

MEDITATIONS & READINGS

ST. ALPHONSUS

VOLUME III – PART II

AFTER PENTECOST

V TO XI SUNDAY

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 II.

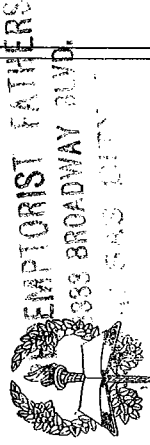
FOREWORD

BY

HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM

Edited by

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



B. HERDER BOOK CO.
15 & 17 SOUTH BROADWAY, ST. LOUIS, MO.

THE TALBOT PRESS LIMITED
DUBLIN AND CORK

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

VISITS TO THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT and TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, with Prayers for Mass, Preparation for Communion, Thanksgiving, etc. By ST. ALPHONSUS.

PRAYER. By St. ALPHONSUS. Jubilee Edition.

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL SUCCOUR AND IRELAND. (Áit maísh-
roean Sioit-Cabhrac i' Éire). S. uá C., O'Áit-
Éire.

MEDITATIONS & READINGS
FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

VOLUME III.—PART II.
AFTER PENTECOST
(V. TO XI, SUNDAY)

EX LIBRIS C. S. S. R.
KANSAS CITY, MO.

Permissu Superioris:

PATRITII MURRAY, C.S.S.R.

Superioris Generalis et Rectoris Majoris.

Romæ,
die 26 Aprilis, 1929.

Imprimi preceps:

JOANNES B. O'CONNELL,
Censor Theol. Deput.

Imprimi preceps:

✠ EDUARDUS,
*Archiepiscopus Dublinensis
Hiberniæ Primas*

Dublino,
die 8 Julii, 1929.

Made in Ireland at THE TALBOT PRESS, Dublin

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

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

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

✠ T. P. GILMARTIN,
Archbishop of Tuam.

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

vi.

LETTER FROM HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL LOGUE
TO THE EDITOR.

ARA COELL,
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

vii.

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, 1923.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

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

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

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

ix.

(D744)

A2

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL O'DONNELL wrote :

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

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL O'DONNELL,
Archbishop of Armagh.

Armagh, 20th February, 1926.
viii.

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

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

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

Your devoted servant and confrère,

PATRICK MURRAY, C.S.S.R.,

Sup. Gen. and Rector Major.

REV. J. B. COYLE, C.S.S.R.,

St. JOSEPH'S,

DUNDALK.

x.

THE EDITOR'S FOREWORD

THE Editor has aimed at making each of the Parts of this Series of MEDITATIONS AND READINGS from St. Alphonsus as complete as possible. It has also been his aim and desire to make each a volume that would do good service at the time of a Spiritual Retreat.

In this particular Part of the Series quite a large number of Meditations, which St. Alphonsus himself intended specially for those making a Retreat, are included, and besides these Meditations, a short, but very precious treatise of the Saint on *Closed Retreats* has been inserted as Spiritual Reading. After reading the Saint's pages one would wish to proclaim him the Apostle of the *Closed Retreats* that are having in many countries such excellent results of late years.

We cannot do better than quote here what St. Alphonsus says in another place about the value of Retreats made in private. He writes : "There can be no doubt that Retreats made in common, in which the meditations and lectures are given by a priest, are very profitable; but for all who desire to advance in Divine love, one great means is to perform the same Spiritual Exercises in a private Retreat. It is in total solitude that God speaks most efficaciously to the souls of His beloved ones, and it is impossible for a Christian to make such Retreats and not come forth from each a different man. In order the better to enjoy God, Who in solitude

xi.

communicates Himself more familiarly to those who seek Him, the Saints retired into caves and deserts. St. Bernard says he learned more about Divine things amid the beeches and the oaks of the forest than he ever learned from masters or from books. You can make the same solitude for yourself even in your own house. Strive to avail of it for a Retreat of at least eight days.

“But others, you will say, do not make such Retreats. Well, be it so; what then? If others do not make Retreats, do you at least make them, and your good example will win over others to do the same. Even if it be looked upon as singular, such singularities are pleasing to God. No one, as St. Bernard says, can become perfect if he be not singular in the practice of virtue and in availing himself of the means of salvation.”

With these simple, beautiful lines from St. Alphonsus, we introduce this new volume of **MEDITATIONS AND READINGS** to our Catholic people, only asking from them a remembrance in their prayers.

—THE EDITOR.

*Clonard Monastery, Belfast,
Feast of Corpus Christi,
May 30, 1929.*

xii.

VOLUME III.—PART II.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—	
Salvation is our only business in this world	1
I.—The advantage of a Retreat made in solitude and silence	3
<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
“ <i>Charity beareth all things.</i> ”	
I.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt	6
MONDAY—	
Loss of the soul, an irreparable evil	9
II.—The advantage of a Retreat made in solitude and silence	11
<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
“ <i>Charity beareth all things.</i> ”	
II.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt	13
TUESDAY—	
We must before all things secure the salvation of our souls	15
III.—The advantage of a Retreat made in solitude and silence	17
<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
“ <i>Charity beareth all things.</i> ”	
III.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt	19

CONTENTS		XV. PAGE
SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—		
Our journey into Eternity. We are only Pilgrims on this earth ...		46
Prayer, the Great Means of Salvation		48
<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>		
“ <i>Charity beareth all things.</i> ”		
VIII.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt ...		51
MONDAY—		
Our journey into Eternity. The folly of those who do not consider it ...		53
Prayer, its Necessity.		
I.—It is a means necessary for salvation ...		55
<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>		
“ <i>Charity believeth all things.</i> ”		
IX.—He that loves Jesus Christ believes all His words ...		59
TUESDAY—		
Our journey into Eternity.—Let us profit by the time that is given us		61
Prayer, its Necessity.		
II.—Without Prayer it is impossible to resist temptations, and to keep the commandments ...		63
<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>		
“ <i>Charity believeth all things.</i> ”		
X.—He that loves Jesus Christ believes all His words ...		68
WEDNESDAY—		
Mortal sin—its malice ...		69
Prayer, its Necessity.		
III.—On invoking the Saints, and on praying to the Souls in Purgatory ...		72
WEDNESDAY—		
The vanity of the world.—The goods of this world are false goods ...		20
IV.—The advantage of a Retreat made in solitude and silence ...		22
<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>		
“ <i>Charity beareth all things.</i> ”		
IV.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt ...		24
THURSDAY—		
The vanity of the world.—The goods of this world pass quickly ...		26
V.—The advantage of a Retreat made in solitude and silence ...		28
<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>		
“ <i>Charity beareth all things.</i> ”		
V.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt ...		30
FRIDAY—		
The vanity of the world.—Death shows us the vanity of the world ...		32
VI.—The advantage of a Retreat made in solitude and silence ...		34
<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>		
“ <i>Charity beareth all things.</i> ”		
VI.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt ...		36
SATURDAY—		
The Mercy of the Blessed Virgin Mary		38
VII.—The advantage of a Retreat made in solitude and silence ...		40
<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>		
“ <i>Charity beareth all things.</i> ”		
VII.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt ...		43

XVI.	CONTENTS	PAGE
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
	“ <i>Charity believeth all things.</i> ”	
	XI.—He that loves Jesus Christ believes all His words ...	76
THURSDAY—	Abuse of Divine Mercy ...	78
	Prayer, its Necessity.	
	IV.—On invoking the Saints, and on praying to the Souls in Purgatory and helping them by our prayers	80
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
	“ <i>Charity hopeth all things.</i> ”	
	XII.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him ...	84
FRIDAY—	Venial Sin ...	85
	Prayer, its Necessity	
	V.—The Intercession of the Blessed Virgin ...	88
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
	“ <i>Charity hopeth all things.</i> ”	
	XIII.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him ...	92
SATURDAY—	The Mercy of the Blessed Virgin towards sinners who invoke her ...	93
	Prayer, its Power.	
	I.—Its power and excellence with God ...	95
	II.—Power of Prayer against temptation ...	97
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
	“ <i>Charity hopeth all things.</i> ”	
	XIV.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him ...	100

XVII.	CONTENTS	PAGE
	SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—	
	Death—The worlding at the approach of Death ...	101
	Prayer, its Power.	
	III.—God is always ready to hear our prayer.	
	IV.—The power of prayer to obtain great things for us ...	105
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
	“ <i>Charity hopeth all things.</i> ”	
	XV.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him ...	110
MONDAY—	Death, the Final Preparations ...	111
	Prayer, Conditions of Prayer.	
	I.—That the Prayer be offered for one's self or for things necessary for Salvation ...	114
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
	“ <i>Charity hopeth all things.</i> ”	
	XVI.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him ...	119
TUESDAY—	Death, the last agony ...	121
	Prayer, Conditions of Prayer.	
	II.—That we pray piously ...	123
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
	“ <i>Charity hopeth all things.</i> ”	
	XVII.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him ...	128
WEDNESDAY—	Death—The death of the Just ...	130
	Prayer, Conditions of Prayer.	
	III.—Confidence, its excellence and necessity ...	132
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
	“ <i>Charity hopeth all things.</i> ”	
	XVIII.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him ...	135

XVIII.	CONTENTS	PAGE
THURSDAY—	The Particular Judgment	137
	Prayer, Conditions of Prayer. IV.—Confidence—the foundation of one's confidence	139
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i> "Charity hopeth all things." XIX.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him ...	143
FRIDAY—	The Amiable Heart of Jesus	145
	Prayer, Conditions of Prayer. V.—The Prayer of Sinners	148
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i> "Charity endureth all things." XX.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations	153
SATURDAY—	Mary is the hope of sinners	155
	Prayer, Conditions of Prayer. VI.—Perseverance	157
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i> "Charity endureth all things." XXI.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations	164
EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—		
	Our Eternal Salvation depends upon ourselves	166
	Prayer, Preliminary Proposition.—(a) God wishes all men to be saved... ..	168
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i> "Charity endureth all things." XXII.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations	177
XIX.		
CONTENTS		
MONDAY—	The General Judgment	180
	Prayer. (b) Therefore Christ died to save all men	182
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i> "Charity endureth all things." XXIII.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations	189
TUESDAY—	Remorse of Christians in Hell	191
	Prayer. Second Preliminary Proposition—God gives to all men the graces necessary for salvation whereby one may be saved that corresponds with them ...	193
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i> "Charity endureth all things." XXIV.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations	199
WEDNESDAY—	Christians in Hell know they have been given all the graces necessary for salvation	201
	Prayer. God gives the grace of Salvation even to obstinate sinners	204
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i> "Charity endureth all things." XXV.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations	210
THURSDAY—	Our ingratitude towards Jesus Christ Prayer. God gives to all men the grace to pray. I.—The famous Theologians who teach this doctrine	213 215

XXI.	CONTENTS	PAGE
	"Patience hath a perfect work" ...	256
	The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus ...	258
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
	"Charity endureth all things."	
	XXX.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations ...	261
	"Patience hath a perfect work" ...	263
	The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus ...	265
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
	"Charity endureth all things."	
	XXXI.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations ...	269
	"Patience hath a perfect work" ...	272
	The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus ...	274
	<i>Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ</i> ...	276
	"Patience hath a perfect work" ...	278
	The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus ...	280
	<i>Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ</i> ...	283
	"Patience hath a Perfect Work" ...	285
	The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus ...	287
	<i>Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ</i> ...	291
	Mary is the Hope of all Sinners ...	292
	The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus ...	295
	<i>Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ</i> ...	299

XX.	CONTENTS	PAGE
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
	"Charity endureth all things."	
	XXVI.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations ...	221
	The love of Jesus for us demands our love ...	223
	Prayer.	
	God gives to all men the grace to pray.	
	II.—further proof ...	225
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
	"Charity endureth all things."	
	XXVII.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations ...	233
	Mary is the hope of all sinners ...	236
	Prayer.	
	God gives to all the grace to pray.	
	III.—Theological reasons that justify this doctrine ...	238
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
	"Charity endureth all things."	
	XXVIII.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations ...	246
	NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—	
	The desire Jesus had to suffer for us	248
	Prayer.	
	Conclusion ...	250
	<i>The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.</i>	
	"Charity endureth all things."	
	XXIX.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations ...	254

	PAGE
TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—	
“Patience hath a perfect work”	301
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus	303
<i>Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ</i>	306
MONDAY—	
“Patience hath a perfect work”	308
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus	312
<i>Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ</i>	315
TUESDAY—	
Doing God’s Will your sanctification	318
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus	320
<i>Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ</i>	324
WEDNESDAY—	
Doing God’s Will your sanctification	326
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus	328
<i>Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ</i>	331
THURSDAY—	
Doing God’s Will your sanctification	334
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus	336
<i>Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ</i>	339
FRIDAY—	
Doing God’s Will, your sanctification	342
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus	344
<i>Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ</i>	349
SATURDAY—	
Mary is the hope of all sinners	351
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus	354
<i>Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ</i>	360

MEDITATIONS AND READINGS

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

SALVATION IS OUR ONLY BUSINESS IN THIS WORLD.

One thing is necessary (Luke x. 42). It is not necessary we should be rich, or honoured, or in the enjoyment of good health, but it is necessary we should be saved. For this end alone has God placed us in this world, and woe to us if we do not attain it!

I.

Of all our affairs there is none more important than that of our eternal salvation, on which depends our happiness or misery for eternity.

One thing is necessary. It is not necessary that we should be rich, honoured, or in the enjoyment of good health, but it is necessary that we should be saved. For this end alone has God placed us in the world; and woe to us if we do not attain it!

St. Francis Xavier said that the only good to be obtained in this world is salvation; and the only evil to be dreaded, damnation. What matter if we are poor, or despised, or infirm? If we are saved we shall be happy forever. On the contrary, what does it avail to be great, or to be monarchs? If we are lost, we shall be miserable for all eternity.

O God, what will become of me? I may be saved, and I may also be lost! And if I may be lost, why do I not resolve to adhere more closely to Thee?

My Jesus, have pity on me. I will amend my life.

Give me Thy assistance. Thou hast died to save me, and shall I, notwithstanding, forfeit my salvation?

II.

Have we already done enough to secure salvation? Are we already secure of not falling into hell?

What exchange shall a man give for his soul?—(Matt. xvi. 26). If he lose his soul, what will compensate him for his loss?

What have not the Saints done to secure their salvation? How many kings and queens have renounced their kingdoms and shut themselves up in cloisters! How many young men have left their country, and have gone to live in deserts! How many young virgins have renounced marriage with the great ones of the world, to go and give their lives for Jesus Christ! And what are we doing?

O my God, how much has Jesus Christ done for our salvation! He spent thirty-three years in toil and labour; He gave His Blood and His Life; and shall we, through our own fault, be lost?

O Lord, I give Thee thanks for not having called me out of the world when I had forfeited Thy grace. Had I died then, what would have become of me for all eternity?

God desires that all should be saved: *He will have all men to be saved.*—(1 Tim. ii. 4). If we are lost, it will be entirely our own fault. And this will be our greatest torment in hell.

St. Teresa says that even the loss of a trifle, of an ornament, of a ring, when it has happened through our own carelessness, occasions us the greatest uneasiness. What a torment, then, will it be to the damned to have wilfully lost all—their souls, Heaven, and God!

Alas! death approaches; and what have I done for life eternal?

O my God, for how many years have I deserved to dwell in hell, where I could not repent, nor love Thee! Now that I can repent and love Thee, I will repent and I will love Thee.

Spiritual Reading

I.—THE ADVANTAGE OF A RETREAT
MADE IN SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.*

I have received your last letter in which you tell me you are still undecided as to the state of life you should choose, and that having communicated to your Pastor the advice I gave you—namely, to go for that purpose to perform the Spiritual Exercises in the house your father owns in the country—the said Pastor answered you it was not necessary to go there to torture your brains for eight days in solitude, but that it was enough for you to attend the Retreat he would soon have for the people in his own church. Now, as on this point of making the Exercises you again ask my advice, it is necessary I should answer you more at length, and show you how much greater the fruit of the Spiritual Exercises is when they are performed in silence, in some retired place, than in public, when one is obliged during the time to live in one's own house and converse with relatives and friends: and the more so in your case, for, as you write to me, you have in your own home no quiet room to which you can retire.

Besides, I am very much in favour of a Retreat performed in solitude, closed away from the world, as I know it is to such a Retreat I owe my own conversion and my resolution to give up the world. I will later suggest to you the means and precautions to be taken during the Spiritual Exercises in order to reap from them the fruit you desire. I beg of you, when you have read this letter yourself, to give it to your Rev. Parish Priest that he may read it also.

Let us, then, speak first of the great benefit of the Spiritual Exercises when performed in solitude, where one converses with God alone, and let us see the reason for this.

* This little treatise was written by St. Alphonsus in the form of a letter to a young man who consulted him as to the state of life he should choose.—Ed.

The truths of eternal life, such as the great affair of our salvation, the value of the time God gives us that we may amass merits for a happy Eternity, the obligations under which we are to love God for His infinite goodness and the immense love He has for us,—these and similar things are not seen with the eyes of the flesh, but only with the eyes of the mind. It is, on the contrary, certain that, unless our understanding represents to the will the value of a good or the greatness of an evil, we shall never embrace that good nor reject that evil. And this is the ruin of those who are attached to this world. They live in darkness, and not seeing the greatness of eternal good and eternal evil, and allured by the senses, they give themselves up to forbidden pleasure and thus miserably perish.

Wherefore the Holy Ghost admonishes us that in order to avoid sin we must keep before our eyes the last Things which are to come upon us; that is, Death, with which all the goods of this earth will come to an end for us, and the Divine Judgment, in which we shall have to give to God an account of our whole life. *Remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin*—(Eccles. vii. 40). And in another place God says: *Oh, that they would be wise and would understand and would provide for their last end*—(Deut. xxxii. 29). By which words He wishes us to understand that if men would consider the things of the next life, they would all certainly take care to sanctify themselves, and would not expose themselves to the danger of an unhappy life in Eternity. But they shut their eyes to the light and thus, remaining blind, precipitate themselves into an abyss of evil. This is why the Saints always prayed the Lord to give them light. *Enlighten my eyes, that I never sleep in death*—(Ps. xii. 4). *May God cause the light of his countenance to shine upon us*—(Ps. lxxvi. 2). *Make the way known to me wherein I should walk*—(Ps. cxlii. 8). *Give me understanding and I will learn thy commandments* (Ps. cxviii. 78).

Now in order to obtain this Divine light we must come close to God. *Come ye to him and be enlightened*

—(Ps. xxxiii. 6). For, as St. Augustine tells us, that as we cannot see the sun without the light of the sun itself, so we cannot see the light of God but by the light of God Himself. This light is obtained in the Spiritual Exercises; by them we come close to God, and God enlightens us with His light. The Spiritual Exercises mean nothing else than that we retire for a time from intercourse with the world, and go to converse with God alone, where God speaks to us by His inspirations, and we speak to God in our meditations by acts of love, by repenting of the sins by which we have displeased Him, by offering ourselves to serve Him for the future with all our heart, and by beseeching Him to make known to us His will, and give us strength to accomplish it.

Holy Job says: *Now I should have rest in my sleep with kings and consuls of the earth who build themselves solitudes*—(Job iii. 13). Who are these kings that build themselves solitudes? They are, as St. Gregory says, those who rise above this world, and withdraw from its tumults to render themselves fit to talk alone with God. “They build solitudes, that is, they separate themselves as far as possible from the tumult of the world, in order to be alone and to become fit to speak with God.”

One day as St. Arsenius was reflecting on the means that he should take to become a saint, God caused him to hear these words: *Fuge! Tace! Quiesce!* “Fly! Be silent! And rest!” Fly from the world; be silent; cease to talk with men, and speak only with Me, and thus rest in peace and solitude. In conformity with this, St. Anselm wrote to one worried by many worldly occupations, who complained that he had not a moment of peace, and gave the following advice: “Leave your occupations for a while; hide yourself from your tumultuous thoughts; apply yourself for a time to contemplate God and rest in Him: Say to God: Now teach my heart where and how I may seek Thee; where and how I may find Thee.” Words that are applicable, each and all, to yourself. Fly, says he, for a short time from those earthly occupations which render you so unquiet, and rest in solitude with God. Say to Him: O Lord, show me where and

how I may find Thee, that I may speak alone with Thee, and at the same time hear Thy words.

God speaks indeed to those who seek Him, but He does not speak in the midst of the tumult of the world. The Lord is not in the commotion of the earthquake, as was said to Elias when God called him to solitude. The voice of God, as it is said in the same place, is as the breath of a gentle air, which is scarcely heard, and then not by the ear of the body, but by that of the heart, without noise and in a sweet retreat. This is exactly what the Lord says through Osee: *I will lead her into solitude, and I will speak to her heart*—(ii. 14). When the Lord wishes to draw a soul to Himself, He leads it into solitude, far from the embarrassment of the world and intercourse with men, and there speaks to it in words of fire. The word of God is said to be of fire, because it melts a soul, as the sacred Spouse says: *My soul melted when he (my beloved) spoke*—(Cant. v. 6). It prepares the soul to submit readily to the direction of God, and to embrace the manner of life which God wishes. The word of God is so exceedingly efficacious that at the very time it is heard it operates in the soul all that God requires.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

“*Charity beareth all things.*”

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY, AND CONTEMPT.

I.

Father Balthazar Alvarez said that a Christian must not imagine himself to have made any progress in perfection until he has succeeded in penetrating his heart with a lasting sense of the sorrows, poverty, and ignominies

of Jesus Christ, so as to be able to support with loving patience every sorrow, privation, and contempt, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

In the first place, let us speak of bodily infirmities, which, when borne with patience, merit for us a beautiful crown.

St. Vincent de Paul said: “Did we but know how precious a treasure is contained in infirmities, we would accept them with joy as the greatest of all possible blessings.” Hence the Saint himself, though constantly afflicted with ailments that often left him no rest day or night, bore them with so much peace and serenity of countenance that no one could guess that anything ailed him at all. Oh, how edifying to see a sick person bear his illness with a peaceful countenance, as did St. Francis de Sales! When he was ill, he simply made known his complaint to the physician, obeyed him exactly by taking the prescribed medicines, however nauseous; and for the rest, he remained at peace, never uttering a single complaint in all his sufferings. What a contrast to this is the conduct of those who do nothing but complain even for the most trifling indisposition, and who would like to have around them all their relatives and friends in order to have their sympathy! Far different was the instruction of St. Teresa to her nuns: “My sisters, learn to suffer something for the love of Jesus Christ, without letting all the world know of it.” One Good Friday Jesus Christ favoured the Venerable Father Louis da Ponte with so much bodily suffering that no part of him was exempt from its particular pain; he mentioned his severe sufferings to a friend, but he was afterwards so sorry at having done so that he made a vow never again to reveal to anybody whatever he might afterwards have to suffer. I say “he was favoured”; for, to the Saints, the illnesses and pains which God sends them are real favours.

II.

One day as St. Francis of Assisi lay on his bed in excruciating torments, a companion said to him:

“Father, beg of God to ease your pains, and not to lay so heavy a hand upon you.” On hearing this the Saint instantly leaped from his bed, and going down on his knees, thanked God for his sufferings; then, turning to his companion he said: “Listen; did I not know that you so spoke from simplicity, I would refuse ever to see you again.”

Some one who is sick will say it is not so much the infirmity itself that afflicts me as that it prevents me from going to church to perform my devotions, to communicate, and to hear Holy Mass; I cannot go to choir to recite the Divine Office with my brethren; I cannot celebrate Mass; I cannot pray; for my head is aching with pain, and light almost to fainting. But tell me now, if you please, why do you wish to go to church or to choir? Why would you communicate and say or hear Holy Mass? Is it to please God? But it is not now the pleasure of God that you say Office; that you communicate, or hear Mass; but that you remain patiently on this bed, and support the pains of this infirmity. But you are not pleased with my speaking thus; then you are not seeking to do what is pleasing to God, but what is pleasing to yourself. The Blessed John of Avila wrote as follows to a priest who so complained to him: “My friend, busy not yourself with what you would do if you were well, but be content to remain ill as long as God thinks fit. If you seek the will of God, what matters it to you whether you be well or ill?”

Monday—Sixth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

LOSS OF THE SOUL, AN IRREPARABLE EVIL.

How long shall we delay? Until we have to weep with the damned, saying: *Ergo erravimus!* *We therefore have erred!*—(Wis. v. 6), and there is now no longer, or ever shall be, any remedy for us? For every other misfortune in this world there is some remedy, but for the loss of the soul, there is none.

I.

And how long shall we delay? Until we have to weep with the damned, saying: *Ergo erravimus!* *We therefore have erred!*—and there is now no longer, or ever shall be, any remedy for us?

For every other misfortune in this world there is some remedy, but for the loss of the soul there is none.

What pains and trouble men take to obtain wealth, dignities, pleasures! But what are they doing to save their souls? Nothing; as though the loss of the soul were but of little consequence!

How much diligence in preserving bodily health! The best physicians, the best remedies, the best climate, are sought after. And as regards the health of the soul, what great negligence!

O my God, I will no longer resist Thy calls! Who knows but that the words which I am now reading may be my last call from God!

Can we be sensible of the danger of being lost forever and not tremble? And do we delay to apply a remedy to the disorders of our consciences?

My soul, how many graces has not God bestowed upon you that you may be saved! He has caused you to be born in the bosom of the true Church. How many advantages for becoming a Saint. Sermons, confessions, the good example of companions. How many lights, how many loving calls in Spiritual Exercises, in Meditation, in Holy Communion! How many mercies has He not shown you! How long has He not waited for you! How many times has He not pardoned you!—graces which He has not bestowed on so many others.

II.

What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it?—(Is. v. 4). What more, says Almighty God, ought I to do for your soul? For how many years have you been in the world and what fruit have you hitherto brought forth?

If we had been allowed to choose the means of salvation, what more easy and effectual means could we have chosen?

Alas! if we do not avail ourselves of so many graces, they will serve only to render our death the more miserable.

To become a saint it is not necessary to have ecstasies and visions; sufficient for you are the ordinary means which you possess. Meditate, communicate frequently, read spiritual books, fly all sinful occasions, and you will become a saint.

O God, already have I lived many years in the world, and what have I hitherto gained? O Jesus! Thy precious Blood, Thy death upon the Cross, are my hope!

If this night I were to die, should I be satisfied with my past life? No; and why do I delay? Death may come, and I may have to lament and say: Alas! my life is now at an end, and I have done nothing!

What a grace would it be for a sick man, already despaired of by his physicians, to be allowed another year, or even another month! And God grants me this time; and how shall I employ it for the future?

O Lord, since Thou hast waited for me until now, I will no longer disregard Thee. Here I am! Tell me what Thou requirest of me, and I will do it. I will not wait to give myself to Thee until time for me be no more. O Jesus! I will never more offend Thee. I will spend the remainder of my life in bewailing my past sins, and in loving Thee, the God of my soul.

Spiritual Reading

II.—THE ADVANTAGES OF A RETREAT
MADE IN SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.

One day the Lord said to St. Teresa: "There are many souls to whom I would willingly speak, but the world makes so great a noise in their hearts that My voice cannot be heard. Oh, if they would but separate themselves a little from the world!" Thus, then, my very dear friend, the Lord wishes to speak to you, but alone and in solitude; since if He would speak to you in your own house, your relations, your friends, and your domestic occupations would continue to make a noise in your heart, and you would be unable to hear His voice. The Saints have for this reason left their homes and their country, and gone to hide themselves in caverns or deserts, or at least in a cell in some Religious house, there to find God and hear His voice. St. Eucherius relates that a certain person seeking a place in which he could find God, went for this purpose to ask counsel from a master of the spiritual life. The man of God led him to a solitary place and then said: "Behold, here God may be found!" adding nothing more. By this he wished him to understand that God is not to be found in the midst of the noise of the world, but in solitude. St. Bernard says that he learned to know God better amongst the beeches and oaks than in all the learned books he had ever studied.

Worldlings love to be in company with friends, to talk and divert themselves; but the desire of the Saints is to live in solitary places, in the midst of forests, or in caverns, there to converse alone with God Who in solitude familiarly converses with souls as a friend with his friend. "Oh, Solitude," exclaims St. Jerome, "in which God familiarly converses with His servants!" The Venerable Vincent Caraffa said that if it had been free to him to wish for anything in this world, he would have asked for nothing but a little grotto with a piece of bread and a spiritual book, there always to live far from men, and conversing alone with God. The Spouse of the Canticles, praising the beauty of a soul living in solitude, compares it to the beauty of the turtle-dove: *Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle-dove's*—(Cant. i. 9), precisely because the turtle-dove avoids the company of other birds, and always lives in the most solitary places. Hence it is that the holy Angels are filled with admiration and joy at the beauty and splendour of a soul ascending into Heaven after a life hidden and solitary as in a desert: *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights?*—(Cant. viii. 5).

Now I have written all these things in order to inspire you with a love for holy solitude, for I hope that in the Exercises you are going to perform you will not have to torture your brains, as your pastor said, but that the Lord will make you taste so great a spiritual delight, that you will come out of your Retreat with such an affection for the Spiritual Exercises that you will not fail hereafter to go through them every year. This will be of immense advantage to your soul, whatever state of life you may choose, because in the midst of the world, its various occupations, disturbances, and distractions always produce dryness of spirit, so that it is necessary from time to time to refresh and renew it, as St. Paul exhorts: *Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind*—(Ephes. iv. 23).

King David, troubled by earthly cares, wished to have wings and to fly from the bustle of the world in order to find rest: *Who will give me wings . . . and I will fly away*

and be at rest?—(Ps. liv. 7). But being unable to leave the world in body, he at least sought from time to time to withdraw himself from the affairs of the realm he governed and dwelt in solitude conversing with God, and thus his spirit found peace. *I have gone far off, flying away, and I abode in the wilderness*—(Ps. v. 8).

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity beareth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY AND CONTEMPT.

I.

You say you are unable even to pray, because your head is so weak. Be it so: you cannot meditate; but why cannot you make acts of resignation to the will of God? If you would only make these acts, you could not make a better prayer, welcoming with love all the torments that assail you. Thus did St. Vincent de Paul act. When attacked by a serious illness, he was wont to keep himself tranquilly in the presence of God, without forcing his mind to dwell on any particular subject; his sole exercise was to elicit some short acts from time to time, as of love, of confidence, of thanksgiving, and more frequently of resignation, especially in the crisis of his sufferings. St. Francis de Sales made this remark: "Considered in themselves tribulations are terrifying; but considered in the will of God, they are lovely and delightful." You cannot make meditation, you say, and what more exquisite prayer than to cast a look from time to time on your crucified Lord, and to offer Him your pains, uniting the little that you endure with the overwhelming torments that afflicted Jesus on the Cross!

II.

There was a certain pious lady lying bed-ridden with many ailments, and on the servant putting the Crucifix into her hands and telling her to pray to God to deliver her from her miseries, she made answer: "But how can you desire me to seek to descend from the Cross, whilst I hold in my hands a God crucified? God forbid that I should do so! I will suffer for Him Who chose to suffer torments for me incomparably greater than mine." This was, indeed, precisely what Jesus Christ said to St. Teresa when she was labouring under serious illness; He appeared to her all covered with Wounds, and then said to her: "Behold, My daughter, the bitterness of My sufferings, and consider if yours equal Mine." Hence the Saint was accustomed to say in the midst of all her infirmities: "When I remember in how many ways my Saviour suffered, though He was innocent itself, I know not how it could enter my head to complain of my sufferings." During a period of thirty-eight years St. Lidwina was afflicted with numberless diseases—fevers, gout in the feet and hands, and sores, all her life-time; nevertheless, from never losing sight of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, she maintained an unbroken cheerfulness and joy. In like manner, St. Joseph of Leonessa, a Capuchin, when the surgeon was about to amputate his arm, and his brethren would have bound him to prevent his stirring from vehemence of pain, seized hold of the Crucifix and exclaimed: "Wherefore bind me? Wherefore bind me? Behold Who it is that binds me to support every suffering patiently for love of Him!" And so he bore the operation without a murmur. St. Jonas the Martyr, after passing the entire night immersed in ice water by order of the tyrant, declared next morning that he had never spent a happier night, because he had pictured to himself Jesus hanging on the Cross; and thus, compared with the torments of Jesus, his own had seemed rather caresses than sufferings.

Tuesday—Fifth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

WE MUST BEFORE ALL THINGS SECURE
THE SALVATION OF OUR SOULS.

Let us proceed at once with the work of our soul's salvation, for death is at hand. What we can do to-day let us not put off till to-morrow. Time passes and returns no more.

I.

Let us proceed at once with the work of our soul's salvation, for death is at hand. What we can do to-day let us not put off till to-morrow. Time passes and returns no more.

Every one says, at the hour of death: Oh, that I had been a saint! But of what avail will such regrets be when the oil fails, and the lamp will soon be extinguished?

We shall say when death comes: What would it have cost me to have avoided that occasion, to have borne with that person, to have broken off that correspondence, to have yielded that point of honour? But I did not do so; and now what will become of me?

Let us not think that we can do too much to gain eternal salvation. "No security can be too great," says St. Bernard, "where Eternity is at stake."

To secure our salvation, we must be resolved to adopt the means. Inclination will not be sufficient; nor will it serve us to say, I will do it by and by. Hell is filled with souls who said: By and by! By and by! Death came in the meantime, and they were lost.

O Lord, help me ! I will say to Thee, with St. Catherine of Genoa : " My Jesus, no more sins, no more sins ! " I renounce all things to please Thee.

II.

The Apostle says, *With fear and trembling work out your salvation*—(Phil. ii. 12). He who trembles at the thought of being lost, always recommends himself to God, avoids the occasions of sin, and will be saved.

To be saved we must use violence. Heaven is not given to indolent cowards. *The violent bear it away*—(Matt. xi. 12).

O Lord, how many promises have I not made Thee ! But my promises have all been treasons. I will never betray Thee more ; help me, grant that I may die rather than offend Thee.

Ask, says our Lord, *and you shall receive*.—(Jo. xvi. 24), by which He manifests to us His great desire that we should be saved. If any one should say to his friend : Ask of me what you please, he could say nothing more. Let us, then, ever pray to God, and we shall be enriched with graces, and secure of salvation.

My dear Jesus, cast Thine eyes on my miseries and have pity on me. I have been forgetful of Thee, but Thou hast not forgotten me. I love Thee, my Love, with all my soul ; I detest all the offences I have committed against Thee above every evil. Pardon me, my God, and forget my many acts of ingratitude. And since Thou knowest my weakness, do not abandon me ; enlighten me, and strengthen me to conquer all things to please Thee. Grant that I may forget all, that I may think only of Thy love and the mercies by which Thou hast so powerfully obliged me to love Thee. Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Spiritual Reading

III.—THE ADVANTAGE OF A RETREAT
MADE IN SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.

Jesus Christ, Who had no need of solitude to be recollected and united with God, in order to set us an example, often retired from intercourse with men and withdrew to mountains or into deserts to pray : *Having dismissed the multitude he went into a mountain alone to pray*—(Matt. xiv. 23) ; and *He retired into the desert and prayed*—(Luke v. 16). He also desired His disciples, after the fatigue of their missions, to retire to some solitary place to rest in spirit : *Come apart into a desert place and rest a little*—(Mark vi. 31), declaring by this that the spirit, even amidst spiritual occupations, being obliged to treat with men, becomes somewhat relaxed, whence it is very necessary to renew it in solitude and retreat.

Worldlings, who are accustomed to divert themselves in conversations, at banquets and plays, imagine that in solitude, where no such things are found, one must suffer insupportable tediousness. This is indeed the case with those who have a conscience defiled by sin. As long as they are occupied in the affairs of this world they do not think of the things of the soul ; but when they are disengaged and in solitude where they do not seek God, they feel all at once remorse of conscience, and thus they find nothing but tediousness and pain. But in the case of one who seeks God, he will find in solitude not tediousness, but contentment and joy. Of this the Wise Man assures us : *For her (wisdom's) conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness*—(Wis. viii. 16). Oh no, to converse with God causes no bitterness, no tediousness ; no, nothing but peace and joy.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Charity beareth all things.”

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY AND CONTEMPT.

I.

Oh, what abundance of merits may be accumulated by patiently enduring an illness! Almighty God revealed to Father Balthazar Alvarez the great glory He had in store for a certain nun who had borne a painful sickness with resignation; and told him that she had acquired greater merit in those eight months of her illness than some other Religious in many years. It is by the patient endurance of ill-health that we weave a great part, and perhaps the greater part, of the crown that God destines for us in Heaven. St. Lidwina had a revelation to this effect. After sustaining many and most cruel disorders, as we mentioned, she prayed to die a martyr for the love of Jesus Christ; now, as she was one day sighing after this martyrdom, she suddenly saw a beautiful crown, but as yet incomplete, and she understood that it was destined for herself; whereupon the Saint, longing to behold it completed, entreated the Lord to increase her sufferings. Her prayer was heard, for some soldiers came shortly after and ill-treated her, not only with injurious words, but with blows and outrages. An Angel then appeared to her with the crown completed, and informed her that those last injuries had added to it the gems that were wanting; and shortly afterwards she expired.

II.

Ah, yes! to the hearts that fervently love Jesus Christ, pains and ignominies are most delightful. And thus we see the holy Martyrs going with gladness to encounter the

The Blessed Cardinal Bellarmine, during the season when the other Cardinals went to pass their holidays in country seats and villas, used to go to some quiet house to make the Exercises for a month, and these he called his holiday, and certainly his heart found more delight in them than others did in their pastimes.

St. Charles Borromeo made the Exercises every year and found in them his paradise on earth; and it was while he was one year engaged in these Exercises on Mount Varalle that his last illness and death came. Hence it is that St. Jerome says that solitude was his paradise on earth: “Solitude is a paradise to me.”

But, perhaps, some one will ask: What contentment can a person find, being alone and having no one with whom to converse? St. Bernard answers: “He who seeks God is by no means alone in solitude, for God Himself is there with him, and renders him happier than if he had the company of the first princes of the world.” “I am never less alone,” wrote the holy Abbot, “than when alone.” *Nunquam minus solus quam cum solus.*

The Prophet Isaias, describing the sweetness which God gives to those who seek Him in retreat, says: *The Lord therefore will comfort Sion, and will comfort all the ruins thereof; and he will make her desert as a place of pleasure, and her wilderness as a garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of praise—(Is. li. 3).*

The Lord well knows how to comfort a soul that withdraws from the world. He compensates a thousandfold for the loss of all the pleasures of the world. He changes solitude into a garden of delights, where the tumult of the world being excluded, the soul thanks and praises God, and finds a very paradise of peace.

sharp prongs and hooks of iron, the plates of glowing steel and axes. The Martyr St. Procopius thus spoke to the tyrant who tortured him: "Torment me as you like; but know at the same time that nothing is sweeter to the lover of Jesus Christ than to suffer for His sake." St. Gordiano, Martyr, replied in the same way to the tyrant who threatened him with death: "Thou threatenest me with death; but I am sorry that I can die only once for my own beloved Jesus." And I ask, did these Saints speak thus because they were insensible to pain or weak in intellect? No, replies St. Bernard; not insensibility, but love caused this: *Hoc non fecit stupor, sed amor*. They were not insensible, for they felt well enough the torments inflicted on them; but since they loved God, they esteemed it a great privilege to suffer for God, and to lose all, even life itself, for the love of God.

Wednesday—Fifth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE VANITY OF THE WORLD—THE GOODS OF THIS WORLD ARE FALSE GOODS.

The world! And what is the world but mere show! A scene which quickly passes away! *The fashion of this world passeth away!* Death approaches, the curtain falls, the scene closes, and all comes to an end!

I.

What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?—(Matt. xvi. 26).
O great maxim, which has conducted so many souls to Heaven, and bestowed so many Saints on the Church!

What doth it profit to gain the whole world, which passes away, and lose the soul, which is eternal?

The world! And what is the world but mere show, a scene which quickly passes away! *The fashion of this world passeth away—(1 Cor. vii. 31).* Death approaches, the curtain falls, the scene closes, and thus all comes to an end!

Alas! at the hour of death, how will all worldly things appear to a Christian—those vessels of silver, those heaps of gold, that rich and vain furniture—when he must leave them all forever!

O Jesus, grant that henceforward my soul may be wholly Thine! Grant that I may love no other but Thee. I desire to renounce all things before death tears me away from them.

St. Teresa says: "Nothing ought to be considered of consequence which must come to an end." Let us, therefore, strive to gain that treasure which will not fail with time. What does it avail a man to be happy for a few days (if indeed there can be any happiness without God), if he must be unhappy forever in eternity.

David says that earthly goods, at the hour of death, will seem as a dream to one waking from sleep: *As the dream of them that awake—(Ps. lxxii. 20).* What disappointment does he feel who, having dreamt he was a king, on awaking finds himself still as lowly and poor as ever?

O my God, who knows but that this meditation which I am now reading will be the last call for me? Enable me to root out of my heart all earthly affections, before I enter into eternity. Grant that I may be sensible of the great wrong I have done Thee, by offending Thee, and by forsaking Thee for the love of creatures. *Father, I am not worthy to be called thy son—(Luke xv. 21).* I am grieved for having turned my back upon Thee; do not reject me, now that I return to Thee.

II.

No position of dignity, no magnificence, no wealth, no nice points of honour, no pastimes, will console a

Christian at the hour of death; the love of Jesus Christ, and the little that he has suffered for His love, will alone console him.

Philip II, when dying, said "Oh, that I had been a Lay-Brother in some Monastery, and not a King!" Philip III said "Oh, that I had lived in a desert! Alas, now I shall appear with but little confidence before the tribunal of God!" Thus, at the hour of death, do those express themselves who have been esteemed the most fortunate in this world.

In short, all earthly goods generally bring, at the hour of death, only remorse of conscience and fear of eternal damnation. O God! will the dying sinner say, I have had sufficient light to withdraw myself from worldliness, and yet I have followed the world, and its maxims; and now what sentence will be pronounced upon me? Fool that I have been! I might have been a saint, with the means of grace and the advantages I enjoyed! I might have led a happy life in union with God; and now what have I but remorse of conscience and a dread of damnation! But when will he say this? When the scene is about to close, and himself about to enter into eternity, and at that moment on which will depend his happiness or misery forever.

O Lord, have pity on me! For the past I have not been so wise as to love Thee. From this day forward Thou alone shalt be my only Good: *My God, and my all!* Thou alone deservest all my love, and Thee only will I love.

Spiritual Reading

IV.—THE ADVANTAGE OF A RETREAT MADE IN SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.

If, indeed, there were no other satisfaction in solitude than that of knowing the Eternal Truths, that alone

would be sufficient to make a Retreat a most desirable thing. The knowledge of the Eternal Truths gives the soul a perfect contentment such as is never found in the vanities of the world, which are only lying and deceitful things. Herein consists precisely the happiness which is found in the exercises of a Retreat gone through in solitude and silence. It is then one sees in the clearest light the Christian maxims, the importance of salvation, the ugliness of sin, the value of grace, the love God bears us, the vanity of earthly goods, the foolishness of those who, for the sake of the fleeting joys of the world, fling away eternal goods and prepare for themselves an Eternity of pain and misery.

Hence it comes about that, having convinced himself of these truths, a man takes the most efficacious means to secure his eternal salvation. In a Retreat he disentangles himself from earthly affections and unites himself to God in prayer, by desires of closer union with Him, by repeated offerings of himself, by multiplied acts of sorrow, love, and resignation. He thus finds himself raised so high above all created things that he smiles in pity on those who set such value on the things of this world which he so much despises, knowing how worthless they are, and how unworthy of the love of a heart created to love an infinite Good, which is God. It is certain that one comes out of the Exercises a very different man, and much better than he was when he began them.

It was the opinion of St. John Chrysostom that retirement was a great means of rising to perfection. And a learned author, speaking of the Exercises of a Retreat, says: "Happy, indeed, is the man who, fleeing from the noise of the world, allows himself to be led by the Lord to the Spiritual Exercises, into that sweet solitude where he finds and tastes the delights of Paradise." Sermons in the churches are good, but if the hearers do not reflect on what they have heard, the fruit will be little. Reflection will never be made as it should be unless it be made in solitude. As soon as the oyster receives the dew of heaven it shuts itself at once and sinks to the bottom of the sea, and there the pearl is

formed. It is beyond all doubt that what makes the fruit of the Exercises perfect is the silent reflection alone with God upon the truths one has heard in a sermon or read in a book. Hence St. Vincent de Paul in his missions never failed to exhort his hearers to make the Exercises in some retired place. One single spiritual maxim well meditated upon is sufficient to make a saint. Thus St. Francis Xavier resolved to give up the world in consequence of the impression made on him by that maxim of the Gospel : *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?*—(Matt. xvi. 26). A young student having once heard a maxim on death, changed his conduct and led a virtuous life. St. Clement of Ancyra was encouraged to suffer for Jesus Christ all the torments inflicted by the tyrant, by thinking of what his mother had taught him : “It is for life eternal we are fighting.”

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY AND CONTEMPT.

I.

Above all, in time of sickness we should be ready to accept of death, and of that death which God pleases. We must die, and our life must finish in our last illness; but we do not know which will be our last illness. Wherefore in every illness we must be prepared to accept that death God has appointed for us. A sick person says : “Yes; but I have committed many sins, and have done no penance. I should like to live, not for the sake of living, but to make some satisfaction to God before I die.” But tell me, how do you know that if you live

longer you will do penance, and not rather do worse than before? At present you can well cherish the hope that God has pardoned you, and what penance can be more satisfactory than to accept of death with resignation, if God wills you are to die? St. Aloysius Gonzaga, at the age of twenty-three, gladly embraced death with this reflection : “At present,” he said, “I am, as I hope, in the grace of God. Hereafter I know not what may befall me; so that I now die contentedly, if God calls me to the next life.” It was the opinion of Blessed John of Avila that every one, provided he be in proper dispositions, though only moderately good, should desire death, to escape the danger which always surrounds us in this world, of sinning and losing the grace of God.

Besides, owing to our natural frailty, we cannot live in this world without committing at least venial sins; this should be a motive for us to embrace death willingly that we may never offend God any more. Further, if we truly love God, we should ardently long to go to see Him, and love Him with all our strength in Paradise, which no one can do perfectly in this present life; but unless death open to us the door, we cannot enter that blessed region of love. This caused St. Augustine, that loving soul, to cry out : “Oh, let me die, Lord, that I may behold Thee!” O Lord, let me die, otherwise I cannot behold and love Thee face to face.

II.

In the second place we must practise patience in the endurance of poverty. Our patience is certainly very much tried when we are in need of temporal goods. St. Augustine says : “He that has not God, has nothing; he that has God, has all.” He who possesses God, and remains united to His will, finds every good. Witness St. Francis, barefooted, clad in sack-cloth, and deprived of all things, yet happier than all the monarchs of the world, by simply repeating : *Deus meus et omnia!* My God and my All! He only is a poor man who has not what he desires; but he that desires nothing, and is contented with his poverty, is in fact very rich. Of such

St. Paul says : *Having nothing, yet possessing all things*—(2 Cor. vi. 10). The true lovers of God have nothing, and yet have every thing; since, when temporal goods fail them, they exclaim : "My Jesus, Thou alone art sufficient for me!" and with this they rest satisfied. Not only did the Saints maintain patience in poverty, but sought to be despoiled of all, in order to live detached from all, and united with God alone. If we have not courage to renounce all worldly goods, at all events let us be contented with that state of life in which God has placed us; let our solicitude be not for earthly goods, but for those of Paradise, which are immeasurably greater, and last for ever; and let us be fully persuaded of the truth of what St. Teresa says : "The less we have here the more we shall have in Heaven."

Thursday—Fifth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE VANITY OF THE WORLD—THE GOODS OF THIS WORLD PASS QUICKLY.

Ye great ones of the world who are tormented in the fires of hell, what remains to you now of your honours and your wealth? They answer, weeping : Nothing ! Nothing ! *What advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All these things are passed away like a shadow!*

I.

Ye great ones of the world, who are now tormented in the fires of hell, what remains to you now of your honours and riches? They answer, weeping : Nothing ! nothing !

We have nothing but torments and despair ! All is passed but our punishment, which will never end !

At death men will say : *What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow*—(Wis. v. 8). Alas ! the remembrance of the good things we have enjoyed in the world will not, at the hour of death, inspire us with confidence, but will fill us with terror and confusion.

Woe to me ! How many years have I been in the world, and what have I hitherto done for God? O Lord, have pity on me, and *cast me not away from thy face*—(Ps. l. 13).

The time of death is the time when all worldly things will appear as they really are—vanity, smoke, and dust ! O my God ! How frequently have I exchanged Thee for a nothing ! I should not dare to hope for pardon, were it not that Thou hast died in order to pardon me. Now will I love Thee above all things, and will esteem Thy grace more precious than all the kingdoms of the earth.

Death is compared by St. Paul to a thief—(1 Thess. v. 4), because it robs us of all things—possessions, relations, beauty, dignity, and even of our own very flesh.

The day of death is also called *the day of destruction*—(Deut. xxxii. 35). Then shall we lose all that we have ever acquired, and all that we can hope for from this world. O my Jesus ! I am not concerned about the loss of earthly goods, but only lest I should lose Thee, the Infinite Good.

We extol the Saints, who, for the love of Jesus Christ, despise the goods of this earth; and do we continue to be attached to such vanities at the imminent danger of our salvation?

We have a great esteem for the treasures of this life; and why do we make so little account of the treasures of eternity?

Enlighten me, O my God ! Make me realize that all creatures are nothing, and that Thou art my All, the Infinite Good. Grant that I may leave all things to

possess Thee alone. My God! My God! Thee only do I desire, and besides Thee, nothing in this world!

II.

St. Teresa says that our faults and our attachments to the goods of this earth, arise from a want of Faith. Let us then reanimate our Faith, and remember we shall one day have to leave all and go into eternity. And hence let us leave all now, while we can obtain merit by so doing. One day we shall have to leave them all. What are riches, honours, friends? God! God! Let us seek God alone, and God will be our All.

That eminent servant of God, Sister Margaret of St. Ann, daughter of the Emperor Rudolf II., and a discredited Religious used to say: "What will kingdoms avail at the hour of death?"

The death of the Empress Isabella induced St. Francis Borgia to renounce the world, and to give himself entirely to God. At the sight of her corpse he said to himself: It is thus, then, that the grandsseurs and the crowns of this world terminate!

O my God, Thou hast always loved me! Grant that I may be wholly Thine before death overtakes me.

Spiritual Reading

V.—THE ADVANTAGE OF A RETREAT MADE IN SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.

In order to form a true idea of the good produced by a Retreat, read some book on the subject, and see the wonderful conversions brought about by the Exercises. I will mention a few.

Father Maffei tells us there was in Sienna a priest who led a disedifying life. He made a Retreat under the direction of a missionary who happened to be in that town; and not only was he converted, but one day when

there was a great multitude in the Church, he went into the pulpit weeping and with a rope round his neck, and there asked pardon for all the scandal he had given. He afterwards became a Capuchin and died a Saint. On his death-bed he made known that all the great graces he had received were due to the Spiritual Exercises.

Father Bartoli relates that a certain German knight, who, having abandoned himself to all kinds of vice, gave his soul to the devil by a document signed in his own blood. He afterwards performed the Spiritual Exercises, and he conceived so great a sorrow for his sins, that he often fainted from excess of grief. He thenceforth led a life of severe penance till the day of his death.

Father Rossignoli tells us that in Sicily a certain baron's son led so debauched a life that, having tried all means to make him amend, but in vain, his father was obliged to put him in a galley to work with the slaves. But a certain good Religious, moved to compassion, sought out the young man, and by his kind winning manners, induced him to meditate whilst at his work on the great Truths of Eternity. This he did, and soon he made his confession, and so changed his life that his father was glad to receive him back to his house again, and never again had any reason to be displeased with his son.

A young man in Flanders, having made a Spiritual Retreat, gave up his wicked life. Seeing his friends amazed at his conversion, he said to them: "You wonder at my change of life, but I tell you that if the devil himself were capable of making the Spiritual Exercises, he would be converted to penance."

A Religious who had by his bad conduct become insupportable in his Community, was sent by his Superiors to make a Retreat. When he was going away he jestingly said to those about him: "Get ready your Rosary beads to touch me when I return." But the Exercises did indeed change him so completely that he became an example for all the other Religious, and, seeing the change, they all wished to make the Exercises.

Some young men, seeing a number of their friends going to make a Spiritual Retreat, wished to accompany them, not to profit their souls, but in order afterwards to jest about the Exercises. Just the opposite happened; for during the Retreat they were so filled with compunction that they began to sigh and weep for their sins. They made good Confessions and changed their lives.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Charity beareth all things.”

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR
HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY,
AND CONTEMPT.

I.

St. Bonaventure said that temporal goods were nothing more than a sort of bird-lime to hinder the soul from flying to God. And St. John Climacus said that poverty, on the contrary, is a path which leads to God free of all hindrances. Our Lord Himself said: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*—(Matt. v. 3). In the other Beatitudes, the Heaven of the life to come is promised to the meek and to the clean of heart; but to the poor, Heaven (that is heavenly joy) is promised even in this life: *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. Yes, for even in the present life the poor enjoy a foretaste of Paradise. By the poor in spirit are meant those who are not merely poor in earthly goods, but who do not so much as desire them; who, having enough to clothe and feed them, live contented, according to the advice of the Apostle: *But having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content*.

—(1 Tim. vi. 8). Oh, blessed poverty, exclaimed St. Laurence Justinian, which possesses nothing and fears nothing! Ever joyous and ever in abundance, since she turns every inconvenience into advantage for the soul. St. Bernard said: “The avaricious man hungers after earthly things as a beggar, the poor man despises them as a lord.” The miser is always hungry as a beggar, because he is never satiated with possessing; the poor man, on the contrary, despises them all as a rich lord, inasmuch as he desires nothing.

II.

One day Jesus Christ thus spoke to St. Angela of Foligno: “If poverty were not of great excellence, I would not have chosen it for Myself, nor have bequeathed it to My Elect.” And, in fact, the Saints, seeing Jesus poor, had therefore a great affection for poverty. St. Paul says that the desire of growing rich is a snare of Satan by which he has wrought the ruin of innumerable souls: *They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition*—(1 Tim. vi. 9). Unhappy beings who, for the sake of vile creatures of earth, forfeit an Infinite Good, which is God! St. Basil the Martyr was right, when the Emperor Licinius proposed to make him the chief among his priests, if he would renounce Jesus Christ; he was right, I say, to reply: “Tell the emperor that were he to give me his whole kingdom, he would not give me as much as he would rob me of by depriving me of God.” Let us be content, then, with God, and with the things He gives us, rejoicing in our poverty, when we stand in need of something we desire, and have it not; for herein consists our merit. “Not poverty,” says St. Bernard, “but the love of poverty, is reckoned a virtue.” Many are poor, but from not loving their poverty, they merit nothing; therefore St. Bernard says that the virtue of poverty consists not in being poor, but in the love of poverty.

Friday—Fifth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE VANITY OF THE WORLD.—DEATH SHOWS US THE VANITY OF THE WORLD.

St. John Chrysostom says: "Go to the tomb, and contemplate the dust and worms and—sigh!" O the great secret of death! Things the most desirable on this earth lose all their splendour when viewed from the bed of death.

I.

O the great secret of death! How it brings to an end all worldly desires! How it shows all worldly grandeur as smoke and deceit! Things the most desired of this earth lose all their splendour when beheld from the bed of death. The shadow of death obscures the beauty of all things here below.

Of what profit are riches when nothing remains but a winding-sheet? Of what advantage bodily beauty, when all is reduced to a heap of worms? Of what avail is authority, when nothing remains but to be thrown into the grave, and be forgotten by all?

St. Chrysostom says: "Go to a sepulchre, contemplate dust and worms—and sigh!" Look on the graves of the dead; see those skeletons gnawed by worms and crumbling into dust, and say, with a sigh: Ah, such must I become, and why do I not think of this? Why do I not give myself to God? Alas! who knows but that which I am now reading may be the last call for me?

O my dear Redeemer, I accept of my death, and I accept of it in whatever way it may please Thee to send

it to me; but I beseech Thee, before Thou judgest me, to allow me time to bewail the offences I have committed against Thee. I love Thee, O my Jesus, and I am truly sorry for having despised Thee.

O my God, how many miserable beings, to obtain worldly goods, pleasures, vanities, have lost their souls, and, by losing their souls, have lost all!

Do we believe or not that we must one day die? And that only once? And why do we not leave all, to secure a happy death? Let us leave all, to secure all.

Is it possible we realize that the remembrance of a disorderly life will at the hour of death be an insufferable torment, and still continue to live on in sin?

O my God, I thank Thee for the light Thou afforest me. But, O Lord, what have I done? Have I multiplied my sins, and hast Thou increased Thy graces? Woe to me, if I do not avail myself of them!

II.

He who reflects that in a short time he must leave the world will not be attached to it.

Oh, with what peace of soul do those live and die who, despoiled of all things, are contented to say, *My God and my all!*

Solomon said that all the goods of this earth are only vanity and affliction of spirit; since the more one possesses of the goods of this world, the more he suffers.

St. Philip Neri used to call those fools whose hearts are attached to this world. Fools, because even here they lead miserable lives.

O my God, what now remains of the many sinful deeds of which I have been guilty, but the pain and remorse that torment me, and will torment me still more at the hour of death? Oh, do Thou, O Lord, make haste to pardon me! Thou desirest that I should be all Thine, and such do I desire to be. Behold, from this moment, I give myself to Thee, and I desire nothing in return but Thyself.

Let us not imagine that to be detached from all things,

in order to love God alone, is to live an unhappy life. Who on this earth is so contented and happy as the man who loves Jesus Christ with his whole heart? Find me one amongst all the kings of the world, who is more happy than the man who gives himself entirely to God.

My soul, if now thou wert to depart out of this world, wouldst thou die satisfied with thy past life? And for what dost thou delay? Is it that the light which God in His mercy now affords thee may only serve to reproach thee at the great accounting day?

O Jesus, I renounce all to give myself to Thee. Thou didst seek me when I fled from Thee; and now that I seek Thee, do not reject me. Thou didst love me when I did not love Thee, nor even desire that Thou shouldst love me; and now that I have no other desire but to love Thee, and to be loved by Thee, cast me not away from Thy face. O my God, I am now convinced that Thou desirest to save me, and I desire to work out my salvation to please Thee. I leave all, and give my whole self to Thee. Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Spiritual Reading

VI.—THE ADVANTAGE OF A RETREAT MADE IN SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.

I could add a thousand other examples, but I shall relate only one more—the case of a nun in the Convent of Torre di Spechi in Rome. She pretended to be a learned woman, but led a very imperfect life. When the Spiritual Exercises were being conducted in the convent she began them, but very much against her will. The very first meditation on the “End of Man” made such an impression on her that, weeping, she went to the Spiritual Father, and said: “Father, I wish to become a saint without delay.” She wanted to say more, but sobs prevented her. Returning to her cell she wrote out

a consecration of her entire self to Jesus Christ, and gave herself up to penance and retirement, and persevered until death.

If we had no other motive for attaching so much importance to the Spiritual Exercises, it would be enough to consider the esteem so many saintly men had for them. St. Charles Borromeo began to lead a perfect life after the first Retreat in Rome. St. Francis de Sales attributed to the Spiritual Exercises the first beginnings of a holy life. Louis of Granada, a man of very great virtue, used to say that a lifetime would not suffice to explain the knowledge of Divine things which he discovered in going through the Spiritual Exercises. Blessed John of Avila called the Exercises a school of heavenly wisdom, and exhorted all his spiritual children to make them. Father Louis Blossius, the holy Benedictine, used to say we should give God special thanks for having in these latter times made known to His Church the precious treasure of the Spiritual Exercises of a Retreat.

But if the Exercises are of great help to persons in every state and condition, they are of special help to him who wishes to make a proper choice of a state of life. For I find it laid down that the first end for which the Exercises were instituted was that of making the choice of a state of life, because upon this choice depends the eternal salvation of each one. We cannot expect that an Angel from Heaven should come to assure us of the state which, according to the will of God, we should choose. It is sufficient to put before us the state we are thinking of choosing, and then to consider the end we have in view in that choice, and weigh all the circumstances.

This is the principal reason for which I wish you to make the Exercises in silence; namely, for making the choice of the state of life.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Charity beareth all things.”

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY AND CONTEMPT.

I.

This love of poverty should be especially practised by Religious who have made the Vow of Poverty. “Many Religious,” says the great St. Bernard, “wish to be poor; but on the condition of wanting for nothing.” “Thus,” says St. Francis of Sales, “they wish for the honour of poverty, but not the inconveniences of poverty.” To such persons is applicable the saying of the blessed Solomea, a nun of St. Clare: “That Religious will be a laughing-stock to Angels and to men, who pretend to be poor, and yet murmur when in want of anything.” Good Religious act differently; they love their poverty above all riches. The daughter of the Emperor Maximilian II, a discolored nun of St. Clare, called Sister Margaret of the Cross, appeared on one occasion before her brother, the Archduke Albert, in a patched habit. He evinced some astonishment at it, as if it were unbecoming her noble birth; but she made him this answer: “My brother, I am more content with this torn garment than all monarchs with their purple robes.” St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi said: “O happy Religious, who, detached from all by means of holy poverty, can say: ‘The Lord is the portion of my inheritance!’” My God, Thou art my portion and all my good! St. Teresa, having received a large alms from a certain merchant, sent him word that his name was written in the Book of Life; and that, in token of this, he should lose all his possessions; and the merchant actually failed, and remained in poverty till death.

St. Aloysius Gonzaga said that there could be no surer sign of a person's being numbered among the elect than to see him fearing God, and at the same time undergoing crosses and tribulations in this life.

II.

The bereavement of relations and friends by death belongs also, in some measure, to holy poverty; and in this we must especially practise patience. Some people, at the loss of a parent or friend, can find no rest; they shut themselves up to weep in their chamber, and giving free vent to their sorrow, become insupportable to all around them by their want of patience. I would ask these persons for whose gratification, or for whose sake, do they thus lament and shed tears? Is it for God's? Certainly not; for God's will is that they should be resigned to His dispensations. For that of the soul departed? By no means: if the soul be lost, she abhors both you and your tears; if she be saved, and already in Heaven she would have you thank God on her part; if still in Purgatory, she craves the help of your prayers, and wishes you to bow with resignation to the Divine will, and to become a saint, in order that she may one day enjoy your society in Paradise. Of what use, then, is all this weeping? On one occasion the Venerable Father Joseph Caracciolo, the Theatine, was surrounded by his relations, who were all bitterly lamenting the death of his brother, whereupon he said to them: “Come! come! let us keep these tears for a better purpose, to weep over the death of Jesus Christ, Who has been to us a Father, a Brother, a Spouse, and Who died for love of us.” On such occasions we must imitate Job, who, on hearing the news of the death of his sons, exclaimed, with full resignation to the Divine will: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; God gave me my sons, and God hath taken them away. As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord!* It hath pleased God that such things should happen, and so it pleaseth me; wherefore may He be blessed by me for ever—(Job i. 21).

Saturday—Fifth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE MERCY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

“Oh, how many who deserved to be condemned by the justice of the Son, are saved by the mercy of the Mother! For she is God’s treasure and the treasurer of all graces, and thus our salvation is in her hands and depends on her.”—(Abbot of Celles).

I.

The Blessed Virgin said one day to St. Bridget: I am called, and I truly am, the Mother of Mercy; for such God has made me. And who, but God in His mercy, because He desires our salvation, has given us this advocate to defend us? “Therefore,” adds Mary, “miserable will he be, who, while it is in his power, has not recourse to me, who am merciful.” Miserable is the man, and miserable for eternity, who, though he could, during life, have recommended himself to me, who am so benign and merciful to all, has neglected to have recourse to me, and is lost.

Perhaps, says Bonaventure, we are afraid that in asking Mary’s intercession she will refuse it to us? No, says the Saint: “Mary does not refuse, and never has refused pity and aid to any sinner who has invoked her intercession.” She has not done so, and she cannot do so, because God has made her the Queen and the Mother of Mercy; and as Queen of Mercy she is bound to attend to the care of the miserable. “Thou,” says St. Bernard, “art the Queen of Mercy; and who but the miserable are the subjects of mercy?” Hence the Saint through humility adds: “Since, then, O Mother of God, thou art the Queen of Mercy, thou must have a special care of me, who am the most miserable of sinners.” As Mother

of Mercy it is her duty to deliver from death her sick children, to whom her mercy makes her a Mother. Hence, St. Basil calls her a public hospital. Public hospitals are erected for the poor; and they who are in the greatest poverty have the best claims to be admitted into them. Hence, according to St. Basil, Mary ought to receive with the greatest tenderness and care the greatest sinners who have recourse to her.

O great Mother of God, behold at thy feet a miserable sinner, who has not once, but several times, voluntarily lost Divine grace, which thy Son purchased for him by His death. O Mother of Mercy, I come to thee with a soul covered with wounds and sores; be not angry with me on this account, but have the greater pity on me and assist me. I do not ask of thee earthly goods; I ask thee to obtain for me the grace of God and love of thy Son.

II.

But let us not doubt of the Mercy of Mary. One day St. Bridget heard the Saviour saying to His Mother: “Thou wouldst show compassion to the devil, should he ask it with humility.” The haughty Lucifer will never humble himself to ask her prayers; but if he humbled himself to this Divine Mother, and invoked her help, she, by her intercession, would deliver him from hell. By those words, Jesus Christ wished to give us to understand what Mary herself afterwards said to the same St. Bridget—that when a sinner has recourse to her, however enormous his guilt may be, she regards not the sins with which he is charged, but the intention with which he comes. If he come with a sincere desire to amend, she receives him and heals all his wounds. Hence St. Bonaventure says: “Poor sinners, do not despair! Raise your eyes to Mary, and trust in the Mercy of this good Mother.” Let us, then, says St. Bernard, ask the grace we have lost, and let us ask it through Mary. The grace which we have lost, she has found, says Richard of St. Laurence; we therefore ought to go to her in order to recover it. When the Archangel Gabriel announced to the Most Holy Virgin the Divine

maternity, he said to her: *Fear not, Mary, thou hast found grace*—(Luke i. 30). But, since Mary was never deprived of grace, but was, on the contrary, always full of grace, how could he say that she had found it? In answer to this question, Cardinal Hugo says that Mary found grace, not for herself, because she had always possessed it, but for us, who have lost it. Hence the same author says that we ought to go to her and say: O Lady, property ought to be restored to him who has lost it; the grace which thou hast found is not thine, for thou hast always possessed it; it is ours, we have lost it through our own fault; thou shouldst then restore it to us. "Let sinners, then, who have lost grace by their sins, run—let them run to the Virgin, and say with confidence: Restore to us our property, which thou hast found."

My Mother Mary, pray for me, and never cease to pray for me. It is through the merits of Jesus Christ and thy intercession that I am to be saved. Thy office is to intercede for sinners: I will, then, say with St. Thomas of Villanova: "O Mary, our advocate, fulfil thy office!" Recommend me to God and defend me. No cause, however desperate, is lost, when defended by thee. Thou, after Jesus, art the hope of sinners; thou art my hope. O Mary, I will not cease to serve thee, to love thee, and to have recourse to thee always. Do not, then, ever cease to pray for me, particularly when thou seest me in danger of again losing the grace of God. O Mary, O great Mother of God, have pity on me.

Spiritual Reading

VII.—THE ADVANTAGE OF A RETREAT MADE IN SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.

When, then, you have entered upon the Retreat, as I hope you will, I beg of you to follow the advice I now give you.

1. The sole intention you should have in making these Exercises is that you may know what God will have you to do; and, therefore, in going to that silent Retreat-house, say to yourself: *I will hear what the Lord God shall speak in me*—(Ps. lxxxiv. 9). I go into Retreat to know what the Lord will tell me and what He wishes me to do.

2. Besides, it is necessary that you have a determined will to obey God and to follow without reserve the vocation He will make known to you.

3. It is, moreover, necessary that you pray earnestly to the Lord, that He may make known to you His will, no matter what the state of life He wishes you to live. But remember that in order to obtain this light you must ask it with holy indifference. He who prays to God to enlighten him on the choice of a state of life, wishes so without this indifference, and, instead of wishing to conform to God's will wishes rather that God should conform to his, is like a pilot who feigns to will, but indeed wills not, that his vessel should advance, since he begins by casting anchor and then hoists the sail! God does not enlighten or speak to such a person. But if you will supplicate God with this holy indifference and the resolution to accomplish His will, He will make you see clearly the state which is best for you. And if you should then feel any repugnance, place before your eyes the hour of your death, and think of the choice you would in that hour wish to have made, and act accordingly.

4. Take with you to your house of Retreat a book containing the meditations which are commonly made during the Exercises; read these meditations, and let them take the place of sermons, reflecting on them for half an hour in the morning and in the evening. Bring also with you the Life of some Saint or some other spiritual book for your spiritual reading; and these ought to be your only companions in solitude during the eight days of your Retreat. In order to obtain light and to hear what the Lord will speak to you it is necessary to avoid every distraction: *Be still, and see that I am God*

—(Ps. xlv. 11). To hear the Divine voice, we must cease all intercourse with the world. To a sick man no remedies will be of any use if he does not take them with the proper precaution, as, for example, avoiding exposure to the cold air, unwholesome food, or too much application of mind. In like manner, in order that the Exercises may be useful for the health of your soul, you must remove hurtful distractions, such as the receiving of visits from friends, messages from without, letters, etc. When St. Francis de Sales was engaged in the Exercises he laid aside all the letters he received and did not read them until after the Retreat. You must avoid books of amusement, and do no study; for you ought then only to study the Crucifix. Therefore, have in your room none but spiritual books, and read not for curiosity's sake, but only for this one end—namely, to help you to follow the state of life which God will make known to you as the one He wishes you to embrace.

5.—Moreover, it is not enough to avoid distractions from without, you must also avoid those from within; for if you should deliberately allow your mind to think on worldly matters, or of your studies, or the like, the Exercises and the solitude will be of little use to you. St. Gregory says: "What will solitude of the body avail if solitude of the heart be wanting?" Peter Ortiz, a minister of the Emperor Charles V, went to make a Retreat at the monastery of Monte Cassino. Having arrived at the gates of the monastery he addressed to his thoughts the words our Lord spoke to His disciples: *Sedete hic, donec vadam illuc et orem*—(Matt. xxvi. 36). "Worldly thoughts, stay you here outside the gates, and when I have ended my Retreat I shall return to you." When one is engaged in making the Spiritual Exercises, one should occupy the time solely for the good of one's soul without losing or wasting a single moment of it.

Finally, when you are in your Retreat, I would beg of you to use the following short prayer:—

O my God, I am that miserable one who in the past despised Thee; but now I esteem and love Thee above

everything, nor will I love any other but Thee. Thou wishest me to belong entirely to Thee; to Thee I will belong entirely. *Speak, O Lord; for thy servant heareth*—(1 Kings iii. 10). Let me know what Thou wishest from me, and I will do all. Let me especially know in what particular state Thou wishest me to serve Thee: *Make thou known to me the way in which I should walk*—(Ps. cxlii. 8).

During the Exercises recommend yourself also in a special manner to the Divine Mother Mary, praying her to obtain for you the grace to accomplish perfectly the will of her Son.

And do not forget, when you make the Exercises, to recommend me to Jesus Christ, as I will not omit to do so in a particular manner for you, that He may make you a saint, as I wish with all my heart. Your most devoted and obliged servant,

ALPHONSUS MARY,
Bishop of St. Agatha.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity beareth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY AND CONTEMPT.

I.

In the third place, we must practise patience, and show our love of God by tranquilly submitting to con-

tempt. As soon as a soul delivers herself up to God, He sends her from Himself, or through others, insults and persecution. One day an Angel appeared to the Blessed Henry Suso, and said to him: "Henry, thou hast hitherto mortified thyself in thy own way; henceforth thou shalt be mortified after the pleasure of others." On the day following, as he was looking from a window on the street he saw a dog shaking and tearing a rag which it held in its mouth; at the same moment a voice said to him: "So hast thou to be torn in the mouths of men." Forthwith the Blessed Henry Suso descended into the street and secured the rag, putting it by to encourage him in his coming trials.

I love Thee with my whole heart, O my dear Redeemer! I love Thee, my Sovereign Good! I love Thee, my own Love, worthy of infinite love! I am grieved at any displeasure I have ever caused Thee, more than for any evil whatever. I promise Thee to receive with patience all the trials Thou mayest send me; but I look to Thee for help to be faithful to my promise, and especially to be enabled to bear in peace the sorrows of my last agony and death.

O Mary, my Queen, vouchsafe to obtain for me a true resignation in all the anguish and trials that await me during life and at death.

II.

Affronts and injuries were the delicacies the Saints earnestly desired and sought for. St. Philip Neri, during the space of thirty years had to put up with much ill-treatment in the house of St. Jerome at Rome; but on this very account he refused to leave it, and resisted all the invitations of his sons to come and live with them in the new Oratory, founded by himself, till he received an express command from the Pope to do so. St. John of the Cross was prescribed change of air for an illness which eventually carried him to the grave. Now, he could have selected a more commodious convent, the prior of which was particularly attached to him; but he

chose instead a poor convent, whose superior was unfriendly, and who, in fact, for a long time, and almost up to his dying day, spoke ill of him, and abused him in many ways, and even prohibited the others from visiting him. Here we see how the Saints even sought to be despised. St. Teresa wrote this admirable maxim: "Whoever aspires to perfection must beware of ever saying: *They had no reason to treat me so*. If you will not bear any cross but one which is founded on reason, then perfection is not for you." Whilst St. Peter Martyr was complaining in prison of being confined unjustly he received that celebrated answer from the Crucifix; our Lord said to him: "And what evil have I done that I suffer and die on this Cross for men?" Oh, what consolation do the Saints derive in all their tribulations from the ignominies Jesus endured! St. Eleazar, on being asked by his wife how he contrived to bear with so much patience the many injuries he had to sustain, and that even from his own servants, replied: "I turn my eyes on the outraged Jesus, and I discover immediately that my affronts are a mere nothing in comparison with what He suffered for my sake; and thus God gives me strength to support all patiently." In fine, affronts, poverty, torments, and tribulations serve only to estrange further from God the soul that does not love Him; whereas, when they befall a soul in love with God they become an instrument of closer union and more ardent affection: *Many waters cannot quench charity* —(Cant. viii. 7). However great and grievous troubles may be, so far from extinguishing the flames of charity, they only serve to enkindle them the more in a soul that loves nothing else but God.

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

OUR JOURNEY INTO ETERNITY.—WE ARE ONLY PILGRIMS ON THIS EARTH.

We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come. In this world we are not citizens, but pilgrims, for we are on our way to Eternity. Man shall go into the house of his eternity.

I.

We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come—(Heb. xiii. 14). In this world we are not citizens, but pilgrims, for we are on our way to Eternity: Man shall go into the house of his eternity—(Eccles. xii. 5).

Very soon, therefore, we shall have to leave this world, The body must soon go into the grave, and the soul into Eternity.

Would not that traveller be guilty of great folly, who should waste his time and his wealth in building himself a dwelling in a place he must soon leave?

O my God, my soul is eternal; I must, then, either enjoy Thee or lose Thee for Eternity.

In Eternity there are two places of abode—one overflowing with every delight, the other replete with every torment. And these delights and torments will be eternal. *If the tree fall to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall there shall it be—(Eccles. xi. 3).* If the soul be saved, it will be happy forever; but if it fall into hell, it will remain there to weep and lament as long as God shall be God.

There is no middle state: either a king forever in Heaven, or forever a slave of Lucifer; either blessed forever in Paradise, or in despair forever in hell.

Which of these abodes will fall to the lot of each of us? That which each one voluntarily chooses. *Man shall go—Ibit homo.* He who goes to hell, goes of his own free will. Every one that is damned, is damned because he wills his own damnation.

O my Jesus, would that I had always loved Thee! Too late have I known Thee! too late have I loved Thee! O Thou, the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever!—(Ps. lxxii. 26).

II.

Every Christian, in order to live well, should always keep Eternity before his eyes. Oh, how well regulated is the life of that man who lives and sees all things in the light of Eternity!

If Heaven, Hell, and Eternity were even only doubtful things, surely we ought to do all in our power not to run the risk of being lost forever. But no; they are not doubtful things, but Articles of Faith.

To what will all the greatness of this world come? To a funeral; to a descent into the grave. Blessed in that hour is he who obtains eternal life!

O Jesus! Thou art my life, my riches, my love. Grant me a great desire to please Thee during the remainder of my life; and give me Thy assistance to fulfil it.

The thought of Eternity is sufficient to make a saint. St. Augustine called it the *Great Thought*. It is this thought that has sent so many young persons into cloisters, so many anchorites into deserts, and so many Martyrs to cruel deaths.

Father John of Avila converted a lady who was attached to the world, by only saying: "Consider: *Always and Forever!*"

Oh, how much depends on the last moment of our lives! On our last breath depends an Eternity, either of happiness or of misery; a life of eternal bliss, or of

eternal woe. Jesus Christ died upon the Cross, in order to secure for us His grace at this last moment.

My dear Redeemer, if then Thou hadst not died for me, I should have been lost forever! I thank Thee, O my Love! I confide in Thee and I love Thee!

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, THE GREAT MEANS OF SALVATION.

I have published several spiritual works *The Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*, *The Passion of Jesus Christ*, *The Glories of Mary*, and, besides, a work against the Materialists and Deists, with other devout little treatises. I have recently brought out a work on the Infancy of our Saviour entitled *Novena for Christmas*; and another entitled *Preparation for Death*, besides the one on the *Eternal Maxims*, most useful for meditation and sermons. . . . But I do not think that I have written a more useful work than the present, in which I speak of prayer as a necessary, and a certain means of obtaining salvation, and all the graces which we require for that object. If it were in my power, I would distribute a copy of it to every Catholic in the world, in order to show him the absolute necessity of prayer for salvation.

I say this, because on the one hand I see that the absolute necessity of prayer is taught throughout the Holy Scriptures, and by all the Holy Fathers of the Church, while, on the other hand, I see that Christians are very careless in their practice of this great means of salvation. And, sadder still, I see that preachers take very little care to speak of it to their flocks, or confessors to their penitents; I see, moreover, that even the spiritual books now popular do not speak sufficiently of it; yet there is nothing which preachers, and confessors, and spiritual books should insist upon with more warmth

and energy than prayer; not but that they teach many excellent means of keeping ourselves in the grace of God, such as avoiding the occasions of sin, frequenting the Sacraments, resisting temptations, hearing the Word of God, meditation on the Eternal Truths, and other means—all of them, I admit, most useful; but, I say, what profit is there in sermons, meditations, and all the other means pointed out by masters of the spiritual life, if we forget to pray? Has not our Lord declared that He will grant His graces to no one who does not pray? *Ask and ye shall receive*. Without prayer, in the ordinary course of providence, all the meditations we make, all our resolutions, all our promises, will come to naught. If we do not pray, we shall be always unfaithful to the inspirations of God, and to the promises we make Him. Because, in order actually to do good, to conquer temptations, to practise virtues, and to observe God's law, it is not enough to receive illumination from God, and to meditate and make resolutions, but we require, moreover, the actual assistance of God; and, as we shall see, He does not give this assistance except to those who pray, and pray with perseverance. The light we receive, and the considerations and good resolutions we make, are of use to incite us to the act of prayer when we are in danger and are tempted to transgress God's law; for then prayer will obtain for us God's help, and we shall be preserved from sin; but if in such moments we do not pray, we shall be lost.

My intention in thus prefacing my book is, that my readers may thank God for giving them an opportunity, by means of this little book, to receive the grace of reflecting more deeply on the importance of prayer; for all adults who are saved, are ordinarily saved by this single means of grace. And therefore I ask my readers to thank God; for surely it is a great mercy when He gives the light and the grace to pray. I hope, then, that you, my beloved brother, after reading this little work, will never from this day forward, neglect to have continual recourse to God in prayer, whenever you are

tempted to offend Him. If ever in times past you have had your conscience burdened with many sins, know that the cause of this has been your neglect of prayer, your not asking God for help to resist the temptations which assailed you. I pray you, therefore, to read my words again and again with the greatest attention; not because I write them, but because this book is a means which God offers you for the good of your salvation, thereby giving you to understand that He wishes you to be saved. And after having read it yourself, induce as many of your friends and neighbours as you can to read it also. Now let us begin in the Name of the Lord.

The Apostle writes to Timothy: *I desire, therefore, first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made*—(1 Tim ii. 1). St. Thomas explains that prayer is properly the lifting up of the soul to God. *Petition* is that particular kind of prayer which begs for determinate objects, but when the thing sought is indeterminate (as when we say, "Incline unto my aid, O God!"), it is called *supplication*. *Obsecration* is a solemn adjuration or representation of the grounds on which we dare to ask a favour; as when we say, "By Thy Cross and Passion, O Lord, deliver us!" Finally, *thanksgiving* is the returning of thanks for benefits received, whereby, says St. Thomas, we merit to receive greater favours. Prayer, in a strict sense, says the holy Doctor, means recourse to God; but in its general signification it includes all the kinds just enumerated. It is in this latter sense that the word is used in this book.

We will here treat:

- 1.—Of the Necessity of Prayer; the Power of Prayer, and the Conditions of Prayer;
- 2.—We will show that God gives the grace of Prayer to all men.*

* Only a part, but we think the most important part, of St. Alphonsus' Treatise on Prayer will be given here. The entire Treatise is included in Vol. III. of the tenary Edition of the Saint's works, which may be obtained from the Editor of the present work.—ED.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity beareth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY, AND CONTEMPT.

I.

But wherefore does Almighty God load us with so many crosses, and take pleasure in seeing us afflicted, reviled, persecuted, and ill-treated by the world? Is He perchance, a tyrant, whose cruel disposition makes Him rejoice in our suffering? No; God is by no means a tyrant, nor cruel; He is all compassion and love towards us; suffice it to say that He has died for us. He indeed does rejoice at our suffering, because suffering is for our good; inasmuch as by suffering here we are released hereafter from the debt of punishment justly due from us to His Divine justice; He rejoices in our sufferings because they detach us from the sensual pleasures of this world: when a mother would wean her child she puts gall on the breast in order to create a dislike in the child; He rejoices in sufferings because we give Him, by our patience and resignation in bearing them, a token of our love; in fine, He rejoices in them, because they contribute to our increase of glory in Heaven. Such are the reasons for which the Almighty, in His compassion and love towards us, is pleased when we suffer.

I love Thee with my whole heart, O my Redeemer! I love Thee, my sovereign Good! I love Thee, my own Love, worthy of infinite love. I am grieved at any displeasure I have ever caused Thee, more than for any evil whatever. I promise Thee to receive with patience all the trials Thou mayest send me; but I look to Thee

for help to be faithful to my promise, and especially to be enabled to bear in peace the sorrows of my last agony and death.

II.

Let us conclude. That we may be able to practise patience to advantage in all our tribulations, we must be fully persuaded that every trial comes from the hands of God, either directly, or indirectly through men; we must therefore render God thanks whenever we are beset with sorrows, and accept, with gladness of heart, of every event, prosperous or adverse, that proceeds from Him, knowing that all happens by His disposition and for our welfare: *To them that love God all things work together unto good*—(Rom. viii. 28). In addition to this, it is well in our tribulations to glance a moment at that hell we formerly deserved: for assuredly all the pains of this life are incomparably less than the awful pains of hell. But above all, prayer, by which we gain the Divine assistance, is the great means by which we may suffer patiently all affliction, scorn, and contradictions, and is that which will furnish us with the strength we have not of ourselves. The Saints were persuaded of this; they recommended themselves to God, and so overcame every kind of torments and persecutions.

O Lord, I am fully persuaded that without suffering, and suffering with patience, I cannot win the crown of Paradise. David said: *From him is my patience*—(Ps. lxi. 6). And I say the same; my patience in suffering must come from Thee. I make many resolutions to accept all tribulations in peace; but no sooner are trials at hand than I grow sad and alarmed; and if I suffer, I suffer without merit and without love, because I know not how to suffer them so as to please Thee. O my Jesus, through the merits of Thy patience in bearing so many afflictions for love of me, grant me the grace to bear crosses for the love of Thee!

O Mary, my Queen, vouchsafe to obtain for me a true resignation in all the anguish and trials that await me during life and at death.

Monday—Sixth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

OUR JOURNEY INTO ETERNITY.—THE FOLLY OF THOSE WHO DO NOT CONSIDER IT.

O my God, the months and years pass! We are hastening towards Eternity and we do not concern ourselves to think about it! And who knows but this may be the last warning I may receive from God!

I.

Either we believe or we do not believe. If we do not believe, we are doing too much for things we regard as fables. But if we do believe, then we do too little to obtain a happy Eternity, and to avoid eternal misery.

Father Vincent Carafa said that if men thoroughly knew the Truths of Eternity, and compared the goods and evils of this life with those of the next, the earth would become a desert, because there would be none at all who would attend to the affairs of this world.

When the last moment is near at hand, how we shall tremble at the thought that on that moment will depend our eternal happiness or misery!

O my God, the months and years pass! We are hastening towards eternity, and we do not concern ourselves to think about it! And who knows but that this year or month may be my last? Who knows but that this may be the last warning I may receive from God?

O my God, I will no longer abuse Thy graces! Behold, I am ready! Make known to me what Thou wouldst have me do, and in all things I will obey Thee.

And why should we delay after so many lights and calls from God, unless we desire to lament with the damned, saying: *The summer is ended, and we are not*

saved—(Jer. viii. 20). Now is the time for reconciliation with God, for after death no remedy will be left.

With good reason did Father John of Avila say that Christians who believe eternal life, and live at a distance from God, ought to be shut up in an asylum as insane.

The business of Eternity is indeed important. It is not whether we shall inhabit a house more or less commodious or lightsome; but whether we shall dwell in a palace of all delights, or in an abyss of the most terrible torments. It is whether we shall be happy with the Saints and Angels, or live in despair with the multitude of the enemies of God. And for how many years? For a thousand? No; forever, forever, as long as God shall be God.

If, then, O God, I had died in my sins, should I not have lost Thee forever? If as yet, O Lord, Thou hast not pardoned me, pardon me now, I beseech Thee. I love Thee with all my soul, and I am sorry above every other evil for having offended Thee. I will never lose Thee more. I love Thee with all my heart, and will forever love Thee. Have pity on me.

II.

There are many upon whom, during life, it makes little impression to hear of Judgment, Hell, Eternity. But in death what dread and terror do these Truths excite! But, alas! with but little fruit; because then they serve only to increase their remorse and confusion.

St. Teresa used to say to her Religious: "Daughters, one soul, one Eternity!" By which she meant that if the soul is lost, all is lost, and that the soul once lost, is lost forever.

O Lord, wait yet awhile, that I may weep for my sins. Too many years have I spent in displeasing Thee! The time which yet remains to me shall be given all to Thee. Accept of me, that I may serve Thee, O my God, my God!

The Lord waits for us; let us highly prize the time which, in His mercy, He bestows upon us, that we may not have to lament when for us time shall be no more,

O God, what would not a dying man give for another day, or even another hour! Another day or hour in his sound senses! Alas, the time which remains to the dying man is but little adapted to the settling of the affairs of conscience. Giddiness of head, pains of body, oppressions at the chest, hinder the mind from doing anything in a proper manner. Then the soul, as it were, buried in obscurity, is alive to nothing but the distress which overpowers it, and which it cannot alleviate. It longs to have a little time, but sees that there is no more time for it.

At what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come—(Luke xii. 40). God conceals from us the time of death, that we may always be ready. The time of death is not the time to *prepare ourselves* to give an account of our souls, but the time when we should find *ourselves prepared* to do so. St. Bernard said: "In order to die well, we must be ever prepared to die."

O Jesus, too long have I offended Thee! It is surely now time to resolve henceforth to prepare for death. I will no longer abuse Thy patience. I desire to love Thee with all my power. I have very much offended Thee; I desire now to love Thee very much.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, ITS NECESSITY.

I.—IT IS A MEANS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION.

One of the errors of Pelagianism was the assertion that *Prayer is not necessary for salvation*. Pelagius, the impious author of that heresy, said that man will only be damned for neglecting to know the truths necessary to be learned. How astonishing! St. Augustine said: "Pelagius discussed everything except how to pray," though, as the Saint held and taught,—Prayer is the

only means of acquiring the science of the Saints, according to the words of St. James : *If any man want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not*—(James i. 5).

The Scriptures are clear enough in pointing out how necessary it is to pray, if we would be saved. *We ought always to pray, and not to faint*—(Luke xviii. 1). *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*—(Matt. xxvi. 41). *Ask, and it shall be given you*—(Matt. vii. 7). The words *we ought, pray, ask*, according to the general consent of Theologians, impose the precept, and denote the *Necessity of Prayer*. Wickliffe said that these texts are to be understood, not of the necessity of Prayer, but of the *necessity of good works*, for in his system Prayer was only *well-doing*; but this was his error, and was expressly condemned by the Church. Hence Lessius wrote that it is heresy to deny that Prayer is necessary for salvation in adults, as it is evident from Scripture that Prayer is the means, without which we cannot obtain the help necessary for salvation.

The reason of this is clear. Without the assistance of God's grace we can do no good work : *Without me, ye can do nothing*—(John xv. 5). St. Augustine remarks on this passage that our Lord did not say : "Without Me, ye can complete nothing," but, "Without Me, ye can do nothing"; giving us to understand, that without grace we cannot even begin to do a good work. Nay more, St. Paul writes, that of ourselves we cannot even have the wish to do good. *Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves . . . but our sufficiency is from God*—(2 Cor. iii. 5). If we cannot even think a good thought, much less can we wish to carry it out. The same thing is taught in many other passages of Scripture : *God worketh all in all*—(1 Cor. xii. 6). *I will cause you to walk in my commandments, and to keep my judgments, and do them*—(Ezech. xxxvi. 27). So that, as St. Leo I. says : "Man does no good thing, except that which God, by His grace, enables him to do"; and hence the Council of Trent says : "If any one shall assert that without the previous inspiration of the

Holy Ghost, and His assistance, man can believe, hope, love, or repent, as he ought, in order to obtain the grace of justification, let him be anathema."

The author of the *Opus Imperfectum* says that God has given to some animals swiftness, to others claws, to others wings, for the preservation of their life; but He has so formed man that God Himself is his only strength. So that man is absolutely unable to provide for his own safety, since God has willed that whatever he has, or can have, should come entirely from the assistance of His grace.

But this grace is not given in God's ordinary Providence, except to those who pray for it; according to the celebrated saying of Gennadius, "We believe that no one comes to be saved, except at the invitation of God; that no one who is invited works out his salvation, except by the help of God; that no one merits this help, unless he prays." From these two premises, first, that *we can do nothing without the assistance of grace*; and secondly, that *this assistance is only given ordinarily by God to the man that prays*—who does not see that the consequence follows, that *prayer is absolutely necessary to us for salvation*? And although the first graces that come to us without any co-operation on our part, such as the call to Faith or to penance, are, as St. Augustine says, granted by God even to those who do not pray; yet the Saint considers it certain that the other graces, and specially the grace of perseverance, are not granted except in answer to Prayer : "God gives us some things, as the beginning of Faith, even when we do not pray. Other things, such as perseverance, He has only provided for those who pray."

Hence it is that the generality of Theologians, following St. Basil, St. Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, St. Augustine, and other Fathers, teach that Prayer is necessary to adults, not only because of the obligation of the precept, as we have seen, but because Prayer is necessary as a means of salvation. That is to say, in the ordinary course of Providence, it is impossible that a Christian should be saved without recommending him-

self to God, and asking for the graces necessary for salvation. St. Thomas teaches the same: "After Baptism, continual Prayer is necessary for man, in order that he may enter Heaven; for though by Baptism our sins are remitted, there still remain concupiscence to assail us from within, and the world and the devil to assail us from without." The reason, then, which makes us certain of the necessity of Prayer is briefly this: In order to be saved we must fight and conquer: *He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned except he strive lawfully*—(2 Tim. ii. 5). But without the Divine assistance we cannot resist the might of so many and such powerful enemies; now this assistance is granted only to Prayer; therefore, without Prayer there is no salvation.

Moreover, that Prayer is the only ordinary means of receiving the Divine gift, is very distinctly proved by St. Thomas in another place, where he says that whatever graces God has from all eternity determined to give us, He will only give them if we pray for them. St. Gregory says the same thing: "Man by Prayer merits to receive that which God had from all eternity determined to give him." Not, says St. Thomas, that Prayer is necessary in order that God may know our necessities, but in order that we may know the necessity of having recourse to God to obtain the help necessary for our salvation, and may thus acknowledge Him to be the Author of all our good. As, therefore, it is God's law that we should provide ourselves with bread by sowing corn, and wine by planting vines, so has He ordained that we should receive the graces necessary to salvation by means of Prayer: *Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find*—(Matt. vii. 7).

We, in a word, are merely beggars, who have nothing but what God bestows on us as alms: *But I am a beggar and poor*—(Ps. xxxix. 18). The Lord, says St. Augustine, desires and wills to pour forth His graces upon us, but does not give them except to him who prays. "God wishes to give, but only to him who asks." This is declared in the words, *Ask, and it shall*

be given to you. Whence it follows, says St. Teresa, that he who seeks not, does not receive. As moisture is necessary for the life of plants, to prevent them from drying up, so, says St. Chrysostom, is Prayer necessary for our salvation. Or, as he says in another place, Prayer vivifies the soul as the soul vivifies the body: "As the body without the soul cannot live, so the soul without Prayer is dead and emits an offensive odour." "Graviter olens." He uses these words because the man who omits to recommend himself to God at once begins to be defiled with sins. Prayer is also called the food of the soul, because the body cannot be supported without food; nor can the soul, says St. Augustine, be kept alive without Prayer: "As the flesh is nourished by food, so is man supported by prayers." All these comparisons used by the holy Fathers are intended by them to teach the *absolute necessity of Prayer for the salvation of every one.*

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity believeth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BELIEVES ALL HIS WORDS.

I.

Whoever loves a person believes all that proceeds from the lips of that person; consequently, the more a soul loves Jesus Christ, the more lively and unshaken is her Faith. When the Good Thief beheld our Redeemer, though He had done no ill, suffering death upon the Cross with such patience, he began at once to love Him; under the influence of this love, and of the Divine light which then broke upon his soul, he believed that Jesus was truly the Son of God, and begged not to be forgotten by Him when He should have passed into His Kingdom.

Faith is the foundation of Charity; but Faith afterwards receives its perfection from Charity. His Faith is most perfect whose love of God is most perfect. Charity produces in man not merely the Faith of the understanding, but the Faith of the will also; those who believe only with the understanding, but not with the will, as is the case with sinners who are perfectly convinced of the Truths of the Faith, but do not choose to live according to the Divine Commandments—such as these have a very weak Faith; for had they a more lively belief that the grace of God is a priceless treasure, and that sin, because it robs us of this grace, is the worst of evils, they would assuredly change their lives. If, then, they prefer the miserable creatures of this earth to God, it is because they either do not believe or because their Faith is very weak. On the contrary, he who believes not only with the understanding but also with the will, so that he not only believes in God but has the will to believe in Him, the Revealer of truth, from the love he has for Him, and rejoices in so believing—such a one has a perfect Faith, and consequently seeks to make his life conformable to the truths he believes.

II.

Weakness of Faith, however, in those who live in sin, does not spring from the obscurity of Faith; for though God, in order to make our Faith more meritorious, has veiled the objects of Faith in darkness and secrecy, He has at the same time given us so clear and convincing evidence of their truth, that not to believe them would argue not merely a lack of sense, but sheer madness and impiety. The weakness of the Faith of many persons is to be traced to their wickedness of living. He who, rather than forego the enjoyment of forbidden pleasures, scorns the Divine friendship, would wish there was no law to forbid, and no chastisement to punish, his sin. On this account he strives to blind himself to the eternal truths of Death, Judgment, and Hell, and of Divine justice; and because such subjects strike too much terror

into his heart, and are too apt to mix bitterness in his cup of pleasure, he sets his brain to work to discover proofs, which have at least the look of plausibility; and by which he allows himself to be flattered into the persuasion that there is no soul, no God, no hell, in order that he may live and die like the brute beast, without law and without reason.

Tuesday—Sixth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

OUR JOURNEY INTO ETERNITY.—LET US PROFIT BY THE TIME THAT IS GIVEN US.

Walk, says our Divine Lord, *while you have the light, for, the night cometh when no man can work.* Oh, what a torment for the poor repentant sinner at the end of a careless life when there is no time left him to do all he has left undone!

I.

Oh, what a torment for the poor repentant sinner at the end of a careless life when there is no time left him to do all he left undone! St. Laurence Justinian says that worldlings, in death, would willingly give all their riches to obtain but one more hour of life. But it will be said to them: *Time shall be no more*—(Apoc. x. 6). It will be intimated to them to depart without delay: *Go forth, Christian soul, out of this world!*

St. Gregory relates that a certain Crisorus, being at the point of death, cried out to the demons: "Give me time until to-morrow." But they replied, "Fool! thou

hast had time, and why didst thou waste it? Now there is no more time for thee."

Ah, my God, how many years have I not wasted! The remainder of my time shall be entirely devoted to Thee. Grant that Thy holy love may abound in me, in whom sin has so long abounded.

St. Bernardine of Sienna said that every moment of time in this life is as precious as God; because at any moment, by an act of love or contrition, we may acquire new degrees of grace.

St. Bernard says that time is a treasure to be found only in this life. In hell, the lamentation of the damned is: "Oh, if one hour were given us!" Oh, if we had but one hour in which to escape from eternal ruin! In Heaven there is no weeping; but if the Blessed could weep, it would be at the thought of having lost so much time in which they might have acquired higher degrees of glory.

My beloved Redeemer, I do not deserve Thy pity; but Thy Passion is my hope. Help me, therefore, and stretch out Thy hand to a miserable sinner, who now desires to become wholly Thine.

And who knows but that a sudden death may surprise us, and deprive us of the time for making up our accounts? The many who have died suddenly did not expect so to die; and if they were in sin, what has become of them for all eternity?

III.

The Saints thought that they did but little, in preparing themselves during their whole lives to secure a good end. Blessed John of Avila, when it was announced to him that he was about to die, said: "Oh, that I had but a little more time to prepare myself!"

And we, why do we delay? Is it that we may make a wicked and most miserable end and leave to others an example of the Divine justice?

No, my Jesus, I will not oblige Thee to abandon me. Tell me what Thou requirest of me, and in all things I

will do Thy will. Grant that I may love Thee, and I ask for nothing more.

He hath called against me the time—(Lam. i. 15). Let us tremble, and let us not so live that God may hereafter, as judge of our ingratitude, call against us the time which, in His mercy, He now bestows upon us. *Walk, says our Lord, whilst you have the light—(Jo. xii. 35).* *The night cometh when no man can work—(Jo. ix. 4).*

St. Andrew Avellino trembled, saying: "Who knows whether I shall be saved or lost?" But speaking thus, he ever united himself the more closely to God. But what are we doing? How is it possible that he who believes he must die and go into Eternity should not give himself wholly to God?

My beloved Redeemer, my crucified Love, I will not wait till my death-hour to embrace Thee; from this moment I embrace Thee, I bind Thee to my heart, and leave all to love Thee alone, my only Good. O Mary, my Mother, bind me to Jesus, and obtain for me that I may never more separate myself from His love.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, ITS NECESSITY.

II.—WITHOUT PRAYER IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO RESIST TEMPTATIONS AND TO KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS.

Moreover, Prayer is the most necessary weapon of defence against our enemies; he who does not avail himself of it, says St. Thomas, is lost. He does not doubt that the reason of Adam's fall was because he did not recommend himself to God when he was tempted: "He sinned because he had not recourse to the Divine assistance." St. Gelasius says the same of the rebel angels: "Receiving the grace of God in vain, they could not persevere, because they did not pray." St. Charles

Borromeo, in a Pastoral letter, observes that among all the means of salvation recommended by Jesus Christ in the Gospel, the first place is given to Prayer; and He has determined that this should distinguish His Church from all false religions, when He calls her "The House of Prayer": *My house shall be called a house of prayer*—(Matt. xxi. 16). St. Charles concludes that Prayer is "the beginning and progress and the completion of all virtues." So that in darkness, distress, and danger, we have no other hope than to raise our eyes to God, and with fervent prayer to beseech His mercy to save us: *As we know not what to do*, said King Josaphat, *we can only turn our eyes to thee*—(2 Par. xx. 12). This also was David's practice, who could find no other means of safety from his enemies than continual Prayer to God to deliver him from their snares: *My eyes are ever towards the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare*—(Ps. xxiv. 15). So he did nothing but pray. *Look thou upon me and have mercy on me; for I am alone and poor*—(Ps. xxiv. 15). *I cried unto thee, O Lord; save me that I may keep thy commandments*—(Ps. cxviii. 146). Lord, turn Thy eyes to me, have pity on me, and save me; for I can do nothing, and besides Thee there is none that can help me.

And, indeed, how could we ever resist our enemies and observe God's precepts especially since Adam's sin, which has rendered us so weak and infirm, unless we had Prayer as a means whereby we can obtain from God sufficient light and strength to enable us to observe them? It was a blasphemy of Luther's to say that after the sin of Adam the observance of God's law has become absolutely impossible to man. Jansenius also said that there are some precepts which are impossible even to the just, *with the power which they actually have*, and so far his proposition bears a good sense; but it was justly condemned by the Church for the addition he made to it, when he said that *they have not the grace to make the precepts possible*. It is true, says St. Augustine, that man, in consequence of his weakness, is unable to fulfil some of God's commands with his

present strength and the *ordinary grace* given to all men; but *he can easily, by Prayer, obtain such further aid as he requires for his salvation*: "God commands not impossibilities; but by commanding He suggests to you both to do what you can and to ask for what you cannot do; and He helps you, that you may be able,"—"*Deus impossibilia non jubet; sed jubendo monet, et facere quod possis, et petere quod non possis; et adjuvat ut possis.*" This is a celebrated text, which was afterwards adopted and made a Dogma of Faith by the Council of Trent. The holy Doctor immediately adds: "Let us see how this is" (i.e. how man is able to do that which he cannot). "By medicine he can do that which his natural weakness renders impossible to him." That is, by Prayer we may obtain a remedy for our weakness; for when we pray, God gives us strength to do that which we cannot do of ourselves.

We cannot believe, continues St. Augustine, that God would have imposed upon us the observance of a law, and then made the law impossible. When, therefore, God shows us that of ourselves we are unable to observe all His commands it is simply to admonish us to do the easier things by means of the ordinary grace which He bestows on us, and then to do the more difficult things by means of the greater help which we can obtain by Prayer. "By the very fact that it is absurd to suppose that God could have commanded us to do impossible things, we are admonished what to do in easy matters, and what to ask for in difficulties." But why, it will be asked, has God commanded us to do things impossible by our natural strength? Precisely for this, says St. Augustine, that we may be incited to pray for help to do that which of ourselves we cannot do. "He commands some things which we cannot do, that we may know what we ought to ask of Him." And in another place: "The law was given that grace might be sought for; grace was given that the law might be fulfilled." The law cannot be kept without grace, and God has given the law with this object, that we may always ask Him for grace to observe it. In another place he says:

“The law is good, if it be used lawfully; what then, is the lawful use of the law?” He answers: “When by the law we perceive our own weakness, and ask of God the grace to heal us.” St. Augustine, then, says: We ought to use the law; but for what purpose? To learn by means of the law, which we find to be above our strength, our own inability to observe it, in order that we may then obtain by prayer the divine aid to cure our weakness.

St. Bernard’s teaching is the same: “Who are we, or what is our strength, that we should be able to resist so many temptations? It was certainly this that God intended, that we, seeing our deficiencies, and that we have no other help, should with all humility have recourse to His mercy.” God knows how useful it is to us to be obliged to pray, in order to keep us humble, and to exercise our confidence; and He therefore permits us to be assaulted by enemies too mighty to be overcome by our own strength, that by Prayer we may obtain from His mercy aid to resist them; and it is especially to be remarked that no one can resist the impure temptations of the flesh without recommending himself to God when he is tempted. This foe is so terrible that, when he fights with us, he, as it were, takes away all light; he makes us forget all our meditations, all our good resolutions; he makes us also disregard the Truths of Faith, and even almost lose the fear of Divine punishments. For he conspires with our natural inclinations, which drive us with the greatest violence to the indulgence of sensual pleasures. He who in such a moment does not have recourse to God is lost. The only defence against this temptation is Prayer, as St. Gregory of Nyssa says: “Prayer is the bulwark of chastity”; and before him Solomon: *And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it, I went to the Lord and besought him*—(Wis. viii. 21). Chastity is a virtue which we have not strength to practise, unless God gives it to us; and God does not give this strength except to him who asks for it. But whoever prays for it will certainly obtain it,

Hence St. Thomas observes (in contradiction to Jansenius), that we ought not to say that the precept of chastity, or any other, is impossible to us; for though we cannot observe it of our own strength, *we can by God’s assistance*. “It must be said that what we can do with the Divine assistance is not altogether impossible to us.” Let no one say that it appears an injustice to order a cripple to walk straight. No, says St. Augustine, it is not an injustice, provided always the means are given him to find the remedy for his lameness; for after this, if he still go lame, the fault is his own. “It is most wisely commanded that man should walk uprightly, so that when he sees that he cannot do so of himself, he may seek a remedy to heal the lameness of sin.”

Finally, the same holy Doctor says that he will never know how to live well who does not know how to pray well. “He knows how to live aright who knows how to pray aright”; and, on the other hand, St. Francis of Assisi says that without Prayer you can never hope to find good fruit in a soul. Wrongly, therefore, do these sinners excuse themselves who say that they have no strength to resist temptation. But if you have not this strength, why do you not ask for it? is the reproof which St. James gives them: *You have not, because you ask not*—(James iv. 2). There is no doubt that we are too weak to resist the attacks of our enemies. But, on the other hand, it is certain that God is faithful, as the Apostle says, and will not permit us to be tempted beyond our strength: *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with the temptation issue, that ye may be able to bear it*—(1 Cor. x. 13). “He will provide an issue for it,” says Primasius, “by the protection of His grace, that you may be able to withstand the temptation.” We are weak, but God is strong; when we ask Him for aid, He communicates His strength to us; and we shall be able to do all things, as the Apostle reasonably assured himself: *I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me*—(Philip. iv. 13). He, therefore, who falls has no excuse, says St. Chrysostom, because

he has neglected to pray; for if he had prayed, he would not have been overcome by his enemies. "Nor can any one be excused who, by ceasing to pray, has shown that he did not wish to overcome his enemy."

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity believeth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BELIEVES ALL HIS WORDS.

I.

And this laxity of morals is the source whence have issued, and still issue daily, so many books and systems of Materialists, Indifferentists, Politicians, Deists, and Naturalists; some among them deny the existence of God, and some Divine Providence, saying that God, after having created men, takes no further notice of them, and is heedless whether they love or hate Him, whether they be saved or lost; others, again, deny the goodness of God, and maintain that He has created numberless souls for hell, becoming Himself their tempter to sin, that so they may damn themselves, and go into everlasting fire, to curse Him there forever!

Oh, ingratitude and wickedness of men! God has created them in His mercy, to make them eternally happy in Heaven; He has poured on them so many lights, benefits, and graces, to bring them to eternal life; for the same end He redeemed them at the price of so many sorrows and sufferings; and yet they strive to deny all, that they may give free rein to their vicious inclinations!

II.

But no; let men strive as they will, the unhappy beings cannot tear themselves away from remorse of conscience, and the dread of the Divine vengeance. On this subject

I have lately published a work entitled *The Truth of Faith*, in which I have clearly shown the inconsistency of all these systems of modern unbelievers. Oh, if they would but once forsake sin, and apply themselves earnestly to the love of Jesus Christ, they would then most certainly cast away all doubts about things of Faith, and firmly believe all the truths that God has revealed!

O my God, let not Thy precious Blood be shed for me in vain! Thou hast promised pardon to him who repents of his sins. O my God, I grieve from the bottom of my heart for the many offences I have committed against Thee. I now love Thee above all things. I will never sin again. No, my God, let me die rather than ever offend Thee.

Wednesday—Sixth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

MORTAL SIN.—ITS MALICE.

To understand how great is the malice of mortal sin we must first know who God is, and what a wretched being man is who dares to despise Him. Before God all the Saints and Angels are as nothing, and it is a worm of the earth who has the insolence to despise Him!

I.

What is mortal sin? According to St. Thomas and St. Augustine, it is a *turning-away from God*; an act of contempt for God's grace and love, and a throwing-off

of all respect for Him, by which the sinner declares to God's very face : I will not serve Thee ! I will act as I please, and, if by so doing, I displease Thee and forfeit Thy friendship, I care not !

To understand how great is the malice of mortal sin, we must first know who God is, and what a wretched being man is who despises Him. Before God all the Saints and Angels are as nothing, and shall a worm of the earth have the insolence to despise Him ?

But more than this. Man, by committing sin, not only despises a God of infinite majesty, but a God Who has so loved him as to die for the love of him. An eternity, therefore, would not be sufficient to bewail but one mortal sin.

He who commits mortal sin dishonours God by preferring before Him a whim, a fit of passion, a wretched gratification. A God so great and so good ! And so dishonoured !

O Lord, if Thou hadst not sacrificed Thyself on the Cross for the love of me, I should lose all hope of pardon ; but Thy death gives me confidence. *Into thy hands I commend my spirit*—(Ps. xxx. 6) I commend to Thee my soul for which Thou hast been pleased to shed Thy Blood and sacrifice Thy life ; grant that it may love Thee and never more lose Thee. I love Thee, my Jesus, my Love, and my Hope. And how shall I ever be able, after having learned how much Thou hast loved me, to separate myself from Thee, my only Good ?

What an affliction it is to us to be injured by one for whom we have done much ! God is not capable of grief ; but could He grieve, He would die of grief and sorrow at being despised by a creature for whom He gave even His very life.

O my accursed sins, a thousand times do I detest and abhor you ! You have caused me to offend my Redeemer, Who has loved me so much !

Unhappy souls, now confined in hell, you who, during life, said that sin was a slight evil, have you not to acknowledge now that all your torments are far less than what you deserved for your sins ?

II.

Sin must surely be a great evil since God, Who is Mercy itself, is obliged to punish it with an eternal hell. Yea, more ! In order to satisfy Divine justice for sin, a God was obliged to sacrifice His own life !

O God, we know that hell is the most horrible punishment, and have we no fear of sin, which may cast us into that hell ? We know that God has died, in order that He might be able to pardon our sins ; and do we still continue to commit sin ?

The loss of the least worldly possession makes us uneasy and sad ; and does the loss of God distress us not ?—a loss that should not fail to overwhelm us with affliction and grief for the remainder of our lives !

I give Thee thanks, O Lord, for having given me time to bewail my offences against Thee. O Jesus, I abhor and hate them. Give me still greater sorrow, still greater love, that I may lament all my sins, not so much on account of the punishment I have deserved for them, as for having offended Thee, my most amiable God.

What disquiet and fears agitate a courtier who is afraid of having offended his prince ? And do we, who know for certain that we have displeased God, and forfeited His friendship, live tranquil, without grief or sorrow !

What care do not men take to avoid poison, which destroys only the body ? And yet what great negligence in regard to sin which poisons the immortal soul, and robs us of God !

Let us not be ensnared by that wile of the devil, by which he suggests to us how easily we can afterwards confess a sin. Oh, how many has the enemy drawn into hell by this stratagem !

O my God, for how many years have I deserved to dwell in hell ! Thou hast been waiting for me, that I may forever bless Thy mercy, and love Thee. Yes, my Jesus, I bless Thee and love Thee ; and I trust in Thy merits that I shall nevermore be separated from Thy love. But if after so many graces and mercies I again

offend Thee, how shall I presume that Thou wilt not abandon me, or ever again forgive me? Permit it not, O Lord, that I ever offend Thee again!

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, ITS NECESSITY.

III.—ON INVOKING THE SAINTS AND ON PRAYING TO THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

Here a question arises, whether it is *necessary* to have recourse to the intercession of the Saints to obtain the grace of God.

1. That it is a *lawful* and *useful* thing to *invoke the Saints*, as intercessors, to obtain for us, by the merits of Jesus Christ, that which we, for our demerits, are not worthy to receive, is a Doctrine of the Church, declared by the Council of Trent. "It is good and useful to invoke them by supplication, and to have recourse to their aid and influence to obtain benefits from God through His Son Jesus Christ."

Such invocation was condemned by the impious Calvin, but most foolishly. For if it is lawful and profitable to invoke *living Saints* to aid us, and to beseech them to assist us in prayers, as the Prophet Baruch did: *And pray ye for us to the Lord our God*—(Baruch i. 18); and St. Paul: *Brethren, pray for us*—(1 Thess. v. 25); and as God Himself commanded the friends of Job to recommend themselves to his prayers, that by the merits of Job He might look favourably on them: *Go to my servant Job, . . . and my servant Job shall pray for you; his face I will accept*—(Job xlii. 8); if, then, it is lawful for us to recommend ourselves to the *living*, how can it be unlawful to invoke the Saints who in Heaven enjoy God face to face? This is not derogatory to the honour due to God, but it is doubling it; for

it is honouring the King not only in His Person but in His servants. Therefore, says, St. Thomas, it is good to have recourse to many Saints, "because by the prayers of many we can obtain that which we cannot by the prayers of one." And if any one object: But why have recourse to the Saints to pray for us, when they are already praying for all who are worthy of it? The same Doctor answers that no one can be said to be worthy that the Saints should pray for him; but that "he becomes worthy by having recourse to the Saints with devotion."

2. Again, it is disputed whether it is useful to recommend one's self to the Souls in Purgatory. Some say that the Souls in that state cannot pray for us; and these rely on the authority of St. Thomas, who says that those Souls, while they are being purified by pain, are inferior to us, and therefore "are not in a state to pray for us, but rather require our prayers." But many other Doctors, as Bellarmine, Cardinal Gotti, Lessius, and others, affirm with great probability that we should piously believe that God manifests our prayers to those Holy Souls, that they may in turn pray for us; and that so the charitable interchange of mutual prayer may be kept up between them and us. Nor do St. Thomas's words present much difficulty; for, as Sylvius and Gotti say, it is one thing *not to be in a state to pray*, another *not to be able to pray*. It is true that those Souls are not in a state to pray, because, as St. Thomas says, while suffering they are inferior to us, and rather require our prayers; nevertheless, in this state they are well able to pray, as they are the friends of God. If a father keeps a son whom he tenderly loves in confinement for some fault; if the son then is not in a state to pray for himself, is that any reason why he cannot pray for others? And may he not expect to obtain what he asks, knowing, as he does, his father's affection for him? So the Souls in Purgatory, being beloved by God, and confirmed in grace, have absolutely no impediment to prevent them from praying for us. Still the Church does not invoke them, or implore their intercession,

because ordinarily they have no cognisance of our prayers. But we may piously believe that God makes our prayers known to them; and then they, full of charity as they are, most assuredly do not omit to pray for us. St. Catherine of Bologna, whenever she desired any favour, had recourse to the Souls in Purgatory, and was immediately heard. She even testified that by the intercession of the Souls in Purgatory she had obtained many graces which had not been accorded to her by the intercession of the Saints. But here let me make a digression in favour of those Holy Souls.

8. If we desire the aid of their prayers, it is but fair that we should succour them with our prayers and good works. I said it is fair, but I should have said, *it is a Christian duty*; for Charity obliges us to succour our neighbour when he requires our aid, and we can help him without grave inconvenience. Now it is certain that amongst our neighbours are to be reckoned the Souls in Purgatory, who, although no longer living in this world, yet have not left the Communion of Saints. "The souls of the pious dead," says St. Augustine, "are not separated from the Church," and St. Thomas says more to our purpose that the Charity which is due to the dead who died in the grace of God is only an extension of the same Charity which we owe to our neighbour while living: "Charity, which is the bond that unites the members of the Church, extends not only to the living, but also to the dead who die in Charity." Therefore, we ought to succour, according to our ability, those Holy Souls as our neighbours; and as their necessities are greater than those of our other neighbours, for this reason our duty to succour them seems also to be greater.

But now, what are the necessities of those holy prisoners? It is certain that their pains are immense. The fire that tortures them, says St. Augustine, is more excruciating than any pain that man can endure in this life: "That fire will be more painful than anything that man can suffer in this life." St. Thomas thinks the same, and supposes it to be identical with the fire of hell: "The damned are tormented and the elect purified

in the same fire." And this only relates to the *pain of sense*. But the *pain of loss*, that is, the privation of the sight of God, which those Holy Souls suffer, is much greater; because not only their natural affection, but also the supernatural love of God, wherewith they burn, draws them with such violence to be united with their Sovereign Good, that when they see the barrier which their sins have put in the way, they feel a pain so acute that, if they were capable of death, they could not live a moment. So that, as St. Chrysostom says, this pain of the deprivation of God tortures them incomparably more than the pain of sense: "The flames of a thousand hells together could not inflict such torments as the pain of loss by itself." So that those Holy Souls would rather suffer every other possible torture than be deprived for a single instant of the union with God for which they long. So St. Thomas says that the pain of Purgatory exceeds anything that can be endured in this life: "The pain of Purgatory must exceed all pain of this life." And Denis the Carthusian relates that a dead person who had been raised to life by the intercession of St. Jerome, told St. Cyril of Jerusalem that all the torments of this earth are refreshing and delightful when compared with the very least pain in Purgatory: "If all the torments of the world were compared with the least that can be had in Purgatory they would appear to be comforts." And he adds that if a man had once felt these torments, he would rather suffer all earthly sorrows that man can endure till the Day of Judgment than suffer for one day the least pain of Purgatory. Hence St. Cyril wrote to St. Augustine: "That as far as regards the infliction of suffering, these pains are the same as those of hell—their *only difference* being that *they are not eternal*." Hence we see that the pains of these Holy Souls are excessive, while, on the other hand, they cannot help themselves; because, as Job says: *they are in chains, and are bound with the cords of poverty*—(Job xxxvi. 8). They are destined to reign with Christ; but they are withheld from taking possession of their kingdom till the time of their purga-

tion is accomplished. And they cannot help themselves (at least not sufficiently, even according to those Theologians who assert that they can by their prayers gain some relief) to throw off their chains, until they have entirely satisfied the justice of God. This is precisely what a Cistercian monk said to the sacristan of the monastery: "Help me, I beseech you, with your prayers; for of myself I can obtain nothing." And this is consistent with the saying of St. Bonaventure: "Destitution impedes solvency." That is, those souls are so poor, that they have no means of making satisfaction.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity believeth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BELIEVES ALL HIS WORDS.

I.

The true lover of Jesus Christ keeps Eternal Truths constantly in view, and orders all his actions according to them. Oh, how thoroughly does he who loves Jesus Christ understand the force of that saying of the Wise Man: *Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity*—(Eccles. i. 2)—that all earthly greatness is mere smoke, mire and delusion; that the soul's only welfare and happiness consists in loving its Creator, and in doing His blessed will; that we are, in reality, no more than what we are before God; that it is of no advantage to gain the whole world, if the soul be lost; that all the goods of the world can never satisfy the human heart, that only God Himself can satisfy it; and in fine, that we must leave all in order to gain all.

My beloved Redeemer, O Life of my soul, I firmly believe that Thou art the only Good worthy of being

loved! I believe that Thou art the greatest Lover of my soul, since through love alone Thou didst die, overwhelmed with sorrows, for love of me. I believe there is no greater blessing in this world, or in the next, than to love Thee, and to do Thy adorable will. All this I believe most firmly; so that I renounce all things that I may belong wholly to Thee, and that I may possess Thee alone.

II.

Charity believeth all things. There are other Christians—though not so perverse as the class we have mentioned, who would fain believe in nothing, so that they may give full scope to their unruly passions, and live on undisturbed by the stings of remorse—there are others, I say, who believe indeed, but their Faith is languid; they believe the most holy Mysteries of Religion, the Truths of Revelation contained in the Gospel, the Trinity, the Redemption, the holy Sacraments, and the rest; still they do not believe all. Jesus Christ has said: *Blessed are the poor! Blessed are they that hunger! Blessed are they that suffer persecution! Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and shall say all manner of evil against you!*—(Matt. v. 3—11). This is the teaching of Jesus Christ in the Gospel. How, then, can it be said that those believe in the Gospel who say: "Blessed are the rich! Blessed are those who have to suffer nothing! Blessed are those who can have their amusements and pitiable is the man who suffers persecution and ill-treatment from others"? We must certainly say of such as these that either they do not believe the Gospel or that they believe only a part of it. He who believes all the Gospel esteems it his highest fortune, and a mark of Divine favour in this world, to be poor, to be sick, to be humiliated, to be despised and ill-treated by men. Such is the belief, and such the language, of one who believes all that is said in the Gospel, and has a real love for Jesus Christ.

Help me, through the merits of Thy sacred Passion, O my Jesus, and make me such as Thou wouldst have me to be. I believe in Thee, O infallible Truth! I trust in

These, O infinite Mercy! I love Thee, O infinite Goodness! O infinite Love, I give myself wholly to Thee, Who hast given Thyself wholly to me in Thy Passion, and in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

And I recommend myself to thee, O Mary, Refuge of sinners, and Mother of God.

Thursday—Sixth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

ABUSE OF DIVINE MERCY.

God has pity on those who fear Him, but not on sinners who despise Him. To offend God because He shows us mercy, is to provoke Him in the highest degree to chastise us.

I.

God has pity on those who fear Him but not on sinners who despise Him. To offend God because He shows us mercy is to provoke Him in the highest degree to chastise us.

Again, to offer an insult to God, because God is a forgiving God, is to deride Him; but *God is not mocked*—(Gal. vi. 7).

The devil will say to you: "But who knows? Even with this other sin it may be that you shall yet be saved." But meanwhile, if you sin, you yourself may condemn your soul to hell. Who knows? It may be that as yet you shall be saved; but it may also happen, and more easily happen, that you may be lost. And is the affair of eternal Salvation to be risked on a *who knows?*

If in the meantime death should come upon you! If God should abandon you after that other sin! What would then become of you?

No, my God, I will never more offend Thee. How many are now suffering in hell for fewer sins than mine? I will no longer be devoted to self, but will be Thine and entirely Thine. To Thee I consecrate my whole liberty and my will. *I am thine; do thou save me*—(Ps. cxviii. 94). Save me from hell, but first save me from sin. I love Thee, my Jesus, I will never more forsake Thee.

The Fathers of the Church say that God has determined the number of sins He will forgive each one. Hence, as we know not this number, we ought to fear lest with every one more additional sin God should abandon us. This dreadful thought—Who knows whether God will any more pardon me?—ought to be a great restraint upon us and keep us from again offending God: with this fear we should be secure.

II.

He who has been the more favoured by God with lights and graces ought to be the more afraid of being abandoned by Him. The Angelic Doctor says that the grievousness of sin increases in proportion to the ingratitude with which sin is committed. Woe, then, to the Christian who, after having been enriched with the graces of God, offends Him mortally!

O my Jesus, while Thou hast shown me numberless mercies, I have repaid them by multiplied offences! Thou hast bestowed favours upon me, and I, in return, have despised Thee! But now I love Thee with my whole heart, and I desire to make amends by my love for all the offences I have committed against Thee. Oh, do Thou enlighten and strengthen me!

Sister Mary Strozzi says that "sin in a religious person strikes Heaven with horror, and obliges God to turn away from that soul."

He who has not a great dread of mortal sin is not far from falling into it. Hence it is necessary to fly from dangerous occasions as much as possible.

It is necessary also to fly from all deliberate venial sins. Father Alvarez used to say: "Little voluntary faults do not kill the soul, but they so weaken it that, when there comes a grievous temptation, it will not have strength to resist, and will fall."

St. Teresa has written: "From wilful sin, however small it be, may God deliver us!" Because, as the Saint says, a deliberate venial sin does us more harm than all the devils in hell.

No, my Jesus, no, I will no more offend Thee; neither in great things nor in small. Thou hast done too much to oblige me to love Thee. I desire rather to die than to give Thee the least offence. Thou dost not deserve insult; but rather all my love, and I desire to love Thee with all my strength. Give me Thy assistance.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, ITS NECESSITY.

IV.—ON INVOKING THE SAINTS AND ON PRAYING TO THE SOULS IN PURGATORY AND HELPING THEM BY OUR PRAYERS.

Since it is certain, and even of Faith, that by our suffrages, and chiefly by our prayers, as particularly recommended and practised by the Church, we can relieve those Holy Souls, *I do not know how to excuse that man from sin who neglects to give them some assistance, at least by his prayers.* If a sense of duty will not persuade us to succour them, let us think of the pleasure it will give Jesus Christ to see us endeavouring to deliver His beloved spouses from prison, in order that He may have them with Him in Paradise. Let us think of the store of merit which we can lay up by practising this great act of Charity; let us think, too, that those Souls are not ungrateful, and will never forget the great benefit we do them in relieving them of their pains, and

in obtaining for them, by our prayers, anticipation of their entrance into glory; so that when they are there they will never neglect to pray for us. And if God promises mercy to him who practises mercy towards his neighbour—*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*—(Matt. v. 7)—he may reasonably expect to be saved who remembers to assist those Souls so afflicted, and yet so dear to God. Jonathan, after having saved the Hebrews from ruin by a victory over their enemies was condemned to death by his father, Saul, for having tasted some honey against his express commands; but the people came before the king, and said: *Shall Jonathan then die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel?*—(1 Kings xiv. 45). So may we expect, that if any of us ever obtains, by his prayers, the liberation of a Soul from Purgatory, that Soul will say to God: "Lord, suffer not him who has delivered me from my torments to be lost." And if Saul spared Jonathan's life at the request of his people, God will not refuse the salvation of a Christian to the prayers of a Soul which is His own spouse. Moreover, St. Augustine says that God will cause those who in this life have succoured those Holy Souls, when they come to Purgatory themselves, to be most succoured by others. I may here observe that, in practice, one of the best suffrages is to hear Mass for them, and during the Holy Sacrifice to recommend them to God by the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. The following form may be used: *Eternal Father, I offer Thee this Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, with all the pains which He suffered in His life and death; and by the merits of His Passion I recommend to Thee the Souls in Purgatory, and especially that of, etc.* And it is a very charitable act to recommend, at the same time, the souls of all those who are in their agony.

4. Whatever doubt there may be whether or not the Souls in Purgatory can pray for us, and therefore whether or not it is useful to recommend ourselves to their prayers,

there can be no doubt whatever with regard to the *Saints*. For it is certain that it is most useful to have recourse to the *intercession of the Saints* canonized by the Church, who are already enjoying the vision of God. To suppose that the Church can err in canonizing is a sin, or is heresy, according to St. Bonaventure, Bellarmine, and others; or at least very near to heresy, according to Suarez, Azorius, Gotti, etc.: because the Sovereign Pontiff, according to St. Thomas, is guided by the infallible influence of the Holy Ghost in an especial way when canonizing the *Saints*.

But to return to the question just proposed; are we obliged to have recourse to the *intercession of the Saints*? I have no wish to undertake to decide this question; but I cannot omit the exposition of the teaching of St. Thomas. In several places above quoted, and especially in his *Book of Sentences*, he expressly lays it down as certain that every one is bound to pray; because (as he asserts) in no other way can the graces necessary for salvation be obtained from God, except by Prayer: "Every man is bound to pray, from the fact that he is bound to procure spiritual good for himself, which can only be got from God; so it can only be obtained by asking it of God." Then, in another place of the same Book, he proposes the exact question, "Whether we are bound to pray to the *Saints* to intercede for us?" And he answers as follows—in order to catch his real meaning, we will quote the entire passage: "According to Dionysius, the order which God has instituted for His creatures requires that things which are remote may be brought to God by means of things which are nearer to Him. Hence, as the *Saints* in Heaven are nearest of all to Him, the order of His law requires that we who remaining in the body are absent from the Lord, should be brought to Him by means of the *Saints*; and this is effected by the Divine Goodness pouring forth His gifts through them. And as the path of our return to God should correspond to the path of the good things which

proceed from Him to us, it follows that, as the benefits of God come down to us by means of the suffrages of the *Saints*, we ought to be brought to God by the same way, so that a second time we may receive His benefits by the mediation of the *Saints*. Hence it is that we make them our intercessors with God, and, as it were, our mediators, when we ask them to pray for us." Note well the words—"The order of God's law requires"; and especially note the last words—"As the benefits of God come down to us by means of the suffrages of the *Saints*, in the same way we must be brought back to God, so that a second time we may receive His benefits by the mediation of the *Saints*." So that, according to St. Thomas, the order of the Divine law requires that we mortals should be saved by means of the *Saints*, in that we receive by their intercession the help necessary for our salvation. He then puts the objection that it appears superfluous to have recourse to the *Saints*, since God is infinitely more merciful than they, and more ready to hear us. This he answers by saying: God has so ordered not on account of any want of clemency on His part, but to keep the right order which He has universally established, of working by means of second causes. "It is not for want of mercy, but to preserve the aforesaid order in the creation."

In conformity with this doctrine of St. Thomas, the Continuator of Tourneley says with Sylvius, that although God only is to be prayed to as the Author of grace, yet we are bound to have recourse also to the intercession of the *Saints*, so as to observe the order which God has established with regard to our salvation, which is, that the inferior should be saved by imploring the aid of the superior. "By the law of nature we are bound to observe the order which God has appointed; but God has appointed that the inferior should obtain salvation by imploring the assistance of his superior."

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Charity hopeth all things.”

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST HOPES FOR ALL THINGS FROM HIM.

I.

Hope increases Charity, and Charity increases Hope. Hope in the Divine goodness undoubtedly gives an increase to our love of Jesus Christ. St. Thomas says that in the very moment when we hope to receive some benefit from a person, we begin also to love him. On this account, the Lord forbids us to put our trust in creatures: *Put not your trust in princes*—(Ps. cxlv. 2). Further, He pronounces a curse on those who do so: *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man*—(Jer. xvii. 5). God does not wish us to trust in creatures, because He does not wish us to fix our love upon them. Hence St. Vincent de Paul said: “Let us beware of reposing too much confidence in men; for when God beholds us thus leaning on them for support, He Himself withdraws from us. On the other hand, the more we trust in God, the more we shall advance in His holy love”; *I have run the way of thy commandments, when thou didst enlarge my heart*—(Ps. cxviii. 32). Oh, how rapidly does that soul advance in perfection who has her heart dilated with confidence in God! She flies rather than runs; for by making God the foundation of all her Hope she flings aside her own weakness, and borrows the strength of God Himself, which is communicated to all who place confidence in Him: *They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, and they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint*—(Is. xl. 31). The eagle is the

bird that soars nearest the sun; in like manner, the soul that has God for her trust becomes detached from the earth, and more and more united to God by love.

II.

Now as Hope increases the love of God, so does love help to increase hope; for charity makes us the adopted sons of God. In the natural order we are the work of His hands; but in the supernatural order we are made sons of God, and partakers of the Divine nature through the merits of Jesus Christ; as the Apostle St. Peter writes: *That by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature*—(2 Peter i. 4). And if Charity makes us the sons of God, it consequently makes us heirs of Heaven, according to St. Paul: *And if sons, heirs also*—(Rom. viii. 17). Now a son claims the right of abiding under the paternal roof; an heir is entitled to the property; and thus Charity increases the Hope of Paradise; so that the souls that love God cry out incessantly: *Thy kingdom come! Thy kingdom come!*

Friday—Sixth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

VENIAL SIN.

Venial sin is, unfortunately regarded as a slight evil. Is that called a slight evil which is an offence against God!

A man will go on committing venial sins, and foolishly

says : " It will be enough for me to be saved ! " But I answer : By continuing that course you will not be saved ! For, as St. Gregory says, the soul never remains where it falls, but descends much lower.

II.

Venial sin is, unfortunately, regarded as a slight evil. Is that called a slight evil which is an offence against God !

A man will go on committing venial sins, and foolishly says : " It will be enough for me to be saved ! " But I answer : By continuing that course you will not be saved ! For, as St. Gregory says, the soul never remains where it falls, but descends much lower.

St. Isidore writes that he who makes no account of venial sins is permitted by the Almighty to fall into mortal sins, in punishment of his little love of God. And our Lord Himself said to the Blessed Henry Suso that those who have not a horror of venial sins expose themselves to much greater dangers than they are aware of ; because it thus becomes much more difficult for them to persevere in grace.

The Council of Trent teaches that we cannot persevere in grace without the special assistance of God ; but he is quite undeserving of such special assistance who offends God by voluntary venial sins, and without a thought of amendment.

Chastise me not, O Lord, as I have deserved ! Remember not the many offences I have committed against Thee, and deprive me not of Thy light and assistance. I desire to amend ; I desire to be Thine. O Omnipotent God, accept of me and change me ! This is my hope.

Our Lord said to Blessed Angela de Foligno : " Those who have been enlightened by Me to aim at perfection, but who debase their souls and walk in the ordinary way, will be abandoned by me. "

He who serves God, but is not afraid of offending Him by venial gratifications, would seem to think that God

deserves no better. He declares, in fact, that God is not deserving of so much love as to oblige us to prefer His pleasure to our own satisfaction.

Habitual defects, says St. Augustine, are a kind of leprosy, which renders the soul so disgusting that God deprives it of His loving embraces.

I see, O Lord, that Thou hast not yet abandoned me, as I have deserved ; strengthen me, therefore, to shake off my tepidity. I desire never more deliberately to offend Thee. I desire to love Thee with my whole soul. O Jesus, help me ! In Thee do I confide.

II.

St. Francis de Sales says that it is an artifice of Satan to bind souls first with a hair, that he may afterwards bind them with a chain, and make them slaves. Let us therefore be on our guard not to be entangled by any passion. A soul that is entangled by passion is either lost or in great danger of being lost.

" The devil, " said Mary Victoria Strada, " when he cannot have much is content with little, but by that little he gains much in the end. "

Our Lord declares that the lukewarm are loathsome and disgusting to Him : *Because thou art lukewarm . . . I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth*—(Apoc. iii. 16). This means abandonment by God.

Tepidity is a kind of fever, which is scarcely perceived, but if neglected becomes fatal ; inasmuch as tepidity renders the soul insensible to remorse of conscience.

O Jesus, do not cast me off, as I have deserved ! Look not on my ingratitude, but on the sufferings Thou hast endured for my sake. I am sorry for all my offences against Thee. I love Thee, O my God, and from this day forward I desire to do all in my power to please Thee. O Love of my soul ! I have much offended Thee ; grant that for the remainder of my life I may love Thee very much. O Mary, my hope, succour me by thy holy intercession.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, ITS NECESSITY.

V.—THE INTERCESSION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

If it be true that the intercession of the Saints is necessary for us, much more is it true of the intercession of the Mother of God, whose prayers are certainly of more value in His sight than those of all the rest of the inhabitants of Heaven together. For St. Thomas says that the Saints, in proportion to the merits by which they have obtained grace for themselves, are able also to save others; but that Jesus Christ, and so also His Mother, have merited so much grace, that They can save all men. "It is a great thing in any Saint that he should have grace enough for the salvation of many besides himself; but if he had enough for the salvation of all men, this would be the greatest of all; and this is the case with Christ, and with the Blessed Virgin." And St. Bernard speaks thus to Mary: "Through thee we have access to thy Son, O discoverer of grace and Mother of salvation, that through thee He may receive us, Who through thee was given to us." These words signify, that as we have access to the Father only by means of the Son, Who is the *Mediator of Justice*, so we have access to the Son only by means of the Mother, who is *mediator of grace*, and who obtains for us, by her intercession, the gifts which Jesus Christ has merited for us. And therefore St. Bernard says, in another place, that Mary has received a twofold fulness of grace. The first was the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, Who was made Man in her most holy womb; the second in that fulness of grace which we receive from God by means of her prayers. Hence the Saint adds: "God has placed the fulness of all good in Mary, that if we have any hope, any grace, any salvation, we may

know that it overflows from her who *ascendeth abounding with delights*. She is a garden of delights, whose odours spread abroad and abound, that is, the gifts of graces." So that whatever good we have from God, we receive all by the intercession of Mary. And why so? Because, says St. Bernard, it is God's will: "Such is His will, Who would have us receive everything through Mary." But the more precise reason is deduced from the expression of St. Augustine, that Mary is justly called our Mother because she co-operated by her charity in the birth of the faithful to the life of grace, by which we become members of Jesus Christ, our Head: "But clearly she is the Mother of His members (which we are), because she co-operated by her charity in the birth of the faithful in the Church, and they are members of that Head." Therefore, as Mary co-operated by her charity in the spiritual birth of the faithful, so also God willed that she should co-operate by her intercession to make them enjoy the life of grace in this world, and the life of glory in the next; and therefore the Church makes us salute her and give her absolutely the titles of "our *Life*, our *Sweetness*, and our *Hope*."

Hence St. Bernard exhorts us to have continual recourse to the Mother of God, because her prayers are certain to be heard by her Son: "Go to Mary, I say, without hesitation; the Son will hear the Mother." And then he adds: "My children, she is the ladder of sinners, she is my chief confidence, she is the whole ground of my hope." He calls her "ladder," because, as you cannot mount the third step except you put your foot on the second, nor can you arrive at the second except by the first, so you cannot come to God except by means of Jesus Christ, nor can you come to Christ except by means of His Mother. Then he calls her "his greatest security, and the whole ground of his hope"; because, as he affirms, God wills that all the graces which He gives us should pass through the hands of Mary. And he concludes by saying that we ought to ask all the graces which we desire through Mary; because she obtains whatever she seeks, and her prayers cannot be rejected.

"Let us seek grace, and let us seek it through Mary; because what she seeks she finds, and she cannot be disappointed." The following Saints teach the same as St. Bernard: St. Ephrem: "We have no other confidence than from thee, O purest Virgin!" St. Ildephonus: "All the good things that the Divine Majesty has determined to give, He has also decreed to commit to thy hands; for to thee are entrusted the treasures and the ornaments of grace." St. Germanus: "If thou desertest us, what will become of us, O life of Christians?" St. Peter Damien: "In thy hands are all the treasures of the mercies of God." St. Antoninus: "He who seeks graces without her, attempts to fly without wings. St. Bernardine of Sienna: "Thou art the dispenser of all graces; our salvation is in thy hands." In another place, he not only says that all graces are transmitted to us by means of Mary, but he also asserts that the Blessed Virgin, from the time she became Mother of God, acquired a certain *jurisdiction* over all the graces that are given to us. "Through the Virgin the vital graces are transfused from Christ, the Head, into His mystical body. From the time when the Virgin Mother conceived in her womb the Word of God, she obtained a certain jurisdiction (if I may so speak) over every temporal procession of the Holy Ghost; so that no creature could obtain any grace from God except by the dispensation of His sweet Mother." And he concludes: "Therefore all gifts, virtues, and graces are dispensed through her hands to whom she wills, and as she wills." St. Bonaventure says the same: "Since the whole Divine nature was in the womb of the Virgin, I do not fear to teach that she has a certain jurisdiction over all the streams of grace; for her womb was, as it were, an ocean of the Divine nature, whence all the streams of grace must emanate." On the authority of these Saints many Theologians have piously and reasonably defended the opinion that there is no grace given to us except by means of the intercession of Mary; so Mendoza, Vega, Paciucchelli, Segneri, Poiré, Crasset, and others, as also the learned Alexander Natalis, who

says: "Since it is from God we expect all good things, He wishes us to ask them through the intercession of the Virgin Mother, when, as is fitting, we invoke her." And he quotes in confirmation the passage of St. Bernard: "Such is His Will, Who has determined that we should receive all through Mary." Con-tenson says the same, in a comment on the words addressed by Jesus on the Cross to St. John, *Behold thy mother*—(Jo. xix. 27); as though He said: "No one shall be partaker of My Blood except by the intercession of My Mother. My Wounds are Fountains of grace; but their stream shall flow to no one, except through the channel of Mary. O My disciple John, I will love you as you love her."

Besides it is certain that if God is pleased when we have recourse to the Saints, He will be much more pleased when we avail ourselves of the intercession of Mary, that she by her merits may compensate for our unworthiness, according to the words of St. Anselm: "that the dignity of the intercessor may supply for our poverty. So that to invoke the Virgin is not to distrust God's Mercy but to fear our own unworthiness." St. Thomas, speaking of her dignity, says it is, in a sense, infinite. "From the fact that she is the Mother of God she has a certain infinite dignity."

CONCLUSION.

Let us conclude this point by giving the gist of all that has been said hitherto.

He who prays is certainly saved. He who does not pray is certainly damned. All the Blessed (except infants) have been saved by Prayer. All the damned have been lost through not praying. If they had prayed they would not have been lost.

And this is, and will be, their greatest torment in hell, to think how easily they might have been saved, only by asking God for His graces. But now for these miserable ones the time for Prayer is over.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Charity hopeth all things.”

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST HOPES FOR ALL THINGS FROM HIM.

I.

The Lord God loves those who love Him : *I love them that love me*—(Prov. viii. 17). He showers down His graces on those that seek Him by love : *The Lord is good . . . to the soul that seeketh him*—(Lament. iii. 25). Consequently, the soul that loves God most has the greatest hope in His goodness. This confidence produces that imperturbable tranquillity in the Saints which makes them always joyful and full of peace, even amid the severest trials; for their love of Jesus Christ, and the conviction they have of His liberality towards those who love Him, leads them to trust solely in Him; and thus they find a lasting repose. The sacred spouse abounded with delights, because she loved none but her Spouse, and leaned entirely on Him for support; and she was full of contentment, since she well knew how generous her Beloved is towards all that love Him; so that of her it is written : *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?*—(Cant. viii. 5). These words of the Wise Man are most true : *All good things came to me together with her*—(Wis. vii. 11). With Charity all blessings are introduced into the soul.

II.

The primary object of Christian Hope is God, Whom the soul enjoys in the Kingdom of Heaven. But we must not suppose that the hope of enjoying God in Paradise is any obstacle to Charity; since the hope of

Paradise is inseparably connected with Charity, which there receives its full and complete perfection. Charity is that infinite treasure, spoken of by the Wise Man, which makes us the friends of God : *An infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God*—(Wis. vii. 14). The angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, says that friendship is founded on the mutual communication of goods; for as friendship is nothing more than a mutual love between friends, it follows that there must be a reciprocal interchange of the goods which each possesses. Hence the Saint says : “If there be no communication, there is no friendship.” On this account Jesus Christ says to His disciples : *I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father I have made known to you*—(Jo. xv. 15). Since He had made them His friends, He had communicated all His secrets to them.

Saturday—Sixth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE MERCY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN TOWARDS SINNERS WHO INVOKE HER.

Mary is called the Mother of Mercy, because, like a mother, she cannot see her children in danger of being lost without giving them her assistance. She is so solicitous about the relief of the miserable that she appears to desire nothing with greater ardour than to comfort them.

I.

Consider that Mary is so merciful an advocate she not only assists all who have recourse to her, but also goes in search of the miserable in order to defend and save them. Behold how she invites us all, and encourages us to hope for every good, if we have recourse to her. *In me is all hope of life and virtue. Come over to me, all ye who desire me*—(Eccles. xxiv. 25-26). In explaining this passage, the devout Pelbart says: "She invites all, the just and sinners." The devil, according to St. Peter, goes about continually seeking *whom he may devour*—(1 Peter v. 8). But this Divine Mother, says Bernard de Bustus, goes about seeking whom she may save. Mary is called the Mother of Mercy; because, like a mother, she cannot see her children in danger of being lost without giving them assistance. Mary pities all our miseries, and constantly seeks our salvation. And, asks St. Germanus, who, after Jesus, has greater care of our salvation, than thou, O Mother of Mercy? St. Bonaventure says that Mary is so solicitous about the relief of the miserable that she appears to desire nothing with greater ardour than to comfort them.

She certainly assists us as often as we have recourse to her, but this, adds Richard of St. Victor, is not enough for her; she anticipates our supplications, and obtains aid for us before we ask her prayers. Moreover, the same author says that Mary is so full of mercy that, as soon as she sees misery, she instantly obtains relief, and cannot behold any one in distress without coming to his assistance. It was thus she acted when she lived on this earth, as we learn from what happened at the marriage of Cana in Galilee; where, when the wine failed, she did not wait to be asked, but taking pity on the affliction and shame of the spouses, asked her Son to console them, saying: *They have no wine*—(Jo. ii. 3). Thus she induced Him to change, by miracle, water into wine. But, says St. Bonaventure, if Mary's compassion for the afflicted was so great while she was in this world, her pity for us is certainly much greater now that she is in Heaven, where she has a better knowledge of our miser-

ies, and greater compassion for us. Novarino adds: If Mary, unasked, shows such readiness to afford relief, how much more careful will she be to console those who ask her prayers!

II.

Ah! let us never cease to have recourse in all our necessities to the Divine Mother, who is always ready to obtain relief for all who pray to her. "You will find her ever ready to assist," says Richard of St. Laurence. And Bernardine de Bustus adds that she desires more ardently to obtain graces for us than we do to receive them. Hence he says that, whenever we have recourse to her, we shall always find her hands full of graces and mercies. According to St. Bonaventure, Mary's desire for our welfare and salvation is so great that she feels offended not only with those who do her a positive injury but also with those who neglect to ask favours from her. And, on the other hand, the Saint affirms that they who invoke Mary's intercession (that is, with a determination to amend their lives) are saved. Hence he calls her the salvation of those who invoke her. Let us, then, always have recourse to the Divine Mother, and always say to her with the holy Doctor: "In thee, O Lady, have I hoped; may I not be confounded forever." No, O Lady, O Mother of God, O Mary, I shall not be lost after having placed my hopes in thee after Jesus.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, ITS POWER.

I.—ITS POWER AND EXCELLENCE WITH GOD.

Our prayers are so dear to God that He has appointed the Angels to present them to Him as soon as they come forth from our mouths. "The angels," says St. Hilary, "preside over the prayers of the faithful, and offer them daily to God." This is that *smoke of the incense of the*

prayers of the saints—(Apoc. viii. 3), which St. John saw ascending to God from the hands of Angels. This he saw in another place represented by golden phials full of sweet odours, very acceptable to God. But in order to understand better the value of prayers in God's sight it is sufficient to read both in the Old and New Testaments the innumerable promises which God makes to the man that prays. *Cry to me, and I will hear thee*—(Jer. xxxiii. 3). *Call upon me, and I will deliver thee*—(Ps. xlix. 15). *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. He shall give good things to them that ask him*—(Matt. vii. 7, 11). *Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth*—(Luke xi. 10). *Whosoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my father*—(Matt. xviii. 19). *All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you*—(Mark xi. 24). *If you shall ask me anything in my name, that will I do*—(Jo. xiv. 14). *You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you*—(Jo. xv. 7). *Amen, amen, I say unto you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you*—(Jo. xvi. 23). There are many similar texts, but it would take too long to quote them.

God wills us to be saved; but for our greater good He wills us to be saved as conquerors. While, therefore, we remain here, we have to live in a continual warfare; and if we would be saved, we have to fight and conquer. "No one can be crowned without victory," says St. Chrysostom. We are very feeble, and our enemies are many and mighty; how shall we be able to stand against them, or to defeat them? Let us take courage, and say with the Apostle, *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me*—(Philip. iv. 13). By Prayer we can do all things; for by this means God will give us that strength which we want. Theodoret says that Prayer is omnipotent; it is but one, yet it can do all things: "Prayer, though one, can do all things." And St. Bonaventure asserts that by Prayer we may obtain every good and escape every evil: "By Prayer, the possession

of every good, the liberation from every evil." St. Laurence Justinian says that by means of Prayer we build for ourselves a strong tower, where we shall be secure from all the snares and assaults of our enemies: "By the exercise of Prayer man is able to erect a citadel for himself." "The powers of hell are mighty," says St. Bernard, "but Prayer is stronger than all the devils." Yes; for by Prayer the soul obtains God's help, which is stronger than any created power. Thus David encouraged himself in his fears: *Praising I will call upon the Lord, and I shall be saved from my enemies*—(Ps. xvii. 4). For, as St. Chrysostom says, "Prayer is a strong weapon, a defence, a port, and a treasure." It is a weapon sufficient to overcome every assault of the devil; it is a defence to preserve us in every danger; it is a port where we may be safe in every tempest; and it is at the same time a treasure which provides us with every good.

II.—POWER OF PRAYER AGAINST TEMPTATION.

God knows the great good which it does us to be obliged to pray, and therefore permits us, as we have already shown—(*The Necessity of Prayer*, p. 66) to be assaulted by our enemies, in order that we may ask Him for the help which He offers and promises us. But as He is pleased when we run to Him in our dangers, so He is displeased when He sees us neglectful of Prayer. As the king, says St. Bonaventure, would think it faithlessness if an officer, when attacked, did not ask him for reinforcements, so God thinks Himself betrayed by the man who, when he finds himself surrounded by temptations, does not run to Him for assistance. For He desires to help us; and only waits to be asked, and then gives abundant succour. This is strikingly shown by Isaiah, when, on God's part, he told King Achaz to ask some sign to assure himself of God's readiness to help him: *Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God*—(Is. vii. 11). The impious king answered: *I will not ask, and I will not tempt the Lord*—(Is. vii. 12). He trusted in his own power to overcome his enemies without God's aid.

And for this the Prophet reproved him : *Hear ye, therefore, O house of David ; is it a small thing for you to be grievous to men, that you are grievous to my God also ?*—(Is. vii. 18), which means that that man is grievous and offensive to God who will not ask Him for the graces which He offers.

Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you—(Matt. xi. 28). “My poor children,” says our Saviour, “though you find yourselves assailed by enemies, and oppressed with the weight of your sins, do not lose heart, but have recourse to Me in Prayer, and I will give you strength to resist ; and I will give you a remedy for all your misfortunes.” In another place He says, by the mouth of Isaiah : *Come and accuse me, saith the Lord ; if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow*—(Is. i. 18). O men, come to me ; though your consciences are horribly defiled, yet come ; I even give you leave to reproach Me (so to speak), if, after you have recourse to Me, I do not give you grace to become white as snow.

What is Prayer ? It is, as St. Chrysostom says, “the anchor of those tossed on the sea, the treasure of the poor, the cure of diseases, the safeguard of health.” It is a secure anchor for him who is in peril of shipwreck ; it is a treasury of immense wealth for him who is poor ; it is a most efficacious medicine for him who is sick ; and it is a certain preservative for him who would keep himself in health. What does Prayer effect ? Let us hear St. Laurence Justinian : “It pleases God, it gets what it asks, it overcomes enemies, it changes men.” It appeases the wrath of God Who pardons all who pray with humility. It obtains every grace that is asked for ; it vanquishes all the strength of the tempter ; it gives sight to the blind ; it changes the weak into strong, and sinners into Saints. Let him who wants light ask it of God, and it shall be given. As soon as I had recourse to God, says Solomon, He granted me wisdom : *I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me*—(Wis. vii. 7). Let him who wants fortitude ask it of God and it shall be given. For how, in fact, did the Mar-

tyrs obtain strength to resist tyrants, except by Prayer, which gave them force to overcome dangers and death ? “He who uses this great weapon,” says St. Chrysostom, “knows not death, leaves the earth, enters Heaven, lives with God.” He falls not into sin ; he loses affection for the earth ; he makes his abode in Heaven ; and begins even in this life to enjoy the conversation of God. Why then should you disquiet such a man by saying : How do you know that you are written in the Book of Life ? How do you know whether God will give you efficacious grace and the gift of perseverance ? *Be nothing solicitous*, says St. Paul, *but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known unto God*—(Phil. iv. 6). Drive from you all those cares which only lessen your confidence, and make you more tepid and slothful in walking in the Way of Salvation. Pray and seek always, make your prayers known to God, and thank Him for having promised to give you the gifts you desire whenever you ask for them, namely, efficacious grace, perseverance, salvation, and everything you may desire. The Lord has given us our post in the battle against powerful foes ; but He is faithful in His promises, and will never allow us to be assaulted more violently than we can resist : *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able*—(1 Cor. x. 13). He is faithful, since He instantly succours the man who invokes Him. The learned Cardinal Gotti writes that God is bound, when we are tempted and fly to His protection, to give us, by the grace prepared and offered to all, the strength by which we not only can, but will actually resist : *for we can do all things in Him who strengthens us* by His grace if we humbly ask for it. We can do all things with God’s help, which is granted to every one who humbly seeks it ; so that we have no excuse when we allow ourselves to be overcome by a temptation. We are conquered solely by our own fault, because we do not pray. By Prayer all the snares and power of the devil are easily overcome. “By prayer all hurtful things are put to flight,” says St. Augustine.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

“*Charity hopeth all things.*”

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST HOPES FOR ALL THINGS FROM HIM.

I.

St. Francis de Sales says: “If by a supposition of what is impossible, there could be an infinite Good (that is a God) to whom we belonged in no way whatever, and with Whom we could have no union or communication, we should certainly esteem Him more than ourselves; so that we might feel a great desire of being able to love Him; but we should not actually love Him, because love is built upon union; for love is a friendship, and the foundation of friendship is to have things in common; and its end is union.” Thus St. Thomas teaches us that Charity does not exclude the desire of the reward prepared for us in Heaven by Almighty God; on the contrary, it makes us look to it as the chief object of our love, for such is God, Who constitutes the bliss of Paradise; for friendship implies that friends mutually rejoice in one another.

The Spouse in the Canticles refers to this reciprocal interchange of goods, when she says: *My beloved to me and I to him*—(Cant. ii. 16). In Heaven the soul belongs wholly to God and God belongs wholly to the soul, according to the measure of her capacity and of her merits.

II.

From the persuasion the soul has of her own nothingness in comparison with the infinite attractions of Almighty God, and aware consequently that the claims of God on her love are beyond measure greater than her own can be on the love of God,

she is far more anxious to procure the Divine pleasure than her own enjoyment; so that she is more gratified by the pleasure she affords Almighty God by giving herself entirely to Him, than by God's giving Himself entirely to her; but at the same time she is delighted when God thus gives Himself to her, inasmuch as she is thereby animated to give herself up to God with a greater intensity of love. She indeed rejoices at the glory which God imparts to her, but for the sole purpose of referring it back to God Himself, and of thus doing her utmost to increase the Divine glory. At the sight of God in Heaven the soul cannot help loving Him with all her strength; on the other hand, God cannot hate anyone that loves Him: but if (supposing what is impossible) God could hate a soul that loves Him, and if a beatified soul could exist without loving God, she would much rather endure all the pains of hell on condition of being allowed to love God as much as He should hate her, than to live without loving God, even though she could enjoy all the delights of Paradise. So it is; for that conviction which the soul has of God's boundless claims upon her love gives her a greater desire to love God than to be loved by Him.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

DEATH.—THE WORLTLING AT THE APPROACH OF DEATH.

What will be the terror of the poor worldling when he reflects: In a short time I shall be no more! And I know not whether I shall be happy or miserable for eternity! O God, what consternation will the bare words,

Judgment, Hell, Eternity, strike into the souls of poor worldlings!

I.

We must die. Sooner or later we must all die. In every age houses and cities are filled with new inhabitants, and their predecessors are consigned to the grave. We are born but to die—born with a halter, as it were, about our necks. However long, then, our life may be, a day, an hour, will come which will be our last, and this hour is already determined.

I thank Thee, O God, for the patience with which Thou hast borne with me. Oh, that I had died rather than have ever offended Thee! But since Thou givest me time to repair the past, make known to me what Thou requirest of me, and I will obey Thee in all things.

In a few years neither I who write nor thou who readest will be living on this earth. As we have heard the bell toll for others, so will others one day hear it toll for us. As we now read the names of others inscribed in the lists of the dead, so will others read our names.

In a word, there is no alternative; we must all die. And, what is more terrible, we can die but once; and if once lost, we shall be lost for ever.

What will be your alarm when it is announced to you that you must receive the Last Sacraments, and that there is no time to be lost! Then will you see your relatives and friends leave your room, and none remain but your confessor and those who are to attend you in your last moments.

O Jesus, I will not wait until death to give myself to Thee. Thou hast said that Thou knowest not how to reject the soul that seeks Thee: *Seek and you shall find*—(Matt. vii. 7).

Now, therefore, O Jesus, do I seek Thee; grant that I may find Thee. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness! Thee alone do I desire, and besides Thee, nothing more.

In the midst of his schemes and worldly projects the man of the world shall hear it said to him: "My brother, you are fatally ill, and must prepare to die." He would wish to put his accounts in order; but, alas! the terror

and confusion which agitate him render him incapable of doing anything.

Whatever he sees or hears adds to his pain and distress. All worldly things are now thorns to him: the remembrance of past pleasures, his vanities, his successes, the friends who have withdrawn him from God, vain apparel; all are thorns, and all alarm and torment him.

What will be his terror when he reflects: "In a short time I shall be no more; and I know not whether I shall be happy, or miserable, for eternity!" O God, what consternation will the bare words, Judgment, Hell, Eternity, strike into the souls of poor dying worldlings!

My Redeemer, I believe that Thou hast died for me. From Thy precious Blood do I hope for salvation. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness! And I am grieved for having offended Thee. O Jesus, my Hope, my Love, have pity on me.

II.

Consider that poor worldling now seized with his last illness. He who but a little while ago went about slandering, threatening, and ridiculing others, is suddenly struck down and deprived of his strength and bodily senses, so that he can no longer speak, or see, or hear.

Alas! the unhappy man thinks now no more of his worldly projects, or his schemes of vanity; the thought of the account which he must soon render to God alone occupies his mind. His relatives are weeping and sighing, or in sad silence around him, and his confessor is there to assist him.

Physicians consult together. Everything increases his alarm. In such a state, he thinks no longer of his amusements; he thinks only of the news which has been brought him—his malady is fatal!

But there is no help for it, and in this state of confusion, in this tempest of pain, affliction, and fear, he must prepare himself to depart out of this world. But how is he to prepare himself in so short a time and his mind so troubled? But it matters not! There is no remedy; he must depart! What is done is done!

O God, what shall my end be? No, I desire not to die in so great uncertainty as to my salvation. I will change my life. O Jesus! help me, for I am resolved to love Thee henceforward with my whole heart. Unite me to Thyself, and never suffer me to be separated from Thee.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, ITS POWER.

III.—GOD IS ALWAYS READY TO HEAR OUR PRAYER.

St. Bernardine of Sienna says that Prayer is a faithful ambassador, well known to the King of Heaven, and having access to His audience chamber, and able by his importunity to induce the merciful Heart of the King to grant every aid to us His wretched creatures, groaning in the midst of our conflicts and miseries in this valley of tears. Isaias also assures us, that as soon as the Lord hears our prayers He is moved with compassion towards us, and does not leave us to cry long to Him, but instantly replies, and grants us what we ask: *Weeping, thou shalt not weep; he will surely have pity upon thee: at the voice of thy cry as soon as he shall hear, he will answer thee*—(Is. xxx. 19). In another place He complains of us by the mouth of Jeremias: *Am I become a wilderness to Israel, or a lateward springing land? Why then have my people said, we are revolted, we will come to thee no more?*—(Jer. ii. 31). Why do you say that you will no more have recourse to Me? Has My mercy become to you a barren land, which can yield you no fruits of grace? or a tardy soil, which yields its fruit too late? So has our loving Lord assured us that He never neglects to hear us, and to hear us instantly when we pray; and so does He reproach those who neglect to pray through diffidence of being heard.

If God were to allow us to present our petitions to Him once a month, even this would be a great favour. The kings of the earth give audience a few times a year, but God gives continual audience. St. Chrysostom writes that God is always waiting to hear our prayers, and that a case never occurred when He neglected to hear a petition offered to Him with the proper dispositions. And again, he says that when we pray to God, before we have finished recounting to Him our petitions, He has already heard us: "It is always obtained, even while we are yet praying." We even have the like promise from God: *As they are yet speaking I will hear*—(Is. lxx. 24). The Lord, says David, stands near to everyone who prays, to console, to hear, and to save him: *The Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him; to all that call upon him in truth (that is, as they ought). He will do the will of them that fear him; and he will hear their prayer and will save them*—(Ps. cxliv. 18, 19). It was in this that Moses gloried, saying: *There is no other nation so great, that has gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions*—(Deut. iv. 7). The gods of the Gentiles were deaf to those who invoked them, for they were wretched fabrications, which could do nothing. But our God, Who is Almighty, is not deaf to our prayers, but always stands near the man who prays, ready to grant him all the graces which he asks: *In what day soever I shall call upon thee, behold I shall know that thou art my God*—(Ps. lv. 10). Lord, says the Psalmist, hereby do I know that Thou art my God, all goodness and mercy, in that, whenever I have recourse to Thee, Thou dost instantly help me.

IV.—THE POWER OF PRAYER TO OBTAIN GREAT THINGS FOR US.

We are so poor that we have nothing; but if we pray we are no longer poor. If we are poor, God is rich; and God, as the Apostle says, is all liberality to him that calls for His aid: *Rich unto all who call upon Him*—(Rom. x. 12). Since therefore (as St. Augustine exhorts us), we have to do with a Lord of infinite power and infi-

nite riches, let us not go to Him for little and valueless things, but let us ask some great thing of Him : " You seek from the Almighty—seek something great." If a man went to a king to ask some trumpery coin, like a farthing, methinks that man would but insult the king. On the other hand, we honour God, we honour His mercy, and His liberality, when, though we see how miserable we are, and how unworthy of any kindness, we yet ask for great graces, trusting in the goodness of God, and in His faithfulness to His promises of granting to the man who prays whatever grace he asks : *You shall ask whatsoever you will, and it shall be done unto you*—(Jo. xv. 7). St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi said that " God feels Himself so honoured and is so delighted when we ask for His grace, that He is, in a certain sense, grateful to us ; because when we do this we seem to open to Him a way to do us a kindness, and to satisfy His nature, which is to do good to all." And let us be sure that, when we seek God's grace, He always gives us more than we ask : *If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not*—(James i. 5). Thus speaks St. James, to show us that God is not like men, parsimonious of His goods. Men, though rich and liberal, when they give alms, are always somewhat niggardly, and generally give less than what is asked of them, because their wealth, however great it be, is always finite, so that the more they give the less they have. But God, when He is asked, gives His good things *abundantly*, that is, with a generous hand, always giving more than is asked, because His wealth is infinite, and the more He gives the more He has to give : *For thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild ; and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee*—(Ps. lxxxv. 5).

On this point, then, we have to fix all our attention, namely, to pray with confidence, feeling sure that by Prayer all the treasures of Heaven are thrown open to us. " Let us attend to this," says St. Chrysostom, " and we shall open Heaven to ourselves." Prayer is a treasure ; he who asks most receives most. St. Bozja-

venture says that every time a man has recourse to God by fervent Prayer he gains good things that are of more value than the whole world : " A man gains any day more by devout prayer than the whole world is worth." Some devout souls spend a great deal of time *in reading*, and *in meditating*, but pay little attention to *petition*. There is no doubt that Spiritual Reading and Meditation on the Eternal Truths are very useful things ; " but," says St. Augustine, " it is of much more use to pray." By reading and meditating we learn our duty ; but by Prayer we obtain the grace to do it. " It is better to pray than to read : by reading we know what we ought to do ; by prayer we receive what we ask." What is the use of knowing our duty and then not doing it, but to make us more guilty in God's sight ? Read and meditate as we like, we shall never satisfy our obligations, unless we ask of God the grace to fulfil them.

And, therefore, as St. Isidore observes, the devil is never more busy to distract us with the thoughts of worldly cares than when he perceives us praying and asking God for grace : " Then mostly does the devil insinuate thoughts, when he sees a man praying." And why ? Because the enemy sees that at no other time do we gain so many treasures of heavenly goods as when we pray. This is the chief fruit of Mental Prayer, and for eternal salvation ; and chiefly for this reason is it that Mental Prayer is morally necessary for the soul, to enable it to preserve itself in the grace of God. For if a person neglects in the time of Meditation to ask for the help necessary for perseverance he will not do so at any other time ; for without Meditation he will not think of asking for it, and will not even think of the necessity of asking for it. On the other hand, he who makes his Meditation every day will easily see the needs of his soul, its dangers, and the necessity for his praying ; and so he will pray, and will obtain the graces which will enable him to persevere and save his soul. Father Segneri said of himself that when he began to meditate he aimed

rather at exciting affections than at making petitions. But when he came to know the immense utility of Prayer, he more and more applied himself, in his long mental prayer, to making petitions.

I will cry like a young swallow, said the devout King Ezechias—(Is. xxxviii. 14). The young of the swallow do nothing but cry to their mother for help and food; so should we all do, if we would preserve our life of grace. We should be always crying to God for aid to avoid the death of sin, and to advance in His holy love. Father Rodriguez relates that the Ancient Fathers who were our first instructors in the spiritual life held a conference to determine which was the exercise most useful and most necessary for salvation; and that they determined it was to repeat over and over again the short prayer of David, *Incline unto my aid, O God*—(Ps. lxxix. 2). "This," says Cassian, "is what everyone ought to do who wishes to be saved: he ought to be always saying, My God, help me! My God, help me!" We ought to do this the first thing when we awake in the morning; and then to continue doing it in all our needs, and when attending to our business, whether spiritual or temporal; and most especially when we find ourselves troubled by any temptation or passion. St. Bonaventure says that at times we obtain a grace by a short prayer sooner than by many other good works: "Sometimes a man can soon obtain by a short prayer what he would with difficulty obtain by pious works." St. Ambrose says that he who prays while he is praying obtains what he asks, because the very act of prayer is the same as receiving: "He who asks of God, while he asks receives; for to ask is to receive." Hence St. Chrysostom wrote that "there is nothing more powerful than a man who prays," because such a one is made partaker of the power of God. To arrive at perfection, says St. Bernard, we must meditate and pray: by Meditation we see what we want; by Prayer we receive what we want. "Let us mount up by Meditation and Prayer: the one points out what may be deficient, the other obtains it."

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, to save one's soul without Prayer is most difficult, and (as we have seen) in the ordinary course of God's Providence, even impossible. But by praying our salvation is made secure, and very easy. It is not necessary in order to save our souls to go among the heathen, and give up our life as martyrs. Nor is it necessary, like the hermits, to retire into the desert, and eat nothing but herbs. What does it cost us to say, *My God, help me! Lord, assist me! Have mercy on me!* Is there anything more easy than this? And this little will be enough to save us, if we will be diligent in doing it. St. Laurence Justinian specially exhorts us to oblige ourselves to say a prayer at least when we begin any action: "We must endeavour to offer a prayer at least in the beginning of every work." Cassian attests that the principal exhortation of the Ancient Fathers was to have recourse to God with short but frequent prayers. St. Bernard says: "Let no one undervalue his prayer, for God does not undervalue it... He will give either what we ask or what He knows to be better." And let us understand that if we do not pray we have no excuse, because the grace of Prayer is given to everyone. It is in our power to pray whenever we will, as David says of himself: *With me is prayer to the God of my life; I will say to God, thou art my support*—(Ps. xli. 9). On this point I shall later speak at length, and I will make it quite clear that God gives to all men the grace of Prayer in order that thereby they may obtain every help, and even more than they need, for keeping the Divine Law and for persevering till death. At present I will only say that if we are not saved the whole fault will be ours; and we shall have to answer for our own failure because we did not pray.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Charity hopeth all things.”

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST HOPES FOR ALL THINGS FROM HIM.

I.

Charity hopeth all things. St. Thomas, with the Master of the Sentences, defines Christian Hope to be a “sure expectation of eternal happiness.” Its certainty arises from the infallible promise of God to give eternal life to His faithful servants. Now Charity, by taking away sin, at the same time takes away all obstacles to our obtaining the happiness of the Blessed; hence the greater our Charity the greater also and firmer is our Hope; Hope, on the other hand, can in no way interfere with the purity of love, because, according to the observation of St. Denis the Areopagite, love tends naturally to union with the object beloved; or, as St. Augustine asserts in stronger terms, love itself is like a chain of gold that links together the hearts of the lover and the loved. “Love is as it were a kind of bond uniting two together.” And as this union can never be effected at a distance, the person that loves always longs for the presence of the object of his love. The Sacred Spouse languished in the absence of her Beloved, and entreated her companions to acquaint Him with her sorrow, that He might come and console her with His presence: *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love*—(Cant. v. 8). A soul that loves Jesus Christ exceedingly cannot but desire and hope, as long as she remains on earth, to go without delay and be united to her beloved Lord in Heaven.

II.

Thus we see that the desire to go and see God in Heaven, not so much for the delight we shall experience in loving God, as for the pleasure we shall afford God by loving Him, is pure and perfect love. Neither is the joy of the Blessed in Heaven any hindrance to the purity of their love; such joy is inseparable from their love; but they take far more satisfaction in their love of God than in the joy that it affords them. Someone will, perhaps, say: But the desire of a reward is rather a love of concupiscence than a love of friendship. We must therefore make a distinction between temporal rewards promised by men, and the eternal rewards of Paradise promised by God to those who love Him: the rewards given by man are distinct from and independent of their own persons, since they do not bestow themselves, but only their goods, when they would remunerate others; on the contrary, the principal reward which God gives to the Blessed is the gift of Himself: *I am thy reward exceeding great*—(Gen. xv.1). Hence to desire Heaven is the same thing as to desire God, Who is our last end.

Monday—Seventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

DEATH.—THE FINAL PREPARATIONS.

At the approach of death the Crucifix will be presented to you, and you will be admonished that Jesus Christ must be your only refuge, your only consolation. To those who have had but little love for Jesus Crucified, this will bring fear rather than encouragement. O my God, assist me by Thy graces to change my life!

I.

If you were about to die, what would you not give for another year, or another month? Resolve, therefore, to do now what you will not be able to do when the hour of your death comes.

Who knows but that this year, or this very month, or even this very day may be your last?

You would not wish to die in the state in which you now are; and will you dare to continue to live on in this state? You lament over those who die suddenly, because they have no time to prepare for death; and you have this precious time, and will you not prepare?

O my God, I will not force Thee to cast me away! I thank Thee for the mercies which Thou hast bestowed upon me; assist me by Thy grace to change my life. I see that Thou desirest to save me; and I desire to be saved that I may praise and love Thee for all eternity.

At the approach of death the Crucifix will be presented to you, and you will be admonished that Jesus Christ must be your only refuge and consolation. To those who have had but little love for Jesus Crucified, this will bring fear rather than encouragement. On the contrary, what a consolation will it be to those who have left all for the love of Jesus!

My beloved Jesus, Thou shalt be my only love in life and in death! *My God and my All!*

For the dying whose consciences are in a bad state, how terrible will be the sole mention of Eternity! They will not hear anything else spoken of but their malady, physicians, remedies; and if the affairs of their soul be mentioned they soon grow weary, change the subject, and beg of you to let them be at rest!

The sinner will exclaim: "Oh, that I had time to amend my life!" But it will be said to him: *Depart out of this world.* "Call in additional medical aid," he will answer; "and try other remedies." But of what avail will these be? His hour is come; he must depart and go into Eternity.

II.

To him who loves God how consoling will it be to hear it said: *Depart!* He will not be terrified, but rejoice at the thought of being soon out of all danger of losing his sovereign and only Good.

Let thy place be this day in peace, and thy abode in holy Sion. What a joyful announcement to him who dies in a well-grounded certainty of being in the grace of God!

O Jesus, in Thy precious Blood I place my hope, that Thou wilt conduct me into that place of peace, where I shall be able to say: O God of my heart, I have now no longer any fear of losing Thee!

Have compassion, O Lord, on his sighs: have compassion on his tears. My God, I will not wait until the hour of death to bewail my offences against Thee; I now detest and abhor them, and am sorry for them with my whole heart, and would willingly die of sorrow for having committed them. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness! I desire to live and to die in sorrow and in love.

Remember, O Lord, he is thy creature; not made by strange gods, but by thee, the only living and true God.

O my God, Thou Who hast created me for Thyself, cast me not away from Thy face. If I have despised Thee, I now love Thee more than myself, and I desire to love Thee alone.

He who has had but little love for Jesus Christ will tremble at the coming of the Holy Viaticum; but he, on the contrary, who has loved only Jesus, will be filled with confidence and love, when he beholds his Lord at hand to accompany him in his passage into Eternity.

While Extreme Unction is being administered, the devil will remind the dying man of all the sins committed by means of the senses. Let us therefore hasten to weep for them before the approach of death.

When he has received all the Sacraments, his relatives and friends will retire, and he will be left alone in the presence of the Crucifix.

O Jesus, when all have abandoned me, do not Thou depart from me! *In thee, O Lord have I hoped, let me never be confounded*—(Ps. xxx. 2).

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

I.—THAT THE PRAYER BE OFFERED FOR ONE'S SELF OR FOR THINGS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION.

Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you—(Jo. xvi. 23). Jesus Christ, then, has promised that whatever we ask the Father in His Name, the Father will give us. But always with the understanding that we ask under the proper conditions. Many seek, says St. James, and obtain not, because they seek improperly: *Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss—(James iv. 3).* So St. Basil, following out the argument of the Apostle, says: "You sometimes ask and receive not, because you have asked badly; either without faith, or lightly, or you have requested things not fit for you, or you have not persevered." "Faithlessly," (*infideliter*), with little faith or confidence; "lightly," (*leviter*), that is, with little desire for the grace you ask; "things not fit for you," that is, things not conducive to your salvation; or, you have left off praying. Hence St. Thomas reduces to four in number the conditions required to make Prayer efficacious. These four Conditions are:—

- A.—That the Prayer be offered for one's self;
- B.—For things necessary for salvation;
- C.—Piously;
- D.—With Perseverance.

A.—THAT THE PRAYER BE OFFERED FOR ONE'S SELF.

The First Condition, then, of Prayer is that you make it *for yourself*. The Angelic Doctor holds that one man cannot *ex condigno* (i.e. by title of justice) obtain for another eternal life; and, consequently, not even those

graces which are requisite for his salvation, for, as he says, the promise is made not to others, but only to those that pray: *He will give to you.*

There are, nevertheless, many Theologians, Cornelius à Lapide, Sylvester, Tolet, Habert, and others, who hold the opposite doctrine, on the authority of St. Basil, who teaches that Prayer, by virtue of God's promise, is infallibly efficacious, even for those for whom we pray, provided they put no positive impediment in the way. And they support their doctrine by Scripture: *Pray for one another, that you may be saved; for the continual prayer of the just man availeth much—(James v. 16).* *Pray for them that persecute and calumniate you—(Luke vi. 28).* And better still, on the text of St. John: *He that knoweth his brother to sin a sin which is not to death, let him ask, and life shall be given to him who sinneth not unto death—(1 Jo. v. 16).* St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, the Venerable Bede, and others explain the words *who sinneth not unto death* to mean the sinner who does not intend to remain obstinate till death; since for such a one a very extraordinary grace would be required. But for other sinners, who are not guilty of such malice, the Apostle promises their conversion to him who prays for them: *Let him ask, and life shall be given him for him that sinneth.*

Besides, it is quite certain that the prayers of others are of great use to sinners, and are very pleasing to God. The Lord complains of His servants who do not recommend sinners to Him, as He once complained to St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, to whom He said one day: *See, my daughter, how many Christians are in the devil's hands; if My elect did not deliver them by their prayers they would be devoured.* But God specially requires this of Priests and Religious. The same Saint used to say to her nuns: "My sisters, God has not separated us from the world that we should only do good for ourselves but also that we should appease Him in behalf of sinners"; and God one day said to her: "I have given to you, My chosen spouses the City of Refuge (i.e. the Passion of Jesus Christ), that you may have a place

where you may obtain help for My creatures. Therefore have recourse to it, and thence stretch forth a helping hand to My creatures who are perishing, and even lay down your lives for them." For this reason the Saint, inflamed with holy zeal, used to offer God the Blood of the Redeemer fifty times a day in behalf of sinners, and was quite consumed with the desire she had for their conversion. She used to say: What pain it is, O Lord, to see how one could help Thy creatures by giving one's life for them and not be able to do so! In every exercise she recommended sinners to God; and it is written in her Life that she scarcely passed an hour in the day without praying for them. Frequently too, she arose in the middle of the night and went before the Blessed Sacrament to pray for them; and yet for all this, when she was once found bathed in tears, on being asked the cause, she answered, "Because I seem to myself to do nothing for the salvation of sinners." She went so far as to offer to endure even the pains of hell for their conversion, provided that in that place she might still love God; and often God gratified her by inflicting on her grievous pains and infirmities for the salvation of sinners. She prayed especially for Priests, seeing that their good life was the occasion of salvation to others, while their bad life was the cause of ruin to many; and therefore she prayed God to visit their faults upon her, saying: "Lord, make me die and return to life again as many times as is necessary to satisfy Thy justice for them!" And it is related in her Life that the Saint, by her prayers, did indeed release many souls from the hands of Lucifer.

I wished to speak rather particularly of the zeal of this Saint; but, indeed, no souls that really love God neglect to pray for poor sinners. For how is it possible for a person who loves God, and knows what love He has for our souls, and what Jesus Christ has done and suffered for their salvation, and how our Saviour desires us to pray for sinners—how is it possible, I say, that he should be able to look with indifference on the numbers of poor souls who are living without God, and are slaves of hell,

without being moved to importune God with frequent prayers to give light and strength to those wretched beings, so that they may rise from the miserable state of perdition in which they are slumbering? True it is that God has not promised to grant our requests when those for whom we pray put a positive impediment in the way of their conversion; but still, God of His goodness has often deigned, at the Prayer of His servants, to bring back the most blind and obstinate sinners to a state of salvation by means of extraordinary graces. Therefore let us never omit, when we say or hear Mass, when we receive Holy Communion, when we make our Meditation or the Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, to recommend poor sinners to God. And a learned author says that he who prays for others will find that his prayers for himself are heard much sooner. But this is a digression. Let us now return to the examination of the other conditions that St. Thomas lays down as necessary for the efficacy of Prayer.

B.—THAT WE PRAY FOR THINGS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION.

The Second Condition assigned by the Saint is that we ask those favours which are *necessary for salvation*; because the promise annexed to Prayer was not made with reference to temporal favours, which are not necessary for the salvation of the soul. St. Augustine, explaining the words of the Gospel, *whatever ye shall ask in my name*, says that what is in any way detrimental to salvation is not asked in the Name of the Saviour. Sometimes, says the same Father, we seek some temporal favours, and God does not hear us; but He does not hear us because He loves us and wishes to be merciful to us. The physician knows better than the patient what is good for the sick man. The physician who loves his patient will not allow him to have those things that he sees would do him harm. Oh, how many, if they had been sick or poor would have escaped those sins which they commit in health and affluence! And,

therefore when men ask God for health or riches, He often denies them because He loves them, knowing that these things would be to them an occasion of losing His grace, or at any rate of growing tepid in the spiritual life. Not that we mean to say that it is any defect to pray to God for the necessities of this present life, so far as they are not inconsistent with our eternal salvation, as the Wise Man said: *Give me only the necessities of life*—(Prov. xxx. 8). Nor is it a defect, says St. Thomas, to have anxiety about such goods, if it is not inordinate. The defect consists in desiring and seeking these temporal goods, and in having an *inordinate anxiety* about them, as if they were our highest good. Therefore, when we ask of God these *temporal favours*, we ought always to ask them *with resignation*, and with the condition *if they will be useful to our souls*; and when we see that God does not grant them, let us be certain that He then denies them to us for the love He bears us, and because He sees that they would be injurious to the salvation of our souls.

It often happens that we pray God to deliver us from some dangerous temptation, and yet that God does not seem to hear us, but permits the temptation to continue troubling us. In such a case let us understand that God permits even this for our greater good. It is not *temptation* nor *bad thoughts* that separate us from God, but *our consent to the evil*. When a soul in temptation recommends itself to God, and by His aid resists, oh, how it then advances in perfection, and unites itself more closely to God! and this is the reason why God does not hear it. St. Paul earnestly prayed to be delivered from the temptation of impurity: *There was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me; for which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me*. But God answered him that it was enough to have His grace: *My grace is sufficient for thee*—(2 Cor. xii. 7). So that even in temptation we ought to pray with resignation, saying: *Lord, deliver me from this trouble, if it is expedient to deliver me; and if not at least give me help to resist*. And here comes in what

St. Bernard says, that when we beg any grace of God, He gives us either that which we ask or some other thing more useful to us. He often leaves us to be buffeted by the waves in order to try our faithfulness, and for our greater profit. He would seem to be deaf to our prayers. But no; let us be sure that God then really hears us, and secretly aids us, and strengthens us by His grace to resist all the assaults of our enemies. See how He Himself assures us of this by the mouth of the Psalmist: *Thou calledst upon me in affliction, and I delivered thee; I heard thee in the secret place of tempest; I proved thee at the waters of contradiction*—(Ps. lxxx. 8).

The other considerations assigned by St. Thomas to Prayer are, that it is to be made *piously and perseveringly*; by *piously* he means *with humility and confidence*—by *perseveringly*, continuing to pray until death. We must now speak distinctly of each of these three conditions which are the most necessary for Prayer, namely, of *Humility, Confidence, and Perseverance*.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Charity hopeth all things.”

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST HOPES FOR ALL THINGS FROM HIM.

I.

I wish here to propose a doubt which may rise in the mind of one who loves God, and strives to conform himself in all things to His blessed will. If it should be ever revealed to such an one that he was to be eternally lost, would he be obliged to bow to it with resignation in order to practise conformity with the will of God? St. Thomas says no; and further, that he would sin by con-

senting to it, because he would be consenting to live in a state that involves sin, and is contrary to the last end for which God created him; for God did not create souls to hate Him, but to love Him in Heaven: so that He does not wish the death even of the sinner, but that all should be converted and saved. The holy Doctor says that God wishes no one to be damned except through sin; and therefore, a person, by consenting to his damnation, would not be acting in conformity with the will of God, but with the will of sin. But suppose that God, foreseeing the sin of a person, should have decreed his damnation, and that this decree should be revealed to him, would he be bound to coincide in it? In the same passage the Saint says, by no means; because such a revelation must not be taken as an irrevocable decree, but made merely *by way of communication*, as a threat of what would follow if he persists in sin.

¶.

But let every one banish such baneful thoughts from his mind, as only calculated to cool his confidence and love. Let us love Jesus Christ as much as possible here below; let us always be sighing to go hence, and to behold Him in Paradise, that we may there love Him perfectly; let us make it the grand object of all our hopes to go thither to love Him with all our strength. We are commanded even in this life to love God with *thy whole strength: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength*—(Luke x. 27); but the angelical Doctor says that man cannot perfectly fulfil this precept upon earth; only Jesus Christ, Who was both God and Man, and the most holy Mary, who was full of grace and free from Original sin, perfectly fulfilled it. But we miserable children of Adam, infected as we are with sin, cannot love God without some imperfection; and it is in Heaven alone, when we shall meet God face to face, that we shall love Him, nay more, that we shall be necessitated to love Him with all our strength.

Tuesday—Seventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

DEATH.—THE LAST AGONY.

A cold sweat spreads itself over the sick man; his eyes grow dim; his pulse intermittent; his extremities become cold and he is stretched out on his bed like a corpse. He is now rapidly passing into Eternity.

O moment of death, upon which will depend an Eternity of happiness, or an Eternity of woe!

¶.

A cold sweat spreads itself over the sick man, his eyes become dim, his pulse intermittent, his extremities become cold, he stretches himself out like a corpse, and his agony begins. He is already rapidly passing into Eternity.

His breath fails, the breathing is scarcely noticeable, and death is at hand. The priest lights a blessed candle and places it in his hand, and begins to repeat for him acts suitable for the soul's immediate departure. O light, enlighten now our souls, for then thou wilt be of but little service to us when the time has gone for repairing the evil we have done!

O God, how guilty will our offences, and how empty will the vanities of this world appear in the light of the last candle!

The dying man expires; and in the same moment in which he breathes his last, time for him is ended, and Eternity begins. O moment which will decide an Eternity of happiness or an Eternity of woe!

O Jesus, mercy! Pardon me and so unite me to Thee that I may not at my last moment be able to lose Thee forever.

