys of the kingdom of Heaven." St. Bernardine of Siena has written: "Holy Virgin, excuse me, for I speak not against thee: the Lord has raised the priesthood above thee." The Saint assigns the reason of the superiority of the priesthood over Mary; she conceived Jesus Christ only once; but by consecrating the Eucharist, the priest, as it were, conceives Him as often as he wishes, so that if the Person of the Redeemer had not as yet been in the world, the priest, by pronouncing the words of Consecration, would produce this great Person of a Man-God. "O wonderful dignity of priests," cries out St. Augustine, "in whose hands, as in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, the Son of God becomes incarnate." Hence priests are called the parents of Jesus Christ: such is the title that St. Bernard gives them, for they are the active cause by which He is made to exist really in the consecrated Host.

Thus the priest may, in a certain manner, be called the creator of his Creator, since by saying the words of Consecration, he creates, as it were, Jesus in the Sacrament, by giving Him a sacramental existence, and

produces Him as a Victim to be offered to the Eternal Father. As in creating the world it was sufficient for God to have said : Let it be made, and it was created—*He spoke, and they were made*—(Ps. xxxii. 9)—so it is sufficient for the priest to say, “*Hoc est corpus meum*,” and behold the bread is no longer *bread*, but the Body of Jesus Christ. “The power of the priest,” says St. Bernardine of Sienna, “is the power of the Divine Person; for the Transubstantiation of the bread requires as much power as the creation of the world.” And St. Augustine has written : “O venerable sanctity of the hands ! O happy function of the priest ! He that created me (if I may say so) gave me the power to create Him ; and He that created me without me is Himself created by me !” As the Word of God created Heaven and earth, so, says St. Jerome, the words of the priest create Jesus Christ. “At a sign from God there came forth from nothing both the sublime vault of the heavens and the vast extent of the earth ; but not less great is the power that manifests itself in the mysterious words of the priest.” The dignity of the priest is so great, that he even blesses Jesus Christ on the altar as a Victim to be offered to the Eternal Father. In the sacrifice of the Mass, writes Father Mansi, Jesus Christ is the principal Offerer and Victim ; as Minister, He blesses the priest, but as Victim, the priest blesses Him.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

V.—THE MEANS OF AVOIDING LUKEWARMNESS AND
 ATTAINING PERFECTION.

I.

The first resolution must be to make every effort, and to die rather than commit any deliberate sin whatever,

however small it may be. It is true that all our endeavours, without the Divine assistance, cannot enable us to vanquish temptations ; but God wishes us on our part frequently to use this violence with ourselves, because then He will afterwards supply us with His grace, will succour our weakness, and enable us to gain the victory. This resolution removes from us every obstacle to our going forward, and at the same time gives us great courage, because it affords us an assurance of being in the grace of God. St. Francis of Sales writes : “The best security we can possess in this world of being in the grace of God, consists not indeed in feeling that we have His love, but in a pure and irrevocable abandonment of our entire being into His hands, and in the firm resolution of never consenting to sin, either great or small.” This is what is meant by being of a delicate conscience. Be it observed that it is one thing to be of a delicate conscience, and another to be of a scrupulous conscience. To be of a delicate conscience is requisite to become a saint ; but to be scrupulous is a defect, and does harm ; and on this account we must obey our directors, and rise above scruples, which are nothing else but vain and unreasonable alarms.

II.

Hence it is necessary to resolve on choosing the best ; not only what is agreeable to God, but what is most agreeable to Him, without any reserve. St. Francis of Sales says : “We must start with a strong and constant resolution to give ourselves wholly to God, and protest to Him that for the future we wish to be His without any reserve, and then we must afterwards often renew this same resolution.” St. Andrew Avellini made a vow to advance daily in perfection. It is not necessary for every one who wishes to become a saint to make it the matter of a vow ; but he must endeavour every day to make some steps forward in perfection. St. Laurence Justinian has written : “When a person is really making progress, he

feels in himself a continual desire of advancing; and the more he improves in perfection, the more this desire increases; because as his interior light increases each day more and more, he seems to himself always to be wanting in every virtue, and to be doing no good at all; and if, perchance, he is aware of some good he does, it always appears to him very imperfect, and he makes small account of it. The consequence is, he is continually labouring to acquire perfection without ever feeling wearied."

Wednesday Within the Octave of Ascension

Morning Meditation

DIVINE LOVE STRENGTHENS US.

"*Fortis est ut mors delectio.*"

Love is strong as death—(Cant. viii. 6). As there is no created power that can resist death, so with the soul that loves God there is no difficulty that love cannot overcome. O my Jesus, send Thy Holy Spirit that He may come and strengthen me to do and suffer something for Thy love before death overtakes me.

I.

Fortis est ut mors delectio. Love is strong as death. As there is no created power than can resist death, so to the soul that loves God, there is no difficulty which

yields not to love. When the soul that loves would please its Beloved, love overcomes all losses, contempt, and sorrows: "Nothing is so hard but that it may be conquered by the fire of love." This is the most certain mark by which to know whether a soul really loves God, its being as faithful to Him when things are adverse as when they are prosperous. St. Francis of Sales says: "God is just as amiable when He chastises us as when He consoles us, because He does both from love."

O God of my soul, I say that I love Thee, and yet what do I do for Thy love? Nothing. It is a sign, therefore, that I either do not love Thee, or love Thee too little. Send, therefore, O Jesus, the Holy Ghost upon me, and come and strengthen me to do and to suffer something for Thy love before death overtakes me. Suffer me not, O Lord, to depart out of this life cold and ungrateful, as I have hitherto been. Give me strength to love sufferings, on account of the many sins by which I have deserved hell. O my God, Who art all goodness and all love, Thou desirest to dwell in my soul, from which I have so often expelled Thee; come and take possession of it; dwell within it and make it all Thine own.

II.

When God afflicts us the most in this life, He loves us the most. St. John Chrysostom considered St. Paul bound in chains more happy than St. Paul rapt to the third heavens. Hence the holy Martyrs, in the midst of their torments, rejoiced, and gave thanks to God for the great favour He conferred upon them in allowing them to suffer for His love. And the other Saints, when tyrants were wanting to afflict them, became their own tormentors by the penances which they imposed upon themselves, in order to please God. St. Augustine says: "He who loves, either does not feel the labour, or the labour itself is loved."

I love Thee, O my Lord; and if I love Thee, Thou art

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with me, as St. John assures me : *He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him*—(1 John iv. 16). Since, therefore, Thou art with me, increase the flames, the chains of Thy love, that I may neither desire, nor seek, nor love any other but Thee, and thus bound by Thy love, may never separate myself from Thee any more. I desire, O Jesus, to be Thine, to be all Thine. O Mary, my Queen and advocate, obtain for me love and holy perseverance.

Spiritual Reading

GOING TO HOLY COMMUNION.

Of all the Sacraments the adorable Sacrament of the altar is the most excellent. The other Sacraments contain the gifts of God, but the Holy Eucharist contains God Himself. Hence St. Thomas says that the other Sacraments have been instituted by Jesus Christ to prepare men either to receive or to administer the Blessed Eucharist, which, according to the holy Doctor, is the consummation of the spiritual life; because from this Sacrament is derived all the perfection of the soul. For the means of uniting the soul to Him there is none better than Holy Communion by which, as Jesus Christ Himself has said, the soul becomes as it were one thing with Him. *He that eateth my flesh . . . abideth in me and I in him*—(Jo. vi. 57). Hence St. John Chrysostom says that Jesus has given His Body to us under the species of bread that we may become one thing with Him. And St. Cyril of Alexander teaches that as two pieces of wax melted together become one, so we, by Holy Communion, are similarly united with Jesus Christ.

Our Saviour instituted this Sacrament under the form of food to show that, as corporal food is changed into ou

flesh, so this heavenly Bread becomes one thing with us; but with this difference, that earthly food is converted into our substance, while this divine Bread transforms those who eat into Jesus Christ. This is the reason why Rupert makes our Lord say : "Eat, and you shall be by grace what I am by nature." And this is what our Lord deigned to say one day to St. Augustine : "I will not be changed into you, but you shall be changed into me." The principal effect of this Sacrament is to preserve in the soul the life of grace. Hence, it is called bread; for as earthly bread supports corporal life, so this heavenly Bread preserves the life of the soul which consists in the grace of God.

The Eucharist is, according to the Council of Trent, the divine medicine that purifies the soul from venial faults, and preserves it from mortal sins. Like a stream of water, this Sacrament extinguishes the ardour of the passions by which we are consumed. Let him in whose soul the flame of some particular passion is kindled approach Holy Communion, and he will find the passion altogether, or at least in a great measure, destroyed. "If any of you," says St. Bernard, "does not experience so frequent or so violent motions of anger, of envy, or of lust, let him give thanks to the Body of the Lord that produces fruit in his soul." The angelic Doctor teaches that the Communion gives us strength to overcome all the attacks of the devil. "It repels every assault of the demons." St. John Chrysostom asserts that when we receive the Holy Eucharist, the devils are put to flight, and the Angels fly to our assistance. Moreover, this Sacrament infuses into the soul great interior peace, a strong inclination to virtue, and a great willingness to practise it, and thus renders it easy to walk in the path of perfection.

Holy Communion, as St. Thomas teaches, infuses divine charity into the heart. Jesus Christ protested that He came into the world for no other purpose than to kindle in our souls the holy fire of divine love. *I come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be*

kindled?—(Luke xii. 49). The Venerable Father Olimpio, of the Order of Theatines, used to say, that there is no Mystery of Redemption more apt to inflame us with the love of Jesus Christ than the Sacrament of the altar in which He gives Himself entirely to us, and pours forth all His love. Hence, speaking of the institution of this Sacrament, St. John says: *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, loved them unto the end*—(John xiii. i). *He loved them to the end*, that is, according to the commentators, he loved them to the utmost of His power. Hence the Council of Trent said that in this Sacrament Jesus “poured forth, as it were, all the riches of His divine love towards man.” Holy Communion has been called by St. Thomas “the Sacrament of love”; and by St. Bernard “the love of loves.” St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to call the day of Communion “the day of love”; and would say that a soul after Communion might exclaim with Jesus dying on the Cross: *It is consumed!* For after having given Himself to me, God has nothing more to give me; nor can I desire anything else from Him.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

VI.—THE MEANS OF AVOIDING LUKEWARMNESS AND
ATTAINING PERFECTION.

I.

We must begin quickly, and not wait for the morrow. Who knows whether we shall afterwards find time or not! Ecclesiastes counsels us: *Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly*—(Eccles. ix. 10). What

thou canst do, do it quickly, and defer it not; and he adduces the reason why: *For neither work, nor reason, nor wisdom, nor knowledge shall be in hell, whither thou art hastening*. Because in the next life there is no more time to work, nor free-will to merit, nor prudence to do well, nor wisdom or experience to take good counsel by, for after death what is done is done. A nun of the convent of Torre de Specchi in Rome, whose name was Sister Bonaventura, led a very lukewarm kind of life. There came a Religious, Father Lancisius, to give the spiritual exercises to the nuns, and Sister Bonaventura, feeling no inclination to shake off her tepidity, began to listen to the exercises with no good will. But at the very first sermon she was won by Divine grace, so that she immediately went to the feet of the Father who preached, and said to him, with at tone of real determination, “Father, I wish to become a saint, and quickly a saint.” And, by the assistance of God, she did so; for she only lived eight months after that event, and during that short time she lived and died a Saint.

II.

David said: *And I said, now have I begun*—(Ps. lxxvi. 11). So likewise did St. Charles Borromeo speak: “To-day I begin to serve God.” And we should act in the same way as if we had hitherto done no good whatever; for indeed, all that we do for God is nothing, since we are bound to do it. Let us therefore each day resolve to begin afresh to belong wholly to God. Neither let us stop to observe what or how others act. They who become truly saints are few. St. Bernard says: “One cannot be perfect without being singular.” If we would imitate the common run of men, we should always remain imperfect, as for the most part they are. We must overcome all, renounce all, in order to gain all. St. Teresa said: “Because we do not come to the conclusion of giving all our affection to God, so neither does He give all His love

another Paraclete that he may abide with you for ever—(John xiv. 15, 16).

I.

The Holy Ghost is called *Sweet Guest of the Soul*. The great promise made by Jesus Christ to those who should love Him was this: *If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever*—(John xiv. 15, 16). Hence the Holy Ghost will never abandon the soul, if the soul does not drive Him away: *He does not forsake, unless he be forsaken*.

God, then, dwells in our souls when we love Him, but He declares that He is not satisfied with us unless we love Him with our whole hearts. St. Augustine writes, that the Roman Senate would not admit Jesus into the number of their gods, because said they, He is a proud God, Who will have no other adored but Himself. And so it is; He will not admit a companion in the heart that loves Him; He must dwell there alone, and be the only object loved. And when He sees that He is not the only object loved He is jealous, as it were, as St. John Chrysostom writes, of those creatures which divide with Him a heart which He desires to have entirely to Himself. *Do you think that the Scripture saith in vain? To envy doth the spirit covet which dwelleth in you*—(James iv. 5).

O my God, I see that Thou desirest that I should be all Thine. I have many times expelled Thee from my soul, and yet Thou disdainest not to return to me, and to unite Thyself to me. Oh, do Thou now take possession of my whole self. I give myself this day entirely to Thee.

II.

In a word, as St. Jerome says, Jesus is jealous. Hence the heavenly Spouse praises the soul which, as the turtle

to us." Oh God, how little is all that is given to Jesus Christ, Who has given His Blood and His life for us! "However much we give," says the same Saint, "is but mire, in comparison of one single drop of Blood shed for us by our Blessed Lord." The Saints know not how to spare themselves, when there is a question of pleasing a God Who gave Himself wholly, without reserve, on purpose to oblige us to deny Him nothing. St. Chrysostom wrote: "He gave all to thee, and kept nothing for Himself." God has bestowed His entire Self upon thee; there is, then, no excuse for thee to behave reservedly with God. He has even died for us all, says the Apostle, in order that each one of us may live only for Him Who died for us: *Christ died for all; that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them*—(2 Cor. v. 15).

Thursday Within the Octave of Ascension

Morning Meditation

DIVINE LOVE CAUSES GOD TO DWELL
IN OUR SOULS.

"*Dulcis Hospes Animæ.*"

The Holy Ghost is called *Sweet Guest of the Soul*. This was the great promise made by Jesus Christ to those who love Him: *If you love me, keep my commandments; and I will ask the Father and he will give you*

dove, lives alone and hidden from the world : *Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle dove's*—(Cant. i. 9), because He desires that the world should not take any part of that love which He desires to have entirely Himself. Again, the spouse is praised because she is a *garden enclosed*—(Cant. iv. 12). A garden closed up against all worldly love. Can it be that Jesus does not deserve all our love? “He gave His whole self to Thee,” says St. John Chrysostom, “leaving nothing for Himself.” He has given Thee His Blood and His life; nothing more remains for Him to give thee.

Do Thou accept of me, O Jesus, and grant that, for the future, I may never live one moment deprived of Thy love. Thou seekest me, and I seek no other but Thee. Thou desirest my soul, and my soul desires no other but Thee. Thou lovest me, and I love Thee; and because Thou lovest me, bind me in such a manner to Thee, that I may never more be separated from Thee. O Queen of Heaven, pray for me.

Spiritual Reading

GOING FREQUENTLY TO HOLY COMMUNION.

Which of the two, asks Cassian, is the more humble—the man that communicates often or he that communicates but seldom? He answers that the person that frequently receives Jesus Christ is the more humble, because he knows his infirmities, and therefore seeks more frequently the remedy of his disease. The angelic Doctor says that though to abstain from Communion through humility and fear is pleasing to God, still the love and confidence that induce a soul to receive Him are more acceptable in His sight. Love and hope, to which the Scriptures constantly exhort us, are preferable to fear.

You will say : I do not know whether I am in the state

of grace. But I ask, do you expect that an Angel will come from Heaven to assure you that you are in the state of grace? Is it not enough for you to have the assurance of your confessor? You ought to place more confidence in the testimony of the minister of God than in the revelations of all the Angels of Paradise; for in receiving a communication from Angels, there might be an illusion, but in listening to the confessor who, in your regard, holds the place of God, there is no danger of deception. Whenever, then, your spiritual Father allows you to communicate, take care not to obey the suggestions of the devil by abstaining from Communion through fear and scruples.

I cannot, you will say, bring myself to communicate often, because I constantly commit faults and never amend. The greater you perceive your infirmities to be, the more frequently you ought to seek a remedy for them in Holy Communion. “Because,” says St. Ambrose, “I always sin, I should always use a remedy.” We buttress walls that are leaning, not to make them erect but to prevent them from falling. You say that you perceive in yourself no amendment. Will you improve without the aid of Holy Communion? No; you will, on the contrary, grow worse every day. Father Granada says that “he that desires to be cured of his infirmities should not abstain from this great remedy.” The bare remembrance of having communicated in the morning, and the thought of having to communicate the next day, makes a person more watchful and more attentive to the correction of his faults. Besides, the Sacrament itself infuses an increase of light and strength into the soul. Theologians generally assert that the Holy Eucharist produces more grace than all the other Sacraments, because it contains Jesus Christ Himself who is the Author of grace. A present that a prince makes with his own hand is more valuable than the gifts that he dispenses through the hands of others.

You will say : I feel myself distracted, cold, and without devotion. What, I ask, do you understand by devotion? If you mean sensible fervour, I say that it is not neces-

sary : it is enough to have fervour in the will, or a determination to do what you know to be pleasing to God. This is the true devotion and fervour that God demands of you ; and though you do not feel this fervour of the will, you should, notwithstanding, communicate in order to obtain it by means of the Holy Sacrament. For if you abstain from Communion because you have not sensible fervour, you will, as Gerson says, imitate the folly of those who, when cold, refuse to approach the fire because they do not feel warm. According to St. Laurence Justinian, this Sacrament sometimes produces its effect, though we do not perceive it. St. Bonaventure says : “ Although you feel tepid, approach with confidence ; for the greater your infirmity the more you stand in need of a physician.” Do not be deterred from frequent Communion because you experience more devotion when you communicate seldom than when you communicate often. He that eats but seldom eats with great eagerness but with less profit ; and, if you communicate but seldom you may, perhaps, feel a little more of sensible fervour, but you will also receive less fruit ; because your soul will want the food that gives strength to avoid sins and imperfections. Seek not, then, sensible devotion in your Communions. Communicate only for the purpose of uniting your soul more closely to God, and be assured that, as often as you communicate with that view, your Communions will be productive of great fruit.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

VII.—THE MEANS OF AVOIDING LUKEWARMNESS AND
 ATTAINING PERFECTION.

I.

The third means of becoming a saint is *mental prayer*. John Gerson writes : “ He who does not meditate on the eternal truths cannot, without a miracle, lead the life of a Christian. The reason is, because without mental prayer light falls us, and we walk in the dark. The truths of faith are not seen by the eyes of the body, but by the eyes of the mind, when we meditate ; he that fails to meditate on them, fails to see them, and therefore walks in the dark ; and being in the dark, he easily grows attached to sensible things, for the sake of which he then comes to despise the eternal.” St. Teresa wrote as follows to the Bishop of Osma : “ Although we seem to discover in ourselves no imperfections ; yet, when God opens the eyes of the soul, which He is wont to do in prayer, then they plainly appear.” And St. Bernard had before said, that he who does not meditate “ does not abhor himself, simply because he does not know himself.” “ Prayer,” says the Saint, “ regulates the affections and directs the actions” ; it keeps the affections of the soul in order, and directs all our actions to God ; but without prayer the affections become attached to earth, the actions conform themselves to the affections, and in this manner all runs into disorder.

II.

We read of an awful example of this in the life of the Venerable Sister Mary Crucified of Sicily. Whilst this servant of God was praying, she heard a devil making a

boast that he had succeeded in withdrawing a Religious from the Community-prayer; and she saw in spirit, that after this omission the devil tempted her to consent to a grievous sin, and that she was on the point of yielding. She forthwith accosted her, and by a timely admonition prevented her falling. St. Teresa said, that whoever leaves off prayer "very shortly becomes either a brute-beast or a devil."

O Jesus, my Love, I repent of my lukewarmness, I am determined to love Thee as much as I can, and I wish to become a saint; and I wish to become a saint for this reason, in order to give Thee pleasure, and to love Thee exceedingly in this life and the next! I can do nothing of myself, but Thou canst do all things; and I know that Thou wishest me to become a saint. I see already by Thy grace my soul sighs only for Thee, and seeks nothing else but Thee. I wish to live no more for myself; Thou desirest me to be wholly Thine, and I desire to be wholly Thine. Come, and unite me to Thyself, and Thyself to me. Thou art Infinite Goodness; Thou art He who hast loved me so much; Thou art, indeed, too loving and too lovely; how, then, can I love any thing but Thee? I prefer Thy love before all the things of this world; Thou art the sole object, the sole end of all my affections. I leave all to be occupied solely in loving Thee, my Redeemer, my Comforter, my Hope, my Love, and my All.

Friday Within the Octave of Ascension

Morning Meditation

DIVINE LOVE A SACRED BOND THAT BINDS THE SOUL TO GOD.

As the Holy Ghost is the indissoluble bond which unites the Father and the Eternal Word, so also is He the bond that unites our souls and God. O Love, Thy bond is so strong that it is able to bind even God and unite Him to our souls!

I.

As the Holy Ghost, Who is uncreated Love, is the indissoluble bond uniting the Father and the Eternal Word, so also He unites the soul with God: "Charity is a virtue," says St. Augustine, "uniting us with God." Hence St. Laurence Justinian with great joy exclaims: "O love, how strong is thy bond, which is capable of binding God!" The bonds of the world are bonds of death, but the bonds of God are bonds of life and salvation: *Her bands are a healthful binding*—(Ecclus. vi. 31), because the bonds of God, by means of love, unite us with God Who is our true and only life.

Before the coming of Jesus Christ men turned away from God, and being attached to the earth, refused to be united with their Creator; but our loving Lord has drawn us to Him by the bonds of love, as the Prophet Osee foretold: *I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love*—(Osee xi. 4). These bonds are His benefits, His lights, His calls to love Him, and His

promises of Heaven; but, above all, they are the gifts which Jesus Christ has bestowed upon us in giving us Himself in the Sacrifice of the Cross, and in the Sacrament of the Altar, and ultimately in sending down upon us the Holy Ghost.

My dear Jesus, Thou hast indeed done too much to oblige me to love Thee, too dearly hast Thou paid to purchase my love; too ungrateful, therefore, should I be if I were to love Thee but little, or to divide my heart between Thee and creatures, after Thou hast shed Thy Blood and laid down Thy life for me. I desire to detach myself from all things else, in order to give my whole affections to Thee. But I am too weak of myself to execute this desire; do Thou, Who inspirest me with it, give me strength to execute it.

II.

The Prophet Isaias exclaims: *Loosing the bonds from off thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion*—(lii. 2). O my soul, thou who art created for Heaven, loose from off thy neck the bonds of the earth, and unite thyself to God by the bonds of love. *Have charity, which is the bond of perfection*—(Colos. iii. 14). Love is a bond which unites with itself all other virtues, and makes the soul perfect. "Love," says St. Augustine, "and do what thou pleasest." Yes, love God and do what thou wilt, because he who loves God, carefully avoids giving any offence to his Beloved, and seek in all things to please Him.

O my Jesus, pierce my poor heart with the sweet dart of Thy love that I may ever languish with the desire of Thee, and be dissolved with the love of Thee. May I ever seek only Thee, desire only Thee, and find only Thee! O Jesus, I desire only Thee alone. Grant that I may ever repeat during life, and especially at the hour of my death: I desire Thee alone! O Mary, my Mother, pray that from henceforth I may never desire anything but God.

Spiritual Reading

GOING FREQUENTLY TO HOLY COMMUNION.

You say again: I abstain from Communion to escape the censure of others that see my imperfections and rebuke me for communicating so frequently. To this pretext I answer: If you communicate with the advice of your director, and though a motive of advancing in divine love or of correcting your defects, be not disturbed by the complaints or censures of others. According to Blessed John of Avila, they who censure others for frequent Communion perform the office of the devil. Will you then pay attention to their remarks? Listen to the words of St. Francis de Sales: "If," he says, "they ask you why you communicate so often, tell them that two classes of persons should communicate frequently, the perfect to preserve perfection; and the imperfect, to attain perfection; the strong, lest they become weak; and the weak, to grow strong; the sick to be cured, and the healthy, to prevent sickness. And as to yourself, tell them that, because you are imperfect, weak, and infirm, you stand in need of frequent Communion. Tell them that all who are free from worldly occupations, because they have the opportunity, and all who are engaged in them, because they have need of Communion, should communicate frequently." In conclusion, he says: "Philothea, communicate often, and as often as possible, with the advice of your spiritual Father; and believe me that, as the hares on our mountains become white because they feed only on snow, so, by eating purity itself in this Sacrament you will become all pure." To St. Frances of Rome, as she was going to Communion, the devil said: "How can you, who are so full of venial sins, dare receive the Immaculate Lamb?" Perceiving that the enemy wished to deprive her of Communion, she banished him by spitting in his face. The Blessed Virgin immediately

appeared to her, and, after having praised her conduct, said that our defects, instead of being an obstacle, should be an incentive to Communion, since, in Communion, we find the remedy of all our miseries.

You will perhaps say: I have not time to prepare as I ought for Holy Communion. I answer: if your time is spent in useless occupations or discourses, then your excuse is frivolous. But if you be employed in performing the duties of your office, or of obedience, rest assured that the discharge of these duties, with a view to please God, will be an excellent preparation for Communion. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi was once engaged in making bread, when the bell rang for Communion; she instantly obeyed the call, and in an ecstasy received the Holy Sacrament. Hence she was accustomed to say to her Sisters: "Offer to God all your actions as a preparation for Communion, perform them with the intention of pleasing Him, and communicate." Whenever the want of time arises from your being employed in the performance of your duties, in the care of the sick, or in the performance of any work of charity that cannot be deferred, you should never abstain from Communion in consequence of not having sufficient time for preparation. But be careful to avoid as much as possible all unnecessary conversations and amusements, and when you foresee that in the morning you will not have time to prepare for Communion, endeavour on the preceding evening to make some preparation, by reading a book of piety, and by making the acts that ought to be made in the morning; or rise a little before the usual hour and spend whatever time may be at your disposal in preparation for the Holy Sacrament.

Oh! what great and continual progress is made in divine love by those who, with a strong desire, frequent Holy Communion! Oh! how wonderfully does the Lord draw them to His love! St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi once saw a soul suffering in Purgatory for having through carelessness omitted one Communion. And we read in her Life that she several times burst into tears because a

Sister in her Community abstained from Communion through negligence. Be assured that of all your devotions there is none more dear to Jesus Christ than your Communion. For all perfection consists in a perfect union with God; and Holy Communion is the action that unites the soul most closely to Jesus, and consequently you can do nothing more pleasing in His sight. Hence, the same St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say: "I would rather die than omit a Communion permitted by obedience."

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

VIII.—THE MEANS OF AVOIDING LUKEWARMNESS AND ATTAINING PERFECTION.

He that leaves off prayer, will leave off loving Jesus Christ. Prayer is the blessed furnace where the fire of holy love is enkindled and kept alive: *And in my meditation a fire shall flame out*—(Ps. xxxviii. 4). It was said by St. Catherine of Bologna: "The person that foregoes the practice of prayer breaks the chain which binds the soul to God." It follows that the devil, finding the soul cold in Divine love, will have little difficulty in inducing her to partake of some poisonous fruit or other. St. Teresa said, on the contrary: "Whosoever perseveres in prayer, let him hold for a certainty, that with however many sins the devil may surround him, the Lord will eventually bring him into the haven of salvation." In another place the Saint says: "Whoever halts not in the way of prayer arrives sooner or later." And elsewhere she writes that it is on this account the devil labours so hard to withdraw souls from prayer, because he well knows that he has missed gaining those who faithfully persevere in prayer.

Oh, how great are the benefits that flow from prayer! In prayer we conceive holy thoughts, we practise devout affections, we excite great desires, and form efficacious resolutions to give ourselves wholly to God; and thus the soul is led for His sake to sacrifice earthly pleasures and all disorderly appetites. It was said by St. Aloysius Gonzaga: "There will never be much perfection without much prayer." Let him who longs for perfection mark well this notable saying of the Saint.

II.

We should not go to prayer in order to taste the sweetness of Divine love; whoever prays from such a motive will lose his time, or at least derive little advantage from it. A person should go to prayer solely to please God, that is, solely to learn what the will of God is in his regard, and to beg of Him the help to put it in practice. The Venerable Father Antony Torres said: "To carry the cross without consolation makes souls fly to perfection. Prayer unattended with sensible consolations confers greater fruit on the soul. But pitiable is the poor soul that leaves off prayer because she finds no relish in it." St. Teresa said: "When a soul leaves off prayer, it is as if she cast herself into hell without any need of devils."

Saturday—Vigil of Pentecost

Morning Meditation

DIVINE LOVE IS A TREASURE CONTAINING EVERY GOOD.

"*Infinitus thesaurus hominibus.*"

Divine Love is that Treasure, to purchase which, the Gospel says, we should leave all things; for this love makes us partakers of the friendship of God. *An infinite treasure which they that use become the friends of God.*

I.

Divine love is that Treasure, to purchase which, as the Gospel says, a man should give up all things, for this love makes us partakers of the friendship of God: *An infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God*—(Wis. vii. 14). "O men," says St. Augustine, "whither go ye in search of good things? Seek the one only Good in Whom are all good things." But we cannot find the only Good—namely, God—unless we renounce the things of the earth. St. Teresa writes: "Detach thy heart from creatures, and thou shalt find God." He who finds God, finds all that he can desire. *Delight in the Lord, and he will grant thee the desire of thy heart*—(Ps. xxxvi. 4). The human heart is continually seeking after such good things as may make it happy, but if it seek them from creatures, how much soever it may acquire, it

will never be satisfied with them ; but if it seek only God, God will satisfy all its desires. Who but the Saints are most happy in this world? And why? Because they desire and seek only God. A certain prince, going to the chase, saw a solitary running swiftly through the forest, and asked him what he was seeking for in that desert place. The solitary replied : " And thou, O prince, what art thou in quest of?" The prince : " I am going in quest of wild beasts." " And I," said the hermit, " am going in quest of God."

My God, hitherto I have sought not Thee, but myself and my own gratifications, and for these I have turned my back upon Thee, my sovereign Good. But I am consoled with the words of Jeremias : *The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him*—(Lam. iii. 25). These words assure me that Thou, my God, art all goodness towards him who seeks Thee.

II.

The tyrant offered St. Clement gold and gems if he would renounce Jesus Christ; on which the Saint exclaimed with a deep sigh : " Alas, God is put in competition with a little mire!" Happy is he who knows the value of the treasure of Divine love and seeks to obtain it! He who obtains it will divest himself of all things else, that he may possess God alone. " When the house is on fire," says St. Francis of Sales, " all the goods are thrown out of the windows." And Father Paul Segneri the Younger, a great servant of God, was accustomed to say that love was a thief which robbed us of all worldly affections, so that we can in all truth say : " What do I desire, but Thee alone, my God?"

My beloved Saviour, I know the evil I have committed in forsaking Thee, and I repent of it with my whole heart. I know Thou art an infinite Treasure. I will not abuse the light. I forsake all things, and choose Thee for my only Love. My God, my Love, my All, I love Thee, I

desire Thee, I sigh after Thee. Come, O Holy Spirit, and destroy in me by Thy sacred fire every affection which has not Thee for its object. Grant that I may be all Thine, and that I may conquer every thing to please Thee. O Mary, my advocate and my Mother, do thou help me by thy prayers.

Spiritual Reading

PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

St. Francis de Sales says, that our Saviour can never be seen more amiable and more tender, in all that He has done for us, than in Holy Communion, in which He, so to say, annihilates Himself and becomes Food, that He may unite Himself to the hearts and bodies of His faithful. Therefore the learned Gerson used also to say, that there was no means more efficacious than the Holy Communion whereby to enkindle devotion and the holy love of God in our souls.

And, indeed, if we speak of doing something agreeable to God, what can a soul do more agreeable to Him than to receive Communion? St. Denis teaches us that love always tends towards perfect union; but how can a soul be more perfectly united with Jesus than in the manner of which He speaks Himself, saying : *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him*—(Jo. vi. 57). St. Augustine says, that if every day you receive this Sacrament, Jesus will be always with you, and you will always advance in divine love.

Again, if there is question of healing our spiritual infirmities, what more certain remedy can we have than the Holy Communion, which is called by the sacred Council of Trent " a remedy whereby we may be freed from daily faults, and be preserved from mortal sins."

Whence does it come, asks Cardinal Bona, that in so

many souls we see so little fruit from frequent Communion, and that they constantly relapse into the same faults? He replies: "The fault is not in the Food, but in the disposition of him who receives it." *Can a man say Solomon, hide a fire in his bosom, and his garments not burn?*—(Prov. vi. 27). God is a consuming fire. He comes Himself in the Holy Communion to enkindle this divine fire; how is it, then, says William of Paris, that we see so diabolical a miracle as that souls should remain cold in divine love in the midst of such flames?

All comes from the want of proper dispositions, and especially from the want of *preparation*. Fire immediately inflames dry but not green wood; for this latter is not fit to burn. The Saints derived great benefit from their Communion, because they prepared themselves with very great care. St. Aloysius Gonsaga devoted three days to his *preparation* for Holy Communion, and three days he spent in *thanksgiving* to his Lord.

To prepare well for Holy Communion a soul should be disposed on two main points: it should be detached from creatures, and have a great desire to advance in divine love.

1. In the first place, then, a soul should detach itself from all things, and drive everything from its heart which is not God. *He that is washed, saith Jesus, needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly*—(Jo. xiii. 10). Which signifies, as St. Bernard explains it, that in order to receive this Sacrament with great fruit, we should not only be cleansed from mortal sins, but our feet also should be washed, that is, we should be free from all earthly affections; for, being in contact with the earth, they excite a sort of repugnance in God, and soiling the soul, prevent the effects of Holy Communion.

St. Gertrude asked our Lord what preparations He required of her for the Holy Communion; and He replied: "I only ask that thou shouldst come empty of thyself, to receive Me."

2. In the second place it is necessary, in the Holy Communion, to have a great desire to receive Jesus Christ

and His holy love. In this sacred Banquet, says Gerson, only those who are famishing receive their fill; and the most Blessed Virgin Mary had already said the same thing: *He hath filled the hungry with good things*—(Luke i. 53). As Jesus, writes the Blessed Father Avila, came into this world only after He had been much and long desired, so does He only enter a soul that desires Him; for it is not becoming that such Food should be given to him who has a loathing for It. Our Lord one day said to St. Matilda: "No bee flies with such impetuosity to flowers, to suck their honey, as I fly to souls in the Holy Communion, driven by the violence of my love."

Since, then, Jesus Christ has so great a desire to come into our souls, it is right that we also should have a great desire to receive Him and His divine love in the Holy Communion. St. Francis de Sales teaches us that the principal object a soul should have in view in communicating should be, to advance in the love of God; since He, Who for love alone gives Himself to us, should be received for love.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

IX.—THE MEANS OF AVOIDING LUKEWARMNESS AND
ATTAINING PERFECTION.

I.

It results from the practice of prayer that a person constantly thinks of God. "The true lover," says St. Teresa, "is ever mindful of the beloved One. And hence it follows that persons of prayer are always speaking of God, knowing, as they do, how pleasing it is to God that His lovers should delight in conversing about Him, and on the love He bears them, and that thus they

should endeavour to enkindle it in others." The same Saint wrote: "Jesus Christ is always present at the conversations of the servants of God, and He is very much gratified to be the subject of their delight."

Prayer, again, creates that desire of retiring into solitude, in order to converse alone with God, and to maintain interior recollection in the discharge of necessary external duties; I say *necessary*, such as the management of one's family, or of the performance of duties required of us by obedience; because a man of prayer must love solitude, and avoid dissipation in superfluous and useless affairs, otherwise he will lose the spirit of recollection, which is a great means of preserving union with God: *My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed*—(Cant. iv. 12).

II.

The soul espoused to Jesus Christ must be a garden closed to all creatures, and must not admit into her heart other thoughts, nor other business, but those of God or for God. Hearts thrown open never become holy. The Saints, who have to labour in gaining souls to God, do not lose their recollection in the midst of all their labours, either of preaching, confessing, reconciling enemies, or assisting the sick. The same rule holds good with those who have to apply to study. How many from excessive study, and a desire to become learned, become neither holy nor learned, because true learning consists in the science of the Saints; that is to say, in knowing how to love Jesus Christ; whereas, on the contrary, Divine love brings with it knowledge and every good: *All good things come to me together with her*—(Wis. vii. 11), that is, with holy charity. St. John Berchmans had an extraordinary love for study, but by his great virtue he never allowed study to interfere with his spiritual interests. The Apostle exhorts us: *Not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety*—(Rom. xii. 8). A priest

especially must have knowledge; he must know things, because he has to instruct others in the Divine Law: *For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth*—(Mal. ii. 7). He must have knowledge, but unto *sobriety*. He that leaves prayer for study shows that in his study he seeks himself, and not God. He that seeks God leaves study (if it be not absolutely necessary) in order not to omit prayer.

Pentecost Sunday

Morning Meditation

THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST INTO THE SOUL.

The Eternal Father was not content with giving us His Son, Jesus Christ, to save us by His death, He has given us also the Holy Ghost to dwell always in our souls and keep them inflamed with His holy love. Hence, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, He appeared in the form of tongues of fire. This is the holy fire that inflamed the Saints with the desire to do great things for God, that enabled them to love their most cruel enemies, to seek after contempt, to renounce all the riches and honours of the world, and even to embrace torments and death.

I.

The Holy Ghost is that divine bond which unites the Father with the Son; it is He Who unites our souls, through love, with God. For, as St. Augustine says, union with God is the effect of love. "Charity is a virtue which unites us with God." The chains of the world are chains of death, but the bonds of the Holy Ghost are bonds of Eternal life, because they bind us to God, Who is our true and only Life.

Let us also remember that all the lights, inspirations, divine calls, all the good acts we have performed during our life, all our acts of contrition, of confidence in the divine mercy, of love, of resignation, have been the gifts of the Holy Ghost. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings*—(Rom. viii. 26). Thus, it is the Holy Ghost Who prays for us; for we know not what to ask, but the Holy Spirit teaches us what we should pray for.

O holy and divine Spirit, come into my heart and teach me to pray as I ought. Give me strength not to neglect prayer in times of weariness and dryness. I have been lost by my sins. Thou desirest my sanctification and salvation, and I, too, earnestly desire to become holy. I love Thee, my sovereign Good, my Love, my All, and because I love Thee, I give myself wholly to Thee. O Blessed Virgin Mary, protect me.

II.

We know by Faith that the Holy Ghost is the Love that the Eternal Father and the Eternal Word bear one another, and therefore the gift of divine charity which the Lord infuses into our souls, and which is the greatest of all gifts, is particularly attributed to the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul teaches: *The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us*

—(Rom. v. 5). And our Lord Himself made this great promise: If you love Me I will pray My Father, and He will send you the Holy Spirit that He may always dwell in you. *If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will ask my Father and he will give you another Paraclete that he may abide with you for ever*—(Jo. xiv. 15, 16).

O Holy Spirit, divine Paraclete, Father of the poor, Consoler of the afflicted, Light of hearts, Sanctifier of souls, behold me prostrate in Thy Presence. I adore Thee with the most profound submission. I love Thee with all my affections. I have been so ungrateful as to offend Thee. I ask a thousand pardons for all my sins. I offer Thee my heart, cold as it is, and I supplicate Thee to let a ray of Thy light and a spark of Thy fire enter therein. Thou art a divine Spirit, fortify me against the wicked spirits: Thou art a Fire, enkindle in me the fire of Thy love: Thou art a Light, enlighten me that I may know the things of eternity: Thou art the Author of the heavenly gifts, I beseech Thee to grant them to me. Vivify me by Thy grace, sanctify me by Thy charity, govern me by Thy wisdom, adopt me by Thy beauty as Thy child, and save me by Thy infinite mercy. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

THANKSGIVING AFTER COMMUNION.

There is no prayer more agreeable to God, or more profitable to the soul, than that which is made during the *Thanksgiving after Communion*. It is the opinion of many grave writers (Suarez, Cajetan, Valentia, De Lugo, and others), that the Holy Communion, as long as the Sacramental species last, constantly produces greater and greater graces in the soul, provided the soul is then

constant in disposing itself by new acts of virtue. The Council of Florence, in the Decree of Eugenius IV to the Armenians, teaches that the Blessed Sacrament produces the same effect in the soul as material food, which, when it enters the body, produces effects according to the state in which it finds it.

For this reason, holy souls endeavour to remain as long as possible in prayer after Communion. The Blessed John of Avila, even when he was giving his missions, used to remain for at least two hours in prayer. Father Balthazar Alvarez used to say, that we should set great value on the time after Communion, imagining that we hear from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself the words that He addressed to His disciples: *But me you have not always with you*—(Matt. xxvi. 11).

It is not advisable, as many do, to begin to read immediately after Communion: it is better to spend at least a short time in producing holy affections, and in conversing with Jesus, Who is then within us, and in repeating many times words of tenderness, or some fervent prayer. Jesus Christ repeated the same prayer in the Garden three times: *And he prayed the third time, saying the self-same word*—(Matt. xxvi. 44). In affections and prayers it is, then, that the soul should entertain itself with Jesus after Communion; for we must know that the acts formed in prayer after Communion are far more precious and meritorious in the sight of God than when made at another time; for the soul being then united with Jesus, the value of the acts is increased by the presence of Jesus. We should, moreover, know, that after Communion Jesus Christ is more disposed to grant graces. St. Teresa says, that after Communion Jesus places Himself in the soul as on a throne of grace, and then says: *What wilt thou that I should do for thee?*—(Mark x. 51) meaning: O soul, I am come for the express purpose of granting thee graces: ask Me what thou wilt, and as much as thou wilt, and thou shalt receive all.

Oh, what treasures of grace would you receive, devout

soul, if you only entertained yourself with Jesus for an hour, or at least half-an-hour, after Communion! After your thanksgiving is ended, be also careful during the whole day on which you have communicated to keep yourself united by affections and prayers with Jesus, Whom you have received.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

X.—THE MEANS OF AVOIDING LUKEWARMNESS AND ATTAINING PERFECTION.

I.

The greatest evil is, that without mental prayer we do not pray at all. I have spoken frequently in my spiritual works of the necessity of prayer, and more especially in a little volume entitled, *On Prayer, the Great Means of Salvation and Perfection*; and here also I will say a few other things. It will be sufficient, then, to quote the opinion of the Venerable Palafox, Bishop of Osma: "How can charity last, unless God grants us perseverance? How will the Lord grant us perseverance unless we ask it of Him? And how shall we ask it of Him except by prayer? Without prayer there is no communication with God for the preservation of virtue." And so it is, because he that neglects mental prayer sees very little into the wants of his soul; he knows little of the dangers of his salvation, of the means to be used in order to overcome temptations; and so, understanding little of the necessity of prayer, he leaves off praying, and will certainly be lost.

II.

Then as regards subjects for Meditation, nothing is

more useful than to meditate on the Four Last Things—Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven; but it is of especial advantage to meditate on Death, and to imagine ourselves expiring on the bed of sickness, with the Crucifix in our hands, and on the point of entering into eternity. But above all, to one that loves Jesus Christ, and is anxious always to increase in His love, no consideration is more efficacious than that of the Passion of the Redeemer. St. Francis of Sales calls Mount Calvary “the Mountain of Lovers.” All the lovers of Jesus Christ love to abide on this Mountain, where no air is breathed but the air of Divine love. When we see a God dying for our love, and dying in order to gain our love (*He loved us and delivered himself up for us*), it is impossible for us not to love Him ardently. Such darts of love continually issue forth from the Wounds of Christ Crucified as pierce even hearts of stone. Oh, happy he who is ever going during life to the heights of Calvary! O blessed Mount! O lovely Mount! O beloved Mount! And who shall ever leave thee more! A Mount that sends forth flames to enkindle the souls that perseveringly abide upon thee!

Whit Monday

Morning Meditation

THE LOVE OF JESUS IN THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT.

Jesus, not wishing to separate Himself from us even in death, instituted the Most Blessed Sacrament in order to

remain with us therein until the end of the world. *Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world*—(Matt. xxviii. 20).

I.

Our most loving Redeemer, knowing that He must leave this earth and return to His Father as soon as He should have accomplished the work of our Redemption by His death, and seeing that His hour was near at hand—*Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should pass out of this world to his father* (Jo. xiii. 1)—would not leave us orphans in this valley of tears. What, then, did He do? He instituted the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, in which He left us His whole Self. “No tongue,” says St. Peter of Alcantara, “can express the greatness of the love of Jesus for our souls; and hence this Spouse, before He departed this life, in order that His absence might not be the occasion of our forgetting Him, left us as a memorial this Most Holy Sacrament, in which He might Himself remain with us, not being willing that any other pledge but Himself should remain to remind us of Him.” Jesus, therefore, not wishing to separate Himself from us by His death, instituted this Sacrament of love, in order to remain with us until the end of the world: *Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world*—(Matt. xxviii. 20). Let us behold Him, therefore, as Faith teaches us, residing upon numberless altars,—shut up in so many prisons of love, that He may be found by all who seek Him. “But, O Lord,” says St. Bernard, “this does not become Thy majesty.” Jesus Christ answers: *It is sufficient that it accords with My love.*

O my beloved Jesus, O God Who lovest us with such great love, what more canst Thou do to make us, ungrateful sinners, love Thee? Oh, if men loved Thee, all the churches would be continually filled with devout people, prostrate on their faces, adoring and thanking Thee,

burning with Thy love at beholding Thee with the eyes of Faith hidden in a tabernacle! But no; men, forgetful of Thee and of Thy love, wait indeed upon a mortal man from whom they expect some perishable good, and leave Thee, my Lord, abandoned and alone. Oh, that I were able to make Thee amends for so much ingratitude by my own devotion!

II.

Those persons are tenderly affected who go to Jerusalem, and visit the place where the Word Incarnate was born, the hall where He was scourged, the Mount on which He died, and the Sepulchre in which He was buried; but how much greater ought our tenderness to be in visiting an altar on which Jesus is present in the Most Holy Sacrament? The Blessed John of Avila was accustomed to say, that there was no sanctuary so excellent and holy as a church in which Jesus was sacramentally present.

I am grieved, O my Jesus, that I have hitherto been like unto such, careless and forgetful of Thee. But for the future I will not be one of their number. I will devote myself to Thee and visit Thee as often as I am able. In flame my heart with Thy holy love, that for the future I may live only to love and to please Thee. Thou deservest to be loved by the hearts of all. If at one time I despised Thee, I now desire to love Thee. My Jesus, Thou art my Love and my only Good—*my God and my All*. Most Holy Virgin Mary, obtain for me a great love of Jesus in the Holy Sacrament.

Spiritual Reading

VISITING JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

Our holy Faith teaches us, and we are bound to believe that in the consecrated Host Jesus Christ is really present under the species of bread. But we must also understand that He is thus present on our altars as on a throne of love and mercy, to dispense graces and to show us the love He bears us, in wishing thus to dwell night and day hidden in our midst.

It is well known that the Holy Church instituted the Festival of Corpus Christi with a solemn Octave, and that she celebrates it with many processions, and frequent Exposition of the Most Holy Sacrament, that men may thereby be moved to gratefully acknowledge and honour this loving presence and dwelling of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar, by their devotions, thanksgivings, and the tender affections of their souls. O God, how many insults and outrages has not this admirable Redeemer had, and has He not daily to endure in this Sacrament on the part of those very men for whose love He remains upon our altars! Of this He indeed complained to His dear servant, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, as the author of the *Book of Devotion to the Heart of Jesus* relates. One day, as she was in prayer before the Most Holy Sacrament, Jesus showed her His Heart on a throne of flames, crowned with thorns, and surmounted by a cross, and thus addressed her: "Behold this Heart which has loved men so much, and which has spared Itself in nothing, and has even gone so far as to consume Itself, thereby to show them Its love; but in return the greater part of men only show Me ingratitude by the irreverence, tepidity, sacrilege, and contempt, of which they make Me the object in this Sacrament of love; and that which I feel most acutely is, that hearts consecrated to Me treat Me thus." Jesus then expressed His wish,

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that the first Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi should be dedicated as a particular festival in honour of His adorable Heart; and that on that day all souls who loved Him should endeavour by their homage, and by their affections to make amends for the insults men have offered Him in the Sacrament of the Altar. He at the same time promised abundant graces to all who should thus honour Him present in the Blessed Sacrament.

This Presence makes us understand what our Lord said of old by His Prophet, that His delights are to be with the children of men; for He knows not how to tear Himself from them, even when they abandon and despise Him. This also shows us how pleasing to the Heart of Jesus are all those souls who frequently visit Him and keep Him company in the churches in which He is present under the sacramental species. He desired St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi to visit Him in the Most Blessed Sacrament thirty-three times a day; and in this His beloved spouse faithfully obeyed Him, and in all her visits she approached as near as possible to the altar, as we read in her Life.

But let all those devout souls who often go to keep company with Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament speak—let them tell us of the gifts and inspirations they have received, of the flames of love which are there enkindled in their souls, and the Paradise they enjoy in the presence of this hidden God.

The servant of God, and great Sicilian missionary, Father Louis La Nouza, was, even in his youth and as a layman, so enamoured of Jesus Christ, that he seemed unable to tear himself from the presence of his beloved Lord. Such were the joys which he here experienced, that his director, to moderate his devotion, had to command him, in virtue of obedience, not to remain before the tabernacle for more than an hour. The time having elapsed, he showed in obeying that in tearing himself from the bosom of Jesus Christ, he had to do himself just such violence as a child that has to detach itself from its mother's breast in the very moment in which it is satiat-

ing itself with the utmost avidity. St. Aloysius also was forbidden to remain in the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament, and as he passed before the Tabernacle, finding himself drawn, so to speak, by the sweet attractions of his Lord, and almost forced to remain there, he would with the greatest effort tear himself away, saying, in an excess of tender love: *Depart from me, O Lord, depart!* There it was also that St. Francis Xavier found refreshment in the midst of his many labours in India, for he employed his days in toiling for souls, and his nights he passed in the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XI.—THE MEANS OF AVOIDING LUKEWARMNESS AND
ATTAINING PERFECTION.

I.

The fourth means of perfection, and even of perseverance in the grace of God, is *frequently to receive Holy Communion*, of which we have often spoken, and often declared that a soul can do nothing more pleasing to Jesus Christ than to receive Him often in the Sacrament of the Altar. St. Teresa said: "There is no better help to perfection than frequent Communion. Oh, how admirably does the Lord bring on such a soul to perfection!" And she adds that ordinarily speaking, they who communicate most frequently are found further advanced in perfection; and that there is greater spirituality in those Religious Communities where frequent Communion is the custom. For this reason it is that, as we find declared in a decree of Innocent XI, in 1679, the Holy Fathers have so highly extolled, and so much promoted,

the practice of *frequent and even of daily Communion*. The Holy Communion, as the Council of Trent tells us, delivers us from daily faults, and preserves us from mortal sins. St. Bernard asserts that Communion represses the movements of anger and incontinence, which are the two passions that most frequently and most violently assail us. St. Thomas says that Communion defeats the suggestions of the devil. And finally St. John Chrysostom says that Communion pours into our souls a great inclination to virtue, and a promptitude to practise it; and at the same time imparts to us a great peace, by which the path of perfection is made very sweet and easy to us. Besides, there is no Sacrament so capable of kindling Divine love in souls as the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, in which Jesus Christ bestows on us His whole Self, in order to unite us all to Himself by means of holy love. Wherefore Blessed John of Avila said: "Whoever deters souls from frequent Communion does the work of the devil." Yes; for the devil has a great horror of this Sacrament, from which souls derive immense strength to advance in Divine love.

II.

But a proper preparation is requisite to communicate well. The first preparation, or, in other terms, the remote preparation, to be able to go to Communion daily, or several times in the week, is, (1) To keep free from all deliberate affection to sin, that is, to sin committed, as we say, with the eyes open. (2) The practice of much mental prayer. (3) The mortification of the senses and of the passions. St. Francis of Sales teaches as follows: "Whoever has overcome the greatest part of his bad inclinations, and has arrived at a notable degree of perfection, can communicate every day." The angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, says that anyone who knows by experience that his soul derives an increase of Divine love from Holy Communion, may communi-

cate daily. Hence Innocent XI, in the above-mentioned decree, said that the greater or less frequency of Holy Communion must rest on the decision of the Confessor, who ought to be guided in this matter by the profit which he sees accrue to the souls under his direction. In the next place, the proximate preparation for Communion is that which is made on the morning itself of Communion, for which there is need of at least half an hour's mental prayer.*

To reap also more abundant fruit from Communion, we must make a good thanksgiving. Blessed John of Avila said that the time after Communion is "a time to gain treasures of graces. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say that no time can be more calculated to inflame us with Divine love than the time immediately after our Communion. And St. Teresa says: "After Communion let us be careful not to lose so good an opportunity of negotiating with God. His Divine Majesty is not accustomed to pay badly for His lodging, if He meets with a good reception."

Whit Tuesday

Morning Meditation

*JESUS REMAINS ON OUR ALTARS THAT HE
MAY BE FOUND BY ALL.*

St. Teresa used to say that in this world it is impossible for all subjects to speak with their king. But everyone who wishes can find Jesus, the King of Heaven, in the

*In connection with above paragraph read the Decree of the Sacred Congregation concerning frequent and daily Communion, page 299.

Blessed Sacrament, and may speak with Him without restraint.

I.

St. Teresa used to say that in this world it is impossible for all subjects to speak with their king. The most the poor can hope for is to convey what they have to say to him by means of some third person. But to speak with Thee, O King of Heaven, there is no need of any third person. Everyone who wishes may find Thee in the Holy Sacrament, and may speak to Thee without restraint. For this reason it is, says the same Saint, that Jesus has concealed His majesty under the appearance of bread,—to give us confidence, and to take away from us all fear of approaching Him. Ah! how does Jesus hourly exclaim from our altars: *Come to me all you who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you*—(Matt. xi. 28). Come, He says to us—come, ye poor; come, ye infirm; come, ye afflicted; come, ye just and sinners, and you shall find in Me a remedy for all your losses and afflictions. Such is the desire of Jesus Christ to console all who have recourse to Him. He remains night and day upon our altars that He may be found by all, and may bestow His favours upon all.

O my Jesus, I could even die of grief when I think that hitherto I have loved creatures and my own gratification more than Thee, by turning my back upon Thee, my sovereign Good. But Thou wouldst not suffer me to be lost; Thou hast borne with me with so much patience, and, instead of chastising me, hast wounded my heart with so many darts of love that I can no longer resist Thy allurements, and have now given myself to Thee. I see that Thou wouldst have me all Thine. But since Thou desirest this, do Thou effect it, for it is Thou that must do it. Detach all my affections from myself and from creatures, and grant that I may seek no other but Thee, nor think of any other, nor speak of any but Thee, and that I may desire and sigh only to burn with Thy

love, to live and to die for Thee. O love of my Jesus, come and occupy my whole heart, and expel from it all love that is not for God. I love Thee, O Jesus, present in the Holy Sacrament. I love Thee, my Life, my Treasure, and my All. O Mary, pray for me, and make me belong entirely to Jesus.

II.

The Saints here in this world experienced such delight in remaining before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament that days and nights appeared to them but as moments. The Countess of Feria, having become a Poor Clare, was never wearied remaining in the choir in sight of the tabernacle. Being one day asked what she was doing so long before the Blessed Sacrament, she answered with surprise: "What was I doing before the Blessed Sacrament—what was I doing? I was thanking, loving, and asking!" St. Philip Neri, at the sight of the Blessed Sacrament, exclaimed: "Behold my Love! Behold all my Love!" Ah! if Jesus Christ were our whole love, our days and nights in His presence would also appear as moments.

From this day forward, O Jesus, I hope to be able to say always of Thee, when visiting Thee on the altar: "Behold my Love! Behold all my Love!" Yes, my beloved Redeemer, I desire to love no other but Thee; I desire only Thee, Who art the only love of my soul.

Spiritual Reading

VISITING JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

St. John Regis was accustomed frequently to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Sometimes, however, finding the church closed, he satisfied his longings by remaining on his knees outside the door, exposed to the rain and

cold, that, at least at a distance, he might pay his homage to his Comforter concealed under the sacramental veils. St. Francis of Assisi used to converse concerning all his labours and undertakings with Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament. But tender, perhaps, beyond all others was the devotion of St. Wenceslaus, Duke of Bohemia, towards the Most Holy Sacrament. This holy king was so enamoured of the presence of Jesus that he not only gathered the wheat and grapes, and made the hosts and wine with his own hands, and then gave them to be used in the Holy Sacrifice, but he used, even during the winter, to go at night to visit the church in which the Blessed Sacrament was kept. These Visits enkindled in his soul such flames of divine love that the ardour imparted itself even to his body, and took from the snow on which he walked its wonted cold. It is related that the servant who accompanied him, and had to walk on the snow, suffered much from the cold. The holy king, on perceiving this, was moved to compassion, and commanded him to follow him, and to step only in his footmarks. He did so, and never afterwards felt the cold.

In the *Visits*, you will read other examples of the tender affection with which souls inflamed with the love of God longed to remain in the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament. You will find that all the Saints were enamoured of this most sweet devotion, and, indeed, it is not possible to find on earth a more precious gem, or a treasure more worthy of all our love, than Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament. Certainly, amongst all devotions, that of receiving the Sacraments alone excepted, adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament holds first place. It is the most pleasing to God and the most useful to ourselves. Do not then, O devout soul, refuse to begin this devotion: leave the conversation of men, and remain each day, from this time forward, for half, or at least a quarter of an hour, in some church in the presence of Jesus Christ under the sacramental species. *Taste and see how sweet is the Lord.* Make a trial, and by experience you will learn the great benefit you will derive from this devotion.

Be assured that the time thus spent with devotion before this most Divine Sacrament will be the most profitable to you in life, and the source of your greatest consolation in death and for eternity. And you should know that in a quarter of an hour's prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, you may gain more than in all the other spiritual exercises of the day. It is true that in every place God hears the petitions of those who pray to Him, having promised to do so. *Ask and you shall receive*—(Jo. xvi. 24). Yet *The Disciple* tells us that Jesus dispenses His graces in greatest abundance to those who visit Him in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Blessed Henry Suso also used to say that Jesus Christ hears the prayers of the faithful more graciously in the Sacrament of the Altar than elsewhere. And where, indeed, did holy souls make their most beautiful resolutions, but prostrate before the Most Holy Sacrament? Who knows but that you also may one day, in the presence of the Tabernacle, make the resolution to give yourself entirely to God? In this little book I feel myself bound, at least out of gratitude to my Jesus in the Holy Sacrament, to declare, that through means of this devotion of visiting Him, which I practised, though with so much tepidity and in so imperfect a manner, I abandoned the world, in which, unfortunately, I lived until I was six-and-twenty years of age. Fortunate indeed will you be if you can detach yourself from it at an earlier period and give yourself without reserve to that Lord Who has given Himself without reserve to you. I repeat, blessed indeed you will be, not only in eternity, but even in this life. . . Oh, how sweet a joy it is to remain with faith and tender devotion before an altar, and converse familiarly with Jesus Christ, Who is there with the express purpose of listening to and graciously hearing those who come to visit Him; to ask His pardon for the displeasure we have caused Him; to put before Him our wants, as a friend to a friend in whom he places all his confidence; to ask Him for His graces, for His love, for His Kingdom. But, above all, oh, what a paradise it is there to remain

making acts of love towards that Lord Who is in the Tabernacle burning with love for us and praying to His Eternal Father for our welfare. In truth it is love that keeps Him there thus hidden and unknown, even though He is despised by ungrateful souls. But why say more? *Taste and see.*

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XII.—THE MEANS OF AVOIDING LUKEWARMNESS AND
ATTAINING PERFECTION.

I.

There are certain pusillanimous souls, who, on being exhorted to communicate more frequently, reply: "But I am not worthy." But, my child, do you not know, that the more you refrain from Communion, the more unworthy you become? Because, deprived of Holy Communion you will have less strength, and will commit many faults. Well, then, obey your director and be guided by him: faults do not forbid Holy Communion, when they are not committed with full will; besides, among your failings the greatest is not to submit to what your spiritual father says to you.

"But in my past life I was very bad." And I reply, that you must know, that he who is weakest has most need of the physician and of medicine. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is our Physician and Medicine as well. St. Ambrose said: "I, who am always sinning, have always need of medicine." You will then say, perhaps, "But my confessor does not tell me to communicate oftener." If, then, he does not tell you to do so, ask him the permission to communicate oftener. Should he deny you, obey him; but in the meantime,

make him the request. "It would seem pride." It would be pride if you were to wish to communicate against his will, but not when you ask his consent with humility.

II.

This heavenly Bread requires to be hungered for. Jesus loves to be desired, says a devout author, *sittit sitiiri*, "He thirsts to be thirsted for." And what a thought is this: "To-day I have communicated, and to-morrow I am to communicate." Oh, how such a reflection keeps the soul attentive to avoid all defects and to do the will of God! "But I have no devotion." If you mean sensible devotion, it is not necessary, neither does God always grant it even to His most beloved souls: it is enough for you to have the devotion of a will determined to belong wholly to God, and to make progress in His Divine love. John Gerson says that he who abstains from Communion because he does not feel that devotion which he would like to feel, acts like a man who does not approach the fire because he does not feel warm.

Wednesday—Ember Day

Morning Meditation

THE GREAT GIFT OF JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

God is Omnipotent; but after He has given Himself to us in the Blessed Sacrament He has no greater gift to give us. O wonderful prodigy of Divine love!

I.

The love of Jesus was not satisfied with His shedding His Blood and laying down His life for us in the midst of ignominies and torments, in order to make known His affection for us; but, moreover, to oblige us the more to love Him, on the night before His death, He would leave us His whole Self to be our Food in the Holy Eucharist. God is omnipotent, but, having given Himself to us in this Sacrament, He has nothing more to give. The Council of Trent says that Jesus, in giving Himself to us in the Holy Communion, pours out upon us all the riches of His infinite love. *He pours out, as it were, the riches of His love towards men.*

O my dear Jesus, what more canst Thou do to make us love Thee? Oh! make us sensible of the excess of Thy love in reducing Thyself to Food in order to be united with us sinners. Thou, then, my Redeemer, hast had so much love for me as not to refuse to give me Thy whole Self frequently in the Holy Communion, and I have many times had the baseness to expel Thee from my soul! But Thou wilt not despise a contrite and humble heart. Thou didst become Man for my sake; Thou didst die for me; and Thou hast given me Thyself to be my Food; and what more remains for Thee to do to gain my love? Oh! that I might die with grief as often as I remember having despised Thy graces! I am sorry with my whole heart for having offended Thee. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness! I love Thee, O infinite Love!

II.

How honoured would that vassal esteem himself, says St. Francis of Sales, to whom his prince at table should offer a portion from his own dish, or of his own very flesh! Jesus, in the Holy Communion, gives us for our Food, not a portion from His own table, nor a part of His sacred Flesh, but His whole Body: *Take and eat—this is my body.* And at the same time that He gives us

His Body He gives us also with it, His Soul and Divinity; so that, as St. Chrysostom says, our Lord, in giving us Himself in the Holy Eucharist, gives us all that He has, and nothing more remains that He can give to us. O wonderful prodigy of love! God, Who is the Lord of all, makes Himself entirely ours!

I desire nothing but to love Thee, O my Jesus, and I fear nothing but to live without loving Thee. My beloved Jesus, do not refuse to come again into my soul. Come, for I would rather die a thousand deaths than drive Thee from me any more; and I will do all in my power to please Thee. Come, and inflame my whole soul with Thy holy love. Grant that I may forget all things else to think only of Thee, and to aspire after Thee alone, my sovereign and only Good. O Mary, my Mother, pray for me, and by thy holy prayers make me grateful for the great love of Jesus towards me.

Spiritual Reading

THE VISIT TO MARY.

And now as to the Visit to the Most Blessed Virgin, the opinion of St. Bernard is well known and commonly accepted: namely, that God dispenses no graces otherwise than through the hands of Mary: "God wills that we should receive nothing that does not pass through Mary's hands." Hence Father Suarez declares that it is now the sentiment of the universal Church, that the intercession of Mary is not only useful, but even necessary to obtain graces. And we may remark that the Church gives us strong grounds for this belief, by applying the words of the Sacred Scripture to Mary, and making her say: *In me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come over to me all ye that desire me*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 25, 26). Let all come to me; for I am the hope of all that you can desire.

Hence she adds : *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). Blessed is he who is diligent in coming every day to the door of my powerful intercession, for by finding me he will find life and eternal salvation : *He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord*—(Prov. viii. 35). Hence it is not without reason that the Church wills that we should call Mary our common hope, by saluting her with the words : “ Hail, our hope ! ”

“ Let us then,” says St. Bernard (who went so far as to style Mary “the whole ground of his hope”), “seek for graces, and seek them through Mary.” For, as St. Antoninus says, if we ask for graces without her intercession, we shall be only making an effort to fly without wings, and obtain nothing. “He who asks without her as his guide, attempts to fly without wings.”

In Father Auremma’s little book, *Affetti Scambievoli*, we read of innumerable favours granted by the Mother of God to those who practised this most profitable devotion of often visiting her in her churches or before her image.

Do you also, then, be careful to ever join to your daily visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament a visit to the most holy Virgin Mary in some church, or at least before a devout image of her in your own house. St. Andrew of Crete says, that Mary always bestows great gifts on those who offer her even the least act of homage.

Spiritual Communion during Visit.

As it is suggested in the following visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament to make a *Spiritual Communion* after each, it will be well to explain what a *Spiritual Communion* is, and the great advantages of making it. A *Spiritual Communion*, according to St. Thomas, consists in an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, and in lovingly embracing Him as if we had actually received Him.

How pleasing *Spiritual Communion*s are to God, and how many graces He bestows through their means, was manifested by Our Lord Himself to Sister Paula Maresca, the foundress of the Convent of St. Catherine of Sienna, in Naples. It is related in her Life that our Lord showed her two precious vessels, one of gold, another of silver. He then told her that in the gold vessel He preserved her *Sacramental Communion*s, and in the silver her *Spiritual Communion*s. He also told Blessed Jane of the Cross that each time she communicated spiritually she received a grace like in kind to that which she received when she really communicated. But for us it will suffice to know that the holy Council of Trent greatly praises *Spiritual Communion*, and encourages the faithful to practise it.

Hence devout souls are accustomed often to make use of this holy exercise of *Spiritual Communion*. Blessed Agatha of the Cross did so two hundred times a day. Father Peter Faber, the first companion of St. Ignatius, used to say that it was of the highest utility to make *Spiritual Communion*s, in order to receive the *Sacramental Communion* well.

All, therefore, who desire to advance in the love of Jesus Christ are exhorted to make a *Spiritual Communion* at least once in every visit that they pay to the Most Blessed Sacrament, and once at every Mass that they hear. Better still on these occasions to repeat the *Spiritual Communion*s three times; that is to say, at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. This devotion is far more profitable than some suppose, and at the same time nothing can be easier to practise. The above-named Jane of the Cross used to say that a *Spiritual Communion* can be made without any one remarking it, without being fasting, without the permission of our director, and that we can make it any time we please; an act of love does all.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XIII.—THE MEANS OF AVOIDING LUKEWARMNESS AND
ATTAINING PERFECTION.

I.

Alas, my God, how many souls, for want of applying themselves to lead a life of greater recollection and more detachment from earthly things, care not to receive Holy Communion! And this is the true cause of their not wishing to communicate frequently. They are well aware that to wish always to appear, to dress with vanity, to be fond of nice eating and drinking, of bodily comforts, of conversations and amusements, does not harmonise with frequent Communion; they know that more prayer is required, more mortification, as well internal as external, more seclusion; and on this account they are ashamed to approach the altar more frequently. Without doubt, such souls are right to refrain from frequent Communion as long as they find themselves in that unhappy state of lukewarmness; but whoever is called to a more perfect life should lay aside this lukewarmness, if he would not greatly risk his eternal salvation.

II.

It will be found likewise to contribute very much to keep fervour alive in the soul often to make a Spiritual Communion, so much recommended by the Council of Trent, which exhorts all the faithful to practise it. The Spiritual Communion, as St. Thomas says, consists in an ardent desire to receive Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament; and therefore the Saints were careful to make

it several times in the day. The method of making it is this: "My Jesus, I believe that Thou art really present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love Thee and I desire Thee; come into my soul. I embrace Thee; and I beseech Thee never to allow me to be separated from Thee again." Or more briefly, thus: "My Jesus, come to me; I desire Thee; I embrace Thee; let us remain ever united together." This Spiritual Communion may be practised several times a day: when we make our prayer, when we make our Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and especially when we assist at Mass at the moment of the priest's Communion. The Dominican Sister, Blessed Angela of the Cross, said: "If my confessor had not taught me this method of communicating spiritually several times a day, I should not have trusted myself to live."

Thursday—Whit Week

Morning Meditation

**THE GREAT LOVE JESUS HAS SHOWN US IN
GIVING US THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.**

St. Paul says that God, by becoming Man, showed the world how far His goodness and kindness towards us went. But by giving Himself to us in the Blessed Sacrament He makes us know the depths of the tenderness of His love towards us. Does it not, says St. Augustine, seem madness—Jesus Christ to say to us: *Eat my flesh; drink my blood?*

I.

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—(Jo. xiii. 1). Jesus, knowing that the time of His death was near, desired to leave us the strongest pledge of His love for us, and this was the gift of the Blessed Sacrament: *He loved them to the end*—which St. Chrysostom explains: “He loved them with extreme love.” He, therefore, loved men with the greatest love He could possibly entertain towards them by giving them His whole Self. But when was it that Jesus instituted this great Sacrament? The night before His death. *The Lord Jesus, says the Apostle, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat—this is my body*—(1 Cor. xi. 28, 24). While men were preparing to put Him to death, He was pleased to give them this last proof of His love.

O infinite love of Jesus, Thou art worthy of being loved with an infinite love! Thou, my Lord, hast loved man so much, and how is it that man loves Thee so little? What more couldst Thou do to make him love Thee? O my Jesus, Thou art most amiable and loving; make Thyself known, make Thyself loved. When shall I ever love Thee as Thou hast loved me? Discover to me more and more the greatness of Thy bounty, that I may always burn more and more with Thy love and always seek to please Thee.

II.

The marks of affection which are shown to us by our friends at the time of their death remain more deeply impressed on our hearts; and for this reason did Jesus choose to bestow Himself upon us in the Blessed Sacrament, a little before His death. Well, therefore, might St. Thomas call this Sacrament “the Sacrament of love and pledge of tenderest affection”; and St. Ber-

nard, “the love of loves”—“*amor amorum*”—because Jesus Christ in this Sacrament unites and comprises all the other marks of His love towards us. Hence St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, speaking of the day on which Jesus instituted this Sacrament, calls it “the day of love.”

O Beloved of my soul, oh! that I had always loved Thee! Alas! there was a time when I not only did not love Thee, but even despised Thy graces and Thy love. I am consoled with the sorrow I feel for having done so, and I hope for pardon through Thy promise to forgive those who repent. To Thee, my Saviour, do I direct all my affections; help me, through the merits of Thy Passion, to love Thee with my whole strength. O that I could die for Thee, as Thou hast died for me! Holy Mary, Mother of God, obtain for me the grace of loving henceforward God alone.

Spiritual Reading

CORAM SANCTISSIMO.*

Introductory Prayer to be said before each Visit.

My Lord Jesus Christ, Who for the love which Thou bearest to men, remainest night and day in this Sacrament full of compassion and of love, awaiting, calling, and welcoming all who come to visit Thee; I believe that Thou art present in the Sacrament of the Altar. I adore Thee from the abyss of my nothingness, and I thank Thee for all the graces Thou hast bestowed upon me, and in particular for having given me Thyself in this Sacrament, for having given me Thy most holy Mother Mary for my advocate, and for having called me to visit

*These Readings can be made in one's own home, but the best place of all is in some church or oratory—*Coram Sanctissimo*—before the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Thee in this church. I now salute Thy most loving Heart: and this for three ends:

- I. In thanksgiving for this great gift;
- II. To make amends to Thee for all the outrages which Thou receivest in this Sacrament from all Thine enemies;
- III. I intend by this visit to adore Thee in all the places on earth in which Thou art present in this Sacrament, and in which Thou art the least revered and the most abandoned.

My Jesus, I love Thee with my whole heart. I grieve for having hitherto so many times offended Thine infinite Goodness. I purpose by Thy grace never more to offend Thee for the time to come; and now, miserable and unworthy though I am, I consecrate myself to Thee without reserve; I give Thee and renounce my entire will, my affections, my desires, and all that I possess. From henceforward do Thou dispose of me and of all that I have as Thou pleasest. All that I ask of Thee and desire is Thy holy love, final perseverance, and the perfect accomplishment of Thy will. I recommend to Thee the souls in Purgatory; but especially those who had the greatest devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament and to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. I also recommend to Thee all poor sinners. In fine, my dear Saviour, I unite all my affections with the affections of Thy most loving Heart; and I offer them, thus united, to Thy Eternal Father, and beseech Him in Thy Name to vouchsafe, for Thy love, to accept and grant them.

(Indulgence of 300 days each time; Plenary once a month).

FIRST VISIT.

Behold the source of every good, Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, Who says, *If any man thirst let him come to me*—(Jo. vii. 37). Oh, what torrents of grace

have the Saints drawn from the fountain of the Most Blessed Sacrament! For there Jesus dispenses all the merits of His Passion, as it was foretold by the Prophet: *You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains*—(Is. xii. 3). The Countess of Feria, that illustrious disciple of the Blessed John of Avila, afterwards a Poor Clare, and surnamed the spouse of the Most Blessed Sacrament, from her long and frequent visits to it, on being asked how she employed the many hours thus passed in the presence of the Holy of Holies, replied: "I could remain there for all eternity. And is not the very Essence of God, which will be the food of the blessed, there present? Good God! Am I asked what I do in His presence? Why am I not rather asked, what is not done there? We love, we praise, we give thanks, we ask. What does a poor man do in the presence of one who is rich? What does a sick man do in the presence of his physician? What does a man do who is parched with thirst in the presence of a limpid fountain? What is the occupation of one who is starving, and is placed before a well-supplied table?"

O my most amiable, most sweet, most beloved Jesus, my Life, my Hope, my Treasure, the only Love of my soul, oh, what has it cost Thee to remain thus with us in this Sacrament! Thou hadst to die, that Thou mightest dwell amongst us on our altars; and then how many insults hast Thou not had to endure in this Sacrament, in order to aid us by Thy presence! Thy love, and the desire which Thou hast to be loved by us, have conquered all.

Come, then, O Lord, come and take possession of my heart; close its doors for ever, that henceforward no creature may enter to divide the love which is due to Thee, and which it is my ardent desire to bestow all on Thee. Do Thou alone, my dear Redeemer, rule me; do Thou alone possess my whole being; and if ever I do not obey Thee perfectly, chastise me with rigour that henceforward I may be more watchful to please Thee as Thou wilt. Grant that I may no longer seek for any

other pleasure than that of giving Thee pleasure : that all my delight may be to visit Thee often on Thy altars ; to entertain myself with Thee, and to receive Thee in Holy Communion. Let all who will seek other treasures : the only treasure that I love, the only one that I desire, is the Treasure of Thy love ; for this only will I plead at the foot of the altar. Do Thou make me forget myself, that thus I may remember only Thy goodness. Blessed Seraphim, I envy you, not for your glory, but for the love which you bear to your God and mine ; oh, do you teach me what I must do to love Him, and to please Him.

Ejac. My Jesus, I will love Thee only ; Thee only do I desire to please.

A Spiritual Communion here follows for which an Indulgence of 60 days is granted by the Church :—

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION.

My Jesus, I believe that Thou art truly present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love Thee above all things, and I desire to possess Thee within my soul. Since I am unable now to receive Thee *sacramentally*, come at least *spiritually* into my heart. I embrace Thee as already there, and unite myself wholly to Thee ; never permit me to be separated from Thee.

VISIT TO MARY.

In our Mother Mary we have another fountain which is indeed fruitful for us. She is so rich in good things and in graces, says St. Bernard, that there is no one in the world who does not participate in them : “ Of her fulness we have all received.” The Most Blessed Virgin Mary was filled by God with grace, and as such was saluted by the Angel, *Hail, full of grace!*—(Luke i. 28), not for herself alone, but also for us. St. Peter Chrysologus adds, that she received that great abyss of grace, that

she might afterwards impart it to all who were devout to her : “ The Blessed Virgin received this grace, that she might give in return salvation to all.”

Ejac. Prayer. Cause of our joy, pray for us.

Concluding Prayer.

Most holy Immaculate Virgin and my Mother Mary, to thee, who art the Mother of my Lord, and Queen of the world, the advocate, the hope, the refuge of sinners, I have recourse to-day—I, who am the most miserable of all. I render thee my most humble homage, O great Queen, and I thank thee for all the graces thou hast conferred on me until now, particularly for having delivered me from hell, which I have so often deserved. I love thee, O most amiable Lady ; and for the love which I bear thee, I promise to serve thee always, and to do all in my power to make others love thee also. I place in thee all my hopes ; I confide my salvation to thy care. Accept me for thy servant, and receive me under thy mantle, O Mother of Mercy. And since thou art so powerful with God, deliver me from all temptations, or rather obtain for me the strength to triumph over them until death. Of thee I ask a perfect love of Jesus Christ. From thee I hope to die a good death. O my Mother, for the love which thou bearest to God, I beseech thee to help me at all times, but especially at the last moment of my life. Leave me not, I beseech thee, until thou seest me safe in Heaven, blessing thee, and singing thy mercies for all eternity. Amen. So I hope. So may it be.

Indulgence of 300 days for above Prayer.

he wants? *Behold*, says the Apostle, *our God, rich unto all that call upon him*—(Rom. x. 12).

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XIV.—THE MEANS OF AVOIDING LUKEWARMNESS AND
ATTAINING PERFECTION.

I.

The fifth and most necessary means for the spiritual life, and for obtaining the love of Jesus Christ is *prayer of petition*. In the first place, I say that by this means God convinces us of the great love He bears us. What greater proof of affection can a person give to a friend than to say to him, "My friend, ask anything you like of me, and I will give it to you"? Now that is precisely what our Lord says to us: *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find*—(Luke xi. 9). Wherefore prayer is called all-powerful with God to obtain every blessing: "Prayer, though it is only one, can effect all things," as Theodoret says; whoever prays obtains from God whatever he chooses. The words of David are beautiful: *Blessed be God who hath not turned away my prayer nor his mercy from me*—(Ps. lxxv. 20). Commenting on this passage, St. Augustine says, "As long as thou seest thyself not failing in prayer, be assured that the Divine mercy will not fail thee either." And St. John Chrysostom: "We always obtain, even while we are still praying." When we pray to God, He grants us the grace we ask for, even before we have ended our petition. If, then, we are poor, let us blame only ourselves, since we are poor merely because we wish to be poor, and so we are undeserving of pity. What sympathy can there be for a beggar, who, having a very rich master, and one most desirous to provide him with everything, if he will only ask for it, nevertheless chooses still to continue in his poverty rather than ask for what

II.

Humble prayer, then, obtains all from God; but we must be persuaded at the same time, that if it be useful it is no less necessary for our salvation. It is certain that we absolutely require the Divine assistance, in order to overcome temptations; and sometimes, in certain more violent assaults, the sufficient grace which God gives to all, might possibly enable us to resist them; but on account of our inclination to evil, it will not ordinarily be sufficient in these violent temptations, and we shall then stand in need of a special grace. Whoever prays obtains this grace; but whoever prays not obtains it not, and is lost. And this is more especially the case with regard to the grace of *final perseverance*, of dying in the grace of God, which is the grace absolutely necessary for our salvation, and without which we should be lost for ever. St. Augustine says of this grace, that God only bestows it on those who pray. And this is the reason why so few are saved, because few indeed are mindful to beg of God this grace of perseverance.

become wholly his who should receive Him. Hence St. Francis of Sales says : “ In no one action can our Blessed Saviour be considered more tender or more loving than in this, in which He, as it were, annihilates Himself, and reduces Himself to Food to penetrate to the hearts of all the faithful.”

O my Jesus, this is what I desire and seek from Thee in the Holy Communion—to hear from Thee : “ We will consider ourselves as united for ever, never more to be separated.” I know that Thou wilt not separate Thyself from me if I do not separate myself from Thee. But this is my fear—lest I should ever again separate myself from Thee as I have done before. Permit it not, my beloved Redeemer. “ Suffer me not to be separated from Thee.”

II.

Because Jesus Christ ardently loved us, He was desirous of being united with us in the Holy Eucharist, that we might become the same thing with Him; thus speaks St. Chrysostom : “ He mingled Himself with us, that He might become one with us; for this belongs to ardent affection.” Thou wast desirous, O God of love, that our hearts and Thine should form but one heart, says St. Laurence Justinian. And Jesus Himself meant this when He said : *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him*—(Jo. vi. 57). He, therefore, who communicates, abides in Jesus, and Jesus abides in him; and this union is not a mere union of affections, but a true and real union. As two pieces of wax, says St. Cyril of Alexandria, are melted together, and united together, so he who communicates and Jesus Christ, Whom he receives, become one and the same thing. Let us therefore imagine, when we communicate, that Jesus Christ says to us, as He did to His beloved servant, Margaret of Ypres : “ Behold, daughter, the

Friday— Ember Day

Morning Meditation

THE UNION OF THE SOUL WITH JESUS IN
HOLY COMMUNION.

Jesus was not satisfied with uniting Himself to our human nature, He would, by means of the Most Blessed Sacrament, find a way of uniting Himself also to each one of us, so as to become wholly his who would receive Him. *He that eateth my flesh abideth in me and I in him*—(Jo. vi. 57).

I.

St. Dionysius says, that the principal effect of love is to tend to union. For this end did Jesus institute the Holy Communion,—to unite Himself entirely with our souls. He had given Himself to us as our Teacher, our Model, and Victim; it remained to Him to give Himself to us as our Food—to become one with us, as food becomes the same with the person who eats it; and this He did by instituting the Holy Sacrament of love. “ The last degree of His love,” says St. Bernardine of Sienna, “ was His giving Himself to us to be our Food; because He gave Himself to be completely united with us, as food is united with him who takes it.” Thus Jesus Christ was not satisfied with uniting Himself to our human nature, He was desirous by this Sacrament to devise a means of uniting Himself to each one of us individually, so as to

beautiful union that exists between us : love Me, and we will consider ourselves as united for ever, and will never separate."

Through the merits of Thy death, O my Jesus, let me die now rather than ever be separated again from Thee. I repeat, and give me grace ever to repeat : Suffer me not to be separated from Thee ! O God of my soul, I love Thee, I love Thee, and desire always to love Thee. I protest before Heaven and earth that I desire nothing but Thee. O my Jesus hear me ; I desire only Thee. O Mary, Mother of mercy, pray for me, and obtain for me never to separate myself from Jesus, and to love only Jesus.

Spiritual Reading

CORAM SANCTISSIMO.

SECOND VISIT.

The devout Father Nieremberg says, that bread being a food which is consumed by eating, and which keeps when preserved for use, Jesus was pleased to dwell on earth under its species, that He might thus not only be consumed by uniting Himself to the souls of His lovers, by means of the Holy Communion, but also that He might be preserved in the Tabernacle, and be present with us, and thus remind us of the love He bears us. St. Paul says : *He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant*—(Philipp. ii. 7). But what must we say when we see Him taking the form of bread? "No tongue can suffice," says St. Peter of Alcantara, "to proclaim the greatness of the love Jesus bears to souls in the state of grace. In order, therefore, that His absence might not be to them an occasion of forgetting Him, this most sweet Spouse, when He was pleased to quit

this life, left as a memorial this Most Blessed Sacrament, in which He Himself remains. He did not wish that between these souls and Himself any other pledge but Himself should remain, whereby to keep alive their remembrance of Him."

Since, then, my Jesus, Thou art enclosed in this Tabernacle to receive the supplications of miserable creatures who come to seek an audience of Thee, listen this day to the petition addressed to Thee by the most ungrateful sinner on earth. I come repentant to Thy feet, for I know the evil which I have committed in giving Thee displeasure. My first prayer and desire, then, is that Thou wilt be pleased to pardon me all the sins I have committed against Thee. Ah, my God, would that I had never offended Thee ! After this I must tell Thee my next desire. Now that I have found out Thy sovereign goodness, I have become enamoured of Thee ; I feel an ardent desire to love Thee and to please Thee ; but I have not the strength to do this unless Thou helpst me. Manifest, O great Lord, Thy supreme power and Thine immense goodness to the whole court of Heaven ; change me from a great rebel, such as I have hitherto been to Thee, into a great lover of Thee. Thou canst do it, and I know that such is Thy will ; supply all that is wanting in me, that thus I may be enabled to love Thee much—at least that I may love Thee as much as I have offended Thee. I love Thee, my Jesus ; I love Thee above all things ; I love Thee more than my life—my God, my Love, my All !

Ejac. My God and my All !

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION as above, page 86.

VISIT TO MARY.

Let us go with confidence to the throne of grace ; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid

—(Heb. iv. 16). St. Antoninus says, that Mary is this throne, from which God dispenses all graces.

O most amiable Queen, since thou hast so great a desire to help sinners, behold a great sinner who has recourse to thee; help me much, and help me without delay.

Ejac. Sole refuge of sinners, have mercy on me.

CONCLUDING PRAYER as on page 87.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XV.—THE MEANS OF AVOIDING LUKEWARMNESS AND
ATTAINING PERFECTION.

I.

The holy Fathers say, that prayer is necessary for us, not merely as a *necessity of precept* (so that divines say, that he who neglects for a month to recommend to God the affair of his salvation is not exempt from mortal sin), but also as a *necessity of means*, which is as much as to say, that whoever does not pray cannot possibly be saved. And the reason of it is, in short, because we cannot obtain eternal salvation without the help of Divine grace, and this grace Almighty God only accords to those who pray. And because temptations, and the dangers of falling into God's displeasure, continually beset us, so ought our prayers to be continual. Hence St. Thomas declares that continual prayer is necessary for a man to save himself: "Unceasing prayer is necessary to man that he may enter Heaven." And Jesus Christ Himself had already said the same thing: *We ought always to pray, and not to faint*—(Luke xviii. 1). And

afterwards the Apostle: *Pray without ceasing*—(Thess. v. 17). During the interval in which we shall cease to pray, the devil will conquer us. And though the grace of perseverance can in no wise be merited by us, as the Council of Trent teaches us, nevertheless St. Augustine says, "that in a certain sense we can merit it by prayer." The Lord wishes to dispense His grace to us, but He will be entreated first; nay more, as St. Gregory remarks, He wills to be importuned, and in a manner constrained by our prayers: "God wishes to be prayed to,—He wishes to be compelled—He wishes to be, as it were, vanquished by our importunity."

II.

Saint Mary Magdalen de Pazzi said: "When we ask graces of God, He not only hears us, but in a certain sense thanks us." Yes, because God, as the infinite Goodness, in wishing to pour out Himself upon others, has, so to speak, an infinite longing to distribute His gifts; but He wishes to be besought; hence it follows, that when He sees Himself entreated by a soul, He receives so much pleasure that in a certain sense He thanks the soul for it.

Well, then, if we wish to preserve ourselves in the grace of God till death, we must act the mendicant, and keep our lips ever open to beg for God's help, always repeating, "My Jesus, mercy! Never let me be separated from Thee! O Lord, come to my aid! My God, assist me!" This was the unceasing prayer of the ancient Fathers of the desert: "Incline unto my aid, O God! O Lord, make haste to help me! O Lord, help me, and help me soon; for if Thou delayest Thy assistance, I shall fall and perish!" And this above all must be practised in the moment of temptation; he who acts otherwise is lost.

burns there still : and He gives the same invitation now to all which He gave then to His disciples to receive Him : *Take ye and eat, this is my body*—(Matt. xxvi. 26).

My adorable Jesus, Thou canst give no greater proof of love, to teach us how much Thou lovest us. Thou hast given Thy life for us : Thou hast bequeathed Thyself to us in the Holy Sacrament, that we may nourish ourselves with Thy sacred Flesh, and Thou art most desirous that we should receive Thee. How can we be sensible of all these efforts of Thy love and not burn with love of Thee? Begone, all ye earthly affections from my heart ; it is you who hinder me from burning with love for Jesus, as He burns with love for me. And what other pledges of Thy love can I expect, O my Redeemer, than those which Thou hast already given me? Thou hast sacrificed Thy whole life for the love of me ; Thou hast embraced for my sake the most bitter and ignominious death ; Thou hast reduced Thyself for me almost to annihilation by becoming my Food in the Holy Eucharist, in order to give me Thy whole Self. Ah, Lord, grant that I may never more live ungrateful for such great goodness.

Saturday—Ember Day

Morning Meditation

THE DESIRE OF JESUS CHRIST TO BE UNITED WITH US IN HOLY COMMUNION.

Oh, with what desire does Jesus Christ pant to come into our hearts in Holy Communion ! *With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer*—(Luke xxii. 15). “This is the voice of most ardent charity”—(St. Laurence Justinian).

I.

Jesus knowing that his hour was come—(Jo. xiii. 1). This hour which Jesus called *his hour*, was the hour of that night on which He was to begin His Passion. But why did He call so dreadful an hour *his hour*? Because this was the hour for which He had sighed during His whole life ; because He had resolved to bequeath to us in this hour the Holy Communion, by which He desired to become united with us whom He loved, and for whom He was soon to shed His Blood and lay down His life. Hear how He spoke that night to His disciples : *With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you* : by which words He would signify His great wish and anxiety to unite Himself with us in the Holy Sacrament of love. *With desire have I desired*. “This,” says St. Laurence Justinian, “is the voice of most ardent charity.” Now, the same love which then burned in the Heart of Jesus

II.

To allure us to receive Him with affection and love, He promises Heaven to us : *If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever*—(Jo. vi. 52). And if we refuse to receive Him He threatens us with death : *Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood you shall not have life in you*—(Jo. vi. 54). These invitations, promises, and threats, all arise from the desire of Jesus Christ to be united with us in the Holy Communion through His love for us. Our Lord said to St. Mechtilde that the bee does not take the honey with more eagerness of delight, than He enters the souls that desire Him. Jesus because He loves us, desires that we should love Him ; and because He desires us He would have us desire Him : “God thirsts to be thirsted after,” says St. Gregory.

Happy the soul that approaches the Holy Communion with a great desire of being united to Jesus Christ.

I thank Thee, O God, for having given me time to bewail my past offences against Thee, and to love Thee during the remainder of my days. I am sorry, O my sovereign Good, for having hitherto so much despised Thy love. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness, I love Thee, O infinite Treasure. I love Thee, O infinite Love, Who art worthy to be loved with an infinite love. Help me, O Jesus, to cast out from my heart all affections which tend not to Thee, that from this day forward, I may neither desire, nor seek, nor love any other but Thee. My beloved Lord, grant that I may ever find Thee, grant that I may ever love Thee. Take Thou possession of my whole will, in order that I may never desire anything but what is pleasing to Thee. My God, my God, whom shall I love if I love not Thee, Who art all goodness! O Mary, my Mother, take me under thy protection, and obtain for me the purest love for Jesus.

Spiritual Reading

CORAM SANCTISSIMO.

THIRD VISIT.

And my delights are to be with the children of men—(Prov. viii. 31). Behold, our Jesus, Who, not satisfied with dying on earth for our love, is pleased even after His death to dwell with us in the Holy Sacrament, declaring that He finds His delights among men. “O men,” exclaims St. Teresa, “how can you offend a God Who declares that it is with you that He finds His delights?” Jesus finds His delights with us, and shall we not find ours with Jesus? And we especially who have had the honour to dwell in His palace? How

greatly do those vassals esteem themselves honoured to whom the king assigns an abode in his own residence! Behold the palace of the King! It is this house in which we dwell with Jesus Christ. Let us, then, learn to thank Him for it, and to avail ourselves of it to converse with Jesus Christ.

Behold me, then, O my Lord and God, before this altar, on which Thou dost reside night and day for my sake. Thou art the Source of every good; Thou art the Healer of every ill; Thou art the Treasure of every poor creature. Behold now at Thy feet a sinner, who is of all others the poorest and most infirm, and who asks Thy mercy; have pity upon me! Now that I see Thee in this Sacrament, come down from Heaven upon earth only to do me good, I will not be disheartened at the sight of my misery. I praise Thee, I thank Thee, I love Thee; and if Thou wilt that I should ask Thee for an alms, I will ask for this,—O listen to me: I desire never more to offend Thee and I desire that Thou shouldst give me light and grace to love Thee with all my strength. Lord I love Thee with all my soul; I love Thee with all my affections. Do Thou grant that I may thus speak with truth; and that I may speak in the same way during life and for all eternity. Most Holy Virgin Mary, my holy Patron Saints, ye Angels, and all ye Blessed Saints of Paradise, help me to love my most amiable God.

Ejac. O Good Shepherd, true Bread, Jesus, have mercy on us! Do Thou show us good things in the land of the living!

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION as above, page 86.

VISIT TO MARY.

Her bands are a healthful binding—(Ecclus. vi. 31). The devout Pelbart says that devotion to Mary is a chain of predestination. Let us beseech our sovereign

Lady to bind us always more closely by the chains of love to confidence in her protection.

Ejac. O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary!

CONCLUDING PRAYER as on page 87.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XVI.—THE MEANS OF AVOIDING LUKEWARMNESS AND
ATTAINING PERFECTION.

I.

And let us have great faith in prayer. God has promised to hear him that prays: *Ask, and you shall receive.* How can we doubt, says St. Augustine, since God has bound Himself by express promise, and cannot fail to grant us the favours we ask of Him? “By promising He has made Himself our debtor.” In recommending ourselves to God, we must have a sure confidence that God hears us, and then we shall obtain whatever we want. Behold what Jesus Christ says: *All things, whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you*—(Mark xi. 24).

“But,” some one may say, “I am a sinner, and do not deserve to be heard.” But Jesus Christ says: *Every one that asketh, receiveth*—(Luke xi. 10). Every one, be he just or be he a sinner. St. Thomas teaches us that the efficacy of prayer to obtain grace does not depend on our merits, but on the mercy of God, Who has promised to hear everyone who prays to Him.

II.

And our Redeemer, in order to remove from us all fear when we pray, said: *Amen, amen, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father anything in my name he will give it you*—(Jo. xvi. 26). As though He would say: Sinners, you have no merits of your own to obtain graces, therefore act in this manner; when you would obtain graces, ask them of My Father in My Name; that is, through My merits and through My love; and then ask as many as you choose, and they shall be granted to you. But let us mark well these words, “In my Name,” which signify (as St. Thomas explains it), “in the Name of the Saviour”; or, in other words, that the graces which we ask must be graces which regard our eternal salvation; and consequently we must remark that the Lord does not regard temporal favours; these our Lord grants when they are profitable for our eternal welfare; if they would prove otherwise, He refuses them. So that we should always ask for temporal favours on condition that they will benefit our soul. But should they be spiritual graces, then they require no condition; but with confidence, and a sure confidence, we should say: “Eternal Father, in the Name of Jesus Christ, deliver me from this temptation: grant me perseverance, grant me Thy love, grant me Heaven.” We can likewise ask these graces of Jesus Christ in His own Name; that is, by His merits, since we have His promise also to this effect: *If you shall ask me anything in my name, that I will do*—(Jo. xiv. 14). And whilst we pray to God, let us not forget to recommend ourselves at the same time to Mary, the dispenser of graces. St. Bernard says that it is Almighty God Who bestows the graces; but He bestows them through the hands of Mary: “Let us seek grace, and let us seek it through Mary; because what she seeks she finds, and cannot be refused.” If Mary prays for us, we are safe; for every petition of Mary is heard, and she can never meet with a repulse.

ness while at the same time I stay away from Thee! How can I resist my internal enemies without Thee, Who art my Strength? Had I approached Thee more frequently in the Holy Communion, I should not have been so frequently overcome by my enemies. For the future it shall not be so: *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me not be confounded forever*—(Ps. xxx. 2). No, I will no more rely on my own strength, but will place my whole confidence in Thee, my Jesus, Who will give me strength to fall no more into sin.

First Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

HOLY COMMUNION THE MEANS OF PERSEVERANCE IN DIVINE GRACE.

St. Denis says that when Jesus Christ comes to a soul in Holy Communion, He brings with Him boundless treasures of grace; and therefore after Communion, we can truly say: Now all good things come to me together with it.

I.

When Jesus comes to the soul in the Holy Communion He brings with Him every good, every grace, and especially the grace of holy perseverance. The principal effect of the Holy Sacrament of the Altar is to nourish the soul that receives it with the Bread of Life, by imparting great strength to advance towards perfection, and to resist those enemies who seek to effect its eternal ruin. Hence Jesus Christ calls Himself in this Sacrament heavenly Bread: *I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever*—(Jo. vi. 51, 52). As earthly bread maintains the life of the body, so this heavenly Bread maintains the life of the soul by enabling it to persevere in the state of God's grace. Hence the Council of Trent teaches that the Holy Communion is "a medicine which frees us from daily faults and preserves us from mortal sins."

Oh, how miserable I am O Lord, bewailing my weak-

II.

Innocent III says that Jesus delivers us by His Passion from sins committed, and by the Holy Eucharist from those which we might otherwise commit. Hence St. Bonaventure says that sinners should not stay away from Holy Communion because they have been sinners; but for this very reason should receive it more frequently, for "the more infirm a person is, the more does he stand in need of a physician."

I am weak, O my Jesus, but Thou by the Holy Communion wilt make me strong against all temptations—I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me—(Phil. iv. 13). Pardon me, O Jesus, all the injuries I have committed against Thee, for which I am sorry with my whole soul; I am resolved rather to die than willfully offend Thee any more; and I trust in Thy Passion that Thou wilt help me to persevere in Thy grace to the end of my life. *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded.* And with St. Bonaventure I will say the same to Thee, O Mary, my Mother: "In thee—that is, in thy holy intercession, O Blessed Lady, have I hoped; let me never be confounded for ever!"

Spiritual Reading

CORAM SANCTISSIMO.

FOURTH VISIT.

Her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness—(Wisd. viii. 16). Friends on earth find such pleasure in being together, that they lose entire days in each other's company; with Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, those who love Him not, get weary. After her death, St. Teresa, who was already in Heaven, said to a nun: "Those who are in Heaven and those who are on earth should be one and the same in purity and in love; we enjoying, and you suffering; and that which we do in Heaven with the Divine Essence, you should do on earth with the Most Blessed Sacrament." Behold, then, our Paradise on earth—the Most Blessed Sacrament!

O Immaculate Lamb, sacrificed for us upon the Cross, remember that I am one of those souls Thou hast redeemed by so many sufferings and by Thy Death. Grant that Thou mayest be mine and that I may never lose Thee, since Thou has given Thyself to me, and givest Thyself every day, sacrificing Thyself for my love on the altar; and grant that I may be all Thine. I give myself to Thee without reserve, that Thou mayest dispose of me as Thou pleasest. I give Thee my will; chain it with the sweet bonds of Thy love, that it may forever be the slave of Thy most holy will. I wish no longer to live for the satisfaction of my desires, but only to please Thy goodness. Destroy in me all that does not please Thee; grant me the grace never to have any other thought than to please Thee, any other desire than that which Thou desirest. I love Thee, O my dear Saviour, with my whole heart; I love Thee because Thou desirest that I

should love Thee; I love Thee because Thou art indeed worthy of my love. I grieve that I love Thee not as much as Thou deservest. I desire, Lord, to die for Thy love; accept my desire, and give me Thy love. Amen.

Ejac. O good pleasure of my God, I sacrifice myself all to Thee!

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION as above, page 86.

VISIT TO MARY.

Mary says: *I am the mother of fair love*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 24). That is to say, she is the Mother of that love which beautifies souls. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi saw the Most Blessed Virgin Mary going about dispensing a sweet liquid, which was divine love. This gift is dispensed only by Mary; from Mary let us seek it.

Ejac. My Mother, my hope, make me belong wholly to Jesus.

CONCLUDING PRAYER as on page 87.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity is not puffed up."

XVII.—HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST IS NOT VAIN OF HIS OWN WORTH, BUT HUMBLES HIMSELF, AND IS GLAD TO BE HUMBLED.

I.

A proud person is like a balloon filled with air, which seems, indeed, great; but whose greatness in reality, is
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nothing more than a little air; which, as soon as the balloon is opened is quickly dispersed. He who loves God is humble, and is not elated at seeing any worth in himself; because he knows that whatever he possesses is the gift of God, and that of himself he has only nothingness and sin; so that his knowledge of the Divine favours bestowed on him, humbles him more, for he is conscious of being so unworthy, and yet so favoured by God.

St. Teresa says, in speaking of the especial favours she received from God: "God does with me as they do with a house, which, when about to fall, they prop up with supports." When a soul receives a loving visit from God, and feels within herself an unwonted fervour of Divine love, accompanied with tears, or with a great tenderness of heart, let her beware of supposing that God so favours her in reward for some good action; but let her then humble herself the more, concluding that God caresses her in order that she may not forsake Him; otherwise, were she to make such favours the subject of vain complacency, imagining herself more privileged because she receives greater gifts from God than others, such a fault would induce God to deprive her of His favours. Two things are chiefly requisite for the stability of a house, the foundation and the roof: the foundation in us must be humility, in acknowledging ourselves good for nothing, and capable of nothing; and the roof is the Divine assistance, in which alone we ought to put all our trust.

II.

Whenever we behold ourselves unusually favoured by God, we must humble ourselves the more. When St. Teresa received any special favour, she used to strive to place before her eyes all the faults she had ever committed; and thus the Lord received her into closer union with Himself: the more a soul confesses herself undeserving of any favours, the more God enriches her with His graces. Thais, who was first a sinner and then a Saint,

humbled herself so profoundly before God, that she dared not mention His Name; so that she did not dare to say, "My God," but "My Creator, have mercy on me! *Plasmator meus, miserere mei.*" And St. Jerome writes that, in recompense for such humility, she saw a glorious throne prepared for her in Heaven. In the Life of St. Margaret of Cortona we read how, when our Lord visited her one day with greater tokens of tenderness and love, she exclaimed: "But, O Lord, have You, then, forgotten what I have been? Is it possible that You can repay all my outrages against You with such exquisite sweetness?" And God replied that when a soul loves Him and cordially repents of having offended Him, He forgets all her past infidelities; as, indeed, He formerly spoke by the mouth of Ezechieh: *But if the wicked do penance... I will not remember all his iniquities*—(Ezech. xviii. 21-22). And in proof of this, He showed her a high throne which He had prepared for her in Heaven in the midst of the Seraphim. Oh, that we could only well comprehend the value of humility! A single act of humility is worth more than all the riches of the universe.

Monday—First Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

PREPARATION AND THANKSGIVING.

The Saints derived great advantage from Holy Communion because they were most careful in preparing themselves for it. The fire immediately burns dry

wood, but not green wood, because it is not fit for burning.

I.

Cardinal Bona asks how it happens that so many souls after so many Communion make such little advancement in the ways of God? And he answers: "The fault is not in the Food, but in the dispositions of those who receive it." There is nothing wanting in the Holy Communion, but preparation is wanting on the part of those who receive it. The fire immediately burns dry wood, but not green wood, because it is not fit for burning. The Saints derived great advantage from Holy Communion because they were most careful in preparing themselves for it. There are two things which we should endeavour to acquire in preparing ourselves for Holy Communion. The first is detachment from creatures, by banishing from our hearts everything that is not of God and for God. Although the soul is in the state of grace, yet if the heart be taken up by any earthly affection, the less room will there be for Divine love. One day St. Gertrude asked our Lord what preparation He required of her for the Holy Communion; and Jesus answered: "I require no other of thee but that thou come to receive Me devoid of thyself." The second thing we should endeavour to acquire, in order to be prepared to reap great fruit from the Holy Communion, is a desire to receive Jesus Christ with a view to love Him much more for the future. Gerson says that at this banquet only those are filled who feel great hunger. Hence St. Francis of Sales writes that the principal intention of the soul in communicating should be to advance in the love of God. "He," says the Saint, "should be received for love, Who for love alone gives Himself to us." And on this account our Lord once said to St. Mechtilde: "When thou art about to communicate, desire all the love that any soul ever had for Me, and I

will receive thy love as though it were what thou wouldst have it to be."

O God of love, dost Thou so much desire to dispense Thy graces to us, and are we careless in seeking for them? How great will be our distress when we come to die, to think of this neglect, so pernicious to us! Forget, O Lord, what is past; for the future, with Thy holy assistance, I will prepare myself in a better manner, by being careful to detach my affections from everything that can hinder me from receiving all those graces Thou desirest to impart to me.

II.

Thanksgiving after Communion is also necessary. No prayers are so acceptable to God as those which we offer to Him after Communion. During this time we should employ ourselves in acts of love and petitions. The holy affections in which we then exercise ourselves have greater merit before God than those we offer to Him at other times, because they come before Him inflamed by the presence of Jesus Christ, Who has united Himself to our souls. And as to petitions, St. Teresa says that Jesus Christ after Communion remains in the soul as on a throne of grace, and says to her: *What wilt thou that I should do for thee?*—(Mark x. 51). I am come down from Heaven to bestow My graces upon thee: ask of Me what thou wilt, and as much as thou wilt, and thou shalt be heard. Oh! what treasures of grace are lost by those who offer but few prayers to God after Communion.

After Holy Communion, dear Jesus, I will endeavour, as far as I am able, to obtain Thy help to advance in Thy love. Do Thou give me grace to accomplish this. O my Jesus, how careless have I hitherto been in loving Thee! The time of life, which in Thy mercy Thou didst allot me, is the time to prepare myself for death, and to make amends for the offences I have committed against Thee. I desire to spend it all in bewailing my sins and in loving Thee. I love Thee, O Jesus, my

Love; I love Thee, my only Good; have pity on me and do not abandon me. And, O Blessed Virgin Mary, never cease to succour me by thy holy intercession.

Spiritual Reading

CORAM SANCTISSIMO.

FIFTH VISIT.

The sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself, where she may lay her young ones: thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God!—(Ps. lxxxiii. 4). The sparrow, says David, finds a dwelling in houses; turtle-doves in nests; but Thou, my King and my God, hast made Thyself a nest and found a dwelling on earth on our altars, that we might find Thee, and that Thou mightest dwell amongst us.

Lord, we cannot but say, that Thou art too much enamoured of men; Thou no longer knowest what to do to gain their love. But do Thou, my most amiable Jesus, give us the grace that we also may be passionately enamoured of Thee. It would indeed be unreasonable were we cold in our love towards a God Who loves us with such affection. Draw us to Thee by the sweet attractions of Thy love; make us understand the endearing claims which Thou hast on our love.

O infinite Majesty, O infinite Goodness, Thou lovest men so much, Thou hast done so much that Thou mightest be loved by men, how is it that amongst men there are so few who love Thee? I will no longer be as I have hitherto been, of the unhappy number of those ungrateful creatures. I am resolved to love Thee as much as I can, and to love no other than Thee. Thou deservest it, and Thou commandest me with so much earnestness to do so, I am resolved to satisfy Thee.

Grant, O God of my soul, that I may fully satisfy Thee. I entreat Thee to grant me this favour by the merits of Thy Passion, and I confidently hope for it. Bestow the goods of the earth on those who desire them; I desire and seek the great treasure of Thy love alone. I love Thee, my Jesus; I love Thee, infinite Goodness. Thou art all my riches, my whole satisfaction, my entire love.

Ejac. My Jesus, Thou hast given Thy whole self to me; I give my whole self to Thee!

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION as above, page 86.

VISIT TO MARY.

My Lady, St. Bernard calls thee “the ravisher of hearts.” He says that thou goest about stealing hearts by the charms of thy beauty and goodness. Steal also my heart and will, I beseech thee: I give them wholly to thee: offer them to God with thine own.

Ejac. Mother most amiable, pray for me!

CONCLUDING PRAYER as on page 87.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XVIII.—HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST IS NOT VAIN OF HIS OWN WORTH, BUT HUMBLES HIMSELF, AND IS GLAD TO BE HUMBLED.

I.

It was the saying of St. Teresa, “Think not that thou hast advanced far in perfection till thou considerest thyself the worst of all, and desirest to be placed below all.”

And on this maxim the Saint acted, and so have done all the Saints; St. Francis of Assisi, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, and the rest, considered themselves the greatest sinners in the world, and were surprised that the earth sheltered them, and did not rather open under their feet to swallow them up alive; and they expressed themselves to this effect with the sincerest conviction. The Blessed John of Avila, who from his earliest infancy had led a holy life, was on his death-bed; and the priest who came to attend him said many sublime things to him, taking him for what indeed he was, a great servant of God and a learned man; but Father Avila thus spoke to him: "Father, I pray you to make the recommendation of my soul, as of a criminal condemned to death; for such I am." This is the opinion which Saints entertain of themselves in life and death.

II.

We, too, must act in this manner, if we would save our souls, and keep ourselves in the grace of God till death, reposing all our confidence in God alone. The proud man relies on his own strength and falls on that account; but the humble man, by placing all his trust in God alone, stands firm and falls not, however violent and multiplied the temptations may be; for his watchword is: *I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me*—(Phil. iv. 13). The devil at one time tempts us to presumption, at another time to diffidence: whenever he suggests to us that we are in no danger of falling, then we should tremble the more; for were God but for an instant to withdraw His grace from us, we are lost. When, again, he tempts us to diffidence, then let us turn to God, and thus address Him with great confidence: *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, I shall never be confounded*—(Ps. xxx. 2). My God, in Thee I have put all my hopes; I hope never to meet with confusion, nor to be bereft of Thy grace. We ought to exercise ourselves

continually, even to the very last moment of our life, in these acts of diffidence in ourselves and confidence in God, always beseeching God to grant us humility.

Tuesday—First Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

JESUS DELIGHTS TO COME TO US IN HOLY COMMUNION.

Oh, how delighted Jesus is to be united to our souls! To excite souls to receive Him He exhorts them 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*,—speaking of this Heavenly Bread and Wine. These invitations all proceed from the ardent desire Jesus has to come to us in this Sacrament.

I.

Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved—(Cant. v. 1). The "friends," that is, beginners, who scarcely enjoy the Divine friendship, when they receive the Holy Communion, feed indeed on the Flesh of Jesus Christ, but they eat with labour; while those who are on the way to perfection eat with less difficulty. But by the "dearly beloved" are meant the

perfect, who, inebriated with holy love, live almost out of the world, forgetting all things, even themselves, and think only how they may love and please their God.

My beloved Jesus, I am not yet perfect, but Thou canst make me perfect. I am not dear to Thee, and it is my own fault, because I have been ungrateful and unfaithful; but Thou canst make me dear to Thee by inebriating me this morning with Thy love. *Thy kingdom come*—(Matt. vi. 10). Come, my beloved Lord, and take possession of my whole soul. Establish Thy kingdom in me; so that Thou alone mayest reign in me, that Thy love alone may command me, and that Thy love alone may I obey. Inebriate me, inebriate me entirely; make me forget all creatures, myself, my interests, and all, that I may love nothing but Thee, my God, my Treasure, all my Good, my All! May I sigh for Thee alone, seek Thee alone, think of Thee alone, and please Thee alone. Do this by the merits of Thy Passion. This only do I ask of Thee; for this I hope.

II.

I found him whom my soul loveth. I held him, and I will not let him go—(Cant. iii. 4). So ought every soul to say who is united with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament: Creatures, depart from me! Go out altogether from my heart! I loved you once because I was blind; now I love you not, nor can I ever love you again. I have found another Good, infinitely more delightful than you. I have found in myself my Jesus, Who has enamoured me of His beauty. To this Love I have given myself entirely. He has already accepted me, so that I am no longer my own. Creatures, farewell! I am not, nor shall I ever again be yours; but I am and shall always be Christ's. He, too, is mine, and will always be mine: *I held him and I will not let him go*. Now I have pressed Him to my heart, receiving Him in

the Holy Communion; for the future I will hold Him with my love, and will not let Him leave me again.

Permit me, sweet Saviour, to embrace Thee so closely that I may never more be separated from Thee. Behold, I press Thee to myself, my Jesus! I love Thee! I love Thee! Oh, that I could love Thee worthily! I wish that my only happiness and repose should be to love Thee and please Thee. Do Thou command all creatures to leave me, and not to disturb me. Say to them: *I adjure you, do not arouse or waken my love*—(Cant. viii. 4). Ah, if I do not wish it, creatures cannot enter in to disturb and divide me from Thee. Strengthen, then, my will; unite my miserable heart to Thy Divine Heart that it may always will what Thou wilt. Do this, Lord, by Thy merits.

Spiritual Reading

CORAM SANCTISSIMO.

SIXTH VISIT.

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also—(Luke xii. 34). Jesus Christ says that where a person esteems his treasure to be, there also he keeps his affections. Therefore the Saints, who neither esteem nor love any other treasure than Jesus Christ, centre their hearts and their love in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

My most amiable Jesus, hidden under the sacramental veils, Who for the love which Thou bearest me, remainest night and day imprisoned in this Tabernacle, draw, I beseech Thee, my whole heart to Thee, that I may think of none but Thee, that I may love and seek and hope for Thee alone. Do this by the merits of Thy Passion, through which I seek and hope for it.

Ah, my sacramental Lord and divine Lover, how

amiable and tender are the inventions of Thy love to gain the love of souls! O Eternal Word, Thou, in becoming Man, wast not satisfied with dying for us; Thou hast also given us this Sacrament as a Companion, as Food, and as a pledge of Heaven. Thou reducest Thyself so as to appear amongst us, at one time as an Infant in a stable, at another as a poor Man in a workshop, then as a Criminal on a gibbet, and now as Bread on an altar. Tell me, couldst Thou invent other means to win our love?

O infinite Goodness, when shall I really begin to correspond with such refinements of love? Lord, I will live only to love Thee alone. And of what use is life to me, if I do not spend it wholly in loving and pleasing Thee, my beloved Redeemer, Who hast poured out Thy whole life for me? And what have I to love if it is not Thee, Who art all beauty, all condescension, all goodness, all loving, all worthy of love? May I live only to love Thee! May the mere remembrance of Thy love dissolve my soul with love! May the very names of *Crib* and *Cross* and *Sacrament* inflame it with the desire to do great things for Thee, O my Jesus, Who hast indeed done and suffered such great things for me!

Ejac. Grant, O my Lord, that before I die I may do something for Thee!

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION as above, page 86.

VISIT TO MARY.

As a fair olive-tree in the plain—(Eccclus. xxiv. 19). I am, says Mary, the beautiful olive-tree from which the oil of mercy always flows. And I stand in the plain that all may see me. "Remember," let us say in the words of the prayer of St. Bernard, "O most compassionate Mary, that it has never been heard of in any age, that any one having recourse to thy protection was abandoned by thee." Most merciful Queen, such a thing was never

heard of, that any one having recourse to thy aid was abandoned; I will not be the first unfortunate creature who, having recourse to thee, was abandoned.

Ejac. O Mary, grant me the grace always to have recourse to thee!

CONCLUDING PRAYER as on page 87.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XIX.—HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST IS NOT VAIN, BUT HUMBLE HIMSELF, AND IS GLAD TO BE HUMBLED.

I.

But it is not enough, in order to be humble, to have a lowly opinion of ourselves, and to consider ourselves the miserable beings that we really are; the man who is truly humble, says Thomas à Kempis, despises himself, and wishes also to be despised by others. This is what Jesus Christ so earnestly recommends us to practise, after His example: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart—(Matt. xi. 29)*. Whoever styles himself the greatest sinner in the world, and then is angry when others despise him, plainly shows humility of tongue, but not of heart. St. Thomas Aquinas says that a person who resents being slighted may be certain that he is far distant from perfection, even though he should work miracles. The Divine Mother sent St. Ignatius Loyola from Heaven to instruct St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi in humility; and beheld the lesson which the Saint gave her: "Humility is a gladness at whatever leads us to despise ourselves." Mark well, a gladness; if the feelings are stirred to resentment at the contempt we receive, let us be glad, at least, in spirit.

II.

And how is it possible for a soul not to love contempt if she loves Jesus Christ, and beholds how her God was buffeted and spit upon, and how He suffered in His Passion! *Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others struck his face with the palms of their hands*—(Matt. xxvi. 67). For this purpose our Redeemer wishes us to keep His image exposed on our altars, not indeed representing Him in glory, but nailed to the Cross, that we might have His ignominies constantly before our eyes; a sight which made the Saints rejoice at being vilified in this world. And such was the prayer which St. John of the Cross addressed to Jesus Christ, when He appeared to him with the Cross upon His shoulders: "O Lord, let me suffer, and be despised for Thee!" My Lord, on beholding Thee so reviled for my love, I only ask of Thee to let me suffer and be despised for Thy love.

Wednesday—First Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

HOLY COMMUNION THE GREAT GIFT OF
JESUS CHRIST TO MAN.

Take ye and eat: this is my body—(Matt. xxvi. 26). Let us consider how great a Gift Jesus Christ has bestowed upon us in giving us His entire Self to be our Food in Holy Communion. St. Augustine says that

Jesus, though He is the Almighty God, could give us no more. "Omnipotent though He is, He could give no more."

I.

Consider how great a Gift Jesus Christ has bestowed upon us in giving us His entire Self to be our Food in the Holy Communion. St. Augustine says that Jesus, though He is the Almighty God, yet could give us no more: "Omnipotent though He is, He could give no more." And St. Bernardine of Sienna adds that no greater treasure can be in the heart of man than the Body of Christ: "What greater treasure can a soul desire or achieve than the most holy Body of Jesus Christ?" The Prophet Isaiah exclaims: *Make his works known among the people*—(Is. xii. 4). Publish, O men, the loving invitations of our good God! If our Redeemer had not given us this Gift, who could ever have asked it of Him? Who could ever have dared to say to Him: Lord, if Thou wilt make us know Thy love, conceal Thyself under the species of bread, and allow us to feed on Thee? This very idea would have been reckoned folly. "Would it not have been thought madness," says St. Augustine, "to say: Eat My Flesh, drink My Blood?" When Christ announced to His disciples this gift of the Most Holy Sacrament, which He intended to leave them, they could not bring themselves to believe, and many left Him saying, *How can this man give us his flesh to eat . . . This saying is hard, and who can hear it?*—(Jo. vi. 53-61). But what men could never have imagined, the great love of Jesus Christ has thought of and accomplished.

St. Bernardine says that our Lord has left us this Sacrament as a *Remembrance* of the love He showed us in His Passion: "This Sacrament is a memorial of His love." And this agrees with what St. Luke records of the words of Jesus Christ Himself: *Do this for a commemoration of me*—(Luke xxii. 19). St. Bernardine

adds that the love of Our Lord was not satisfied in sacrificing His life for us : before He died, He was constrained by this very love to give us the very greatest of all His gifts, by giving us Himself to be our Food : " In that excess of fervour, when He was ready to die for us, He was forced by exceeding love to do a greater work than He had ever yet accomplished, to give us Himself to be our Food."

O my Jesus, what has led Thee to give Thy whole Self to be our Food? After this Gift, what hast Thou left to give us to force us to love Thee? O Lord, give us light, and make us know how excessive is the love which has made Thee reduce Thyself into Food to unite Thyself with us poor sinners. That Thou thus givest Thyself wholly to us is a reason why we should give ourselves wholly to Thee. My Redeemer, how could I have offended Thee Who hast loved me, and Who didst leave nothing undone to win my love? Thou didst become Man for me, Thou didst die for me, and didst make Thyself my Food; tell me what remains for Thee to do. I love Thee, O Infinite Goodness, Infinite Love!

II.

The Abbot Gueric says that Jesus has shown in this Sacrament the last effort of His love : " He poured forth upon His friends all the power of His love." The Council of Trent expresses it still better in saying that in the Blessed Eucharist Jesus, " as it were poured forth the riches of His love towards man."

What a proof of love it would be considered, says St. Francis of Sales, if a prince, being at table, should send a poor man a portion of his own dish; and how much more if he should send him his whole dinner! But what would be thought if he should send him a portion of his own flesh? Jesus, in the Holy Communion, gives us not only part of His table, not only part of His Body, but His whole Body : *Take ye and eat: this is my body.*

And with His Body He gives us also His Soul and His Divinity. " In short," says St. John Chrysostom, " He has given Himself wholly, and for Himself He has reserved nothing." And the angelical Doctor says : " God has given us in the Holy Eucharist all that He is, and all that He has." Behold this great God, Whom the whole world cannot contain, exclaims St. Bonaventure in admiration, makes Himself our Prisoner in the Holy Sacrament : " He Whom the whole world cannot contain is our Captive!" And if our Lord gives us His whole Self in the Blessed Eucharist, how can we fear that He will ever deny us any grace we ask of Him? *How hath he not also, with him, given us all things?*—(Rom. viii. 32).

Lord, come often into my soul, inflame me wholly with Thy holy love, and make me forget all else, to think of and love none but Thee. Most holy Mary, pray for me, and by thy intercession make me worthy frequently to receive Thy Son in His ever-blessed Sacrament.

Spiritual Reading

CORAM SANCTISSIMO.

SEVENTH VISIT.

Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world—(Matt. xxviii. 20). Thus our loving Shepherd, Who has given His life for us who are His sheep, would not separate Himself from us by death. Behold me, He says, beloved sheep, I am always with you; for you I have remained on earth in this Sacrament; here you find me whenever you please, to help and console you by My presence. I will never leave you until the end of the world; as long as you are on earth. The Bridegroom, says St. Peter of Alcantara, wished to leave

His bride company, that she might not remain alone during so long an absence; and therefore He left this Sacrament in which He Himself, the best companion He could leave her, remains.

My sweetest Lord, my most amiable Saviour, I am now visiting Thee upon this altar; but Thou returnest me the visit with far other love when Thou dost enter my soul in the Holy Communion. Thou art then, not only present to me, but Thou becomest my Food; Thou unitest and givest Thy whole self to me, so that I can then say with truth: My Jesus, Thou art now all mine. Since, then, Thou givest Thyself all to me, it is reasonable that I should give myself all to Thee. I am a worm, and Thou art God. O God of love! O love of my soul! when shall I find myself all Thine, in deeds, and not in words only? Thou canst do this; by the merits of Thy Blood increase my confidence, that I may at once obtain this grace of Thee, that I may find myself all Thine, and in nothing my own. Thou graciously hearest, O Lord, the prayers of all: hear now the prayers of a soul that indeed desires really to love Thee. I desire to love Thee with all my strength; I desire to obey Thee in all that Thou wilt, without self-interest, without consolations, without reward. I wish to serve Thee through love, only to please Thee, only to content Thy Heart, which is so passionately enamoured of me. My reward will be to love Thee. O beloved Son of the Eternal Father, take possession of my liberty, of my will, of all that I possess, and of my entire self, and give me Thyself. I love Thee, I seek after Thee, I sigh after Thee; I love Thee, I desire Thee, I desire Thee!

Ejac. My Jesus, make me all Thine own.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION as above, page 86.

VISIT TO MARY.

Our own most amiable Lady, the whole Church proclaims and salutes thee as, "Our hope"! Thou, then,

who art the hope of all, be also my hope. St. Bernard called thee "the whole ground of his hope," and said: "Let him who despairs hope in thee." Thus also will I address thee: My own Mary, thou savest even those who are in despair; in thee I place all my hope.

Ejac. Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me!

CONCLUDING PRAYER as on page 87.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XX.—HE WHO LOVES JESUS CHRIST IS NOT VAIN, BUT HUMBLE HIMSELF, AND IS GLAD TO BE HUMBLED.

I.

St. Francis of Sales said, "to support injury is the touchstone of humility and of true virtue." If a person aspiring to spirituality practises prayer, frequent Communion, fasts, and mortifies himself, and yet cannot put up with an affront, or a biting word, what is it a sign of? It is a sign that he is a hollow reed, without humility and without virtue. And what indeed can a soul do that loves Jesus Christ, if she is unable to endure a slight for the love of Jesus Christ, Who has endured so much for her. Thomas à Kempis, in his golden little book of the *Imitation of Christ*, writes as follows: "Since you have such an abhorrence of being humbled, it is a sign that you are not dead to the world, have no humility, and that you do not keep God before your eyes. He that has not God before his eyes is disturbed at every syllable of censure that he hears." Thou canst not endure cuffs and blows for God—endure at least a passing word.

II.

Oh, what surprise and scandal does that person occasion, who communicates often, and then is ready to resent every little word of contempt! On the contrary, what edification does a soul give that answers contempt with words of mildness, spoken in order to conciliate the offender; or perhaps makes no reply at all, nor complains of it to others, but continues with placid looks and without showing the least sign of indignation! St. John Chrysostom says that a meek person is not only serviceable to himself but likewise to others, by the good example he sets them of meekness in bearing contempt: "The meek man is useful to himself and to others." Thomas à Kempis mentions, with regard to this subject, several things in which we should practise humility. He writes as follows: "What others say shall command an attentive hearing, and what you say shall be taken no notice of. Others shall make a request and obtain it; you shall ask for something and meet with a refusal. Others shall be magnified in the mouths of men, and on you no one shall bestow a word. Such and such an office shall be conferred on others, but you shall be passed by as unfit for anything. With such like trials the Lord is wont to prove His faithful servant, and to see how far he has learnt to overcome himself and to hold his peace. Nature, indeed, will at times not like it; but you will derive immense profit thereby, if you support all in silence."

Feast of Corpus Christi

Morning Meditation

THE LOVE OF JESUS IN GIVING US HIMSELF IN HOLY COMMUNION.

The Most Holy Sacrament is the Gift of God's pure love. Jesus had already given Himself to us in many ways; as our Companion, our Master, our Father, our Light, our Example, our Victim. "It was the last effort of love when He gave Himself to be our Food." —(St. Bernardine).

I.

Let us consider the great love Jesus has shown us in giving us Himself in the Holy Eucharist. The Most Holy Sacrament is the Gift of pure love. According to the Divine decree it was necessary that our Redeemer should die in order to save us, and should by the sacrifice of His life, satisfy the Divine justice for our sins; but what necessity was there that Jesus Christ, after dying for us, should leave us Himself to be our Food? Yet, thus His love willed. St. Laurence Justinian says His excessive charity alone led Him to institute the Most Holy Sacrament, only to make us understand the immense love He bears us; and this is precisely what St. John 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*—(Jo. xiii. 1). Knowing that the

time had come for Him to quit this world, Jesus would leave us the greatest possible proof of His love, which was this Gift of the Most Blessed Sacrament, as we are taught in these words, *He loved them unto the end*; that is, "with extreme love He loved them to the utmost," as Theophylact and St. Chrysostom explain it.

And we must observe what the Apostle mentions, that the time in which Jesus Christ was pleased to leave us this Gift was the very time of His Death: *The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye and eat; this is my body*—(1 Cor. xi. 23, 24). While men were preparing scourges and thorns, and a Cross to put Him to death, our loving Saviour wished to leave us this last proof of His love. And why did He institute this Sacrament when He was going to die, and not before? St. Bernardine says that He did so because "the last marks of love given by dying friends remain more easily in our memory, and are more dearly cherished." The Saint adds that Jesus Christ had already given Himself to us in many ways; He had made Himself our Companion, our Master, our Father, our Light, our Example, and our Victim: "It was the last effort of love when He gave Himself to be our Food; for He gave Himself to be united completely to us, as food and he who eats it are united; so that our Redeemer was not satisfied with merely uniting Himself to our human nature, but He was pleased to find in this Sacrament the means of uniting Himself to each of us in particular.

O infinite love of Jesus, worthy of infinite love! Ah! my Jesus, when shall I love Thee as Thou hast loved me? Thou couldst do nothing more to make me love Thee; and I have forsaken Thee, O infinite Good, for the sake of vile and miserable goods! Ah! enlighten me, my God, and discover to me always more and more the greatness of Thy goodness, that my whole soul may be enamoured of Thee, and that I may labour to please Thee.

II.

St. Francis of Sales says: "There is no action in which we may more perfectly see the tenderness and love of our Saviour than in this, in which He, as it were, annihilates Himself, and reduces Himself into Food, to penetrate our souls, and unite Himself to the hearts of His faithful." "So that," says St. John Chrysostom, "we unite ourselves, and are made one body and one flesh with that of the Lord, on Whom the Angels dare not fix their eyes." The same Saint adds, "What shepherd ever fed his sheep with his own blood? But why do I speak of shepherds? There are many mothers who give their children to others to be nursed; but He acts not thus, He feeds us with His own Blood." But why did He make Himself our Food? Because, says the Saint, He loved us ardently, and so desired to unite Himself to us and to become one and the same thing with us: "He mingled Himself with us that we might be one thing with Him: for this is the property of those who ardently love." Thus, then, did Jesus Christ will to perform the greatest of all miracles—*He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, he hath given food to them that fear him* (Ps. cx. 4, 5)—in order to satisfy the desire He had of remaining with us and of uniting our hearts to His own Most Sacred Heart. "Oh, how wonderful is Thy love, Lord Jesus!" exclaims St. Laurence Justinian; "Thy desire is to incorporate us so entirely with Thy own Body, that our heart and soul may be inseparably united to Thine own."

The great servant of God, Father de la Colombiere, used to say: If anything could shake my faith in the mystery of the Eucharist, I should not doubt the power, but the love which God shows us in His Sacrament. If you ask me how bread becomes the Body of Jesus—how Jesus is to be found in many places—I reply, God can do all things. But if you ask me how God can love man to such an excess as to become his Food,—I can only answer that I do not understand it, and that the love of Jesus cannot be comprehended.

But, O Lord, it seems that such an excessive affection as to reduce Thyself to Food is not becoming Thy majesty. St. Bernard answers that love makes the lover forget his own dignity; and St. Chrysostom answers similarly, that love does not seek what is suitable when it wishes to make itself known to the beloved: "Love neglects reason; and goes where it is led, not where it ought." The angelical St. Thomas was, then, right in calling this the Sacrament of Love, and the Pledge of Love; and St. Bernard, in calling it "the Love of loves." So was St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi in calling Maundy Thursday, on which day this Sacrament was instituted, "the day of love."

I love Thee and I thank Thee, O my Jesus, my Love, my All; and I wish to unite myself frequently to Thee in this Sacrament, in order to detach myself from all things, and to love Thee alone, Who art my Life. Through the merits of Thy Passion, assist me, O my Redeemer! O Mother of Jesus, and my Mother, do thou, too, assist me; beg of Jesus to inflame my whole heart with His holy love.

Spiritual Reading

CORAM SANCTISSIMO.

EIGHTH VISIT.

To every soul that visits Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, He addresses the words He said to the Sacred Spouse: *Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come*—(Cant. ii. 10). Thou, O soul, that visitest Me, arise from thy miseries; I am here to enrich thee with graces. *Make haste*, approach, come near Me; fear not My majesty, which has humbled itself in this Sacrament in order to take away thy fear, and to give thee confidence. *My beloved*, thou art no longer My enemy, but My friend, since thou lovest Me and I

love thee. *My beautiful one*, My grace has made thee fair. *And come*, draw near and cast thyself into My arms, and ask Me with the greatest confidence whatever thou wilt.

St. Teresa says that this great King of Glory has disguised Himself in this Sacrament under the species of bread, and that He has concealed His majesty to encourage us to approach His divine Heart with greater confidence and affection; let us unite ourselves to Him, and let us ask Him for graces.

O Eternal Word made Man, and present for my sake in this Sacrament, what joy should be mine now that I am in Thy presence, Who art my God, infinite Majesty and infinite Goodness, and Who hast so tender an affection for my soul! Ye souls who love God, wherever you may be, either in Heaven or on earth, love Him for me also. Mary, my Mother, help me to love Him. And Thou, most loving Lord, make Thyself the object of all my love. Make Thyself the Lord of my entire will; possess my entire self. I consecrate my whole mind to Thee, that it may always be occupied with the thought of Thy goodness; I also consecrate my body to Thee, that it may help me to please Thee; I consecrate my whole soul to Thee, that it may be all Thine. Would, O Beloved of my soul, that all men could know the tenderness of the love Thou bearest them, that all might live to honour Thee and to please Thee, as Thou desirest and deservest. Grant that, at least, I may always live enamoured of Thine infinite beauty. From this day forward my desire is to do all that I can to be pleasing to Thee. I now resolve to abandon everything, be it what it may, as soon as I perceive that it displeases Thee, however much it may cost me, even should it be necessary for this purpose to lose all, or even to lay down my life. Fortunate indeed shall I be, if I lose all to gain Thee, my God, my Treasure, my Love, my All!

Ejac. Jesus, my love, take all that I have; take full possession of me.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION as above, page 86.

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VISIT TO MARY.

Whoever is a little one, let him come to me—(Prov. ix. 4). Mary invites all children who need a mother to have recourse to her, as to the most loving of all mothers. The devout Nieremberg says that the love of all mothers is but a shadow in comparison with the love which Mary bears to each one of us. My Mother, Mother of my soul, thou who lovest me and desirest my salvation more than any other after God—O Mother, show thyself a Mother! *Ejac.* My Mother, grant that I may always remember thee!

CONCLUDING PRAYER as on page 87.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XXI.—HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST IS NOT VAIN, BUT HUMBLE HIMSELF, AND IS GLAD TO BE HUMBLED.

I.

It was a saying of St. Jane Frances de Chantal that “a person who is truly humble takes occasion from receiving some humiliation to humble himself the more.” Yes, for he who is truly humble never supposes himself humbled as much as he deserves. Those who behave in this manner are styled *blessed* by Jesus Christ. They are not called blessed who are esteemed by the world, who are honoured and praised as noble, as learned, as powerful; but they who are spoken ill of by the world, who are persecuted and calumniated; for it is for such that a glorious reward is prepared in Heaven, if they only bear all with patience: *Blessed are you when they*

shall revile you and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly for my sake: be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven—(Matt. v. 11, 12).

O Incarnate Word, I entreat Thee, by the merits of Thy holy humility, which led Thee to embrace so many ignominies and injuries for our love, deliver me from all pride, and grant me a share of Thy humility. And what right have I, O Jesus, to complain of any affront whatever that may be offered me, after having so often deserved hell? O my Jesus, by the merit of all the scorn and affronts endured for me in Thy Passion, grant me the grace to live and die humbled on this earth, as Thou didst live and die humbled for my sake. For Thy love I would willingly be despised and forsaken by all the world; but without Thee I can do nothing. I love Thee, O my sovereign Good; I love Thee, O Beloved of my soul!

II.

The grand occasion for practising humility is when we receive correction for some fault from superiors or from others. Some people resemble the hedgehog; they seem all calmness and meekness as long as they are not touched; but no sooner does a superior or a friend touch them, by an observation on something which they have done imperfectly, than they forthwith become all thorns and answer warmly, that so and so is not true, or that they were right in doing so, or that such a correction is quite uncalled for: in a word, to rebuke them is to become their enemy; they behave like persons who rave at the surgeon for paining them in the cure of their wounds.

“*Medicanti irascitur*—they are angry with their physician,” writes St. Bernard. “When the virtuous and humble man is corrected for a fault,” says St. John Chrysostom, “he grieves for having committed it; the proud man on the other hand, on receiving correction, grieves also; but he grieves that his fault is

