

MEDITATIONS & READINGS

ST. ALPHONSUS

VOLUME IV – PART II
AFTER PENTECOST
XVIII TO XXIV SUNDAY

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

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

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

PRAYER. By ST. ALPHONSUS. Jubilee Edition.

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL SUCCOUR AND IRELAND. (Ár mairé-
vean Siort-ádhraic ir éirne). S. uá C. 'D'áir-
túg.

Meditations and Readings

FOR
EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

Selected from the Spiritual Writings of

SAINT ALPHONSUS

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

VOLUME FOUR
PART II.

FOREWORD

BY

HIS EMINENCE JOSEPH CARDINAL MACRORY

Edited by

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

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MEDITATIONS & READINGS
FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

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

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PATRITII MURRAY, C.S.S.R.

Superioris Generalis et Rectoris Majoris.

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die 8 Decembris, 1931.

FOREWORD

BY

HIS EMINENCE JOSEPH CARDINAL MACRORY

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

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

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

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

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

✠ JOSEPH CARDINAL MACRORY.

ARA COELLI,
ARMAGH.

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

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

ARA COELLI,
ARMAGH,
16th March, 1924.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

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

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

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

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

Wishing you every blessing and success in your useful work,

I am,

Dear Father Coyle,

Yours gratefully,

✠ MICHAEL CARDINAL LOGUE.

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

wrote :—

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

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

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL O'DONNELL wrote :

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

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL O'DONNELL,
Archbishop of Armagh.

Armagh, 20th February, 1926.
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Christian. We want books that will, with flashes from the Beyond, dissipate the spell that the prospect of sensual pleasure casts over the imagination of youth. We want books, too, that will terrorise the hardened sinner and confirm the struggling aspirant to the higher life in the grim determination to walk in the narrow way. Now such are the ascetic works of St. Liguori that Father Coyle is engaged in having re-published. From my heart I wish him success in this apostolic mission. From my heart I pray that these volumes may have a wide circulation.

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

✠ T. P. GILMARTIN,
Archbishop of Tuam.

St. JARLATH'S,
28th April, 1929.

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

wrote:—

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

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

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

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

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

✠ J. M. HARTY.

Archbishop of Cashel.

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

*LETTER OF APPROBATION AND BLESSING FROM
MOST REV. PATRICK MURRAY, C.S.S.R.,
Superior-General and Rector Major*

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

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

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

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

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

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

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

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

Your devoted servant and confrère,

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

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

THE EDITOR'S WORD OF THANKS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Achtzehnter Sonntag after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL.

(September 29.)

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

I.

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation.

ST. MICHAEL BATTLES FOR US AGAINST THE INFERNAL DRAGON.

I.

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

II.

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

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

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

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

I.

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

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

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Monday—Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

TO PLEASE GOD WE MUST ABANDON SIN.

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

II.

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

“BE NOT DECEIVED, GOD IS NOT MOCKED.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation.

ST. MICHAEL GIVES TO EACH A GUARDIAN ANGEL.

I.

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

Tuesday—Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

Mornings Meditation.

OBSTINACY IN SIN ESPECIALLY BRINGS
PUNISHMENT.

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

I.

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

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

II.

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation.

ST. MICHAEL ASSISTS US AT DEATH AND IN PURGATORY.

I.

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

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

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

Wednesday—Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

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

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

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

I.

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

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

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

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

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

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

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

In order to amend, we must fear punishment, otherwise we shall never be brought to change our lives. True it is, God protects him who hopes in His mercy. *He is the protector of all who trust in Him—(Ps. xvii. 31).* But he who hopes in the mercy of the Lord always fears His justice. *They that fear the Lord have hoped in the Lord: He is their helper and their protector—(Ps. cxiii. 1).* The Lord often speaks of the rigour of His judgment, and of hell, and of the great number who go thither. *Be not afraid of them who kill the body: . . . cast ye him who, after he hath killed, hath power to leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in theret—(Matt. vii. 13).* And why does God so often speak thus? In order that fear may keep us from vice, and from following our passions, and from occasions of sin; and that thus we may reasonably hope for salvation which is only for the innocent, and for the penitent who hope and fear.

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation.

LOVE OF SOLITUDE.

I.

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

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

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

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

Thursday—Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

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

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

I.

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

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

II.

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation.

SOLITUDE OF THE HEART.

I.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Morning Meditation.

THE HEART OF JESUS LONGING FOR OUR LOVE.

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

I.

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

What! can God desire or ask with such eagerness for

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

GOD SENDS AFFLICTIONS FOR OUR GOOD.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation.

THE LOVE OF JESUS IN SUFFERING FOR US.

I.

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

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

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

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Saturday—Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

MOST HOLY MARY THE MEDIATRIX OF SINNERS.

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

I.

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

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

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

II.

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

THE HOLY ROSARY.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation.

THE MOST FAITHFUL MEDIATRIX.

I.

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

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

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

II.

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

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

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

TERESA'S LOVE FOR JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.*

I.—EXCELLENCE OF THIS VIRTUE.

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

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

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

II.

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

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

Monday—Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

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

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

I.

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

So great was the confidence with which the holy

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

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

"THE LORD IS CAREFUL FOR ME."

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

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

fidence and you shall receive whatever you desire. Heaven and earth may fail you, but the Word of God Who has said: *Everyone that asketh, receiveth*—(Matt. vii. 8), cannot fail. He that asks, obtains, even when he does not at all deserve to obtain what he asks, as St. Thomas says. On the other hand, he who does not ask, does not obtain. Behold then, on what our victory, in time of temptation, depends: *Praising I will call upon the Lord and I shall be saved from my enemies*—(Ps. xvii. 4). Let us have recourse to God and we shall be conquerors. Behold, on what all our good depends: *Ask, and you shall receive*—(Jo. xvi. 24). Let us ask, and it will be given us. Our Saint used to say: "For gaining Divine graces, prayer is the only gate: shut this, and I know not how God shall bestow them. Let us observe that our Father and God not only takes care of us, but that He is ever full of anxiety for our good, as He gives us to understand in the Holy Scriptures." Let us pray, then, with confidence; let us pray to God in the Name of Jesus Christ, His Son, Who has made us this promise: *If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you*—(Jo. xvi. 23). God always takes care of us. *The Lord is careful for me*—(Ps. xxxix. 18). And the Prophet says it is easier for a mother to forget her child than for God to forget us. It will be enough to show God our miseries and say to Him with the leper in the Gospel: *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*—(Matt. viii. 2); or with the Sister of Lazarus: *He whom thou lovest is sick*—(Jo. xi. 3); but *we ought always to pray and not to faint*—(Luke xviii. 1). The day we leave off prayer, we shall fall.

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

II.—EXCELLENCE OF THE VIRTUE.

I.

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

Tuesday—Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

ST. TERESA'S GREAT LOVE FOR GOD.

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

I.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

“MERIT CONSISTS IN SUFFERING AND IN LOVING.”

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

III.—CONFORMITY IN ALL THINGS.

I.

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

Wednesday—Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

THE GREAT PERFECTION ATTAINED BY ST. TERESA.

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

I.

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

RESOLUTION TO GIVE ONESELF WHOLLY TO GOD.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

IV.—HAPPINESS THAT COMES FROM PERFECT CONFORMITY.

I.

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

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

II.

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

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

Thursday—Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

THE HUMILITY OF ST. TERESA.

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

I.

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

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

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

V.—HAPPINESS THAT COMES FROM PERFECT CONFORMITY.

I.

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

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

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

II.

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

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

Friday—Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

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

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

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

I.

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

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

tell him that I languish with love

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

II.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation.

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

I.

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

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

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

Saturday—Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

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

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

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

I.

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

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

THE PROTECTION OF HOLY MARY AND

ST. JOSEPH.

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation.

“O GRACIOUS ADVOCATE.”

MARY AN ADVOCATE WHO IS ABLE TO SAVE ALL.

I.

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

ST. TERESA'S DESIRE FOR DEATH.

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

I.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

"I live, from myself am far away:

And hope to reach a life so high,

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

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

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading.

“PARADISE! PARADISE!”

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

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

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

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

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

The holy Mother Teresa used to say:

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

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

From my true Life above:

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

O my eternal Love!

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

I weary of this endless strife;

I weary of this dying life—

This living death—this heavy chain;

This torment of delay,

In which her sins my soul detain;

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

With my last breath to say—

“No more I weep—no more I sigh!

I’m dying of desire to die.”

HYMN IN HONOUR OF ST. TERESA.

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Meditation.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

VI.—GOD WISHES ONLY OUR GOOD.

I.

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

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

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

II.

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

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

Monday—Twentieth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation.

ST. TERESA'S PRECIOUS DEATH.

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

I.

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

