

## CONFERENCES

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# CONFERENCES

GIVEN BY FATHER DIGNAM OF THE  
SOCIETY OF JESUS

*With Retreats, Sermons, and Notes of Spiritual Direction*

COMPILED BY

MOTHER MAGDALEN TAYLOR

Author of "Cyborne," etc. etc.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION BY

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL MAZZELLA, S.J.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION BY

FATHER GRETTON, S.J.

CENTRAL DIRECTOR OF THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

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1901



Hoc opus diligenter examinavi et non tantum nihil in eodem reperi contra fidem vel mores, sed imo quod plurimum conferet totum opus ad pietatem fidelium et praecipue ad devotionem erga SS. Cor Jesu confovendam.

Datum e Collegio S. Antonii in Urbe, die 24 Martii, 1897.

Fr. DAVID, *Ord. Min.*

*S.T.L. Jub.*

*S.O. Consultor.*

Nihil obstat

Fr. JOANNES NERI, O.P.

*Censor deputatus.*<sup>1</sup>

*Imprimatur*

FRAN. CASSETTA PATR. ANTIOCH. VICESG.

<sup>1</sup> This book having been printed in Rome, underwent the accustomed revision of the "Sacred Palace."



## PREFACE.

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THE volume, herewith presented to the public, is meant to be a sequel to two others, respectively entitled, *A Memoir of Father Dignam, S.J.*, and *Retreats given by Father Dignam, S.J.* Like its predecessors, it is a tribute of gratitude and love from the "Poor Servants of the Mother of God," to the memory of a zealous religious priest, whose spiritual advice they held in the highest esteem.

Mindful of the counsel of the Holy Ghost, "*let not the part of a good gift overpass thee*,"<sup>1</sup> they seek to rescue from oblivion the lessons of Christian wisdom, addressed by the good Father to such as had placed themselves under his direction. Like the Apostles of old they strive to "*gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost*."<sup>2</sup> With this view, they have put together the scattered notes, taken at different times and by different persons, particularly during the many Retreats conducted by the Father in the course of his ministry. They have collected a few spiritual gems which, by reason of the light in which they were seen, appeared to shine out

<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiasticus xiv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> St. John vi. 12.

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with greater lustre than others. They have culled a few spiritual flowers which, somehow, attracted special attention.

The present publication, therefore, does not claim to reproduce in full the meditations, conferences, instructions, and exhortations, as they were actually given. It does not even profess to be an abstract or sketch, such as the speaker might have drawn up for his own reference. It is rather a collection of thoughts and principles of conduct, which made a strong impression upon the listeners, and seemed to have a particular, and perhaps personal, application. Of itself, such a collection cannot give an adequate idea of the spiritual treasures which the souls, guided by Father Dignam, thought that they discovered in his discourses and even in his most familiar addresses. Still less can it supply for the absence of the living person, the countenance, the gesture, the voice, the interior spirit which seemed to them to breathe in his every word, and to impart a supernatural force and efficacy to all that he said.

Nevertheless, encouraged by the favour with which the previous compilation of Father Dignam's Retreats has been received; the "Poor Servants of the Mother of God" offer this new volume to the devout reader, in the hope that it will help to perpetuate and consolidate the work done by the Servant of God for the benefit of his spiritual children.



May their hope be fully realized! May these pages serve to recall to the minds of all that have listened to the good Father, the lessons of virtue and Christian perfection which fell from his lips! May they serve above all to foster in the "Poor Servants of the Mother of God" the genuine spirit of the religious life and of their own particular Institute, with which he laboured so strenuously to imbue them!

Thus, even though his voice is now hushed, shall he continue his Apostolate on earth, for the good of many souls. Thus shall we be able to say of him, in the words of Holy Writ, not only that "*the just shall be in everlasting remembrance,*"<sup>1</sup> but also that "*the just shall live for evermore.*"<sup>2</sup>

C. CARDINAL MAZZELLA.

*Rome, Feast of the Annunciation, 1897.*

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxi. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Wisdom v. 16.

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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THE call for a second edition of Father Dignam's *Conferences* is a consoling proof that there are among us many souls who have a sincere desire for solid progress in holiness. For it must be well known by this time to the Catholic reading public that these Conferences are addressed to those only who are in earnest, who are not afraid to face the difficulties of the spiritual life, who are willing to try to pay the great price of the science of the Saints. Not that this book pretends to be anything like a complete treatise on Christian and religious perfection ; but that there is little in it to suit the taste of triflers, and of easy-going characters, who would be glad enough to enjoy the sweets of sensible devotion if these could be had without genuine self-conquest. These Conferences distinctly demand more than mere reading ; they call for serious study, meditation, and self-examination ; they require, as imperatively as did the living voice which they faithfully echo, a sincere attempt to walk bravely in the narrow and thorny path which alone leads to holiness. Few concessions to human frailty will be detected here ; yet there is a gentleness throughout which wins us

from the fear of the strong hand guiding us ever forward ever upward towards the Sacred Heart—on Calvary.

That these Conferences and Meditations were so faithfully noted down, with no view apparently of publication, by the various persons to whom they were given, is a proof in itself of their power when delivered by the living voice. But the question with their compiler was whether they would have anything like the same power at second-hand, in written form. The demand for a Second Edition is an encouraging answer to that question. The power of the thoughts here gathered together has not ended with the mortal life, of which they were a faithful mirror. That power, as his Eminence the late Cardinal Mazzella, S.J., pointed out in his Preface to the First Edition, must of course have been greater when the living person, the countenance, the gesture, the voice, the interior spirit breathing in every word, were seen and felt. But whether it is the intrinsic force, the nature and style, of these Conferences, or the strong impression made upon their first hearers here manifested in the care and manner in which they are set before us, or the memory, still cherished by many, of the living voice and manner, or the common knowledge that they helped to sanctify and strengthen the heroic soul of her<sup>1</sup> who three years before her own

<sup>1</sup> The late Mother Mary Magdalen Taylor, Superior General of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God.

death hastened to gather them together with such loving care as most precious fragments, certain it is that this book will produce upon the thoughtful and even the superficial reader a subtle, distinct, and powerful sense of life, as if in truth that voice were still heard which we well remember was, with all its gentleness, most imperative in its firm guidance of souls towards the higher paths of perfection.

It is therefore a matter of great consolation to find that a book of such character has not been offered in vain to Catholic readers. The high estimate of it formed by its zealous compiler is thus amply justified, as is also her confidence that there were many generous souls able and ready to appreciate and profit by it. Were she now living she would not have to be content with seeing only among her own dear children in Religion how abundant and excellent could be the fruit borne in souls by the three books which her grateful veneration for Father Dignam's memory impelled her to publish—The Memoir, The Retreats, and these Conferences.

JOHN GEORGE GRETTON, S.J.

*Wimbledon,  
Feast of St. John the Baptist,  
1901.*

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*Letter from His Eminence Cardinal Mazzella, S. J., Cardinal Protector  
of the Institute, to the Mother General of the Poor Servants of the  
Mother of God.*

ROME, 15th December, 1895.

REVEREND MOTHER GENERAL,

Yesterday I had the honour and pleasure of presenting to the Holy Father the Life of the much-regretted Father Dignam, S.J. Having previously read it, I could thus tell him that it describes to us a man who was all intent on propagating the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in England, and the great co-operator in the firm foundation of the much-esteemed Institute of the Povere Ancelle della Madre di Dio e dei Poveri (Poor Servants of the Mother of God, and the Poor), and, therefore, a lover and benefactor of theirs. Such a book cannot fail to give edification to the faithful, and, above all, to the said Povere Ancelle, who will find in it the spirit of their holy Institute perfectly described. All this led the Holy Father to accept with pleasure the filial offering, and to impart to you, and to your Institute, the Apostolical Benediction. Nothing more remains to me, but to hope that the blessing of the Holy Father may cause this book to bear more and more salutary fruit.

Reverend Mother General,

Most affectionately at your service,

C. CARDINAL MAZZELLA, Protector.

*Letter from His Paternity the Very Reverend Father General of the  
Society of Jesus.*

ROME, 7th October, 1895.

DEAR REVEREND MOTHER GENERAL,

I beg to return sincere thanks for the edifying *Memoir of Father Augustus Dignam*. The good that his words did to individuals in his lifetime will be perpetuated and extended to others, by the numerous extracts from his letters now published in this Memoir. But who can estimate the spiritual help he gave to countless souls by his fervent instructions, counsels, exhortations, continued for so many years in the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*? He was truly an Apostle of the Sacred Heart, and so his work in life was visibly blessed, and a special fragrance hangs round his memory after death.

May our Divine Lord impart to us something of the same fervour and zeal, in spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart!

Believe me, dear Reverend Mother General,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

L. MARTIN, S.J.

Reverend Mother General M. Magdalen,  
The Convent, The Butts, Brentford, London,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Memoir of Father Dignam, S.J.* London: Burns and Oates.



## INTRODUCTION.

---

THE favourable reception of *Retreats* by Father Dignam, has convinced the compilers of that volume (as also of his Memoir) that it would be well to print the MSS. remaining in their hands.

Among the MSS., a few fragmentary notes of the Father's inner life have been found ; and these the compilers well know will be precious in the eyes of many who knew him, and will certainly give further evidence that he practised what he taught.

He always urgently pressed on those under his direction, to adopt the habit of reflection after their daily meditations were finished, and to keep a record of their reflection in brief words such as often would be unintelligible to any but the writers ; and he told one of his spiritual children that this was his life-long habit, beginning from the days of his noviceship. The very first record of these reflections occurs just after he had taken his vows.

21 Feb. 1858.—Christ bound. He, bound and abandoned ; I, freed from the bonds that have so carefully been wrapt around the broken trunk to straighten its deformity—but freed not to return to the old shape, but free to preserve the new one. Thy bonds, O Jesus, be my safety. No self in this life.

The next are records of his meditations before the feast of Pentecost.

*Friday before Pentecost.*—The rewards of the Apostles. If I could make a profit of my uncharitable thoughts, by carefully avoiding, as à Kempis says, whatever is displeasing in others, I should soon vanquish them. Any sign then of over-appreciation of the world is to be suppressed; and I am to try internally and externally to walk worthy of my vocation.

*Vigil of Pentecost.*—Preparation for the Holy Ghost. His communication is with the simple. All turns on my rejection of selfish thoughts, as I would those against charity.

*Whit Sunday.*—Christ as fire. Should I shrink from the view of my necessities? Ah, would to God I could only know them. Is not Jesus able to cure them—would that He would do so to-day, if for my good. If I knew them, and lived in their knowledge, how soon, O my God, would Thy Holy Spirit possess my soul.

*Whit Tuesday.*—He who is inebriated with Thy love, O my God, what shall disturb his peace.

*Whit Wednesday.*—My fidelity and conformity must not only correspond to the graces I receive, but I must humbly and willingly acquiesce in the failings which God pleases to let me fall into.

This arrogant tone in conversation on spiritual things I must strive with all my heart to overcome, since it gives constant scandal to His children, but if I don't succeed, not petulance, not anger, not *bitterness*, but contrition, humility, and courage.

*Whit Friday.*—The fruits of the Holy Ghost. Besides chastity, and its attendant modesty, all the works of the Holy Ghost in the soul resolve themselves into *gentleness*.

*Whit Saturday.*—The effects of the Holy Ghost on the early Christians. Community life demands simplicity. Whilst I am selfish my every act is in opposition to charity; above all, this miserable vanity, swelling

even to preventing silence about the faults of others, is, as I was warned in my noviceship, that which especially must render me odious and intolerable to all.

Fortunately we find also some reflections during the month of June—evidences of the deep love for the Sacred Heart ever burning in his soul, and rendering him a true apostle of the devotion. His meditations evidently dwelt upon the different *Virtues of the Sacred Heart*; and even when June had run its course we find him still lingering upon his favourite subject.

*May 31.*—The month of the Sacred Heart.—The best reparation I can offer our dear Mother, for this month, is to spend the next well. Let me resolve then, not only with regard to prayer, but in every action during it, to try to let all be such as will give pleasure to the Heart I design to honour, and to be as I shall wish to have been in eternity.

*June 1.*—Excellence of the Sacred Heart.

My only happiness is as far as I put on Jesus Christ, and this after all is as much a matter of habit as other things. I can grow *used* to asking myself in emergencies, "How would He act."

*June 2.*—Oblation of the Sacred Heart. Prompt, entire, constant.

But yesterday, where was my oblation; selfishness and unwillingness came first, then human respect. When shall I be able to see myself as I am?

*June 3.*—Holiness of the Sacred Heart and the model of our holiness.

I must learn to desire perfection for God's sake; now I only seek it for the esteem it causes. Let me then not be discouraged at falls which come from God's

mercy. He could in a single Communion cure all if it were His will.

*June 4.*—Shame and contrition.

*June 5.*—Interior suffering. His love for His Eternal Father—for man. He saw the little use of His sacrifice many would make. Oh, if I but *loved* Jesus Christ, how truly I should condemn pride and selfishness; if I had a real ardent desire for God's glory, and if I were so consumed with a desire to pray for that, how safely might I consign all the objects dear to me in life, to the Divine Heart. What blessings I should procure for all.

*June 11.*—Renovation—Divinity—Love—Sorrows of the Sacred Heart.

*June 12.*—The Sacred Heart's love of God; ready, entire, constant.

Oh, my Jesus, make known unto me in Thine own time all that is wanting to my love and faithful service. Give me only Thy grace, and command what Thou wilt. *The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing.*

13.—The Sacred Heart's love of men—Friend, Brother, Father, Spouse.

“Love Him and keep Him for thy friend who, when all go away, will not leave thee.”

“*For what have I in Heaven? And besides Thee what do I desire upon earth!*”

*June 14.*—Purity—Reparation—Model—Source. Courage is necessary always, but above all here; and it is the thought of the Sacred Heart that should give this courage. With the Tabernacle before you, how can you fear?

*June 15.*—With regard to creatures. Indifference is to love God in them, therefore all can help to greater perfection, to love them in God, so we need never be inordinate. How little I have to sacrifice, to give

myself all to Him. Oh, why cannot I do it? "What is aught to me beside Thee."

16.—Poverty and riches.

With regard to detachment, two things must be remembered: How utterly removed I am from it, and how necessary it is to union with Jesus Christ; but secondly, that it is necessary to be wise, as well as determined, and to make such resolutions as God's grace shall enable me to keep; aiming at *all*, but gradually.

*June 17.*—Interior recollection of the Sacred Heart.

18.—Obedience of the Sacred Heart—entire, constant, perfect. If truly obedient, how far would all internal trouble be from us, how full of confidence and joy. Obedience in the Society should take from us every thought but purely "God's will."

19.—Fidelity of the Sacred Heart—Progress. Full days—days of things done with intention to please God. With desire of perfection—"What is this to eternity?"

*June 22.*—Peace of the Sacred Heart.

For peace are necessary—1. Humility. 2. Fidelity to grace. Without the first we can have no peace from without. Without the second we can have no peace from within.

23.—Desires of the Sacred Heart. If I would nourish holy desires, I must destroy all *caprice*: and never act from merely natural impulse, for this must always produce tepidity, indifference, and languor.

24.—The hidden life of the Sacred Heart—on earth, in the Blessed Sacrament, in the Church. "If thou didst know the gift of God." If you could feel with faith what it is to have Jesus thus daily at your side, hourly to see Him, to speak with, to offer all to Him, what merit would not an entire devotion bring?

*June 25.*—The Divine life of the Sacred Heart.

Jesus lives through, in, and for God.

Through, by His entire dependence; in, by unity of thought, feeling, and sympathy; for, by intercession. As He to God, so I to Him.

26.—Abandonment of the Sacred Heart.

27.—Meekness of the Sacred Heart.

28.—Patience in suffering, with creatures, in His desires. The desire of God's will must be the *only* one.

29.—Active life—on earth, in the Blessed Sacrament, in souls. To work independently of *results*; this is perfect work. This gave Father Ricci his souls in China. Could he, unless for God, have worked for twenty years without fruit?

30.—Temptations—the world, devil, from God.

Can I be a true lover of Him, who has from His meek and loving Heart cursed the world so dreadfully, if I still cherish it in mine? And yet I do. It is of what we love that we love to speak.

*July 1.*—Humiliation and glory. My heart is still all impure, and God waits for me to offer myself for humiliation to cleanse it. And you, my soul, are afraid to trust yourself to the hands of your Heavenly Father.

*July 2.*—Suffering and happiness. To-day the Sacred Heart was given to the Society,<sup>1</sup> to-day It will be given to you in Holy Communion. But, remember, It is planted with the Cross, encircled by the thorns, the signs of your happy nuptials. Therefore, if you would cherish It, cherish also the cross of humiliation, the thorns of pain. "To suffer, and be contemned for Thee."

*July 3.*—Amiability of the Sacred Heart. The delight of the Eternal Father, of all the just on earth.

<sup>1</sup> Allusion to the vision vouchsafed to Blessed Margaret Mary, July 2nd, 1688.



He seeks His delight in me. "If thou wilt be with Me, I will be with thee." "I will willingly be with Thee." If the abyss is a great one, it invokes an abyss which is infinite. He desires to make me that which I, in spite of all my depravity, sincerely desire to be. He knows! He can! He will! What dost thou fear?

*July 4.*—Zeal—practical, ardent, universal.

*July 5.*—Compassion of the Sacred Heart. (1) For our temporal evils, (2) for our spiritual misery, (3) for our struggle with spiritual life. All this should give me confidence. But at the same time let me remember that when I reject grace, I impart the most sensible pain to this Heart which loves me so.

*July 6.*—Compassion of the Sacred Heart for sinners. (1) waiting, (2) seeking, (3) receiving.

*July 7.*—Sacrifice of the Sacred Heart—(1) Victim, (2) Priest.

*July 13.*—Devils go into swine. "The destruction of the swine excited a great fear of our Lord," so that they ask Jesus to leave them. Such is affection for temporals; so soon does it result in sin.

*July 14.*—Paralytic carried by force to Jesus. The tepid Religious who can *see* how through indulging a love of temporals he has cooled his heart towards the Divine One, which never cools towards him, though it may seem to do so, and has still humility, and the theological virtues waiting to bear him swiftly to the feet of Jesus, nor is he to fear because the dread of some sacrifice to be made, be ever ready to interfere and stop his way.

Here the daily reflections end; but some resolutions during a Triduum are briefly recorded.

He asks himself how he can best fight against the flesh, the world, and the devil. The first must be subdued by "self-denial," and there must be "detach-

ment of heart"—the world must be fought by avoiding "particular friendships," and the desire for "external things;" and the devil must be resisted by "never permitting the conduct of another to disgust us, and by making recreations religious;" he will never yield to murmuring at arrangements, nor to excess in fun, especially at Villa; and he will be very faithful in keeping the "rules of holy modesty," "about subjects of conversation, about mortification with regard to our neighbour;" and to avoid "bantering or sneering." These resolutions were kept. The tendency to these faults mentioned were conquered. For he was one of those to whom we could apply his own words faithfully carried out: "It is not by the practice alone of poverty, chastity, or zeal, that we can taste the peace and happiness of religious life. It is by that war with *self*, that following of Jesus to which He has invited us."

Father Dignam was fond of using the "tessera" or motto which many people adopt as a sort of watchword. He seems to have had two.

1. There is not a moment in the whole course of our lives in which we are not engraving in our souls the characters of glory or of confusion. (Père Rigoleuc.)
2. Progress depends on the fidelity with which yesterday is examined and to-day resolved for.

These chosen mottoes of his life were certainly faithfully followed.

Now we come to the last records that remain, written at a much later date than the preceding.

Many years have elapsed, and we find the Sacred Heart is still the pervading thought of his life.

1. Think about what we like, and not to be the puppets of external objects.

Sacred Heart.—In Him, commencing. With Him, listening, “*I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me ;*” through him acting, A.M.D.G. “*How is the gold become dim.*”

2. Vocation.—The choicest gift of the Sacred Heart, not only privilege, but call to perfection, “*modest, of good behaviour, a teacher, no striker, not quarrelsome, prudent, chaste, not covetous.*” Not mere perfection but a difficult kind; we all know a perfect man when we see him—*unspotted from the world.*

3. Ideal.—Without it we labour in vain. It is in Jesus Christ. Know Him by study and to think on, not only flesh and blood, know Him in His teaching to preach, feel Him to promote His interests; our hearts should beat in unison with that of His mystical body, the Church.

4. Love of Sacred Heart makes Religious spring forward—the past will repeat itself when trials come. St. Thomas. Lancicius.

5. St. Gregory—“Love is proved by deeds.”

Rules—(1) Source of strength. Giant with one idea. No other way of proving our love. (2) Expression of our Lord’s exterior—ours to be like His—a man’s walk. Eccentricity—utility depends on the rules. Rules of orthodoxy. (3) Of His Heart’s union with the harmony in God’s works—fruit—determination:

*These things three, most dear to me  
With these I die right happily.*

And here ends the last record of his inner life, save a tiny scrap left between the leaves of the

Sailor's prayer-book which he carried in his pocket during the last months of his life. It is almost illegible, but the following words (a quotation) have been deciphered.

He only wishes to establish His reign in our hearts, to give us more abundantly His great mercies, and His precious graces of sanctification and salvation.

From his earliest childhood Father Dignam had never neglected prayer ; and he tells us himself, what a deep impression was made on him, in his boyhood, by a sermon of Father Ignatius Spencer (page 356), who little thought what fruit his words were to bring forth, from the soul of a listening child among the crowd at Moorfields. For it was with this child, to use his own words later in life, as with some children: "They are even when young true to God, they have true relations with Him." He was always *true* to God. This habit of prayer was fostered and trained, as soon as he entered Religion, till it became part of his daily life. On one occasion, when speaking to a friend of a brief but sharp attack of illness he had gone through—he remarked simply: "I was indeed very ill, for actually I found that I could not pray."

Once at St. Helens, one pressing duty after another pursued him from the time he had ended his Mass: the last of all being a long conversation of spiritual direction, with a person who had come a great distance to seek his counsel. On taking leave of his visitor about two o'clock, he said: "Now I must go to my room, and make my thanksgiving after Mass." We cannot then but feel assured that it was of himself

he spoke, in one of his Conferences, when he said : "If we want to succeed in prayer, we must be prepared for longanimity and perseverance. . . . At last comes a day when, oftentimes unknown to ourselves, we receive the spirit of prayer—feel a peace we cannot account for."

"This spirit of prayer, like so many other graces of our lives, has come so noiselessly that we are not aware of it ; one by one inordinate affections have been given up, the soul is now free to listen to God, and in union with Him the trials of life pass almost unheeded ; at any rate, suffering borne with Him and for His sake, is not able to disturb our peace. The precious fruit of longanimity in prayer is ours." And we can hardly doubt that it was from personal experience he spoke when, treating of the heart to heart conversations with God, he said : "Those who have once experienced these communications, can no longer live without them. As the panting stag thirsts for the fountain, so they long and thirst for the time when they will be again in converse with our Lord."

But the spirit of prayer was not won without the habit of self-conquest. In one of his letters to his sister, when exhorting her to maintain great calmness, as a help to progress in the spiritual life, he adds : "Eagerness in character ; in that we are alike." Yet those who only knew him during the last twenty years of his life can hardly believe that eagerness was part of his character, so completely had he subdued its outward manifestation. To *wait*, was a leading idea with him. God's time, not ours, was his chief

thought and constant teaching. In trial, in misrepresentation, even calumny, to "*live it down*" was his motto. He once said, "The constant cry—*Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven*—the fixing of our happiness in the accomplishment of God's will alone and nothing else. This makes the true Religious, this is meant by *Follow Me*." Even some under his direction have been surprised at the revelations of the height of inward sanctity to which he had attained. He literally wore himself out in the war with self. Surely to him these words can be applied: "The very intensity and earnestness with which these great souls strive after the heights of perfection is in itself a great suffering. It does not kill, but it wears and wears away quietly their lives and their hearts. It is the martyrdom of Divine love. Of all the executioners of the human heart the greatest tyrant is Divine love. It pierces the heart with an anguish so intense that it is a most real inward crucifixion." So did he wear himself away in the pursuit of perfection, and as he taught us by example as well as precept, how to live; so he taught us first by precept and then by example, how to die: how perfectly were his words about death fulfilled in him—how clearly did he show that he *felt*: "We meet the *same* God in death whom we have so often met in life. This is the road—that the term."

For his greater merit indeed, Father Dignam was permitted to long for life; but he met death without fear, and with a lively faith, assured hope, and fervent charity.

There are two letters, written many years before

his death, to one who was very near her end, which now assume an aspect of deeper interest, because they present to us so true a picture of what Father Dignam was. He writes: "No real harm can come to you, as long as you are under the shadow of His wings. Praise is set off and made more beautiful and precious by a good dark background of suffering. And what I preach, you must illustrate." And a time came when he ceased to preach, but most truly illustrated his own words. And none of those who watched his closing days on earth but must be reminded of him by the following words: "You are very ill, I fear, and suffering very much, and I am so anxious that the patience may not grow less, and the bright firm trust in 'the Everlasting Arms' that are round you, may be as bright and as firm as ever. Is the end indeed coming—is God so near? Well, if it be so, do not fear Him, for it is His gift that the lamp is trimmed, and you are watching. Oh, my dear child, how you will thank Him, when you are in His Heart, that He has taken you, and while He left you here, cleansed you from the defilement of creatures, and taught you to value nothing but Himself."

And we might venture to follow him beyond the portals of the grave, and apply to him the words which he wrote to the Jesuit Fathers at Toulouse after the death of Father Ramière (January 3rd, 1884): "With immense sorrow we think that this eloquent voice will be no longer heard, that this great, noble and simple heart has ceased to beat. Certainly the first meeting between the Master and him who

had laboured for Him so long and so hard, must have been very beautiful and very sweet. May the Sacred Heart inebriate him with Its love! Thanks to that Love, he has left his work flourishing, and strengthened against future peril. The numerous crosses he had so courageously borne during his life, had produced their blessed fruit which shall increase and last."

We also can add in our turn, as regards Father Dignam, that we are "firmly persuaded that his intercession with that God with whom he now dwells, will be a powerful aid to this result." Yes, we do not doubt that now he joins in the intercession of his Divine Master, his prayers tend greatly to increase the prosperity of his beloved work, the "Apostleship of Prayer," and to help forward those who still cling to the memory of his direction, or who through his Memoir and recorded words become imbued with his spirit.

How often do those who gazed at his face so calm in death, with its heavenly smile, recall his own words again and joy in their fulfilment in him: "*Here* we have the toil, *there* the Father's Heart is waiting for us," and feel that *he* is thanking his Lord for all the toil, now that he is for ever "*in His Heart.*"

*Feast of the Holy Crown of Thorns,*  
1897.



### Section 3.

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N.B.—It was a characteristic of Father Dignam, that he cared not, whether he addressed a large or small audience. He was as well contented to speak to a scanty congregation of working women—a few score pupil-teachers, or a handful of “Promoters of the Sacred Heart”—as if he were addressing the closely packed congregation of a great Basilica.

In this he was like St. Francis of Sales, a Saint whom in many ways he greatly resembled—we are told the Saint “loved small audiences, the country people and children.”<sup>1</sup> And those who knew Father Dignam can well imagine what his answer would have been, if told as St. Francis says he once was, that there were “but seven people in the church and it was not worth while to preach.” Certainly the Father’s answer would have been similar to that of St. Francis, who said: “Provided somebody was edified it was enough.”<sup>2</sup>

This being the case, it is singular that so many records of his words have been preserved—but it so befell, that on many occasions there were faithful

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on St. Francis de Sales.* By Rev. H. B. Mackey, O.S.B.

<sup>2</sup> *Esprit de St. François de Sales*, ii. 27.

hearts among his audience who wrote down the words as they fell from his lips, and with sufficient accuracy to enable those who knew him, to recognize at once his thoughts, his ideas, and often his very words. Hence it is, that he, so humble and diffident of his own powers, so content to live "unknown," has been able to teach, even when his lips are closed for ever on earth ; able, therefore, to win souls to God, or to draw others to serve Him better, and to promote the honour and glory of the Sacred Heart he loved so well—all this adding to his accidental glory in eternity. But the compilers repeat, with the strongest emphasis possible, that which they have already stated in *Retreats* (p. xxxvi)—that readers must remember, these pages contain *recollections only* of what the Father said. They are, in no way, notes from his hand ; and are, save with few exceptions, totally unrevised by him. Therefore they are unequal in style ; often abrupt in their conclusions, and at times therefore may not express his full meaning.

But the compilers have adhered to one principle throughout the three volumes, that these recollections should not be "improved upon" nor added to, nor altered, except when *absolutely necessary*. They are given as they were written, and the truthfulness and simplicity with which they reflect his words has been considered sufficient compensation for any ruggedness, obscurity, or defects of style. And experience has proved that the compilers have been right in their judgments. The "book is alive," writes one ; "he lives and breathes in it," say others ; and a very

sympathetic review in *The Month*,<sup>1</sup> writing of *Retreats*, says: "They are simple, unpretending, with no attempt at rhetoric, but yet they come home to the heart with an incisive force, which shows that they came straight from the heart of him who uttered them."

It is needless to say that Father Dignam when speaking of the pleasure and pain given to the Sacred Heart, spoke in the sense in which St. Paul writes to the Hebrews of those who had been "*crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making Him a mockery*"—or again when he says to the Ephesians, "*Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.*"

<sup>1</sup> November, 1896.



## RETREAT.

(GIVEN TO THE MEMBERS OF AN ASSOCIATION  
OF OUR LADY.)

*A few preparatory words.*

VERY high indeed is the vocation of a Christian wife and mother, it may even be an apostolic one.

She is called upon to be the centre of the family, as the man is called upon to be its head; and wide-spreading indeed can her influence be. Not only does it affect every one around her, husband, children, and neighbours, but it is felt in every "hole and corner" of her house; and goes further still. How necessary it is that this influence should be a good and salutary one. The Christian wife and mother should realize the greatness of her calling and strive to live a life of holy retirement. If she does not, then her evil influence is spread around. Our faith should tell on our daily lives. People often listen to sermons and even frequent the sacraments, yet their life seems to be separated from their religion.

You are going to devote a few days to the study of the duties of your vocation. Talk to God about what you will hear, still more listen to God, Who will speak

to you—pass these days in as quiet a manner as you possibly can—keep yourselves to yourselves that God may do His work in your soul.

## FIRST DAY.

### FIRST MEDITATION.

#### *The imitation of our Blessed Lady.*

1. Try to form within yourselves the strong desire, the loving resolution, to begin now, and to continue till you die, to try as earnestly as you can, but at all events to *wish* to try each one of us, in spite of our passions, and bad habits, to make our lives a little bit more like that of our Lady. The most pleasing devotion to our Lady, is to try and resemble her.

2. We could be a little bit like our Lady in our work, our prayers, in our dealings with our neighbours, and in bearing pain with more patience. Let us make her our model in all things. Our Lady was Immaculate, she was conceived without original sin, and besides that, she was confirmed in grace; therefore she never did and never could offend God by sin. And we must carefully remember in all these meditations which we are going to make, if any words are used which would seem to imply that she could have failed to do God's will in the smallest particular, or even think that she had done so, we are but using a figure of speech to enable us to understand her better, and to better compare our own poor, sinful, wretched

selves with her perfection and spotless purity. And that we may do this let us invoke her in the beautiful words of St. Bernard :

“Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known, that any one who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, and sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of Virgins, my Mother. To thee I come ; before thee I stand sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.”

## SECOND MEDITATION.

### *On Prayer.*

1. I beg of you to believe me when I say there is no happiness in this world, no salvation in the next without constant prayer. God Himself has told us, that we must pray always. And it is easy for you to do so, you know very well that your body is not *you*, that you are composed of body and soul, that your body is only the house in which the soul dwells, and as soon as the soul goes out it is turned to rottenness.

Breath is necessary to your bodily life, without air to breathe you would die, and prayer is necessary for your souls, and it is easy for you to pray *always*.

Your business, your sleep, your family, your dealings with others will sometimes occupy your whole mind ; you cannot pray, then your Morning Offering of the Apostleship by which you have offered to God your work, prayers, and sufferings of the day, will pray for

you, and so your prayer goes on. But as soon as the business is over and you are again alone, begin your prayer if it be only a Hail Mary. St. Teresa saw in a wonderful vision the glory of the soul of a poor old woman who had said daily one Hail Mary really well.

How can we say a Hail Mary well? If you are real, and mean what you say.

2. What is prayer, is it not to talk to God? Begin by putting yourself in God's Presence, say to yourself I am going to speak to the great and eternal Creator, to Him on Whom I depend for every breath I draw. He, the immense, the all holy God is looking at me now, all the Saints and Angels are looking at me, pleased that I am going to speak to Him, interested in what I am going to say. And who am I before so glorious a God, a poor, little, weak, helpless creature wholly dependent on Him for even the breath with which to speak to Him, and more than this I have sinned against Him, and not once or twice, but again and again. Be real in what you say to God; it is no use to read pages and pages out of your prayer-books and not *mean* one word of what you have read. God does not care for that sort of prayer. You must not treat Him as you would be ashamed to treat a neighbour, turning away even while you were greeting them—they would say, are you speaking to me? You must look at God, speak to Him in His Presence, take pains to mean what you say. When you read your prayer-book, stop from time to time and ask yourself do I really mean what I am saying.

If you do this you will soon begin to love prayer, and God is more pleased with ten words from your



heart than ten pages read, perhaps not one word meant.

3. One thing more; one great reason why so many of you pray without fruit is, that you are always making excuses for yourselves, leave that to God. God will make more excuses for you than you could for yourself, if you humbly and plainly confess your fault to Him. To make excuses for yourself is pride, and God looks at the proud from very far away. Those who go often to confession learn to humble themselves by the grace of the sacrament; those who go rarely, if they have ten sins to confess, have fifty excuses.

If you are always excusing yourself in your heart, in your thoughts, in your words, you are full of pride. God wants you to leave all that alone and, like the Publican, to say frankly, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Then three things I want you to take home to think about: first, prayer is necessary for you; it is easy, there is neither happiness nor salvation without it; second, prayer must be real, in the Presence of the all holy God you must mean what you say; third, it must be humble.

## SECOND DAY.

### FIRST MEDITATION.

#### *On studying our Lady.*

1. I spoke to you yesterday morning of the real earnest desire to imitate our Lady. It must be not a

mere passing idea, "how beautiful it would be to be like our Lady; I wish I were," and then no more thought about it; but a real purpose which comes into the heart and never leaves it, but becomes part of our very self.

Now let us begin to study our Lady when the Angel left her after bringing her the wonderful tidings that she was to be the Mother of God. When any great good news comes to us, that some great riches or great honour has fallen to us, we are almost sure to be full of ourselves. Not so our Lady.

As soon as the Angel left her after delivering his message and telling her of her holy cousin's state, her thought was, "My cousin has need of me, I must go and help her." We shall never be like our Lady if we are not kind and thoughtful for others.

2. Then let us take another very solemn lesson from our Lady. Conceive the suffering caused to her by the perplexity into which St. Joseph was thrown concerning her, until the Mystery of the Incarnation was fully revealed to him. Always just, patient, and holy, "*he thought on these things.*" And then came an Angel of the Lord, saying, "*Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.*" But one word from our Lady could have put an end to all his suspense.

What did our Lady do?—she bore it in *silence*, in meek submission to God's will. O, my children, learn this lesson well. If when you are misunderstood or accused you bear it in silence, taking comfort from the thought of our Lady, be sure God will turn this trial

into an untold source of blessings to your own soul and will Himself take care of your good name. And beware then of anger and bitterness. Be greatly on your guard in your self-defence, lest by resisting a false accusation you should be led into actual sins, and thus displease our Lord instead of bearing a trial for His sake.

3. Lastly, let us consider the poverty of Jesus and of our Lady. It was not a poverty of destitution. By means of hard labour they were provided with the necessaries of life, but with nothing beyond.

Their poverty very much resembled that of your own, usually able to make two ends meet. But then you are subject to hard times. These are all sent to you by Divine Providence. See our dear Lady at Nazareth dependent with St. Joseph on his daily wages for their support. Then just when she most needed the quiet of her home, when she most wished to keep herself out of sight, there came the selfish order from the Roman Emperor that they were to go to *Bethlehem*, and therefore take a journey of eighty miles. If our Lady had been a rich woman, she might have had many servants to attend her, and a litter to be carried in, and many comforts—but she was poor and she had to travel as poor people did in those days, and to bear the cold, the inconveniences, the rudeness and contempt of the world, as poor people always have to do. The Angel had told her that her Child was to be great, the Son of the Most High, that He should rule on the throne of David, and of His Kingdom there should be no end! and she saw herself refused a lodging at all the houses in

Bethlehem—obliged to take refuge in a ruined stable, and therein bring Him into the world. Yet that night was a night of most exquisite joy and peace to our Lady ; her delight was in the holy will of God.

Love to repeat those humble words "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord.*" When you delight in saying these words, your love for our Lady will increase, and you will gradually grow a little more like her, in your hearts and in your lives.

#### SECOND MEDITATION.

##### *On our Lady's life at Nazareth.*

1. The portion of our Lady's life which we now have to consider, is of vital importance to you, and I want it to be a turning-point in your lives.

Yesterday we considered our Lady under exceptional sufferings, and of these she had indeed a large share. After our Lord was born, she had to fly with Him into Egypt, and remain there seven years, and St. Bonaventure tells us, that the Holy Family were often reduced to utter destitution, to beggary and even to want their daily bread. But this was not the ordinary course of their lives. Now take heed of a lesson which I want you to learn.

Our Lord, the Son of the Most High, came to be our example in all things, and out of the thirty-three years He spent on earth, He chose to spend eighteen in a cottage home, in a life so like those around Him that when He came back during His three years' ministry to preach there, they were all in amazement

and said, "*Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His Mother called Mary?*" How comes He to be preaching?

2. The life of our Lady at Nazareth greatly resembled your own. When you are cooking, cleaning, washing the linen, minding your children, you can always say: "Our Blessed Lady did every one of these things; she was a poor working woman like myself, therefore, how her dear heart so full of love and tender sympathy can *understand* all my troubles." Then endeavour to perform every action in the way you feel she must have done, and desire to do this. In this way you will become a truly holy, Christian woman.

3. In the Holy House of Nazareth there was no external difference between the Holy Family and their neighbours. There were no remarkable observances, their prayers were of no extraordinary length, they lived a simple quiet life; but who can reckon, who can count, the immense amount of honour and glory given to God by that little obscure household? They needed no excitement, there was no pleasure-seeking, no gossip; they were content with their poverty. If we love and crave for money, and for gossip, and amusement, and excitement, we cannot really be trying to imitate our Blessed Lady. Her one desire was to do the holy will of God, the one wish of her heart was to do all she knew God wanted from her.

Learn to love the will of God, in the state in which He has placed you; unite each of your actions with those of our Lady, love the thought of her in

her work, in her prayers, in her pain, and you will soon become true imitators of her.

### THIRD DAY.

#### FIRST MEDITATION.

##### *The Valiant Woman.*

*“ Who shall find a valiant woman ? far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her.”*

1. For all your duties the abundant grace of God is given to you in the holy sacraments. I have already told you that you would not gain any profit from this retreat, unless you were earnest in your prayers. And this I now repeat, and I hope it will make a deep impression upon you ; and I will add a further remark—that all our failures come from want of prayer. In prayer lies our strength, our soul’s life.

Those who are wise know their own weakness—and they pray ; they cry to God for strength to fulfil their duties as wives, mothers, mistresses ; and His grace will be given to them abundantly. The foolish are proud, and rely on their own strength, and so their lives are sad failures.

Father Ignatius Spencer used to say that in the Day of Judgment when the division is made, those on the right hand of the Judge will be found to be those who prayed, even if they were very weak and failed very often, still somehow or other, if they con-

tinued to pray they will get to the right hand, and those on the left will be found to be those who did not pray.

2. Now let us consider some of the virtues of a good mother : faith, piety, horror of sin. We will take these as the principal, and for convenience.

By faith here I do not mean so much belief in the doctrines and dogmas of the Church—but faith in God's Presence.

The mother has faith, in the sense I mean, who whenever she looks at the child in her arms sees God between her and it, who remembers it is God's little child, entrusted to her to bring up for God, to teach to love God, to live for God. And remember, you cannot give your child what you have not got yourself, you cannot deceive your child.

From the first moment when it opened its little eyes in this world and fixed them on your face it is studying you, reading your passions in your face, learning what you think, what you like, what you love, what you fear, what you are.

Long before it can speak it has learnt much, either for good or evil, and it has learnt it from you—Is not prayer necessary for a mother ?

Then piety. What is piety?—It is that grace which makes us take a delight in prayer, take a delight in hearing Mass, take delight in speaking to God, in talking of God, in serving God. If you have not this love in your heart, you cannot give it to your child. The little child sees its mother pray, come to Confession and Communion ; you never think it is taking any notice, but before it can speak it has

learnt that there is some one above whom its mother loves and loves to speak to ; it has learnt to know God.

3. Then horror of sin—and this is especially necessary for you who are compelled to live in the midst of so much and such gross sin, that, humanly speaking, it is not to be wondered at if you forget its horror from your necessary familiarity with it. Yet this horror of sin, if you have it yourselves and so teach it to your children, you will give them what will never be rooted out of their hearts, even if it be overlaid for a time—the seed will remain, and when watered by the grace of God it will spring up again.

#### SECOND MEDITATION.

##### *On our Lady at the Marriage Feast.*

1. We come now to consider our Lady as our model in company with others taking her recreation at a feast. And this is most useful, for we ought all to be able to offer our recreation, our play-time, our eating and drinking, just as much as our work or our prayer, to the glory of God.

St. Aloysius was once asked, “If you knew God was going to call you by a sudden death, what would you wish to be doing when you came to die?” and the Saint answered :

“Whatever duty was appointed by the Rules for that hour.”

Now let us see what our Lady was like outwardly, in her dress, for it should be the great object of



Christian women to be as like her, outwardly even, as they can.

Of course at the feast she would have on her Sunday best, for as a poor woman, like the rest of her poor neighbours, she would usually wear very poor clothes.

But could you ever imagine our Lady with her hair or dress in disorder? Impossible! When you see a woman unmindful of neatness you may be sure there is disorder in her soul, her modesty has suffered; those words of the Apostle are very striking, "*If a man nourish his hair, it is a shame unto him, but if a woman nourish her hair, it is a glory to her, for her hair is given to her for a covering.*" Then we may be sure our Lady never was fine, never like those women who, when they are dressed up are as fine as peacocks, and next morning most untidy.

The great object of a Christian woman should be, according to her station, so to dress that no one may remark her, that she may pass unnoticed. Too many women, alas, seem to dress for the express purpose of calling people's attention to them, of making people in the streets look after them; this is most horrible and *unwomanly*.

2. Then consider our Lady among the guests, how sharp her eyes were to see what was wanting, to try and save pain and confusion to the poor people who were giving the feast, how unobtrusive her kindness, she did not go and make a fuss. There is no wine; what can I do? shall I send for some? She went quietly to our Lord and whispered to Him, "*They have no wine!*" and our Lord, Who was giving us

another lesson, rather repulsed her, "*Woman, what is it to Me and to thee?*" Still she persevered. He told her it was not yet the time for Him to work miracles, but she was not discouraged. She was His Mother, and she *knew* He would not refuse any wish of hers. He did not promise anything, but she knew He would do it. So she went quietly to the waiters and said, "*Whatever He shall say to you, do ye.*"

3. And He turned the water into wine, and from that day to this, and so it will be to the end of the world, whatever His Mother asks, our Lord is sure to grant, and so St. Bernard calls her omnipotent, not in herself and her own power, for she is a pure creature, but because she is the Mother of God, and her Son will refuse her nothing.

Many women even in church and during Mass, look at every one who passes them from top to toe, to see what they can find fault with or make uncharitable remarks about. But let us look and observe with what *charity* our Lady uses her eyes. She did not use them to find fault or to give pain to any one, but only (as I have said) to *save* pain and confusion and to say, as she will now say for us, "*They have no wine!*"

## FOURTH DAY.

### FIRST MEDITATION.

#### *On confidence in the Sacred Heart.*

1. I am anxious this morning that we should all learn a lesson of confidence in the Sacred Heart.

It is a lesson very very necessary for us all. The history the Evangelist gives us of the Canaanite woman, is what I have chosen for our meditation this morning.

When we first turn from a prayerless natural life, and begin to wake up, and see that prayer is something more than the mere lesson-like repeating of words we learnt at school ; that prayer is really talking to God ; our Lord is so pleased that usually He gives us what we ask at once—and many of you have experienced this. But when we have begun to love prayer, to turn to our Lord in every trouble, in every difficulty for help, in every joy to give Him thanks, there comes to us that wondrous sweetness in the consciousness that now, at last, we have a friend Who will never weary of us, never be tired, Who will always sympathize—then we are lonely no longer. But, after a time, our Lord wants to see whether we really do trust Him, and He leaves our prayers unanswered ; He takes no notice of us, and this is a very hard trial. How do we behave then ?

2. Now I want you to think carefully of the history of this pagan woman. She had not been taught to trust our Lord as you have. She had not the help of the sacraments, the true faith, as you have. She was a pagan. But she had heard of our Lord's kindness ; how He had healed this woman, and cured that man, how He went about doing good.

So one day when she heard He had come very near her village, she went out into the street and followed Him as He was going to seek a little rest in a house with His Apostles round Him ; and being

very much in earnest, longing with all her heart that her daughter should be delivered from the fearful power of the unclean spirit that possessed her, she began to cry out : "*Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David : my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil.*" You would have thought our kind Lord would at once have heard her prayer, but He walked on and took no notice of her. She was a rough person, and she was in earnest, she cried out so much the more. The Apostles, who were very timid men until after the coming of the Holy Ghost, plead for her : "*Send her away, for she crieth after us.*" They knew our Lord would not send her away without granting her request, He never did so ; but what they cared most about was ridding themselves of her because she made a noise.

Then came our Lord's answer : "*I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel.*" These words seem to say, " I did not come for her sake." Yet all the while the Sacred Heart was looking down into the very depths of her heart to see if she could bear yet another rebuff, yet another trial of her faith. He saw she was a brave woman, and He walked on. Then she came closer still, and kneeling down before Him she looked up into His sacred eyes and with her whole heart besought Him again.

The Sacred Heart, looking into the depths of her heart, saw she *could* bear yet another trial, and then came that crushing rebuke : "*It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs.*" What would you have done, my children ? would you

not have fired up at the first word? "Not sent for the likes of you indeed"—and then to be called a dog!—but see the humble trust of this poor pagan. No word of self-defence, no answering back: "*Yea, Lord, for the whelps eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters.*" And the Sacred Heart was conquered. She drew a cry of astonishment from our Divine Lord: "*O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt.*"

3. Now, my children, I want you to remember to realize that it is the very same Man, the very same God you speak to in our tabernacles, the very same eyes are looking down into the depths of your heart to see if you can bear a little longer trial of your faith, if you will give the Sacred Heart honour by trusting It a little longer.

Be assured of this, it is the same loving Heart now as it was then, every prayer you say is heard by the same loving ears, every word you pour out is treasured up by that loving Heart, and if you will only honour It by your trust and confidence, finally to you also it will be said: "*Be it done unto thee as thou wilt.*" Whatever you want you shall have.

When we kneel down to pray we often call ourselves very hard names, and perhaps we do it sincerely, but how do we behave when any one calls us "out of our name," when any one finds fault with us? See how this woman, who was truly humble, accepts at once the hard name our Lord gave her. Oh, let us beg for that great grace to consider it an honour to bear reproach for Christ—when any one finds fault with us or "calls us out of our name," to

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think, if I bear this patiently, in silence, I shall render honour to the Sacred Heart.

SECOND MEDITATION.

*On the Sorrows of our Lady.*

1. We come now, as we are drawing nearer to the end of our retreat, to contemplate the sorrows of our Lady. Our retreat is to be something more than a few days piously spent, days passed in listening to pious instructions—we have been making resolutions. We have said, Please God I will correct that bad habit, I will conquer that bad temptation; and we know that to do this, to go against self, will cost us something.

Now nothing will strengthen us so much to bear the pain, to go against self, as the thought of the Passion of Jesus, and so closely intertwined therewith, the sorrows of our sweet Lady. Nothing will give such strength to a Christian woman as the real belief of what our Lord Himself has told us—that He would willingly go through all His Passion over again, would willingly die as many times over for each one of us—that during His Agony, all through His Passion, and while hanging on the Cross He thought of each one of us, He loved each one of us—He saw not only each of our sins, but each of our sorrows, each of our pains. We can each say, He pitied me, He loved me, He longed to have me folded in His arms at last in Heaven. No one has true strength until she has this thought deeply impressed in her heart: My Lord

thought of me, saw me, loved me, longed for me, as the Apostle says.

“*Who loved me and delivered Himself for me.*” He gave Himself for me as freely, as longingly, as completely as though there were no one else in the world. Now I do not say that our Lady thought of each one of us in particular as our Lord did—that is impossible, for she is only a creature, but by the love she bore her Divine Son, by the close share she had in His Passion, and by which she merited to be more than the Queen of Martyrs, to be called the co-redemptress of the world—by the intense yearning, pain, and love she had for the souls her Son loved so dearly and who cost Him so dear, by the travail and labour of her soul, she became the Mother of all those who through the long ages to come should be her children.

2. As you know, our Lady’s Sorrows are seven. In the first three she is our Mother and our Model too.

As you all know so well, there are times in God’s Providence when all the future looks black, when that heavy trial of evil anticipated comes upon us, and no one can bear it without great trust in God. Indeed, the sorrows of life are so many and so great, that without confidence in God we could not bear them.

Now, see our Lady at the prophecy of Simeon, when he told her the sword should pass through her heart—how this heavy, weary trial of anticipated suffering came upon her—what a dark cloud! Yet her trust in God never wavered. Here I say our Lady is our Model. Again, when after all the trouble and anxiety about our Lord’s birth, when she had at

last brought Him safely into the world, and she might have expected a little rest and peace, then the Angel whispered into St. Joseph's ear: "*Arise, and take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt.*" What must our Lady have suffered of fear and anxiety—not only during the journey, but through the long years of penury and destitution in Egypt, amongst idolators, without friends or consolation, when she saw her Son even wanting bread; but her confidence, her trust in God, never failed. Again, I say our Lady is our Model.

And then those three bitter days of seemingly endless, weary suffering when by the Divine Providence she lost her Son—and when though she could see no real fault, for our dear Lady was ever perfectly sinless, but she was sorrowful and anxious, "*Son, why hast Thou done so to us?*" she asked; she wondered why she had lost Him, but all in perfect submission to the will of God. And you often ask why such and such a thing happens, and forget it was God's Providence. Our Lady is our Model, and in the last four of her "Dolours" she teaches a higher lesson still.

3. On the night before His Passion, when our Lord because He was God and knew all things and could do all things, forced by His infinite love, gave us all He could—when He gave us Himself in that first solemn Mass which He celebrated before He went to His Passion, our Lady was present then; she joined in His offering of Himself to the Eternal Father—when He lay prostrate in agony in the Garden, when He made such an intense act of sorrow for the sins of each of us as drew forth a sweat of



blood from His Heart—that act of sorrow by virtue of which we are able to make acts of contrition—our Lady knew and felt, according to her measure as a creature, every pain that rent her Divine Son's Heart, and there she learnt what each of your sins brought upon her Divine Son, Whom she loved far more, a thousand times more, than herself.

When our Lord was taken prisoner, His hands, which had healed and blessed so many, bound tightly with rough ropes, and He was dragged through the brook on His way to the city, when He stood before the unjust judges, every pang that went through His frame and His Heart was felt by our sweet Lady, and there she learnt what our harsh judgments, our unkind words cost her Divine Son—when they bound Him to the column and lashed Him with ropes and chains and thorny rods, till there was not a sound spot anywhere on His Sacred Body, our Lady felt in her heart every blow that fell on her Son, and there she learnt something of what the iniquities of her children cost Him Whom she loved far more intensely than words can say. When Jesus went out bearing His Cross, crowned with thorns, bleeding at every pore, as you know, His Mother met Him ; she followed Him up the weary road to Calvary, she saw the big nails driven through His hands and feet, she heard His moan of pain, she saw Him lifted up—and then through those long three hours of intensest torture she stood at the foot of the Cross, she watched His Head fall and heard the last loud cry ; and out of her union with His Sacred Heart, she drew so much love for you, her children, that she willingly, generously,

freely offered Him her well-beloved, her Divine Son, Whom she loved beyond expression with her Mother's heart, every one of Whose pains she felt so intensely, so keenly, she offered Him freely and fully to His Eternal Father for you, her children, for your sins. Is not her love, her mother's love wonderful? Will it not strengthen you to make whatever sacrifice is necessary to keep the good resolutions you have made? Can you, will you say, it is too much trouble, too great a sacrifice for you to make, when your Mother has suffered so much for her children?

## FIFTH DAY.

### FIRST MEDITATION.

#### *The Joy of our Lady.*

I began by telling you that you would reap the most fruit from your retreat according as you prayed more heartily, more earnestly, more affectionately for each other. Our dear Lady will pour down more graces, not only on all of us, but on your own soul.

She is looking down on us now, she sees each one's pain, each one's sorrow, each one's weakness, each one's trials, and she is ready to give abundantly to all, and most abundantly where she sees a heart unselfish, generous, anxious for the common good; therefore I say to you be kind, be patient, not only with yourselves, but with each other's frailties.

Now for the meditation.

1. Let us go back to the time when we left our Lady on Friday evening standing at the foot of the Cross, having seen her Son die. As you made the Way of the Cross you went over point by point that path which our Lady went over on the Saturday, recalling at each step the memory of some fresh outrage, of some fresh pain, some new insult her Divine Son had suffered, renewing her own pains in her compassion; and remember, at the *moment* our Lord died, that moment all suffering was over for Him. Having died once, He "*dieth no more*;" that very moment His Blessed Soul went to receive the joys and congratulations of the angels, went into Limbo to receive the joyful thanks of the souls so long waiting there, to the Paradise He had promised the penitent thief. And yet He left His dearest Mother to suffer in sorrow, in desolation. Our Lady knew her Son's Soul had entered into joy; do you think she complained, do you think she grumbled because her Son had left her alone to suffer? Ah, no, my children, remember this lesson so important for us all. Our Lord Who knew all things, Who loved His Mother so dearly, intended His Mother should suffer.

2. It is God's Providence for each of us that we should suffer, and why? because otherwise neither our Lord nor we should have earned our reward. For why did God create us? God had no need of us, He was perfectly happy in Himself, we could give Him nothing except the pleasure of rewarding us for the right exercise of our free-will. God created us for this, for this He breathed into our souls the breath of

life, that He might have the pleasure of rewarding us in eternity.

And God never sends the soul of one of His creatures, who has wilfully and deliberately turned away from Him, into Hell without being *disappointed*. And now see our Lady on that Sunday morning as she sat in her little oratory, perhaps with the crown of thorns in her lap, with her sad eyes fixed on it and on the big, cruel nails that had fastened her Son to the Cross, full of sorrow, desolate mourning, and think if you can of the unspeakable, ineffable joy which filled her soul when she saw her risen Son stand before her, with His glorious transparent Body in which the mark of every wound was now an additional glory, when the five cruel wounds in His hands, feet, and side were now shining as so many brilliant stars, when the marks of the cruel crown of thorns now formed a crown of glory round His Sacred Head. Surely she said then: "*According to the multitude of the sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul.*"

3. And so it will be with us, my children. God sees and sends every pain, every sorrow, every disappointment, every desolation, in order that if we bear it with patience, with generosity, with love, He may reward us when the time shall come, and the more He sends the brighter He intends our reward to be.

All suffering comes to an end. Remember that no matter how long it may seem to be, the end comes, and then if we have borne it patiently, lovingly, unselfishly, we too shall say, "According to the

multitude of the sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul."

If we could imagine it possible for our Lady to have been selfish or ungenerous, if we could imagine such a thing, impossible as it is, we can see that she would not have rejoiced as she did, nor had that share in her Son's glory which she now enjoys.

SECOND MEDITATION.

*Our Lady the Model of Charity.*

1. We have considered together your duties as Christian women and we have put before us the most wonderful, the most beautiful picture, the picture of her who was indeed the Golden Ark wherein the Divine Manna, our Lord Jesus Christ, was laid up, and by whom He was born into the world. We have studied her closely, not only in her person, her dress, her deportment, but in those times of extreme distress which come sometimes to all. In the exile in Egypt we have studied her, in the quiet comforts of her home at Nazareth, in the joy with which she found her Son after the three days' loss; we saw her at the marriage-feast at Cana, and we studied her as she stood beneath the Cross and saw her Divine Son die.

2. And now if I am to say another word to you, if I am to sum up all the lessons of the retreat, to give you one word, one sentence that shall remind you of all you have learnt, all you have resolved, what shall I say? St. Paul once speaking to the Romans on a similar occasion, said: "*For he that loveth his*

*neighbour hath fulfilled the law. For thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet : and if there be any other commandment, it is comprised in this word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."* And in another place he tells us what charity is. "*Charity is patient, is kind.*"

And where indeed could we have a more perfect example of charity than our Blessed Lady? She was incarnate charity in a finite, but perfect manner.

3. I give then these two ideas, these two words. Be patient, be kind. Be patient when trouble comes, as come it must in every life, be kind to all around you ; so with the constant thought of our Blessed Lady before you, you will grow pure and kind and brave, and your bright example will show forth the high dignity of Christian women.

For it is a dignity so high that despite all the resolutions we have made, we must all know and feel that without the grace of God we shall do nothing. We must be brave, knowing our own weakness, knowing that despite the sincerity of our resolutions we are sure to fail again and again.

She only is truly brave who, knowing this, relies on the infinite forgiveness of God, and after each fall asks and receives pardon and rises again at once, and again and again begins afresh with renewed sorrow for her own weakness, renewed trust in the inexhaustible loving-kindness of our God ; and so goes on falling and rising again, till after long struggles by little and little she rises to a higher and a better life.

# RETREAT.

(GIVEN TO LADIES.)

## PREPARATORY MEDITATION.

### *What is a Retreat?*

I WANT you thoroughly to understand what a retreat is—its main object is to be with God, without the distractions and embarrassments of ordinary life. Each one is left alone with God. Those who have not been all their lives in the Church find it difficult at first to understand the ways of Catholics. There are so many things, they say: “We must go to school to learn to understand all these expressions.” But converts sometimes, in the end, surpass us who have been all our lives in the Church. It is the same with those who are handling the Exercises for the first time. There are so many things to be learnt, that their multiplicity seems to defeat their object. But as with a sincere convert, so it is with you. If you do sincerely and honestly what you are told, you will soon understand it all. But here is the great danger of making frivolous retreats. Some people are ranked as spiritual, because they can talk about the Particular Examen, the Annotations, and the

Additions—but their minds have not grasped the real meaning or object of these things. These persons are not any the better for their retreat; on the contrary, they are worse, for it makes them conceited. You do not come to learn the meaning of Annotations and Additions and the three kinds of mental prayer, but to be penetrated with what you hear. You must take it into your hand, to your heart, and to your head—you must assimilate and digest it. And we notice in the Exercises, St. Ignatius never uses the passive voice. He does not say they are means by which you may be sanctified, but means by which we may conquer ourselves. The word Exercises implies this. If we saw some men marching outside and we lay on the sofa watching them, we should not be taking exercise. In the same way, it will do us no good to listen to beautiful thoughts, if we do not apply them to ourselves.

Now we come to the first Annotation. I shall not speak about them all to you, but I should like you to read them all through steadily, and I shall speak to you about one or two. The first tells us to use the means given us to gain the end of a retreat. The end is to conquer ourselves, and in a retreat we are surrounded with the means necessary for this end. And on this depends the result of our retreat. If you use these means and apply them to yourself, if you say, What is this to me? What have I been? What am I now? What am I going to be? And if you can answer these questions you may retire to rest happy. What if your meditation has not been made well. Almighty God will make up for that if you have



done your best. One of the great means to the end of a retreat is submission. It is a great mistake to consider this as slavery, it is true liberty. Some persons make vows of obedience, and thereby they gain true liberty, for they show that they have gained such power over their own wills that they can submit them entirely to any person whom God has chosen to make the medium of His will to them; and we see this submission in the life of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, those who cannot submit are the slaves of their own desires. It is the same with those who take vows of chastity.

It is as much as to say they have their passions sufficiently under control to be able to repress them. Those who say they are not called to this, are those that are in reality to a certain extent the slaves of their own passions. We all believe this, for submission is the law of the Church; in submission is true liberty, yet how many of us scout the idea and put it aside in our daily lives, yet it is just as true as when we are face to face with God.

There is great difference in the depth of our convictions. One is convinced of a thing, but will never practise it in her life. Another will believe it and will apply it to herself, till temptation comes, and then perhaps take refuge with her confessor, and so be saved from falling, and another will spurn the temptation bravely in whatever form it comes.

Well, I want you to make this your subject of meditation, to see whether your convictions have influenced your tone of life, your character, your thoughts, your actions. If they have not, the only

way to alter this, except by some special grace of God, is by a retreat. And during this retreat you must use every means to attain this.

Some persons will try every means but the one God gives them, because that one mortifies them, yet it is the only one which will answer that end. Father Gallwey tells a story of a man who wanted to make his horse fat, so he gave him hay, chaff, and other things. His friends said, "Did you try corn?" "Oh no, corn is no good." This is the way with some people, they try every way but the right one to conquer themselves.

Now we come to the fifth Annotation, which says we must enter into retreat with a generous mind and with liberality towards God. Do not be afraid of going too far.

Do what you feel God requires of you, and thank Him for giving you light to know, and grace to be capable of it.

#### POINTS.

*(For the private meditation on the morrow.)*

#### *Our End.*

I. For your meditation to-morrow I want you to take the first principle of the Exercises, "Man was created for this end, to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul." Our one end is to be with God for ever. God gave me out of nothing a wondrous existence which will never come to a close. Life is a series of steps, each

one bringing us nearer the awful moment when we shall kneel at our Lord's feet and look up inquiringly into His eyes. Do we make our lives as full as they might be? Do we not rather run after feathers on the road instead of keeping straight to the direct path? if so, it is because we have not this thought deep enough in our minds: to live with God for ever.

2. Think of the time when we shall be alone with God, alone with Him then as we are now in this retreat: there will be no husband, nor child, no brother nor sister.

If we meet them in Heaven we shall increase each other's glory, but they cannot save our souls.

"*I was created to save my soul.*" It is like an ant going down a stream, we go step by step always tending to the same end. Each one has his own way to make, his own soul to save, so it must be done in our own heart, and in order to do it, you must be mistress there and not be the slave of your own passions and desires.

3. Viewed in this light, of what small importance do all the events of life appear. God made me for Himself; this was His only end, and I can have no other. Every faculty and capacity in me is for this end alone.

My happiness (and my only possible happiness) is in that same thing exactly as God's own end in making me.

Does it not therefore follow that every interest of God's is no less mine?

All that is for God is for me too; all that is against His glory *must be*, by the very nature I have,

against my own interest no less. God my Creator, and I, His creature, are *so one* that it must be so.

Then try and enter into this retreat with the resolution to do bravely and calmly, without exaggeration, without reserve, and without fear, whatever God requires of you.

## FIRST DAY.

### FIRST MEDITATION.

#### *The Means to the End.*

1. It is a very old saying, that God is not in the storm, and you generally find storms in the beginning of a retreat. In the excitement of the first arrangements, the settling down, it is difficult to keep your souls in peace. So you must not be discouraged if you found it thus in the meditation this morning. Calm and quiet is essential to meditation. Yesterday I told you to examine the depths of your convictions, especially with regard to submission.

Those who are able to submit themselves entirely to all creatures, have attained the greatest degree of liberty possible in this life, and are prepared to enter into that true liberty which we shall have in Heaven.

There will be no submission there, for we shall all be willing the same thing with our whole hearts. There will be conformity of will which is true liberty. This morning you took the first and last words of

the fundamental principle : Man was created to save his soul. If you do this it little matters what happens in this life. If you arrive at last at the feet of our Saviour, let the world have wagged as it may, let the events of life have been what they may, let fortune have been adverse, let friends have been unkind, it is all over then.

It matters little if you have attained the one end of your life. St. Ignatius, true to his principle, gives us here the end and the means. Let us consider the means. Petulant, shallow people will say, "I must save my soul ; very well, go on ;" but the wise will say, "Stay, I must save my soul ; have I been using the means to do it ?" We cannot arrive at an end without using the means given us. What are these means ? To praise, reverence, and serve God. Have I praised God as I ought ? Some spend hours in the choir, eat very little, sleep very little, and when they do sleep rise in the middle of it to praise God. And perhaps I often thought this an idle, useless life, to take what time is necessary for the body, for eating, sleep, and exercise, and to spend all the rest in praising God. Yet I see this is what I was created for. Have I ever in my life given one half-hour of sincere, hearty praise to God ? No, and what has made me so niggard with this praise which ought to burst from my heart as from a fountain ? Why do I dole it out so stingily to God ? It does not cost me much. If it required any self-sacrifice on my part I need not be surprised at my stinginess. But it does not cost me much labour. There must be something wrong in my heart which makes my praise so shallow

and feeble. There can be no obstacle in my heart to prevent my praising God.

What is it then? Everything is acquired by habit. She who wishes to make herself mistress of the piano or of her embroidery-frame, or of anything else, can only do so by repeated acts, by practice.

This is the same with praise. We must practise and make repeated acts of it. And on whom are we to practise it but on the creatures around us. Do we do this? Have we accustomed ourselves to look for what is praiseworthy in all the things around us? Do we not rather attach our minds to things that are worthy of blame, and pass by these that we ought to praise? You see what a great deal there is in this little sentence, "Man was created to praise." In order to praise God we must reverse our whole frame of mind. St. Francis made most glorious saints in his Order of men who were simple peasants, vulgar men; but they were sent to earth as visions to reveal God's glory perhaps more than any other saints. They always looked for what was praiseworthy in their neighbour.

If they saw a lady flouncing by in all the extremity of worldly vanity they would say: Poor thing, she uses this means to hide her sanctity! she probably wears a hair-shirt under that satin; and I, here I am in a coarse habit and men think me a saint and kiss the hem of my garment, and there she is, a real saint with her sanctity hidden from the eyes of men. You well understand if they could go to this length, how they would praise those whose exterior as well as their interior was edifying.

Again, to take the most selfish view of the case, besides giving glory to God, this praise will do infinite good to your own souls. There is another way of praising God through His creatures.

The Church gives the priest only one prayer after Mass. That is the *Benedicite*, which is a hymn inspired by the Holy Ghost calling on all God's creatures to praise Him, the sun, the moon, the stars, the ocean, the birds, beasts, and fishes, holy men and the saints of God. The way is then to say, "I have received a benefit for which my lips are inadequate to praise God, therefore I call upon all His creatures to help me to praise Him."

We now come to the second duty of the creature to the Creator (we shall only take two at present): reverence. This is rather more difficult than praise; that can be given from an elevation without humbling ourselves, but to give reverence we must humble ourselves. We are told in the Book of Wisdom that reverence is created with man in his mother's womb, and we see in little children the readiness to reverence. The world finds this out more and more every day, and therefore it takes little children and tries to banish it from their hearts. It tries to take away their reverence even from their parents. How are we in this respect towards God? How do we make our genuflections in His very corporal Presence, for we may learn a great deal from that? Do we make them in a way instinct with reverence, or do we bump down on our knees without any feeling of reverence in our hearts? What is our attitude in time of prayer, whether in church or in our own rooms? And with

reverence as with praise, we must exercise it on creatures.

There are many creatures whom we may reverence; those whom we are bound to reverence, priests, parents, directors, but instead of looking to what we may reverence in them, do we not look upon them with a spirit of criticism, of carping observation, so that the spirit of reverence perishes for want of aliment or want of nourishment.

#### CONSIDERATION.

##### *On Mental Prayer.*

Naturally our first consideration in entering on a course of mental prayer would be to see what prayer is, what are the means by which it may be attained or perfected, and what are the obstacles in the way.

It is really frightening to think of the ease with which the gift of prayer may be attained. We can obtain anything we want if we use the means.

Given the means to overcome any passion or to obtain any virtue, the enemy is easily overthrown and the virtue attained. This is really alarming when we think of it in regard to prayer.

We can obtain the gift if we wish it. Of course there are some exceptions.

You all wish for the gift of mental prayer, but to what degree?

There is a story told of a monk belonging to one of the mendicant Orders who was representing to a lady the penury of his Order, and she said how sorry



she was. But he took out his collecting-book and said, "How sorry are you, ten shillings or a pound." "Oh," she said, "I meant——" "I see," he said. "Yes, Father, I am ten shillings sorry."

If you are really sorry that you have not the gift of prayer, you will try to relieve that sorrow by using the means to gain the gift.

Are you ten shillings sorry? Will you take the trouble to prepare your meditation before going to bed, and to think of it the last thing? Silence and recollection going to bed are essential; if you go to sleep with a frivolous word between your lips you will wake up with the same thoughts, and your meditation will be destroyed. Then you must make your relations real with Almighty God. You perhaps say a sharp, unkind, and bitter word outside the church door; then you come in, kneel down, and begin your prayer with, "Behold, O good Jesus," and our Lord says, "Yes, I can see you; but you are the one that said that unkind word just now;" and you have probably forgotten all about it. I do not say you ought not to pray after saying an unkind word, but you should do it humbly acknowledging your fault. Another great obstacle to prayer is sensuality, which I ought to have put first; the gratification of the body for gratification's sake. This is a very great obstacle to meditation. The next is that pride of which I have been speaking, which fails to recognize your true relations with God. You open your book every day at the same page, and begin by telling God you love Him with your whole heart, when you have just been offending Him. This kind of thing He

may accept from children ; it is perhaps the right thing for them, or from a certain class of people who have perhaps no direct relations with Him, those who come and say their prayers and then go home and beat their wives, and pray just the same afterwards ; but He does not expect this from you. The third obstacle to prayer is disturbance of mind, want of calm.

Some people let every trifle of life, every petty trouble take possession of them ; and they bring these trifles with them into the presence of God, where they have no place. They are perhaps trying honestly and sincerely to humble themselves, and put themselves in their true relations with God, but they begin to fidget about what Mary Ann said or Susan did, and they get themselves into the same state they might be in, in the nursery or the kitchen. And, as I was writing the other day to an invalid, if you must have fidgets, arrange them in order ; take a quarter of an hour in the morning, and a quarter of an hour in the afternoon, make a memorandum of all your fidgets and condense them into this time ; but do not let them trouble you at any other time. At the end of the quarter of an hour say, " Now fidgets, time is up ; " and if you have found it very pleasant, you can look forward to your next quarter of an hour ; but do not let Susan, or Mary Ann, or John come between you and God during your meditation.

And this does not only apply to mistresses and mothers of families ; every one has these little troubles of one kind or another, and they must mortify their propensity for fidgeting if they wish

to obtain the grace of prayer. And this mortification you will find is not very difficult, but its effect upon your prayer will be immense.

There is one thing about which I should like to speak to you: patience under ill-success, provided it does not arise from sloth. If you had a rich friend and saw her sometimes in plain attire, you would not think less of her because she was not grandly dressed.

If God chooses to array you in consolation, He does not think any the better of you than if He sent desolation; if one day you shed tears of consolation, you were not better than when on the next you are cold and without devotion. This thought is most useful in encouraging those who have not light, and in keeping those, to whom God gives consolation, humble. Desolation is no reason for giving up mental prayer; on the contrary, you give a greater proof of your goodwill if you persevere like the seraphic St. Francis, who repeated for a quarter of an hour: "*My God and my All.*" You can pray without consolation and with profit, and if God has not given you light you can use the means to obtain it. Father Cobb used to tell a story about a retreat he was giving to some priests, and an old Canon came to his room and said, "Father Cobb, we are sensible, business-like men who wish to make our meditation, but we do not understand all that jumbo-jimbo you were telling us." "I don't quite understand," said Father Cobb. "Well, I venture to style jumbo-jimbo all that you have been telling us about reading over our meditation, and kneeling there and standing here, and saying a Hail Mary at one

time and something else at another." "Canon," said Father Cobb, "do you know who invented all this?" "Yes, it was St. Ignatius of Loyola." "And do you know that the Church has expressed an opinion about it?" "No! what is it?" "All the most learned theologians have declared that a man cannot practise these things without being the better for them. St. Charles Borromeo said the same; he was not a Jesuit. Will you promise me to try this these few days of your retreat, and if you tell me at the end that you are none the better for it, I promise to go back to the church and say before all these priests, that I have made a mistake in becoming a Jesuit."

The Canon was so taken aback by the boldness of this promise that he agreed, and he afterwards told Father Cobb that he never left off these practices and that he found them a real help to mental prayer.

## SECOND MEDITATION.

### *How to Serve God.*

1. I gave for your meditation this morning the two first conditions of creatureship, which St. Ignatius lays down. We now come to the third, which is also the last. "Man was created to *serve* God." These three words go in grades of difficulty. Our first thought in thinking of the sentence, "We were created to praise God," is a feeling of shame that we should have failed to do anything so simple and easy. Reverence is a little more difficult, and you know yourselves well enough to understand, that you would

find a difficulty in that, for it requires a certain degree of humiliation, of humility. We now come face to face with the third: We were created to serve. Our reason tells us so. It reminds one of the old Roman triumphs, when the victor was advancing in triumphal procession, there was always the slave to whisper in his ear that he was man. This truth does not belong alone to the Christians, it is not an article of faith taught by the Church. The Roman victor knew this just as well as we, if he chose to give ear to the wise voice that spoke to him; the Jew or even deist, or any one who believes in a God, may meditate on it. Now to apply it to yourselves. You are most of you mistresses in one way or another; you ought to understand this better than I do. Think what is your ideal of good servants, what you would wish to have in them, and consider whether you have these qualities, this perfection with regard to Almighty God. I should think the qualities you would most wish for in a servant are dependence, attachment, zeal. You would wish for dependence not only in what they do, but in the manner they do it; you would like them to ask you how you wished things done. Some servants would do their work, wait at dinner, be in the right place, but would not bear submission in detail. They accept their position which is one of submission, but if you wish them to do anything in a particular manner they shrug their shoulders and say they wish to do their work in their own manner. Those are the kind of servants that you just tolerate; you bear with them, but they are a continual thorn to you. The next quality is attachment, which is very rare in these

days, and you would put up with a great many faults to gain a servant who works not only for wages but also out of attachment to you. The third quality is zeal, and if the other two qualities are there, this will most likely be there too. A zealous servant will on those occasions which must come to all of you, which you cannot foresee, act for you and your interests, although it costs him labour, inconvenience, and mortification. These are the virtues you wish for in those servants about whom you are so ready to think, and they are equally to be desired in those about whom you ought to think so much more, yourselves. You say, "Would to God we had them." And there is one great advantage which you have over your servants. God will accept your good-will. He will take intention for the deed, if the deed cannot be done. But, on the other hand, there is the corresponding disadvantage, if you choose to put yourself under the responsibility. All your actions are of no avail unless they are done with a good intention. It is not what you do, but the manner in which you do it that pleases God. What if you are idle? You may be serving God by that idleness, while others who are working are doing it not for God but for men. You may serve God lying in your beds by submission to His will; in society, anywhere, if you do what you have to do with a good intention to serve *Him*. But this intention is necessary, both on account of His own adorable perfection, and from motives of interest for the good of your own soul.

## THIRD MEDITATION.

“*The other things.*”

1. Let us go on with the text of St. Ignatius. We have already considered, “Man was created to praise, to reverence, and serve God, and by this means to save his soul.” Now he goes on to say, “and *the other things* on the face of the earth, were created for man’s sake and in order to aid him in the prosecution of the end for which he was created.” St. Ignatius is always true to his rule, which is indeed the rule of reason ; he tells us first the end, then the means we are to employ to attain it. Man was created to save his soul ; the means by which we are to attain that end, are by praising, reverencing, and serving God. Now comes the question, how can we best serve God? and St. Ignatius tells us that all the other creatures on the face of the earth were created to help us to serve God. God created everything for the same purpose, from the little fly which settles on our brow, to the thunder-storm which may lay us in death. And by the word creatures, we do not understand only the material sense of the words, but all the events of our lives, our circumstances, our lot in life, our duties ; all that is said to us, and all that happens to us is to save our souls. Do we believe this? and have we believed it hitherto? We know the story of Naaman. We are sometimes like this. Although all creatures are sent to us by God, we try to use all but the one which is profitable. Generally the creature that would

profit us most is the one which mortifies us most, so we turn away from it with indignation; and unless there is some one to give us opportune advice like the servants of Naaman, we do not use it. The creatures which God gives us may be divided into two catalogues, first those which are under our control, and the difficulty with them is to choose the one which is most for the good of our own soul.

2. But for to-day we will only take those creatures which are not under our own control—which are irrevocable, such as the weather, our lot in life, our state of health, what others say to us. These are all sent to us by God; even an unkind word, something which pains us very much, comes to us stamped with the *fiat* of Almighty God. But you will say, "This comes to us from the free-will of creatures, from their malice, not from God."

Is this right? But God could ward off every pain, and every harsh word from you if He chose, without any violence to their free-will. What right have you then to complain of the person who causes you pain? They will have to answer for it before God, but you have no right to judge them for it. Our Lord tells us very plainly, "*Judgment is Mine, I will repay it.*" It would be absurd to explain to you how childish it would be to blame the postman because you received disagreeable letters.

It is just as foolish to find fault with a person who transmits a message to you from Almighty God. When you rebel, therefore, it is against God Himself; you refuse the potion which He has concocted with all the skill of the most able physician, and all the



tenderness of the most loving mother, and which has cost Him study and thought, and which He sends in love.

3. You must feel ashamed when you see that before you even come to Catechism, to the truths of religion, you fail in a virtue which those who have not your faith or spiritual advantages may practise. In any one who believes in God there might be this resignation, this constant gratitude for all that comes from the hand of God. You might be a kind of pagan saint by practising it. Must I remind you again that the object of this retreat is to root your convictions firmly in your mind? If I have succeeded in doing so with regard to this submission, your lives will be quite changed. You may take also those creatures over which you have control ; as your duties, your food, your manner towards others, or your free-will. There are only two principles, self and God ; everything out of self comes from God, therefore self, the exercise of your own free-will, is all you have to be afraid of. Beg of God to root these convictions so deeply in your hearts that they may have more influence over your lives, your thoughts, and your passions than they ever had before.

## SECOND DAY.

## FIRST MEDITATION.

*In order to aid him.*

I want you to be very familiar with what St. Ignatius says, in order that you may follow his thoughts.

We have gone as far as to consider that man was created to save his soul by means of praising, reverencing, and serving God. Then he tells us the best way of doing this is by using rightly the creatures He has given us.

How are we to use them rightly? He goes on to say we must use those which help us to attain the end of our salvation, and avoid those which lead us away from that end. God has given us creatures for this end. What right have we to use them for any other purpose? If you engaged a cook, and she finds the kitchen well stocked with everything needed, you expect her to use the things according to a certain measure in order to gain the end—which is the dinner, and leave the other things on the shelf.

If she put pickles in the soup, or filled up the pie with sugar, you would say she is mad, and dismiss her.

Well, God, Who gives you the right to exact this from her, has also the right to exact it from you.

He wishes you to use all the creatures in a "certain measure," as far as they help you to attain the end of your salvation, and no further. These creatures are not yours; as the *Imitation* says, "*When I give it, it*

*is still Mine ; when I take it away I take not anything that is thine, for everything is Mine.*" If the fruit of this meditation be only to free you from that arrogance with which you assert your dominion over things, it will have done a good deal.

2. Daniel gives us the history of a wicked king who recognized no master in God or man, and it is terrible to think how often you do this in your lives. Instead of consulting the end of your creation in your choice of creatures, you only consider your own tastes, appetites, and pleasures.

You use to excess those you like, even though they be injurious to you, and you entirely neglect those whose copious use would be profitable because they mortify you. Let us take a few examples. We may put food first, and it would be folly for the most spiritual among you to suppose herself above that temptation. The last thing a man gives up in life is the taste.

In youth, after childhood is past, there are far fewer temptations of this kind than in later life. When we approach maturity, when we begin to decline, the wants of the body press on us, and our appreciation of comfort grows keener.

And this is far more the case with women than with men.

In food, then, we must take what is useful, and reject what is useless, and avoid any excess, which is always injurious. St. Ignatius considers this matter of such importance, that in the third week of the Exercises, he lays down a code of rules about the way in which we should take our food.

The one great thing I want to prove is, that in the use of all creatures we must avoid extremes, and look for the medium.

Let us take labour. Every one must labour, from the lady to the slave, and a life spent without labour is not only useless, but unhappy ; then we may either have the defect of idleness, or of excess, which hinders our spiritual duties.

One will spend time doing nothing, and allow her mind to become a perfect blank, or go on through her duties in a sort of careless way. Another will be very busy about the wrong thing ; she leaves her household in discomfort, to make a pet novena, or satisfy her devotion somehow.

Let us take pains to see which is our weak point, that we may not waste our time.

3. You remember when the Israelites thirsted in the desert they came to the waters of Mara, and when they began to drink they found it was bitter, and God told Moses if he put a certain wood in the water it would become sweet.

This is a beautiful figure of what our Moses, Who is God Himself in the flesh, tells us ; that the Cross cast on the waters of our lives ought to take away all their bitterness. Do we bear sickness with resignation ? We ought to bear it without impatience, or repining, using at the same time reasonably the remedies for the body. When you are obstinate about this it arises from sloth or mere perversity. Real mortification can be practised by obedience and simplicity in time of sickness. And as regards penance, some take too much of it, and others do not take enough.

Another of God's creatures is almsgiving ; some persons seem to think that this command does not apply to them ; they leave it to their husbands, or parents, or friends, somehow or another, and you find this particularly among the young. At the end of the year, they will find probably that they once gave a fourpenny bit, out of human respect.

Then there is amusement ; we are not to regard it as the one great object of our lives, neither are we to put it aside altogether.

In bearing with others we must not let it lead us into weakness, but prevent us from losing time in querulous, peevish disputes. Or you may take dress. It is a great disgrace to turn this, which is a sign of your shame, of the degradation of our fallen nature into a passion.

It is a duty you owe to your fellow-creatures to cover yourselves in a way that denotes your position, but it is very wrong to do so in a manner which causes sin either in yourself or others.

Another example I am very fond of is failure ; of course this is a form of the Cross, but it is a very hard one. The life that has been spent in industry and striving, and which is yet a failure, is the nearest approach to that of Christ ; for what was His life viewed only with external eyes but a great failure ? But all these examples I only suggest to you.

You can find others more suitable for yourselves.

## CONSIDERATION.

*How to become indifferent.*

It will be well worth observing in this instruction, which will be our last on the Foundation, how remorselessly we make use of the creatures God has given us. We belong to God ; therefore we ought to let Him do with us exactly as He pleases. I think I had better read over again what you have already meditated upon, although perhaps some of you will be tired. (Exercises, p. 12.)

St. Ignatius then goes on to say, "We must above all endeavour to make ourselves indifferent to all created things, in so far as it is left to the liberty of our free-will to do so and it is not forbidden, in such sort that we do not for our part wish for health rather than sickness, for wealth rather than poverty, for honour rather than dishonour, for a long life rather than a short one." St. Ignatius knew very well in writing this clause, that we should not attain to our last end without it. We see this indifference very often in the things around us. The cook is indifferent as to whether she uses sugar or vinegar ; if she is not, you say, "too much salt," and find fault. This want of indifference is a fault in you. It is not natural to us to be indifferent. You know we were all born with a twist in our minds ; we are not unbiassed, we have inclinations, and appetites, and aversions ; but we must overcome them, for without indifference to creatures we can never make a right use of them. This is the clause that makes the Jesuit,

He understands that it is all the same whether he is at Quebec or Kamtschatka, or Beaumont or Roehampton. Take a cab and tell the man to drive you to Mount Street, if you call him afterwards and tell him to go to Bermondsey instead, he will not refuse and say, "It is a vulgar, dirty place," because he only cares to get his wages; Bermondsey or Berkeley Square are all the same to him, so long as he gets his eighteen pence, and if you think only of your eighteen pence, which is eternal life, you will not find it difficult. Indifference is no less necessary to you than to a Jesuit; rather more, for you have very often to choose for yourself, you are asked too often alas, what you would like. Indifference is necessary in the first place, then you must try and find out what is most pleasing to God. Of course this only refers to creatures which are under the control of your free-will; married persons and Religious are bound by vows; there are certain things they cannot choose between, but for those creatures by which you are not bound you must strive to gain this holy indifference. Take an instance of missing a train.

I remember the surprise of a French Father who went with me to catch a train.

We arrived at the station and saw a train starting off, so I put my rug back into the carriage and drove home.

My companion said, "Oh, you English," as if I had done some heroic act of virtue in not making a fuss nor blaming anybody. Think of the things a railway porter must behold, how many humiliating

scenes take place on a railway platform for want of this indifference.

I was staying for a few days this year with a friend, and had every opportunity of watching her, and I convinced her and she was obliged to recognize, that about nine times in three days when something went wrong she immediately attached blame to someone, and not once out of those nine times was it the right person. These are all little things. St. Ignatius applies the rule to great things, health and sickness ; as he says in another place, sickness is a gift of God as well as health : why should I prefer one to the other. Then come riches and poverty. How much we care about them ; yet you will very often find that the want of this or that, caused you to go here or there, where you had the happiest time of your life. Whereas if you had what you wanted you would have gone somewhere else and missed this happiness. If you look back on your lives you will often find the things you have most groaned over have been seeds of your greatest graces. It is folly to cling to a thing before you know its true value.

#### SECOND MEDITATION.

##### *The obstacle to our End.*

1. I want you to reconsider all that we have been saying on the end of man. (Exercises, p. 12.) There is one word more with a very extensive meaning to which we might give a little thought: "Man was created." If God created us, He must take an interest



in us. He must wish us to attain the end for which He made us. God is not a machine sending out so many yards and not caring what becomes of it. God loves us and does care what becomes of us, and though He will not violate our free-will, that great privilege which He has given us, He will do all He can to help us, to urge us on to Him. God loves us *because He created* us, and endowed each one with a special peculiarity He gave to no one else. As the mother loves the child she brought forth, so, but far more, God loves us. Why is our life not all hope and brightness with such a thought as this to cheer us.

To some God sends life-long sufferings, to others life-long toils and labours or temptations—others again are exempt; but one thing is certain, which is, that to each God has assigned her portion out of pure love, and over each is He watching with unutterable bounty.

2. Now we enter upon a sort of vista, our last end in view straight before our eyes. God and self there face to face, with all the creatures round us to help us to Him; our dear Lord Himself sustaining and helping us, and we naturally ask the question: Is there any obstacle to prevent our going to Him? There is but one answer—the obstacle is *sin*. Consider sin in itself, what it is; and this ought to fill you with shame at the thought of the degradation you have brought on yourself by it, and you ought to be willing and content to bear this shame; it is your due. Although you have been to confession and God has pardoned you, it cannot alter the fact that you have sinned, and you ought therefore to acquire a habit of shame.

3. You think then of sin in yourself, and you should be penetrated with grief at the thought that God has been offended ; if you make shame the habit of your life, you will not find it difficult to feel sincere, pure, unselfish grief at this thought, which those who do not bear this shame contentedly can never feel. Those who keep their shame only for Confession and Communion, and bear it with impatience, go to confession, make an act of contrition, receive absolution and go away without another thought of the goodness of God in pardoning them, can never feel real unselfish sorrow. Consider sin then in all its consequence—its punishment—Hell, and this should cause in you aversion for it. Three things constitute a perfect act of contrition—shame, sorrow, and aversion for sin. Those who are not accustomed to the preludes may find them a little difficult at first, but with patience, docility, and industry they will soon become easy. In meditations on visible things you see the place where our Lord is standing, but in this meditation, in the first prelude, you must imagine yourself a prisoner shut up in this corrupt body, clothed in the habit of a sinner, not as you are now that God has pardoned you, but as you would be with all your sins upon you. In the second prelude beg the grace, which should be as St. Ignatius says, “shame and confusion at myself.”

## THIRD MEDITATION.

*The triple Sin.*

1. In the first point you take the first sin, the sin of the angels.

God created them, beautiful and powerful, almost infinite, but they had to choose of their own free-will whether they would remain so ; if God had chosen He might have created machines which would have done His will as the stars and inanimate creatures do, but He chose to give them free-will, and no creatures can go to live for ever with Him unless they will it. It is taught by great theologians that the angels were told a Queen of an inferior order to themselves would reign over them. Scripture says one-third of them rebelled, and refused the submission required of them, and in a moment they were precipitated into Hell, and all that was bright and glorious in them was transformed into malice and degradation. Their former glory increased the degradation of their corruption.

Now turn to ourselves ; we have committed not one sin, but sin after sin, over and over again, and yet sin has the same power of destruction in us as in the angels, only God pardons us after each sin. But this ought not to lessen our shame, it ought to show us more and more how good God is, and how ungrateful we are.

2. In the next point we take the sin of Adam and Eve. Adam had been created and placed in Paradise and Eve formed from his side, and they had been

told to obey and would not, and therefore they were clothed in skins and driven out of Paradise. Compare this with your own life, not the fault indeed, for God knows our weakness and has compassion on it; but for this *one* sin, see the length of time for which Adam did penance, 900 years!

See the degradation which it has brought on his children, so many millions of them who have been living like hogs for centuries; see what sin is, and this is what I have been taking to my bosom, clasp in my arms, and preferring to the God Who died for me. Our first parents at least had no experience of sin, but we who have been pardoned over and over again may well feel ashamed.

3. The third point is not a real sin, but an imaginary one. We suppose that a man has been allowed to live till he committed one mortal sin, and that in the course of events he dies in that sin; though he may have no other stain on his soul, yet rather than look on the face of God with that sin on his soul, he will fly shrieking to Hell for all eternity, for Hell is for all who die in mortal sin; they remain there for ever because they cannot bear the sight of God, their Creator.

This may perhaps do more for some of you than the other two points; it shows what sin really is, and yet what sins upon sins have we committed? But there are things at which we can only bear to look at the foot of the Cross.

Let us go then to our crucifix, and kneeling before it, let us look into the face of our Lord with humble amazement and say: "How is it that Thou hast

come down from Thy eternal happiness and have come to die thus ; can it be for me ? ”

Then let us beg Him to make us understand it, and let this abiding shame, which is the mother of all other graces, come into our hearts and remain there for ever.

### THIRD DAY.

#### FIRST MEDITATION.

##### *Our Review.*

You remember what I told you, that we want to learn what sin is and the depth of its malignity. We read of some of the saints that they fainted away at the sight of one mortal sin ; St. Stanislaus was one and St. Louis of France was another. You may perhaps think there is exaggeration in this, and that they were scrupulous ; in fact, in the wrong. But it is not so.

You are so accustomed to see sin all around you, to read it in the newspapers, that you cease to think much about it ; but you only know it in its external aspect, you do not see it as it will be when you appear before God ; and that is certainly its true aspect, and the nearer you approach it, the nearer you will be to the true idea of sin—therefore the saints are right and you are wrong, and the most exaggerated form of this horror of sin is only an approximation to the idea of what it is in God’s sight.

St. Ignatius gives us another thought on sin. It is wrong even itself, even if it were not forbidden by

God ; if there were no law against it, still it would be wrong.

The baseness of sin is so great, and especially in sins against purity and of malice. They are so unworthy of a rational, immortal soul. We find this even in little faults—vanity, self-seeking, self-will ; and you will often find that you can make a better act of contrition for these kind of faults, than for greater ones into which you have been led in a moment of passion. Your act of selfishness is done in such a cold-blooded way.

The second meditation on sin is rather long, but it follows such a simple chain of reasoning that you will easily remember it. Its end is quite different from that of the previous one, though it is analagous. The end of the first was to bear willingly and contentedly the shame which is due to our sins. The end of this is to obtain great and intense sorrow for the accumulated insults which you have heaped on God. The first prelude is the same as the former. Imagine yourself clothed in all your sins as you will be when you come face to face with God. For the second prelude ask for this intense sorrow ; our Lord says, "*Ask and you shall receive.*" St. Ignatius therefore tells us to ask for sorrow.

1. In the first point make a brief review of your past life, avoiding distraction ; for if you are not on your guard, you will be very likely led away by distraction. It is best that this review should be brief.

You can examine yourself on three points.

The places and houses where you have been. The conversation you have had with others. The

duties for which you have been responsible. Do this briskly, do not spend the whole meditation on it; what you want to do is to bring before your minds in one *coup d'œil* all the sins of your past life, to place them before you just as they will be when you come face to face with God—then take two or three sins, those you are most ashamed of, which you would not have courage to tell any of your fellow-creatures, except under the shadow of the sacred tribunal. You would not dare to say, “I have done this.”

2. Try and get an idea of your own littleness and insignificance, compare yourself first to all those around you. We read that Daniel in the presence of one single angel fell on his face with terror, and so would any of you. You would be overcome with the sense of your own littleness in the sight of this one angel; but what are all the saints and angels of Heaven to God? Go by degrees—compare yourself to your fellow-creatures, then compare the whole human race to the angels, and then the angels to God.

3. Lastly you come to compare yourself to God. Who am I, and against Whom have I rebelled! It is against this God I have lifted up my judgment, and my will to strike Him in the face. I who can be compared to nothing but an ulcer, a gangrene sore, constantly suppurating sin, and all that is most loathsome in the sight of God, the most foul corruption. Even our bodies we are obliged to tend and keep clean for the sake of others; a miserable creature crawling upon the earth, leaving the slime of my corruption in everything with which I come in contact, this is my truest picture, and I have dared to

rebel against God. How have the angels let me live, and how have the inanimate creatures served me as they have done. How is it that the earth has not opened and a new Hell been created to receive me? Then compare God's wisdom with your ignorance in some things, used perversely against God in others, compare this to His omniscience. Take God's justice, which is one of His most beautiful attributes, although we do not think enough about it, that beautiful calm way in which God judges the sinner, never exaggerating the fault of His creature, always making allowance for its weakness, whatever pain it may have cost Him, and compare this with your iniquity. The way in which we judge the poor miserable creatures around us, the palliating way in which we judge ourselves. What right have we to judge others at all, it is presumption in us to do so ; but to judge them mercilessly, cruelly, unjustly, no wonder God says to us, "*Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy.*" Then compare God's omnipotence with your weakness of body, memory, will ; His goodness, never failing bounty, and benevolence, with your malignity. End at the foot of the Cross with thoughts of wonder and amazement that God has spared you ; thank Him for letting you live till now that you may amend ; this is the sure sign of sorrow, a sign that you recognize your sins, a feeling of thankfulness to God that He has spared you till this day, and that He still wishes to raise this worm, this ulcer, this snail, to eternal glory.



## CONSIDERATION.

*On Confession.*

I wanted, if possible, to say a little word to you about shame for sin and self-abjection. I shall not be satisfied if I have not made you really desire to obtain it before the end of the retreat. But I think to-day I had better speak to you about the way you make your ordinary confessions. You all know God did not make confession the necessary remedy for venial sin, at least you all know it from your catechism; but you do not all bring your knowledge into practice. Some people, although they know this, yet consider they have committed sacrilege, and made a bad Communion, if they have a venial sin on their souls unconfessed. This is all your own nonsense; it is selfishness; you care only for your own safety. God's glory is nothing to you; if you feel safe, that is all you care for; so you give up your Communion, instead of making a frank act of contrition and going to Holy Communion—if you do go, it is in a timid sort of way, as if you were doing wrong, instead of trusting in God and communicating for His glory. This is wrong, and certainly does not improve your Communion.

It is a great pity indeed, that you are so obstinate on this point. You know that confession is not necessary even for the most deliberate venial sin; an act of contrition will obtain its pardon. If you wished, you might go to Communion a month after you had been to confession, but you avoid doing this out of respect.

It was only out of this respect that some of the saints went to confession every day. But as far as obligation goes, you need never go to confession for venial sin. Confession was instituted by God as the necessary remedy for mortal sin.

Why do you go to confession? This is a very important question, for it ought to influence the way in which you make your ordinary confessions. You will reply, "Because I want absolution." It is a very good motive, but what are you going to say? "Oh, I am going to accuse myself of my distractions in prayer, distractions at Mass, distractions at meditation, distractions at examen." But not all separately? "Oh, yes, each separate." But why? Of course you cannot tell us why, and if you specify seven kinds of distractions how is your confessor to judge? Far better to say you have nothing but venial sins to confess, and you want to have absolution. That would be a very good confession, and at least your confessor would know whereabouts you were; but if you accuse yourself of jealousy, envy, anger, impatience, sloth, and all the deadly sins, how is your confessor to be any the wiser or do you any good? If you want to have counsel, say something that will make your confessor know you better, or if you wish to humble yourself, make your confession in a way to do so. You all know that there are two ways of doing a thing.

You may turn up your eyes in church while saying your beads, and it may be from piety, or you may be acting the hypocrite. So you can make your confession in a way that does not humble you in

the least or make you thoroughly ashamed. Some of you know very well how to do this, others do not at all.

Instead of accusing yourself in a vague way of distractions or impatience, you say, "I did this selfish act," and specify it; "I told a lie for such a reason." It sometimes costs much to do this; it makes the heart bleed with shame, it is a small crucifixion, but it does real good. But an accusation in a general way—I have been selfish, untruthful, jealous—causes you no shame, does not humble you at all. Of course; if you confess mortal sin you need only specify the kind and number, as your confessor knows exactly what you mean, but if you have only small sins to confess, it is well to humble yourself. And it is always well to mention some sin of your past life for which you are sorry. Only this year I have met people really trying to be good, but who did not understand how to make their weekly confessions well. One really holy person had never thought of mentioning a sin of her past life at confession, and when I advised her to do it, she said: "I can't, Father, I would rather die." This is the way with all of you, you would rather die than go through shame. However, she decided on doing it, and probably she will gain very great merit from this little act which cost her so much. You should, then, make this accusation of a past sin at your ordinary confessions. Always end by saying, "I accuse myself of all the sins of my past life," but especially of those against charity, or whatever commandment you may have sinned against most grievously. Your progress in sanctity depends upon

your ordinary confessions, and the most important thing in these confessions is the accusation of your past sins.

#### SECOND MEDITATION.

##### *Abiding Shame and Sorrow.*

The next meditation, on sin, will be a repetition of the two last. In the first you asked for the feeling of shame which is the due of your sins; you cannot appear before God without it, you would be ridiculous in the sight of the angels.

In the second meditation you asked for sorrow; in this one you ask for both. In this repetition you must meditate on the points you chose yourselves. Some may have been struck by the fall of the angels, others may have thought more of the misery brought upon mankind by the sin of Adam, or some may easily have been struck most by the thought of the consequences of one mortal sin.

A soul in a state of sin would rush to Hell; it would suffer less in Hell than it would in God's sight with all its sins on it.

We have considered what sin would be if there were no law of God forbidding it. Then you made a brief review of the sins of your life and singled out those which caused you most pain; lastly, you compared your littleness with the creatures around you, those creatures with the angels and with God, what God is and what you are, something most loathsome to God, an ulcer. St. Ignatius proposes a triple colloquy, of which he then gives the form. You pray

first to our Lady, then to our Lord through her prayers, and to God the Father through the merits of His Son ; this is the form.

Your prayer is to be, first, to understand what sin is and a supreme detestation of it ; secondly, to understand the disorder that is in you, all your inordinate affections ; and thirdly, you go a step further and ask to know what the world is.

There is sound doctrine in this as well as a beautiful prayer. St. Ignatius shows us the three grades which lead to sin ; for there is that much good in our nature, even after its fall, that we do not wilfully without cause lose the state of grace for one of mortal sin ; we begin by making a wrong use of creatures. Then there is the world, and we ask for grace to know its falsehood and vanity, till we begin to dread and distrust it, to feel whenever we enter it that we are treading on unsafe ground, and that it is to be avoided as much as possible. Then there is the disorder within ourselves which we must all recognize ; we must know it is there, and that it is the cause of sin, and the more we learn this, the more in proportion will you make this prayer with fervour to our Lady, to our Lord, and lastly to the Eternal Father Himself.

### THIRD MEDITATION.

#### *On Hell.*

I want you to try and remember what I told you in the first meditation on sin, that it ought not to produce fright or disquietude about your past life ;

anxiety, scruples, disturbance, all come from the devil. He takes, in a different way, as much interest in this retreat as God and His angels ; and in one sense, the greater your sins may have been before, the greater is the interest which God and His angels on the one side, and the devil on the other, take in you at this time. In another sense of course, those who have been labouring to please God cause more interest, because the fall of such a one would be greater. All feelings of disquietude, then, come from the devil ; as he is the father of lies, and the greatest enemy of God, what he tells you is not worthy of much credit. So now we come to meditate on Hell. Let us listen to St. Austin. He says let us go down into this place of torment living that we may not go there at our death. Imagine for the first prelude, that you see the height, and breadth, and depth of Hell. The fruit of this meditation is different again from that of the two others on sin. In the first you asked for the grace of shame willingly and contentedly borne ; in the second for sorrow ; here you ask for horror of sin, disgust at its loathsomeness. But this must not, as I said, lead to disturbance ; God loves us, not only with a mother's love, therefore not with a weak love. This love is something higher, nobler, and He knows how to apply the iron when needed, and Hell is really only the last resource of His love ; the last one means by which He seeks to gain our love is fear of Hell. If it had not been created, this world would have been a second Hell.

1. In the first point, imagine you see the place, the fire, the people ; you can walk along the ranks of

the reprobate till you come to one in the same rank of life as yourself. Stop opposite one who was in the same position, the same age, one who has had the same difficulties and temptations as yourself. What caused the ruin of that poor woman who once loved God ; there is one answer which will be given by all the reprobate in Hell, the sense of what our Lord once said to His disciples : “ *Ye of little faith, why didst thou doubt.*”

This will be the answer given by all in Hell and in Purgatory, and those who have fallen away from God on earth. If we trust God, though we commit a mortal sin every five minutes of the day, yet we shall be pardoned, for we may make an act of contrition in the sixth minute ; one word of sorrow and trust will save us. But this poor woman had not trust, she had not the spirit of shame of which I have been speaking to you ; when she sinned there was only disgust of self and pride, which prevented her from humbling herself promptly ; she first yielded to her passions, then rose in rebellion against God Himself for the very sins which ought to have covered her with shame. Now she sees how very easy salvation was, how one word would have saved her ; she sees her folly. “ Fool that I was.” This is the word always used in Scripture of the damned. “ Fool that I was.” Those are the words which it puts into their mouths. “ *We fools esteemed their life madness.*” They scoffed and derided the lives of the saints, and they were convicted of folly in the act.

2. In the second point, think that you hear with the ears of your imagination the curses, and blas-

phemies, and howls of the damned. You can easily see that this would not be the least pain of Hell, this atmosphere of cursing and blasphemy. If one of you had to spend a night in the same room as, or next door to, somewhere in fact within hearing of, I will not say a human creature, but an animal, and had to hear it groaning and crying all night in its death agony, you would have no sleep, you would spend a night of misery ; but in Hell you would hear all the fearful groans and howls of the reprobate for ages and ages ; there will never be one kind word, not a soul will have any sympathy with you ; it will be varied between horror, and derision, and blows. And those who on earth could not bear one word of contempt, one legitimate command, will here be made the slave of the most degraded creatures, subject to them.

3. In the third point imagine you smell the fearful stench, the sulphur of the putrid bodies. You know physically how dreadful it would be to be among this immense number of bodies collected together ; but besides this, even before the Last Judgment, all the sins of sensuality will be punished. Fourthly, use the taste of your imagination, to taste all the misery and tears of the reprobate. Fifthly, comes the touch, which is the most gross of all the senses, yet it is through this that all external sins are committed, and they will be punished by the pain of fire penetrating through every part of the body.

Then comes a simple colloquy with our Lord. Thank Him from your hearts that He has spared you till now, and ask Him for this horror and aversion for sin which the thought of Hell inspires. But remember



that nothing can send you there if you do not wish it. You are surrounded by every means to save yourselves; the only thing that can take you to Hell is your own deliberation.

This meditation ought only to excite trust; the Sacred Heart's craving for you is so great, that He threatens you with Hell only if you do not trust Him.

#### FOURTH DAY.

##### FIRST MEDITATION.

##### *The Joy of the Angels.*

I. Let us take for the subject of our meditation the words of our Lord, "*There shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance.*"

I told you at the beginning of the retreat, that the angels and saints in Heaven take an affectionate interest in us. If you take a right view of this truth, it ought to fill you with confidence, and take away that diffidence which is so selfish, and which pains our Lord more than anything you can do. He is always ready to forgive you after you have sinned, if you will only humble yourself, and make one act of trust in Him. Even Judas would have been pardoned if he had trusted. One word of trust, even when he had taken the rope in his hand ready to cast himself into Hell, if he had only said: "Jesus, betrayed, crucified, and destroyed by me, I still trust Thee,"—in a moment his soul would have become pure as an angel, and he might now have been an Apostle in

Heaven ; this shows us how terrible it is to distrust our good God.

2. But to return to my text, which I must own to you is not in the Exercises.

Why do the angels rejoice so at one sinner's return to God? In the first place they have a personal interest in our sanctification ; when they had attained to their eternal beatitude, there were a great number of places left vacant by their brethren who had fallen, and they looked to God as though to say, "Is it to be always so?" and God revealed to them that He was about to create beings some of whom would give Him yet more glory ; for He was going to make after His image, creatures of spirit and clay, and they were to serve Him in spite of the clay from which they were made and which surrounded them ; so that man was created to repair the honour of God, and the angels, seeing us striving to make up for the dishonour done by their brethren, must feel an interest of the most personal kind in our salvation. You may see this by the hatred of the devils, the malignant and untiring way in which they follow us. They know that we have to fill up the places which they have forfeited, and they look upon us with hate, and envy, and jealousy, and disgust of the most odious kind, as creatures who are to repair the stain which they have cast on the honour of God—worms to undo what they, mighty spirits, have done.

They too have a personal interest in our actions, so you can understand ; and it is a valuable thought that the angels of God feel this interest, that our guardian angels are not merely sent with a message from

Almighty God, to guard the steps of creatures in whom they have no interest, but that our interest is theirs.

3. In the second place, they are called "the swords of Divine Justice." And their first impulse—if we may use the word speaking of pure spirits, when God is offended, is vengeance, to draw their swords and slay the offenders.

But their love, and interest, and patience prevent it; God whispers to them that one act of voluntary humiliation and penitence, will give Him more glory than the loss of a soul.

There is one thought on this subject which is yet higher. The Sacred Heart's love, my dear children, is better understood in Heaven than it ever can be on earth; there, every pulsation of this Adorable Heart is watched and studied, and understood. So the angels know that the Sacred Heart is more glorified by the forgiveness of a sinner, than if that sinner should be hardened in sin, and lost for all eternity. The Sacred Heart is all love, and though the justice of God that must be avenged comes first, still the love of Jesus Christ is not satisfied by the punishment of a sinner, as it would be by one act of sorrow and trust, which would enable Him to pardon; so that the sight of a sinner struggling up after a fall—this glorifies Him more than if he had never fallen.

Thus the angels are interested in you for three reasons: there is a personal interest, and they are the swords of Divine Justice, so that they wish reparation to be made to God's honour; and lastly, there is the great love of the Sacred Heart which our reparation glorifies. Surely we ought to trust.

## CONSIDERATION.

*On Wisdom.*

For your consideration to-day, I want to speak to you about wisdom, to show you that it is something within your reach, or what would be perhaps more to the point with some of you, to show you that it is worth reaching.

A great proof of the hatred of the world for Jesus Christ, is the way in which it, as it were, despises the phraseology of the Church; if you wished to praise persons, you would hardly say they were wise; this would not be received as praise, and yet it is the greatest term of praise in Scripture. You know how pleasing Solomon was to God, because he preferred wisdom before all other gifts, and he tells us of himself, he wished for it; and we can have it if we wish for it. One of the qualities of wisdom is that it never acts from impulse. Voltaire used to tell his disciples never to trust their first impulses because they were good, and I tell you never to trust your first impulses because they are bad, and the two are quite compatible, for though they are often benevolent, yet they are often also imprudent. Wisdom is always very suspicious of self-will and self-opinion. It is always ready to seek advice. For though you may go regularly to your confessor, it does not follow that you are willing to follow his advice; you may indeed go to him without any intention of doing so, but even when you think you wish to follow his advice, you may not be in reality at all ready to do so. And yet you are often too ready to seek counsel, and go for it to all

sorts of indiscreet comfortresses, from whose advice there is no benefit to be derived, unless you intend to avoid doing as they advise you, and who go and babble all that you tell them to the next friend they meet. The *Imitation* warns us against this, and tells us to find a prudent person to seek advice from, for generally those who are not so ready to make confidantes of every one they meet, are the most docile when they do seek advice. Wisdom also avoids that arrogant way of asserting your opinion. A person who is wise will not say, "This is, this is not, I think it is so," and so she will avoid all that exaggeration of speech we so often meet with. Another mark of those who are wise is, that they possess their souls in peace. Peace is not to be found in the world and in its pleasures, and going out at night. As the proverb says: The evening's amusement will not bear the morning's reflection. Peace is only to be obtained by the conquest of ourselves, and though we are told that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, still you will find that this fear is no hindrance to peace, which is both the reward and the sign of real wisdom in this life.

#### SECOND MEDITATION.

##### *The Kingdom of Christ.*

Experience has shown that this meditation has a great effect on some hearts. Those who are at all capable of generosity, will find it appeal to them very earnestly. We have seen in previous meditations for what end we are in this world, we have to save our

souls by praising, reverencing, and serving God, and making a right use of His creatures; we have also seen the obstacle to the end, sin. Now comes the question, Who will be our guide? Jesus Christ, and surely when we know that His only desire is to lead His creatures to Him, it will not be difficult to trust ourselves to Him.

After the preparatory prayer to beg the blessing of God on your meditation, imagine you are following our Lord through the towns and synagogues, and that you see the miracles that He works, and hear the Divine teaching.

In the second prelude, ask for great generosity in following and imitating the Divine Leader.

St. Ignatius throughout the meditation makes use of a comparison. He compares the vocation of our Lord, to the call of some earthly prince to his subjects to join in some good cause.

Each point is divided into two parts.

1. In the first imagine that some prince appointed by God, as Saul, or David, or our Holy Father the Pope, now invites you to follow him, and fight against his enemies. Some people say that St. Ignatius was a noble soldier, and that the comparison did very well for the time in which he lived, but that feudal times are over now, and it is no longer suitable. This is a mistake. There is certainly not much generosity and loyalty in our material nineteenth century, not much, but there is some, and if a prince gave a call to his subjects to make war against the infidels, there would be many who would follow him with enthusiasm.

Unfortunately this enthusiasm is generally wasted

on an unworthy object. Any man who becomes the leader of a faction is soon surrounded by enthusiastic followers. I was once speaking to a man who had left the army and married, of the chance of a war : I said, "But it would not affect you." "Oh, yes, if war broke out I should go back, I should never dare to show my face in the clubs if I did not." So he was prepared to leave wife, and child, and home for the good of his country. And we ought to be ready to answer the call of our Lord to fight against His enemies in our hearts when they rebel, which they do when they lead us astray ; for His only enemies are sins. And there is this difference between the vocation of our Lord and that of an earthly prince, that the latter is very often undertaken in an unjust cause, and the call to follow him is not an offer, but a conscription, and those who fight have all the labour and suffering of the war, without any of the glory or the prizes ; yet this call is answered with enthusiasm. As the *Imitation* says : "The world promises things temporal and of small value, and is served with great eagerness"—with what anxiety and greediness it is followed !

2. In the second point, imagine you hear our Lord saying, that those who come after Him must be content with the food and drink which He has, and with the same clothing ; that they must be content to labour with Him ; but in proportion as they have laboured and suffered with Him, they shall partake also of His glory and the prizes of the victory. And remember, He may have as enthusiastic a response from a woman's heart as a prince of this world from a soldier.

But as it is considered a sort of dishonour to refuse the call of an earthly king, so with God's vocation there is a certain response which duty and self-interest require of us. If the country were invaded by a horde of barbarians, every one would wish to fight against them for his own sake; and when sin, the enemy of God, enters into our hearts, it is for our own interest to resist it. But if we are generous, we shall do more. We shall not be content with resisting the enemies of God, we shall wish to overthrow them. If we are tempted to sin, we should make an act of the contrary virtue. St. Ignatius tells us this of meditation, that if we are tempted to give it up, we are to continue it for rather longer than usual; and the same will apply to any other temptation to sloth or pride. If you are tempted to pride, humble yourself, and let the devil see it does not pay to tempt you.

3. In the third point we go a step further.

When an earthly prince is in need, there are some who not only follow him at his call, but will cast themselves at his feet, and offer all their fortune to advance the cause; others will say, "Take not only me, but my children; we are all ready to shed our blood to the last drop for you." And some are as ready to offer themselves to God; they offer God not only to fight against temptation for His sake, but also to bear injuries, and contempt, and reproaches if He send them. St. Ignatius tells us to end with a colloquy which is rather peculiar.

"Behold me at Thy feet, Supreme Monarch of the universe. Without doubt I am unworthy to march



after Thee ; but full of confidence in Thy grace and protection, I consecrate myself to Thee without reserve. All that I am and all that I possess I submit to Thy holy will. I declare before Thy infinite goodness, in presence of the Virgin Mother of my Saviour, and of all the heavenly court, that my desire, my unalterable resolution, my determined will, is to follow Thee as nearly as possible, detached in spirit from the things of the earth, and, if Thou shouldst will it, really poor ; humble of heart, and, if that also is Thy will, partaking all Thy humiliations and all Thy ignominies ; living and dying at the post where the interests of Thy glory and my salvation and Thy Divine call may have placed me."

"As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth : in what place soever thou shalt be, my lord king, either in death or in life, there will thy servant be." (2 Kings xv. 21.) If you treat our Lord like this, with generosity ; if you are liberal with His Divine Majesty, you will experience a liberality which you have not even conceived.

### THIRD MEDITATION.

#### *The Word was made Flesh.*

St. Ignatius treats this meditation on the Incarnation in his own peculiar way. It is not like one of the truths that we have been thinking of hitherto, neither does it present anything to us which can be grasped by our senses ; so that although it is the mystery on which all our hopes of salvation are centred,

you might find it very difficult to meditate upon if St. Ignatius had not put it in the way he does.

Let your preparatory prayer be an act of reverence at the foot of the Cross. In the first prelude recall to mind the history ; how the Three Divine Persons behold the wickedness of the world, and see how nothing can save it unless God the Son should become Incarnate ; and therefore they sent an Angel to the Virgin Mary, who saluted her with these words : "*Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women.*"

In the second prelude imagine you see the place ; the earth, the little house in the village of Nazareth ; and ask for the grace of knowledge of our Lord made Man, and of His eternal love for us. Our previous meditations have all been on simple truths, now we come to meditate on eternal events. In doing this, you must imagine you see everything as on a stage, though with this difference : that what you see here is of personal interest to you, while what you see on a stage has nothing to do with you, though you may sometimes feel that it applies to you and it may even excite in you feelings of shame. Think then that you see those Divine eyes looking on you with love, and that you hear the gentle words which He spoke to sinners. Everything about Him shows His love for us. He never treated any one with contempt except Herod, who came before Him red with the blood of St. John the Baptist, and with all the mire of his sins upon him ; and yet it was not the blood, nor the uncleanness, which caused our Lord to turn from him with contempt ;

it was his jauntiness of manner and obduracy of heart.

It was the same with him as I was telling you it was with Judas : one word of humiliation, one word of sorrow, and he would have been as pure as St. Peter after his fall ; but he would not humble himself, and this was why our Lord turned from him. On one other occasion He appeared to be stern, though He was not really so ; this was to the Canaanite woman, because He saw that her humility was such that He might do so with profit to her soul ; but when she humbly said, "*Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters,*" His Heart was melted, and the true Man appeared. He said, "*O woman, great is thy faith.*" It is worth while to beg earnestly to know and understand this love of Jesus Christ.

1. In the first point imagine you see the persons ; that you gaze from the place from whence the Holy Trinity are looking down, and see the whole world, all the different nations, differing in clothing, in habits, some in peace, some in war, some in riches, some in poverty, some laughing, some weeping, some in health, some in sickness ; but everywhere sin, and man living contented in this sin. If you see the havoc which sin causes in the hearts of men, you cannot fail to feel this shame for it of which we have been speaking so much, and from this shame is sure to follow that keen, unselfish sorrow that God has been offended. You see those who are blessed with peace, living in sin. They are elated with prosperity, and from this prosperity follows sin ; from sin comes humiliation,

then a sort of repentance ; but with returning prosperity, returning sin. They think it a bore to serve God. How often do we think this? How often do we groan under the cross which God sends us, when in that very cross we should find salvation to our souls. Then we also see war, with all the misery and desolation it brings. We see some weeping—how few alas for their sins—and some laughing, in forgetfulness of their last end. You will see all the misery of unregenerate humanity.

2. In the second point look at our Lady ; the one bright spot in this broad, dark world is the cottage, the chamber, the oratory of this girl, this child, who is to be the co-operator with God in the work of our redemption : and the Angel salutes her with veneration ; then you hear the answer : “ *Behold the handmaid of the Lord.*” Is this your answer? When God sends you a suffering of any kind, do you offer yourself as His handmaid to do His will ; do you say, “ *Ecce ancilla Domini* ” ?

3. In the third point look on the world and see what all the creatures in it are doing : some are cursing, some blaspheming, and all trying to make each other unhappy—that seems their great object ; you see unkind thoughts, unkind judgments, unkind words, unkind acts, every one seeking self, and, as the *Imitation* tells us, finding self to their own misery. We see this everywhere, but we do not profit by the experience.

Let each one say, “ Does this apply to me? I see the world yielding to the enemies of God, do I not yield my heart to them ; what have I done hitherto ?

what am I doing now, what ought I to do for the future?"

Then a colloquy with the Three Divine Persons, and ask the Word made Flesh, and His Holy Mother, for help to love, follow, and imitate our Lord, Who by His Incarnation became our Brother ; end with a *Pater noster*.

## FIFTH DAY.

### FIRST MEDITATION.

#### *The Nativity.*

The time is getting so short that I am afraid we shall have to mangle the Exercises very much. You can understand that a book that is intended to occupy one exclusively for a month, cannot be thoroughly studied in six days, but we must do the best we can in the short time that remains. The next meditation is on the Nativity, and it would be a pity to miss that, for though it contains a lesson for those who are striving for the highest perfection, which it would take them a lifetime to learn, still it also contains useful lessons for those who are leading a domestic life ; and if the meditation on sin has not made you ashamed of yourselves, perhaps this one on the Nativity will. There is something very beautiful in the thought of the God-Child, which will soften any heart.

In the first prelude recall the history which you know well ; how when the Blessed Virgin was on the point of childbirth, a foolish Prince, in whose hands