

CONFERENCES

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CONFERENCES

GIVEN BY FATHER DIGNAM OF THE
SOCIETY OF JESUS

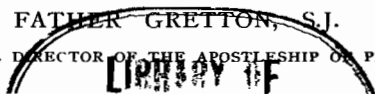
With Retreats, Sermons, and Notes of Spiritual Direction

COMPILED BY
MOTHER MAGDALEN TAYLOR

Author of "Tyborne," 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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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.*¹

Imprimatur

FRAN. CASSETTA PATR. ANTIOCH. VICESG.

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

PREFACE.

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*,"¹ 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*."² 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

¹ Ecclesiasticus xiv. 14.

² St. John vi. 12.

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*,"¹ but also that "*the just shall live for evermore*."²

C. CARDINAL MAZZELLA.

Rome, Feast of the Annunciation, 1897.

¹ Psalm cxi. 7.

² Wisdom v. 16.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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 her¹ who three years before her own

¹ 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.Œ., 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,¹

¹ *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,¹ 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 condemned for Thee."

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

¹ 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.

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.”¹ 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.”²

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

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

² *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*,¹ 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.*"

¹ 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, "*Whatsoever 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

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.

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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, claspings 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.

I. 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

that country happened to be, thinking to exalt himself, and increase his glory, issued an edict ordering all his subjects to go to the city of their birth to be enrolled, and that our Lady set out at once with St. Joseph, and that at Bethlehem God the Son was born, and wrapped in swaddling-clothes. Imagine you see the road, any road you know, the eighty miles between Nazareth and Bethlehem, and our Lady riding on an ass, and St. Joseph walking by her. You may also, if you like, suppose there was a handmaid, and you may take her to be yourself. Then picture to yourself the cave, its shape and size, and all the arrangement and preparations.

In the second prelude beg that the love of the Divine Humanity may come into your heart, and that you may not despise the mercy of God. He is become a baby, and is stretching out His arms to you to show you that you may trust Him. It seems a bold thing to say, but the only sin which can damn a soul, which has damned all the reprobate in Hell, is this contempt of God's mercy, this distrust. There are other sins, of course, which merit Hell, but none of these would have damned the lost if they had trusted and asked pardon.

1. In the first point imagine you see the persons, our Lady and St. Joseph, with the God-Child after His birth in the cave. Many of you have spent perhaps an hour at a time in the contemplation of your own child, meditating and drawing your lessons from it, and most of you will be able to remember at some time of your life, some person whose image has been constantly before your mind, too often

perhaps, on whom you have meditated and drawn a lesson, perhaps alas, not a very wise one, but at least it has taught you to meditate. Imagine now that you see this tender young Mother, holding out her Child to you in her virginal arms, and telling you He is your God. It is a beautiful picture. You know the words which the Church puts into the mouth of our Lady: "*I am the mother of fair love, of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope.*" The Church surrounds her with every beautiful name as with so many garlands, to draw us to love her. It was not for her happiness alone that God was born, it was also for you. Then see St. Joseph; he might teach us a lesson if we had time to contemplate him; think what he had to go through before he had come to this, and he has shown proof of many virtues which make him fit to stand beside Mary now. There is another lesson in all this. You know that the Providence of God rules every event of your life; nothing is said of you, no injury is done to you without His decree; but even if you were foolish enough to disbelieve this, you could not doubt that there was the Providence of God in every event of the life of this Man-God, Whose coming has been predicted by God to Adam, Whom the Prophets had proclaimed, for Whose coming the whole world had sighed and prayed, that the clouds might open and He come down. You could not doubt that the Holy Trinity had decreed with accuracy and deliberation all the events of His life, and yet what a satire on the world's providence is the arrangement which God made for the birth of His only Son.

Was He asleep, as the Israelites said of Baal, or was He gone on a journey that every inconvenience was prepared for the coming of His First-Born? Mary, according to the ideas of this world, not in a fit state to travel, and the season was inclement ; but she had to leave her home which, though humble, was not destitute, and take the long journey ; and we see her in the stable deprived of everything which you would consider necessary for your peace of mind—and yet this certainly was the happiest night ever spent by human heart.

And then God was born to go through sufferings, labours, hunger, thirst, and privations of every kind, and finally die on a Cross. And all for me. What does repining mean? "It is hard!" your favourite word ; and the hardships of life are so intolerable. Does not this picture of unselfishness fill you with shame at the thought of your self-seeking, self-contemplation, and selfishness?

2. The second point is rather striking.

St. Ignatius tells us to attend and note what they say, and in all this mystery not one word is revealed to us of what they said. Does not that show us that there is a silence more eloquent than the grandest words? What were they thinking of on their journey over this long eighty miles? Not of that foolish, ignorant King. We do not hear any complaints, they did not ask what right he had to utter such an edict, why he did not consider the hardships he brought on his poor subjects. Surely this ought to teach us not to repine.

3. In the third point St. Ignatius tells us in a very

forcible manner to see the things which they do ; but that is what I have just been telling you.

Then end with a colloquy, begging again the grace not to doubt the love of Jesus Christ, and to believe that He cannot refuse you any grace, any pardon which your soul needs.

CONSIDERATION.

Simplicity of Intention.

It is no use your making all these meditations unless you make practical use of them.

The effect of a retreat is not to change the external appearance of your lives, yet you may be sanctified by it. You will have to return to your old life afterwards, to your ordinary occupations ; you will have to eat your dinner, or nurse the baby the same as before ; but your sanctity, remember, can be nothing but a concoction of these ordinary occupations by bringing the thoughts of the retreat to bear on them. You may have a great many beautiful thoughts during the retreat, you may feel very fervent, and say you are ready to do anything God requires of you, yet not reduce this to practice. How then can you be a holier and a better woman at the end of the retreat ?

The *Imitation*, as I told you at the beginning of the retreat, says that a man ought to be lifted on two wings. The two wings are, simplicity of intention and purity of affection. Simplicity of intention is not always to be wondering what people will say of us,

or what we look like. There are three things we ought to examine in every act—the thing itself, the circumstances under which it is to be done, and the intention with which we do it. You may say “that is very high, far beyond my reach.”

But it is really very simple, and is worth inquiring into ; and if you would examine yourselves on these three points when you make your examination of conscience, you would find it a real and solid help, first, to see what is right or wrong in the thing itself ; it may be bad in itself, and that is very simple ; but it more often occurs that a thing good in itself is bad from the circumstances under which it is done : it is done in the wrong time or in the wrong place. Take for example coming late to Mass—take an indiscreet word, a word which may have no harm in itself ; it might be no harm if said to a priest, or a husband, or a father, but said to another person it may be very wrong. Again, an act which is good in itself and its circumstances may lose all its merit if it is not done with a good intention, if it is done from vainglory or self-seeking. God says of those who act from the feeling of vainglory, for the praise and admiration of men, that they have had their reward. He has no reward for them. God’s glory is the one thing which He clings to. “*I will not give My glory to another,*” He says in Holy Scripture. It is useful to think of this, for many people do not appreciate this thought, that in acting to gain praise we deprive God of His glory. That was what Nabuchodonosor did before he was turned into a beast : he declared he would take all the glory of his victories for himself, that he

would give it neither to God nor man ; and when he would not take warning he became like a beast of the fields. You do not go quite so far as he did, so you are not punished in the same way, though you certainly do make donkeys of yourselves by vain-glory. This simplicity of intention gives such strength and unity of purpose, I am only afraid of your falling in love with it for minor motives. Perhaps you know two or three people who have the gift of simplicity, not more than two or three I am afraid, but you will find that they stand out among your acquaintances as something so much grander—they appear to be so thoroughly sincere and honest in all their actions. Those who are simple have no fear of what people think, or whether they are looking right ; all this falls off from them, they see what is right and that is sufficient, they do not hesitate how to act.

I will try and give you an idea of what I mean. It may sometimes happen you have to walk along a file of people who have nothing to do but look at you. Well, there are two ways of getting out of this. A little "*brass*" may do something of course, but that is not the best way ; most of you would look foolish and be shy, and shyness is only a form of pride.

But if you kept the thought of God in your mind, and paid no attention at all to the pigmy creatures around you ; if you thought only that He was present and looking down on you, even the shyest among you would do it quite simply. You see this by the difference it makes when you are in church ; you

feel that God is there, so you do not care who else is looking at you. Some may, of course, do so a little, and others more, but many not at all. You will see by this what I mean : you might often save yourself five minutes' misery by having a simple intention.

This self-consciousness stultifies all your actions, it makes every attitude, every movement foolish. We might well take a lesson from those around us, when we see how foolish they look, only it is so general perhaps you do not remark it so much.

The second point is more difficult—purity of the affections, for there is no limit to it, till we arrive at what the Church refers to in our Lady by the words *Mother most pure*. It does not mean ordinary purity, for that is not used in reference to her, but the higher purity—purity of the affections. When we give way to inordinate affections it destroys the higher purity of our souls. We are constantly dreaming of the object to which we have attached ourselves, and this takes our thoughts away from God. We are to be ivory, not velvet—for velvet clings, and you must not cling to anything : you must be ivory.

Take God's creatures as they come, use them, or put them aside ; but if you form an inordinate attachment it will bring misery to you.

It was owing to the purity of their affections that those saints who died young "*fulfilled a long time in a short space*," as we are told. Those who died at the age of eighteen had practised this purity of the affections, and so they had done the work God gave them in a marvellously short time ; they had filled

their measure, and were ready to take their place among the saints of God.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Two Standards.

We come to the meditation of the Two Standards, which is supposed to have inspired St. Ignatius with the idea of founding the Society. Although the direct object of this meditation is the choice of a vocation, yet like most things which are good and solid, it does good also in indirect ways, and may be used with profit by those who have not to make this choice, and it may have a beneficial effect on their whole lives.

A person who had gone through the Exercises several times was asked what the fruit of this meditation was, and he said, "Of course that you choose our Lord." This shows how its meaning may be mistaken, for this would imply going back farther than the beginning of the Exercises; after having meditated on Sin, Hell, and the Incarnation, it is to be hoped that you have already "chosen our Lord."

Father Roothaan says, and what he says is generally received, that the fruit of this meditation is to show us the true spirit of Jesus Christ. The Two Standards are those of Christ, our one most excellent Leader, and Lucifer, the greatest enemy of our human nature.

See the force which St. Ignatius puts even into his titles—"enemy of human nature." Satan is its

natural enemy, because he cannot bear to think that we, mere beasts, but "*quickened together in Christ*," should occupy the place which was meant for him and his bright, spiritual beings. The preparatory prayer is as usual—cast yourself with reverence and humility at the feet of our Lord and ask Him to bless your prayer. In the first prelude you call to mind the history, all of which St. Ignatius imagines. Think that you see the Divine Leader, on the one hand, calling all people together under His banner; and on the other side, Lucifer trying to seduce us to follow him.

In the second prelude imagine the place. First, a bright green field near Jerusalem, where Jesus Christ is seated on a throne, with His followers; and then a dark plain near Babylon, where Lucifer presents himself with his evil spirits. For the fruit of the meditation beg a knowledge of the frauds of the evil leader, and grace to guard against them, and also a knowledge and grace to imitate your great General—Christ. You see how St. Ignatius divides the intellect and the will; you are to ask for knowledge and grace, for very often they are to be found quite separate. You often find people who know well what is right and who are too lazy or too perverse to do it; there are others so engrossed with worldly matters that they put their knowledge aside, and you also find persons with good-will working to the right and the left without the least idea of what they ought to do.

St. Ignatius tells us to ask for light for the intellect and strength for the will. As there is a

comparison in this meditation, you divide it into two sets of points, as you did the one on the Kingdom of Christ.

1. In the first point imagine before your eyes in the dark, barren spot near Babylon the wicked chief with his spirits, "as it were seated on a lofty throne of fire and smoke, in aspect horrible and fearful." (Exercises, p. 44.)

It would be a great mistake if you thought St. Ignatius wrote all this to amuse himself. There is a meaning in every word he says. The fire is of a kind which does not give light, and this and the smoke signify the obscurity which sin brings into our souls, and in representing the devil so horribly, St. Ignatius only shows him in his true light, as the Church tells us he really is, not in the disguise which he puts on to seduce us. In the second point he tells us to imagine we hear him calling his evil spirits around him ; and giving them his orders, he scatters them all over the world ; he does not omit one city, one place, or one individual. They attack all states and souls.

In the third point you are to imagine you hear the address which he makes them.

He stirs them up to lay snares whereby to tempt man ; the love of worldly goods, whence they may easily be brought to the love of worldly honours, and then to the abyss of pride, from which the downward course to every vice is headlong. You see the three degrees : love of riches, love of worldly pomp and esteem, and then pride ; then the devil says you can leave them to me. He knows that when pride

is in the heart, he can easily lead it to all sorts of sins.

2. Then turn to the great Leader, Jesus Christ.

In the first point imagine you see the green fields in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and Jesus Christ seated, a contrast to Satan, humble in posture and beautiful, and amiable in look.

See how He chooses Apostles, disciples, friends, and sends them to draw all nations to Him, to scatter His sacred doctrine over the whole world, and to give as example the imitation of His life.

3. Then in the third point hear the address which He makes to those chosen servants and friends. He tells them to be anxious to help all, to lead all, first to poverty of spirit, and if duty to God requires it, to real and actual poverty; then to draw them to patience under, and even the desire of, reproaches, contempt, and neglect, as from this comes humility. You see here again the three grades of perfection: poverty, self-abasement, and humility, which are directly opposed to worldly goods, honour, and pride. These are the three degrees by which our Divine Leader wishes to draw us to His standard: poverty of spirit against the craving for the things of this world, patience under opprobrium and neglect, against the desire of honours and the esteem of men, and humility against pride; and when we are humble He knows He can lead us to every virtue. Then St. Ignatius proposes a triple colloquy. First, ask our Blessed Lady to obtain for you grace to follow her Son by a true spirit of poverty, a comprehension of the nothingness and danger of the things of this

world, and also ask for grace to comprehend the value of injuries and contempt, how good it is for you to be ignored. Then say the Hail Mary. Secondly, ask her Divine Son to obtain for you all these graces from the Father, and especially that of patience, and say the *Anima Christi*, and lastly, beg these graces from the Eternal Father Himself, and end with the *Pater noster*. Remember the object of this meditation is to acquire the virtue of indifference to the things of this world, though you have not the courage to give them up entirely, for the devil tries to draw men to fasten themselves to things indifferent in themselves; and from this clinging grow the passions which ultimately render him the master of our souls.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Apostolic Life.

1. It would be a pity to end the Exercises without giving some attention to the Public Life of our Lord. Though there will only be time for one meditation, it will be a help to those of you who have the courage to attempt mental prayer. What I will give you, is St. Peter walking on the waters and the scene immediately preceding it. It is a beautiful picture. Our Lord with His disciples as in a family; and we may draw a lesson not only from the virtues of the Apostles; but also from their imperfections, and the way in which our Lord deals with them, His considerateness for them.

After making the preparatory prayer, imagine

you see the shore, and the lake, the crowd of simple disciples round our Lord, and all the people of the neighbourhood on the *qui vive* to see what they are going to do. For our Lord had been preparing the Apostles for the work which they would have to do when He was gone, and He sent them out by two and two to preach to the people. And now the Gospel tells us, they related to Him all that they had done. Here is a lesson for us ; the candour and simplicity with which they told Him everything. By means of this candour they are carried through all their temptations, all their difficulties ; even the grossness of their nature is no barrier to the work they have to do while they trust Him so simply. Then our Lord invites them to "*come apart.*" Here we see the mother's heart ; He sees that they are tired, they have had a hard day's work, so He wishes to give them some recreation, some amusement. He provided for this as well as for their work, so He tells them to come apart and rest ; He gives them a holiday. But all the people who have been looking out for Him, eager to hear Him speak, see where He is going and hasten thither from all directions. Now here is another lesson. Our Lord took His Apostles there intending as He said to rest, and when they get there they find this crowd waiting for them, and our Lord, although He had invited them to refresh themselves, put the amusement aside when He came in face of another duty, a higher one ; there was an opportunity of doing good, and He did not hesitate to give up His Apostles' holiday.

You will find it constantly happen that you have

to choose between a legitimate amusement and an opportunity of doing good, of doing some kind act ; both are perfectly lawful ; but if you give up the amusement God will reward you. It is touching to see how grateful our Lord is for these little sacrifices you make for Him. He is happy with the smallest thing you do for Him, and you will find there is often a question of amusement or some opportunity of doing a kind act in this history. As our Lord said, here were sheep without a shepherd, so He remained and spoke to them, or in other words He gave them a long sermon, for we are told afterwards it was getting late. It is easy to see what His Apostles thought of it ; they had come there to rest, and they had a long sermon, and so the Gospel tells us, they told our Lord it was getting dark, and they asked Him to send the people away. But our Lord told them to give the people to eat, and you see how quickly they pick up again. Here we see in the hearts of the Apostles that mixture of generous impulses and good-will, together with that eternal preference of self which we so often meet with ; they wish to get rid of the people, but once the *fiat* of our Lord has gone forth, they soon make up their minds and ask if they shall go and buy bread for the people to eat.

2. Then our Lord worked this wonderful miracle of which we read so often, of dividing five loaves and two fishes among this great multitude. He commanded them to sit down on the green grass in companies. There were about 5,000 of them, and you can imagine you see them scattered about in

companies of fifty or a hundred. He then ordered the Apostles to set before Him the loaves and fishes they had brought. They had come here after their day's labour to get rest, and they got a sermon, and now they had to walk along the ranks, distributing food to the multitude. You see our Lord did not spare them any more than Himself; He gives us here an example of firmness, as well as of indulgence, and though this lesson chiefly refers to those who have charge of others, still it is useful to all. It shows that indulgence is out of place in presence of a duty, or an occasion of doing good. Then they had to fill the baskets with the fragments that remained.

And now here is a mystery. Our Lord tells them to go up at once into the ship, and He will dismiss the people. There is no question of their having any of the fragments themselves to eat; they may perhaps have taken one of the baskets with them, but there it is, they are to go straight to the ship. There is only one explanation of this: the people were all full of fervour after our Lord had been speaking to them, and they had been showing all possible marks of veneration to His Apostles. Our Lord saw all that was going on, that the Apostles were taking in all these marks of honour, and He saw that their heads would be turned, so then came the snub.

This is the very reality of life. You ought to take the unground truths of the Gospel, and masticate them for your daily life, and you will find this apply well. Then when our Lord had dismissed the

people, He went up to the mountain alone to pray, and in the middle of the night He came down, and walked across the waves to where the ship was tossing in the middle of the sea, and the Apostles still labouring and rowing, poor things ; and He came to them across the waters. They were quite worn out by this time with their labours and fatigues, but we see them still working. This is the time when temptation is the hardest, when mind and body are worn out with fatigue and lassitude. When we are tempted this way in the hour of weariness, our Lord always comes to us, as He did to His Apostles, but in what form? Are you not often like them? Are you not ready to cry out, "It is a ghost," as they did? When His grace comes to you, are you not afraid of it, and would you not run away from it if you could, especially if it comes in the shape of suffering? This is a very common picture, what we see in the Apostles ; but all their fright, all their anxiety is laid to rest at the first word He speaks, "*Fear ye not.*" Why? Because "*it is I.*" How often does our Lord address these words to you from the Tabernacle? The Apostles had not the privileges which you have. True they could look into His Divine eyes, and hear the gentle words which fell from His lips, but they did not know as much as you do, and they had not Holy Communion which you have so often, and which you might have so much oftener if you wished ; yet all their fatigue and fright were laid to rest by one word, "*It is I.*" This is a lesson of that trust about which I have been speaking to you ; you ought not to need more than this one word to trust entirely.

3. The most precious lessons we get from the Apostles are those which we learn from St. Peter ; we may learn something from all of them, but more from St. Peter than any. You see him in the character which you so often come across, this irrepressible character, always craving for notice. Our Lord was constantly snubbing him, and saying severe things to him, but we always see in him a character full of buoyancy ; nothing can repress him, nothing can convince him that our Lord does not love him, for it is not true. And now the moment he hears our Lord's voice saying "*It is I,*" he says, "*Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters.*" "*He said, Come,*" and now we see St. Peter at the summit of his happiness, walking to our Lord across the waves, and all the Apostles looking at him in wonder. St. Peter really loved our Lord, but he did it as we often do, in a selfish way. Jesus sees the love that is in his heart, but He sees also the imperfection of his affections ; there is the reality, but the husk also ; and He knows that humiliation is the best thing for him, so He allows him to feel himself sinking. Here is a sudden change from the height of exultation to the most profound dismay. And then comes the thought of those tiresome Apostles looking at him, and taking it all in. This is what we see in life day after day ; but notwithstanding his fears, the trust of God is still there, and he cries out : "*Lord, save me,*" and our Lord stretches out His hand to him. And now our Lord begins to scold him : "*Why didst thou doubt ?*" He says those words which express one thing which most hurts our Lord and

gives pain to His Sacred Heart—want of trust in Him. And after this He went into the ship, and the wind ceased. Ask earnestly of our Lord as the fruit of this meditation, the grace to know, love, imitate, and trust Him.

SIXTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Before the end.

I. Just before His Passion began, our dear Lord gave to His Apostles and to us all, the Heavenly Bread replenished with all sweetness, and His Blood in which we bathe our souls. Do you prepare for Holy Communion by thinking that you go because you are so unfit and unworthy? You are going to the Physician of your souls, and there you find medicine, and strength, and virtue.

St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure, in the two prayers they made for a priest's preparation for Mass, show that all the wounds of their souls are motives for approaching with more confidence.

The first effect of Holy Communion is to wash the soul clean. Do you enough consider what Holy Mass is? If you did, you would long for the time of Holy Mass to come, and you would pant for the moment when our Lord descends upon the altar. You would offer to Him your poor, sinful, wretched soul, and cry out earnestly: "*Wash me yet more from my iniquity: and cleanse me from my sin.*" Remember

Jesus Christ is there for you. The priest is only your representative ; you may take Him and offer Him for anything you like. Forget not our Lord's desire to be remembered. It was for this He bade His priests offer up continually the Holy Sacrifice. You please Him when you remember the moment of His appearing on the altar. At Holy Mass He delivers Himself up for you to do with Him what you please.

2. After the Last Supper a dread and fear came over our Lord. We hear Him exclaim, "*My Soul is sorrowful even unto death.*" Each word of our Lord bears the stamp of Divine truth ; what then must have been His sorrow which in itself was capable of producing death ! Down comes the black veil, between His Soul and the presence of the Divinity. How can we penetrate into this great mystery—no human words can tell what He then endured ; let us adore in awe and silence.

St. Catherine of Siena once lay as if dead for four hours, and this is called her mystical death. She saw herself already crowned with the diadem of glory—the bridal ring decked her finger, and she believed that she had left earth for ever. Then she thought our Lord desired her to return to this world and for His sake to labour on, to save the souls so dear to Him. What an heroic sacrifice was then demanded of her, and how glorious was her acceptance, and how deeply she loved souls in her after-life ? But turn to our Lord and ask what did *He* give up for us, what did He not voluntarily renounce for our sakes ? In the moment of His heaviest and darkest trials,

He retires into a grotto away from the sight of men—He kneels down to pray.

The devils come and press into His innocent Flesh every sin committed since the sin of Adam, or which will be accomplished down to the last, in the dread days of Antichrist. He was, in truth, *innocent*; but we must consider as far as shame and pain and horror went, He bore each separate offence in His own Person. Then went forth the *one efficacious act of sorrow* to which every puny act of ours is allied, and from which ours derives its value. If we refuse to believe in the power of our act of contrition, we are refusing to believe in the power which Jesus Christ had in the Garden, to make an act of sorrow capable of appeasing His Father's anger, and turning His love to us again. We are too selfish to bear the shame and disgrace of our sins. Jesus Christ alone outstood it all.

All was darkness in that pure, innocent mind, all was horror, all was desolation. "*Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me.*" What depth of suffering these words proclaim.

His Soul was true to God all through this extreme pain, and after His example we also can be true to God throughout our earthly warfare. There is always a tiny thread—but stronger than an iron chain, the hand in the dark, infallible in its power—*obedience*. He was perfectly submissive to His Father's will: "*But yet not My will, but Thine be done,*" He said, continuing His cry. Many of us have to pass through hours of anguish, days of bitter desolation. When these come we ~~have our~~ Lord's example: persevere,

obey ; surer is the path of obedience than if angel hands encircled us and guided us through every danger.

3. Then when He went to seek some comfort from His chosen friends, He found them asleep ; and so the cup of His humiliation was filled up, for He had divested Himself of every shadow of help from His Divinity, until His Heavenly Father sent an Angel to comfort Him. What consolation we may experience in thinking, that we may have poured some tiny drop of comfort into that draught, whatever it may have been. Perhaps it was a sight of those few who would love Him, and be faithful, and to whom His bitter Passion and Death would be support and strength ; who would draw comfort and consolation from the thought of the Agony borne with so much love for them, and who in the hours of their bitterest desolation would gain strength from the prayer wrung from that agonized Heart : "*My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.*"

CONSIDERATION.

The Denial of St. Peter.

"*Peter saith to Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet.*"

It was more than the impetuous Peter could bear. His thoughts were all of the glory and dignity of his Master. He had not yet learnt the lesson of His deep humility. He did not realize that it was

only because his Master *emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant*, that he had any hope of eternal life.

"And with them was Peter also standing warming himself."

And while our Lord was being insulted and mocked before Caiphas, Peter was "*warming himself*," and as the heat penetrated his chilled limbs, the courage he so relied on was melting away in his heart. Thus does the love of earthly comfort weaken in the soul heavenly grace.

"And he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of Whom you speak."

And so with oaths Peter lied and was ashamed of the Master Who loved him so much.

And I too have denied Him perchance often ; not under the temptation of deadly fear, but because His will crossed mine and I was weary of the yoke.

Imagine you see Pilate's hall. Our Lord a prisoner, and St. Peter warming himself. Let us consider the hour St. Peter passed between the first and second denial.

Hour of danger, when the devil brings forth every engine in his power to unnerve a soul that deliberates. Why was St. Peter tempted ? Because he had a high vocation and many graces. The devil saw this and sought him out as his mark.

Why was he so weak ? Because he was a vain man without shame ; soon up, soon down—giving himself airs of superiority as soon as he was brought forward, which often happened. He was a great

source of temptation to the other disciples by this craving desire to be first.

Why did he fall? Because he relied on his own strength. Why did he rise? Because he trusted our Lord. With all his faults, he had not that of distrust; he never doubted our Lord's willingness to forgive him. When shame at last came, it came so plentifully that it lasted him his life through.

Dwell on our Lord's *look*—" *And the Lord turning looked on Peter.*" One look from those eyes, and the heart which was so hardened melted—all the memory of that wondrous love and patience came back to him. How often has our Lord looked on us at confession, at Holy Communion, in this retreat. How have we repaid His love; shall not our future lives be an answer to that love as was that of St. Peter? How did he govern the Church? In humility, trying to be like the rest. He never forgot that he was the man who had committed a most cruel sin, who had denied our Lord in the presence of His enemies. He was cured completely of his vanity, and as Prince of the Apostles, and holder of the highest dignity, he always remained the true and humble penitent, the Church's great example of penance, his cheek furrowed with the tears that daily flowed.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Passion.

1. "*And the men that held Him mocked Him, and struck Him. And they blindfolded Him, and smote*

His face. And they asked Him, saying: Prophecy, who is it that struck Thee? And blaspheming, many other things they said against Him."

Let us think of that night in the guard-room. The judges had retired, St. Peter had denied Him, and He was delivered over to the brutal soldiers, most degraded villains, lewd, coarse, brutal; let us picture them in groups in the stone-flagged yard where He sat, all defiled as He was with spittle, even then surrounded by a halo of innocence, dignity, and sanctity, so that even to their coarse minds He was some one to reverence; then they got tired of watching Him, and anxious to pass the hours of the long night, they began to approach Him, to touch Him, to pass their ribald jokes, until one bolder than the rest struck Him; then all their atrocities were heaped upon Him, His eyes blinded with a foul cloth, His hair and beard plucked out in handfuls; and as the guard was relieved at intervals during the dreary night, each succeeding group tried to exceed what they had heard of the others. How few have rightly entered into the horrors of that night! And all this had passed before His mind in His Agony in the Garden, till the Blood was forced from His Body, and saturating His garments, fell in torrents to the earth.

2. "*Not this man, but Barabbas.*" And thus we cry when we prefer our untamed, uncontrolled passions to the reign of our Lord.

In the "Kingdom of Christ" we learnt that to be true soldiers we must feel the smart of the wounds, and share in the labours, but that afterwards

we should partake in the victory. If we would have Jesus, and not Barabbas, we must fight with these emotions; our hearts being the battlefield, some choice must be made—we cannot remain neutral. God has in divers ways revealed to us, how desirous He is to communicate to our souls the fruit of the Passion, how He longs that we should realize and make use of the treasure He has given us, "*for you are bought with a great price.*" And you may take these words in another sense, as if He said, "There is My Divine Son, I place Him in your hands, offer Him again to Me as the price of all you want for your own soul and the souls of others."

Our Lord's life was sought by His own people, for whom He had laboured, whom He had taught, whose perversity He had borne with.

How Simon the Cyrenean resented the affront of being forced to help in carrying the malefactor's Cross! Then came the heart to heart conversation, and Simon loved the weight. No suffering was ever borne for Jesus without bringing us nearer to Him. Remark well that our Lord did not lie down on the Cross to die, but He was *nailed* to it; three nails were driven through His hands and feet, and by means of these He hung suspended, the blessed fruit of the Tree of Life. Why have our past resolutions been so ineffectual? Because we forgot to *nail* them.

Those three nails should be dear to each heart, because the strength bought by them is ours, the Blood they caused to gush forth is ours, and with their help perseverance in our good resolutions is ours.

"And they that passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads." So do our disorderly hearts offer a thousand insults in the day to our Lord, and yet at night we examine ourselves and find nothing! We hurt Him thus so much, and are not sorry. We are His executioners; our pride was the chief cause of His pain.

Mary was there listening to the strokes of the hammer. Beg her to look at us and say she forgives our work. Draw near to the first Elevation of the Host, Who for the sins of mankind was offered to His Eternal Father, the one great Victim of expiation for all. There He hung in the bitterest extremity of pain, racked with torture, apparently abandoned by God, till at last the moment comes when His heart-strings crack, the cry is heard, *"Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit;"* the Soul goes forth, and all is over.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Eternal Reward.

I. Yes, that last prayer was heard, the Father received His Soul, and then began the greatness of the reward—the reward for that perfectly unselfish life. He Who had come for our example, had lived on earth perfectly self-forgetting, teaching us how we should "take the second place," if I may thus express my meaning. And now all this self-forgetfulness was to find its recompense, rich and enduring. Yes, at last the reward had come. Reward for the sweet

modesty of His eyes—reward for the kind, cheering, or consoling word—the modulations of His voice to suit all who came near Him. Reward for His suffering—the eyes blinded by blood on the Cross were for ever to gaze on the courts of Heaven, the obscurity of His life to be recompensed by His being the very brightness of Heaven, for in its courts there is “*no need of the sun*,” for “*the Lamb is the lamp thereof* ;” and as He has called us to share in His labours and pains, so it is also true that we are to share in His rewards—and we may look forward to the time when, having fought with Him, we shall be likewise crowned with Him.

St. Luke xxiv. 13—25.

2. We may find some comfort in beholding the men who were taught by Jesus Christ Himself, still so imperfect. These two disciples had built great hopes on our Lord ; they thought He would surely restore the temporal power of Juda. “When He is King, we shall be dukes,” they said, and now they feel all is a failure. Had He not told them over and over again of His Passion and Resurrection, even giving Jonas as a sign of its accomplishment? And yet they doubted. Now our Lord took the trouble to draw out all their sorrow. They had been talking, and He had been listening, and they had hard words from Him for their conversation. We speak, and we shall soon be talking about this retreat, and our Lord will be listening—we forget this. “*They constrained Him, saying, Stay with us,—the day is*

now far spent." One act of kindness on their part won them the happiness of knowing our Lord and receiving Holy Communion; you have often gone before, but now see how you can give our Lord the most pleasure and comfort by it. Look upon our Lord after Holy Communion as a Treasure which you carry away and have all to yourself. God will look upon this Treasure in your heart and wonder what you will do with It and to whom you will give It. This Treasure is the One Whom His Heart loves, His only Son—you will be no longer a miserable little petitioner, you will be at that moment rich and can offer a gift infinite in value. What will you offer it for? Realize Who will be within you.

St. John xxi. 1—22.

3. Our Lord left all His glory and infinite rewards to bring temporal comfort to His disciples. He prepared their breakfast. He knew they were not strong enough to work the whole night through and eat nothing. He came to give them another proof of His care and watchful love. Do we believe in His love; and does each one believe that each word, act, and look recorded in the Gospel, was put there for *me*—*me* individually, not for so and so, and so and so, but *me* personally—are we convinced that our Lord would do as much for each one of us as He did for them?

St. John, the virgin Apostle, saw our Lord first. Notice our Lord's way of making St. Peter do penance. He tried him in the very point in which

he had failed. Hitherto St. Peter had said : "*Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, yet not I.*" Now he appeals to our Lord as if fearful of relying on himself : "*Lord, Thou knowest all things : Thou knowest that I love Thee.*" St. Peter had learnt his lesson from that bitter fall. Now for a last lesson. Has the retreat prepared you for failure ? Nothing human can command success. It was by dint of failure our Lord gained His crown. He Who could have drawn the whole world to His feet, died scoffed at and insulted on a gibbet, despised by the people He taught, mocked at by those who had seen His miracles, abandoned by the very Apostles, the friends of His household, denied by their chief and betrayed by another. It is not success, but courage that is wanted. It is the looking up to our Lord after every fall and saying spontaneously, "Failed again ; I'll try again." This touches Him. He is conquered at last. Go then and labour for His interests, go in the spirit of self-abasement which makes you expect falls and gives you grace to rise after every failure. Thus may we hope that lasting good will come from this retreat. Adorn your resolution with the gem of gems, our *trust*—He will be trusted. Tell Him then to-morrow in Holy Communion that you trust Him, that you believe He loves *you*.

TRIDUUM.

(FOR THE PROMOTERS OF THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER.)

PREPARATORY MEDITATION.

WHAT is it that will make us good Promoters of the League of the Sacred Heart ?

The answer is to be the object of our meditation for three days.

Real Promoters must place the interests of our Lord before their own, and yet we are so mean, selfish, and cowardly, that we may often pass long years in the practices of devotion without ever finding out how self has been at the bottom, how little we have done, or tried to do for our Lord.

The first thing necessary for a Promoter of the Apostleship of Prayer is to have a *real desire* to be in friendship with God, and this may be done no matter how weak, cowardly, or even sinful we are, if the real desire of our heart's depths is, I *want* to be the friend of God, I *wish* I could be His friend.

There are three kinds of love : of desire, of benevolence, of friendship. We may desire God as the Infinite Goodness, Infinite Beauty, because He is so good, so beautiful, and we rejoice with Him. Friendship is more than this : the essence of friendship is to

give good things one to the other according to our capacity.

A true Promoter deliberately puts the interests of Jesus before his own ; his first and chief thought is, not what will be best for me, but what will best promote the interests and forward the wishes of my Lord.

1. Let us try and see ourselves in our own sinfulness, meanness, littleness ; let us look over our past lives in bitterness of soul, and then consider : *God* left His Heaven and took upon Him all my weakness, all my littleness—and wherefore? for me to enable Him to give *me* His riches, His strength, His glory ; and this deliberately, knowing and foreseeing what I am and what return I shall make Him.

2. God is *longing* to give me more and more of His riches, His joy, His love. What hinders Him ? Why am I after so many years still so cold, weak, and miserable ? Because an infinite God can only give me according to the capacity of my heart to receive His gifts ; because my pride and self-love place a barrier in His way ; because, though He longs with an infinite longing to give me more of Himself, He cannot, He dares not, knowing that my pride and self-love would turn His gifts to poison that would be fatal to me.

As long as these live and flourish in my heart, God cannot give Himself to me.

3. Let us think of the shame that accompanied every hour of my Lord's life, which He deliberately chose because He knew my sensitive self-love, my shrinking from the least touch of correction.

To enable our Lord to fill our hearts, and give us more and more of Himself, we must during these three days try as far as in us lies to deepen our hatred of our loathsome selves, and to increase our shame and self-contempt, to water our souls with the tears of abiding sorrow for past sins (for love not watered by tears of contrition soon dies), and to stamp out our self-love.

A good way to test our self-love is to examine ourselves well as to our feelings of *indignation*. A truly humble man cannot have a feeling of indignation. As soon as it begins to rise in his heart he says, "Is it possible; how can one so vile as I am dare to be indignant?"

FIRST DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Self-abjection.

Self-abjection is the first step to an act of perfect devotion to the interests of the Sacred Heart; an act which belongs to every vocation, an act which we ought all to make if we rightly understood what it is to be a creature.

"The end of the law is Christ."

1. Almighty God, so pure, so glorious, so powerful, so wonderful, vouchsafed to call *me* out of nothingness and to make me capable of knowing, adoring, loving Him in all His perfections for all eternity. I have never recognized my own nothingness, for if I had,

I could not have lived such a wicked, frivolous, and selfish life.

2. Our Lord left the splendour of His Father's glory, and took on Himself our created nature, that He might make it easier for me to understand my duty as a creature, and to love self-abjection.

He spent nine months in a perfect Apostolate of Prayer in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, offering to His Father that real, true, sincere offering of the recognition of the nothingness of His created nature ; and then He was born a babe in poverty.

Our Lord would have become Incarnate even if man had never fallen, in order to render the perfect homage of a creature to His Father.

Let us go to the Crib and contemplate our Lord there, and ask Him to enlighten us, to show us how pride is the root of all our sins, to show us our own littleness and nothingness, so that we may not fall into greater sins, which add black stains to that nothingness, and grieve His Sacred Heart.

3. He gave us the example that "*He might be the First-born amongst many brethren.*"

No matter how long we may have been leading a devout life, when the grace comes which enables us to conceive a sincere and holy hatred of ourselves and our loathsome pride, a distinct and great change is wrought in our souls ; the first step is taken towards becoming true friends of the Sacred Heart, and towards that solid peace which make the saints what they are on earth.

This, and this only, will make us peacefully contented with whatever God's Providence appoints for

us : failure, sickness, crosses, afflictions, nothing else will make us such that God will dare to give us success, and to let us do great things for Him.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Sorrow for Sin.

1. Our Lord is our Model in all things, even in contrition. It seems as if this could not be true, for He was perfectly sinless ; but yet it is true.

God loves truth and hates "*every one that loveth and maketh a lie.*" The half conscious errors or false opinions which we cherish in the depths of our hearts, and which we fear to bring to the light lest we should see their untruth, are displeasing to God.

God is true, and our Lord is a true Model of contrition for sin—sin not His own, but *ours*. Let us look at Him in the Garden, lying on the ground, bathed in blood from the excessive anguish of His sorrow for our sins. He felt all their loathsomeness, vileness, meanness, and enormity as much as, nay far more than any living man would feel, Who was closely wrapped in a winding-sheet torn from a putrid, decaying corpse, and pressed closely to Him with all its filth, and its sickening and noisome smell. He said to His Eternal Father : "These My brethren have done these things, and I am their Elder Brother, their Head, their Representative, and I groan and grieve and am ashamed for them as if I Myself had been found guilty of their sins." Without this abiding sorrow for sin, without the real, earnest love of shame,

no one can be a true Promoter of the interests of the Heart of Jesus.

2. Pride and contrition cannot dwell in the same heart. Pride is the root of all our sins, not only of those little meannesses, self-seekings, rash judgments, putting ourselves up above others—at least mentally, and the like, but also of the grosser sins; and we often fall into some open and grievous sin and oblige God to withdraw His grace, because our pride blinds us to its own presence and to the enormous amount of malice and capability for sin which exists in our hearts, even though we may never have the courage or energy of character to carry it out into action.

3. Let us look at St. Peter, one of the first Promoters of the Sacred Heart, as a model of contrition.

St. Peter was wholly devoted to the interests of His Master, and yet he was full of faults, nay sins, and no sooner had our Lord corrected one, than he fell into another at the opposite extreme.

Our Lord promised Him the power of the Keys, and an hour afterwards he was disputing with the other Apostles which should be the greater. He was always in extremes, as we see when our Lord washed the disciples' feet—he protested most strongly, even though His loving Master warned him of his weakness, that he would go forth with Him to prison, and to death, and an hour or two afterwards he forsook Him and fled. Nay more, he was our Lord's first ordained priest. Yet he apostatized the same day on which he made his First Communion.

This was St. Peter before he received the grace of true, abiding contrition.

But how different was he after our Lord with the tenderness of His Sacred Heart had cast that loving look on him, and true contrition had entered his soul—his tears furrowed his face, and he never let a day pass without weeping for his sins.

SECOND DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Good Desires.

1. We started with the idea that to be a true Promoter of the Sacred Heart is to be wholly devoted to the interests of Jesus, and that no one can be so who does not in the first place really wish to be the friend of God, and in the second place have a true, sincere, earnest, abiding sorrow for past sins. Now if these meditations have borne full fruit, our hearts would be purified from all those dispositions, which are the obstacles to kindling within us those burning desires our Lord so greatly longs to give us.

Desires, even if never put into action, are very pleasing to our Lord, give Him great glory, and prepare crowns for us.

In God's service *desires*, if it is not our own fault that we do not put them in practice, are gladly accepted by God, and it is well to remember this because we have so very little else we can give to God. Let us look again at our Model, the Heart of our Lord.

2. During the nine months in Mary's womb,

during the Flight into Egypt, the seven years' exile, the twenty or more years at Nazareth, what was He doing? Was he not all the time honouring and glorifying God by His desires as well when He was bound in swaddling-clothes, or before He was born into the world, as when He was working miracles?

And we must be on our guard against the pride and false ideas which make us say either, "I have no good desires," or "Such high desires are not for me; only saints wish such things."

This is indeed false humility: if we are so poor, and really have nothing else to give to God, let us at least offer Him our good desires. He will accept and value them.

3. Nay more, God is longing to put these good desires into our hearts if we will only clear away the obstacles. Just as in His life on earth the longing for souls who would help Him, and the longing to do more for His Father's glory, seemed to flash out as it were from time to time, as when He said: "*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work.*"

Again, "*See the countries, for they are white already to harvest,*" and again, "*I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled.*" Let us answer in our hearts His touching cry.

SECOND MEDITATION.

True Zeal.

We have followed the Exercises of St. Ignatius almost without knowing it, and we come almost

without knowing it to the "Kingdom of Christ," to consider those who wish to *distinguish* themselves in the service of their Divine Master. But this zeal must be "according to knowledge," and not that false, presumptuous zeal which prompts people to spend themselves most freely for the salvation of others, while they forget the need of their own poor souls ; and so when the nut seems most ripe, it suddenly breaks, and nought but worms and dust is found within. Here again let us take the Sacred Heart of our Divine Lord as our Model.

1. *His ascetic preparation.*

Our Lord was God, His Manhood indissolubly united to the Divinity, yet He gave us an example how we should prepare ourselves before rendering our worship to God ; and thus we see how even when He was busiest doing good and exercising miraculous gifts of healing, He passed whole nights in prayer, how He sent His Apostles away that He might pray alone, how He humbled Himself publicly before beginning to preach, by presenting Himself for the baptism of penance.

And then behold the *great* preparation for the *great Act* of Mercy.

Before He instituted the Holy Eucharist, St. John says, "*Before the festival-day of the Pasch, Jesus knowing that His hour was come, that He should pass out of this world to the Father : having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end. And when supper was done (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him), knowing that the Father had*

given Him all things into His hands, and that He came from God, and goeth to God, He riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments, and having taken a towel, girded Himself. After that He putteth water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of His disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded”—even those of Judas the traitor.

2. *The Apostolic preparation.*

Observe how our Lord took thought for each individual soul who came near Him, how He adapted His treatment to the need of each. To Zaccheus He said, “*Make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house,*” and how gladly did Zaccheus welcome Him; to the Centurion He said—

“*I will come and heal him,*” and the Centurion answered, “*Lord, I am not worthy.*”

To Magdalen He said no word of reproach, but took her part, saying, “*I say to thee, many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much.*”

How even for the woman taken in adultery He had no reproach, and when He had made her accusers slink away ashamed, He only said to her, “*Neither will I condemn thee, go, and now sin no more.*”

3. Yet for the woman of Canaan, who came to Him, poor thing, to tell Him her daughter was possessed with an unclean spirit, He had only hard words—“*I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel. It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs*”—until at last her self-humiliation and perseverance drew from Him those magnificent words of praise, “*O woman, great is thy faith.*”

In all this our dear Lord is a wonderful example to Promoters, showing them the careful preparation and industry they should use before going to speak to others of the interests of the Sacred Heart.

THIRD DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Charity.

1. Let us now see what charity is according to St. Paul's description.

"Charity is patient, is kind."

We must be patient first with ourselves, or we shall never acquire that habitual calmness which is the mark of true sanctity. There are three things that most molest our peace.

(a) Our distractions. We want to pray, and our self-love is hurt to find we pray so badly. Well, it is impossible to prevent distractions, and God knows we cannot help them.

(b) Suggestions. And these are worse, whether they proceed from the devil or from our own corrupt nature, there is such a cloud of them always buzzing about ; vanity, vainglory, envy, jealousy, spite, aversion, greediness, and the like, and we have to see how loathsome we are ; but we must remember that we can only offend God by our will, and suggestions not yielded to do not injure the interests of the Heart of Jesus, and we must have patience with them.

(c) Our own inconsistency. We need not dwell

on this, we all know it so well by experience, and our need of patience with it.

2. We must have patience with others ; patience with their whims, their fancies, their humours, and not a dry hard patience, but a kind, loving one, never showing we are bored, never listening with a suppressed yawn, but entering heartily into their joys and sorrows, even into the humour of the moment. To be a good listener will be a test of our patient charity.

3. "*Charity is kind*," not only patient, but industrious, ingenious in finding ways to give pleasure, little acts of kindness, if only the shutting of a door, kindness to all alike, not only to those we like, or feel gratitude to, but to all with whom we come in contact ; and this will give us power over the hearts of others, power to influence them for good which we may laudably wish to obtain.

SECOND MEDITATION.

• *Our Morning Offering.*

1. Much of the Promoter's success will depend on the reality of the Morning Oblation ; it ought to be so earnestly meant, so often repeated, that it becomes part of our daily lives.

Our Lord came from the Tabernacle to tell Blessed Margaret Mary that His Heart was so pained by the neglect and ingratitude of men, that it would be less pain to Him to be born again into the world, and go through His Passion over again.

2. Our Lord asked specially for reparation, and for Communions of Reparation, and these we can give Him, and the more the thought of reparation grows in our hearts and lives, the better our Communions will be. *True* love cannot see the suffering of the object loved without longing to comfort and console; cannot see the loved one suffering shame without longing to give honour: in one word, to make reparation.

3. It is of little use merely to put down names for the Apostleship; but if you can make one person really understand the meaning of the oblation, and that we truly do a work for God and render our Lord's Apostolate in the Tabernacle more efficacious by offering our prayers, work, and sufferings in union with His, you have done a real work for God.

LAST MEDITATION.

The Communion of Reparation.

1. From the Promoters of the League of the Sacred Heart of Jesus must go out the zeal and fervour which is to reach the farthest ends of the English-speaking world.

Do you really understand what the Communion of Reparation means?

People may go to Holy Communion for many years, and make good Communions too, and yet have no real personal love for our Lord. They go by custom, and do not realize that in the Tabernacle lives God the Judge of Heaven and earth, but also

Man, with a true, loving, human Heart, longing to be loved, longing for us to take part in His joys, to rejoice in His triumphs, to grieve with His sorrows, to be indignant when He is insulted.

Do you know what reparation means? If your father or mother, or some one you love dearly, had been insulted, or cruelly treated, would you not naturally try to be kinder than usual, showing them more attention, and rendering them extra service, to make up for what they had suffered from others?

2. This is what our Lord asks from you. To go to Holy Communion to show your personal love of Him, to tell him you are sorry that He is so grieved and so insulted by sinners, to rejoice in the love of His friends.

These Communions of Atonement, or Reparation, give Him far more glory than many Communions made solely from duty, or because you have undertaken to go on such or such a day.

We should none of us have dared to think we could make reparation, if our Lord Himself had not revealed His desire. If He had not said, "I know you are poor and miserable, an abyss of miseries; but still despite all this I long so for love, I am willing to accept your desire to console Me, to make amends for your own sins and those of others. I find pleasure in it and it glorifies Me!" If our dear Lord had made this appeal only to the good, who would dare to say they were good enough? But He asks it of us, of you, all poor and miserable and unworthy as you are; and what sort of humility would that be which should reply to our Lord,

“ Oh yes, Thou art very good to say so, but I cannot make up my mind to believe Thee.”

3. The gratitude of man is so small a thing, even if it last a lifetime, which it seldom does.

The gratitude of the Sacred Heart is the gratitude of God, that is something. He accepts our little services so humbly, so gratefully, so unforgetfully. Whatever is done out of love and with a pure intention always bears fruit. It may not be of a kind visible to this world, but it surely does its work springing up into life eternal.

TRIDUUM.

(GIVEN TO PUPIL TEACHERS.)

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

How to make a good Retreat.

EVERY one, whether quite young, or older and holier, receives a special grace during retreat—for God adapts His graces to the moment in which He gives them. It will not do to say, "I will be better later on," and so waste time now, because the peculiar grace God has prepared for each during these three days will *never* be given if lost now. Some are in anguish when a retreat is over, and think they have thrown away God's grace, but if they keep the printed rules which I will give each of you,¹ they can be perfectly sure they have *not* made a bad, but a good retreat. All God asks of you is to make two sincere examens each day, not on your sins, but on how you keep the rules. Listening to the meditations, trying afterwards to change your life by them, is a part of the retreat, but only a little part, the great thing is to give God a chance.

During retreat we must be with ourselves and nobody else, which means we must talk to no one,

¹ The "Additions" from the Spiritual Exercises.

nor wish to talk with them, we must look at no one, nor wish to look at them—we must live alone with God. This seems hard to young people ; but by the middle of the first day they will begin to find pleasure in it, for God will speak to them. We can shut out God by wilfully closing our eyes and refusing to do what He wants, or else we can miss His graces by giddiness. Now if we keep these rules, marking down at the back of the paper twice each day how many times we have failed, and sincerely determining to do better from one examen to another, we may be certain when, at the end of each day, night comes, that we have done what God requires of us. God's hour is not the same for all. Some will enter and leave retreat not feeling much changed ; but all the same, no one makes a good retreat without gaining graces which will last her all her life, and make her place in Heaven higher than it otherwise would have been. During to-morrow's meditation, which I hope you will make before Mass, you could not do better than think over the following words, which perhaps you have heard before : " God wants me to make this retreat." Take each word and dwell on it ; *God*, that is, my Master, my Creator, my Lord. So that if I do not do my best during these next three days, I am not going against the Sisters, or the Father, but against *God*. *Wants*, namely, that God has certain special graces destined for me, and He *wishes* me to be ready to have them planted in my heart. *Me*, God does not want us wholesale. It is not as if the Superior said, " Let the teachers make a retreat." No, with God it is personal affection for each one. Some who

expected a month ago to be here, are absent. God never meant them to make it. Others have come in at the last moment. God knew and chose them for it all along. *To make it*, namely, to gain from it what He designs to bestow ; and this you will certainly obtain, if you do what I have told you about marking the printed paper which each one shall have for herself.

HOLY THURSDAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Why did God create us ?

1. God created each one of us for a certain fixed purpose called our *last end*. If we lose that, all is lost—better for us, as the Office for to-day is constantly repeating about Judas, that we had never been born. If we gain it, all is gained ; hence the supreme importance of attaining to that end. It is as necessary for the young, as for the old. Each one for himself. If I save my soul, all is right ; if not, woe betide me ; and nobody can do it for me, it must be myself. Have I ever thought about what my Creator is to me, and what I am to my Creator ; life would be easy if this were always in my mind. Did God want me when He made me, as an old person might want a servant ? No, God cannot grow old. The Three Divine Persons, loving each other from all eternity, were infinitely happy in their self-existence. Did God make creatures that He might gain glory from them ? No, for God's glory in Himself is so

immeasurably immense, that the external glory He gains from their praises adds nothing to it.

Why then did God make man?

Because He knew He could make beings who would be capable of sharing His happiness, and this disposition of goodness and kindness made Him create souls and spirits to enjoy Him for ever. God is eternal, God is unchangeable. He loves us now as He loved us when He conceived us in His mind in the long ages of eternity.

He gives to each qualities, capabilities, talents, different graces to produce different merits, the basis of our reward in His Kingdom; He gives to each one a certain place in His Heart, a certain share in His love, a certain degree of happiness.

3. Heaven is yours, it was placed in your baby hand when the waters of Baptism were poured on your forehead; you can throw it away yourself, but no one can take it from you. In Heaven one of the greatest joys is the power of saying, "I of my own free-will chose God," and revelling in love each adds: "Oh, happy me, who chose my God."

God does not reward for the quantity of work we do. Heaven is given to those who choose it, and to those whom God chooses, as for instance, to the baptized infants who die before they have attained the use of reason. God made me out of His kindness that I might enjoy Heaven. Do not allow His merciful designs to be frustrated. We can say then, God loves me, and God will love me with as much love as long as I am in the world.

CONSIDERATION.

On Prayer.

We cannot pray unless we know God, feel that He is thinking about us, feels for us, loves us. Then we can speak to Him "without tediousness," as Holy Scripture says. Some girls read from prayer-books and know no more of what they are saying than if they were talking Chinese. Again, sometimes a girl with a trouble, or a temptation, will come into the presence of our Lord, and pouring out her trouble, or asking for strength, she will really pray for five minutes, then remembering herself she will say, "Dear me, I have not said my prayers," and there-upon commences a wooden, unmeaning recital of prayers which takes away all devotion, and stops the channel of communication between herself and God. The second of those printed rules you have, tells us to avoid distractions when we wake in the morning. God is jealous of our first thoughts, and the devil generally manages to make the first thoughts gloomy ones; we are commonly in the dumps till breakfast, when our spirits get up. Anything done for others has a particular attraction for God. It is done for Him and for Him alone, and He values it. Now every one likes to be thought pious—it is a pretty thing to say "she is a pious girl," and she is praised for walking into the chapel and looking holy. But one who has shut out distracting thoughts from the moment of rising to her entrance into chapel, has pleased God, and there is no fear of vanity, for no praise will come to her for doing that.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Our Work in life.

1. We have been speaking of the end of man, now let us consider your end: that of a pupil teacher. You know that I set great value on your work. The sight of a pupil teacher brings to me a feeling of responsibility, she can do so much if she is among the "very good" class.

Some are very good, and others are, I won't say *bad*, oh, no, that would not do at all; but "not so good." Our difficulty in doing good to young people is because they lead an aimless life, they yawn, and think what they shall do next to fill up the day. Now to you God has given an inappreciable blessing, something definite to do, and not only this, but He has called you to do the highest possible work. The world cannot understand it, but it is great to the eyes of faith, great before the angels, great in the Church, and great in the eyes of God Himself. Pupil teachers who love God, who feel that God is their Father, that He is watching over them, taking care of them, loving them, have a way of, without words, putting those feelings into the hearts of the children they teach.

If you have planted this truth in the heart of a child before it leaves your care, you have won nine-tenths of its salvation, she has a gleam of sunshine in her life which will never leave her all through her days, and which will shine out brightest on her death-bed.

2. In one sense God has need of pupil teachers to do His work for Him.

Of course He could do for each child in the school what He did for St. Paul, who when thrown from his horse had truth revealed to him in a marvellous manner; but this is not the ordinary way of God's Providence. He has made us dependent one on the other. We have it in our power to help to save souls by corresponding generously to our Lord's call as St. Francis Xavier did—in this case not one but many many souls will go to Heaven with us. On the other hand, we can turn our backs on God; in that case the most probable thing is, we shall be the means of losing as many as we otherwise should have saved. Look at Luther and his splendid talents; he could have been an apostle had he chosen, but he broke his vows, and by his heretical teaching and example of his bad life, he led millions towards Hell.

3. We have spoken of the first class of pupil teachers: those who understand that God did something great for them, when He chose them to be co-operators in the saving of souls, who value and appreciate this vocation and carry it out to the best of their ability.

The next class are those who turn away from the call altogether. There is still a third class; these say yes, but they might as well say no—they put no heart in their work, do not value it—No. 1 is always put forward; how much can they get—how little can they do? that is all they think about. Such as these do not do God's work, and cannot

feel the peace which comes to those who work for Him. Last year a gentleman of this town asked me, who were the girls with "happy faces" whom he saw passing backwards and forwards each day? It turned out he meant the pupil teachers, and it is well known in the town, that the pupil teachers are the most cheerful and contented looking of any set. How comes this—for after all, teaching all day and studying all the evening would not be supposed the pleasantest life possible? It is because they have understood the call. They know without ever putting it into words that they are working for God, and happiness not of this world, but deep and unearthly, is their portion.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The other side.

1. Sin is the other side of the medal.

God's love, and mercy, and tender compassion are in the front. Turn it over and we have our past—sin. When I spoke of Heaven, I said we have to choose it, therefore we had free-will given us; we are free therefore to choose either good or bad—if we choose the latter, it is sin.

Sin covers the soul with infamy and disgrace. Imagine what would be your shame, if you were publicly convicted of some sin you believed to be unknown—a crime against the law of God and man, and, in the sight of all your friends, dragged off shrieking by the police to jail, and then condemned to penal servitude for life. These are the feelings

you will have if you die with one mortal sin. But some people do not feel this—they cannot grasp what sin is. They will remain in sin until Guild Sunday comes round, and never feel the want of speedy confession to have it forgiven.

If they are asked, Did you know you committed a mortal sin? they will answer, Yes; Did you know you became God's enemy? Yes—so it is not ignorance, it is downright indifference. And these are good girls, girls who can go on from one month to another without committing mortal sin, because no temptation comes—but when they fall into sin, there they remain perfectly unconscious of their dreadful state, and never think of getting out of it a day sooner than Guild Sunday.

I grieve over this insensibility more than I can tell you. These souls are running a greater risk than those who with far greater temptations fall oftener into sin, but think more about it, and try to get out of it quickly.

2. Again, girls will not only commit sin, but take up a habit of it after years of regular monthly sacraments and sincere confessions. Whence comes this density, this stupidity about the malice of mortal sin? It lies in the unmeaning prayers I spoke about this morning, never realizing prayer is speaking to God. After three minutes of thanksgiving after Holy Communion, these people don't know what to do; so the graces that are the fruit of the sacraments are lost, and the soul of a regular communicant actually becomes void of strength.

The second effect of sin is to insult God. And

though God is all mercy and love now, when death comes we must meet His justice, and what an amount of bitter bitter shame, and bitter bitter punishment must be endured before this is expiated. For the confessions these people make with just enough sorrow to render absolution valid remove no punishment, all is left for the future.

3. Sin deserves Hell ; they know it, but hope they will not die ; they think they will not, and so they go on quietly in this dreadful state. Think of the sin of the angels, they sinned once—they were so beautiful, so perfect, so mighty, so powerful, so grand, that they thought they could do without God. They were as much bound to serve Him as the meanest creature, for He was their Creator ; but they forgot His rights in their elevation of self, and so they fell. In an instant they became the black, hideous beings they will ever remain. The sight of one, the shriek, the stench of one, would freeze your blood, would kill you. This is what sin did for them.

GOOD FRIDAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

True Sorrow.

I. What will reconcile us with penance? Only this, when we can get into our heads that sin is a thing for which we can never be sorry enough. It is not Catholic teaching that a sin properly confessed and absolved is done with for ever ; as I

told you last night, sin, even *forgiven sin*, must be atoned for; one wilful mortal sin is enough to make us sorry for life. There is no safety for the time to come unless we keep up our sorrow for past sins. When the many steps and wanderings of our lives are over, and we reach the one gate by which we all must pass at the end, the narrow portal of death, and after this the straight road which leads us direct to Him Who will judge us, when we kneel at His feet for our eternal sentence, how glad we shall be if we have tried to spend this day in a spirit of penance, and in making the best act of contrition we can! It is no use hiding the truth from our eyes, like the silly ostrich burying its head in the sand, and then because its own eyes are closed fancying the hunter cannot find it.

2. In the Mass for the Dead, the words are used, "*their works follow them.*" Let us look at our sins as our works, and now see them as we shall see them when God's eyes are examining them with us. This very morning we have commemorated the painful Death of our Lord on the Cross.

What did He think of sin, when He would give His own life to atone for one mortal sin, He the Eternal Wisdom of God. It is almost impossible to attain great sorrow without great industry.

One of the most valuable lessons in the spiritual life, and none are too young to learn it, is that cheerfulness depends in great measure upon keeping a spirit of real sorrow within the heart. If any one is in the dumps, the best cure is to gather her sins together, that will make her afraid, and the sorrow

this will produce will banish melancholy. Every fresh act of contrition brings a fresh ray of light and sunshine into our souls. But this kind of contrition means the sorrow which comes from a heart recognizing it has greatly offended God. Selfish sorrow has not the same joy-inspiring effect. Some people never pray for the grace to be very sorry. Ask yourselves, Have I ever asked for it?

3. And I have offended God Who is so great, and I am so small and insignificant; and for the sake of what did I offend Him? Is there anything left of it now? If there be, so much the worse; we never could have had true sorrow for sin if we enjoy still the advantage of it. The devil gets great hold on those in sin. It is like tearing their hearts out to give up their unlawful possession. Let each one try to do to-day, what she would be glad to have done at the hour of her death. Every tear is now of value, every act of contrition now worth gold. The time is at hand when all we can do will avail nothing. Let us be wise and make good use of the present moment.

CONSIDERATION.

Piety and Modesty.

Modesty and piety are two beautiful virtues of which I shall now speak. We ought to look on these two gifts not merely as jewels with which to adorn ourselves, but as tools in our hands with which to do God's work. We must ask our Lady to obtain them for us; we could scarcely expect to gain such gifts except through her. People, even good people in the

world, associate piety with extravagance, and think there is something ridiculous about it. Nevertheless, piety is a gift of the Holy Ghost which He bestows on certain souls and not on all ; on some because He pleases, and on some because they ask for it. By this gift all the practices of religion become easy and pleasurable ; we like hearing Mass, we are glad to say our beads, and never forget them. I do not say piety is in itself a great help to virtue. Piety helps to reality in our prayer. It makes us look at God as one Who loves us, and we are glad to speak to Him and pay Him homage. It is filial affection towards God, recognizing Him not as an ogre, but as our Father. For no one is it more important to feel, that which she desires others to feel, than for a pupil teacher. If you are able to make your children solidly pious, then indeed you have done a good work.

There are *three* kinds of piety : *sham* or false piety—we don't want any of that ; *indiscreet* piety that sticks its devotion right in front of everybody's pleasure. We must remember that when we give up a devotion to practise a kindness, we have not given up a good work, but replaced it by another. Even God is always perfectly willing to be put aside when kindness to our neighbour is in question. *Solid* piety is what I recommend to your prayers. Wish to be pious, for if God sees we earnestly wish for a grace it is at once an appeal to His Heart to grant it. Modesty is a virtue still more important for you to possess than piety. I am not speaking of it as opposite to what is vile, but as a grace from our Lady, which makes us very very strong, a grace that

enables a creature to act as a creature should act. Let us ask ourselves do we love it?

Do we wish for it? It can adorn both a Christian man and a Christian woman; but the want of it exposes a woman to greater temptations than a man. A girl who always clings tenaciously and lovingly to her modesty, is for that alone always respected. Modesty shows humility, self-respect, and dignity at the same time, and has a certain reserve even with most intimate friends. Sometimes a girl has a free manner, thinking it will make her liked and thought more amiable, but she always loses esteem and never gains any one's good opinion.

A modest girl can enjoy herself and make fun, but she knows when and where to draw the line, and beyond that her fun will not go. Modesty helps us to patience and makes all who listen to us respect us. Ecclesiasticus says the dress, the smile, the manner show the character; and children are quick enough in finding out character.

Modesty is a peculiar gift of our Lady, which she loves to bestow upon those who love her and have a claim on her. Don't forget, then, modesty and piety first are jewels for ourselves, and then a sword with which we fight.

SECOND MEDITATION.

How Sin is punished.

1. The effect of the meditation on Sin is to cause us to be ashamed of ourselves for the disgrace that sin brings upon us. This is good for us. No one is

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ever much troubled with distractions or temptations if they insist on humbling themselves when entering the chapel.

True sorrow which springs from shame is sorrow not for my own sake, but for our Lord's, because He has received pain from my hands.

Those who are willing and able to accept the shame for themselves can then give all their sorrow to God. You commit a sin, how humiliating ; you can say at any rate I will take that for myself : but I am sorry for the fault because I pained our Lord.

2. The last meditation should cause a sorrow springing from a sense of our ingratitude. But the meditation on Hell has its peculiar value. It teaches us its own plain lesson, that God, Who has loved us, and followed us throughout our lives trying to benefit us, Whose Heart has ached for our salvation, Who would die again for us if it were needed, that He calmly and deliberately condemns the soul to a place of everlasting torments, if at the moment of death that soul stands before Him laden with the guilt of mortal sin ; and one sin is enough for this penalty.

3. Hell is a place prepared, not for us, but for the devils. Let us make an act of faith in the reality of this place, beneath our feet, where souls whom we may have known and who refused Heaven during life, are now in burning fire. When we are called to our account, these souls will be burning still, and when the babies of to-day are old men and women, burning still. When the Archangel comes with his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the earth, declaring that time shall be no

more, when God has gathered His elect to His Heavenly Kingdom, after millions of ages, these souls will be still burning.

If a new world were created to last as long as this, and if world after world were created and millions of ages had passed, these souls would be burning still: and consider, further, their eternity is but beginning; each moment of intolerable pain begins an eternity for them, and all this happens because they chose it for themselves. No soul is in Hell unless it has chosen to go there.

It refused to turn to God, and Hell is its doom. You can if you please think of the details about Hell, but it seems to me that this thought is enough.

What is your resolution to be?

To avoid sin at any cost and never to pass a night in a state of sin. Say with St. Austin, "*Here, O Lord, cut and burn as Thou wilt, only spare me in eternity.*"

THIRD MEDITATION.

Our Resolutions.

The Father began by saying he would grant an extra Communion for the next day, and he went on to say:

Let your next Communion be one of Reparation, to make up to our dear Lord for all the pain you have ever caused Him by your sins; say to Him:

"I wish to make this Communion, not for myself, but for Thee; and as it is to be all for Thee, I want

to make it better than any Communion I have ever made in my life, and with the love of our Lady when St. John said Mass and communicated her, with the love of St. Mary Magdalen, the love of St. Teresa, or any of the Saints who most loved our Lord's Sacred Heart: this is to be my Communion of Reparation."

1. For to-morrow's meditation recall the one on why did God create us, or rather upon our work in life. Let us look at our Lord on this day, the anniversary of the day on which He died. He speaks by the fresh Wounds just received for our sakes.

What does He say? He invites you to follow Him—to imitate His obedience, His patience, but most of all His self-denial. He tells you to look on the souls of the little ones for whom He has shed His Blood, but who notwithstanding will be lost if you do not come forward to help Him to save them.

2. He tells you whatever you have to suffer you will always find if you will only look, that He has suffered it first for you, and that while suffering it He thought of you, and this will help you when the hour of suffering comes. Thus He was always thinking of you. Now He asks you what will you do, will you stick to Him and go through the drudgery of teaching for His sake?

3. What will you answer Him? Get it ready, and when He comes in Holy Communion say it to Him as we say a prayer to gain an Indulgence, with *heart and lips*. If it is only middling, say it

—be plain—that is the best thing ; if it is your best, say it.

And remember that among all the hearts of men, not one can be found as grateful as the Heart of Jesus for the least service we render Him—the least little thing we do for His sake.

Your souls are those into which God will pour any amount of graces ; those who go to Him with large pitchers get the most, those who go with small ones carry away but a small quantity.

HOLY SATURDAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

What God asks.

1. Now you have made your offering to our Lord, and told Him that you will follow Him closely, let us see what work He will give you to do.

Many begin this kind of life without very high aspirations ; one teaches A, and then C, and so on ; it is only as she proceeds that the truth unravels itself to her mind, and she sees the wonderful love and marvellous condescension of God in calling her to this work.

He has promised in Holy Scripture a reward for a cup of cold water given in His Name, and water costs nothing, requires no trouble in getting it, and is but to satisfy a passing bodily want. What then will not our Lord give as a reward to those who pour, not ordinary water, but the living waters

of eternal life into the living souls of His children, and who in ministering thus to them have to labour hard, and gain little or no praise or consideration from the world—to mortify their natural inclinations continually, in fact to crucify themselves.

2. He promises, "*As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me.*"

And many a teacher by her patience and gentleness, her cheerfulness and modesty, works upon her children's minds and is helping our Lord effectually to save souls. Let us consider our Lady and St. Joseph in one of the mysteries of their lives—say the birth of our Lord in the stable, and we may be struck with the resemblance between this event and a teacher's life.

Our Lady and St. Joseph were not considered as Religious, they wore no special dress which would command respect and proclaim their pre-eminence; yet they were the purest and holiest of all God's creatures.

3. How inconvenient was the order to go to Bethlehem at that special time, and yet it had to be obeyed.

It was the Government that caused the trouble, and in our days Government causes pupil teachers many a push, and many a struggle by its commands. But we have our new code—our Lady had hers also.

She gave herself to God, and did not expect much wages in this life. We can copy her in this, as well as in all the rest of her life and virtues.

CONSIDERATION.

Your Formation.

I generally spend the last consideration in telling pupil teachers what I think about them.

Though there is much good in you, there is not half as much as there should be, nor as I should like to see. There is a want of go about you which is very striking. Whether it is that the Sisters are too easy with you, which I charitably suspect is the case, or whether you have wearied them out and now they leave you alone, your own consciences will tell.

You are here to be formed, and your whole life depends upon how this formation goes on.

Formation means training, correcting. A pupil teacher who understands her vocation is grateful for correction.

At first she pulls down what she builds up, by her faults, which take away from the children the impression her lessons would give. After some time she sees this truth, that whatever faults she does not correct in her apprenticeship will remain with her through life, and prevent her from doing the good God expects from her. It is a great responsibility to have the training of a pupil teacher, and woe betide the Sister who leaves this duty on one side, either through indulgence, or for peace sake, or to avoid the answering back she well knows will follow correction. But if it is entirely the teacher's fault, then she will have to answer for neglecting to fit herself for the duties of the state of life to which God has called her; she remains half-baked all her

life. The next great weakness among you is human respect. The older girls should take the lead in giving a high tone ; they should aim high, for the younger invariably follow them. When a vulgar expression is used they should put it down, and not allow anything of the sort to creep in and become general.

Still more so where there is a question of sin. Prattlers are detestable—no girl is appointed policeman over the others, but when she cannot stop sin by her own authority, charity obliges her to make known what is going on to Superiors, that they may interfere for the general good.

Lastly, I have tried to teach you before the meanness of making excuses ; and the worst of this habit is that it often leads to untruthfulness.

The temptation comes to tell a lie to escape a scolding or punishment. But a lie pains our Lord : “I don’t mind that : I will thrust the pain on our Lord to get out of it myself.”

I don’t think any girl who has made the retreat will after this ever be so mean and cruel as to tell a lie.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The first Holy Saturday.

I. We must keep in mind, even amidst the Church’s appearance of joy, the real spirit and remembrance of what happened on this day.

Let us look at these mourners one by one in the city of Jerusalem, and see their feelings on this day after our Lord was crucified.

There was our broken-hearted Lady, and St. John standing near her, pouring out the true affection of a son over her. Could she forget the scenes of the preceding day, the quivering of His sacred Flesh, the drops of Blood, that ran drop by drop from His veins, the death-struggle, and the agony of seeing Him die.

St. John was the happiest of the Apostles, for though he yielded to temptation at the commencement of the Passion, he had by his constant and special care of our Lady won the grace of being found by her at the foot of the Cross.

2. St. Peter we must contemplate in his bitter remorse and shame, and St. Mary Magdalen, who learnt to know the greatness of her sins at His crucified feet on Calvary, and who obtains the same grace for those who ask it of her. What is she thinking of on Holy Saturday? she goes in spirit to the Garden of Olives and sees our Lord dragged from thence by rude soldiers, hearing the insults of a mob and of a brutal band of soldiers without feeling, without compassion; she sees Him standing before Herod with the finger of scorn pointed at Him, and she thinks of the time when by her sins she treated Him with the same contempt.

By Pilate's order He was scourged till the very bones were laid bare, and she knows that He is suffering this for sins of impurity of which perhaps she has been guilty.

Sins of the flesh were expiated by our Lord's wounds in His Flesh. We should dread this class of sins, not only for the dreadful disgrace they bring on

the soul, but also for the insensibility into which they plunge it. A sensual man becomes at once selfish and hard-hearted ; he cannot understand, he cannot feel what our Lord went through, and he is perfectly insensible to his own state of damnation : momentary gratification is all that he considers, and that obtained he thinks of nothing else.

3. She sees our Lord's crowning with thorns—He suffered this to atone for our sins of pride. When we refuse to bear correction, we are beating down the thorns into His Head ; when He took up the long heavy Cross and carried it to Calvary until He fell, it was to purchase for us the graces we need to bear our crosses well—to be cheerful and happy in the midst of labours, and annoyances, and mortifications which we have resolved to go through for Him.

Calvary is reached and Magdalen kneels at the foot of the Cross, there to bewail her sins with shame and sorrow, and to know in the burning heat of her ardent love what her God is doing for her.

Here she obtained both for herself, and those who ask it of her, the grace of true shame, distrust of self, and trust in God. This is why those who ever offended God love Magdalen so much, and find such a powerful help in her intercession.

LAST MEDITATION.

Behold thy Mother.

1. One of the sweetest graces our Lord gave us was at the very close of His life when, in the person of St. John, He made Mary our Mother. What has

she not done for us? She has loved us, taken joy in our interest in our work, and from our birth she has had her arm round us. What have we done for her? Well, I hope we can all look up with a straight face to her, and say sincerely: Yes, I have done something for her in my life; I have always been glad to do or say anything that could promote her honour. Still, with all this, we have many times given her pain. But there is this about wrongs done to Mary: we may have pained her, but we have never made her angry. God made her without anger.

She is a reproduction of His kindness, His mercy, His love, His compassion, but not of His justice.

Even with the cruel executioners she was not angry. When we do things that would make another mother angry, the pain we give her only makes her turn her eyes in pity to Him with a prayer for us. Now, as she is never angry, never resents our injuries, it is a deeper motive of shame and sorrow for us if we have dishonoured her by our thoughts, words, or actions; that is, if our heart is in the right place.

2. St. Bernard calls her the prayerfully omnipotent, that is, because God never refuses the prayer she makes.

What an inducement this is for you to go to your work with courage. If you can succeed in making one child love her more, if you can teach that child to trust her, to lean on her, have recourse to her, to go to her, what a great thing you have done!

A soul that loves Mary will love chastity, and modesty its guardian; it will lead a holy life and die a happy death.

How great must be the power of Mary when she seems to use her omnipotence even in turning the free-will of man. If not, how could she make this promise, that those who die wearing her scapular shall never see eternal fire.

If she had not in her hands the means of changing hearts she would never have promised this ; the grace of salvation means dying with contrition.

God will do anything to save a soul that loves His Mother, or that has loved her.

Ask her to get you the grace never to do anything unworthy of your high calling. Never degenerate from the high thoughts of the children of God.

INSTRUCTIONS.

A First Communion Day.

I am only going to say a few words to you, my dear children, and I shall not keep you long. I know you so well, that I am sure that you have made your First Communion sincerely. I have seen a great many First Communions, some very grand ; but I have not been so pleased as to-day. I have remarked a quiet earnestness about you in approaching to receive the Body of our Lord, a calm knowledge of what you were going to do, which has pleased me very much. Well, now I want to warn you against two things ; the first is this : you must not be disturbed at the absence of that sensible devotion which you may wish to have ; you must not feel uneasy, if your desires are not so ardent as you expected. The man inspired by God—David—says, “*I have desired to*

desire." There at least you are sure, and this is all that God requires of you, the desire of desiring.

Certainly sensible devotion is a very good thing, and a great help to the love of God, but we have seen some of the saints, the friends of God, deprived of it, so you must not be uneasy if you have not this gift ; if you desire it, you are just as pleasing to the Sacred Heart. The second thing I want to tell you is, not to be afraid of our Lord. When you are unhappy, He is always ready to listen to your trouble ; He is always ready to pardon you when you have done wrong, if you come and kneel before Him, and tell Him you are sorry, and ask Him to forgive you. He is always ready to grant your requests ; finally, if you come to Him, you are sure to find what you want. The true lovers of our Lord are never afraid of Him ; they always try to please Him, to be good. You must be good when there is no one but God to see you ; then you will never be afraid of Him. We read how a long time ago, when the Apostles were in a boat on the Lake Tiberias, a storm came on, and the Apostles feared lest they should be shipwrecked, and Jesus walking on the waves came and touched them and said, "*It is I, fear ye not.*" These are the very words told us in the Gospel. He wishes then that such should be our confidence in Him, that immediately we know it is He, we should cease to fear ; it is enough to know that, and we may feel ourselves secure. Remember then, that the day of your First Communion is not a day to come, and be afterwards forgotten, but it is the beginning of a love and a friendship with our Lord which is to last for ever.

To Penitents of the Good Shepherd.

Now I am going to speak about something I know will offend some of you—and shall quite expect some of you to come and grumble at me; but I am quite used to people getting into passions with me. Now, as “consecrated” Penitents, you have no right to have anything of your own, or to love anything for its own sake. You cannot do your work amongst the others if you are fettered and tied down by an attachment to anything.

Again, the moment you get attached to anything and consider it as your own, you fall, without perceiving it almost, into innumerable faults.

I used to go and see an old woman in the workhouse at Liverpool, and she had a great attachment to a certain arm-chair. It was a dirty old thing, and yet she would not let any one use, or even dust it, but herself. She was one of the oldest in the workhouse, and therefore considered she had a right to it.

The people of the house knew her dread of losing the arm-chair, and whenever she misbehaved herself they used to cure her by saying, “Well, you know if you behave like this, we shall have to take away your arm-chair,” and this was quite enough for her; she would declare she would die if they took it away.

Now there was another old woman nearly as old as herself, and she was always in a state of misery for fear the chair should be given to this other old woman. She was a good, simple old creature, and used to tell me candidly all she went through in her mind over

this attachment. She told me she would sit for hours watching this other old woman, and thinking to herself: "Oh! would you not like to have this arm-chair? I am sure you are always longing for it—don't you wish me dead that you might get it?"

When she went away for a time she was in an agony to get back, for fear some one had done something to her arm-chair, or taken it away and used it. You can scarcely believe the number of sins it led her into—jealousy, rash judgments, calumny—for she insisted upon it that this other old woman hated her and wished her dead because of it, and all the time she was hating her herself.

Now, some of you might be tempted to think at first, that it would be impossible to get attached to an old-arm-chair—but I give you this as an instance that it can be done, and though perhaps your attachment might not be to the same thing, still examine yourselves, and see if there is nothing which causes these disturbances in your hearts.

There is a particular corner in the dormitory that you have had for years, and you are afraid your "Mother" may take it from you, and if she is not now going to do so, that she will some day. A particular chair near the fire that you think so-and-so is always longing to turn you out of—some little comforts or exception that you are afraid your "Mother" is going to take away from you. However small the thing may be, if it occupies your mind, and disturbs the peace of your soul, *that* is your arm-chair, and you must give it up. Is there anything that causes a disturbance in your heart? It may be some

little thing which you know the nuns would not let you have if they knew, and you are afraid they will find it out. Whatever it is, if it causes disturbance, it shows you are too much attached to it—that you think of it more than God.

A very small thing is sufficient to lead you to forfeit the grace of God, and there are a great many souls in the world now who have lost great graces through their attachment to small things, and who never will be saved. Some of these had given themselves at the first generously to God, and promised to serve Him in penance for the rest of their lives.

To the Children of Mary of a Convent Boarding School.

To those who live in the world this sodality is a great help towards being good ; our Lady you know, although the most perfect of Virgins, yet lived in the world, and was a Model for those living in the world. Well, what engagements do you make by this act of consecration to Mary. You promise to be faithful to her, and she promises to protect you : she protects you with omnipotence, as the Fathers would say ; omnipotence which comes from her prayers.

The means which you promise to adopt, to fulfil your engagements are these : you promise to be faithful in your religious duties, in the frequentation of the sacraments, never neglecting them for whim, pleasure, labour, or pain ; you promise to be unworldly ; and, lastly, to fight against the corruption

of your self-will. These are the three things you must fight against: the devil, the world, and the flesh. The temptations of the devil are overcome by the frequentation of the sacraments. Then comes the world. The world, for you, is seeking pleasure for pleasure's sake and vanity. I do not suppose you will be misers, you will not waste the midnight oil over your cash-books; but you might waste the midnight oil over a looking-glass. The Apostle speaks of entering into life, but young ladies leaving school speak of entering into life in quite a different way; they seem to think it consists in giving themselves up entirely to pleasure.

And when you go into the world, the temptation *will* come; the love of admiration, the thought of what she will think of me, if I am not better than *she*. And this dress, of which you are vain, ought on the contrary to remind you of your shame. Eve was not made to be adorned with muslin and jewellery, her body was adorned with grace; and women instead of decking their bodies, making this the object of their lives, ought, when they look at the drapery with which they are obliged to cover themselves, to be reminded of their shame.

You must then when you go into the world as *Enfants de Marie* dress as a duty, as your state of life requires (to be dowdy is ridiculous), and accept the pleasures which belong to your condition, not with sour faces, not with primness, which would be a reproach to others, but heartily and cheerfully; do not crave for pleasure nor give yourselves up to it, so that prayer becomes an oasis in the desert. Some

persons after spending the day in pleasure will go perhaps in the evening to a brilliant Benediction ; they make a pleasure even of spiritual duties, and perhaps a poor working man, who never goes to Mass on Sundays, is not a greater deformity in God's eyes than a woman who gives herself up entirely to pleasure.

Then comes the last and most difficult duty : the overcoming your will.

You already understand this ; you have already been working hard at this ; from the cradle to the grave, if you are not struggling to do this, you are doing nothing. But Mary's hand and arm are round you ; she is now in a double sense your Mother, and she has promised to protect you in the temptations of the devil, those temptations you meet with in the world, and those which arise in conquering your own will.

To the Children of a National School.

We keep to-day the feast of the Purity of our ever Blessed Lady, Mother of God, of her who is the brightest, holiest, and purest of virgins and mothers that the world has ever seen. Our Lord chose her for His Mother, and He gave her to us to be our Mother also ; and she is the Refuge of Sinners and of those not spotless like unto her. What are the three lessons which our Blessed Lady's example teaches us ? To pray for purity, to love purity, to guard purity. We must pray for purity ; those who ask for great graces always obtain them. If we pray for purity we shall love it ; and we must guard it by

keeping out of the way of temptation and dangerous company. We must pray to our Lady to guard us, as she guards so many, amidst the worst temptations of the world, and that she may obtain for us purity of mind, of heart and of body, that we may be as pure as lilies, that we may pass from childhood to old age, and be as pure at the end of our lives as we were when we were baptized. Mother, who wast pure as the lily amongst thorns, obtain for us that love of purity which trembles at the shadow of spot or stain for thy children!

But I must say one word more—I am grieved to see so many people staying away from Mass. Those who do this, forget the weight of their sins. Their hearts cannot be full as they ought to be with sorrow for their sins. Our sorrow for our sins should be continual. Every night before we lay our heads on our pillow, we should beg our Lord's forgiveness for our past sins. How few consider what they lose by neglecting Mass—how few think what they could gain by offering up Holy Mass for their many needs? How wonderful is the doctrine taught by the Holy Council of Trent,¹ which says, "For the Lord, appeased by the oblation thereof and granting the grace and gift of penitence, forgives even heinous crimes and sins." There is nothing of so much value as Holy Mass. Souls who are greedy of Mass, who think themselves richer for every Mass they hear, whose hearts long for the time for Mass to begin, these are the souls who pass through life most blessed by God, who turn

¹ Sess. xxii. ch. ii.

each cross into gold, and receive such assistance as enables them to bear up, under the burden, the weariness, the fatigues, and struggles of constant daily effort: in other words, faith, hope, and charity, being increased in us each time we hear Mass, our souls are renewed, and life with its many vexations and trials becomes far easier to bear. Again, these are the souls who pass with most security through the waters of death.

These are they who may expect their reward, not for merits acquired through their own imperfect work, but from the application of the merits of Jesus Christ by their devotion to Holy Mass. They obtained these merits by the devout and constant hearing of Holy Mass, and by these Masses they secured these merits not for themselves alone, but for the millions for whose salvation He is longing, and every one whom they have helped by the Mass will increase their joy in Heaven for all eternity.

To the Pupil Teachers of a Convent.

When we are making a cake, we want certain ingredients, so much flour, some raisins, currants, candied lemon, and carbonate of soda. Well now, what are the ingredients that make a pupil teacher, for you know you are like a seed-cake? Here is a definition I once heard: A pupil teacher is a curious composition made up of a hundred parts. Distribute this number in certain proportions, between ignorance, passion, idleness, giggles, tears, self-conceit, piety, and hard work—the bad decreasing, and the

good gaining as they advance in their course—and you have a fair estimate of a pupil teacher. Think of what you are, what you were, and what you will some day be; the thought will do you good. By-and-bye a pupil teacher turns out an accomplished girl, not exactly in a worldly point of view, but with her head stored with useful knowledge, and her faculties trained to do a vast deal of good. Considering the zeal, affection, and devotedness continually poured out on you during this period of your life, the result is not to be wondered at. The difficulty with a pupil teacher is this, to get her to see the nobility of her work; if once she understands that, she will love it and go through it with courage. You all must have found out before now, that you cannot look upon teaching merely as a profession, and go to it as a man would to his furnace or a woman to nurse a baby; you are called to an apostolate altogether beyond nature. You need special graces to carry this out; it is higher than a profession, it is a vocation! You have not only to teach during secular hours and impart the words of the catechism, the work for God is not then finished, you have to get to the hearts of the children and influence them for good. Sometimes in certain cases you can do more than the Sisters, who, though their labours are mainly directed to training in virtue, do not come in such close familiar contact with individual children as you yourselves do with the pupils of your own division; and both you and the Sisters can often help where a priest is powerless. Teaching, viewed with the eye of nature, is a hard, wearisome occupation; but looked upon with the eye

of faith, it is the noblest work God could have called you to do, a work more essential to the interests of the Church, more conducive to God's glory than preaching in the pulpit on the sublimest mysteries would be. When this nobility is recognized, then discouragement on the one hand, or vanity on the other, disappears; real and supernatural love of the work takes its place, because of the immense glory given to God. Such a one seeks strength from above and expects her reward from Him alone Who has said, "*I am thy reward exceeding great.*" It is indeed a mighty work in which you are engaged, nothing less than the saving of souls; call it drudgery if you will, but is not all greatness based on drudgery? There is no class of society from which spring so many excellent women (excepting in religious life) as from that of teachers. It is exactly because their life is a life of drudgery; drudgery is the most precious thing in the world, if we except suffering. Great geniuses may appear, make a stir for the moment, get themselves a name, and create any amount of enthusiasm, but unless all this has been founded on drudgery it will bear no lasting fruit. You are destined to fill a lowly position, for after all it is a humble employment. You will pass unseen, unnoticed, unthanked for the hardest labour, the most persevering toil; but God's eye is upon your work, and God's Heart values it. Try to gain humility while you are young; it will help you much in later years. But I find I am speaking too seriously for your age, far more so than I at first intended. Let us come back to the cake, and watch the cooking which is quietly going on in

the heated oven. I wonder what is expected to come out after the whole process is gone through here. I should say, though I have never been told, that the ingredients of a finished student would be labour, cheerfulness, and zeal in equal parts. When the teacher is not cheerful she suffers, the children suffer, and nothing is learnt. It depends very much on ourselves to be cheerful or not. Make the resolution never to enter the schoolroom until you are in this frame of mind.

Cheerfulness includes two other qualities, patience and courage. These must permeate all teaching from beginning to end. See now what high principles you must work on. People outside recognize that you are called to a supernatural life, and consequently expect great things from you. So much so that they are literally shocked and scandalized if they see you do things, not sinful, but under the mark, that in another they would pass by unnoticed. Let appreciation of your task give you courage. One who is determined to go on, come what may, willing to be corrected and to profit by it, who can bear the pain of failure cheerfully, ever starting afresh, through rough and smooth weather continuing on her course, persevering through all—for such a one we need not fear, the end is sure.

Section 33.

CONFERENCES.

(GIVEN TO NUNS.)

The Spirit of Advent.

Do you use your Missals on Sunday, and ponder over the words which occur so frequently in Advent, but more especially in the Mass of the Fourth Sunday : "*Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above and let the clouds rain the just, let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour.*"

Those words are full of the poetry of the Prophet Isaias, the *Prophet of the Incarnation*, and they enclose the spirit of Advent, which is a spirit of *zeal, fervour*, and *holy desires* : the true spirit of the Church in this season of expectation. It is the apostolic spirit which Religious alone can rightly give to the Sacred Heart. It cannot be expected from people in the world in all its fulness ; but for us who have been separated from the world, consecrated and enriched by the Church with dignity and privileges, how great are our graces, and how great our responsibilities.

If the pagan world, the un-Christian world, lived in expectation during those 4,000 years before Christ,

how much more earnest must be our desires during these four weeks of preparation.

I wonder whether we all realize what was the intention of the Church in receiving us into holy Religion, in giving us the habit and constitutions of a religious life.

Was it simply that we might leave the world and enter into the "*liberty of the children of God*," to live innocently, but perhaps thoughtless of our responsibilities?

To the older and advanced I need not address these words, for with wrinkles come virtue, and not often before—more's the pity.

But the novices, and the younger Religious, do you understand your responsibilities? Until you do you can never understand the grace of your religious vocation.

That you may do so, let your spirit be one of desire, and pray with David, that man according to God's own Heart, "*I desire to desire Thy justifications, O Lord.*"

The older and advanced may perhaps say, "*I desire Thy justifications ;*" but for the rest pray that you may have the "*desire to desire.*"

Let this be our prayer during this holy season of desire and preparation for the coming of the Saviour. To us poor mortals, clothed in bodies of flesh, and subject to all the ills to which flesh is heir, the mystery of the *Incarnation* must be the crowning mystery of mysteries. The Religious who hopes to rejoice in the glories of Christmas must drink in *devotion to the Incarnation*.

The *hidden Babe* must be the subject of our meditation, but remember Jesus is never separated from His Cross, therefore suffering and sacrifice must be the proof of our love for Him. Listen to St. John's inspired words: "*God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that through Him it might be saved.*" Here was the *sacrifice* by which God proved His love for the world. What world? the pagan world, the miserable world.

It is not enough for us to rejoice in the thought and thank God for it.

We, as children of God's own Mother, have more to do. "*If God so loved the world,*" then must I also love it, even while forsaking and despising it. For the sake of the Sacred Heart, I must work lovingly for its eternal welfare. Thus Jesus loved it even unto death. What world must I love? The little ones and the poor? Oh, yes I love them.

But you must love them with the love of an apostle, of a child of our Lady. But before any externs, come your Sisters. God says we must first love "*those who are of the household of the faith.*" You must love your Sisters each and all, without exception, without particular friendships.

How much must I love? "*God so loved as to give His only Son.*"

Our love must *cost*, but we must not *count* the *cost*. We cannot expect the full sunshine of our Mother's smile, if we love only such of her daughters as are kind and amiable. We must not make conditions with our Lord and Master. Just fancy one of us thus addressing Him: "O Lord, I will be kind

and charitable, but if any one opens that window I do not promise Thee to bear it." Imagine us poor mortals making conditions with the God of Majesty.

You remember Father Gallwey's prayer, "Teach me, O Lord, to love Thee, and loving Thee to serve Thee, *without counting* the cost." No keeping back, no conditions, no hidden corner in our hearts. Sacrifice must be the proof of our love. To Abraham God promised that he should be the father of a great nation, yet He said to him: "Take thy only son Isaac and offer him in sacrifice." Have we not some Isaac? We know him well, his form and features are familiar: "Take him and offer him in sacrifice."

Then as regards your pupils or the poor, "I love my children, I love my poor." How much do you love them? You remember Father Spencer's way of testing people's love. When people pitied the poor for whom he was begging, Father Spencer would ask, "Well, how much do you love them, five pounds, three pounds, perhaps only one pound?" How much do you love those under your charge? You must love them for their eternal welfare: "*I seek not My own glory*," said our Lord. "*If I seek My own glory, then My glory is nothing. There is one Who seeketh and judgeth.*"

We, also, must not seek the glory of our school, or any of our works of mercy, before the world, before our community, not even before our Superiors, laudable though this latter may appear in our eyes.

This is a weak point which nuns must combat. You wish your work to excel. You persuade yourself

it is not from any selfish motive, yet remember the words of our Lord, to him who seeks the praises of men: "*Amen, Amen, I say to you, you have received your reward.*"

The praises of men pass. Let us seek only to glorify God in our work, taking cheerfully success or failure as He chooses to send it.

We are His instruments, if we work purely for Him; whether we succeed or not our reward will be the same—God does not seek for results.

Work then only for the eternal salvation of your charges, that by Him they may be saved, while we remain hidden and unknown.

Thoughts for Advent.

Advent is a time of preparation. "*Prepare ye the way of the Lord,*" said the great Prophet.

We are not able to give our Lord anything on Christmas morning, except our preparation.

How far have we expelled from our heart what we know fills up the space He should occupy.

How much trouble have we taken to empty the place He would sit in as King? No matter how little progress we are making, or what our falls are, a soul always disposed to preparation is pleasing to God, for she possesses sincere humility.

The whole of religious life should pass in preparation.

That is our work here below: struggling, striving, doing our best, and leaving it to God to give the increase. A soul which has *reverence* will attach great

value to the coming festival ; and preparation is not only what God deserves, but what he demands and expects.

Humility, or a feeling of our own lowliness, ignorance, incapacity of getting ready as we ought, and even knowing what God expects from us, will make us careful in these weeks preceding Christmas. The day is spent in four duties: prayer, work, play, and suffering. Holy Scripture says, "*Before prayer prepare thy soul ; and be not as a man that tempteth God.*" Let us take heed of this warning.

What is preparation in prayer? keeping St. Ignatius's ten Additions ; studying the points the night before, thinking of them before going to sleep, and first thing on awaking ; making a little examen on how you have passed the hour of meditation, and whether you have made the Additions.

Work—our Lady only cares for work done purely for God ; no lower motive will satisfy her. How much we ought to ask God to help us to work in this spirit.

Material results are nothing to one who knows she is working entirely for our Lord.

Play—recreation—requires more preparation than any other duty. Great saints, many of them with high natural gifts of amiability and charm of manner, like St. Stanislaus or St. John Berchmans, have taken most pains to prepare for it. Nature having more scope than at other times, we are sure to be overthrown unless armed by careful preparation.

Pain—all have pain sometimes, the corrections of Superiors, or mortification, failure in their charges,

or things that affect health, so let us ask the question how are we preparing to carry the Cross?

On the other hand, as à Kempis says, "In the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness." Have you never found this true?

One cross really well accepted, will leave a spiritual sweetness on the soul's palate giving encouragement and strength for long afterwards.

Prepare now to give an account of your preparation to our Lord, when you visit Him in His crib at Christmas.

Our Blessed Lady's Immaculate Conception.

To no class of people is the study of this prerogative of our Lady more useful than to nuns of an active Order.

They have to mix with the world, and they must take care lest they should imbibe its spirit. They must be on their guard lest their thoughts, feelings, tone, and even manner and conversation, should be lowered, or at least not rise as high as their Mother desires it should.

An old Father at Stonyhurst once made the Sodalists laugh, by telling them to imitate the Immaculate Conception.

But this is in one sense what I want you to do. Our Lady was conceived immaculate, Eve was created free from sin; but Eve fell because she did not see things in God's way or in God's light. One of the privileges of our Lady's Immaculate Conception was that her actions were never performed to please creatures or from self-love, but only to please God.

She would ask herself: Is this pleasing to God, does God require this of me? if so, it was instantly done.

If one good thing would please God better than another good thing, *that* one she chose.

All her thoughts and actions were perfect, and therefore her feelings towards those around her were always permeated by Divine love. And if we would act so as to please God, without consulting our self-love it would lead us to have right thoughts about our Superiors, our Sisters, and our charges. This is one way of imitating the Immaculate Conception, to have right thoughts about all with whom we come in contact.

Naturally speaking, this is above us, our very nature is prone to look at the evil side. But prayer can do all things. Let us ask ourselves how do we make our prayer? Do we collect our thoughts, and with childlike simplicity ask our Lord and His Blessed Mother to aid us in our trials and struggles, and then humble ourselves and learn lessons from our falls?

And now let me speak of temptations. The devil can tempt us, but he cannot touch our *will*. He can dress things up with lies, and make a great thing out of a small nothing. Look at some of your temptations and see if this be not true.

One Sister offends another; it is a small matter, but the devil dresses it up as if it were unbearable. He clouds the mind with passion, the will fluctuates, and peace is gone.

Oh, in times like these let us go to our Lady, and

think of the peace and serenity of her soul proceeding from her Immaculate Conception ; how far better to do this than to be only counting up our faults, and taking no precaution for the future. Peace of soul, then, was another privilege of our Lady's Immaculate Conception, and this we must try to gain by prayer and by self-conquest, not letting our hearts and souls be like the waves of the sea, one day up and another day down, according to every little word that may be said or any thought our self-love may suggest, but calmly going our way, keeping our hearts and wills bent in the right direction under our Lady's care and protection.

THE THREE CHRISTMAS MASSES.

The First Mass.

It is to commemorate the Birth of the Son of God, born from all eternity, equal in all things to His Father—His Wisdom—His very Breath, at Whose voice all creation sprang into existence.

View the countless legions of angels prostrate before His throne, with their Alleluias to His praise—He meanwhile reposing in the Bosom of His Father, their love consummated in the eternal production of the Holy Spirit.

We must remember all He left, if we would realize the abasement of His Humanity. When the fulness of time was come the Holy Ghost overshadowed Mary with His wings, and she conceived, God took a human nature to save sinful man. He could have abandoned him, let him fall into Hell,

and forgotten him for ever. His happiness in no way depended on the good of His creatures.

The Second Mass.

What does His second Birth, this most touching mystery of our faith, teach us? When He left His Mother's womb, and laid Himself on the cold ground, it was but the infinite love of God, becoming visible to man, in a shape which man's heart could understand.

Thus love, infinite love, is the lesson taught us on this day.

Contemplate Him as a little Babe, with tiny hands outstretched, lying on straw among the brute beasts, suffering from the elements even before the malice of man could exert its cruelty. We look at Him in the calm repose of Bethlehem, but we know what is to come. Beginning with the obscurity of the cave, the oblivion of that night is to be succeeded by a long course of suffering, all culminating in the scourge, the thorns, the nails, and at last the death on the Cross.

The preludes to these are the Circumcision, the abandonment of the midnight flight, and the beggary of the exile—the rest will surely follow. Why this? Because He loves, and suffering is the language of love; it has seldom any other voice.

Love makes a heart able to bear pain for the sake of its beloved. And as in the First Mass, while contemplating the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity in the splendour of the Godhead,

we offered Him our souls with all their faculties, so now at the Shepherds' Mass, we give Him our bodies with their desires, humiliations, and sufferings.

It is indeed an offering of *suffering*, not only because these bodies are so prone to infirmity, but even more so by the constant self-denial required to keep them in check, to punish and restrain them.

Third Mass.

If Jesus Christ is to be born in our hearts as typified by the Third Mass, it can only be accomplished through death to self. It is not by *one* good act that self is destroyed, it is by reiterated efforts—a long and slow death after many wounds. A true offering of the heart to Jesus Christ supposes a cheerful acceptance, a loyal use of those means which God sends to bring us nearer to Him. The bearing with our own miseries is one of the greatest crosses of life.

It is a part of humiliation—nature wearies and it requires a bright courage—a solid courage, for a soul to push on in the midst of its abjection—unflinching in its determination; the “*go on*” ever uppermost in its thoughts, no matter what the cost may be. These are the souls that finally conquer; God alone knows *when*—but the fulness of their time will come at last, and the reign of God begin in their heart. Is not this what a Religious lives for? By our vows we have given God the bright jewel He asked for; earthly pleasures may no longer be ours.

Mary and Joseph kneeling at the Crib, entirely subject to grace, are your models; such should be your life until the happy day when God sees fit to place you in His Bosom for ever, and you begin the joys of a blissful eternity.

The Babe of Bethlehem.

Does not the Babe of Bethlehem make us think, that after all it cannot be such a hard thing to love God?

Have we ever asked ourselves in sincerity: "What is it that places a veil between my soul and God—that keeps me back from the enjoyment of His perfect love? Happy moments when such thoughts as these steal into our minds, perhaps while kneeling before the Crib. Wretched is the Religious who, having given up all to obtain Jesus Christ, is still removed from His love. It is worse than absence—it is the positive privation of a good, which the heart by its essence and nature is longing for, and which He alone can fill up and satisfy.

In a chapter of the Second Book of the *Imitation*, we are given a method, some real, practical rules for possessing Jesus.

The author calls it an "art," something therefore which we must learn and practise if we wish to succeed. "Be humble and peaceable, and Jesus will be with thee."

So every time we lift ourselves up, either before others or only in our own minds, we frighten Jesus away. He has so keen an eye and so sensitive

a Heart, that He cannot bring Himself to find a home in a soul possessed by self and pride.

To be peaceful is but the outward expression of humility. Irritability springs from pride.

Even the petty annoyances met with in community life, sometimes cause feelings of resentment, of anger, and these drive Him away.

If we know what that means—to have Jesus—we should battle with ourselves till all signs of these faults were eradicated.

“Be devout and quiet, and Jesus will stay with thee.”

Devotion consists in the will. It is a *will* to serve God, and free ourselves from externals in order to come to Him. “Neither desire to be singularly praised or beloved.”

Deep in the heart of every creature is some hidden attachment to sensuality of some kind or another. Mere sensuality is bad enough; using creatures we could do without, and attaching our hearts to them, we give these trifles far far too important a place in our daily lives. But when it comes to being attached to individuals; oh, this it is that wounds the Heart of Jesus; this makes Him withdraw, this pains Him beyond measure. I am not speaking of gross particular friendships—these of course are out of the question; but small attachments to the praise, love, or esteem of creatures.

Jesus will have us pure—He requires from us a tremendous height of purity. We must be free, disentangled from all created things, if we would have *Him*. He remains away until He finds our souls as

He wants them to be. And what keen suffering this involves, what terrible self-renunciation !

Our will is everything—if we *will* to be pure, no matter how far we are off the goal, or rather it only matters inasmuch as more blood has to be shed, more suffering, more labour gone through, the end will finally be reached. All will be calm when He speaks the word.

A New Year's Blessing.

I want the New Year to be so full of blessing for you all that it may take the whole of your life to thank God for it.

Blessings which will not only give you larger and better work in the souls you live to serve ; but more precious still, which will make all your hearts beat in union with those that are beating at and *in* the Crib, and may make that the only place where they can find rest.

Now, in contemplating our Lady in the mystery of the Circumcision, we may picture her with a shade of sadness on her face ; as she knows our Lord is now to begin His work of redemption, by the first shedding of His Precious Blood, sad at the thought of the long years of suffering and sorrow, before the end. Here is consolation for us when we are tempted to discouragement at the monotony and weariness of life, and all must feel this at times. Père Surin says, speaking of those who suffer in this way : “ They shall see the glorious morning when Heaven shall open.”

To plod on perseveringly and faithfully when we are under a dark cloud, and cannot see our way, no not one step before us, still to toil on in trust and love—this is to give glory to God and joy to the Sacred Heart.

St. Joseph took the knife in his hand, and performed the rite causing the Divine Infant's Blood to flow ; he did it courageously and generously, not heeding the pain he felt at doing it, because it was God's will. All was done to teach us a lesson. When we have to give correction, let it be done because it is a duty, unflinchingly, courageously, in spite of the pain it gives us, or the compassion we feel for the person we are bound to correct.

Then our Lady received back her wounded Child into her arms. He, the sinless One, bearing the brand of sin for her and for us. This blood-shedding was the earnest of that copious redemption which was to come. Although that Divine Babe was speechless, His Sacred Heart spoke through His eyes to her His Mother, as she bent over Him telling Him of her sorrow for His pain, her longing to alleviate it, how she wished she could bear it for Him ; offering to tread in His footsteps and keep by His side even to the foot of the Cross.

Offerings of the Wise Men.

This feast shows our far distant ancestors approaching the Crib of Bethlehem, the feet of Him Whom we love so tenderly.

They came with their offerings ; and we all know

when we see people offering gifts to one we love, how we desire to join with them.

But as we gaze at the Crib, day by day during the octave, our longing might take no further shape, and our gifts might not be forthcoming. Therefore I propose speaking of the gifts you should offer, the gifts of the wise women, the Religious of N——.

The gifts offered by the Magi were gold, frankincense, and myrrh ; gold to the King, frankincense for God, and myrrh for Man. They offered gold to the King, the Eternal King. In riches, pomp, and glory of what does He stand in need ? He possesses all things.

What then can we offer ? Our poverty, true poverty ; not content with doing without superfluities, or even being deprived of that which others do without, we offer Him that true poverty of spirit, content to be deprived of ordinary necessities which the community may enjoy—poverty, which is content to do without notice, to be utterly forgotten. We offer Him our popularity, so hard a sacrifice to self-love. “ But, Father, we are in the convent, in community, what have we to do with popularity ? ” Still there are some who have more influence, more attention. We choose to relinquish this and to be even the Sister least thought of, the least liked of all.

Frankincense to God—our God.

What have we to offer ? We offer our prayers. What kind of prayers ? Meditation made with labour, carefully prepared and with care bestowed on the Additions, those Additions to which St. Ignatius was as attentive as the very youngest novice, attention

to our posture of reverence. When in solitude are we as attentive as when under the eyes of others? Well for us if we have a solitude in our hearts where we can retire to pray, even in the midst of the crowd, without bestowing a thought on those around. Living under the same roof with our God, how soon do we grow accustomed to this Divine Presence, and reverence may diminish.

Myrrh to Man—God made Man, our Redeemer marked with the Wounds, pledges of His love for us. What shall we offer Him?

Our chastity, true chastity of body and chastity of heart, no affection for creatures except in and for God. Chastity of mind—simplicity and purity in thought and intention. There must be meekness of heart in imitation of our Redeemer. Meekness and humility are the foundation of chastity, impatience of correction and ambition are its foes. Our King, come from His royal throne and holding forth to us His sceptre to draw us up to Him, He says, "*You have not chosen Me ; but I have chosen you.*"

What shall we offer Him?

Our zeal for His glory, zeal to extend His empire among men, zeal to spend ourselves in His service, zeal to make Him known among His own to whom "*He came*" but who "*received Him not ;*" zeal to attain our own sanctification and salvation, and assist others by word and example to do the same. Frankincense to our God, our High Priest Jesus, Who through God assumed every quality of the priesthood. He is both Priest and Victim, our spiritual Guide, our Counsellor and Consoler. "*Come*

not to the priest empty handed," is an old tradition ; bring your gift to His feet—however small it will be acceptable, a little word unsaid, a curiosity restrained, an inclination to impatience subdued, promptitude to obey against our inclinations, a hasty answer suppressed, a repugnance surmounted, mere trifles, the offerings of the poor to the poor Babe of Bethlehem, yet valuable in His eyes like the widow's mite.

Myrrh to our Redeemer, our dear dear Redeemer, Whose love for us was so great that He shed His Precious Blood. "*Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*"

Then what shall we offer? for He asks not a return equal to His gift ; martyrdom of blood may not be ours. We have already consecrated our lives to His service, but is there any rapine in the holocaust? Let us examine ourselves, and if we find that our crosses weigh heavier, our duties have become irksome, that we have striven to slacken the reins, let us renew our consecration and tread firmly and bravely in the footprints of Jesus on His way to Calvary, offering ourselves cheerfully as victims to His loving Heart. Let us accept our portion of pain and suffering in union with His, and like Him learn to suffer silently, uncomplainingly, and without sympathy from those around us. What better offering can we make than this infirmity which renders us so useless, this ill-health which interferes with our works of zeal, this decline of strength which so impedes our eager activity. These are the crosses with which we must be laden as we journey on.

Such are the offerings we can make to our Infant King. Let each choose what she considers most pleasing to Him; that which costs self-love most, will be the most valuable in His eyes.

Feast of the Holy Name.

“The love of Jesus makes a man despise himself.”

Sometimes we have consolation and sometimes desolation, and there is danger of misusing both one and the other. In the first by elation, vain thoughts of self-complacency—an idea that we are touching on sanctity when indeed we are far far from it. In the second by those miserable failings which we commit when under the influence of discouragement, and the good we omit in consequence.

The words I have quoted are very valuable to ourselves because they will serve as a key-note to discover what is the kind of love we bear to Jesus Christ.

Let me not indulge in a delusive love, full of selfishness, but give me, dear Lord, that love of Thee which will make me despise myself. To despise myself I have only to reflect on my past life from the time I was a child upwards, and see what thorough selfishness runs throughout. And then came the immense grace by which our Lord took me for His spouse, for which I can never be sufficiently thankful; but even now how many times is my work marred and God deprived of glory by the selfish motives which run away with the best part of a hard day's work. Oh, if only for twenty-four hours I could

live divested of self! We condemn ourselves, at least we do so in words, but our war with self is carried on with delicately gloved hands, we do not rub the skin too hard. But then others help us in the work and we do not like the knocking about. *They* take no precautions of putting on aromatic gloves for the business, but give it to us plain and straight, and our self-love is in arms at once. We think—love for Jesus Christ makes me despise myself, but it does not make you despise me. Here is a test of our honesty. We know we cannot trust ourselves to crush self—are we willing that others should do the business for us, or do we resist? If we take little slights, neglects, contempts well, patiently—nay, even willingly—looking on each as a treasure God gives us to bring us nearer to Him, to destroy His enemy our own self-love, then we are really aiming at His love.

Quinquagesima.

I have been thinking about the Epistle for Quinquagesima Sunday, where the great Apostle St. Paul speaks of charity, the queen of virtues, without which all others are of no avail. The Apostle first shows how natural gifts and talents, such as eloquence, for example, are useless for our salvation. "*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.*" Next he says that supernatural gifts high in the order of grace, such as prophecy or the gift of miracles, are also useless if not supported by

charity. St. Paul even goes further, and says that the practices of virtue and perfection—almsdeeds, mortification, even martyrdom itself, are no good if charity be wanting. Then the Apostle enumerates the qualities of charity, first the positive qualities, "*charity is patient—kind ;*" then, to impress it more deeply on our minds, he mentions in the negative the bad qualities which charity has not, "*charity envieth not ; dealeth not perversely,*" and so on.

Now, charity is particularly necessary to us—to you and to me who are called by our spirit and rules to work even to exhaustion for the good of souls. The field open to our zeal is a wide one, and yet if we do not take care we may be living in a state of delusion and blindness as to the state of charity in our souls, and while labouring much for our neighbour at large, and thinking ourselves possessed of great charity, have in reality very little charity at all. Well-ordered charity begins at home ; and to test our charity for our neighbour at large, or as we call them externs, let us see if it can be compared with the charity practised towards our religious Sisters in community life. If there is any flaw in that, if it will not bear the strictest comparison point for point, we have reason to fear that charity for those outside, whoever they may be, and whatever labours of zeal we may undertake, is false and unreal. Charity begins at home, and the key-note of our charity is to be found in the charity we practise at home. Let us then spend this Lent in seriously examining into and regulating charity in our own hearts, and see how we stand in that respect, confident that if sisterly charity

is well attended to, the rest will come right of itself. "*Charity is patient—kind ;*" here then is the way to practise it ; patience when our patience is tried, kindness, little acts of kindness when the opportunity offers itself. In such little ordinary ways as these are we daily called upon to show our spirit of charity. I looked in the writings of that great master of the spiritual life, Father Alvarez de Paz, for something about charity, and found a word which struck me very much, one you would not think of. He says, "Let your charity be *circumspect*," not effusive, angelic, or any other high-sounding title — but circumspect. What does that mean? Well-ordered charity, not natural affection, but a charity based on supernatural motives seeking the spiritual good of our Sisters. Our Lord's charity for us is circumspect, and what does He say to us, "*Love one another as I have loved you.*" And how did He love us? even to giving up His own life that we might have eternal life. Natural love is blind, it seeks only the temporal welfare; circumspect charity seeks the eternal welfare. Naturally charity seeks the temporal gain of those it loves, supernatural charity seeks their spiritual profit. Hence to practise circumspection in our charity, we have to often act in the same manner God acts towards us perhaps when He loves us most, and give pain or trouble or annoyance to those we love, when we have to seek their spiritual welfare in a way contrary to what we would naturally wish. Now let us ask ourselves, Is our charity for our Sisters circumspect, do we do everything in our power to promote their spiritual welfare, or do we act from natural motives? It

requires great virtue and a strong mind to practise circumspection in our charity on these painful occasions. How do we act, for example, when conscience tells us we ought in charity to inform a Superior of some irregularity, some breach of rule or defect we have seen in a Sister, and which for her spiritual advancement ought to be made known? If we do so, she will have a gentle, motherly rebuke from the Superior, or a penance. Do we perform our duty on such occasions, or do we listen to nature and human reasoning? If the latter, we not only do not practise circumspect charity, but we do not practise charity at all, since we prefer not alone the temporal gain, but even the spiritual danger of our Sister's soul.

And yet how hard it is to be faithful even in this one point. But since we have no Lent for our bodies this year,¹ let us make up and atone for our sins by keeping Lent in our souls, and if we set our sisterly charity in order in real earnest it will be a good work done. How can we make our charity become circumspect? By studying our Lord's charity. No love could be purer or more perfect than that which Jesus had for His most pure and holy Mother, and yet He did not spare her feelings, nor save her any pain necessary to work out the designs of God in the marvellous height of sanctity to which she was to be raised. How did He act, for example, when the disciples interrupted Him in the midst of a discourse to the people, and told our Lord His Mother and

¹ On account of the influenza epidemic fasting and abstinence were dispensed.

brethren were waiting for Him without. He answered by those words which always have been and always will be a subject of scandal to Protestants, but which Holy Church explains rightly to us: "*Who is My mother, and who are My brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of My Father that is in Heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother.*"

Nothing could surpass the respect and love our Blessed Lord had for His Mother, but He would not withdraw one iota of that immense sea of suffering which was to raise her to such a sublime height of glory hereafter. He sought her spiritual welfare. Such also was His treatment of those next dearest to His Heart, the saints, and first amongst them the Apostles. One chapter in the *Imitation* ends with these words, "Remember this, my son," and what has gone before? that we are to remember that Christ called His Apostles not to joys, but to labours and sufferings.

Then suppose some breach of charity has occurred, not very serious let us hope, a temptation to show a little coolness, or perhaps only an unkind judgment. Well, what are we to do? Stifle it at once, and nip it in the bud before it has time to take root in our hearts, by doing the very opposite to what we feel inclined. Or suppose a Sister has hurt our feelings, let us repay it by extra kindness. It is thus we overcome evil by good. Two other ways of acquiring charity are, always to prefer the will of another to our own, and the judgment of another to our own judgment. Nuns have no right to stick to their own will and judgment; let us rather put in practice

those words of the *Imitation*: "Seek rather to do the will of another than thine own." If we would be perfect in our charity, we must also avoid anything like particular friendships, which are an obstacle to the common charity we owe to each and all of our Sisters. Another good means of acquiring charity, is to avoid seeking our own ease and comfort, not clinging to our own conveniences, or to anything in particular, but be ready to sacrifice our own comfort and little fancies for the good of others. Let us regard our Sisters with reverence, treating them as the images of God and spouses of Christ. This does away at once with all kind of unkind judgments, bitterness, raillery, and such things. That does not prevent us from having an innocent joke now and again at another's expense; there is no harm in that, but it permits nothing that would hurt another's feelings. We must not look at our Sisters in the light in which our self-conceit puts them before us, or with eyes that magnify their failings, no nor even with the eyes of an ordinary Christian, but with those of a spouse of Christ—blind to their defects and seeing in them only the image of God. Our Lord Himself says, "*Love one another as I have loved you ;*" and again, "*as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren you did it to Me,*" thus making the extent of our charity for others the measure of our love for Him. And surely if this applies to our relations with our neighbour at large, it applies more particularly to our conduct towards our Sisters. If the love of nature is so strong, spiritual love ought to be stronger still; for the tie which binds

us into one great family where, with Religion for our common mother, we are born to God, is closer even than the ties of nature, and we owe even more respect and charity to our religious Sisters than to those to whom we are naturally allied. Besides, if we do not love our Sisters whom we see, how can we love God Whom we see not? In community life it often happens that our Sisters are a trial to us as we are to them. God, by a special disposition of His Providence in our regard, arranges that it should be so. In this respect they are to us angels of God, doing His work and helping us to acquire merit. But do we regard them as such? In the fundamental meditation of the Exercises which we have so often made together, we learn that all the creatures of God are meant to help towards our salvation, and that it is entirely our fault if they do not. So when our Sisters try us it is a grace God sends, and which we are at liberty to use or abuse as we will. But let us remember that if we abuse or neglect God's graces in whatever form they come to us, He will withdraw His hand and bestow them less plentifully, and the loss is our own. And lastly, when charity has been wounded let us blame ourselves and not say, "Oh! she did this or that," "she aggravated me," but say humbly, "It was my fault; if I had behaved myself, she would have behaved herself also." Thus may we hope to share in the plenitude of that beautiful gift our Lord offers to all at Easter when He says: "*Peace be to you.*"

Shrove Tuesday.

Now that we have come to the end of our pancakes, it is time to turn to something more serious.

To-morrow begins the days of grace, "*The acceptable time.*"

We keep Lent for many reasons.

1. To imitate our dear Lord's fast of forty days.
2. To take part in the Passion of our Lord.
3. In recognition of our Lord's formal declaration, "*Except you do penance you shall all likewise perish.*"
4. To get ready for Holy Week, when mysteries so crowd in that unless we prepare ourselves beforehand they may pass over us fruitless.

5. To enforce the reception of the sacraments when numbers of sinners with earnestness and contrition approach the Sacred Tribunal; and through this annual return to God, in the end save their souls. We may think this last point not practical, but its consideration does at least this much for us.

It teaches us to admire and praise the Divine Wisdom which has guided the Church throughout; it increases the Catholic spirit, which, if not fostered, may die away to a minimum, even in the heart of a nun, one of the first effects of tepidity. It makes us see how wonderful are God's arrangements for His Church; it preserves our Catholic instincts, making us rejoice when the Church rejoices and sorrow when she is sorrowing. We should praise everything the Church does—this spirit gives great glory to God, and adorns our own souls. It leaks out unconsciously,

and everything we say is bright and beautiful, and full of good example. This then is Lent for the Church in general ; but as God always reserves the best for His own, this season has a special application to your souls. Consecrated as they are to Him, the *sense* of doing a supernatural act dies away with time. It is an uncommon grace to have the constant feeling of supernatural motives, even while acting on them ; therefore anything which quickens this perception in us ought to be valued. Let us see what we can gather from to-morrow's ceremony, perhaps some thoughts that will help us to spend Lent better : "Remember man that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return."

In a little while life is passed away. The habit gives us the appearance of one leading a consecrated life ; but how sadly full of corruption this life is each one can best answer for herself. How shall corruption be saved unless it passes through the bitter waters ? If penance be forgotten we shall pay for it. "*If the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned,*" said our Lord. Now examine whether you may count yourselves among the lovers of penance or not.

Do you repeat with St. Peter of Alcantara : "O blessed penance, which has merited so great a reward." Those who pad all the hard edges, and sweeten all the bitter morsels, so that self-love may swallow them without making too ugly faces, are certainly not on the list.

Ask yourself again whether the coming of Ash Wednesday is a grace for you ; there is danger in the formal acceptance of penance.

"I keep my rule. I do what goes against nature because I can't get out of it." We who seek ourselves so steadfastly, so deliberately, so systematically, who act as though we had made a retreat to arrange rules for self-seeking, and carry them out with such deplorable fidelity—soon we shall die.

Unless we use penance while we live, what is there for us but many years to be spent in that dark, unprofitable, unmeritorious prison of Purgatory, while the spots are being slowly burnt out. Heaven is so near, and Heaven is so dear.

Ash Wednesday.

Ash Wednesday is a great day for those who live up to the spirit of the Church. God is glorified when our hearts beat in unison with that of His Spouse on earth. When she is in labour, He wants us to be in labour too, when she sorrows we must sorrow, and when she is glad we must also rejoice. Another reason why Ash Wednesday is so precious is because the Church shows no ordinary fervour, but enters upon a course of penance which she intends to keep up assiduously, for a long time together.

Penance is a virtue, which as a means of perfection is often neglected. If penance merely consisted in the exactness of our accusation in the sacrament, then indeed our scrupulous examinations might be profitable. But as the accusation is only an instrument, it follows that by its use alone we should never become perfect; of course it is a very great help for acquiring virtue, indeed so great a

help that any one who understands its value never makes a single one without some definite purpose—she accuses herself of one fault, and passes over another with a settled and determined purpose of the fruit she is to reap by so doing—but this is not the virtue of penance. Penance means purging the heart from all sin, and also from the roots of sin. It is an iron will to crush whatever displeases God in us.

Some do not ever care to gain light to see what in them needs penance, because a real carrying out of the spirit of penance implies death to self, and life then indeed becomes a hard task. St. Catherine of Siena, whose spirit is so akin to St. Ignatius, says that no matter how high a soul may be raised in the love of God, she must never leave off mortifying herself or exercising the virtue of penance.

What occasions we have for advancing in it. We can always find something to work at. Take the five senses alone—even the taste, which seems the most harmless, is not entirely dead; we shall find many a little inordinateness, and sometimes even a big one, if we are not always on the look-out. The eyes—we have tried and some of us achieve success in this line, but do not the old habits sometimes resume their sway, and we find that without constant watchfulness we are as bad as we were years ago. We can also mortify our hearing—how many things we have opportunity of listening to and sometimes to our cost. The touch and the smell are in their turn not harmless. Every gift of God can be used either for indulgence or mortification. Then the ordering of our thoughts, the guard over

our tongues, the repression of dreams. What good comes from habitual reveries—perhaps already a predisposition of mind favours this bad habit, and though the Sister knows how hurtful it is, and how she wastes her thoughts and time through it, she has never yet had the courage completely to give it up. All the points above given are fit matter for mortification, for penance. By thus purging our hearts, we are making a fair field in which the Holy Ghost can sow the seeds of Divine love, and those virtues which in the economy of Divine grace are destined for us. The spirit of the Church is to rejoice at Easter-tide, but our joy will be of a very mild sort unless we sorrow truly over our sins and take increased measures to have done with them. Abiding sorrow comes from looking on our many past sins, whether those committed in the world or in Religion, as a treasure, and gathering shame, contrition, and love of God's patience and mercy out of them.

A Nun's Lent.

I should like to give you some good, strong thought which will help you to spend Lent well, and to obtain that particular grace which our Lord destines this holy season to produce in each one of your souls. A Religious (if she does not take care) will derive less fruit from Lent than a secular—partly, perhaps, because *they* are conscious of the worldly way in which they spend the rest of the year, and therefore make strenuous efforts during the six weeks set aside by the Church for penance,

and really do something. But a Religious has always a certain amount of spirituality in her day's routine; and in the comfortable thought all nuns live on, that "all she does, is done for God," she runs the risk of passing her whole Lent, without once realizing the work God intended her to do in her own soul, by the abundant and precious graces of this holy season. Suppose then we make up our mind to spend *this* Lent in trying to obtain an abiding sorrow for sin; not speaking of it as that of which we elicit acts, at certain periods, such as after examens or in preparation for confession, but that habitual state of the soul which makes God see us walking about as real heartfelt penitents.

Every nun has it in her power to evoke at any moment an act of perfect sorrow, because she has pained God and robbed Him of His glory. Most Religious live in a state of habitual attrition, that is, sorrow from selfish motives, fear of punishment, or reward deferred. This pulls them down, making them grovel on the earth, and rendering them incapable of doing great things in the spiritual life. Perfect sorrow, on the contrary, raises the soul, brings it nearer to God, and causes virtues to spring up as in a well-irrigated land.

The next thing to be considered is, how we shall attain this abiding sorrow. In two ways: by industry and prayer; we must begin then by convincing ourselves that *we are* great sinners. If in the past we have ever committed a mortal sin, the work is easy enough; one such offence is sufficient for a lifetime of sorrow. Then there are others, who by the special

mercy of God have been preserved from mortal sin, but whose souls God has flooded with such lights and graces, that they see in their venial sins abundant matter for undying contrition.

But there is a third class, mostly met with in the first years of religious life, who never having had a mortal sin to confess, find it difficult to own themselves sinners. These have nothing to do but to believe *me*. They must take it for granted, they are very great sinners. When any one is bent on acquiring bright, genuine, earnest sorrow, our Lord comes to her assistance, and she sees faults and motives for sorrow, unknown before. Any one who has ever swerved from the path of perfection, may well deplore her infidelity, and acknowledge the foulness of the ulcer, with its constant stream of imperfection pouring forth. It would be well to use a single confession, and therein examine the baseness of such faults as, we say, are only infractions of Rule. Let us ask ourselves what is meant by an "unpunctual" nun, a "lazy" nun, an "impatient" nun, an "imprudent" nun; and we fail in spite of God's graces and the helps and aids of our Rules.

Every good meditation can and ought during Lent to be turned to this one truth: "*I am a sinner.*" Eight days of retreat are not enough to handle all the subject-matter thoroughly, much must necessarily be left out; but Lent is a fit time to supply the omission, and we ought now to study "sin" from all possible points of view. It is no use sticking at one idea, until the soul is sick of it; vary it to suit the present disposition, taking one day its malice, another

time contrasting it with the bounty of God, His patience, or some other attribute ; but always bearing well in mind that we have to learn from this two important lessons, to hate more and more our own deformity, and to love more and more the infinite goodness of God in supporting us. It is well worth while devoting six weeks to this study ; the gaining of self-knowledge from which so many beautiful virtues spring, will be the blessed result. The only thing which really keeps a Religious back is diffidence in our Lord. She feels towards Him as she would towards any man or woman whom she has offended ; as if our Lord could be compared to any creature ! No, *He* forgives at once and entirely.

Why cannot we be sorry for offending God ; we are pained when we cause suffering to any of our fellow-creatures, even a trifling one. We must indeed be under the influence of strong temptation to be able to rejoice in another's ill. Why cannot we then mourn over the suffering we cause the infinitely loving Heart of Jesus. Perfect contrition softens every fibre of self-love. It prevents us from giving God the second place, and makes us unresisting victims to the Holy Ghost.

The most prudent and enlightened spiritual writers have declared that a call to Religion is a call to sanctity. This call includes the graces necessary for working out our vocation, making it fructify, and thus ensuring final perseverance. Granting, then, that the call to sanctity has been made to every religious soul, what should impede its fulfilment, if not her own perversity ?

If she would remove all obstacles, let her cultivate this spirit of abiding sorrow ; she will thus become docile in the hands of God, and who knows where the Holy Ghost may lead her ? Another great advantage of *perfect* contrition is, that it remits temporal punishment, which attrition does not. Now, as most of you have given your Indulgences wholesale to the souls in Purgatory—and mind this is a real act which holds good—you will have to pay with your own sufferings for all your present shortcomings. Others, perhaps, more prudently, have made over to the poor souls what remains after their own debts are paid off. These, of course, have a better chance in one way, but it makes a big dip into their store, when they confine themselves to acts of attrition, leaving the rest to be cancelled by Indulgences. It is to be feared the poor souls won't get much in the long run.

So now begin Lent with a strong, firm, efficacious desire of going through the exercise of acquiring self-knowledge, by industry and prayer. Desolation is often only another word for laziness. Lent, without sorrow, brings an Easter without joy. The *Imitation* says, "Give thyself to compunction of heart, and thou shalt find devotion." Our Lord in the very compassion of His Sacred Heart seems to lift up a soul He sees bowed down under the weight of its shame ; and this excess of tenderness on His part is again fresh matter for greater self-humiliation on hers.

Pray earnestly for one another during the whole of Lent, that each and all may receive the full measure of blessings intended by Almighty God, and that by faithful correspondence to grace, the help of

Mary's prayers, and the compassion of the Sacred Heart, there may be for every soul the sprouting, nay, the goodly growth of virtues which will make this convent what every convent ought to be to our Lord—His garden of delight.

How to spend Lent.

In saying my Office on the first Sunday of Lent I was struck by a passage simple enough in itself, and which I had often seen before without finding in it any special fruit, just as you yourselves are sometimes struck by some verse in the *Imitation*, which you have read, over and over again ; but to-day as you read, it takes a new meaning, and gives you some light it did not give you before ; to-morrow it is not that verse which strikes you, but some other. St. Leo says in the Office, that Lent is a preparation for the Passion of our Lord. That, we all know, is quite true ; it is a preparation for the great mysteries of the Passion, the crucifixion of Body and Soul which took place on Calvary on Good Friday. Now, the point I specially wish you to grasp and meditate on this Lent is, what is the Passion to me ? If our Lord died for all men, surely I have cost Him more than others. I want you to make the Passion your own, and say : "What is it to me, with my trials, sufferings, strivings, and particular surroundings ?" For mind, God deals with no two souls alike, and this by reason of His own personal love for each one in particular. And because of this He gives special lights and graces to each soul. To this soul He whispers one thing, to

that another, according as His deep, intense love for each individual soul directs Him.

And God does this without in any way altering the ordinary course of our daily life, or causing us to be in any way singular. But no community could be more jealous of anything, which could mar the beautiful spirit of common life, than that in which lived Blessed Margaret Mary ; so much so, that her Superiors and Sisters had nearly determined to turn her out of Religion, for fear she would introduce singularity into the community. And yet her graces were true and solid, as we all know.

Now, what God did for her in an extraordinary degree, He does with us in an ordinary way, in the dealings He has with each one of us. He does not give the same to all, nor ask the same from all, although exteriorly we are all alike in leading a common life. Each one can say to herself, "God loves me, and He loves me very much ; and this is as true as though He had none other to love than myself." From all eternity, long ages before we were created at all, God had each one of us in His mind.

He knew how much grace He would give to each, how high He had destined each one of us to go in the spiritual life, and He knew, too, how each one would correspond to His invitation ; how some would be shy, some diffident, others careless, nay, wofully and persistently occupied with themselves ; some full of love and generosity, while some few would be lost to themselves and utterly abandoned and conformed into Himself, seeking nothing but His holy will. It is on this I wish you to examine yourselves this

Lent, and see how you stand with regard to God's dealings with you in your own soul. How do we use the graces and lights we receive, and to which He will expect us to correspond? He is waiting and watching the degree of generosity with which we will treat Him. How high will we follow Him in His designs on our souls? If we do not correspond to God's love, it pains Him more than others; and why? Because we have cost Him dear. All souls have cost Him much, but we have cost Him most; and the more graces and lights we receive, the more in proportion do our falls pain His Sacred Heart.

Each one of us—you and I—can say, "We have cost Him dear." When He unveiled His burning Heart to the Blessed Margaret Mary, He told her that the infidelities of those consecrated to Him pained Him most; and it stands to reason; for they sin with greater light than those in the world. If people in the world heard the above declaration they would say, "Yes, but that applies to those apostate Religious who have abandoned their vows and their state, and gone altogether away from God." But let us not be deceived; it applies with equal truth to you and to me, and to our infidelities; it is to us He complains.

The most careless one here, the one to whom our Lord has given the least number of graces, has received infinitely more grace and light than those in the world. Look what inestimable, infinite treasures of grace He spent in drawing us out of the world, to say nothing of all we have received since we entered Religion.

Our Lord seems to feel it much when His Sacred Heart is wounded by us, because He has done so much to gain our love. He complained of it long before by the mouth of holy David, when He said : "*If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it, . . . but thou, a man of one mind, my guide and familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with me : in the house of God we walked with consent.*" So our least faults cost our dear Lord because they are done in the face of greater light, and hence with greater ingratitude ; it is quite a different thing, for example, to the offence of some poor, ignorant, rough creature. When one of them sins it is, as it were, that they strike at our Lord through a thick, dark veil ; but when we do wrong, let it be ever so little, we hurt our Lord with our eyes wide open, and it wounds His exquisitely sensitive, tender Heart to the very quick ; for we have cost Him dear, and He expects something better from us in return. Mind I do not speak here of frailties, oh no ! but of wilful, still more of deliberate failings ; of the times when our will puts Jesus Christ on one side, and self and its comforts and conveniences on the other, and deliberately chooses "me" in preference to Him.

It is very easy to measure our Lord's love for us. We have proofs enough of His infinite mercy in our regard. Oh, if we only knew what a vocation is, and the graces we receive with it. If we could but realize what God has done for us in drawing our hearts to Himself, and separating us from parents, home, houses, and lands, as it says in the Gospel, that we may live for Him.

We do not reflect enough on what God has done for us in giving us a religious vocation ; and when we are not as fervent as we ought to be, we shall find it is because the spirit of gratitude is weakened or dying out in our hearts. St. Austin may well call gratitude the foundation of religion, for if gratitude is there in the heart, all the rest goes on right. If we appreciate the gifts and graces of God, we shall make the most of them. God likes us to be grateful : I do not mean to say that God makes much of what He gives, or that we must use it well, with the thought that it is better for us or we shall suffer for it, and God will punish us in Purgatory if we don't—God does not make much of what He gives, except when we make little of it ; but He likes us to appreciate His goodness. If *we* don't make much of His gifts, God *will*. It is thus He puts before Abraham, Moses, and David all the benefits He had bestowed on His people ; but it was because that nation was only too much inclined to forget His benefits, and to depreciate His gifts. So, if we are really grateful, we shall be fervent and faithful in doing what God asks from us.

Here you may develop this a little for yourselves, and reflect for awhile on what God does ask us to do. First, we have the Commandments, where God says positively “do this,” or again, “avoid that.” Then, since the call came, and God drew us “into solitude, there to speak to our hearts,” He expects more ; we have to observe the Counsels, keep our vows. Then come the Rules, not binding under pain of sin certainly, like the vows and the commandments, but yet with the spirit (mind I say the spirit and not

the letter) of the vows, so wrapped up in them, that it is hard to break the Rules, without offending at least against the spirit of the vows. After that we might consider the customs of our Order, less important in one sense, and yet dear to us, and in which there is much chance of giving edification to our Sisters. Let us remember we are here for each other, and each one can say for herself, "The goodness of God has placed my Sisters round me ; they are there purposely for my benefit, on purpose to help me to Heaven, that their good example, fervour, and support may assist my weakness ; poor, weak, and imperfect as I am, where should I be, and what should I be, only for the support and good example of my Sisters." And here we may ask ourselves how many years have I been in Religion, and how much have I done for God? Last of all (though I dare say you could each add more points for reflection), let us examine how we keep the recommendations, the least recommendations of Superiors. If our countenances could be seen as the recommendations are given, perhaps anything but pleasure could be perceived thereon ; it does not suit our tastes, our ideas, our inclinations. Well, when you feel like that, let us say to ourselves, Shame on me ; what ? am I to put forward my tastes, my ideas, my inclinations ?

If we recognized God's voice speaking to us by the mouth of the Superior, it would not be so. Our thoughts then would be, "How shall I carry it out?" With these thoughts then in our minds, let us follow our Blessed Saviour to Gethsemane, and surely we can easily picture to ourselves His thoughts, and the

sorrow which filled His Heart, as He knelt there and saw each one of us, with all our infidelities, all our coldness and want of love, all the pain and the wounds we were going to inflict on His Sacred Heart, and made that one grand, generous offering in reparation for us to the Eternal Father. Truly we have cost Him dear. And we do not realize, that we ourselves can make this very same offering to the Eternal Father in Holy Mass. We have so little of the spirit of faith, our hearts are so little and mean and contracted, that we do not realize, and I want you to try and realize it better, that we puny, miserable, sinful beings can as it were take in our hand that generous offering of our Lord, and hold it up daily to God the Father, in reparation for our own faults and those of all men. What are our puny offerings in comparison with this? We do not realize our riches, and so do not make use of the treasures we have got. There is one way of offering a thing in a gross manner, and saying, "Here it is if you want it, and must have it." But when we think of the generosity of our Lord's offering, and the superabundance with which He repaired our faults, our offering will be quite different to that. And are we content to watch Him suffer all, and alone? When we see Him bleeding and making reparation for us, will it not waken some responsive chord in our hearts, which will make us add some suffering of our own? Are we content to take life easy, to seek our own comfort, while He is suffering for us? Will we not rather do all we can in return, and count it a joy to suffer with and for Him, and to bear the Cross?

We ought to be on the look-out for occasions to suffer something for Him, and that not, as I said before, in a mercenary spirit, or for fear of punishment, but from a spirit of loyalty and generosity, of pure, pure, pure love; we ought to long and thirst and pine for suffering and crosses, that we may be more like Him.

The Passion our Treasure-House.

As Lent is fast approaching, it is time to see how we shall spend it, so as to make it a Lent in our lives that will stand out, and upon which we can look back as a time wherein we have made marked progress in virtue. How many Lents we have already spent! Each year, each Lent, is a grace and a precious treasure God gives us, and which has to be answered for; it is the "*acceptable time*," as the Church says. So much is done by the Church to show us the infinite treasure we have in the Passion of our Lord, and the abundance of graces this holy season brings to our souls is so great, that we may well consider, and prepare ourselves a little beforehand, to see how we can make the most of it, and as I said, let this Lent stand out in our lives.

It could certainly be so, if we would endeavour to realize more truly this one truth, as the Church puts it in such a marked manner before us: that the Passion of our Lord is the treasure-house, where we may seek infinite riches, precious graces, and aid of every kind for our own souls and those of others. We cannot handle the Passion without gaining some fruit for our souls and those of others; even a careless handling

of it leaves something behind ; we cannot think of the Passion without gaining some help for our eternal salvation.

The simplest and most uncultured mind can meditate on the Passion. Many say they have not courage, it is such a wide field to go over, and there is so much matter, but nothing can be easier than to take one point at a time.

What, for instance, could be more concrete to think about or more easy to represent to our mind's eye than a blow on the face. Suppose, for instance, you saw one man strike another in the street, both of them rough enough and perhaps used to such things, yet it would fill you with horror, you would sicken at the sight of it. Imagine, then, what you would have felt had you been present ; or imagine you are present when the same thing happens to our dear Lord. What would your sentiments be ? See the modesty with which Jesus stands before His judges, the gentleness and dignity with which He replies to the High Priest ; then see the mailed hand rise, the cruel blow given to our Lord, the cheek swell and the face grow disfigured. Look at the sacred face of Jesus and say, "He endured that for me for my sins." We can view each point as we go along from many sides. Think, for instance, of the justice of God, and see how terrible must be the sin, which required such a blow and to such a Person as its atonement. The practical conclusion comes at once : What atonement have I made for my sins ? What ought I to do ? Is my spirit of penance such as it ought to be ? What more can I do to appease

the justice of God and take my share in the atonement?

Again, we may look at it as showing God's infinite mercy and love. What a tender and infinite love must have prompted our Lord to endure such an insult for my sake. I love my Sisters, the children, my friends, I love them very much perhaps, but if it came to be a question of enduring such a blow as that, and in public, for their sakes—what dread, what shrinking, what struggles, what repugnance, before I could make up my mind to suffer it, and summon up courage to bear even less than that for their sakes. And yet the love of Jesus bears that for my sake, in my stead, for my sins! Am I going to give Him no return? What have I hitherto done to prove my love for Him? What can I do even yet (for it is not too late to begin) to show Him that He has not suffered in vain?

Let us take one single thought each day, and consecrate the day, as it were, to the sentiments and practical thoughts with which it inspires our minds; using our spiritual industry, for without that we gain no spiritual profit.

In any meditation-book on the Passion we find points ready set; but let it be real earnest work; let the thought sink into your soul, so that it will recur during the day. Our Lord loves us to think on His Passion; over and over again He revealed to St. Gertrude for our instruction, as well as her own, that He could not resist pouring graces into the soul that offered Him the merits of the Passion. He told her to offer Him the merits and sufferings of the

Passion, and she did it so continually that at last it became habitual. And when at last she neared her end, and had less control over her mind (as it comes to all of us at last), she kept on offering the life and merits of our Lord, as she was accustomed to do time after time in the day, thus bringing into her soul infinite treasures of grace and merit. It is at death that the habit of a lifetime comes out strongly. How happy would our death-beds be, if like her we cultivated during life an habitual devotion to the sufferings of our Lord. Let us try this Lent to acquire some degree of it, and begin the habit of offering up the Passion continually, for the good of our own souls ; then, going a little further and having the Apostleship always at heart, we offer it that His Kingdom may come, and begin to think of His interests, and to serve Him, not only for the sake of our own salvation, but out of pure love.

This habitual thought of the Passion ought not to have in it anything of effort, or a forced restraint of mind. It ought to come as it were naturally, without in the least hindering us from giving our minds fully to whatever duties we have to perform. With the desire and the will we can do much, and very much, towards acquiring this habitual thought of our Lord's sufferings, and I am not asking anything out of the way—any high, or continual contemplation, or any extra time for prayer—it can all be done in the usual time for prayer by steeping our minds thoroughly and deeply in that one single thought for the day, making it enter practically into our daily life. In Lent our duties are the same as usual, many of us

have no extra time for prayer. I do not even say you will have very great contrition, but by bending all your spiritual energies, all your interior affections and sentiments one way, you will make many, and perhaps very many little acts of sorrow ; it may be a little tear of contrition, and like little drops of water running together and forming a mighty torrent, your little acts, the little tears of sorrow, will daily gather during Lent, till at last the Passion will become to us what it has never been before ; it will have gained a firmer hold on our minds, a dearer place in our hearts ; it will have become more real to us, and we shall have learnt what I tried to put before you in the beginning—that it is our treasure. I dare say you know well that little book of St. Gertrude's, in which she makes that long and most beautiful offering to God of the merits of the life and sufferings of our Lord. It is so long that I cannot advise you to say it often ; but there is a shorter form in which she offers the sufferings of our Lord, and which you might use now and again, especially in Lent, till the spirit of it sinks deep into your souls, and has become as it was with St. Gertrude, an habitual thought, and until like her we are constantly offering it to God for ourselves and others. Even if we gain but one grace, a truer and more abiding sorrow for sin, our industry during Lent would not have been spent in vain.

Oh ! if it only would give us that genuine, abiding sorrow for sin, so rarely seen, and still more rarely prayed for and desired, what an effect it would have on our lives : all mists would clear away from our souls, and we should learn to regard ourselves in our

true light, and to take our true position in the sight of God—that of sinners.

We should acquire that exquisite purity of soul which characterizes the saints and those holy souls who are penetrated with this deep sentiment of sorrow. It leads the soul to look on sin, and all that might lead to sin, with that holy hatred and horror which makes it shrink from the slightest approach of anything which might sully its beauty in God's sight. It begins to see in itself those imperfections which before it was too blind to see. It begins to detest its own vileness, and is afflicted at the sight of its many deficiencies ; not with regard so much to sin, which it flies from and abhors, but in the meanness of its own interior disposition,—its poverty, its want of purity of intention, its continual falling short of what it feels it ought to be, towards a God so holy and so good. It is ashamed of those little movements of passion, which imperceptibly occupy the heart for a time. It does not act nor speak uncharitably, for instance, on such an occasion, nay, it even acts with generosity and large-heartedness, but yet it is conscious of an interior feeling which arose or arises, a repugnance for which it humbles itself ; even when others cannot see any imperfection, it sees the want of perfection in all it does from morning to night ; this leads it to that solid and practical spirit of deep humility which is so touching and so beautiful to see.

The soul then accepts penance as its due ; when it is slighted and humbled, ignored or tried, it does not grumble—it accepts all with cheerfulness, for it regards itself as unworthy of any better treatment.

This gives us joy and contentment, for humility is truth, and as soon as we truly recognize what we are, and what we deserve, we do not look for more than is our due, for doing that is the source of all discontent. We take our position in God's sight as sinners ; I do not know whether you understand what I am saying or not.

We can go on for years and years, blind to our spiritual state, but true contrition soon does away with these mists. We consecrate some unworthy corner of our hearts to self in some form or other, and we either do not see it, or seeing have not the courage to mortify and overcome it. We feel a kind of uncharitableness in our hearts towards some one, for instance—we may seldom think of this individual, but when we do, something unpleasant, perhaps unforgiving, rises in our hearts ; and jealousy, self-seeking, self-complacency, in the same way may lurk unchecked within us. Want of contrition hardens and blinds the heart, but when true contrition begins to reign, and that deep abiding sorrow begins gradually to develop itself, it softens the heart and makes it tender towards God—sensitive to the things of God, eager to please God and atone for the past ; and self-love begins to have less influence over our lives, for we begin to be animated with love for God. We are continually aiming at becoming more pure in God's sight, and striving to avoid all that could displease Him, and to rid ourselves more and more of the unworthy dispositions lurking in our hearts. Contrition abiding in the soul also gives us that cheerful alacrity in the service of God which I have so often

spoken to you about. The soul realizes God's infinite goodness and tenderness in bearing our imperfections, and is glad to give Him in return every proof of cheerful and loving service.

Month of St. Joseph.

We cannot let the Month of St. Joseph pass without a few words about this great Saint and model of the interior life. It is said that nothing is more difficult than to pronounce a panegyric on St. Joseph, simply because there is so little to say of him ; but to me it seems that there is no Saint whose life affords so many pictures for contemplation. The Holy Spirit Himself sets him up before us as the *model* man, the Saint whose sanctity has been doubly guaranteed. Doubly guaranteed I say, from the fact that : first, the Holy Spirit, the Wisdom of God, has chosen him for guardian of the Incarnate Word and spouse of His holy Mother.

And secondly, the Holy Ghost has proclaimed Him "*a just man.*" Yet this man thus elevated, and praised by God Himself, is utterly stripped of every exterior semblance of sanctity. No great austerities, no apostolic zeal, no martyrdom, nothing of extraordinary gifts or sublime prayer to distinguish him in the eyes of men. Never was a life, except that of the Blessed Virgin, more devoid of exterior signs of sanctity, yet surely there could be no greater holiness or zeal than his, who was chosen to fulfil so high an office. This brings clearly to our minds how distinct great sanctity is from great actions. St. Joseph is

truly the model of the interior, the hidden life ; and it is this which I wish to take for the subject of my instruction this time. I do not mean by this what is generally understood by the interior life in Religion, nor the life hidden and secluded from the world. By the interior life I mean that inward life which we lead in our very heart of hearts, where none but God can penetrate. This inward communing with self is a part of our character as rational creatures. It is what gives each of us our special character and makes us what we are. We cannot give ourselves our character, yet we have it in our power to mould it, by attending to this inward chamber, this corner where we are truly at home.

It is quite possible not to be what Superiors think us, *not* even what confessors suppose us to be, *not* what the good simple people who listen with reverence to our every word, take us for, but something very different in this inward chamber of our own hearts.

According to this character, things act differently upon us. A sermon or an instruction is given. One understands it, one misunderstands it, one takes it one way, and one neither understands it nor thinks further about it. What a variety there is amongst us. And how many there are whose inner life is at variance with the exterior ! How little we know of our own selves, and what can we know of the inner life of our neighbour ? Our own is an almost unfathomable abyss, into which if we look long we sometimes sicken, for what meets us there ? How many of us, Religious though we be, can find in our very inmost heart, low, sordid and selfish motives and aims in our

actions, and desires all too unworthy of the character we bear ! Sin is here out of question, but littleness, and meanness and selfishness, how these may engross our heart and mind, while outwardly we appear intent only on the interests of God ! How often we can be beside some poor soul in worldly attire, with aims purer and nobler than those upon which we are intent ? How sometimes a word accidentally dropped by some poor person to whom we are speaking, takes us by surprise, as it were, and fills us with reverence for the soul before us. We, with all our study of the interior life, and all the care bestowed upon our training, feel how far we are from the profound spirituality of that person enlightened by the Spirit of God ! It is thus the light from the inner chamber of the heart sometimes flashes forth, and we form some idea of what is within. Now, let us study together for awhile : think of our Lord, His exterior was simple, open, candid, as His Infinite Perfection rendered it. In His dealings with Mary and Joseph, He was a Child full of affection and thoughtfulness for others, and what could be compared with those thirty years of close companionship with Him at Nazareth ? Yet with all, what could they, Saints though they were, what could they understand of the inner life of that infinitely holy and perfect Being. Oh ! the depths beyond any conception, hidden within the Sacred Heart, the Heart of the God made Man ! Of Mary the Holy Spirit says : "*Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.*" Holy beyond our conception must have been the heart of that Virgin Mother, "*full of grace :*" and St. Joseph

constantly in the company of both, how upright and pure must have been the aims and intentions of that "*just man*." But of our own selves I am about to speak, and what a contrast they form ! There is the frivolous heart, over which everything passes and leaves no impression, no more than the cloud which has passed over the sun. There are those who never think of sounding themselves or examining their motives. How amazed we shall be on the Day of Judgment, when the secret chamber is exposed to our view. Then there is the scheming or designing heart, always with an end in view, but to its own interest, always self-seeking. We appear to attend to advice or correction, but all the while are communing with ourselves in the "rogue's corner," and mean to carry out our end. I remember a story of a man, who had a penance for spending money on a cab when he might have walked. Asked about it afterwards, he said : "Oh, I thought to myself, after all I *had* my ride."

I once knew a nun who put her vocation into jeopardy about her choice of linen coiffes.

Then comes those who indulge imagination. What are Superiors going to do ? Then the melancholy heart. How St. Teresa deplores having received melancholy women amongst her Sisters, and how earnestly she instructs the Prioresses of the different houses with regard to dealing with them. A Religious, who was cracked through brooding over little troubles and imaginary grievances, had hoarded up in a book all the supposed injuries he had received from Superiors. He pondered over them, and

resolved to carry the book before the judgment-seat of our Lord, in order to accuse his Superiors. To what a lamentable state had melancholy reduced this poor man! What a waste of precious time results from this brooding, and how much ashamed we should be if only our schemings, imaginings, and communings in the "rogue's corner" were exposed to the view of others, yet how they all lie bare before the "all-seeing eye" of God our Lord and Master, on Whose side we pretend to be! We are about to begin the holy season of Lent, a time of penance and mortification; it is well to mortify our bodies, minds, and wills, but let us attack this inner chamber of the heart, let right order reign therein. Let us be *there* what we appear *outwardly*, and when we meet *ourselves* in this little corner, let us bravely say, and abide by what we say: "I shall not join your side again, I shall be with you here as I am when kneeling before our Lord, no more secret understandings and roguish tricks. Everything must be straightforward and clear, for I shall keep in mind for the future the 'all-seeing eye' which penetrates even to this recess, and in its light I shall also try to obtain a true knowledge of myself."

The Feast of St. Joseph.

I think the thing you will like best is to hear me speak about St. Joseph, that by meditation and prayer we may prepare to keep his feast well, and thus obtain many graces. Those are wise who apply to St. Joseph; no devotion pays, so to speak, more

than devotion to him, who has in some marvellous way the disposal of the treasures of Heaven. To begin by the words of Holy Scripture—St. Joseph there gains the unique praise of being “*a just man.*” This term includes everything, and goes much farther than would at first appear. Justice of mind should not be unfamiliar to you ; it is one of the essential requirements of a Religious, a mind equally balanced—neither disturbed by adversity, passion, or imagination, nor elated by prosperity. It means a clear, calm view of all the events of life as they come before us one by one, and that we conduct ourselves with that robust sort of goodness absolutely necessary for those employed in active work, and which we have spoken of before as “common sense.” Justice takes in what we owe to God, our neighbour, and ourselves—St. Joseph is a practical example of justice towards God. It consists in absolute submission, entire dependence on Him, recognition of our creatureship. St. Joseph passed through the most unexampled trials in calmness and peace, because his heart was rooted deep, deep, deep in submission.

In submission to God’s holy will and joy in everything that could happen through His appointment. Let those who wish to share this virtue, pray to this great patron with confidence, sure of obtaining and really receiving what they demand. Justice towards our neighbour is also exemplified in St. Joseph’s life. Remark his dealings with our Lady before the mystery of the Incarnation was *fully* revealed to him. Holy Scripture says, “*Whereupon Joseph her husband*

being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately."

St. Joseph, devotedly attached to every command or observance of the Law, feared lest she should be brought under the severe penalties of the Mosaic dispensation.

Are we as anxious about our neighbour's reputation. How many times a day do we grumble at them, and if we actually keep our tongues quiet, we are all the same "in the grumble," for the disposition to grumble, to walk about grumbling, is as strong as ever. And when we grumble, what are we grumbling at? Search, and you will find it is because self-love has been wounded: therefore our grumbles are unjust, passion blinds us, and we see offence where common reason would show us there was none. Generally we are hurt at things that do not offend God in the least. Then how dare I blame my Sister for an act for which God praises her! As a rule you do not speak uncharitably, but what about unkind thoughts, and thoughts amounting to a deliberate judgment? We hear of examples approved by the Church in which God is known to have punished with almost incredible rigour thoughts against charity. In this case these words apply to the fullest extent: "*As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me.*" Thirdly, if we give our neighbour her due, we give God His due, "*For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, Whom he seeth not.*"

But we can be just neither to God nor our neighbour unless we give ourselves our due. For

many the answer will be "hell-fire," one mortal sin merits that for us. For those who have kept, or rather have been kept, from mortal sin, the remark of St. Ignatius in one of his meditations on sin is equally true, that by rights we should be shunned and abhorred by all men for our countless venial sins and the terribly numerous imperfections of our daily life. If we then take this true estimate of ourselves, how great will our esteem for others proportionably rise.

Sunk in our littleness, nay, rather nothingness, we shall be jealous of guarding their character, and not a thought will ever find admittance which injures them in our opinion—this comes from giving ourselves our due. Lastly, we will consider St. Joseph as the special patron and model of training up youth. How closely you resemble him! Children, and not only children, but also their angels, look to you to place in their budding minds thoughts that will eventually save their souls. How fervently you ought to implore St. Joseph's aid in your important work, and how diligently you should try, day by day, to imitate the calm serenity of his life and his evenness of temper in those inevitable little upsets which, though small, are so trying to persons of unripened virtue. St. Joseph must be favourably disposed to you, for you are doing for the little ones what he was privileged to do for his Creator.

NOTE.

Father Dignam had a peculiar devotion to calling the feast of the Annunciation of our Lady that of the

Incarnation, in order to intensify the lesson of this Mystery of Mysteries when the Sacred Heart of Jesus first began to beat.

Feast of the Incarnation.

St. Luke i. 26—38.

This is the event by which Jesus Christ was given to us, by which He came into the world, by which He became our Brother.

In the Incarnation we have everything—this mystery is, among the other mysteries of our Lord's life, as the Blessed Sacrament is among the seven—the fountain of all, containing all.

There is no uncertainty, no flutter, as Mary heard the Angel—there was prudent inquiry: "*How can this be done?*" But when she learnt that God's will would be accomplished without detriment to her virginity, the *Fiat* was spoken, heedless of the pain which she knew would follow from its utterance. The Angel saluted this young child with *reverence*, because of God's election. See how in these mysteries we may still fall back upon the fundamental meditation of all our retreats, and pick up fruit on our way.

Here it is reverence, respect for those chosen by God.

What the Incarnation gave us, it is useless to attempt describing. Perhaps it is best understood by trying to picture what our lives would be if no such man as our Lord had ever been on the earth. It calls up the same feelings as on approaching the

holy altar—wonder, admiration, astonishment, deep humility, immense joy.

He came into the world purposely to do the will of His Father, and His whole life was spent in bowing to the will of every one that passed Him by.

And the Incarnation, the most wonderful of all mysteries, is our example.

How are you going to begin?

“Lord, I am going to empty myself.” Oh! that’s something to think about. Our Lord did first and taught after.

We ought to educate ourselves to be useful to others. Humility is the best preparation for our work, and the humble will do most for souls. Because our Lady was so humble, our Lord delighted to dwell in her for nine months.

We must renew our love and confidence in our Lady, not merely because we are her children, but more especially because she, and only she, can help us in the work we have to do for the souls God has entrusted to our care.

Each day we should set about our appointed work, with Mary for companion, praying her to obtain for us preservation from a spirit of routine, which takes away the spiritual joy we otherwise would have in the “high thoughts of the children of God.”

Each Religious in her own charge should be the mouthpiece of our Lady—let each earnestly pray that by her words, example, instruction, and manners, she may have the happiness of inspiring true virtue in the hearts of others. If no good comes, it is well and wise to put it down to our imperfections,

though God does not always grant external success, even to the most fervent. Certain it is, however, that not one act of self-conquest, or one prayer offered by the least of the community, but will gather its fruit in the hearts of those under our charge, or for those for whom we pray.

Easter Peace.

Peace is our Lord's Easter gift to each religious soul. It is God's will that the heart should be in peace. Whether tempted or not tempted, struggling or sailing easily along, peace can be hers if she likes. Some appreciate this gift more than others, and are willing to make more sacrifices to possess it. To pray, to suffer, to toil, make up life, and from none of these can God obtain His glory, unless peace be in the heart. What are the obstacles to peace? Chiefly two: vain, useless fears; inordinate desires. Under this first head come unworthy fears of God.

Having thoughts of Him which we should be ashamed of our own children having of us.

Considering Him as one always prone to blame, and never prone to praise, comparing Him mentally to an ill-tempered mistress, or cross master. Let us ask ourselves, "Do I think of our Lord in such a way, as He would like me to do? Do I put in the balance the love which made death on Calvary acceptable to Him, and in my dealings with Him do I treat Him accordingly?" An unworthy fear of death. Death should not be (though it is to most of us) a more stupendous act than receiving Holy

Communion. If with confidence and thankfulness we unite ourselves to our Lord, this act is similar to that plunge into those recesses which lead to the bosom of God. We meet the *same* God in death Whom we have so often met in life. This is the road, that the term—here we have the toil, there the Father's heart is waiting for us. *Mean* fears of humiliation, reproof, and the like, which sometimes, alas, are quite enough to upset a nun completely. Inordinate desires—these of course embrace a wide sphere. The great remedy for both evils—fears and desires—is to control the imagination. When something presents itself, either attracting or repelling us, we should calmly place it before our mind, look well at it, pluck the feathers out of its body, and when it is well stripped view it in its nude littleness. How few would then seek for, or fly from those objects which heretofore captivated their understanding. Half the victory is already gained, if we learn this art of controlling the imagination, and become clever and skilful in finding out the tricks of the devil. Either the difficulty vanishes altogether, or it becomes reduced to a proportion over which we have the power of control. We cannot give our Lord what He has a right to expect, we cannot make our hearts a home of delights for Him, unless we resolutely face these two great adversaries, fears and desires; woe be to us, if each day does not reckon struggles on our part against these enemies of His reign in our souls.

Patronage of St. Joseph.

What a model is this great Saint to those who live a life of obscurity, and strive to practise the hidden life.

He was a man who gave without counting the cost. What agony he suffered concerning our Lady, not seeing clearly what was God's will ; but he held firm, and his steadfast fidelity overcame his perplexity. He knew God would guide him, and he waited God's own time.

How in our own way we too have to give without counting the cost. It is true we do not give much, but somehow, kind Providence arranges that we should love much the little that we have to renounce. And so it becomes great to us.

Nobody consults us much, thank God ; we are not asked where we wish to live or what companions we prefer ; if we were, after a time we should become useless and not worth the asking. We are so accustomed to being knocked about that renunciation becomes a second nature to us. St. Joseph is our model again when we come "to fight and not to heed the wounds."

This means of course hunting down self-love in all its different disguises. As Father de la Palma says, we would willingly take refuge in a discipline, or some mortification, if we could escape the restraint imposed by a faithful daily marking of the examen.

Particular indeed it is, for it is the most particular thing we have to do ; on it centres our whole advance-

ment in perfection. St. Joseph shows us how to "labour and not to seek reward."

Oh, how few do this. Self-indemnification, as a wise Superior once remarked to me, is the unhappy cause of many a good Religious stopping on her course. It is an unconscious defect. One who is devoted, self-sacrificing, generous of her strength, will pay herself back in little things so trivial as to be almost unnoticeable unless well searched out. Self-indemnification when we have done what is worthy of praise, occurs so frequently that à Kempis may well say, "Who is willing to serve God gratis?" Let us search our own hearts and put our finger on the spot, and resolve to amend.

And we should pray earnestly to St. Joseph on this matter for light and grace to banish it from our hearts. He is the Saint to whom St. Teresa says we never pray in vain.

Feast of the Ascension.

Two thoughts are prominent on this day's festival: that our Lord ascended to Heaven from the very spot where He had most cruelly suffered from the shame, and humiliation, and dejection of His Agony.

So is it with us; the proportion of our sufferings will be the measure of our reward, if we will but bear patiently all God sends for our sanctification. Our Lord said, "*I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and your God.*" Thus He joins us to Him in the bond of brotherhood, and that at

the moment when His eternal glory is about to begin.

What can be better on such a day, than to meditate on the place to which Jesus Christ has ascended? As those who every day think of our Lord, if only for one minute, become each time more like Him in mind, ways of acting, and intentions, so each time we think about Heaven we become more fit for it. Some persons are always seeking pleasure, others fun and mischief, others the good of their souls. According to what we willingly dwell on, will our life be shaped.

After all, Heaven is the home for which we were created; it is there that God dwells, it is therefore the place in which we shall meet Him. There we shall see, know, and love Him.

What multitudes of people assemble to witness a gorgeous spectacle! Let us compare the sights of earth to those of Heaven, the better to appreciate the enjoyment in store for us. Then we shall also understand God. If even children are riveted at the recital of some touching story, what a joy will ours not be when our intelligence is flooded with heavenly light.

But all this is only as the threshold. We shall not stand there as mere idle spectators; besides seeing, we shall be seen. As we look into our Father's eye, He will look into ours, and the reciprocal looks of love will be more tender than those exchanged between parent and child, husband and wife, lover and spouse. Is there a higher bliss than to feel intense love returned, and that without sin or even imperfection, to enjoy such union of heart as we shall there receive.

Then He Who loves us can and will bestow innumerable riches on His chosen ones. In that desired day, all things will become sources of pleasure, and the society of our companions more delightful than that of the dearest friend on earth.

Our bodies, such constant springs of mortification and temptation, will only increase our happiness ; the senses will be charmed each one according to its power, and with St. Paul may we exclaim, "*that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.*"

Can we, believing these truths, remain the carnal things we are ?

Our Lady's Month.

The month of our Lady is drawing near, and I want you to offer her such a beautiful bouquet of united love and service that she will be quite taken by surprise. Union of hearts is union of strength, and is obtained by union of purpose ; so that if we all go at the same thing we shall give more glory to God than if each one chose something in particular.

I am not going to suggest any special devotions or extra prayers, but the preparation I wish you to make will rather startle you at first—it is "self-denial." You might think this is Easter-time, and what has self-denial to do with Easter, when we are told to rejoice and take a holy relaxation ? Then what has self-denial to do with May and our Lady ? She is not generally taken as a type of self-denial.

Looking at it in this light, these are the questions you will ask yourself; but the light in which I want you to consider it is the perfection of your vocation. Our Lady by her Immaculate Conception was free from those remains of sin which in us cause such commotions and struggles to submit to the will of God.

Her will was always in perfect and most sublime conformity to the will of God without effort or struggle—it would even have been an effort for her to act contrary to God's will. Now, the only way in which we can attain to some degree of this state of our Blessed Mother, is to acquire an habitual conformity to God's holy will by constantly going against our natural inclinations—self-denial. By this means we shall become more like our Holy Mother, and consequently nearer and dearer to her Son. Every nun should say from the day of her entrance into Religion, "I will do all I can to be a joy to my Mother;" underneath your habits should burn that spirit of self-sacrifice which God saw there the day you first put on the white veil, and still more since you took the black veil. To practise this self-denial of which I am speaking, I do not wish you to be continually counting this and that, or even to do any penance, but to take advantage of ordinary daily opportunities and daily community life to form as it were a habit of self-immolation.

The graces of Religion ought to cause great joy in your vocation. Whenever a Religious is fervent and good, you will always find that it comes from the love and joy in her vocation which burns in her heart. Having said so much to make you understand and

consequently make you esteem this self-denial, I shall now show you in a few words how the brightness and aroma of our offering may be dimmed and spoiled. There are three kinds of dimness, which belong to different classes of Religious. The first indulge in repining and grumbling when things go contrary—and sometimes this repining is not only interior, but is shown in manner—in self-seeking even in trifles, putting God in the second place.

The second kind of dimness belongs to those who are trying to do their best, but are fidgety, never in peace, serving God as if He were a taskmaster ; who do not give Him that confiding, childlike love they ought to have for their good Lord, but are always on the rack. The third are those whose work is dimmed with self-complacency and the natural satisfaction they seek in it. It is in Purgatory we shall find the harm self-complacency can do. This self-complacency is like a worm in the heart of a rose, it eats quietly and imperceptibly at the heart of our good actions, and is the cause of numbers of faults and defects. We do our work well and take a pleasure in it ; our Superiors may think it perfect, and we may even say to ourselves, “ No one could do such a thing as well as I.” We are too blind to see our danger, and imagine we are working purely for God. This state of things continues till we are contradicted, till something goes wrong, till we are hindered in our work or told to give it up and do something else, and then how wofully and deplorably we fall. When all went on as we liked, we did not perceive our danger, but when crossed we find it was

self and not God who held the first place. Let us beg of God to give us light to see if there be any of this in us, and grace firmly to resist it. In conclusion, let me add a few words which may help to give a special May-bloom to our actions. Let us divest ourselves of all self-seeking, and work for God. Remember God loves offerings made in joy, and the cream of our offerings is to show joy when tried. If contradictions and annoyances come, let us try to offer a fervent, joyful act of thanksgiving that God has given us an opportunity of practising virtue. Let us make a serious examination to discover if any self-complacency, or natural pleasure is lurking in our hearts, and if so we must courageously rid ourselves of it, and tell God we are willing to undertake another charge, fulfil another office, and generously sacrifice all we have when He demands it. Lastly, let us cultivate a familiarity and personal tenderness for our dearest Lady and Mother, having recourse to her with confidence and love, and thank God for giving us such a beautiful and tender Mother.

Our Lady, Refuge of Sinners.

I do not know if you will like my thought. Of course we are all trying to keep the month of May in our own hearts, in the way which will give most delight to the Blessed Virgin; but this year I am going to propose that your homage should be directed to her as "Refuge of Sinners." Two happy results will come from this form of addressing our Blessed Lady. First, we shall get a good deal of light and

grace towards acquiring sensitive consciences to perceive real sins, and strength to despise imaginary ones.

Mary will help us to check the waste of such a precious thing as sorrow. It is deplorable to see a nun fretting her life away on things deserving not a thought, while those faults which really displease our Lord she passes over lightly. We should often take our consciences to our Lady to be rectified, just as mariners take their compasses to the optician to be adjusted after their return from a voyage. When the conscience is once set in order, then follows the second beneficial effect of this devotion. The spirit of abiding sorrow enters the heart and dwells there. There may have been some faults committed during the past year for which deep sorrow is absolutely necessary, such are sins of pride or of malice, shown in uncharitableness and selfishness ; we cannot grieve over these too much. But another class of sin does not require this intense contrition ; the practical sorrow for these is to resolve firmly not to do them again : they are sins of inadvertence, of carelessness, of inconsideration, the cause of many disagreeables to others. People excuse it by saying, " Sister didn't mean it ; but then Sister never thinks." Now our Lady's prayers will obtain us remedies for both these kinds. For the first, the spirit of compunction and abjection, which when absent makes community life so difficult. When this willing self-abasement is in the heart, the waters of grace are let loose and we receive consolation and hope. Past sins become present treasures, for they help us to draw nearer to God,

Who, as they say mothers do, loves most those who have cost Him most dear. And for the second class of carelessness, if our Lady obtains for us practical lights on the matter, we shall certainly be more edifying Religious by next May than we are now. Is not the "Refuge of Sinners" the true haven to which we ought to fly, not only so to intercede for others whom we call sinners, but to kneel there in the midst and name ourselves sinners amongst them? How can we dare, with the view of our ever-flowing miseries before us each quarter of an hour, raise our heads or seek any position but amongst poor sinners? Let us only begin low enough at the very foot of the ladder, and joy will come into the heart. The same one who begins by raising herself above the sinners, will be heard later on talking about the happiness of others; "but as for me," she adds, "I try to be happy, but I don't seem to grasp it as they do." Upon your happiness there should be no shadow; it is what God intends, for as sin preferred, sin loved, sin refused to be parted with, is the only real cause of sadness in the world, a nun's life ought to be nothing but one perpetual sunshine.

Our Lady's Virtues.

The words of the Book of Wisdom, although literally understood to refer to our Lord, the uncreated Wisdom hidden in the bosom of the Eternal Father, are yet most directly and elaborately applied by the Church to our Lady; she is spoken of as existing before all creation, as taking root in God's

people, as filling Heaven with a new and resplendent light.

She is made to proclaim herself "*the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth ; in me is all hope of life and of virtue.*"

Let us consider each of these last characters. "*I am the Mother of fair love,*" that is, pure love, as opposed to earthly love, or love founded only on human passion, love which leads to God, and to a proper use of His creatures. This pure love begets fear or reverence, which is the virtue of Religion.

Let us then, in this month of May, look into our hearts and souls to see if reverence has taken deep root there ; for as I have told you often, to appear exteriorly, reverence must have root in the heart.

"*I am the Mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope.*" Naturally this last virtue springs from the other two, for only those who love have true reverence, which is fear, and only those who possess these two virtues can persevere in that joyous spirit of hope which carries them through life and its difficulties, without those periods of discouragement and down-heartedness which only spring from pride. With reverence or fear, what Religious would even think of being obstinate or unyielding ? When such a state of mind is indulged in, a Sister may say, "I have taken in pride to my heart, and I have wounded holy fear and reverence."

"*I am the Mother of knowledge.*" With true knowledge of God comes trust and confidence in Him, our Father and only true Friend, and this sustains us

through all the trials of life. Mary says, "*In me is all hope, of life and of virtue.*" Yes, Mary is our hope in life and our joy in eternity.

From her we receive all our blessings, for through her we have Jesus, the Source of every grace. This fair, pure love which filled her heart, and made her long to be the handmaid of the woman who should be chosen for God's Mother, drew God Himself to her, and He chose her for His Mother.

See this Mother of beautiful love, when the mystery of the Incarnation makes her Mother of God! If before, her virtue had made the Angel proclaim her *full of grace*, what now must have been the perfection of that virtue, when He, the "Author and Finisher" of all perfection, took up His abode in her? Then for thirty years she lived in His holy company, imbibing more and more the spirit of His Sacred Heart, till she stood on Calvary at the foot of His Cross, a victim in her pierced heart, while He, the Redeemer of man, hung there the victim of sin. She is the mirror in which we see reflected the perfection, the mercy, the goodness of our loving Lord, and reflected, oh, how perfectly, since it had been her one aim in life to copy Him and mould her soul on His. We go to Jesus through Mary. Him, the great God, Whom we have offended, we sometimes fear to approach, but in company with Mary His Mother we have nothing to fear; her word is all-powerful with her Divine Son. If at the marriage-feast her request obtained a miracle, where merely temporal good was concerned, what will not her word obtain for her children where the salvation of their souls is in

question. How much greater confidence may those repose in her, by the triple title of Christians redeemed by her Son, spouses whom He the Lamb has chosen as His followers, and her children.

Our Lady's Four Corners.

Some people are frightened when it is proposed to them to "imitate" our Lady. So, instead of setting her before us for imitation, we will do so only to grow to love "her spirit" a little.

Philosophers say that all bodies in nature must have four corners. We know a brick has—and all Religious ought to be bricks—not in the slang acceptance of the word, but in so far that they are able to fill an office and bear pressure.

Our Lady then was true and firm, and her four corners were: First corner, Cheerfulness; second, Freedom; third, Activity; fourth, Gentleness. Unselfish people are cheerful—who could even for a moment suppose our Lady capable of a selfish action? In her own eyes she was imperfect, but even her seeming imperfections did not damp the light-heartedness of her spirit. She was too humble for that. A fountain of joy was continually welling up in her heart, fed by her hopes of eternal bliss and the knowledge that she was trying to please God alone, therefore He would accept her efforts. She was never cast down—why? Because so thoroughly conscious that her hopes were fixed in none but God. Those who keep a corner of their hearts consecrated to sadness will never advance in holiness, Melan-

choly makes a soul think constantly of itself and never of any one else. If we would look with love on our Lady's image, the clouds of melancholy and selfishness must first have been dispersed. Many of those here present are called not only to lead bright and happy lives themselves, but to be very fountains of gladness to those around them.

Freedom: our Lady's heart was free—detached from earth and all that earth can give. Even the knowledge of God's designs on her soul did not exert a fascinating power over her. "*How shall this be?*" she asked in her childlike way, for our Lady was childlike throughout. How freedom makes the soul run—"love feels no burden, it aims at doing more than it can."

Activity: our Lady's activity was all supernatural—no *fuss*, which in reality is only another name for *self*. She was observant without being critical. How quietly she came to the help of her friends at the marriage-feast: "*they have no wine.*" How she forgot herself at the very moment that joy was flooding her soul, for "*rising, with haste*" she set out to visit her cousin, who then needed her assistance and sympathy. We have it in our power to help others as our Lady did—a kind word in season, even a kind look is oftentimes enough to cheer a drooping soul. Can we not learn this lesson from our Mother?

Gentleness: who so gentle as she! "*Chaste and gentle*" are the praises bestowed on her by the Church in the *Ave, Maris Stella*—chaste because she was gentle. Even when Jesus seemed insensible to her sorrow after the three days' loss—when He, as it

were, drove home the nail of detachment by His seeming indifference to her trial—no irritation ; she was gentleness itself. Detachment is the genuine trial of the Religious. Where is the magnanimous soul, brave, noble, and true, who will serve God freely, seeking only God's approbation and turning to nought of earth for comfort, sympathy, or approval.

Our Lady and the Seven Gifts.

Our Lady is as truly the Spouse of God the Holy Ghost, as she is the daughter of God the Father, and the Mother of God the Son. Contemplate our Lady as possessing the fulness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Beg of her to obtain a share for you—

Wisdom, to taste the things of God and rise above all earthly desires.

Understanding, to comprehend eternal truths and order our lives thereby.

Knowledge, to fathom human science and turn it to God.

Counsel, to know when to go forward, and when to put such limit to zeal that it may never clash with charity or the interior life.

Fortitude, to keep up the soul under the pressure of hard work and external difficulties, and also to fortify her in internal struggles. Religious need this gift in an extraordinary degree ; the daily drudgery being severe—grand, apostolic drudgery though it is. But besides all this outward taxation, there are these horrid little selves, known only to God and the confessor, that have to be continually watched,

fought against, and corrected. So that if anybody requires the strength of the Holy Ghost we certainly do.

Piety, by which meditation becomes another name for repose. Do we ever think this is a gift which can be had for the asking?

Fear of the Lord is also a gift; but mind it must be the right fear, a filial fear, looking on God as our Father, and trusting Him while we fear Him.

Lesson for Pentecost.

St. Paul gives us the beautiful lesson of Pentecost when he says, that the Holy Spirit comes to give us, not the spirit of fear, but the spirit of strength and love.

This is the gift of the Holy Ghost to us. In times of trial and suffering, it is encouraging to reflect that we receive strength, a special gift of strength.

The Holy Ghost comes to give us in all its plenitude the gift of fortitude, to make us strong. God promises it. His promises never fail; on the contrary, God always gives more than He promises. Now, what is this gift of strength? St. Mark explains it more fully when he says not only, "*thou shalt love the Lord thy God*," like the other Evangelists, but when he thus expresses the first, and greatest commandment, "*thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole strength.*"

Now, what is it to love God with our whole strength? Father Alvarez explains it, by describing what a man in the world does to get anything to

which he is passionately attached ; let it be pleasure, honour, ambition, money, or any other object ; let the thing be what it will, he pursues it with an incredible ardour, he surpasses himself to get it, he attempts impossible things that are above his strength, fails and is ruined.

The reports of the law-courts furnish abundant examples of this : a man is attracted by some object, he strives to get it, leaves not a single means untried, but even does extravagant things, is discovered, accused, arrested, and perishes. This is also beautifully explained in that chapter of the *Imitation* with which you are all so familiar, where it says we ought to be ashamed at the thought that worldlings strive and wrangle and run after a single penny, some poor unworthy object that will perish as soon as they grasp it, and we take such little trouble to catch at the penny which is eternal and gives us everlasting life. St. Bernard says we give the devil an occasion to insult our Lord, to taunt Him, and to throw it in His face, as it were ; that we serve him rather than our Lord God, Who created us, took us into Religion, died for us, for Whom we have left all, even the most legitimate treasures we possessed. And the devil says to our Lord, "Look, you did all that for her, I didn't die for her, I have done nothing for her, and yet see she prefers me to you." It is a very horrible thought, I know ; but it is one which, if reflected on often and sincerely between the heart and God, will produce much fruit in our souls. Yes ! we pain our Lord and give the devil the chance of taunting Him each time we deliberately say, "My Superiors, or the Rule, say

this ; but I will do that, just for this once at any rate." This is specially the case in faults of sloth or self-will.

Any habitual failing in sloth, let it be ever so small, is dangerous. It is not the fact of a thing being great or small ; it does not matter how small a thing it may be, not even seen by any one, not a subject of disedification to any one, not known even to our Superiors, still a something in the very secret of our hearts which we know is displeasing to God, not quite the right thing, or something God is asking and which we keep back. This is a very searching inquiry, and naturally makes one very anxious. Little actions, thoughts, infidelities in secret, and with no eye but God's to see them, come in here, and we can only settle the matter by examining ourselves sincerely, and looking straight up to God. If we give way in these things, and seek in any way our own will and our own ease, before God's good pleasure, we are not loving Him with all our strength. These things come from weakness and from weakness indulged in for a long time, till at last weakness takes the place of strength in our souls.

To love Almighty God with all our strength, we must do what we can, and all we can, and having done that, long with a great desire even to do more than we can. All cannot do the same for God. There are some souls stronger than others, and capable of bearing, and suffering, and doing higher things for God, and it is for each one to ask herself, "Am I doing what I can for God, and am I doing all I can for God?" Now mind, you are not to measure your

efforts by those of others, for God does not expect the same from any two alike.

Now, perhaps the fervent will wear themselves to nothing, attempting impossibilities ; the scrupulous will wear themselves to fiddlestrings over a trifle, and do but little prudently.

But that is not what the Holy Spirit wants.

He wants us in a sensible way to give Him what we can, and all we can, without comparing it with what others do. The weakest Sister in the community may be perfectly pleasing in the eyes of God, because she is doing all she can, all God expects from her, whereas another may seem to do much greater things, both in the way of work and the practice of virtue, and may be thought by the Superiors and Sisters to be doing wonders, and yet be far off from what God expects of her, for she is capable of doing much more, and there may be some holding back in generosity and fervour in heart, which, although she appears to far surpass the other already, keeps her still from giving God all she can. This is an anxious point not easy to decide.

I will explain it still further by a comparison. A child sees a man with a sack on his back holding 50lbs. and thinks he is doing wonders, since it would be too heavy for the child even to lift. But a person meets him, who knows the man is quite capable of carrying 70 or 100lbs. with ease, and so he thinks nothing of it. With God's eye looking straight into our hearts, and seeking God's eye alone as witness of our actions at all times, let us just examine if we are giving to God all we can. There are two ways of

giving to God : refraining from sin, or *ad salutem*, and refraining from imperfections, *ad fervore*, or rising to God by love and straining to our very utmost to love Him with all our strength, so that we are never satisfied ; but when we have done what we can and all we can, longing with an intense desire, we could do more than we can and say to God, " My God, I wish I could love Thee more ; I wish I could do more for Thee." The spirit of fortitude and strength is more than ever needed and shown when we have to bear the Cross, and you know the mark of our love is the Cross. He showed us the way and went on before us carrying His Cross, and we cannot go along the same road after Him with our shoulders unladen ; we must follow with our cross, and the cross He has laid on us. God wants us to accept it with a bright, cheerful spirit, to stretch out our hand and take it up with alacrity, eagerness, and joy. "*God loves a cheerful giver.*" When the cross presses hard, and everything seems dull and weary, when all seems upside down, let us remember we must love God in winter as well as in summer, and look up to Him with a hopeful heart and accept His Divine will ; and if the Divine will becomes our cross, let us accept it with loving alacrity ; let us remember it is not only good for us, but that His love sends it, and that it is the best. Let us beware of any little infidelity, and falling short or giving way to nature, which would tarnish the offering God asks and expects from us, or spoil the beautiful spirit of brightness and alacrity in which we accept His will. The Holy Spirit has come into each one's heart, but not in the same way to any two hearts

sitting here before me now. He loves each with a special love, a great love ; but it is not the same for each in kind or degree. He had the height of each one's sanctity predestined from all eternity, before we were ever thought of in the world ; and He is waiting in each one's heart gently and patiently, soliciting her sympathy and co-operation with His designs. Let us think of that beautiful Lover within us, Who is leading and directing our interior life, and shaping all things to conduct us to the degree of perfection He has assigned to each one in particular. Just as the Providence of God orders and arranges everything in the exterior world for our benefit and advantage, so in our inmost hearts the Holy Spirit is constantly dwelling, and arranging by His Providence the events of our interior life. Let us not disappoint Him ; but let Him lead us where He will and how He will : all He wants is our correspondence. We have the spirit of strength, and if we believe in God we shall become strong ; He wants us to trust Him.

A Thought for Corpus Christi.

"Come to Me, all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you." Our Lord here, as on many occasions, passes over the most deserving to follow the instincts of His Divine compassion. St. Thomas Aquinas, whose mind was most illumined on the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament, as the whole liturgy of the Church for the feast of Corpus Christi proves, expresses also the feelings with which we should approach Holy Communion in the prayer he

composed for priests when preparing to say Mass. St. Thomas teaches in this prayer that because the priest is weak, because he is blind, because he is sinful, he should receive our Lord that he may be strengthened, enlightened, and healed.

We should think of Holy Communion with joy ; for whatever defects or whatever miseries we feel in ourselves, Holy Communion can supply an abundant remedy. If we are sad reflecting on the injuries offered to Jesus Christ by ourselves and others, we can make the best reparation by a fervent Communion. All sin consists in rejecting our Lord—Holy Communion is the turning to Him, union with Him, and we thus repair the offence. The Blessed Virgin is what she is through her *Fiat*. In a lesser degree we can, as well as she, unite ourselves with the Sacred Humanity. If you can make a child have joy in going to Holy Communion, wonders will be wrought in its soul ; for in a child nothing impedes the working of grace, with of course some exceptions which are rare.

Mass is our Lord's time for action. At Mass we may unite with Him in honouring His Eternal Father by infinite adoration—we are nothing, His Majesty merits unlimited homage, and He receives it at Mass through His only Son. We also render thanks for the countless benefits we have received. And with our Lord we offer propitiation, not only for our own sins, but for all those unfortunate creatures all over the world who day by day are pouring fresh bitterness into His adorable Heart. Then we can petition for graces needed for ourselves and others. Now let us

each ask ourselves, Do I thus obtain from the Holy Sacrifice all I ought, all I could if I really made efforts?

A Word for June.

Now a little word for the month of June. Our thought for May was a good foundation, and if you have thoroughly carried out what I put before you then, I feel you have come well prepared. "*I have called you friends,*" is what our Lord said to His Apostles, and it is what He says in a special manner to you. Let us see what the word friend means. The essential, the first and principal idea of friendship is equality, heart to heart. God from all eternity thought of us as His friends, not that we are at all necessary for His happiness. He from all eternity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was supremely happy, and His glory complete, and could not be increased except by the accidental glory of His creatures. This accidental glory or free service of His creatures is what God longs for. Our Lord wants it, and for this He abased Himself and—can we say it?—makes us His friends, His equals! God united Himself with us to be our friend. What abasement for Him, what an elevation for us. All creatures show forth God's glory, but they cannot offer Him free service; this requires free-will. He knew all the evil free-will would do, all it can do and is doing, all the evil it has done. He could, had He so pleased, have made wills which would of their nature have bent towards His as the blessed do in Heaven; but this He would not do. Even those blessed spirits the angels had

to offer Him the homage of free-will ; they had to choose between right and wrong, just as we are doing now. There are two kinds of service—that of mercenary and that of true love. The work of a Religious is a service of love in comparison with that of the children of the world. But even our service can have a different motive. We may perform our actions for Him with the hope of getting a reward, for God out of His own pure mercy can raise our actions to a supernatural level, and so render them fit to merit or deserve a reward. This is a good motive, but nothing in comparison with that true, devoted service of *love* which serves God at any cost, because He is good and beautiful in Himself. This is to be our offering for the month of June, loyal and devoted service. Every morning when we make our offering, let us say, “ Lord, I will sacrifice, suffer, and work for Thy interests, not because I expect a reward, but because Thou art my God, and have loved me so much, and have deigned to call me Thy friend, Thy little servant. Putting the thought of reward out of my head, to-day, this month—nay, I will go further—for my whole life, I will be Thy devoted servant.”

The Spirit of the Sacred Heart.

Now that the month of June is upon us, I am sure every one is impressed with the feeling that something more than ordinary is required of you, something in addition to what you have already done. And at the same time you ask yourselves, What am I to do? What offering can I make? “ All that I

have is His, what remains to bestow?" And truly, as Religious, what remains for us to offer? The fact of our profession shows that we have given all. Yet, with this fact before our eyes, which of us is conscious that she gave all with generosity? Going back to the very beginning of our vocation, we have to reproach ourselves with our want of generous correspondence to grace, we have to own that God did all, and in His goodness and mercy accepted our ungenerous offering. Casting a glance over our noviceship, with its various starts of enthusiasm, we find the same want of generosity, the same seeking of self. We have given all as far as things could be given; we had the great blessing of being called to religious life, in which all is taken and no consideration made of self-love or its choices. Yet, with all this, one little corner of our heart may remain unvisited, and there in its small centre self may still reign. This is the offering which Jesus demands. It is here we must examine and uproot this little monster, that the Spirit of Jesus may enter when self has been exterminated. And now what is this Spirit of Jesus? Only one who possesses it can describe it; words fail to picture it; it seems to escape between our thoughts and the words by which we would explain it. When a man has a many-sided character of great faults and some great virtues, we can write pages on him, but it would require the most illuminated mind to describe the Spirit of our Lord.

We can fancy St. Peter watching Jesus day by day and asking himself, "What is the Spirit of my

Master?" St. Paul was possessed of it when in his instruction to his neophytes he desires that the Spirit which was in the Lord Jesus may be in them. Then first, the Spirit of Jesus is the spirit of the greatest purity and simplicity; its only aim the glory of God; it suffered only for His interests, and rejoiced only in His triumphs. It desired to immolate itself for the interests of God's glory; and had He a self, He certainly would have immolated it: as it was, He sacrificed what He could, the human nature which He had assumed.

And with what longing He desired and thirsted that the sacrifice might be fulfilled. Contrast our simplicity with His! Yet you are simple; but compared with the simplicity of Jesus, how it dwindles down into a mere shadow. How many windings, how many colours it assumes. So many desires, fears, sorrows, likes, dislikes, and longings, that were they united they would be sufficient to form a kaleidoscope.

Which of us makes everything turn to the honour and glory of God? Our praise, our blame, our crosses, humiliations, satisfactions, and pleasures. How few acquire this simplicity even after years spent in advancing in religious virtues!

Religious virtues we all have more or less, each in our degree; but we might advance far in one such virtue, or even in many, and yet be far from simplicity.

The lives of the saints are models of that of Jesus, because of the purity of their simplicity. In their hearts there was no second aim; God's glory

alone was the motive of their thoughts, words, and actions.

And in the second place, how are we to learn the Spirit of the Sacred Heart, this pure simplicity which Jesus Christ Himself tells us to learn: "*Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.*"

Meekness or sweetness renders us gracious and kind to all, especially to our equals and inferiors. We must become all to all, no distinction in our acts of affection and esteem; we must look upon the men and women of the world as Jesus looked upon them, and thirst as He did to win all to God. Meekness renders us patient in suffering and difficulties, helps us to use all as means of increasing God's glory and our own treasure of merits. It renders us kind and considerate to all, enables us to bear with their faults and failings as they have to bear with ours, and keeps our soul in peace and tranquillity, for Jesus said, "*Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls.*" Humility regulates our conduct with regard to our Superiors, renders us submissive to authority, subject to the yoke of obedience. All through the life of our Divine Lord we see this exemplified, as the "Child of Bethlehem," the "Youth of Nazareth," and in His Public Ministry always submitting to authority and teaching His followers to do the same. But in His suffering life we see it carried further, for "*He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.*"

By imitating our Lord in these two virtues we shall at length acquire some portion of His Spirit.

Let us long and pray for this and try to advance step by step in this Spirit as we advance in age, and before our life is ended we may hope to bear some resemblance to our Divine Master.

The Heart of Jesus in the Tabernacle.

This is the month when the heart bursts with love for our Lord, and when St. Peter's words, "*grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,*" are most applicable.

Thanks be to God, it is long since God gave us the grace to see that our Lord was best, and to prefer Him above all, and we have still the knowledge that our choice was good, and we could not will it otherwise. Still, in this month of June we can grow and increase in these things. What shape now shall our growth take?

Our Lord dwells in the tabernacle that He may have close personal relationship with us. This is why the Blessed Sacrament is amongst us day and night. "*I sleep and My heart watcheth,*" does He say to us. We must not be satisfied with the graces we have, we must long for more, certain that our Lord has them in store for us if we desire them ardently. Intimate intercourse with Him makes us able to tell Him everything which has happened during our absence from Him. We can recognize the good we have done, the triumph over a passion, or the patience under a trial, or the help He gave which brought success in our work, and we thank Him for it; we also own the faults, the weaknesses of the day, and

beg His pardon for them. But without any bitterness, or dwelling too much on self, or feeling spite with ourselves, the bane of religious life. Everything settled at once, and a fresh start made each day, each hour ; all left at our Lord's feet as we retire to rest, and the morn finds us again at His feet with no burden of the previous day to weigh us down.

Perhaps the facility we usually have of approaching Him has taken away the keenness of our spiritual taste ; if so, we must rekindle our lively appreciation of and gratitude for His presence. What is the second thing we have to try for this June ? If we love in earnest, if we are aiming at being one with Him, able to bring Him every thought, word, and act of the day, we shall also try to become like Him, to imitate Him. He says, "*Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.*" Humility of heart for you means that each one in sincerity thinks of each of her Sisters, "She is better than I," and that this conviction runs through all the tone of her voice, her manner of acting, her thoughts about them, and way of speaking about them when absent. The meekness means never to be vexed where there is no offence given. This is a curious definition—St. Austin says otherwise. He defines this virtue as not being ruffled when there is occasion given us for being so. But Religious should forgive injuries easily. We should guard our imagination. In nine cases out of ten, when we are vexed and wounded in our feelings it proceeds from mistaken ideas. So that meekness is acquired greatly by governing the imagination. This month of June, then, is to see you grow in

intimate familiarity with our Lord, both in your manner of treating with Him, your individual, personal relations with Him, and then the necessary consequences of this, your trying to acquire His humility and meekness.

The Pleading Heart of Jesus.

"Every scribe instructed in the Kingdom of Heaven, is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old."

Thus the thought of the Heart of Jesus pleading is new, for Father Gautrelet first brought it out in full for the consolation of a few scholastics. On the other hand, it is old, as we hear St. Paul speaking of our Lord as "*always living to make intercession for us.*"

To think that God, if we may so speak, has chained up the omnipotent love of Jesus Christ in the tabernacle!

There is His Heart burning and throbbing with love, and the love may not burst forth. He is a simple Petitioner. If He could use His omnipotence, and stretching out His hand, utter the words, "Be converted"—which would compel men to follow His command—then He would not need prayer either from Himself or us to gain souls to Him. He is stretching out His hands to us saying, "Give Me something for that perishing soul, a prayer, a labour, a humiliation." He is waiting for our gifts, ready to put them out to interest in the salvation of others. A motive which should incline us to be generous is,

how much do we ourselves not owe to the generosity of those who pleaded for us, as to our vocation and perseverance therein. Some who even perhaps not formally admitted into the Apostleship, still have understood better than we its true character, and by union with the Sacred Heart and working in His interests, have done much for Him. Our merits and our fidelity did not deserve the special graces of our lives: they were gained for us by others. If this be the case, we ought in gratitude to try what we can do to swell the common treasure. Temptation is still going on, vocations are shaking—true calls, but which will not be carried out *unless* a helping hand be given. There are hard, unrepentant death-beds—one good act of self-conquest would bring contrition and unction into that poor sinner's soul. And our Morning Offering. What a blessed thing our vocation is; through it we carry out literally the words we have said. We go from prayer to work, from work to pain or humiliation, or trials of various kinds; and all these have been beforehand offered to our Lord for His purposes. How generous we ought to be; for a well-made prayer, or diligent work, or well-accepted humiliation, has a far, far more impetratory power than those taken any fashion. And when you are under the strain of trial, do not let the opportunity pass without profit—let your trust in God's protecting love remain unshaken, a calm and peaceful offering to Him, and more union among yourselves by the bond of longanimity and devotedness.

St. Aloysius.

I am going to say a word about St. Aloysius, and this as much for my own need as yours, for they say our Lady always gives a special reward to those who praise St. Aloysius, the son of her love ; and as I want a very special grace just now, I am going to praise St. Aloysius, hoping he will get our Lady to obtain it for me. St. Aloysius was a gift from God to the Church, a gem of the highest order, and, if I may dare say so, born in God's grace, since he received Holy Baptism with almost his first breath. He was as it were seized upon by the Holy Ghost, and from his short but perfect life we may all find something for our imitation ; even the little ones and those most given to faults and imperfections. Although he was an angel of purity, and led a spotless life, so much so that he even became the model for other saints, yet, as it says in the Mass for his feast, he united the severest penance to the highest innocence of life. And though his sublime perfection forms a subject of imitation to the most advanced, yet he stoops also to help the least little struggling soul in the order of grace, and it also can imitate his example. One of his devoted clients was willingly and habitually imperfect, and did not take much trouble to improve, and when the Saint once appeared to that person and was reproaching him for wilful neglect, he was answered, "Yes I try ; but very little, and that not well." The Saint said that what little we do we ought to do it well. And if we study his life, we shall find it was precisely this

which formed the secret of his marvellous sanctity ; what little he did—and all he did was very little indeed in his own eyes—he did it well, and this from the motive of humility. One of the greatest characteristics of his life was his earnest, longing desire to obtain the spirit of prayer ; and it is this, I think, in which we can all imitate him, for if we are sincere we can all acknowledge we need improvement in our way of saying our prayers. Let us each ask ourselves, Do I pray as much as I can, and as well as I can ? Now, because St. Aloysius desired the spirit of prayer, he also desired all that could foster the spirit of prayer, hence his mortifications and spirit of penance. He loved mortification, it was a pleasure to him because it promoted his union with God. He knew the cost of prayer and was willing to pay the price. And the reason why we do not possess the spirit of prayer is because we don't long enough for it, and are not willing to give up the things which form an obstacle to our union with God. Penance and prayer go hand in hand ; but you may say, "We lead a common life, and cannot undertake any great amount of exterior penance." So did St. Aloysius lead a common life when he had entered the Noviceship, though in the world he revelled in extraordinary austerities under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But we are not, and cannot be, excused from practising interior mortification. Engaged in constant and laborious work, there may be a dangerous tendency to make the work count for mortification, and take no further trouble. One thing it is our bounden duty to do, and that is to correct our exterior faults

for the edification of our neighbour, and go against our predominant passion. Now, the interior mortification, which is the spring from whence this repression of what is natural in us comes, forms in us a habit of interior penance, and this interior mortification produces a great desire for exterior mortification, and the exterior is a test of the interior spirit, so much so that when we feel that we are not fervent in exterior penance, that we neglect it, or do the little which we are allowed without fervour, it is a sign that interior mortification is not up to the mark; and, on the contrary, when we feel a great desire for exterior penance, it is a sign that interior mortification is progressing. The constant repression of nature was a necessity to St. Aloysius, because union with God was to be obtained by it, and the spirit of prayer was his life. The spirit of habitual prayer should be our life also. We ought to have the sweet, happy thought of God always in our heart. Do we ever examine the thoughts of our hearts? Do we ever examine the thoughts our mind is constantly occupied with? Let us ask ourselves at the end of each day, What have I been thinking about all day?—and blush if we find that our thoughts have been wasted on trifles, nothings, little jealousies, regrets, nonsense, mean unworthy objects such as would be found in the mind of a school-girl. Oh, don't live like this; your thoughts ought to be of a nobler caste. Go to our Lady, and with joined hands say to her, "Dear Mother, look at me walking about in my habit, and don't let my mind be filled with such littleness and meanness, such trifles." If such is our life, then no wonder we are like strangers

afar off when we come to the time of prayer, and spend it in painful efforts to remain in His holy presence. If we do not desire, and do not make efforts to obtain the spirit of prayer, we are not doing what our vocation requires of us. Our lives ought to be passed in the sweet thought of God's presence and constant desire of union with God. Here again you are tempted to say, "Oh, that is not for me; I have too much to do." It *is* for you, and no amount of work should deprive you of the spirit of prayer. I am *not* talking of high, extraordinary things, or any great mental effort to weaken the health. But let us never forget God's presence, keep our hearts united to Him and work for Him. We can do our best, and we never know what graces God has in store for us, and to what great gift of prayer He may yet raise us. It would be false humility to say the contrary. Perhaps He is only waiting for our desires, our faithful correspondence to what we have now. The consequence of this spirit of prayer will be an increase of love of God, which comes from habitual recollection, or the habitual presence of supernatural thoughts. It leads us to take a supernatural view of things. How easy it is to fall into the way of taking natural views of all that happens. Do we ever ask ourselves if we look at the events of daily life from a natural or a supernatural point of view. If from a natural one habitually, it will make disastrous havoc in our interior life. If we even try to spend one day only supernaturally, we find that it is good for us, and life is made up of days, and if these are habitually supernatural days, it moulds the character till at last we regard everything habi-

tually from a supernatural point of view. No fear that our work will suffer by it as we think ; on the contrary, it will be done better, and succeed better. We shall be better and happier Religious, and do more good to souls if our lives are full of the spirit of prayer. Let us desire it earnestly, and ask St. Aloysius to obtain for us the grace to desire it as much as he did. Let us be sincere as he was, and the Saint in his own kind, humble way will help us to obtain from God the grace we so ardently desire.

Feast of St. Mary Magdalen.

"Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." (St. Luke vii. 47.) St. Mary Magdalen is the model of all true penitents, and therefore should be the model for each of us even if we have only sinned but once. Her history gives another great lesson of our dear Lord's wondrous love and compassion for those who had sinned against the angelic virtue. Upon these the world looks down contemptuously, whilst it indulges in sins which are far worse in God's sight, such as malice, bitterness, uncharitableness, oppression of the weak, and others. Look at St. Magdalen kneeling at our Lord's feet, and see how He defended her, because she shrank not from shame, because she sought for public humiliation, as we too should do if we could only understand its value. A Religious was once writhing under an enormous humiliation and said, "This is humiliation, therefore it must be good for me," and so this is true for each of us.

What did our dear Master Himself, the God-Man, the King of Heaven, Who could have had anything He liked in this world, choose for Himself? Shame, contempt, humiliation unutterable. He opened His arms wide to embrace it ; He seemed to thirst for it, as if He could never be satisfied all His life long, from His birth at Bethlehem to His shameful death on Calvary. And why ? because He knew full well the glory it would give His Father, the immense amount of merit it would gain for His own Soul.

Let us learn another lesson from St. Mary Magdalen herself. From the moment she took her place at our Lord's feet, she cast out of her heart all affection for sin, she became a pure, chaste, holy woman. There was no half-heartedness with her as there so often is with us.

When we have fallen into sin we are sorry, we go to confession and are absolved, but how often do we hate the sin so as not even to be tempted again ? You will say "we cannot help being tempted ;" true, but how often must we not confess in God's sight that it is our own fault we are tempted ; we will not fully and determinedly keep our resolutions.

Then, too, see St. Magdalen's full confidence in the goodness of God. She loved much because she knew she had been forgiven so much, and we, too, we know that God is always ready to forgive us no matter how long or how much we have sinned, as soon as we are sorry. And this very knowledge that God is always ready to forgive us all the pain we have caused Him, should make us determined from gratitude to root out of our hearts every, even the least affection for what

has caused Him, our dear, dear Lord, such exquisite suffering, all that has pierced with sorrow His most sweet and adorable Heart.

Thoughts for St. Michael's Day.

"Look upon me and have mercy upon me." Our darkness is so deplorable, and we never ask for that to be removed.

"Lord that I may see," that should be our prayer. For being without light we desire what is bad for us or beneath us. Pray most earnestly for light, for our prayers always follow our desires, and thus waste our life. The first then is to feel our darkness and be always asking for light. Then our prayer would be not a passionate petition for this or that thing, but *"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done."*

We were created to praise, not to blame and censure. If once we could get into the habit of praise and never blame others except when strictly obliged by duty, this alone would make us great saints.

There are but two principles in the world, God's will and our will.

All that does not come from our own self-will comes to us straight from the pierced hands of our Lord. The pet bird or animal, so loved and caressed, is a faint image of me in the hand of my Creator. How He pours out His love on me as author, artist, friend, physician, father, mother, spouse. What unbounded confidence must be produced by this thought of the brooding, eternal love of our Creator. The first

idea of creation is to praise God. The Jews, though so dull regarding moral virtues, carried out this duty so grandly. The Church looks to us to do it, and the cloistered Orders who sing the Office are to supply for the Orders who do the drudgery. But if our hearts are full of self-love, censure, blame, when we go to praise, of disunion and bitterness, how do we then fall short of our vocation !

What a beautiful whole a community would be if all had that reverence for each other, subjects for Superiors, Superiors for subjects.

What an example to the externs whom we teach by our exterior.

There is exterior reverence and interior reverence. To-day, St. Michael's feast, is a very appropriate one for our thoughts, for he it was who vindicated the reverence due to God.

The Angel Raphael refused the recompense offered by Tobias, alleging as his reason for so doing that he was one of the seven spirits standing before the throne of God. We should look to Him alone for payment. God works for us night and day, but is never visible ; through creatures He is forming us into the bright beings we shall one day be. He wishes to let each soul know as she takes her place in Heaven that it is her own, that she has earned it for herself, and therefore has a right to it. Let us dwell on some words from the Book of Judges (chap. vii. 4—7). God tried the people by the drinking of water. He watched them ; and those who only lapped enough to allay their thirst and went on were the chosen ones ; those who knelt down and enjoyed a draught

were rejected. This is the use of creatures, according to St. Ignatius. How sadly in the inordinate and wrong use of them, we let one habit drop, then another ; we neglect little rules, and say, " No matter, no one sees it ! " and by degrees the spiritual life suffers and comes to grief. Fidelity to little things helps to fit us for our high and exalted work, otherwise we should do little or nothing for God's glory.

St. Dominic and the Rosary.

When you heard the Pope's Encyclical Letter read your hearts must have been filled with compassion for the Church and the Vicar of Christ, and love for our Blessed Lady must have been freshly enkindled within you.

But we say we are so little, we can do so little, and the little we do is so badly done. And indeed, knowing ourselves to be so useless, besides our many faults, we should feel powerless to help the Church, if we did not know that God accepts our *desires*. Daniel was a man of desires, and on this account he was sought out to receive special favours even among the Prophets of the Old Law. It is wonderful how much more glory can be given to God by some than others wearing the same habit, following the same order of the day, same employment and spiritual exercises ; it all depends on intentions or desires.

David felt what a great thing it was to have great desires ; he was a man who had learnt by his falls to wish to be wise ; he felt his littleness keenly, and

therefore he cried out: "*I have desired to long for Thy justifications.*"

We come next to the means proposed by the Holy Father for helping the Church—"the Rosary." Our Rosary should be to us as a relic; it is mixed up with the great events of the Church since the day when our Lady bestowed it on St. Dominic as a weapon of prodigious power to succour the Church in her hour of need. He had to fight against the inroads of heresy, and to help the people when even those who should have guided them had gone astray. The Holy Ghost says, "*The lips of the priests shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth.*" If then this order was changed, and the priests of the country in which St. Dominic lived were ignorant and corrupted, sad must have been the state of the people. What a passionate appeal St. Dominic must have made to our Lady, to induce her to place in his hands some means wherewith he might save God's people. The answer came; she gave him the Rosary, and the Rosary did its work, and legions of saints sprang up through its use. The Rosary has been in the hands of all the saints for the last six hundred years; it has raised the greatest sinners from the depths of degradation and made them pure and holy, fit to think the "*high thoughts of the children of God.*" It has brought down prodigious graces on the Church, as well as special graces into individual lives. At last we come to the main point. For what intention do we say our Rosary? If we used the Apostleship of Prayer well, our petty views and intentions would dwindle down, and the immense

interests of the Sacred Heart would take their place. When told to pray for the success of something connected with the Church we do it certainly, but as a duty, feeling as if it were too high for us, and as if our prayers availed little. But if we want to obtain freedom from some slight suffering, or some temporal matter, we can pour out our whole hearts. Now, however, our Rosaries for the wants of the Church will be fervent.

Month of the Rosary.

I am glad to speak to you before the close of this month of the Rosary. You must, I know, have conceived a new and great hope in seeing the way the Rosary devotions have been attended by the people. It is really a beautiful sight to see the earnestness and fervour which the congregations show. And we should consider the self-sacrifice of the people, and the real gift of prayer which our Lady has showered down this month. This is, if any, the time to see verified the words, "*Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.*" Ask, hope, expect great graces, and great graces shall be given; great graces are going to be given, and you will be the first to receive them. Ask for the power of imparting to others a tender and most fervent devotion to our Lady, as well as the grace for ourselves. Do not let us allow this month to close without imploring a great increase of love for Mary. But in what does true devotion to her consist? True devotion to our Lady consists in nothing else than a conviction that she loves us, and

those whom we are helping. That ought to be my study, to impress this great truth on my mind. Our Lord made her the Mother of all men, with a very solemn appointment and with a very marked and special love for the children He gave her. Why does a mother love her child? Because she has begotten it, because its helplessness and miseries call forth her care and tenderness; so with Mary, she begot us at the foot of the Cross, and our dangers, trials, and faults draw out her love more than if we needed not her compassion.

What does the Church say about love for Mary? The Holy Ghost breathes through the Catholic Church, and what does He say of her whom He has acknowledged eternally to be His Spouse. The Church puts into the Mass in honour of our Blessed Lady's Immaculate Conception, the words, "*He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord.*" St. Paul tells us that our Lord ascended to His seat in Heaven, as "*the first-born amongst many brethren*;" and as our Lord drew His Sacred Humanity from the womb of the most Blessed Mary, so we enter Heaven as His brethren, and therefore children of Mary. St. Anselm, our own English Doctor of the Church, says that it is impossible to gain Heaven if Mary's eyes are averted from us; so if a sinner looks up pitifully, and she casts down her merciful eyes on him, he may feel sure of forgiveness and salvation. Some have died only in the soul of the Church, without having had the opportunity of learning what our Lady is; still their dispositions were such, that on

their entrance into eternity they at once took their places among the children of Mary, so there is no one in Heaven who has not loved our Lady. St. Austin says that the greater she is and the nearer to God, so much the more is she filled with pity for her children, and importunate in pleading for them.

And now I must speak a word of those two Saints, the new pictures of whom have just been hung up and are now before me.

St. Gertrude is an example of familiarity with our Lord. Whatever happened to her, she went straight to Him, good and bad all alike.

St. Gertrude was thoroughly simple and truthful. Our Lord was her world, and He on His side took exquisite pleasure in her heart.

St. Teresa is known by her *Life* written by herself at the command of obedience, and her *Book of the Foundations*. She did a wonderful work entirely opposed to the spirit of the world, and yet the world has never dared to cry her down, or to misappreciate, or undervalue her. She covered Spain with Convents of the Reform, and though entirely secluded, and taking no part in the active life of the Church, these Carmelites were true promoters of the Apostleship of Prayer. If such the children, what was the mother like? St. Teresa's virtue was based on contempt of herself. She felt her incapability for good, and in the same proportion trusted our Lord for everything. Knowledge of ourselves, contempt of ourselves, is a grace we should storm Heaven to obtain. We should be convinced that we are the

vilest of creatures, and if the saints could say this, how much more should we be able if we only had light. Saints sanctify themselves that others may thereby profit. Give me souls, souls, souls, is their cry. Matched against my own vileness is the awful mystery of God's patience with me.

All Saints and All Souls.

The beautiful Epistle and Gospel bring before us the story of Heaven ; it is not only the heroes and heroines of the Church, martyrs of old, who have given their blood for Jesus Christ, who are there. Those have entered therein whom we have known in life : father, mother, brother, sister ; some who were on earth this day last week, perhaps in poverty, dirt, pain, and are now reigning gloriously with God. Some may be in this world to-day, and before another week be in Heaven. The veil between us and Heaven is so thin, it looks a long way off, but in reality it is so near that we only depend upon a link of life to keep us here ; once that is snapped, and the next instant we are in Heaven. What detestation we ought to have for sin, which is the only thing to keep us out. Who go to Heaven ? What made the saints enter Heaven ? The Gospel of to-day tells us in our Lord's own words ; but it is enough if we take the first sentence, as it includes all the rest.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." To be poor in spirit, this is the condition ; that means thinking less of this world than of Heaven ; willing to lose money rather than commit a sin ; to forego a pleasure, to

suffer pain, rather than do wrong. It is seeking first the Kingdom of God ; saying our prayers well, and doing our duty seen or unseen in this world, is the road which leads to God in the next.

The Holy Souls.

Let us now turn our thoughts towards Purgatory, and meditate upon it.

In the first prelude we will try to form an idea of its extent, length, and breadth. See the flames of Purgatory, and the many thousands who are there, so many *holy souls*—Bishops, priests, and Religious of all Orders—Jesuits, your own Order, parents, friends, and lastly, our own places therein.

In the second prelude, let us ask the grace of a salutary fear of God, in order that if the love of God can no longer hinder us from venial sin, that at least the fear of Purgatory may do so. In this meditation we will use the application of the senses.

1. Let us therefore first take *sight*.

Purgatory seems to us like a lake full of fire, and among the Holy Souls are there not some suffering because of us? Are there any Religious there? If so, why? Some may have failed in having a right intention, or from negligence in their works of zeal ; others, again, from self-love, impatience, slight movements of anger, envy, jealousy ; some for criticizing and unkind words, violation of poverty, discontent in obedience, and want of confidence in Superiors. For how long are they there? Who can tell? Masses are said a century after those who asked for them are dead, and

many linger because they are forgotten on earth. In what way do they suffer? They are continually impelled towards Him Whom they love; they sigh forth words like these: "If I had striven, I might so easily have escaped Purgatory; ah! if I were sent back to earth, what penances and mortifications I would undertake—what acts of humility and love would I offer, what fervent confessions I would make."

The Holy Souls will not so much regret what they have done, as what they have neglected. Let us see our places in Purgatory which we shall certainly fill some day, and perhaps soon. What then will be the subject of our grief? Let us examine ourselves about this. And yet, as Religious, how easy it would be for us to escape the fire of Purgatory. Here in spite of ourselves we have to bear inclement weather, illness, infirmity, hunger, thirst, trials, aridity, and the contradictions of life; and what are all these in comparison with the sufferings of Purgatory? Let us try and make use of all these trials in the spirit of expiation; whether we will or not we shall have to suffer, why not utilize these sufferings? Let us be patient with self, for temptation is inevitable; patient with others, for we have to live with characters opposite to our own. As Religious we have to bear persecutions from men, and the truer Religious we are the more of this shall we meet. Let us make profit out of it all. And not only let us accept necessary suffering, but impose voluntary pain on ourselves, seeking every means of diminishing our Purgatory. Let

us sum up all thus: practice of mortification, hard work, and love of our Lord; zeal for souls, devotion to the Holy Souls, and gaining Indulgences.

2. Now let us take the sense of *hearing*, and listen to the groans and sighs of the Holy Souls as they pine after Heaven. They cry to our Lord, Who is *forced to reject* them, for of Heaven we are told, "*there shall not enter into it anything defiled*," and imperfect work must be purified in fire. They cry to our Lady, who does indeed listen to and comfort them—to their Guardian Angels, who are obliged to answer that they must endure their pains still longer. If we were in Purgatory, what would our Lord and His Mother and our Guardian Angels say to us? And then they cry to men. Fathers and mothers say to their children, "Forget me not—on account of our weakness towards you we are here." Brothers and sisters are saying, "You promised me prayers, and you have forgotten." Then we hear their regrets: "Why was I so unmortified; why did I indulge vanity and love of ease; why did I not listen to the voice of God when He spoke to me, by a book, by the voice of a Superior and a confessor?" Alas, what useless regrets! Let us listen to their counsels: "*Watch and pray*—to-day for me, to-morrow for you. You have yet time to diminish your Purgatory by your penance and patience in suffering, you can gain Indulgences." What shall we answer, and let us ask ourselves now seriously, What will be the cause of my Purgatory?

3. Now comes the sense of *touch*. What keeps

up this fire? It is lighted by the Divine anger! fed by the breath of His vengeance upon venial sin. To diminish our Purgatory let us be generous now—bear the bad weather, the heat, temptation, patiently bear with others, render services in spite of repugnances, and ingratitude or ill-treatment.

4. Let us look on the Religious who are in Purgatory, and *taste* the bitterness they feel for not having profited better by their vocation, rules, and means of sanctification; for not having done more for God, for having pained the Heart of Jesus and saddened the heart of Mary, laboured so little for the salvation of souls—in one word, for having made so little expiation on earth. Taste these tears which are useless, but which might have been shed on earth. Now we come to the termination, and let us ask ourselves these questions:

What have I done to deserve Purgatory?

What could I have done to avoid it?

What shall I do to avoid it?

What shall I do to avoid—to repair my faults?

Alacrity in God's Service.

It depends on ourselves how much of holy joy is in our hearts and lives. We can increase and foster it by our interior dispositions. The spirit of alacrity and cheerfulness in the service of God ought in a special manner to reign in your hearts as Religious; for all that pertains to Religion fosters the spirit of joy, that contentment with God, that joyous, ready service which is the bloom and the aroma of religious

life. Love of the common life is one great means of increasing our interior joy, esteem of ordinary common graces is another.

In Rome they keep *festas* by hanging festoons and tapestry in their churches, and cover up the exquisite marble and alabaster, the splendid carving and sculpture, beneath some dingy red or coloured hangings; if you ask why they do this, they tell you it is a *festa*, and they must have something different to the ordinary routine to mark it.

The English visitor marvels at their taste in covering up such costly workmanship under the dowdy hangings.

The *festa* over, down come the hangings. We are just the same; we decorate, and make a stir and a show, but it passes away. Then comes something to break the routine, a visit, a trial, a feast; and then we turn with glad hearts to common daily life, put on our big boots and trudge off somewhere, perhaps to teach school; esteeming and loving all the more the daily round of life because of the *festa*.

Such is meant to be the effect of such seasons. Each one should study her own heart and foster these thoughts which show her the goodness and love of God. You who have had an excellent training in the love of God's will, who have been as it were spoilt in the infinite tenderness with which He has treated you, who have seen so many marks of His patience and love, ought to be especially joyful.

Your lives ought to be all sunshine, and they would be, if we could only make them so. Let us have our pet thoughts, which will be like a fund of spiritual

riches, like a mine of spirituality in our hearts, helping us to see and realize the goodness of God, and trust His Providence in our regard.

What we once could not accept we can now thank God for sending, and see it was for the best.

Selfishness is the cause of our want of joy, and it robs us of cheerfulness. Even in a good, fervent community, you could easily pick out the different degrees of this spirit of alacrity in the service of God, according as each one is more or less bent on self-seeking. There are some who are always joyous, the thoroughly unselfish. Then there are some not wholly unselfish, and last of all the thoroughly selfish ones, who are always melancholy, sad, and downcast.

We seek self, and are as happy as possible when everything goes our way ; but if it does not, then we are miserable and unhappy, put out with every one and everything. Have you ever read that little book called *The Art of Always Rejoicing*? In it you will learn the true means of always being happy and cheerful, which is being simply content with God's will and the arrangements of His Divine Providence in our regard.

If we have a passionate love of God's will, we shall always rejoice, for everything will be according to our will, since we have no other will but God's.

The Apostleship of Prayer.

You are just out of retreat, and cannot possibly have relaxed in fervour or forgotten your good resolutions.

Then upon what subject am I to address you? I have thought it over for some time, and concluded that I could find no better subject for this instruction than the Sacred Heart and the Apostleship of Prayer. I shall address you then as members of the Apostleship, or rather Promoters of the Sacred Heart; and let us see how we stand, and if we want stirring up on this subject. First, then, as to our Morning Offering and how we make it. How many of us make it in a drowsy manner, scarcely conscious of what we are saying, or with mind occupied with thoughts of what is likely to occur during the day. In making our Morning Offering, our words must mean what they say. "I offer my prayer," so I mean to pray real, earnest, hearty prayer, such as would satisfy the Sacred Heart, and for all the intentions which may please Him. "I offer my work," and I mean to work as Mary would teach me, and by my zeal and earnestness in exterior labour, to edify and encourage those who come in contact with me. Let no one, from false humility, imagine herself too little, too unimportant, to be capable of influencing others.

Not one with whom we come in contact escapes without some impression from us, for good or for evil. "I offer sufferings," so I must suffer! How strange it would sound, if in our Morning Offering we said, "I offer my prayer, my work, and the means I shall take to avoid suffering!"

Our Morning Offering must bear the same character as the offering Jesus made of Himself. His life of prayer, labour, and suffering was the proof He gave of His love for us, and He would now have us

prove our love for Him, in the offering we make of our prayer, labour, and suffering. In this spirit of earnestness and fervour, we must be united; our Lord does not want shining perfection in this spot and dulness in another. Well, this union must not be outwardly only; but it must be more especially inwardly, by a real and earnest union in the interior spirit, in the spirit in which you work. Your rule and religious training lead to this; our Lord Himself demands it. In His beautiful prayer in the Supper-room, He asks for His Apostles "*that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee.*" Do you ever look earnestly at our Lord in His little home here amongst you, and say, "Lord, make me such as Thou wouldst have me to be," and then offer yourself to Him to be moulded and fashioned as He wishes? The perfection of the Blessed Trinity is what He sets before us.

The communion of happiness and glory of the Three Divine Persons—First, Second, Third Persons—yet all equal, each distinct yet all united, the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, all one; so you around the one, whom God has appointed centre, must be united in thought and feeling.

Not negative charity, which consists in not wishing or doing evil to another, but positive charity, that is, active charity our Lord demands of us. Now is there in any heart just new from retreat, a little corner where some private end, some "I should so like," sprouts up? Take it by the tail and pluck it out; let the common interests, and union of heart and feeling, alone find room in your heart.

Now, in conclusion, let your life be more and more as it has been well said that it should be, an "apostolic breath from the Heart of Jesus."

St. John Berchmans and Little Things.

"Little things" compose the substance of the greater part of our crown. St. John Berchmans is a brilliant example of this truth of gaining much glory by little things. Let us now examine ourselves. How many times a day do we gain the Indulgence for the sign of the Cross? Have we the habit of thinking of the subject of our meditation on awaking in the morning? How do we answer vocal prayers and say the *Angelus*—what about composure of countenance, cheerfulness, posture?

How much we can glorify the Sacred and Adorable Heart of Jesus by these very things?

What an interchange between our hearts and His, when we offer Him these little flowers. And above all, what about charity?

You have been for years working at your own defects, how can you expect to be able to correct your Sisters in such a hurry! If, after trying by every means to mollify the ringleader of all attacks against you—*self*—you still find the battle goes on, then take the old proverb of "What can't be cured had better be endured," or, as Lancashire people say, "If you don't loike it, you mun lump it." Depend upon it, it's a "give and take" business. Religious are often inconsiderate. They constantly give pain right and left and never know it.

In the world we should receive such a switching for our want of good manners, that we should be careful enough to avoid such defects in future. If we dare to think unkindly of one whom our Lord loves as the "*apple of His eye*," we arm His love against ourselves. Other things He forgives more easily than this.

As regards that bane of religious life, particular friendships, keep these simple rules: Be open with Superiors. Acknowledge the slightest act which exercises or encourages an inordinate affection. They may be classed under vanity, selfishness, self-seeking, or contempt of Rule. Keep nothing belonging to the object. Check beginnings, reject thinking, pondering, or meditating on the temptation. God often allows this temptation to assail those who laugh at or condemn others. Don't think the rubs you get all proofs of the high sanctity you are being fitted for; but speak the truth, and own you have given cause for them. I will teach you *four* things which bring much peace; they are different to those in the *Imitation*, but still very efficacious.

Never meditate on your own sufferings.

But meditate on your faults.

Never meditate on other's faults.

But meditate on their sufferings.

Charity.

There are two chapters in the *Imitation* which when put together give us the whole code of perfection complete. Book I. chapter xv. speaks of works

done out of charity, which does away with all scrupulosity and narrowness of mind. Last time we spoke of attachment to our Rule, how we ought to cling to it and keep it in all its integrity. But there is such a thing as clinging too much even to our Rule, and making this the excuse for getting out of things. We grow narrow and selfish in our ideas, and forget that charity is the supreme law which governs everything. So it is good to study this chapter, which tells us that one good work may be changed for another, and not only no harm come of it, but a greater good to our souls.

No one may do evil for the sake of anything whatsoever, but when for the motive of pure charity we leave some point of Rule, or are unable to fulfil it, to leave our prayer, for instance, to give a necessary help to those in need—then we change a good work for a better.

Hence we may change what the Rule commands us to do for the time being, when charity requires it. Hence our daily meditation should place us in the disposition to accept things as they come, and to adapt ourselves to the various little circumstances each day brings round, giving ourselves to each little event that comes as a sign of God's will in our regard. This makes us large-hearted and generous in all our conduct. "He does much who loveth much. He doth much who doth well what he doth. He doth well who regardeth rather the common good than his own will."

Hence on the charity which animates us depends all the merit of our actions in the sight of God. It

may happen, for instance, that a person may seem to be full of zeal and good works, and yet in the eyes of God it may all count for nothing—less than nothing, if there is any self-seeking in the heart. Another may do very little, and yet that little may be, as the *Imitation* says, all fruit and full of merit, because of the great love of God and complete forgetfulness of self in the motive which prompted it. God looks not at what we do, but at the amount of love with which we do it. It is a most consoling thought, that little things, the very tiniest commonplace things of life, may be made great in the sight of God, if we animate them by the pure motive of charity; and the higher and more intensified our love in the performance of any act, the more value has it in God's eyes. Hence charity is the supreme test of our state in God's sight, and nothing done through charity is lost or appears small before God. No good work omitted through charity is lost, but, as the *Imitation* says, it becomes changed for a better. Now self is what spoils our good works, and we all of us know only too well how much of self there is in our lives, how self-love finds innumerable twistings and foldings and corners in the very depth of our hearts, how it taints our very best actions with its ugly stain, and how our whole lives, even to our last breath, will be one long continuous struggle to get out of the grasp of self. We are constantly finding out how much we seek ourselves. The *Imitation* gives us a very searching inquiry wherewith to examine our conscience on this point: "Oftentimes that seemeth to be charity which is rather natural affection, because our own

interest will seldom be wanting." Now in this we are to examine ourselves, mind, and by these four points to find out in our meditations whether we are acting purely for the love of God or not. In our exterior faults we soon get called to account, for we either recognize and correct them ourselves, or the vigilance of Superiors does it for us ; and should it happen that our Superior is not vigilant, we do not fail even then to gain the knowledge we want, for we are reminded of our shortcomings by our Sisters round about us. But with our interior faults it is not the same ; we must here be vigilant with ourselves, and take ourselves to task, for no one else can do it for us. The first thing mentioned is "natural inclination." All that is done purely for natural inclination is certainly not for God, since one of the principles of religious life is to resist our natural inclinations ; so whenever we find ourselves following nature, we are on the path directly opposite to God. We imagine so easily that our lives are all for God. "Have I not quitted all for God?" you say. "Am I not working for His glory and the salvation of souls?" Your lives are given to charity, it is true, and with God's blessing you are trying to be all for God, and yet there is a way in which a Religious may, even without knowing it, follow her natural inclination even in this and be carried away, and allow herself to become absorbed by too great a love of work. There is that temptation at your door, and since it is so near, it is worth while to study it attentively that we may be on our guard. It is just the very temptation most to be feared for the men of our Society who are study-

ing. They are studying for the glory of God, and yet so great is the inclination to be absorbed in this, that their spiritual life inevitably suffers from it ; study dries up their piety. Now these are intellectual and learned men, and in every way qualified to take care of themselves, yet St. Ignatius, who knew so well the value of souls, who so burned with zeal for their salvation by the ministry of his children, considered it necessary to devote a whole year of that precious ministry to holy retirement and the exclusive study of spiritual things, in order to brighten up the spiritual life, and purge away the dross left in their souls by their intense application to study. So it may not be considered presumption if I attribute the same danger to you, and that a Religious may become so carried away by her love of work as to let her spiritual life suffer. There are, of course, in this as in everything else, different degrees, and it seldom happens that she lets the temptation overcome her to the full extent ; but I can tell you that when she does, it is serious, yes indeed, very serious. When this temptation of inordinate attachment to work begins, the spiritual life begins to suffer—it stifles piety and the love of heavenly things in the heart. She thinks of her work at the hour of prayer ; then her meditations, examens, are neglected ; for its sake she becomes proud, self-confident, self-opinionated, she loses her humility of heart, her piety is dried up, she becomes self-willed and indocile, rises up at the least contradiction that interferes with her plans and desires ; and at last is ready to dictate even to her Superior and confessor how she is to be taken and

understood. As I said before, this extent is rarely reached ; but there are degrees, and one degree leads to another, if we are not watchful.

So whenever any one finds herself carried away by thoughts of her work, when her mind ought to be occupied by God, it is time she began to examine her motives, and check herself by looking into it, and here we must be honest with ourselves. If a Sister goes to the chapel and kneels there with clasped hands, and looks as if she were wrapt in prayer, how is her Superior to know if all the time she is thinking of the rule of three, instead of making her meditation. So each one must look after herself ere the temptation gains too strong a hold—then it will be too late ; for a Sister carried away by this temptation is soon overcome, and can no longer see anything nor understand anything but the infatuation which has taken possession of her. We ought in every meditation to give some time to the consideration of this point, and above all we ought to implore of God the grace never to yield to this temptation, nor let our work diminish our fervour and our relish in the pursuit of spiritual things. This is one example out of many (which I have drawn out in full, because I believe it to be a very common temptation with you as with ourselves) of the way in which we may yield to our natural inclination, even in things which of themselves are good and holy and for the glory of God. Some may be under the very opposite temptation, and require a greater love of work—it is for each one to examine occasionally into her own heart and her own motives,

and see by what inclination she is led, and what there is that hinders her actions from being done purely for the love of God.

Self-will is the next point for examination, then the hope of reward. Some people depend on the smiles of the Superior, and would not for the world do anything to forfeit her sweet smile, one example of hope of reward. Seeking our own comfort is the fourth point.

Thanks to our excellent Rules we do not have much chance of clinging to creature comforts. Still, even with us, there are many little ways of making life comfortable for ourselves and seeking our ease.

It is for us to examine and see how we stand in this point. In the splendid monasteries of long ago, where hundreds lived together, they found means of seeking their own comfort, of looking after creature comforts, so we too can seek our ease, especially in little things ; let us be on our guard. So far we have been speaking of acting purely for the love of God. The other chapter of which I spoke is chap. xix. Book III., which speaks of supporting injuries for the pure love of God. The other is the active, and this is the passive side of charity. Let us examine what are the motives which help us to bear trials patiently. We say, "Oh, I can bear anything God sends ; but He did not send me such a trial, it came through that creature, and I could bear it better from any one than from her." Ah ! have you forgotten what I told you long ago, "that creature" was but God's messenger. He sent the trial and she brought it to you. Now if we put these two chapters together, the one to

enable us to act purely for the love of God, leaving self out entirely, the other helping us to bear all that befalls us from day to day, as coming solely from the hands of God, no matter who brings it to us, then our lives will become all fruitful and full of merit in the sight of God.

Cold Weather.

Have you ever noticed that meditation does not go as well when we are suffering from extreme cold.¹ Somehow the thoughts do not flow as rapidly as at other times, so we shall have to trust very much to Providence for what I shall say. Perhaps we could not do better than meditate on the "Cold" itself.

Sometimes we find that the matter fixed upon in the most carefully prepared meditation, seems dry and unfruitful when the moment comes for making it. On these occasions it is well to see if the very hindrances cannot be turned into the best food for reflection.

All the creatures can be meditated upon with profit, if only we will take God's view of them. Now as regards the cold, of course there is the poetical side, nature covered with its robe of unsullied whiteness and the like; but chattering teeth and shivering limbs prevent a just appreciation of its beauties; it wants a comfortable room to be able to enjoy them fully. Instead, then, of dwelling on images of poetry, we will turn our thoughts to those poor creatures, by far the greater portion of the human race, to whom

¹ *Memoir of Father Dignam*, p. 226.

the rigours of this season in its annual recurrence are a cause of intense pain. Workmen thrown out of employment, hundreds, nay, thousands reduced to a state of misery and privation, whole families exposed to biting frost, when totally unprovided for against the elements. On considering these evils are we not tempted to ask, Why does our Lord, Who loves all His creatures, but especially His poor, why does He let them, year by year, suffer so much? Is it because suffering enters into His designs? No, this is hardly an adequate answer for the question. Why is it, then? It is to teach us the frivolity of all that passes away with time, to give us such a lesson as we can only learn by practical experience, that the things of this earth are transitory and unworthy of the affections we are tempted to place in them. Earth is God's workshop. "*Trade till I come.*" These are His words, gain, gain, gain; that is what we are here for, until the hour comes when we are called home. Detachment is a virtue, we can learn quicker and better in prayer than in work. Once we can thoroughly convince ourselves of the emptiness and littleness of this world, we naturally give up our esteem for its frivolities.

Then comes the exulting cry, "My God and my All, when shall I be with Thee?"

Let us next consider the suffering caused by the cold. We may proudly rank ourselves among the poor, and have a right to it, but after all ours is a very snug kind of poverty. It does not come to having no bread-and-butter on the table, no clothing to cover us, no fire to keep us warm. Still, with all

precautions and charity of Superiors in providing for our wants so liberally, we have notwithstanding felt the intensity of the cold during the last few days—what must then have been the suffering which others have gone through. Old men and feeble women bowed down, smarting with actual pain of exposure to the elements. Mothers wrung with anguish at witnessing their children destitute of every protection, the father tempted to despair by his helplessness to procure relief for a family he loves. Cold is indeed a suffering; but now let us turn to the supernatural side of the picture, and see the immense glory, known only to God, which He gets from the poor at this season. We have not their simplicity of heart: therefore it is hard for us to understand how spontaneously, and without effort, they offer God what He is exacting; they bow down in silence and submission, because it is God's will, and the pressure of pain makes them trust God with greater faith than ever.

A priest may work for years among the poor without finding out this truth, and on considering their lives—low, coarse, sinful—his heart turns sick and discouraged at the sight. But God sees the interstices filled up with such virtues as His Heart covets, and His love revels and exults in the heroism of these seemingly wretched creatures.

What practical lessons do we learn for ourselves from to-day's reflections: that cold is a creature, a suffering sent to teach us to despise earth and fix our desires on Heaven. All creatures should do the same. The most useful, profitable, and substantial

service we can turn them to is to use them so as to amass gains for our eternity. Sometimes by taking them, at other times by denying the cravings of nature; but always, always fighting through their means against our corrupt inclinations, and trading for Heaven. Each day we should see more clearly that our vocation ought to make us rise above the things of earth, to lead us on to God and things celestial. We know that God looks upon everything here below as paltry and insignificant. Is there anything then that He values? Yes, there is one; but a thing so precious in His eyes, that He assumed human nature to be able to clasp it to His bosom and make it His own: it is suffering. Suffering alone can be loved, coveted, sought for, without defiling the soul; other things leave their stain behind; this does not, it is safe. His appetite for suffering was never satisfied; can we not try to bear patiently what He so longed for and esteemed?

Fruit of Crosses.

It may be as well to say a few words on the value and fruit of suffering. Of course, we all know that troubles and trials are a dispensation of God's loving Providence. This is the case in every trial and in all the ordinary troubles and vicissitudes of life, but how infinitely more so when He vouchsafes to send us the Cross. It not only helps us to glorify God and gain much merit in the present, but it shapes and strengthens our souls, and has an effect on the whole of our future life; for, mind, God does not mean us

to go through a trial and be no wiser and better for it. It is a precious time. What occasions for practising solid virtue, how many daily acts of charity, forbearance, condescension, and patience, more perfect resignation to God's will, and that not once or for a day, but during a long period. And these multiplied acts which we do almost unconsciously to ourselves; see what a permanent habit of virtue they form in the soul. Crosses are not necessarily a mark of God's displeasure, they are often a proof of His love. To realize this we must go back to the old, old meditations we have so often made on the Nativity, and learn there how we are to take the trials God sends. Look at the loving Providence of God in causing our Lady to make a long and painful journey, under the most painful circumstances; a trial in every way to her modesty. She would have been glad to have remained at home under the circumstances. Then consider the inconvenience in the lodging, the cold weather, the contempt, the anxiety; the trial came just at a time when it was most inconvenient, when their hearts were, as it were, least prepared to bear it. With what dispositions do we bear similar trials, not only in the journeys we have made, but in those which perhaps in spite of ourselves we shall have to make? Do we not make our Morning Offering with fervour the moment we awake? And what is that but to give all the day, our prayer, work, and pain, to the Sacred Heart; and when God gives us more than an ordinary occasion of pain, do we realize it, and be grateful for it, and make the most of it? It is our

pride which keeps us from realizing at these times what a beautiful chance we have of offering something precious to God, and if we are truly humble we shall acknowledge that it is something. True humility estimates things at their real value, and is not stupid or foolish about realizing things. I don't care for those stolid hearts which seem to realize nothing, and like stoical men in the world, say, "What is that to me?"

No, a humble soul realizes on these occasions that she has something, and something very precious indeed to give, and says to God, "O my God, Thou hast given me a grand occasion of making more than an ordinary effort; I thank Thee for it." And then she offers it to God with all that loving submission, fully conscious of its pain, inconvenience, suffering, and with all that entire abandonment of a heart devoted to God. As we said before, the Cross is a mark of God's loving Providence. When was it that Mary and Joseph suffered most?

Just at the time when Jesus came into their midst. And is not Jesus with us? Have we not felt during times of trial that He has been with us, and that He has been immensely glorified with our sufferings? Those who, bearing the Cross, have been united heart and soul with our Lady, have taken her for their model, and at Bethlehem have imbibed the beautiful lesson to be learnt there, have gained an immense merit for their souls and given much glory to God. Now you know our Lord never sends a cross without desiring that it should bear immense fruit in our souls, and expects us to make great steps in perfection, solid

virtue and conformity to God's holy will ; but let me warn you of one thing, be afraid of levity, or the fruit of it all will evaporate in our hearts ; we must bottle it up tight, and squeeze it into the very depths of our hearts, as something very precious indeed which we must not let escape from us. First of all the Cross, as I said before, is of great benefit to our own souls. But let us ask ourselves, Do we realize it so as to profit by it? are we thoroughly conscious what immense glory to God, what habits of life-long virtue may be formed? Take longanimity : I once made a long speech to you about longanimity, and no doubt some of you remember it too.

Well, now, it would be a shame if even the weakest of you did not find her soul deeply steeped in this virtue after some heavy trial. The long continuance of the Cross and protracted period of painful circumstances must wonderfully increase the spirit of longanimity ; that calm unwearied patient waiting on God's will and God's Providence, that most noble and sublime of the fruits of the Holy Ghost, which adds a beauty and lustre to the most perfect virtue, and which gives solidity and strength to all the virtues.

Then, as I said in the beginning, it will increase immensely the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and in different degrees in each soul. Faith, do we not pray better? Perhaps some will say, "No!" and the cowards will say, "What does he know about it? I often don't pray at all." I don't believe it, and I repeat that it must make even the weakest more perfect, and give them greater strength of soul. Even

a little faith teaches that God is the Author of our suffering, and not only that, but it is His most precious gift, a loving disposition of His Providence. Even the smallest and most imperfect act of submission is an act of faith, and how many go further and in time of trial have learned to be lovingly resigned, then entirely conformed, till at last they have reached the state of perfect abandonment into God's hands and have become, as nearly as can be in this life, like the blessed in Heaven, only with this difference, that they can merit by it, while the blessed cannot. What is this but most perfect prayer, and the highest degree of faith. Then hope ; when should our hope be greatest, but when God tries us to the utmost ; and through periods of anxiety and suffering have we not hoped on, and expected that God in His goodness and mercy would end it all, and be merciful to our prayers in His own good time : again, longanimity, patient waiting on the will of God. Then consider how the Cross renews fervour : even the weakest in times of trial are stirred to things which they would not have thought themselves capable of in times of greater prosperity ; does it not in many a heart rouse up springs of self-sacrifice and unselfishness, bringing out virtues that might have lain dormant for years, and which required all the pressure of a heavy cross to cause them to ooze out like precious wine for God's glory and their greater merit. To how many hearts has it not taught abandonment to the Divine will in the present, and given wisdom for the future.

And lastly, for charity, poverty, inconvenience

pain ; what repeated acts are elicited, and hence what habits of charity do they not form in us, to be practised during our whole lives ; and what more perfect act of charity can you make than entire abandonment to God's will and God's Providence. The Cross is not only good and meritorious for our own souls, but look what an immense harvest it brings for the interests of the Sacred Heart.

Let us ask ourselves again, Do we realize it and do we make the most of it for God's glory ? We can offer it for the souls of others, souls in danger, for all the wants of the Sacred Heart, and all in need. What a grand spirit of apostolic zeal and fervour we are thus forming. Now, in conclusion, let me add that you will think and meditate on this, and see if you feel as though our Lord from the tabernacle said to you, " My child, I send you crosses as a mark of My loving Providence, and to teach you how to abandon yourself to Me, to strengthen your soul, to teach you wisdom, and it may be to prepare you for greater trials in the future."

How to value the Cross.

We read in Holy Scripture that King David, being near his end, rejoiced and praised God when he saw all the preparations that were being made for the building of the Temple, although he would never see it, and said, " Lord, in all the simplicity of my heart I rejoice that Thy name will be glorified." And we read in another place that God is not pleased with *any* sort of an offering, for He said, " Take these things

to your princes and see how they would accept them, and yet they are good enough to offer Me!" God examines well all we offer Him, and even small things may become precious in His sight by the spirit in which they are offered. Now, there are times when God expects a generous offering and will be wofully disappointed if He does not get it. We say, "*Thy Kingdom come,*" and immediately, "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.*" There are times when we forget the meaning—the real apostolic meaning of these words. When we are inclined to let our souls be steeped in melancholy and depression, this is to be expected according to nature, but are we to give in to nature or to resist it? Our vocation is a supernatural one, and God has given us so many graces, so many proofs of His love, that He expects and has a right to demand a truly supernatural return. A Religious has too much to look after to have much poetry in her life—it is solid, substantial, practical, and robust, and she is expected to take a practical view of things, to put the Cross before her, realize it, and to face it with a calm, supernatural courage. We have left all: home, parents, everything that was dear to our hearts—and no doubt to most of us it cost much sorrow and many a tear—yet we had the grace to do it. It may be, and God in His goodness may have given it to us, that since then our hearts have formed ties of spiritual relationship, even more tender and far harder to break than our first according to nature. And yet God may, and at some period of life sooner or later no doubt will, ask us to break these ties too. God has been charmed with the beauty

of our souls, He has drawn us apart and taken us for Himself, and He will expect in return the highest generosity, the utmost conformity to His holy will—that perfect nudity of spirit which is so difficult to nature, so pleasing in His sight. All these crosses are certainly a mark of God's kind and patient love, He is waiting and asking. Our vocation implies sacrifice, and asks it of us daily in that constant unremitting process of self-conquest. We have our daily trials in our charges in community life, and thank God we try to bear them—well, not perfectly—and no doubt we have often to bring our failings and weaknesses to the feet of our Lord ; still we are trying, and this daily conquest of self ought to make us better and stronger to bear more willingly all that comes, and help us also to bear and help in the crosses of each other. So each one daily ought to become more brave in carrying her own cross, or basket of crosses, as the case may be. And what should be the result of all this, what effect should it have on our lives, but to prepare and strengthen us for times of greater sacrifice and greater crosses which God sends. And because it costs and costs dearly—nay, even more than anything else in the world could cost us—are we to shrink? No! this is all the more reason why we should make a more generous offering because we have something more than ordinary to give. There is also another reason why we need to be generous. We need great graces, we want them ourselves, and we have to gain graces for the souls committed to our care—for sinners, for the multitudes of souls thirsting and yearning for God's graces. We have to promote God's

glory, His interests in our hearts and in the hearts of others. Times of heavy crosses are occasions when we gain immensely for ourselves and the souls of others. The fear, anxiety, pain, and sorrow may last a long time, or may only last for a short time, God only knows—but it will come again, and God will have His own way in the end ; but be it long or short, its *fruit* must not pass away, it ought to leave a new phase in our interior life, a new spirit of greater strength, it ought to make us more ready for the final sacrifice. We must work our souls up to meet the graces God holds out to us, and give Him generously all He asks for—give it entirely, asking nothing but what will best promote the sanctification of others and our own, which will promote His interests and His greater glory. The more generous our offering, the more entire our abandonment into God's hands, the more graces we shall obtain.

A truly apostolic soul, one filled with real zeal, does not shrink from sacrifice, but yearns and thirsts for opportunities of sacrifice. Sacrifice is the highest oblation, the most perfect offering we can give to God. The greater the suffering, even though it should wring our very hearts, the more is it to be desired for God's glory. Let us then pray in this spirit, and instead of giving way to nature, raise our hearts and souls to the full height of our apostolic vocation. Let there be but one heart and one soul in the union of resignation to and conformity with God's holy will, so that *all* our hearts may say, "*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.*" And unless we are very blind we cannot but recognize the

ineffable love and patient kindness of our good God in waiting, and asking and treating us as He does.

On Holy Desires.

I have been thinking on what I should speak to you : on faith ? No, that would not do, for there is often a great degree of virtue in a soul before it receives the spirit of faith. At last I came to the conclusion that we must go back once more to the Foundation. Now, what was the foundation we laid in the beginning ? It was the foundation of desire. What gave us the strength to quit home, and friends, and give up all we loved, to embrace a life of austerity and labour which seemed so repugnant to nature ? It was our desire of God ; that desire we have to live for God made it seem easy to sacrifice all, that our desire of possessing Him to the full might be realized. And as desire was the beginning and foundation of our spiritual life, so must it continue to strengthen, increase, and support it. Thus, when we see the importance of great desires, we may well pause and ask ourselves, "Are our desires as fervent as they used to be ; have we kept up with the holy longing and desire for God which was once in our hearts ?" Sometimes we have gone on fervently for a long time, and then by degrees we let our good desires die away, or be choked up by a multitude of cares. We are not careful to preserve them in their beauty and freshness. We get into an easy going way far from the fervour we once had. Mind ! tepidity is nothing more than the cessation of

desire ; for the cessation of desires causes the cessation of efforts, and when a soul ceases to make efforts it is in a state of tepidity. Now, tepidity brings us very near to mortal sin, and a soul which gives up making efforts, which glides gradually into the habit of being careless about little things, falls easily into mortal sin. Of course there is no mortal sin without malice, and unless malice enters into our mind an offence is not grievous ; but malice comes from contempt, and contempt from the habitual neglect of little things ; and the Scripture tells us that "*he that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little.*" Now this habitual neglect is the effect of the absence of holy desires, which urge us to make use of all the means, great and small, of acquiring perfection. Let us remember, that Religion is not the home of the perfect, or else some of us, I am afraid, would soon be found on the door-step ; I don't know if even the door-step would not be too good for us, and we might walk further off. Religion is a school wherein we learn how to become perfect. Now a Religious without desires is not trying to become perfect. We all know the sort of girl in a school whom we wish with our whole hearts we could send away, it is the one who has no desire to learn, and who by her laziness is a temptation to her companions. She has no desire to get on. Now, what such a girl is in a school, a Religious who has no desire or who has given up her efforts to cultivate the desires she once had, is in the school of perfection. Want of a desire of virtue comes from sloth, and if we yield to this sloth we allow our

holy desires to forsake us, and we fall at last into one of those black fits of discouragement and sadness and spiritual desolation, until God in His mercy sends us some light, some ray of grace over our soul as we read or meditate, or in some other way, and which flashes for an instant, as it were, over our minds, showing us the state we were once in, reminding us of the fervour we once had. It is then God punishes us for our sloth, for we all know what difficulty there is in getting back to God again, and find to our cost what trouble it is to regain our footing, even if we ever do succeed in regaining it. Sometimes God allows us to fall into discouragement as a trial, to show us our weakness, to prove our virtue, or to make us humble. Look at novices how they sail along till God pulls them down a bit. They are full of fervour, nothing is hard to them, and often in prayer the tears begin to flow ; and if they are not good and faithful, very good, they begin to despise others, and get an opinion of their own virtue, and then God allows the crash to come. Suppose it should be in punishment, to rouse us from our sloth and tepidity. God's anger is never vindictive—He is the Physician of our souls, His goodness strives to cleanse and cure us, to give us back our former longings after a more perfect life, and to give us again that lively faith and spiritual alacrity we once had about the things of God.

God was proud of holy Job, and the devil said to Him, "Let me try him, and you will see how his patience will come to an end." So God permitted Satan not only to afflict him in his property, and even in his very person, leaving him covered

with sores on a dunghill, but allowed the Evil One also to cloud his mind with sadness, and melancholy, and to make him feel the want of holy desires, which were all taken from him. God may also take away from us every support, and leave us destitute of all consolation ; but we know what we have to do, and when we feel our desires gone we must long for the desire to desire, pray for our holy longings to come back to us once more. And it is not a bad thing to think even here in Religion, and with the habit of Religion on our backs, and with the outward semblance of religious life about us, there is a possibility (and as long as even it is a possibility it is profitable to remember it) of our hanging over the deep abyss. There are such sayings as "Not to advance is to go backwards," and they make us feel very queer sometimes. Now, not to advance, means not to make efforts ; not to desire the perfection of our state, for we stop making efforts when we cease to desire. Seeing then that holy desires are so necessary to us, we ought most assiduously to cultivate them, and when God gives them to us they are precious gifts, which ought to be nursed and nourished, cultivated, cherished, and esteemed. There is that stolidity of character in us English which often leads us to despise those earnest longings, those yearnings and desires after a more perfect life, and imagine they savour of exaggeration ; but it is good to have a little of that affectionate, tender yearning for God. We are practical, common sense people ; we like solidity, and so you do try to be solid, thank God ; but there is much practical common

sense and solidity of virtue in many a soul side by side with those earnest, tender longings, those pious and holy desires of which we have been speaking, and which are so precious and pleasing in the sight of God. They draw down on us God's blessing and God's choicest favours. Let us desire in the spirit of humility, which has taught us in the school of adversity (as you have all experienced), not to trust to our own wings to raise us to God, but to beg of Him to bestow on us those holy desires which will raise us to Him. Look at Daniel, that man of desires, and see how his prayer to God for the people, moved God to send down the Archangel to reveal to him that most wonderful of all mysteries: the exact time of our Saviour's birth. And the reason the Angel gave him for his prayer being heard, was because God was pleased with the desires of his heart. Now the means of obtaining or preserving these holy desires is to pray earnestly to God for them, and to use the means within our reach for acquiring them. Above all, let us be faithful in making our prayers and spiritual exercises well, for it is in the time of prayer more than any other that good desires are infused or increased, and the soul feels that holy longing for the things of God. If we spend the time of prayer in distractions, letting our mind wander where it will, we are not doing our best to use the means of becoming perfect, and it is no use aspiring to be "better" if we are not earnestly trying to do "well."

And if after all we do not feel the holy longings we ought to have in our hearts to become better

than we are, let us humbly, at least, desire we had those great desires, and ask God to send us those yearnings after Him, saying with holy David, "*Lord, I have desired to desire Thy justifications.*"

Egypt and the Desert.

(*Exodus* xv. ; *Numbers* xi.)

By what we read of God's dealings in past ages with His chosen people, we can recognize His dealings with us His elect—truly His chosen ones, the children of His Heart, who also have been delivered from the slavery of Egypt, and placed in the most favoured portion of the promised land, the Church of God.

Every Sunday and feast-day the Nicene Creed is said in the Mass, and often every day we say *Credo* when we recite the Apostles' Creed. What do we begin with ? "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." We do not see the deep meaning in these words, simply because we do not reflect enough on what we say ; we get used to saying it so often. But they mean so much, so very much. "I believe that God made heaven and earth." God then is my Ruler here on earth, and He will be my Rewarder in Heaven—that beautiful home of peace and happiness, which will come after all the pain, sorrow, and suffering of this short life, and where we shall rest for ever with God in eternal glory. And we can look forward to this with confidence and deep trust in God, and say that we firmly hope to be happy one day with Him. And without this assured hope, which God in His infinite goodness

has given us, not even the best of us would be able to lead virtuous lives and strive after perfection. But let us remember that earth comes first, and that Heaven would not be what it is to God and to us, if earth had not come first. God, if He liked, could in His infinite mercy and kindness put us in Heaven straight away to enjoy Him, and it would be a joy to Him to see us eternally happy—but not the same joy as if we had merited it. God then has put us here to merit; take away our merit, and our glory is unmeaning. What is the satisfaction of making a wax doll save the momentary pleasure of amusing a child? God did not want us to be like dolls in Heaven.

We should be ashamed to be rewarded for nothing. Merit creates glory; and in regard to us, the words honour, praise, and glory have no sense if we had not merited them.

To God, honour, praise, and glory are intrinsically due; it is His right, and it would be impiety and a great error to think or speak of God as meriting. When God wanted merit what had He to do? take our form—become like unto us. God is very glad to have us with Him in Heaven, no doubt; but if we want to give joy to God, let us merit more joy. Now let us be practical in our belief. And what do I mean by that?

Well, let us cherish and treasure this short life, which is to be the seed of our future glory. Let us make the most of our chance of meriting, and snatch at each little occasion of gaining something for Heaven. For remember what we have so often gone over

together in our retreats, that what we are here for is to gain merit—to earn Heaven. How do we earn? By embracing His Cross. All God's joy from us comes from the Cross, except the satisfaction of seeing us happy. Our Lord Himself showed us the way to Heaven, and we are to follow Him. From the moment He entered His Mother's womb, He was never an instant without the Cross. From His earliest Infancy to the end of His life, He carried it, even to the hill of Calvary; and then only took it off His shoulders to lay Himself on it, and make it His death-bed. Now, let us say to ourselves, as St. Aloysius used to do when he felt the trials of life: "This is what I was born for—to carry my cross; it is precisely for that one thing God put me into this world." And, after all, what are our crosses when we come to examine them calmly. They are measured and meted out according to each one's strength by the loving Providence of God. This is one thing which I wish to explain to you: the conflict, if such we may call it, between God's pity and His justice. In His infinite goodness He measures our crosses by His tender Providence. We were brought through the world into the garden of Religion, without committing very big sins—big enough in a small way, considering all the graces we had; yet not given up to strong passions; God preserved us from all that. It is no thanks to us that we did not fail, the thanks are due to God's mercy which preserved us from falling deeply. Now, great sinners who give themselves to God after their conversion, and enter Religion with fierce, strong passions to combat, have a terrible cross. Our

passions are not like that, and hence do not cost us so much.

We have not either, as St. Paul said, "*resisted unto blood*;" we have not to fear that an angry mob will pounce on us, and tear us to pieces if we go outside the door. Perhaps we think we could face that; we imagine we could rush at that, better than we can bear those constant little crosses of daily life which are always ready: and above all, when the cross lasts a long time, and the place gets sore and we want God to take it off and let it press on some stronger part. But no! there it lies pressing deeper and deeper into the wound. Even a great Saint on his death-bed felt this, and asked pitifully to be moved to the other side, for the one he was lying on so long had got sore. "But you will die if we move you," said they; "and then think of our Lord, think of His death-bed—how hard it was, and He was all sore; from head to foot there was not a sound place in Him." The Saint then asked to be left like his Lord, and so he died as he was. Think, again, of the great penitent souls; when they return to God their past sins become their executioners, the shame, sorrow, and remorse they feel for ever having offended God is in itself a most cruel martyrdom; and the more purified the soul becomes, the keener is the excess of its holy anguish. Look at holy David how he cries out: "*My sin is always before me.*" How weak and poor is our sorrow for sin. It does not make us suffer like that. Then there are the heroic souls, whose intense, burning love of God is so ardent that it is a life-long martyrdom. 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. Look at St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi and St. Aloysius. The Church says of St. Aloysius that, though a model of perfect purity, he was also a model of the most severe austerity and penance. And the reason is, because these innocent souls are so possessed with the love of God that they sorrow as much, and as deeply over their most trivial faults, and think themselves as guilty as the great penitents who sorrow for their grievous falls. 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 at their lives, and on their hearts. It is the martyrdom of Divine love.

Now, we are not great penitents, nor have we that great love of God to cause us great interior suffering. So, after all, our crosses are only light. Let us try then to bear what God in His Providence, His loving Providence, sends us.

Let us dwell a little on God's dealings with His chosen people. He gave them delicious food to eat : they grew sick of it and murmured, they longed for variety ; they wanted liberty to indulge "*the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.*" They were dissatisfied with God's bounty. At another time they were thirsty, and coming to the waters of Mara they found them bitter ; they murmured of course, and God told Moses to place a tree in the waters, and they became sweet. This story is to my mind such a true picture of a

self-seeking Religious. She meets with things she does not like ; she has no sensible consolation, and so all becomes bitter ; then comes murmuring and grumbling. It is a grave fault in a Religious to repine. Self-seeking makes people sour, discontented, fretful, and dissatisfied ; such as these find life dull and wearisome. What is the remedy ? Now the youngest of you here, and you are none of you very young (though the Bible does mention infants of a hundred years), can see from her own experience, small though it be, what happens when we place the sacred wood of the Cross in the bitterness of our sorrows, whatever they may be. All the bitterness is changed into sweetness, from the moment we make up our mind to accept the Cross in union with that of our Lord, and take it from the hands of God as *He sends* it, and not as *we would* have it to be. Let us lay our will beside the will of God, and crosses become sweet. Then look how tenderly we are nourished on the manna of God's Providence.

How different to the poor souls in the world who have to be constantly striving to make both ends meet, so anxious how to procure this or that, so overwhelmed with temporal anxieties. Our food is laid before us at the appointed time as if by an angel's hand. We have neither the trouble of preparing nor the anxiety of procuring it. Religious very often do not know whether it is cheap or dear, scarce or abundant. It is the same for our clothing and everything else we require : truly we need not be "*solicitous for to-morrow.*" God provides all through the hands of our Superiors. And not only need we have no

solicitude about these things, but we are not supposed to have any. If we are troubled about temporal things, we dishonour both God and Religion. And yet a Religious sometimes may turn away like the Jews of old, and cry out, "*My soul is sick of it ;*" give me a change—let me go to another house ; life becomes dull, and we get fretful and weary, we grumble. Oh, my dear Sisters, let us think how precious is this time on earth ; we have to be proved and tried as were God's people of old ; we have to taste the bitterness of life, but we know quite well how to change it into sweetness. Let us place in it the sacred wood of the Cross, and, above all, let us remember how gravely wrong it is for a Religious to repine. Now let us all take courage. Sometimes when we have borne the cross for a long time, even though it be a small one, the monotony and the sameness become wearing, and it constantly presses on the same place, till we feel we must cry out to God to lift the cross, or at least to lay it on some other place, that the wounded part may get a little rest ; then let us say, "Could God, Who is so infinitely good and Who loves me, and knows of what I am made, send me this cross if it were not good for me, and why then can I not accept it and bear it, coming as it does, straight from His hand." Let us think of what St. Aloysius used to say : "For this was I born ; it is by this Cross I am to earn my eternity." Think of that great Saint who would not change his position that he might suffer and die like his Lord. Think of our dear Lord as He lay on His Cross, and see what He suffers for us ; do not say "change it" or

“take it away ;” but rather may we cry out, “O my God, give me grace, give me strength to bear it as Thou wilt and as long as Thou wilt, even to the very end.” In such circumstances we should keep up a spirit of bright, brave cheerfulness, which gives edification to those around and does good in the community and in our own souls.

It will all be over some day, and we shall be with God in our home, the “promised land” of heavenly rest and peace, and the happiness of that eternity will be increased by the dear sweetness of the thought, that it is merited by the crosses which we have borne here below, and which will then be turned into eternal joys. God will be glad to have us there. His joy and ours will be all the sweeter when we look back on the sufferings of life, which helped to earn Heaven for us.

Eve of a Retreat.

Amongst the ways of partaking in another’s sin are “consent” and “participation ;” and it appears to me that I am encouraging you in “spiritual luxury” by giving an instruction on the very eve of the retreat.

However, since it must be, there cannot be a better subject for our meditation than “Preparation for the Retreat.”

Sometimes, for want of preparation, the first day, and even several days, are spent uselessly. This may result from our own indifference, and in this case is an injury to our Lord, Who waits to bestow His

graces upon us. If we feel this lack of earnestness and zeal, let us examine ourselves to see if wilful carelessness has given rise to it, and then offer our repugnance to our Lord with feelings of shame. Sometimes fatigue caused by the work from which we have just come depresses us, and we feel incapable of further exertion. This is only natural, but let us pray for grace to overcome nature heroically. Let us remember that it is Jesus Himself Who invites us to attend to Him. During the year we have been occupied with His work, now He wishes us to occupy ourselves with Him. Let us enter the retreat with feelings of tranquillity and rest, but not slothfulness.

Sometimes from fear and over-anxiety about the retreat we frighten ourselves and lose the fruit of the meditations.

Our Lord desires us to enter on the work in a spirit of tranquillity. Let us leave at His feet all our labours and cares, and with a free heart and mind attend to His call.

This is the first disposition necessary, and the second is to follow the Exercises in the same spirit, resting upon the points, and applying them to our memory, understanding, and will ; not dwelling immediately on the fruit to be drawn from each, for this would destroy the feeling of the rest. We must be prepared to feel little and humbled as our meannesses and want of generosity come up before us.

But let us take comfort and say to our poor self, "Take courage, poor heart, you have a kind Master." The third disposition is a determination to remove all obstacles from our Lord's way. If you follow the

advice I have so constantly given you during the last few months, and try to know yourself—your obstinacy, your blindness, your self-seeking, as the case may be—and enter the retreat with a determination to correct your faults, you will be removing the obstacles from the way of grace. Then, fourthly, with a feeling of tranquil rest give yourself to our Lord with confidence, like the wounded child, who trusts in the skill of his kind father or mother to cure his wound.

You are God's little servants. You have laboured for Him during the year, now He sweetly calls you to repose, to renew your strength. The old ship, weather-beaten and pierced with holes, comes to dock for repair ; you are like a crippled ship, and God calls you to apply the hammer and nails ; and new timbers are wanted, and if you will only give yourself up to His hands wholly and entirely, He will make you once more seaworthy and prepared to face the storm. She who would wilfully enter retreat with her mind occupied about school or any other worldly matter, would certainly offer a great injury to Jesus. In retreat we should place ourselves with St. Mary Magdalen at the feet of Jesus, the eyes of our soul fixed upon Him, our mind absorbed by attention to His sweet words, whether of reproof or encouragement. Even in desolation let us remain peacefully attentive in the company of the Sacred Heart.

Our own Faults.

To pray well our prayer must be real. God hates unreality. God is truth itself, and unreality wounds Him. Therefore if our prayer is to be efficacious it must be real. We must come before God as we are, and this can only be done by obtaining a true knowledge of ourselves; we must know our faults, and seek every means of overcoming them; no use hiding them from Him, or from ourselves, or our neighbour. Each Sister should look upon her faults as a kind of community property, which every one has a right to look after; or as a kind of nuisance in the house, of which every one should try to get rid. Were a mad cat in the sanctuary, and some one advised you not to go in lest it should bite you, how foolish you would be to declare there was no mad cat there, when everybody knew well there was one. Thus we must open our eyes to our faults, and bear to be told about them and advised about them. Each one has some special fault to which she is most addicted, and for which she feels least sorrow, because of her attachment to it. Sometimes such a fault is trifling in itself; nevertheless the attachment to it keeps you back; sometimes it is more serious.

All our faults arise from some one of the chief or capital sins. Thus one is inclined to anger, another sloth; but it would be foolish to delude ourselves with the thought that we have no faults. Thus, when we present ourselves before our Lord, let us come in our own very person, not veiled or hidden, but just as we are. Never need we suffer from desolation, if we

would only adopt the practice at such a time of holding up our faults before our Lord each in turn, asking Him to help us in overcoming them and making good resolutions with regard to them. "See me, O Lord, with these my faults, poor, miserable that I am—how I yield to them." This is to be sincere and real with our Lord, and even those whose very will is bad and turned to sin, can in this way derive benefit from prayer. "Here I am, O Lord, with this bad will of mine, inclined to such and such a sin, really attached to it and only awaiting the opportunity for committing it." To such sincerity our Lord must listen, and even bestow grace to enable the sinner to turn his will from sin.

The second effect of our faults regards others. The knowledge of our own faults will assist in many ways in the spiritual life, but it seems to me in no way will it help us more than in leading us to be kind and compassionate to others, our Sisters, or whoever it may be with whom we come in contact. How little consideration we have for one another. In community life how much we feel this, and if we do not know our own faults, how easily we are led to imagine ourselves afflicted and persecuted, while in reality, we with our unknown and therefore uncorrected faults cause much more suffering to all around us. Imagine such a person coming before our Lord and complaining, and a voice from the tabernacle answering in the words in which our Lord wept over Jerusalem, "*If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace: but now they are hidden from thine eyes.*" Such a soul may remain

hidden and veiled from herself till she stands before Him as her Judge, saying, "Here I am, O Lord, Thy servant." But He will answer, "Yes, but see there is such and such a thing I do not like in you." "Oh, is there, dear Lord, and I did not know," will be her answer. Those who know their own faults and weaknesses are always kind and indulgent to others. Besides faults, wilful or not wilful, there are also natural defects. We have them as a birthright. These natural defects bring us into collision with one another continually, and give rise to many annoyances. One is hasty and precise, another pottering. These are weak points, and as such we have received them from God.

They are His creatures, and we must make the best use of them. Imagine, then, a hasty, precise person and a good potterer working together. The latter has good-naturedly offered her services to the former, who has a great deal of work on hand. "Oh, yes," she answers, "I am very busy and will be grateful for your assistance." The potterer begins bungling and fumbling, till at last the hasty person can bear it no longer, and dismisses the potterer in no very amiable tones. The latter raising her eyes, retires ejaculating, "Dear Lord, what a dreadful person; where will she go when she dies!" The potterer considers herself the most injured person in the world, whereas, if she were not under a delusion, she would think and say, "Alas! there again I have caused that poor Sister's impatience by my lamentable pottering ways. What a cross I am to my Sisters. Dear Lord, help them to bear with me."

Thus you see a true knowledge of our own faults and defects makes us humble and charitable, and gives efficacy to our prayers. God hears the prayers of the humble now, even as He did that of the Publican in the Gospel, whose prayer, "*O God, be merciful to me a sinner,*" evidently showed that he was in no way deluded with regard to his state.

Fears and Desires.

This subject is a dry one, but many are capable of reaping fruit from its consideration, and some really want it. We can easily sympathize with the joy and interior sweetness of a religious soul constantly united to God.

It is this for which we have entered Religion, hoping that by giving up sensible joy and material good things to remove all that lay between the heart and the love of the Creator.

And this union really exists in many.

It is far commoner than many, who ought to know better; are willing to admit. As long as the soul is in the disposition to refuse God nothing, it enjoys a substantial peace, although the pain of different crosses which God allows obtrudes itself upon the mind and prevents her tasting this happiness as much as she ought.

This Religious is called blessed by one who never says a word without having weighed its full value.

In a later chapter he bids us "naked follow the naked Crucified."

This is a reminder that change of dress signifies

little without change of manners, and of the entire mortification in which a Religious should live.

"He that seeks here any other thing than purely God, will find nothing but trouble and pain." You can each testify to that.

Now, if you own you have trouble or pain, why not change the source and begin from this day to seek God only and the good of your soul. *"Neither can he remain long in peace who does not strive to be the least and subject to all."*

But those whose habit it is to refuse God *nothing*, show at the same time that they have the habit of refusing themselves *much*. This is called abnegation. On the day of our vows we, in the sight of God and men, enrolled ourselves under this banner, and the world esteems and reverences us for the crucifixion it judges is going on within us for the love of God. To deliberate whether it shall be yes or no, when God is asking for something, is to run our own necks into temptation. The yes should be a matter of course ; God *asks*, I *give*, and there is an end of it.

I have often spoken to you of the defeats we suffer because we give play to our imagination. We lose our peace, consequently our union with God, by dwelling on visible things which excite either our likes or dislikes. Sometimes we go so far to gain the one or avoid the other that we displease God.

"To be the *least*," why that is a command at which nature rebels, and "subject to all" still worse. The only thing to fall back upon in this case is the first principle of religious life: *abandonment to Divine Providence*. It is in this that Religion most

resembles death. For what is the fear of death but the dread of taking that one great plunge into the arms of an *unseen* God.

But to one who realizes the omnipotence, the love, the Providence of God, this plunge is as nothing, it is made with boundless trust and unshaken faith. Even so should be our manner of daily offering ourselves completely up to God's designs over us. A religious soul should throw herself into God's arms with no weapon of her own in her hands, trusting entirely to His Providence to rule over every event of life, to direct us. But we fret and mope our lives away with cravings or with fears, making ourselves, our Sisters, and most of all our Superiors, uneasy about things which every one except our infatuated selves can see are useless as regards both good or evil.

Then after wantonly and miserably throwing away the graces of months or years, we find in the end, perhaps in the solitude of retreat, that the object we feared or pined after was in itself ridiculous ; that if we had only looked at it in its true light, cravings would have been turned into indifference, and we could have lived happily without it ; on the other hand, fears would have vanished, and we should have had peace even side by side with the bugbear. The fault lay not in the object, but in the sway we allowed it to have over our imagination. When aroused by fear or hope to dread or long for something, follow this simple rule : divest the thing of its colours and catching it by the nape of the neck bring it under the eye of our Lord in the

Blessed Sacrament, and then see what kind of figure it cuts.

Apply the test of craving or fearing to your ordinary life, and note what daily imperfections it leads you into.

How can faults be called "small" which displease God and prevent union of hearts. It is quite possible to acquire a spirit of self-abnegation which will put an end to this; slow work to be sure, but not the less true and real.

Let it be God *first* in everything.

Then there will also exist an intellectual union and that familiarity which the *Imitation* calls "too wonderful." People say, and will say to the end of time, unkind, wanton, and perverse things; what of that, it is quite possible to rise above these unavoidable accompaniments and still enjoy peace and tranquillity of soul.

Forgiveness.

(*St. Matt.* xviii. 21—35.)

The King condemns the servant who owed him ten thousand talents, but pardons him when he pleads, "*Have patience with me and I will pay thee all,*" though he knows he can never do so. Think of our debts to God and His free pardon, not once, but many times. He knows me and yet has freely forgiven me. "*Be not without fear for forgiven sins.*" Not that they are not forgiven, but because their forgiveness lays us under an obligation that would not otherwise exist. The soul that sins after having

been forgiven is worse than the one who had never sinned before.

The servant leaves the King forgiven, but not realizing his position, without shame for the past or gratitude for his pardon.

He meets a fellow-servant who owes him one hundred pence.

Compare the poverty and misery of the servant. He pleads in the same words, "*Have patience with me and I will pay thee all.*"

This only excited the anger of his creditor, who seized him with violence and cast him into prison, ordering him and his wife and children to be sold. When we are offended we in our hasty anger forget how we have offended God and pleaded for forgiveness. Our own interest should urge us to show mercy to a fellow-servant of that God Who has been so merciful to us ; anger is blind and unjust.

See the King's anger and sentence of terrible justice : "*I forgave thee all the debt because thou besoughtest me, shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant ? And he delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt.*"

The angels of God take part against us when we are wanting in mercy and charity to others. Anger and uncharitableness bring sorrow, not only on those who are guilty, but on all belonging to them. His wife and children to be sold ; they were to suffer for his fault. How often anger and harsh judgments lead to feuds and bitter misunderstandings, and how can they who indulge such passions ever be numbered with those of whom God said, "*Blessed are the peacemakers.*"

The Good that is in us.

It is my intention that this conference should be a continuation of that "on Faults." Then I spoke of the necessity of self-knowledge. I showed you that prayer can only be profitably made when we possess this self-knowledge, this knowledge of our own faults ; and that even when these faults are wilful, still the knowledge that such is the case, and the humble acknowledgment of it to our Lord, renders our prayer efficacious. There may be faults to which we are attached, pet faults, so to say, which we cherish, and do not aim at overcoming ; but even the knowledge that such is the state of our soul renders us more humble, and thus pleasing to God. There are Religious who would raise their eyes to Heaven in utter amazement if you told them that such could be the case in Religion. Such souls are under delusion, there is a veil before their eyes ; were it removed, as it would be by true self-knowledge, they would find that there is such a thing as being attached to little conveniences, fear of humiliation, aiming at being sought and accounted as something. Such then was the theme of my conference, and I feel that were I to repeat it twenty times instead of twice, it would not be too often, if by so doing I could impress it on your minds. Now I mean to show you that just as knowledge of our faults is necessary, so also is true knowledge of our good qualities. There is a false humility which fears to own that we have good parts ; but this is not true virtue, it is maimed. Humility at the root is truth, and leads us to see our

good qualities and appreciate the blessings which God has bestowed upon us in our talents and other gifts. One is blest with a sweet temper and, as the *Imitation* says, every one can get on well with her, but she has not as many opportunities of meriting as another with rough manners and crooked temper against whom everybody and everything seems to jar.

How great will be her merit if by overcoming herself things go on smoothly. True knowledge of the good that is in us aids in carrying on good works, it leads us to do more for God.

We never need fear that it will lead to pride. This vice takes rise in imaginary good parts, and leads us to set ourselves up for what we are not. Provided only we remember that of ourselves we are nothing but nothingness, that our only possessions are sins and defects, the knowledge of the many good gifts which God has bestowed upon us will not lead to self-esteem, but rather will render us more fearful that, being what we are, we might make bad use of our blessings. St. Teresa, so highly gifted by nature, and so endowed with supernatural gifts, in all the simplicity and gratefulness of her heart enumerates God's blessings to her, thanking Him for what His Majesty has done for her, and expressing her fear of ill-using His benefits. Let us then use God's gifts in all humility and gratitude whenever His glory or our neighbour's good requires it. And at the same time let us with St. Teresa tremble at the account which we shall have to render of talents abused and graces lost.

Three Degrees of Humility.

Place yourselves with a great spirit of faith before our Lord, Who says to us from the tabernacle, "Come ye all to Me, I am your consolation and your strength." Let us look at our Lord showing His Heart and saying, "Behold this Heart which has so loved men. My child, give Me thy heart." Let us beg for the grace to know, love, and imitate our Lord. It is no longer enough for us to follow Jesus to some extent, but we ought to follow Him in the most perfect manner. St. Ignatius always presses forward—we are to gain the summit of perfection.

The First Degree of Humility.—This consists in perfect submission to the Divine will; it is the essence of humility, it is necessary to salvation. Therefore we must be perfectly submissive to the will, love, and prescriptions of Almighty God, so that we should be ready to die rather than commit a mortal sin. To this all Christians are obliged, and the contrary disposition is mortal sin. If every Christian ought to be thus, how much more a Religious? and we should nourish this determination in examens, confessions, Communions, and at Holy Mass in the *Confiteor*. Let us look back. Have we always been in this degree? "O my God, if the past were in my power, how I would wish to have died rather than have sinned, and if Thou dost foresee that one day I shall have the misfortune to offend Thee mortally, rather strike me now with sudden death."

The Second Degree of Humility.—This consists

in an addition to the first disposition, so as to say : "Better to die than commit a venial sin deliberately." This is more perfect than the first. There are two parts in it.

Holy indifference: so that in my will I do not desire riches more than poverty, honour than ignominy, a long life than a short one, that is, I have no inordinate affection in the will, so that for none of these things would I commit a venial sin. If a man with an irascible character has received an insult and knows he ought to forgive it, but says at the moment, "I won't forgive," it is a venial sin. It is injurious to God that a man should choose a vile thing to satisfy himself to the detriment of God's glory. The second degree is not necessary to salvation, but we ought to labour to acquire this disposition because of our Lord's example, our vocation, the example of the saints, our Rules, our companions, who are the spouses of Jesus, that we may save souls and excite them to a horror of sin, escape Purgatory, and be sure of being in the first class. It is hard, you tell me; yes, it is hard and very difficult, but St. Ignatius supposes that we have large hearts, and we are not alone, "the grace of God is with me;" to nature it is impossible, but with the grace of God all is possible. "*I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me.*" And this must last our whole lives? Yes, till the last sigh. "*Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be My disciple.*" But we are too distrustful of grace; and yet without grace we cannot even avoid mortal sin, but the humiliating thing is that a Religious who has struggled many years to

combat mortal sin has not the courage to conquer herself in trifles, hence they are chicken-hearted before a difficulty. They are not afraid of the newspapers, but they cannot put up with a hasty word or a little humiliation. Is this generosity or cowardice? They can abstain from meat, but not from an inordinate affection; a little sharp word carries them away. They may have sacrificed much riches and yet are attached to a picture; they may have left rich clothing and are attached to a shoe-string. Let us not be of this number, but be generous. In our visits to the Blessed Sacrament let us often say, "O my God, death rather than commit a venial sin;" let us with the help of the Holy Ghost carefully examine into our hearts, to see if there be not, in some secret corner, an attachment to some created thing, something the loss or destruction of which would disturb our peace—this should not be. Remember St. Ignatius said one quarter of an hour would suffice to conquer his repugnance for the utter destruction of the Society.

The Third Degree of Humility.—This is most sublime. It supposes the two first, but does not consist in indifference, but in an ardent desire for poverty, humiliation, opprobrium, suffering, and desolation. If I have to perform an action which humbles or honours me, the glory of God being equal on both sides, which shall I choose? If I am indifferent I shall be in the second degree; if I am in the third I shall choose humiliations: therefore the essence of this degree is, provided that the results to God's glory be equal, to choose that

which most crucifies nature, and so to choose poverty, sneers, crosses, humiliations, anguish, dryness, desolations, rather than riches or consolations. And this because Jesus was poor and humbled, in order to become like Him.

This is what St. Ignatius asks.

The saints understood it. St. Paul cries out, "*The world is crucified to me and I to the world.*" St. Teresa, "To suffer or to die." St. John of the Cross, "To suffer and be contemned." St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, "Not to die, but to suffer." St. Catherine of Siena the like, and so many others. It is to be a faithful copy of Jesus, not on Thabor, but on Calvary. A Religious who is in this degree rejoices in aridity, persecution, corporal and mental suffering; he chooses what is least good and most painful; he is like Jesus. This doctrine is found in the Gospel—it is not new: "*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.*" When our Lord loves any one He presses him to His Heart as a tender friend would do; but round His Heart there is a crown of thorns, and the more He presses us to His Heart, the more these thorns enter into ours.

St. Ignatius says so admirably well, "The fire of Divine love is kept up by the wood of the Cross." All the saints have loved suffering, and in the midst of it they were in joy. "Well," our Lord asks us, "are you capable of following Me on the way to Calvary, covered with blood, full of thorns?" Those who reply with generosity and without restrictions become saints: but this is not done in a year or two years of

novitiate, nor in ten years. We must struggle all our lives—nature is always there, and the grace of God is with us. Let us go into details. You have committed a fault—it was from forgetfulness, you might excuse yourself; the Superior reproves you, and thinks the error greater than it is; accept this in silence and say, “it is well deserved;” be silent when falsely accused. Some one has said a silly thing; they think it is I—say nothing. You are corrected for this—be silent. A scholastic has to go to a college where they need a professor of rhetoric and a surveillant of corridors—he can easily fill either office; the Provincial leaves him the choice. If this scholastic is in the third degree he will choose the surveillance—that is, if he chooses at all and does not rather show himself quite indifferent. In the Novitiate it is easy to exercise the third degree in clothes, books, food, in the way we walk, or our place at recreation and manual works. Let us ask our Lord to give us strength and courage to perform acts of humility, not only of the second but also of the third degree, in little things which no one observes. Let us nourish our minds with them, and if we feel repugnance, so much the better.

This is to act against the repugnances and propensities of nature. I have a repugnance to tell a fault or acknowledge one, or to take the discipline—I will tell and acknowledge faults oftener, and take it oftener. I have a repugnance for such an office, such an employment, such a companion—I will ask God to give me what is repugnant to me. By this principle we arrive at great holiness; the moment of

humiliations is the moment of grace. In one day, then, we make more progress than in ten years. Let us kiss the hand that sends us humiliations: in the Cross is salvation. If we have not this desire, let us ask God that we may desire the desire.

And ask Him to arrange circumstances for us, and He will arrange them. It is then that we live the life of our Lord, that is to say, "Love to be unknown and esteemed as nothing."

"The weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong"—the folly of the Cross. This is the doctrine of Jesus Christ; it is real spirituality. This is the true sense of the Exercises. St. Ignatius asked it for his Society, and God granted it.

St. Ignatius and Humility.

Courage, as St. Teresa says, is more necessary to the making of a saint than humility. True, but humility is sanctity. Just because a humility "worth having" requires so much courage, therefore is it indispensable. A humility "worth having" means a humility grounded, not on human fear, as shown by blushes or stammering, but on the fear of God. A soul possessed with the fear of God can stand before Superiors modestly and respectfully, but with no shyness. The sooner this last is done away with the better.

To come to humility. Those who have not got it, or at least who, when our Lord comes, are not found working to acquire it, are making a mess of religious life.

Now, instead of pouring down your throat that principle of the disciples of St. Ignatius, "that humiliations make humility," I will try to smooth, or rather facilitate the way to humility by another thought. As to humiliations, if we do nothing but take those God mercifully sends us from day to day, but especially if we take our faults and draw profit out of *them*, we shall certainly advance, slowly may be, but surely, in the road of solid humility. Now for this second thought. Humility means being keenly conscious of our misery. It therefore also means using little means of grace with avidity. A self-reliant nun gets through her day's work and spiritual duties, I will not say in a tepid way, I do not mean that, but in a kind of dash-off way, which shows she thinks very little of making grace do its full work.

Take an example from the beggar who knows a halfpenny loaf is not enough to satisfy the cravings of his hunger. How anxiously he tries to get hold of a second halfpenny, how he treasures it, all the while being on the look-out to see if he can get hold of another. Apply this to spiritual life. A soul keenly conscious of her poverty, who feels that she can do nothing at all of herself, that God must do the work of her sanctification entirely through His grace—such a soul has a way about her of taking pains that the proud soul has not. St. Ignatius was such a one. One little instance will show the man—it is characteristic. They tell how every night he read over the Mass for the next day, that so, when the time for celebrating came, he might do it in the manner most conducive to devotion and decorum. The more one

looks into the life of this great Saint, the more this spirit of painstaking is visible in every corner. *He* would not have dared to have come to meditation unprepared. What fidelity to the Additions was his, recalling the subject to mind the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning, thinking of it while dressing. Fidelity to these little points shows whether we feel the need we have of catching and hoarding up every little grace we can lay our hands upon. Some persons would see no connection between seizing upon little graces and humility—they do not understand that extreme consciousness of misery makes one avaricious of every relief. A man who stretches out his hand for the least, the tiniest alms, always shows that he knows he cannot get on without it, that all his hope is in this grace, of which he feels he can never have enough.

Apply this test to your daily life. It will soon teach you whether you are proud or humble !

Infirmary Lessons.

In coming to give you a little instruction during your time of trial, I am not sure who receives most benefit, you or I. Before I come into the chapel, I receive three very effectual little sermons, when I visit your sick Sisters ; not that they talk much, but their sweet calm resignation to God's will speaks for them. When one sees the beautiful calm spirit of perfect resignation, the supernatural peace, the tranquil happiness in the midst of suffering, it makes one think it is Heaven begun on earth. It may be

newer to me than to you, who are always in the midst of it ; and though I have had experience of many death-beds, and good ones too, in the world, in the very best homes, yet there is something here quite of a different order, higher in the ranks of grace, which strikes one forcibly, and shows the power of God's grace, because it is not theirs : it is *His* work. True charity, pure supernatural charity is the cause of this, for in Religion we are surrounded and cared for by those who love us with a truly supernatural love ; and though in the home their love is good and true, there is not the peaceful happiness round the sick-bed which we find in Religion ; for natural love is there, and wherever nature comes in, perturbation must of necessity follow.

I wish you could see it as it strikes me, and it would make you value and appreciate our holy vocation. No home however holy could do for us what Religion does, and I am not now speaking of the external care and devoted attention bestowed on the sick, though God only knows how great and how frequent are the acts of charity and the labour gone through for His sake ; but I mean the graces, the abundance of love and prayer, not prayers said only—but the very life of silent prayer, which everything in the infirmary reminds us of ; the prayer which speaks in all we see around, and which is part of the grace of vocation. How this should fill our hearts with gratitude, and make us value and appreciate more the infinite tender love of our Blessed Lord and our Lady, when they stretched out their arms to us and drew us out of the world into Religion.

The Joy of a Good Conscience.

In one conference, I spent time and care in proving that the height of perfection could be attained in community life. I called it a "living death," from whence at the end of life, generous souls flew to Heaven from earth. Perfection is within the reach of all; there are enough opportunities in ordinary community life to enable you to train yourselves to practise virtues of the highest order.

Now, how is it possible to live happily a life from which nature shrinks? Only by possessing our treasure, the joy of a good conscience.

The *Imitation* says: "*Keep a good conscience, and thou shalt always have joy. Never rejoice but when thou hast done well.*"

If we endeavour day by day to make that supreme act of trust, which saves souls as they give the final plunge, we by this so commit ourselves to God, that human events pass over without having the power to disturb our peace—we see things as they are in God's eyes and leave behind the judgments of men.

Let us remember that obedience brings God face to face with us.

"To do always well and to hold oneself of small account is the mark of a humble soul."

Always to do what we know is right. Let each one ask herself, Do I always do that? What a searching inquiry it is! People outside would stare if they were told a nun never omitted doing what she was sure was right; "of course," they would say,

"we know that." On the contrary, if they were told she did *not* do what her conscience told her, how amazed they would be, and think that a bit of news to be talked about all over the town. But still God says, "Even when we have done all that is right (and how few can answer this question satisfactorily?), we must still think ourselves unprofitable servants," for after all we only did what we were bound to do.

Jubilee Indulgences.

Every one is bound to fight against the devil and self. It is to help us to conquer in this cruel war, that Almighty God mercifully grants us Indulgences.

An Indulgence does not cancel sin. On the contrary, no temporal punishment is ever remitted unless the guilt of the sin be first pardoned. But as every sin deserves a certain amount of punishment, independently of its guilt, years and years of bitter pain in Purgatory may await a soul which departs this life, happily in God's grace, but without having satisfied, in this world, the punishment due to her forgiven sins. An Indulgence, therefore, is remission of temporal punishment, and nothing more. And a Jubilee is a more solemn form of Plenary Indulgence granted by the Pope on certain great occasions. A Jubilee in itself is not greater than any other ordinary Plenary Indulgence, for as this takes away the whole of the debt, it follows that the end being attained, nothing more is required. "Then why take so much trouble about a Jubilee?" people ask in surprise. There are certain conditions attached to it, which in themselves

are irksome to nature, and if no more is gained than would be by simply turning up one's eyes and saying a short prayer, like, "O good Jesus," after Holy Communion, why not choose the easiest and leave Jubilees alone? The reason is a simple one. It is precisely because we have to take more trouble that we begin to reflect on the necessity of leading better lives, lives free from sin and more in conformity with God's holy will. Many a one even after she has fulfilled all the conditions to which a Plenary Indulgence is attached, will find out to her cost later on that, in reality, but a very small portion of temporal punishment was removed. There was either a want of contrition, or perhaps a confession made in the way most sparing to nature; at any rate, it was nothing like a voluntary seeking of humiliation and confusion in the Sacred Tribunal; or there was carelessness in the recital of the allotted prayers, or—the point least thought about—there was no determination to conquer old habits of sin, perhaps in themselves slight, but for all that displeasing to God.

These sins and infidelities sometimes accumulate throughout a lifetime; they are never reflected upon, never repented of, and consequently never forgiven. But there they are and there they will remain, until the soul, with the help of God's grace, sincerely detests and courageously resolves to overcome herself in these points. It is therefore of the first importance for those who wish to gain a Plenary Indulgence in its plenitude or fulness, to examine seriously the state of their conscience, and see what habits of sin are there. When these are broken, the separate sins

repented of and pardoned, then God in His mercy is willing to take away the temporal punishment by means of an Indulgence.

Five conditions are attached to the gaining of a Jubilee. They are easy to remember : two sacraments, Penance and Holy Communion, and furthermore the practice of the three eminent good works, prayer, fasting, and almsdeeds. During the time of Jubilee, confessors receive extraordinary powers for absolving even reserved cases, releasing from vows (of devotion), promises, and so forth ; and the united prayers of the Church impetrate special graces, which help individual souls to gain the Indulgence in a fuller manner than at any other time. It is a magnificent grace from the Heart of Jesus granted to bring us closer to Himself. No affection for sin may remain in a soul which receives the full measure of the Jubilee, and thus the one great obstacle is removed which keeps a soul at a distance from its Creator.

King and Spouse.

“ *You cannot serve God and mammon.* ” A text not often applied for the conversion of nuns. But “ *mammon* ” may mean other things besides money—power, creatures, self, may all come under this term. In other words, we cannot serve God by halves ; nuns enter Religion through different motives—all true vocations, but not one influenced by the same thought. With one it is the light which shows her “ *the hundred and forty-four thousand following the Lamb, whithersoever He goeth.* ” And she sees the

beauty of virginity and its matchless excellence, and she offers her body and soul to God, to live the life of His spouse.

Another is attracted by those words of the Gospel, "*If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor.*" She longs to bind herself, by vow of poverty, to an entire renunciation of earthly goods.

A third remembers St. Teresa's words: "If there were no self-will there would be no hell-fire," and she looks about for some way of completely giving up her own will. Thus she enters holy Religion in a spirit of submission and obedience.

And again, there are some who have entered with the predominant wish of "saving souls;" as true a vocation as, and perhaps even truer than, any. She hears those words of Daniel: "*They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity.*" Then again, those words applied to our Blessed Lady: "*They that explain me, shall have life everlasting.*" And going, she offers herself to work unremittingly for the little ones of God's Church.

But then comes the Novitiate—blessed months, when each soul learns *why* God has called her. And though each has come by a different channel, now He speaks the same word, "*Follow Me.*"

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.

Self-respect would keep many of us pure—fear would keep us from dillydallying with our vow of

poverty; and as to labours of zeal and charity, we may spend ourselves on these till death, and in the end possess nothing but an empty shell. The great thing is quiet, interior work—reforming of the heart, living in the spirit of Jesus, the constant cry, “*Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven*”—indifference to persons, places, things—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.”

He is our Lover and a jealous one. We must be blind, if we dare look at Him with a heart attached to anything but Himself. He is our King, and as such claims undisputed possession of our *all*. Sacrifice and struggle is the consummation of the life of a good Religious.

Kindness to the Poor.

The intention of the Apostleship on the feast of St. Elizabeth of Hungary is, “Care not to hurt the feelings of the poor.” Can this intention have anything to do with you? People of the world are often harsh and unfeeling towards the poor; but you surely would fail rather on the side of compassion for them. In your office, dear Sisters, how frequently you are in contact with the poor.

Let us examine ourselves as to the manner in which we attend to their tales of trouble, of sorrow or complaint.

Self-love and self-esteem may so easily step in, from the fact that they repose confidence in us, and look to us for advice and counsel.

Let us see if we attend to them in a patronizing manner, or in one of respect and humility. Yes, these feelings should mingle in our hearts in regard to the poor, for whom our Lord always showed such great deference and affection.

The poor attend to your words, to which your holy habit gives so much weight in their eyes.

What good a word of comfort or instruction may do them; and with what reverence and affection would the Sacred Heart have us treat with the poor, whom He Himself called "blessed." "*Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.*"

The words of the intention, "Care not to hurt the feelings of the poor," seem scarcely to apply to you, for if you imagined that you had hurt them, how deep would be your contrition, how fervent and humble your next confession! But for you there must be "Care to do all in your power for the poor;" all that our dear Lady would demand of you, and above all the rest, all that the Sacred Heart desires and hopes from you, for the good of the poor, to whom He so devoted Himself.

Examine yourselves then with regard to your feelings towards the poor, and see if you have that true respect and affection towards them which would prompt you to spend yourselves in their service. It is for this that you are called, and so thoroughly trained, that your work may be a success; the Apostolic spirit leads you to labour in the service of God's poor.

This instruction is appropriate in the month of November, the month of the "Holy Souls," as we

call it, or the "Poor Souls," because like the poor on earth, they are so helpless, so destitute of resource, as far as they themselves are concerned; but we well know that we can reap much benefit from their prayers. We who know and experience the benefit of the prayers of the grateful poor, can also appreciate the blessing of earning the prayers of the Poor Souls. So let us interest ourselves much in their regard, bearing in mind those words of our Divine Master and Model: "*As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me.*"

Leo XIII. and his Triumph (given October 1, 1888).

My mind is still full of the solemnities of yesterday. I feel that I cannot do better than spend a few moments in reviewing them. Yesterday was only the finishing stroke to a triple triumph, which has marked this year of Jubilee. Our Lord has His own arrangements in this world, and will not let the enemy have it all his own way. "No," He says, "I also shall have My triumphs and glories." And in reality it is no little glory of which I am speaking; but a great and universal triumph, in which all peoples and all lands are interested. The life of the Church is only a representation of the life of Christ, amplified and extended into all ages. Just as His life was marked by suffering and humiliation and triumph, so also is the life of the Church marked in all ages by the Cross and glory; and in a miniature form, so also is the life of a Religious. She has her sufferings and humiliations, and at times her small triumphs, on her

days of festivity and rejoicing. And as our life resembles that of Jesus in suffering and poverty, so also does it resemble His on our days of rejoicing.

He, the great Lord of Heaven, entered into this world which He had made, and being capable of choosing His life here, He chose what He considered best on earth : poverty, humiliation, and suffering, the Crib, the Passion, and the Cross.

But even in the midst of this, He, the Divine Lord and Lifegiver, chose to have His triumphs, His time when victory should be on His side. Thus we see Him allowing His Apostles to spread their garments on the ass whereon He rode, while the children and the poor surrounded Him, holding palm branches and singing, "*Hosanna to the Son of David.*" And now in this year of Jubilee, Christ has chosen to triumph in His Vicar on earth ; and what a triumph !

What earthly potentate could claim such a triumph ! Not the Emperor of Russia with all his immense territory, nor the Emperor of Germany with his renowned military power. Only the Pope, the universal King of Christendom, could claim such a triumph, such a glory. And the festival was celebrated in the Heavenly Jerusalem, when Christ in His Vicar received the homage of kings and peoples. It was also a triumph and a festival on earth, for every heart was moved, all vied with one another in the grandeur and magnificence of their offerings. The richest gifts that earth could bestow were laid at his feet.

True, much was from Catholic lands, but the Sultan of Turkey, what did he know of Christ in

His Vicar, and the Shah of Persia, and the Emperor of China, what prompted their offerings?

But not only the princes and great ones, but the people, the poor, came with their simple gifts—the work of their own hands; they presented these with gratitude before their common Father, their hearts overflowing with faith and loyalty. All lands were represented in their deputations and addresses. What could be wanting to complete such a festival? Yet the Pope considered it incomplete, unless the poor suffering members of the Church, the Souls in Purgatory, had also a share in the festivity; and in answer to his appeal, each Bishop raised his voice, and on hundreds of thousands of altars the august Sacrifice was offered, to relieve and release the suffering members of Christ's fold. But more, the Pope, as it were, simply gave a hint, and all the Catholic people of the world were moved, and who could count the millions of Holy Communions offered yesterday for the Poor Souls in Purgatory!

Here in our own small island, how numerous they must have been! Christ chose to have His triumph on Palm Sunday, before His Passion, and Christ's Vicar sees plainly the Cross looming in the distance, and drawing nearer and nearer. Even while the Jubilee was progressing, the threats of the enemy were heard, like an underground volcano rumbling, ready at any moment to burst forth. How necessary it is that we should all unite in earnest, heartfelt prayer, that God may succour His Vicar. The interests of the Sacred Heart are here at stake; and you who were led to embrace your state in

life from sheer love of God and His Church, must now give battle to the enemy, by redoubled zeal in prayer and labour, doing all for the great intention for which we are praying.

Morning Meditation.

Many think meditation a hopeless task, and give up the thought of ever succeeding; despair always leads to ill-success. With the little grace we have, we can do much; and most certainly this faithful correspondence will merit greater graces, by which we shall be able to do more later on. Those who from the outset refuse God what He is asking, of course, cannot meditate. Prayer only jars; no matter how insignificant the thing is in itself, if it is denied to God, it stops intercourse between Him and the creature. But questioning yourselves honestly, you know you are giving God, or at least trying to give Him, what you can—therefore, you have a right to be able to pray. These are some practical thoughts on the subject. Prepare your meditation carefully over night, commit it to memory, not off by heart, like children thumping school desks to get knowledge into their heads, but sufficiently to have the run of the subject clear in your mind. Think of it in bed, keeping away vain and distracting thoughts; call it to mind the first thing on awaking, and come into chapel knowing well on what you are about to spend the time. Now a great deal of the day depends on the attitude we assume towards God during the first moments we are with Him. A Religious should lead

a life of steady friendship with our Lord, she has a right to it ; and all desponding thoughts which some of you think are necessary for the "making of a good nun," only injure His love and wound Him sensibly. Come in, then, with a cheerful countenance, say "good morning" prettily, and feel happy to be there in His company.

Then gathering around you the robe of shame, tell Him what you have done against His honour, or omitted what would have tended to it, make an act of contrition ; and sure now of His forgiveness, begin to meditate. Here it is that beginners often make a mistake. They think that unless they are chattering to our Lord the whole time, they are in a state of distraction. Meditation means *thinking*.

Therefore leave our Lord, and think about some word He has said, or some scene He has taken part in. Go there in spirit, forget you are in the chapel, and let yourself be carried away by what, in your imagination, is going on around you ; for instance, see our Lord asking St. Peter to let Him have his boat ; listen to the words of the instruction given to the people ; join St. Peter on the little bench behind ; then reflect how the same Lord is able and willing to speak to you, and the cry of the heart which inevitably comes, is a prayer—far better and more efficacious than the feeble colloquies which some people keep up the whole time.

Thinking and reflecting makes interior souls. Do this till the retreat, in preparation for it ; a year of it changes a soul. Of course, I know that sometimes you are tired, sometimes sleepy, sometimes cross, but

that matters little. God only wants you to use the little head still left, making allowance for sleep or fatigue.

A Sister of Notre Dame.

You have been singularly blessed in having had before your eyes for so many long years, a most perfect example of all that is contained in the letter, and in the spirit of your Rules, in the person of dear Sister Marie Anne.¹ I never saw any one so perfectly conformed to the spirit of her Institute as she was. You know better than I do her zeal to see the Rule kept in all its integrity, her pain when it was infringed in any way. She was not angry, she was stung as it were with a dart—grieved to the heart to see even the least carelessness in this respect. It was a personal pain to her, because the Rule was her life, her very existence seemed to be to uphold it, her esteem for it was unbounded. Hence all the little recommendations with which she hedged it round, and which I should never have had the courage to give you; all this showed how dear to her was the holy Rule. But more, she was herself, as it was said of St. John Berchmans, a living rule, so that were your Rules lost, they could be written again by observing her life. The spirit of perfection and sanctity dropped from her unconsciously, and without her knowing or meaning it from morning till night. She was a model to which you could look for example; perfection and virtue went out from her as perfume

¹ See *Memoir of Father Dignam, S.J.*, pp. 401, 402.

from a violet, regaling all around her with the sweet aroma of the Spirit of God.

Now all this must be answered for, and after such a perfect example, much more will be expected from you. Do we love and cherish our holy Rule as she did?

Do we try to imitate her love of a common ordinary life? It is in the observance of our Rules, and not only our Rules, but the recommendations of our Superiors, that all our perfection consists. Let us cherish the same sentiments as did St. John Berchmans when he exclaimed, "With my Rule, my crucifix, and my rosary, I can die with happiness."

But besides being a living rule, dear Sister Marie Anne was the model of a perfect Superior. These words of St. Paul so exactly apply both to her and to you: "*Therefore, my dearly beloved . . . and most desired, my joy and my crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. . . . Be of one mind in the Lord.*" If dear Sister Superior could speak to us now from her grave, I think these are the words she would say, "*My dearly beloved and most desired, my joy and my crown.*"

Among you I may speak with all confidence of being understood. Wherever all the hearts in a community are united in one love for the Superior, it shows that the Superior's love, for each and all there, is still greater; and never was it known to be otherwise. And it is not one individual, or one here and there, but the whole community of hearts were bound up in hers, and she has left behind a number of hearts, beating with affection for her, nay, without

one exception ; this shows that her love for you must have been very deep. Now, what struck me in dear Sister Superior's love for you was its truly spiritual character. I think that I can safely say that I have known her even more intimately than you, and in the many conversations that I have had with her, I have noticed that the one tone pervading it all was her deep love of her community, and yet at the same time her spirit of perfect detachment, the truly supernatural character of her affection for you. And she loved you not only in a body ; but the perfection, the happiness, and the comfort of each soul confided to her care was her life, all she had to live for. Her love for you was perfectly unselfish, she put herself aside. She thought of the wants of each individual soul, and was bent on leading it to perfection and God.

The perfection of her community was her own peculiar mission. Not that she shrank from other work, or from external work in the sphere of labour outside the convent ; on the contrary, it is marvellous the number of people who looked to her for guidance, and the widespread influence she exercised in her own quiet, humble way. Yet she preferred to do this through her Sisters, to set the springs going, and then retire into the background. But she was not called to this. I have known many Superiors, and good Superiors, too, who have originated and organized many good works outside the convent, for the glory of God and the good of souls, real holy nuns, thank God, and seen their efforts crowned with success. But this was not in her line. She had her hands on

many, many hearts in the town, reconciling those at variance, consoling the sorrowful, encouraging the weak ; and in this her life was a perfect apostolate in the town. But her mission was pre-eminently the perfecting of her own Sisters. I have spoken thus far of her love for you, and though, thank God, I have known many good and holy Superiors, I never saw any to excel her—her love was so spiritualized. Now is the time for you to show your love for her. You, and you alone, can be truly "*her joy and her crown*," she relies on you ; and if you are not filled with the supernatural charity she tried to instil into you, then her life has so far failed, and you will not add to her eternal bliss.

All through these long weary months you have been tried in the crucible, and found worthy of the confidence I always had in you. But the cap is, as it were, going to be placed on it all ; you must show what you are capable of doing. You can add to her honour and glory ; and your trial is not an ordinary one. For many years you have had virtue and charity of the very highest character placed constantly before your eyes, living with you, and now in return God asks nothing less than sublime virtue from all. The kind of love you have for her will be revealed now. Remember that all you do will reflect on her teaching, all the good actions done will place many gems in her crown, and add to her glory, placing her nearer our Lord. On the other hand, anything like giving way to nature will lessen her glory. Of course, nature will cry out, when we see her seat occupied by another. All she did and said is

considered sacred in our eyes, and we might be tempted to yield to childishness. I can give it no other name, and imagine it was almost a sacrilege to change anything she had done. The past has been hard, the future may be harder still. And from the place where our Lord has in His mercy put her, she can give you abundant help still; she is watching you, she knows so well the feelings of each heart. Some weak-minded ones might imagine it was loyalty to their late dear Sister Superior, to prefer all her arrangements and plans to those of the new Superior. Remember no two judgments are exactly the same, so you must expect changes. She will have her own ideas and judgment, and act accordingly; hence changes must of necessity be made, and all must be taken in a cheerful spirit. It would be her wish, and for her sake you will give a loyal love and hearty submission to your new Superior. When you go back to the old *regime* under new circumstances, nature must be resisted. If you are not watchful, judgments will be passed in your minds, rash ones perhaps, a wish to know the general opinion. We must not let these trifles overcome us, nor be upset if changes are made; all that is childishness, nothing worse perhaps: but remember we have come to a time when childishness may and would be a sin. You will show your loyalty to Sister Superior and add to her honour by doing what she would wish. Let us picture the arrival of the new Superior; see our Immaculate Mother bringing her to you and saying, "These are my children; yes, they are indeed my children." See there also Venerable Mère Julie, and

the shadow of her who loved you, and who is waiting and watching to see how you will receive her successor. What I am asking from you is high perfection, but I know that each and all of you will do it. Those three, our Lady, Venerable Mère Julie, and dear Sister Superior, will watch our looks, our manner; nay, more, they will search our hearts. Then do nothing to make them ashamed, but act in such a way that you will draw down on this house, and on the whole Institute, a blessing from Heaven, and reflect glory on Sister Superior, and thus you will indeed be "*her joy and her crown.*"

On passages from the "Imitation of Christ."

The *Imitation* says, "He who knows how to walk internally, and to make little account of external things, is not at a loss for proper places or times for performing devout exercises." (Book II. ch. i.) Such a one as this can speak to God in her heart at all times, whether it be waiting for the train at the railway station, or sitting at a desk in the school-room. The first moment in which she is free, not influencing somebody somehow, she can turn to God and have a heart to heart word with Him.

"If thou hadst a right spirit within thee, and wert purified from earthly affections, all things would turn to thy good and to thy profit." Nothing so defiles as attachment to earthly objects, or caring about them in any way, whether it be by love or fear. There should be no duplicity, or doubleness in our dealings with God. When we find we are

acting thus, we should be indignant, and with determination cut it out, cost what it may.

This is the simplicity at which we ought to aim.

"He that is well disposed and orderly in his interior, heeds not the strange and perverse carriages of men." Nothing at all in this world ought to affect a soul who is purely seeking God. She takes joy soberly, because it is so short, and if she keeps it too long in her mouth to try and taste the sweetness, it will turn to ashes. Unkind things she passes over ; they are the salt and savour, and things which make us ashamed of ourselves are again salt and savour ; and we go on our way heeding them no more than is necessary, but following straight the road which leads to Heaven.

Perfection.

We enter Religion with the definite purpose of accepting the will of God as our own. Therefore, whenever we deliberately say to ourselves, "God wills this, but I will do that," we wilfully go back from our purpose. This thought is a great comfort, for we can always feel that wherever we are, or whatever happens to us, or in whatever circumstances we may be placed, so long as we look upon God's will in it all, we are safe. We are just as safe in the most imminent danger, and the most alarming circumstances, as when life goes quietly on ; it is all in the Providence of God. All this goes back to the fundamental truth of St. Ignatius, to choose or reject ; indifference to creatures, except inasmuch as they lead me to God. Let us get a clear idea of perfec-

tion, which is, according to St. Francis de Sales, a general inclination and alacrity of the will to please God. We make a perfection of our own, and so act under delusion : we want, for instance, to be saints in our own way, and not the saints God intends to make of us. We none of us like to be crabby tempered, we would wish to be sweet and amiable, and get on easily, and be at peace with every one ; it is so nice, we think, to be as sweet as an angel ; but let us just reflect a little and examine whether this comes from the desire of pleasing God or from that comfortable kind of self-love, which makes us seek to be esteemed, and seek that which is most pleasing to ourselves. We make efforts to overcome ourselves certainly ; but what if God should mean us to remain crabby tempered in spite of it all, and by that very imperfection to gain Heaven for ourselves ?

Neither does perfection consist in praying without distractions, we cannot hope for such sublime things, and when they come they are purely God's gifts. Besides, the greatest saints have often passed the greater part of their lives struggling apparently in vain, against a multitude of harassing distractions.

We may get far more merit for a meditation spent in humbly fighting against distractions, and be far more pleasing to God, than if we had passed the whole time in the sweetest consolation. Humility is the best cure for all that, and if we cannot pray, and feel ourselves torn from God by distractions, well, for goodness sake, let us sit on the bench like a stick, and make our very miseries and distracting thoughts the means of approaching God, through

the humble confession of our misery and human weakness, and the submission of our hearts to the will of God. Perfection, then, is the general bent of our will, in all things : from morning till night, to seek the good pleasure of God alone. Of course, we fall back from our purpose, and commit faults ; but yet there is in a person earnestly seeking perfection, a promptness in following the will of God in the daily tenor of her life. Now, to do this properly we must get a right idea of God. If we regard Him as a taskmaster, who does not forgive even when we have expressed our sorrow, who has no pity for human weakness, and makes no account for it, who is always ready to judge—of course, all that has a bad effect on our spiritual life. It begets those ugly black fits of discouragement, which are the worst obstacles we can put between ourselves and Him. God likes us to recognize His goodness, to look upon Him as the tender, compassionate Lord. He has in a thousand ways declared Himself to be full of infinite pity for our human frailty, eager to pardon and to forget the faults as soon as the act of sorrow is made. We must approach Him with unbounded confidence, feeling that it is just because we are so poor and weak and miserable, that He cares for us, and that our very miseries are our best title to His compassion and love. With this conviction, we are able to start on our journey up the road to perfection. When any one undertakes a journey wherein he expects to find dangers, and to be assailed by enemies, he takes care to be well armed ; so we must get our pistols in order, and these are our

prayers, our Communion, our confessions. I spoke of humility being the best means of making the most of our prayers, no matter what the state of our soul may be. Humility is also the best preparation for Holy Communion. Communion and prayer are like the food of our souls. By confession we bathe our souls in the Precious Blood; and when we have made our confession, let it be done with, and don't spend your time examining it when it is done.

Our confessions should be sensible, and since we have to teach others, we should become perfect in it ourselves. Let us make our confessions as we teach others to make theirs, and not mar our happiness by letting the peace of our souls be troubled by little nothings, imagining that God has not forgiven us.

Some people get in a silly fright, because they cannot make up their minds to omit some fiddle-faddle which is no sin at all, and others cannot make up their minds to mention something which though small would humble them and expose their meanness: just the very thing for which we go to confession. Thus if we seek God in our life and not self, our souls will be in peace, and we shall find that true happiness which is the portion of those who sincerely desire to be perfect, for God's sake alone.

Prayer, our help.

I have spoken, indirectly, on the necessity of preparation before prayer, considering the great need we have of getting hold of every grace we can lay our hands upon, and knowing that we can only gather

the full fruit from a prayer that is well prepared. Now I shall speak of prayer, not as a duty, but as a help.

Even if it were not one of the most prominent duties of religious life, we ought still to wish for it, as the most effectual means of gaining other graces. Some find prayer a difficult thing, and obtain little sensible strength through its use. They look upon themselves as being tried by interior desolation ; but the *Imitation* brushes these cobwebs away by telling us that such people may consider the fault their own, if they are long without consolation.

God's ordinary way of dealing with good hard-working nuns, is to give them sensible sweetness in fitting times, and not leave them too long without, which is bad for most people. The other day I read something, which struck me as throwing light on the subject of prayer. The writer said, that many lose the fruit of prayer because they neglect to put themselves in a heart to heart conversation with our Lord, and that if they spent half their time of prayer in establishing this familiar footing between Him and themselves, they would gain more in the other half than by a whole meditation without it.

Now, what prevents this familiarity with our Lord ? It can be ascribed to three causes : a sense of disgrace, a feeling that He is not pleased with us, whether, in the vague, or because of some definite sin which we know we have committed, and are ashamed of. We must not sulk with Him ; like persons who have quarrelled over night, and on meeting next morning turn away their faces. If the feeling is in the vague,

let us honestly sift the matter, get to the bottom of it and repent. If we find all our actions full of defects, let us acknowledge it, and then say, "Thank God, it is not worse." If we have committed a downright sin, after all, He knows it already, and we know it. It must be put straight sometime, either here or at the Day of Judgment; it is no use letting it sleep and passing it over, until we get into a new phase of soul: better settle it at once. If we love a sin and will not give it up, don't stop away, but come and tell Him all about it, and hope the next day will find us more generous, that we shall do better to-morrow; this is being open with Him. He abominates strangerhood, and the strangerhood is always on our side, never on His. As soon as we kneel down, He is hanging on our lips, listening to every sigh of our hearts, nothing escapes Him. Keeping up such a feeling is, in one way, practically denying the comfort of the Real Presence; it is worse, it is denying our Lord's attention to us. If we fly from Him, there is no one else to go to: there is only one. Besides, we cannot escape Him, as David says; earth, sea, and air contain Him; in Him "we live and move, and have our being."

The second cause of coldness with our Lord proceeds from much the same as the first; we are unreal in our prayers, we make acts of the third degree of humility before we have the first, or rather, when we have seven degrees of pride. If we do make these acts, let us tell God we are saying what we would wish to be, not what we are.

It is unwise, unreasonable, wrong and false, to

live as strangers to our Lord. Reality in prayer supposes, that we present ourselves before God in prayer in the state we really are. Never go to God with a viper in your heart, without telling Him why it is there.

The third cause deserves some consideration. It is when we go to pray, with anger in our hearts towards someone who has offended us. It may be a trifle, but our Lord won't have it. Still do not stop away. Begin the Our Father (if you can do nothing else) until you get to "*Forgive us our trespasses,*" then start over again, as you can't go further. If the grace to forgive comes and is accepted, well and good ; if not, repeat what you feel you safely can, until better dispositions return. Desolation, proceeding from not taking the trouble to put ourselves heart to heart with our Lord, is a meritless suffering. It costs to those who are easily distracted, or who are afflicted by inordinate desires in their hearts ; but if three-quarters of the meditation passes in shutting these out, and putting oneself into this intimate familiarity, the time is well spent, and much fruit gained in the time left. We never put ourselves in close connection with our Lord, our Lady, or the saints, without practical conclusions coming, and we see at once what we ought to remove so as to be like them. The speciality of Advent time is prayer—prayer of desire ; and therefore I have chosen this subject. The Church is bursting with longings for the moment when He will give Himself to us in the Crib, and when we see how little we do, and how little we are able to do, even if we did all that lies in our power, and we don't

do that, we may well cultivate a prayer of desire, which will make up for the want of actual merits.

Prayer, a necessity.

If a nun is advised to take for a spiritual reading-book, Rodriguez, she generally looks as if she were insulted, or at least as if some slight commotion was going on inside. It is just because the depth and perfection are so great, that its simplicity blinds many to its merits. Rodriguez is a writer fitted to give comfort to struggling souls. To such as have been some time in Religion, who know what warfare means, who have made no progress in their own eyes, who sometimes, and bitterly too (if they have any pride about them, and few are without it), regret that they have wasted their time ; to these Rodriguez's esteem for spiritual things is the very remedy which will help them best. After the inspired writings and the *Imitation*, no book I think has been of more assistance than this one.

Now, I will speak of prayer, not so much as ranking first in dignity, but because it is the only means by which we can obtain other graces. A Religious who neglects prayer *must* and does feel desolation, aridity, spiritual starvation.

But in time she runs the danger of becoming insensible to these punishments, sent by God and our dear Lady's love ; and though her tone, conversation, habits, and ways, will tell the waste within, her external works can go on much the same as before for a certain period. A Religious who is losing the

presence of God's grace suffers much ; but once it is gone, she is indifferent. They say that when a man is drowning, his sufferings are perfectly dreadful, as long as he is seeking to keep out the water and fighting for life ; but when he opens his mouth and the water rushes in, pain ceases, and apathy succeeds even before consciousness is gone. So with souls who neglect prayer ; it is at first with remorse and discomfort, afterwards with indifference.

Prayer is inevitable light to our minds. "*Hearken, O daughter, and see,*" says the Psalmist ; listen, that you may see. Unless the voice of God is heard in your hearts, you will soon cease to see by the eyes of faith. Prayer is food to our souls.

No one speaks to God in heart to heart conversation, if only for five minutes, without rising up renewed and strengthened. The soul is feeding upon God, and she feels His power. Those who have once experienced these communications, can no longer live without them. As the panting stag thirsts for the fountains, so they long and thirst for the time when they will be again in converse with our Lord.

Prayer is also recreation, and in some periods of life it is the only kind that can do us good. Repose is therein found, such as nothing earthly can give or produce.

All can pray ; whether they be faithful souls, whose sincere aspirations are for the glory of God, to whom prayer is easy, or passionate souls, whose good desires are marred by selfishness, self-seeking, or other passions which disturb their union with God ; in both cases they can pray, if they will only be

sincere and real with Him. Discouraged souls are the third class. They too can pray, if they will speak of this temptation to our Lord, and ask His help to conquer it; down-heartedness is a silly temptation. Any one who with sincerity can say to God, "You have given me a vocation, and I thank You for it," has no need to be dejected. God is more anxious to finish the work which He has begun than she herself—her salvation, which He has forwarded so far with so much labour, He will continue to watch over, and His Precious Blood washes away the slightest offence between Him and ourselves.

Prayer is *work*, and prayer must also *vivify* your work. A Religious should feel that the results of her day depend upon prayer. And as prayer runs through the day, having its share in every action, so during the time of prayer, responsibilities, cares, and anxieties are laid down and watered by the blessings poured over them by prayer. If there is anything calculated to make her Guardian Angel weep, it would be to see a Religious plunge into her work without the help of prayer—for your prayer and work must never be disassociated. The one must permeate the other. Each act of your day is an oblation as powerful with God as the most fervent ejaculations; each duty as it comes is a real prayer.

I shall never forget what I heard as a boy from Father Spencer. He was preaching on the Last Judgment, when motioning to the right side he said, "There will be a lot of people *there*;" then, pointing to the left side, "and a lot of people *there*," meaning the reprobate; "and if you ask why this difference,

they will tell you—because one set prayed and the other did not.”

Questions and Answers.

Question. Is it true that, by reparation for past sin, we may obtain a higher place in Heaven than if we had never sinned?

Answer. It is true, and this teaching is founded on such high authority, and indeed is too conformable to the heart of man and to the Heart of God, to be shaken by any mere abstract assertions, of what is evident—that a sinner who had never sinned could have been as fervent as if his fervour had been pricked by sorrow—*could* gain the same merit by his after-life, without losing the merit which the other lost by his sin. This is (mathematically) obvious, but what answer is it to that saying of St. Ambrose: “The saints, if they fall, rise more determined than ever!” Pricked by the spur of shame, they do greater things, which more than make reparation for the loss, so that not only may it be said that “they suffered no impediments, but that they gathered even greater speed upon their way.”

Gagliardi, in his commentary on the Exercises, implies the same doctrine, speaking of the memory of sin as the great safeguard against tepidity. Who does not say, *O felix culpa*, when a hasty untruth gives an apostle to the Church like St. Alphonsus Liguori, or St. Andrew Avellino? Who thinks St. Peter would have been as great a Saint without his fall? He *could*, yes; but what of that?

Question. Is it good to offer up *the sacrifice of one's life for others?*

Answer. This is a thought which often occurs to school-girls, and is very seldom meant, or at least it is in some way withdrawn afterwards. Any one sensible enough to *mean* it, should be able to say this: "I am but a child, foolish and inexperienced, and knowing nothing of myself; how can I dare to say that I have virtue enough to overcome the smallest temptations, which I shall meet with in after-life; how can I then, without presumption, pretend to make an offering of which I so little know the cost." But she might say, "O Lord, what I know not Thou knowest, and if my boldness find favour in Thy sight, in my nothingness, but with my whole heart, I offer this; but if Thou seest that such an act in me would be but a false and delusive generosity, seeking self-satisfaction *now* in a sacrifice I should not make *then*—let it be far from me."

Question. Ought we to try and understand *Discernment of spirits?*

Answer. Yes, for we do not sufficiently examine the different movements of the good and evil spirits who influence us, and we break our retreat resolutions, because we do not recognize the beginnings of temptations, and let the devil in, and allow him to turn us round; sometimes our life is divided into two halves—one half guided by God, and the other half by the devil. All seemingly good impulses and lights come from the devil, if *contrary to obedience*. According to St. Bernard, we do just as wrong in acting against obedience in a good thing as in a bad one. We should

watch our train of thought, for even if in the beginning it is good, by the wiles of the devil we may be landed in quite a different direction. By the result we shall know if it be good or bad.

Even after consolation coming directly from God, the devil, or our own spirit, may plant evil, if we are not on our guard. Spurious consolation makes the devil grin.

Question. Which is the best posture to take in time of prayer?

Answer. The proper attitude for prayer is with the hands joined and the eyes either closed or looking down, or on the tabernacle, not with the hands over the face. The putting of oneself in the presence of God before prayer, is of the greatest importance. The more I read of those who were penetrated with the spirit of prayer, the more I see what stress they lay upon it. In prayer we ought to abase ourselves before God, we ought to put ourselves in our proper place before Him; to put on our own clothes, to see His magnificence, our own littleness, and sinfulness, and meanness; the greatness of God and my own insignificance, recognizing the difference. A respectful posture is most conducive to good prayer, always remembering our strength, whether we are able to kneel or sit, and no fidgeting with hands or head, but to place ourselves in the presence of God, and think—is He listening, does He love me, is my Angel Guardian smiling down upon me? St. John Chrysostom says that when souls go to meditate they are like soldiers in an arena, fighting with foes bigger than themselves. Our Lord and His heavenly court are

looking on, and applaud the little soldiers when they succeed. Examen of meditation afterwards is most important. Father Roothaan says we cannot make any progress in prayer, if we do not examine how we have succeeded or failed, and the reason.

Custody of eyes is a great help by removing many obstacles—and penance, if courageously undertaken, is also a help. At Mass, we ought not to see anything except the tabernacle, or the altar.

Question. Will you explain to us about the rules for taking food mentioned in the Exercises?

Answer. Yes; St. Ignatius gives some rules regarding food. There is very little danger in being tempted to gluttony with bread-and-butter, but we must be on our guard about grand dishes. Let us apply this rule to daily life. Consider unpleasant occupations as bread-and-butter, and work as much as you like at them. The things agreeable to nature may be considered as "gooseberry pie," and stint yourselves over that; and there *is* such a thing as drinking too much tea. Take your mind away from food by pious thoughts, regarding yourself as seated at table with our Lord, His Blessed Mother, and the Apostles. Listen to the reading in refectory. There are generally three classes of listeners. Some are always distracted, some pay great attention, when the reading pleases them. The wise set store on everything. Refectory reading is of immense advantage.

Try to do without dispensations or exceptions respecting food. Fix beforehand how much you will eat, and if tempted to exceed, retrench even from that

which you had pre-arranged to take. In this way we make the devil turn coward. He hates humiliations more than we do, and when he sees that he is the cause of a Sister practising virtue, he will soon leave her alone.

On Religious Life.

Is it allowable to stick up for your own rights in Religion, to resist those who would encroach on our privileges; to defend ourselves when attacked and this on principle? *No*. Certainly no, if we are aiming at perfection in virtue, if we are endeavouring to keep to the spirit of St. Ignatius—because in his Constitutions for the Society, he says: “Yield to others the best part.”

This can only be carried out fully, when I let others sit upon me as much as they choose, and be quiet and peaceable under it. So here we have the general law laid down for all. There may be exceptions, when it would be prudent to condescend to weakness and take another course.

In the case of a Religious not yet formed to such habits of virtue as to render its practice easy, and who is at constant war with self, in the daily struggles to bear the yoke in silence, who loses peace of mind, and grows excited and annoyed: such as these may be wisely counselled to withstand oppression; but however, always remembering that this is not the most perfect road, and only permitted as a help to weakness, until such times as by God's grace they will become stronger in virtue and able to practise it more robustly.

Religious life is a curious collection of duties and responsibilities on the one hand, and of helps and graces on the other. One single soul, relentlessly bent on seeking self, is enough to impede the progress of a whole community.

Many of us have to lay our troubles at our own door. Take up the golden book, and turn to the chapter which the author quaintly terms, "The monastic life," and see the rule he lays down: "Thou must learn to renounce thy own will in many things, if thou wilt keep peace and concord with others." Not merely to wear the same dress, to follow the same Rule, and seem to agree, but to be in very truth of one heart and one soul. It is no small matter to live in a monastery, and to converse therein without reproof, and to persevere faithful till death. No, indeed, it is *no* small matter. It is enough to make us into saints.

Great virtue is indeed attainable by those who live a community life, in a community spirit, namely, with the same affectionate feeling to all alike. Charity, and peace in charity, is what we ought to aim at—the only way of practising community life in perfection.

We must have absolute trust in God's Providence to rule over us; to direct Superiors in their way of leading their subjects, to place them where He would have them, to give that spirit to those around which will make life for them just what He would wish it to be. Shall I then throw myself defenceless into the hands of a lot of women? No, my dear child, but into the arms of God Himself, Who never fails those

who trust in Him. This does not mean to say we shall never suffer. The process of filing and being filed goes on, and will go on as long as we live ; and though the mantle of unction and strength which our Lord throws around His faithful ones, makes joy out of crosses, still human nature is there, and community life itself is a living death.

God means us to suffer. We could not meditate on the Saint whose feast we keep to-day without recognizing that truth. St. John, true, loyal, noble, self-sacrificing to the last, how was he treated? Greatest among those born of women : nevertheless, what were the circumstances of his death ; he was foully slaughtered in the obscurity of his prison, and his head brought in a dish to gratify the revenge of a dancing-girl.

If we live a true community life we can reach a marvellous height of sanctity. Though pain there be, still it never goes so far as resisting unto blood. God mercifully comes to our assistance, and, by means of *little things*, does the work which has to be accomplished in each soul before holiness is acquired. So community life puts us to death. Are we ready to die?

Entering Religion was a real compact between ourselves and God, to take His will for ours, in all things small and great—in other words, complete abandonment to Providence. If we cling tenaciously to any object even the slightest—be it for a little more sleep in the morning, or to have our own way in a trifle, or our own choice in a spiritual reading-book, or what not—we render ourselves incapable of

following Jesus stript of all things. Better far to throw ourselves unreservedly into the arms of an omnipotent and all-loving Father, and trust Him for all.

Thus the inner spirit becomes robust ; everything turns out well, for God takes such a soul entirely under His protection. Now think over these considerations seriously, and make resolutions spring out of them which will stand the wear and tear of life, and do some good in the end. When was it known that God allowed Superiors or Sisters to forget a Sister who entirely forgot herself, and sought herself in nothing ? To refuse to commit ourselves to Divine Providence, is to take back the aroma of the sacrifice we offered God when we made our vows.

Preparation for Retreat.

I am thinking of you and your retreat, and I shall be only too pleased if anything I can say will induce you to make a good one. By making a good one, I do not mean to say you have not made good retreats before ; but if you do not take care, you will be apt to pass through your retreat as a sort of religious exercise which has to be gone through, and look on it as something required to fill up the year. One of the worst dispositions for a retreat is that of contentment with yourselves.

A Religious, even one who gives edification, and seems to get on pretty well, may say, " Well, I don't think I am so bad. Superiors do not find fault with me. I get on pretty well with the Sisters. I make

my examination of conscience regularly, and I find nothing amiss." These sentiments show a bad look-out for the retreat. It will be passed through like so many others, without leaving a lasting impression, because there was wanting a determined purpose, a determined will. The first thing, then, is to have a fixed resolution, a determined purpose, and make up our minds to do the thing well, no matter what it may cost us. To make you understand what I mean by this determination to do a thing, I will tell you a little account I read last night. A French lady had an only son whom she idolized. He was sent to one of our Colleges in France, and for some years gave satisfaction to everybody. At last, after leaving College he fell in with bad companions, and caused his mother much anxiety. One night he had been to a ball, and coming home in the dawn of the morning he caught cold, and was soon down with rapid inflammation of the lungs. The poor mother was distracted. She saw by the doctor's face that the case was hopeless; and all his efforts to stay the inflammation of no avail. She was to be deprived of her darling, and his soul in danger. Throwing herself on her knees by the bedside, she remained for a few minutes in earnest prayer to our Blessed Lady. Then raising herself to her full height, she looked like one who had taken a fixed resolution. Leaving her son in good hands, she took the next train to Lourdes. It was a journey of eight hours. She arrived at her destination about four in the morning. Going into one of the waiting-rooms, she took off her shoes and stockings, and walked barefoot, over rough flinty

stones, the long distance to the Grotto. As if God wished to increase her pain, the roads had been newly repaired with fresh sharp granite: but the poor mother passed on, impassive, unheeding her bleeding feet, to fulfil her fixed purpose. On arriving at the Grotto, she prayed until seven o'clock with extended arms. At seven she heard Mass, received Holy Communion, and then took the next train back to her home.

With trembling hands and fluttering heart, she knocked at the door. It was opened, she asked one question, her prayer had been heard; at eight that morning her son took a turn for the better. He was soon restored to perfect health, and reconciled with God.

The application of this to your retreat I need scarcely point out. Go in with a firm resolution to fulfil the will of God, and to rise higher in the path of perfection. Don't be afraid of being too mortified, and think "what will become of me." When we have an ardent desire for anything, how we pray for it! Let us then be as anxious and pray as hard to make a good retreat as we have been over objects less worthy of our desires. But this is a great cannon-ball to swallow, and because of its size may be of no use; like the cannon-balls which were admired by an old soldier, but thrown aside as useless, because they would not go into his gun. Let us break the cannon-ball up into small pills, which can be easily digested. The first pill, then, is to get ready our meditation. We listen well while the meditations are being given, but we forget to

think of it the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning. Our meditation should, in a sort of way, be continued the whole day.

This application of the mind should be negative rather than positive ; that is, we should not actually meditate all day. This would soon put one in an asylum ; but you should not lose the fruit of your meditation by wilfully thinking of, or throwing your whole heart and soul into things unconnected with the retreat.

This leads me to the second pill : not to pour out the soul on external things, even those which you are ordered to do by obedience. This is a mistake made by many Religious ; they as it were lighten the retreat, and take a little diversion between meditations, by throwing themselves into some external work. As soon as the meditation is over, they hasten to their charge, or to something they have set their hearts on doing, and so pour themselves out on it as to prevent the meditation just made from making a lasting impression and producing fruit. Some again may be very much tempted to let their imagination wander on what they have done, or what they have not done, or on some imaginary evil which they think is going to happen to them. One good means of keeping the mind quiet, is to make use of ejaculatory prayer, and another custody of eyes ; even a good Sister may go about with her eyes cast down, and yet see everything and know all the news.

Others, on the other hand, may look without seeing. It is not the opening of the eyes which does the mischief, but it is that wish and unmortified

desire to see, and the looking with the intention to know all we can. So mind your own selves, and never mind your Sisters. Lastly, I should say conquer human respect ; overcome any repugnance you may feel to looking devout, and walking about with a recollected exterior. And now for the next few days, ask our Lady's help, and put your retreat under her protection, and it will be one of the best retreats you have ever made.

Simplicity.

" Unless you become as little children you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." How few there are even among the children of God who realize the importance of these words, and the necessity they are under of putting them in practice.

Even good Christians, whose duties and state of life bring them into continual contact with the world, whose badge they as it were by necessity carry, rarely think that these words apply to them. They may ponder them in their minds, and even keep them enshrined in their hearts, as the words of the Incarnate Wisdom, the epitome of the Gospel taught by Jesus Christ, but in *practice* they are *not* children. Their affairs require acuteness and worldly prudence, the management of their children's welfare, as far as the world and its goods are concerned, seem to place an insurmountable difficulty before the practice of this Gospel maxim. Amongst the wealthy and educated, there are those who are childlike to their spiritual guides, their pastor and their confessor ; but priests know from experience that their number is

few. But of the poor our Lord says, that they are "*blessed*" and that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them: the poor, who regard all as their superiors; how truly childlike they are in their respect for their priests and spiritual superiors. Yet amongst themselves, though they may practise many a beautiful virtue, they are not childlike with one another. How often we find that, even amongst themselves, the one who has some trifling possession above his neighbour, asserts his claim to superiority, and is anything but simple and childlike in his demeanour towards his fellows.

But if in the *world* this maxim is so poorly practised, from the immense disadvantages which surround the steps of Christians, how easy and attractive is its practice to *Religious*. Our vocation as Religious places us at once in the position of the family. Whether novice, professed, inferiors, or superiors, we are all called upon to be little children; not only in regard to those to whom we feel naturally inclined to pay reverence, but to one and all of our Sisters, we must be little children in simplicity, candour, and affection. No necessity here for that mingling of the wisdom of the serpent and the simplicity of the dove. No reason why the tail of the former should edge itself in. But amongst all communities, we find some *clever ones*, who teach quite another doctrine. Their idea, and their teaching too, is, that this maxim is practical enough for novices, and those not in charge, but for themselves quite the contrary is necessary. It would never suit their position and reputation, to be simple and

childlike. Such doctrine is false. From the novice upwards, most of us have some one under us, and all have some one over us ; but let our position be one of trust, or of the least importance, we must still be children in candour, openness, and simplicity, in the religious family to which we belong. We must be children in the hands of our Superiors, to praise or blame us, to place us high or low, in offices of importance or in mere trifling charges : we must be little children. As little children we kneel before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, as little children we present ourselves before Him in confession, as little children we love Him, and spend ourselves unselfishly in His service, with no further thought but of working where and how He may appoint for us. Acting thus, we may hope to be of the number to whom Heaven belongs, for, "*unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*"

Simplicity (continued).

I felt after the last instruction, that I had scarcely touched on the points with which I had determined to deal. Instead of entering deeper into the beautiful doctrine, contained in those wonderful words of Divine Wisdom, "*Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven,*" I wandered away, as I often do, into considering where this maxim is practised and where rejected. I referred to the fact of its being so totally ignored in the world, even by Christians ; nor can we expect it to be otherwise, for the spirit of the world is at thorough

variance with that of Jesus Christ. It must be the distinguishing character of His followers, to be enemies to the spirit of the world, that world which we know Jesus so strongly condemns, declaring that it has no part with Him; hence this childlike simplicity which Jesus approves, is condemned and rejected, which Jesus reprobates. The practice of this beautiful virtue distinguishes His children, and for Religious the right understanding of this Divine maxim must be their criterion all through life, to guide them in adhering to the true spirit of their holy vocation. Let us, then, dive into the depths of our own hearts, and see if we fully appreciate this doctrine, or if we are among the many who consider moderation in its practice the better thing. Jesus spoke not of moderation: thoroughness in its practice must certainly be understood of His words — "*Unless you become as little children.*" Have we in our hearts some affection for the world, some tending towards its views and ideas? Are we guided by its mode of measuring greatness and merits? If so, we are not true children of our dear Mother, nor real Religious.

If we have the spirit of children, with what true contempt we shall regard the world, and its attractions and its wisdom.

Who sets so little value upon the world as a little child? How thoroughly it ignores its empty show and parade, its riches and its paltry honours; how beautiful is its ignorance and contempt of the whole! Are we imbued with this feeling with regard to the world? Our kind of life brings us so much in contact

with it, for it is upon it that we have to work. Yes, the world is the material upon which we work, just as the carpenter works upon wood. We have to work for its cure, its benefit; but how can we benefit it if we allow ourselves to be corrupted by its maxims and spirit?

How carefully we need to guard our hearts, that a simple childlike spirit may reign in us.

Religion is founded upon the doctrine contained in the above words of our Lord, for St. Paul says, God has not chosen many great and wise for His work, but the "weak" and "contemptible" things He has chosen, for His power shines forth in their infirmity and weakness; if Religion were for the clever, strong and wise only, where, my Sisters, should you and I be? We could only look on and admire or envy, but never hope to make it our *own* portion. Yes, the truth of those words is illustrated by the many little and weak ones, who have become great by God's grace, to the utter confusion and defeat of the great ones of earth. And again, if we have the spirit of children, how, like them, we shall love and cherish what belongs to our Father. How little the child regards the world's riches and its power! How he turns from its glare and attraction, to the embrace of his poor mother or ungainly father! In his eyes, they alone are admirable and deserving of love. And we, children of our Heavenly Father, what must be our loyalty to His interests and His work. Every thought, word, action, and pulsation of our heart must be controlled by the one absorbing motive of increasing His honour and His reign

amongst men. As true children of our Lady the world can have no part in us ; no paltry gain, or empty praise, or ambition of honour, may share our hearts and steal the bloom from our great and noble work.

The Spiritual Exercises and their Key-note.

You are professed Religious, some of many years standing ; and though you may not be aware of it, yet it is a known fact that your religious character gives you a great influence over souls.

To them you are constantly imparting the spirituality which you have acquired, and in all this you run great risks, unless supported by the spirit of self-denial—self-abnegation or holy hatred of self. I saw this so plainly in my last retreat. Self-abnegation is the key-note of the Exercises.

Take, for instance, “The End of Man” and “Use of Creatures ;” who can attain his last end and make a right use of creatures without self-denial and detachment from created things ? Take sin, and what leads to it but want of self-denial and mortification ? Surveying our own chain of sins, we find the same truth at each step. See Jesus, our Captain, calling on us to follow Him with our cross, to share His labours, food, drink, and sufferings : all speaks of abnegation. Then in the Passion we see Jesus practising the virtue of which He spoke, as He hangs on the Cross bleeding and dying, while His Holy Mother stands at the foot of the Cross, sharing His sufferings. Even in the glorious Resurrection it comes up again, for why did

Mary share His joys, but because she shared His sufferings?

Religious life must be a life of abnegation, if we would let our religious training act upon us. If Religious are not mortified, it is because they do not live up to their Rule, for the rules of all Religious embrace a large amount of mortification. If we do not live up to it, we are Religious only in name. The most austere Orders, where great penances and fasts form part of the Rule, have often needed reform; because the greatest austerities, practised without the union of our wills, cannot make a true Religious. The will must always take part, or the exterior mortification which we may be forced to follow, from the circumstances in which we are placed, will count as nothing.

Now all admit, my dear Sisters, that your life is one of constant self-denial and mortification. This is of necessity from the duties which you have to fulfil. But while compelled by outward circumstances to lead this life of constant mortification, if it is only from compulsion that we bear the hardships which come across us; if our will does not embrace them with loving zeal, we may lose our reward. Let us then embrace with love the mortifications offered us. Let us even add something voluntary to that which our Rule demands. Let us count as lost the day on which we have not practised some voluntary act of abnegation and self-denial. Thus we shall be truly following in the footsteps of the Divine Master, Who says, "*He that loveth his life shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal.*"

That is, he who loves his flesh—works for its destruction; he who chastises it—works for its salvation. “*Whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.*”

Trusting in God.

Do all we can, it will still happen that, from time to time, our will finds itself reluctant to conform itself to that of God. We know we are not submissive, and so we sulk with God because we feel there is something between our hearts and Him—an ugly black veil which keeps us from Him. If we are wise, we know it and realize it. If not, we grope in the darkness and perhaps for long. As long as we are here below, the Cross in some shape or form is our portion; and we must feel at times the pressure of it, from outward circumstances, from changes and losses of all kinds, from little persecutions without, or as I have pointed out, from the more cruel persecutions within; in the rebellion of our own passions and want of submission to the thought which should never be far away—God is the only one I have to go to, and if I sulk with Him, where am I to go? If I cannot go to God, who else is there to help me? You have seen by your own experience of life, and the least experienced here has learnt it by this time, that it is useless to depend on creatures. They all die, or even forget us before they die, or get tired of us before they forget us; and knowing ourselves to be what we are, scarcely bearable even to ourselves, how can we expect others to put up with us without getting weary? It is

the inevitable rule that one of the trials of life is to be our mutual forbearance with each other. Now and then, it is true, we may come across an angel, but they are rare, for God never meant *that*—He means us to bear with each other. So I have no one else but God to go to, and if in my sulkiness I keep aloof from God, what will become of me? I am part of Himself; it is as if I were one with Him, as if God took a little piece out of His own Heart and gave it life, and put me on this earth for a short time to move and act while He watches what I will do. After awhile, if I behave myself as He wills, God will put me back again into Himself from whence I came. This is only the old foundation work put before you in retreats. Creatures are nothing to me except inasmuch as they lead me to God; God is everything. What then is the use of looking to others? God took you out of His own Heart, and put you on your little candlestick—presently He will call you away to Himself. All in the wide world I have to live for is this—to do His will from morning till night. This thought gives us light, too, about purity of intention. Now that we know there is nobody else but God to rely on, all we do must be for God and for God only; it must be so, for either it is for God or it is for myself; and I am all day long deliberately choosing between these two, God and self. Each act is a distinct preference of one or the other.

If I do not prefer God, I prefer self to God. And this enters into every minute detail of our lives from morning till night. When this thought has become habitual, and sunk deeply into our minds so as to

form the principle of all we do, our life becomes one simple act of perfect conformity to the will of God. We do all because it pleases Him ; we are sorry for our faults because they displease Him, because they are a preference of our own pleasure and satisfaction to His interests and His greater glory. We get into the way of doing things, not because we like them, but because they are God's will. Thus we may even do things we like naturally, and yet be doing God's will with great perfection. I may, for instance, eat an ice and enjoy it, and yet be doing God's will and giving Him glory, for I eat it, not for the sake of the enjoyment I find in it, but because it is provided for me, and therefore God's will is that I should partake of it. It would be quite a different thing if I stole an apple and went behind the door to eat it, which would be preferring my will to God's commands. I might, on the other hand, practise great austerities, even suffer a martyrdom through vainglory, and be preferring myself before God, because its principle would be self-love, and not God's glory or His good pleasure ; so that all depends on the preference. See how much merit then we can gain all day by doing our ordinary duties, even by our pleasures and satisfactions. We go through the day with this one thought, " God loves me, I belong to God, I am going to God. I am here to do His will for a short time, then to be with Him for ever." This habitual thought also makes our trials easy to bear. Besides, it is well to take a common sense view of life, and look at it in its practical light. I must submit willingly or unwillingly. I can't help it, do what I will I cannot

get out of it ; so the only way left to me, if I am wise, is to make the most I can out of it, by bearing cheerfully whatever God sends. It is His will that I bear this or that trial or humiliation, that I do this or that which costs me, and so we do it. Looking at things in this light also leads us to self-knowledge, and hence to an humble acceptance of all shame and humiliation that can come to us, as our due. It helps us to make habitually those sublime acts of true sorrow for sin—sorrow for the love of God because He has been pained and offended, not because of the shame and humiliation it brought to ourselves. In this spirit of self-abnegation we can make merit even out of the past.

Suppose we have not made use of our trials properly, yet let us do so now. Let us recall the cruellest losses and pangs we have gone through during life, and say : "*Thy will be done.*" Let us accept them all over again, and tell God we wish it all, and the consequences of it all just as it is, because He willed it and sent it. There are our past sins also, our humiliations, a trifle, perhaps a something which made us foolish and which we blush even to think of—well, let us recall all that and say, "The shame, Lord, the humiliation, the confusion I accept with gladness and cherish it as my due. I offer it in expiation of my faults ; I am glad of the abnegation it causes me ; but as for the sin, Lord, the ugly, base ingratitude, the pain and the insult to Thee, for that I am truly and heartily sorry, because it has wounded Thy Divine Heart."

Unjust Judgments.

The chief offenders of *the* great unjust judgment were Annas and Caiphas, both priests of the Old Law and invested with that power which made all true Israelites bow down in veneration before them. They loved their office for its own sake, and when One came Who by His miracles and teaching power proved Himself to be possessed of Divine authority, they refused to yield, they would not bow down to give Him the seat they valued so highly. Envy and jealousy hardened their eyes and hearts and ears ; it blinded them completely. "*He is guilty of death,*" they said. Nuns even may take this picture and profit by it. Suppose a Sister to be in an office which makes her the centre of a little circle. People love gifts and accomplishments, for two reasons. Either to take therein complacency, or, on the other hand, to use them as means of attracting others to them, and gaining power or influence.

These external gifts which some possess, and which are often the cause of making the eyes of men and women fix themselves upon the owner, are not the slightest good to the individual, as far as goes to making her good and holy. They are rather to be dreaded, because they entail responsibility. To commit a fault when enthroned as queen over two hundred young pupils, is very different to one fallen into while dusting a chair in the convent parlour. They give more power for good if rightly used, but they bring danger to the soul itself. How many nuns are there who, when they render an "account

of their stewardship," that is, resign their charge into the hands of another, do so with perfect detachment. After labouring for years, thinking themselves, and being thought by their Superiors, to be inflamed with purest zeal, they find they cannot renounce their position without giving way to those imperfections which let all see that self is still alive. Sadness, moping, and other miseries come, but these God easily forgives ; the only harm done is the loss of the community's opinion that they had a saint among them. Never mind that, don't fret at others seeing your weakness, perhaps this very thing is what God has waited patiently to bring about—years of quiet, loving waiting ; this may be the commencement of a far higher and purer life for you than ever before. But what of those who repine, harbour unjust thoughts, or even undermine the good their successors are doing, by little words or speeches let fall as it were by accident. No one could do a worse thing for herself. Faults against charity arm our Lord's love against ourselves.

If you never think an unkind thought, say an unkind word, or do an unkind thing, our Lord will look after the rest.

You will have a merciful judgment. *You* pay attention to charity, our Lord will then take care of you. Some are in a state of nervous alarm about temptations, and take far too much notice of them. What enrages the devil more than anything else, is to see creatures who, through the frailty of human nature, are subject to temptations still destined to take their seats in Heaven. Far better for you to

watch your sins against charity than to mind these temptations. Your danger of offending God is want of kindness to others. Pilate sinned through fear of being reported to his superiors. Herod is a practical example of what comes from not making the particular examen. There was a time when Herod lay an innocent babe on his mother's knee, but the seeds of the passions were already there in his heart; mark this, these same passions you have within you, keep them cropped. Have I not told you salvation is a matter of business? As soon as the keen eye of your Superior detects the beginning of rash judgments, or any other fault which she brings under your notice, turn at once the force of your particular examen to that point and conquer it. Speaking again of charity, let me remark that externs have a right to your good opinion. You can make them miserable by depriving them of your esteem; I once knew a child who was made wretched, and whose self-respect was destroyed by being questioned and not believed. Remember when you are contemplating the sufferings Jesus endured at different tribunals, that through these unjust judgments upon Him, He merited grace for you never to judge unjustly, and to bear up patiently, if ever you should be rashly judged yourself.

Venerable Mère Julie Billiart.

Father Dignam had a great veneration for the saintly foundress of the Sisters of Notre Dame.

He attributed to her intercession one of the

"greatest graces" of his life.¹ When the time approached for the introduction of her Cause, he joined in the chorus of petitions that were sent to the Holy See to implore this favour, and wrote as follows to Pope Leo XIII. :

Most Holy Father,

Now that the Canonical process instituted by the Bishop of Namur, concerning the virtues of Mère Julie Billiart has been concluded, it is time that those who ardently desire her beatification should hasten to the feet of your Holiness, to implore the favour that the Decree for the Introduction of the Cause may be signed by your august hand.

It is only after the experience of many years, principally devoted to the work of directing religious families in the pursuit of perfection, and especially after a long and intimate knowledge of the daughters of Mère Julie Billiart, that I presume to intrude my humble testimony upon your Holiness concerning the fruits of sanctity in their lives which are directly traceable to her spirit and example, and the still greater fruit which may be hoped for from this Beatification, both in their own perfection, and the zeal and consequent advantage to the multitudes of souls for whom they give their lives.

I can testify, Most Holy Father, concerning the Sisters of Notre Dame in England that the remarkable spirit which God designed to breathe into the heart of the Mother, the simplicity so perfectly child-like, the gaiety so perfectly modest, the piety so

¹ *Memoir of Father Dignam, S.J.*, p. 255.

perfectly sensible, the labour so perfectly devoted and so fruitful, and these combined with a common life so austere, a poverty so naked, and obedience both of will and judgment of such high and unusual perfection. This spirit, Most Holy Father, these virtues are combined in their souls (and I do not speak of exceptionally favoured souls among them, but of the common run of the Sisters), with so tender a devotion to her, and so fervent a desire to imitate her, that it would be difficult to doubt that these fruits of religious perfection are the general results of the holiness of her life and the power of her intercession with God.

Prostrate, therefore, at the feet of your Holiness I utter my earnest prayer that the Decree for the Introduction of the Cause may receive your Holiness' signature, praying that it may be speedily followed by the Beatification of the Servant of God, from which I hope for such great increase of the Divine glory, great promotion of the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and great fruits of salvation to the innumerable souls of the poor.

I most humbly crave, Most Holy Father, the Apostolic Benediction, and remain ever of your Holiness, the most unworthy and devoted of your servants and sons,

A. DIGNAM, S.J.

After the Decree from Rome had been issued, Father Dignam gave the following conference to the Sisters of Notre Dame, St. Helens.

When God gives any special mark of His favour to an Institute or Order, it is a sign that He is pleased with the individuals composing it, and that He is served therein. Now a most special mark of His favour has just been bestowed upon you by the declaration of the Church that your saintly foundress is "Venerable." That this should happen in our own days is a source of great consolation. I particularly wish you to see that the personal holiness of Mère Julie alone could never have obtained this privilege from the Church ; but it has been sustained and proved by the correspondence of her children to that first sublime idea, the seed sown by Mère Julie, which has fructified and produced a long succession of fervent Sisters of Notre Dame, from the time of Mère Julie to the Decree of Leo XIII. which accords her the title of "Venerable." This is not a favour granted to Mère Julie alone, but to her whole Institute, and I remind you again that it could never have come to pass if her children had not carried on with fervour the great work she began. It is a sign that the Church appreciates their labours, and publicly recognizes them, and cherishes them as her special children and devoted labourers in the Lord's Vineyard. It is an infallible sign that your Institute is in its first fervour, and that its members are living up to its Rules and the spirit left by their Venerable foundress. Now, to a child of Mère Julie what a subject of joy and gratitude ! You all love your vocation, but will it not increase your love more, and make you cling more closely to the spirit and Rules of your holy Institute, and give you a prefer-

ence for it, and an intense love and esteem for your sublime vocation, and fill you with a spirit of gratitude that God has called you to an Order which has solemnly been recognized as venerable and holy by the Church, on which she has put her seal and stamp, placing her arms round you, and pressing your Institute to her bosom saying: "These are my beloved children, they who are working foremost in the ranks; these are the faithful children of my Spouse." What a subject for joy! making your hearts overflow with gratitude. What an incentive to renewed fervour! With these thoughts in her mind, a good Sister of Notre Dame who has no esteem for herself, who knows her own secret, and who realizes her own nothingness (no, nor half realizes it), but at least knows enough to feel her own unworthiness, such a one will not attribute this success to her own merits, but to the virtues and merits of her Sisters, and especially to those who have laboured and gone to their reward. She will say to herself: "What a favour God has done me to give me a vocation so sublime, to allow me to live among those who are so fervent in God's service, and whose lives are such as to draw down this signal favour from God. How their fervour supports my weakness!" What is it that makes you strong but that you have the community and the Institute at your back? Each is supported and sustained by the others. What a comforting thought!

You will find that when any Sister possesses great and solid virtue, the secret of it can be found, if she searches deep in her own heart, in the grace

God has given her to esteem highly the sublimity of her vocation, and hence to endeavour to become what she is destined to be by God when He called her to it. The great joy and gratitude which we feel in our hearts would be but a very poor affair indeed did we not try to copy the beautiful model, now more than ever to be imitated since the Church has placed her before us. Although God knows I esteem and love your holy foundress greatly, yet each one of you can in her own way see much better than I can, what to imitate in Mère Julie. We always knew Mère Julie had heroic virtues ; we felt that she was worthy of our earnest imitation, the decree of the Church has only added new splendour and lustre to that conviction of her solid virtues we have always instinctively felt in our hearts. No doubt the ideal which you have formed in your own minds of what Mère Julie was like, must be much more real and vivid than anything which I could pretend to place before you. Nevertheless, the virtues which to my mind stand pre-eminently forth as characteristic, are her faith, fortitude, and the spirit of labour cheerfully performed for the glory of God.

Her faith was so severely tried and yet was in her so unalterably strong. Bed-ridden for eighteen years, in a state of enforced inactivity, knowing the designs of God ; for nothing could be clearer or more evident than the breathings of the Holy Spirit on that soul, so well prepared in the crucible of suffering to understand the designs of God in her regard, yet apparently deprived of all means of carrying them out ; she is filled with a superhuman courage and

resignation, so calm in the midst of it all, patiently waiting God's good time, and that not with a calmness of a passive nature, or the forced exertion of a weak invalid, but with a heart burning, bursting with active zeal for God's glory, a soul consumed by mighty desires, inflamed with ardent love of God, and yet so calm, so resigned, and why? Because her faith was strong. She felt she was only an instrument in the hands of God, so she believed and trusted in His Providence to accomplish His own work. And we too have trials for our faith. The tiny seeds, very often sown in dubious soil; how long they take to fructify, and perhaps we never see the results of our labour, perhaps have even forgotten what we did. And since we do not see, we are inclined to lose the spirit of faith, for all this is very depressing and discouraging, and by degrees if we neglect our spiritual duties we become mere school-mistresses, and even get so far as to act by routine, go like machines to school because it is time, to the refectory when the bell rings, and manage always to be very punctual at recreation, and to go to bed at the right hour. And mind, you are not to be school-mistresses, but nuns—Religious, with the hearts of Apostles, doing your work in an Apostolic spirit, having always in view the good of souls and the glory of God.

Then how admirable in her fortitude amidst the sufferings of those long years, and during the trials from within and without which God sent her! And have not her children need of this fortitude also? You are not bed-ridden, thank God, or you could not

work at all, but even in little trials have you not need of your Mother's spirit? And God is sure to provide plenty of these, either in our own peculiar disposition or in the characters of those around us.

Our children are taken away from us, a teacher falls ill or behaves badly; and if you happen to be blessed yourself with a sweet, amiable temper that nothing can ruffle, God will give an extra share of irritability to those you work with, and they will let you feel the benefit of it. Besides, any Sister of Notre Dame, who in any high degree possesses a spirit of zeal for souls, and works earnestly for God, is sure to suffer from obstacles she will meet with both in herself and others. You all know what labour is; I need not speak to you of that. My best wish for you is, that after labouring all the year round, your Superior will find you a nice little occupation in the holidays also. And we need only look at Venerable Mère Julie's unearthly countenance and calm happy smile to realize that her labour was cheerful. One thing more might be added. I wonder if it has ever struck you—it has often struck me—that towards the close of her life, when she felt the end drawing near and the whisper of death in her soul, she seemed to have a renewed vigour, and her exhortations to her Sisters became more fervent.

She seemed, as it were, to make a supreme effort to form those God had entrusted to her care, to inspire them with a love of their Rules and the spirit of their Institute; and why was this? Because, it seems to me, she would not have a weak one among her Sisters—they must all be fervent Religious,

each according to her capacity. But, thank God, you are all fervent, and by that I do not mean a feeling of fervour or anything extraordinary ; nothing could be more contrary to your spirit ; but I mean Sisters who love their Rule and the spirit of their Institute with a filial love, and who feel within them a real pain when they have broken a Rule. It remains for you now to fulfil the designs of Mère Julie and strive more earnestly to become worthy children of so good a Mother.

On Vocation.

Vocation is a call from God. How many are inclined to estimate the greatness of a vocation by the intellectual capacity required to carry it through. But this is quite wrong, for the dignity of vocation lies not in the thing done, but in the fact that this action was done by me, because God had an express desire that I should do it. A *crossing-sweeper* with a diploma signed by God for his work, would be thought more of than any of the great ones of the earth. Thus, those employed at Court may have an office lowly in itself, but because they are in the service of the Queen they think it an honour to be so employed, and vie with each other to obtain it. As regards religious vocations, all Religious are called to win souls to God, but in different ways ; some by attending to the temporal wants of the poor, others by teaching and instruction only. To be chosen to work with God in saving souls is a high call ; but at the end, God will not so much reward you for putting that good thought into a child's head, or

bringing that other to perform some good action, as He will for having done the thing He designed you to do. Vocation to Religion is then the same to all, but the merit gained in following up a vocation depends entirely upon the amount of humility exercised in daily life. A simple-hearted Sister without much capacity may gain a higher place in Heaven than a wise, intellectual, and prudent one, if the one thinks less of herself than the other. Vocations are given by God that souls in need may obtain help through us. A man can do so much either for good or evil according as he accepts or rejects God's graces. Contrast Luther with St. Francis de Sales, St. Vincent, or St. Francis Xavier—what dreadful havoc the first made, and what gaps would have been left in the history of the Church if these Saints had not corresponded with the graces bestowed on them? And in their own special way, each man or woman who co-operates generously with God's grace, is doing what these holy men did, not only for present, but future generations. We shall never understand what a vocation is, if we speak of it for a year. To feel that God, the immense, the eternal, the great, the infinite One, should ask a little worm like one of us to do something for Him! What condescension is His! It is said that the higher the vocation, the higher the sanctity which can be attained. True, but this supposes that in proportion to the excellence of the work performed, there is a corresponding degree of faith, hope, charity, and most of all, humility, exercised. I have spoken of your vocation as

regards external work for God's interests, but you know me well enough now to be aware that the interior religious spirit is what I prize most. And since we know that on our silent victories over self, such as obeying when we feel inclined to rebel, being kind when we have just been put out ; in fact, self-conquest under any shape or form, depend graces and most precious graces, for souls in need, can we wonder that the Heart of Jesus is watching the struggle with a longing, panting love, till at last the reward of victory can be claimed ; and this victory is given often in the shape of a grace to some soul which will save it from hell-fire. God grant my words may fall on fruitful soil.

The two Wings.

In Ecclesiasticus, one of the Sapiential Books, we read : "*Take all that shall be brought upon thee ; and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience, for gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation.*" This is a long text, but it sums up the lessons of our retreat—indifference ; abiding sorrow for past sin which removes from the heart the capacity of sinning anew ; patience, which is learnt in the third week while considering our Lord's humiliations and sufferings. Now, how have we used creatures since our retreat ? We have just had enough time to test ourselves. Have we employed the two wings spoken of in the *Imitation* as necessary if we would reach God ?

First wing—simplicity of intention—setting our

hearts on accomplishing God's will alone, and minding neither reputation, popularity, comfort, nor success. This is the only way to gain peace. A soul working with this intention is sure to succeed, for St. Austin says: "Sanctification depends on the will." She may be humbled, snubbed, blamed in the eyes of men, but in God's sight she has succeeded.

Second wing—severely purified affections.

The fruit of meditation does not depend on doing much during the hour, but in finding some thought that we can seize upon, nibble at, chew, and at last, make our own. Self is our greatest enemy; it is self we must conquer. We may melt into tears of devotion at our prayers, labour to exhaustion, but if we are not going against self, we are doing very little indeed, if anything at all.

The struggle with self is often hard—temptations come. How safe we should be if we never argued about it, but simply put God's word, and His known will, before even our most reasonable desires. "*Not in bread alone doth man live.*" Our Lord not only suffered temptation that He might be our model, but put Himself even into that disposition of soul and body; when we are so liable to be tempted, and to give way to temptation, when we are in weakness, desolation, solitude, sometimes we think that all is going wrong, we yield to *acid* judgments about all around us, and all the while it is only because *we* are not noticed, not considered, and the whole temptation disappears when our circumstances change. Then let us take courage, thinking of the reward.

Xavier the great, and Examen.

Xavier, the great Apostle, converting his thousands and ten thousands, and yet the faithful example of the particular examen. He had a difficult nature, but when St. Ignatius had once taught and explained the methods, holy Xavier at once set himself to root up one by one the thorns of his heart. Now I am going to speak to you about the particular examen. And it would be a good thing to notice what sentiment was uppermost in your minds as I said that, because it is a very good test of the interior state of affairs in each one of our souls. Some no doubt would think, "Oh! that dry old subject! I'll do anything but that." If we look into our hearts, we find we are ready to make nice devotions, do this or that practice of our own seeking, and to our own liking, but they are instead of our examen. We have heard that a few high contemplatives could do without their particular examen, and we think we know some one belonging to a very active Order also, who can do without hers. Somehow or other we all have a very strong dislike for this most salutary and most effectual spiritual exercise; we get tired of it, give it up altogether perhaps, and some say: "It is of no use, I can't get any good out of it." Now I want you to renew yourselves in this, and try and get a very great love of, and esteem for, the particular examen. It is the will, mind, that adheres to God; it is by our will that we cling to God, but the will needs renewing, directing, strengthening. St. Francis of Sales says we are to direct the fine point of the

will; this is done by our meditations and our examens, by the daily filing down, by earnest persevering self-conquest, directing the whole force of the will to one point. Self is the root of all our evils; every misery we groan under, every uneasiness we have, comes from our pride and our self-love.

How shall we kill this monster self? If we only could get rid of self, our lives would be Heaven already, and in proportion as we do get rid of it, our life becomes more and more peaceful and happy; now if we could give self one good blow and have done with it, all would have courage to make the attempt, we should be so light-hearted at having so readily got rid of this burden of self which weighs us down, that the house would be overflowing with brightness; what recreations there would be! But alas, the worst of it is we know we must carry this hateful self about us to the end, that it is only got rid of slowly and by degrees; this is the discouraging point; the same falls, the same miseries, day after day, week after week, and we have to wait so long ere we see the fruit. And yet how easy it would be to conquer this giant self, if we only would faithfully make use of the simple little instrument provided for us by the love of the Sacred Heart.

Remember David and Goliath. When David was shackled with the heavy armour of Saul, he could do nothing; but with his simple little sling and five pebbles he laid the giant low. Now let us aim our little instrument, the little pop-gun of our particular examen at that monster self, and let us point it right at the fatal spot, and shoot and shoot, till at last he is

conquered. Now you know St. Ignatius tells us there are three parts in our particular examen,—to fix it on one thing, and that one to be the root of all our faults, and to let it be on that particular part of the passion which troubles us most, and to make up our mind to go steadily against *that* the whole day, and to examine ourselves at the proper times to see how we have got on. Now there are in the best communities many who are good, keep the Rule exteriorly, do their charge well, and all that, and who would not for the world fall so much behind as to give any one a chance of pointing a finger at them for want of fervour. They make very devotional novenas too, but as for that particular thing interiorly, which comes between them and God, oh no! they could not possibly be worrying themselves to pieces like that, or at any rate they say, “Not just at present, thank you; I may think of it later on, but now, not now.” Then there is another class who are easy-going: “Yes, they did make their examen once; but it was no use, gave it all up long ago!” And there is another set who can soon be distinguished, they go ahead and refuse God nothing. Find out what it is that keeps you back in the path of perfection, and level your pop-gun steadily and perseveringly at it. Do not take too many things, nor go over too wide a field at once. Pride, for instance, is too much to attack at once. “Are you proud?” “Well, yes, Father, everybody acknowledges to have a certain amount of pride.” “But are *you* proud?” “Well, I do get a bit put out sometimes.” “Oh! what is it that usually puts you out?” “Well, I do say an

unamiable word sometimes ; but, Father, how you do ask questions ! it is quite embarrassing." "Is it always with the same person you have these little outbursts ?" "Well, yes, pretty nearly." "Ah ! there is the point now, put your finger on that, and mark it in your examen-book." "Examen-book, Father ! oh well, yes, I had one once ; I'll hunt it up."

Have you ever asked yourself about your purpose of amendment ? We can throw ourselves heart and soul into a good hearty act of sorrow, and we do it often, thank God. We can stay so long there that we have no time to get any further, we have made serious efforts to attain real genuine sorrow, and this has nearly exhausted us, and our purpose of amendment suffers in consequence ; we say, "Let me see what I have to avoid. Oh ! the same as it was last night, Lord, and the night before that, and the night before that again."

And so we find that our purpose of amendment dwindles down, so that we really can scarcely remember when we actually made a *firm* deliberate purpose of amendment, with a definite point steadily before our minds. And yet that is the point which ought to be clearly before us. The work of one who makes her particular examen conscientiously, and with humble perseverance, day by day, has a ten-fold value in the sight of our Lord, in comparison with the work of another who neglects it ; but by neglect I do not mean to say that they do not make it—they may even make it and mark it, but there is a want of earnestness of purpose, a waste of time which leaves its mark on the spiritual life of the soul. The instruc-

tion, work, prayer, nay, even the least act of a Sister who makes her examen properly, have, as I said, a ten-fold value ; for see — how many tiny acts of patience, how many acts of shame and confusion, how many efforts for perseverance, how much humility her fidelity daily produces in her soul ; she says to herself : “ Here I am over and over again failing in the same thing, paining our dear Lord in the same way ; I can’t overcome even that little thing.” And thus she daily makes numbers of tiny but perfect acts of contrition and humility, of loving humility, which touches the Sacred Heart of Jesus much more than would the most ecstatic acts of love made with what one imagines to be great devotion and fervour. How we should value our particular examen, how we should esteem and love it, how we should persevere in it, if we could only encourage ourselves with the consoling thought, that these little acts of shame and humility gain for us glorious merit in Heaven, and by them we are making acts of love to the Sacred Heart, far more meritorious than if we were wrapt up in flowing sentiments of fervour, taken even up to the Seraphim in our own imagination !

Dealing with the Young.

No thought is more useful to us than this one, that gaining a high place in Heaven is a matter of business. Just as people in the world are obliged to bother their heads a good deal so as to make both ends meet—just as you yourselves think over how you can best obtain your end in your schools, or other

works, with the means at your disposal; in like manner should we act in the affair of our sanctification. Use the means to the end. Find out the *means* by prayer and study; while you are doing so, keep the end clearly before the mind; then, the means once discovered, forget the end and work heartily with the means.

“Choose and use” is what we ought to do. I will now illustrate what I mean, by one part of many a nun’s work—school life. I take this particular work, not because it is more important than others, but because it suits my purpose at this moment. A nun should enlighten and edify every child under her care, and if there is one in the school who has not been made better by the Sister’s presence, her work is imperfect. From the following suggestions the Sister can form her plan of acting: Absence of buoyancy of soul is irreparable, no influence is ever gained when sourness, melancholy, or bad temper predominate.

Cheerfulness, confidence, courage, these are the dispositions with which the school-room should be entered, joined to a *reverence* for children, which in itself is a grace of the Holy Ghost, and causes us to treat them with respect. Some of you have this grace, which certainly has been bestowed on you by the Holy Ghost.

Keep a calm high evenness of temper, no elation, no depression. Make for yourselves rules, and examine daily to see if you have kept them faithfully, or if some error has shown you the need of a fresh one, to prevent its recurrence. Not alone for school,

but for everything else have set rules. The most uncontrollable passion can be subdued by quietly sticking to your resolutions. What instances there are of this in history! St. Ignatius gives all his sons the means of becoming men of prayer. He knew that all would not be equally endowed with capacity for meditation, but by his Regulations and Additions he met this difficulty.

One point was to *prepare* it, another was to examine after each hour of prayer the cause of the success or failure. Three points for school examen are, evenness of temper, seriousness of manner, avoidance of particular painstaking with *one* pupil. Children have a clear insight into character which older persons lose. As a nun's teaching is a reflection of her inner self, this must be well regulated, and even mortified, if good is to be done. Teaching without rules is like the folly and rashness of kneeling down to pray without knowing what we are about. Pray for light, if you want to teach well, and let gentleness and humility be the mainspring of your influence over the young.

Zeal for Souls.

The Apostleship of Prayer is an appeal from our Lord made to those who are willing to help Him to save souls. It is a call to volunteers.

Volunteers are not dragged into military service, they go because they choose it. So must it be with these volunteers to the army of our Lord.

By making this appeal, He lets out one, or rather

two of the secrets of His Heart. First, that He has a work to do, and that He is in a hurry to get it done, and so asks us to help. Second, that when the end of the world comes, our Lord having dominated all hearts, "will give an account of His stewardship" to His Eternal Father. So it matters greatly to Him in which way He has triumphed over them. Some He will have conquered by His power and justice—but our Lord is the Lover of souls, and He wants to become the Master of hearts by the force of His grace alone. It is to help Him to succeed in this, that He makes His call.

We, in a most real way, can do a great work for Him, by uniting our intentions to His, and praying for those things which His Heart wants.

And by the daily gift of our actions, we can even make each act, each breath, a prayer to draw down graces on sinners, the dying, the tempted. All that is actually required on our part is to make the offering, to take the coming day in our hands and heartily repeat, "My God, I give Thee my day, I give Thee my prayers, I give Thee what I suffer, what I do, for those intentions for which Thou art praying in the tabernacle." We know that our Lord is in the tabernacle praying, sighing, entreating, obtaining; through Him come the graces which save mankind. His life is hidden, but active; we have also our inner life quite apart from duties imposed on us by obedience. If we choose, we can unite this inner life to His, and while doing our accustomed work, become in effect Apostles, furthering most efficaciously the interests of the Sacred Heart,

and bringing many souls under the power of His grace.

Let us also think of the numberless Associates with whom we are united. The Apostleship extends all over the world ; newly-converted natives of Madura, the baptized savages in Central Africa, all are taught to make this daily offering, and it is to be feared that many of the cultivated do not make it with half the earnestness and devotion of these poor untaught children of the faith. I have now explained the "first degree," the rank and file of the Association—these are counted by millions ; then we go a little further and find those who, besides the daily offering, engage to recite each day a decade of their beads for the intentions of the Sacred Heart. It is a substantial act of love, but does not imply any special sanctity. They constitute the "second degree," and may be called the non-commissioned officers, men with a stripe on their arms. "The third degree" is made up of those who give our Lord, at stated periods, the thing He loves best of all, which is a Communion, and they offer this in a spirit of atonement. Of course, before every Mass and every Holy Communion, we can always put our Lord's intentions first, as I hope you do, and this does not prevent our Communion being free for any other intentions of our own.

But the Communion of Atonement, as meant by the third degree, must be one entirely given to our Lord, just as you would offer a Communion for the soul of a dead Sister, or we for one of our dead brethren. Thus you will not have so many to spare

for this object, but do not regret it. A Communion offered up in accordance with God's will is always the best, and if holy obedience took our intentions wholesale we should do wrong to repine; what is done by obedience is always gain, never loss. Now, though you will not have many to give, at least you will have some, and if there is a fervent Sister who undertakes to collect the number, in the course of the year they will mount up. We have spoken of the rank and file, of the non-commissioned as well as the regular troops; but in every army we meet with officers unreservedly devoted to their king, ever standing close to him, and bearing the brunt of the battle on every occasion. Those who come forward for this post in the Apostleship of Prayer, have in the French language the expressive name of *Zélateurs*, or *Zélatrices du Sacré Cœur*, given them, a name fully signifying their office, and the ardour with which they intend to carry it out. In England they bear only the colder title of Promoters.

The Apostleship of Prayer, then, is intended to grasp our whole being; our life must be a perpetual effort to second the desires of the Heart of Jesus. The thought came from the inspired mind of Father Gautrelet, and was put into shape by Father Ramière. At present it is enormous machinery for saving souls, and includes countless thousands. One of its most remarkable features is the ease with which it adapts itself to suit every state of life and every stage of perfection.

It is such a sweet devotion that the heart of itself goes out to meet it. It is a beautiful thought, a nude

thought, wrapped in no exterior sign, for all depends on the intention, the union of our intentions, with those of the Heart of Jesus, and offering up everything we do to this effect.

Now as Religious are busy people, and each one grows engrossed in her work, she may forget to form this all important intention, so it wants a few indefatigable souls, who from time to time will rub up and correct the slipping away to which the human heart is always prone.

We have a reminder of our engagement in the Badge of the Sacred Heart, which if worn by an Associate, procures the privilege of 100 days' Indulgence each time they repeat, even mentally, "Thy Kingdom come."

Section 333.

NOTES OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION, WITH SOME LETTERS.

To a Religious.

USE your ordinary mortifications with a good-will, and that is enough. What I meant was the mortification of your idle thoughts, and glad I am that you have found out how great the need is. Go on, work at it steadily, and don't give it up. Yet mind not to strain and make great efforts, this always spoils a particular examen. You would do yourself no good by going over the past. What would it do? Humble you perhaps? I would rather that were done by a loyal effort to get all the shame you can out of your ordinary confessions, I mean by making them into a systematic means of humiliation, in the way I explained. That is, by being real in saying simply what has hurt our Lord in your soul, stating the mean motives of an act: "I said such a thing to such a person, not for her so much as for myself—to show off. I am brimful of vanity, and seek myself in all I do." *This* is reality, and far better than mentioning a number of trifles not worth speaking of, and that do not bring shame and sorrow. Perhaps you think it would enlighten you to be a better Religious, but it would not. Ask yourself honestly on paper: What comes between God and me, what is there in

which I deliberately *do not* what He asks of me? If you can put one or two plain and practical answers down, it will be sure to help you, even though you may not on the spot resolve to alter. It will take the "vague" out of your life, and teach you what to be ashamed of. If you cannot honestly write down the answer, be sure the devil is bothering you, and send him packing. The one thing you need is industry. Mortify the love of brooding, relentlessly and with perseverance. Work at that, and it will sanctify you. Be as bright, kind, and busy as possible with unobtrusiveness, and above all, go on. That is all you want.

I cannot alter my prescription, ask nothing, refuse nothing. When you do this, and only then, will you do right. Resolving not to fall again is a very excellent occupation for you, and I beg you to go on. Our Lord's feet is the best place of all for you, and I will ask Père Olivaint to get you big graces while you rest there. God bless you.

To a spiritual Child.

"Now for a laborious act of contrition," as some nuns I know used to say. For your night examen, it is quite true that on some days when we may have been faithful, we cannot be contrite for the daily faults, but we are never in a fit state to go to bed till we have made a true, sincere, genuine act of self-humiliation and contrition; and this cannot be done without labour. St. Ignatius, in the meditation on Sin, gives us four points, to compare God's power and my weakness, His wisdom and my imbecility, His justice, fairness, and consideration, even when He condemns (for He weighs every circumstance of every act with unerring fairness)

and my perverse, and rash, and unkind judgments—His generous bounty and longing desire to benefit, and my grudgingness and self-seeking, even when I do a kindness to others. I never yet knew any one tire of these four points. But it requires labour, and blessed are those who labour on and on with constancy—they are laying the foundation for solid consolation.

As the *Imitation* says: “No one is fit for consolation, till he has laboured long and diligently, for holy compunction.”

Particular attachments are the bane of religious life, and are often not regarded as the abominations they really are; they are sometimes taken for granted as necessarily common things. Many evils come from this; it warps the judgment, and makes Superiors and Sisters alike, unwise. Let there be horror and fear of the danger from earliest noviceship. . . .

Do not *tease* yourself about reverence, as long as the spirit of glad, willing service is in what you say to our Lord whenever you come near Him. . . .

Sweet Heart of Jesus *be* my love—a prayer you know—any little words—I *want* to be all He wants; these along with the never failing compunction, will make you quite safe about reverence.

To a spiritual Child.

Your little paper is, I think, good evidence of diligent work during the year, and I do not see the least thing to be discouraged at. You have one great enemy to fight against (and so I think have most of us) in the abominable tendency to brood and indulge profitless speculations and, of course, can never expect unclouded peace as long as you are not thorough about it. But

it is strange how humility is put to the test, by the simple practice of doing the work of the day and the hour, in thanksgiving and trust, and leaving the past to God's mercy, and the future to His love. "*This do and thou shalt live.*"

For your own soul's sake, my child, I beg of you not to be beguiled by the temptation which you express, when you say "you crave for something." You crave for change; yet it is no breathing of the Spirit of God which excites that craving. If you will but be generous now, not in offering yourself for new things, but in resolutely and fervently accepting whatever God may send, and renewing in your heart the old joy and gratitude for what you have, and cheerfully fulfilling the *Divine will known* in each hourly duty, you will not only vanquish this morbid and horrible temptation, but will come out of it a better nun. I should not certainly recommend you to relinquish any of your Communions, unless your ordinary confessor positively wished it. You will, of course, obey him. When temptations come to judge others or speculate, turn them into acts of thanksgiving. Go your way rejoicing, and you will get to Heaven at last. If you have learnt to bear contradiction in peace, and to make the sacrifice promptly of morbid and selfish thoughts, you will be able to do work for God at . . . Cling to the spirit of gratitude whatever comes. God bless you, my dearest child.

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If it goes still very hard with you, you must kneel down as I have taught you before, in simple child's fashion, and cry out loud as a lesson you have been taught to say: "Good Jesus, I know You love me, never loved me more than now. Thank You for loving me; don't let me doubt Your love, even though I may

seem to. I am glad to suffer for You, I want to be glad. Let me offer to Your Heart to suffer for You as long and as much as You like. If I am a coward, I want to be brave along with You, and to love only You for ever."

To another.

I wish, my dear child, I could succeed in getting it well into your head, that the value of your Communion is differently reckoned; but our dear Lord will give you the light in His own hour. It is not a bad use of them to go with the conviction that "I am everything that is bad," with a clear vision of your many faults. If only you would say to Him very humbly, what you say very humbly to me, "I wish I could change," He would be quite content with you. Still He would say to you: "Is it for My sake, or for your own, that you would wish to change? and if it is for Mine, will you not be content to wait *My* time. I could change you in this very moment, but if it be for My glory that you should bear with yourself a little longer, do you not love Me even enough to suffer this for Me? I will always forgive you as soon as you humble yourself and tell Me you are sorry." And, child, if you heard Him say this to you, what would you answer Him? And would you not be more ashamed of all this petulance with yourself and discouragement, than of all the rest?

To a Religious.

And now about yourself. God has given you a vocation in which (like a Jesuit), after a noviceship, you have attained to a high esteem for spiritual things; now your daily work of its own nature undermines the sense of it, the *feeling* of it.

No one without a miracle could do your work and retain the *feeling* which you had. Moreover, this change will work more, and not less, for some time. It is part of God's will about you—you are not less pleasing on account of it. This you ought to recognize, and though you have to struggle against yielding to the effects, the prayerless prayer, the sloth, the forgetfulness of God's presence; yet it is also possible to overstrain yourself by indiscretion, so as to permanently injure either the head, or the body, to God's very great loss. This is the great pain of your present life; that you must exercise a discretion yourself, which if left to your Superiors, would be no trouble to you. It needs then common sense, to grasp all God's will to do His *will*, and be content to be deprived of His lights and gifts and sweetness—to remember that when the body is incapable, only silliness could think God is offended by that: to cheerfully accept the situation, and without sadness or scruple to offer the sleepiness when I am sleepy, the forgetfulness when I am forgetful—and *never to doubt* that He lovingly accepts the "*desire to desire thy justifications at all times.*" . . . In meditation try to realize the feeling of St. Stanislaus, when our Lady put her Son into his arms.

A thought has come home to me. Theology teaches us so much the wonderful respect, the reverence, with which Almighty God treats His creatures; don't you think that the foundation of good teaching is really and practically to *respect* the child? . . . I wish we could convert N.N. Ambitious souls are not a bad sort when you can get them.

If you ever meet with the works of Father Balthazar Alvarez, they are worth a special study. He is, I think,

the acme of the Society's spirit—huge labours, but all subordinate to a most profound internal life.

To a Friend.

Most gratefully do I thank you for the clothes. Our children are so very naked, that all that comes is precious; but our winter has been mild so far, and there has not been the amount of suffering that I have had to tell you of in previous times. The Sisters take care that the little ones pray well for their benefactors. I think if I wanted *quick returns*, my inclination would be to give everything to children. In return, I shall pray that the retreat may make all your children immovable in their love for Jesus Christ.

I am rushing off to help in the First Friday elsewhere. Tell my sister I hope to write to her. Poor child, God blesses her loving patience with me.

To a Religious.

My dear Child,

Miserable is a word so shocking that I could never have expected to hear you say it—to an unrepentant sinner it applies, or to one who does not know nor trust God—but you, my child, even if you have done wrong, have still no other wish than to be sorry for it, and to please God the better. Faults should never make us miserable—only self-love could be the cause. There is nothing to be regretted, everything to be hoped for, waited for, prayed for, but not yet striven for. “*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.*”

Leave things to God; your peace now will plead for all that you desire more than any labour could promote

it. Nor could any such surer foundation of future solidity be laid in than your generous and *heartly* self-effacement.

What above all pleases me is that, at length, God has taught you the all-important practice which you call "immolating your thoughts." If once the light has come, and is recognized as truly all-important, there is then a more solid progress in every respect—peace, self-renunciation, prayer, recollection, union—all are affected at once, as well as all wisdom of speech and manner, by this one thing. I thank God. . . . A great deal of the trouble, in reality, arises from the singularly deep-rooted self-esteem with which you have to contend, and of which I tried to convey a warning, so long ago as when I told you that we would wait a little before beginning to dig the foundations. You, on the contrary, are always bent upon putting on the roof. God, Who is the architect, has been inspecting the edifice, and, as often happens, finds that the foundations have not been dug deep enough—and that it must all come down again, till *that* is made solid. So much for fixing a time; "*it is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in His own power.*" If, however, we could only discard the feeling of *surprise*, as we discover new faults, all will be well—and though there will be perhaps much humiliation, there will be no sadness. This newly discovered fault, my child, may be turned into an invaluable aid to humility—and an aid to humility is certainly not a thing to be sad about, but the very contrary. Renounce it now *in intention*, and persistently fight it, and mortify it in your heart. Be ashamed when kneeling before your crucifix—be more and more ashamed—but without one tittle of diffidence, or unhappiness, or anxiety.

The alternatives you speak of are *all for this*—to form you, teach, strengthen, I hope, inflame you; to be all He hopes you will be to Him when He calls.

“Self-abnegation,” indeed, is well; only understand that these *words*, like others, lose their aroma. Be wise enough to know that only saints can live upon a word, and do not suppose that, because God has filled you for the moment with light, therefore the light can be communicated to all. Many times in my life I have laboured in vain under the idea.

All that you tell me about the retreat of the pupils fills me with joy—mind and be large in your counsels. “*Give and it shall be given to you*,” is the only safe guide when you are dealing with vocations. . . .

I am glad to hear now we are beginning to dig. The previous letter, though very useful (for, of course, I want to know you in every phase of your soul), was written under the influence of much spiritual consolation, and it clearly was not digging weather. Your pride is *naïf*, and your words, “I understand I am worth very little indeed,” is a thing I shall not let you forget. Well now, there has been light, real light—some darkness too and pain—all that means that the ulcer is at work, and that our Lord has begun the digging for you.

To another Religious.

Now let me try to answer your questions, in the way to be most useful to you. But you know they are not exactly easy questions; each one fills books, and to pretend to put the contents of a book into a word, is to lead to obscurity.

And this is especially true of the spiritual life, in which what helps one is meaningless to another—and

what is worse—what is so helpful at one time, serves nothing at another time to the same soul.

On the whole, "my secret is mine," is about the best formula for ordinary community life. We are all very imperfect; and with such, spiritual discourse too easily becomes manifestation, to be safe. Nevertheless, that it is so, arises in great part from want of zeal and alacrity, greatly also from a habit of *heedless* reading—I mean of reading without advertence to what is useful, and the effort to remember it. I was much struck in my last retreat, by seeing a particular examen of Father Luis de Palma, never to let a recreation pass away without have told something which could benefit the souls of others. As for the rest, never seek confidence, nor think yourself trustworthy (which is always pure self-ignorance); but when confidence is *lawfully* given, do not flinch from it, and with prayer and trust in God you will always do good. Meantime be an apostle like St. Francis, who preached by taking a walk. Remember that the school is your *world*, a place therefore never to find rest in, but in which, if your zeal is as self-sacrificing and wise as I hope, you will do much good in time. The spirit of St. Francis of Sales; the being "*all things to all men*" of St. Paul, by which (with cruelty to self) you become sweet to everybody, is but little understood—we must understand it; and put your whole heart into the work in proportion as experience shows you how.

Do not be afraid of school work spoiling prayer, though for awhile it may spoil the pleasure of it. It can only spoil prayer when done for self.

You ask, How am I to think of the Office? I should say as (Holy Communion of course apart) your highest earthly privilege, as being the Church's ambassadress at the Court of Heaven—as being chosen by our Lord as

His appointed intercessor for the whole prayerless world. It has been given to women to enter into the Church's life, of which the year's Office is the expression, most intimately: and this should be your ambition.

What you see in the Revelations of St. Gertrude, and the words of St. Bernard, and Venerable Bede,—how their hearts beat in union with the spirit of the time, and with the words they had been saying in the choir, will teach you to find much to ask for, for which the Sacred Heart will be delighted to see you praying earnestly.

How to use free time is for you, I think, a matter to be settled at times of review, from one period till the next; and then, without hesitation, unless there is a clear and distinctly superior motive for doing something else—which for the most part will be charity. In your choice at review, if there be some solid and valuable piece of work to be got through, such as a big book or other undertaking (and I hope you will never be afraid of *big* things), do not fear to choose it instead of visiting our Lord. The point is to have no hesitation when the opportunity arrives—for life is lost if we waste moments.

And now, O most insatiable of children, you want me to talk about prayer.

When you find that you cannot fix your mind, do not go on in fruitless work, but pause, sit down, and reduce your imagination to control. No sanctity, no union can there be while the imagination is in riot, and at any cost you must not suffer it. Be resolute then in trying always to make the first five of the ten Additions part of your daily life. The pains of preparing a meditation is not of less value if you cannot make it in the morning. Whatever your dispositions may be at

the time itself of prayer, the acts which you make are always more valuable, if they are the result of having looked at or listened to our Lord, than if elicited from yourself; I would never bind you to stay stolidly before a thought which you can at the moment make nothing of; but I would have you try first. If it does not work easily, and spontaneously, let your soul have its way; gratitude, shame, contrition, trust, love, intercession; and if none of them succeed, then most contentedly sit at His feet as becomes a beggar; do not wonder if He does not look at you, but wonder if He does. Live upon His words and the words of the Church.

About books, and things in your cell, have no scruple in keeping what you use. We do not see at the time when we cease to use things; and therefore at times of review, be rigorous in seeing if you use them still. Keep nothing, because you *might* want it.

Ordinaries or Extraordinaries—if God has given them a gift which helps me, I will use it according to my need. I will speak or not speak, say much or little, just as I find from experience that it does me good. If you have to speak of confessors at all, never say nor approve of any one speaking in a way to disparage the Ordinary; never encourage or indulge “cracks” about confessors. Reverence and wisdom equally will always make you chary of the subject, and especially after retreats.

All that you can do, however steadfastly you labour at holiness, is so nearly nothing, as to be quite so, unless it is to prevent God’s graces being stifled, and His will thwarted in you. To let Him reign, this is all; for this your poverty, for this your mastery of your imagination, for this your every effort, that you may be watching and your lamp alight, when He comes. All the labours of your life will not do the one millionth

part of what He will do, in a quarter of an hour, if in truth you love nothing but Him. I dread your being a passive nun with your talents in a napkin; I want every faculty you have to be cultivated and used, every moment to be utilized. Master everything you are capable of, turn it to the best account you can, and I hope, if your dying sickness lasts a fortnight, that you will have translated a book during the time. What otherwise is the meaning of saying, "I am an unprofitable servant."

I valued your little confession at the end, which was sincere and quite true. It is very possible for you to betray our Lord, in times of desolation, for you have a big pride to conquer. And our Lord will have you to suffer much, He loves you so, that you need meekness more than others. Never think that you love Him truly, till you love His Cross, for it is planted in His Heart. God bless you, my dear dear child.

To his Sister.

CHRISTMAS WISHES.

God grant you all a Christmas full of the love of Jesus Christ, and the unction of the Holy Ghost, gilded with our Lady's brightest smile. . . .

(*Another year.*) I wish the sweetest of Christmas joys to every one of you; peace within, and peace without, which makes "*on earth peace*" a reality. . . .

The Sacred Humanity, with all its blessed treasure of graces and helps to us, will never be all known, till we see what this means. "*God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son.*"

Scolding.

I was dangerously near to being sorry for scolding you; and yet see what an immensity of good it has done. Practical humility and real self-diffidence are showing their little green heads in the soil unmistakably, and so though I did compassionate your suffering most truly, I *can't afford* to be sorry; indeed I want to scold you again, for suffering so much, for you ought to understand better by this time the philosophy of a scolding.

If it is deserved, it is surely a good thing, and if not, why then more surely still, a better.

In either case, the scolding never makes the fault any worse, and if we profit by it, repairs it; you see it can never be a thing to be sorry for. If I was not sure that you had done, and can do again, an immensity of good by your letters, I should never have said what I did. Every word I said about your capacity I meant. Sometimes you let your imagination run away with you in your correspondence. God has given you much more than ordinary power in this way; so that it becomes of four-fold importance that you should reflect well upon the subject, and realize the difficulties of your work. You are ambitious, and it is quite right: you seek to bring your influence to bear with peculiar force. Then how much judgment, how much thought, how much prayer becomes necessary? how much diffidence of yourself? Sometimes I, like you, employ a *comp*, though without any of the power which you have, but I do it in fear and trembling till I get the answer.

You don't yet understand how great a mark of my confidence and love it is, that I say harsh things to you so roundly. I am so full of respect and esteem for you,

that I am troubled when I see you frightened. I have worked ruthlessly to make you love and long for wisdom.

By diffidence, prayer, and much deliberation you will be the best imitator of St. Ignatius, that even I could wish you to be.

Listen to . . . but make no suggestions; *she* has had no brother to pitch into her!

Avoid introversion. Examine, humble yourself, and then up and away, "*forgetting*," as says St. Paul, "*the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before.*" Have a high theory, a merciful practice, and set an excellent example.

Spiritual Progress.

It makes me thank God, as for an altogether special grace, that you are free from the wretchedness, so often the bane of Religious in illness—the pre-occupation with self, which means merit stunted and God's glory lost. Have they not indeed the key of all good things in their hands, those who can pray—and wait? My dear, how happy you are; *Magnificat*. Your letters become all the more precious to me since I have been unable to answer them; if they were nothing else but such sweet pledges of your unfailing trust, they must always possess an aroma of their own; but of course they do more, they give me the evidence of unwearied struggle against nature, and what is rarest, and best, the unsparing self-manifestation when self-manifestation is hard. When you are praying for help in temptations and miseries, mind and do not forget mine, my dear.

Mortify mortification; let your greatest mortification be common life. There are people whose purposes *out*

of retreat are much more important than those they make in it, and their retreats will only be valuable, if the formation out of retreat is patient, of course, for nothing can be done without that, but firm also, consistent and inflexible. I like your invincible pluck immensely, though it is not unmixed with some dangerous little sophistry of self-defence. You must distrust your own lights just now thoroughly, and then your confidence will carry you triumphantly through that long and weary process of reaping our own thorns. No one who is so genuinely candid and submissive can ever fail to make profit out of her falls, and in God's own time to have all the light that is good for her. Feed confidence with gratitude and contrition, and then humility and wisdom will come of themselves to clothe her.

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I am more convinced than ever, that you and I have only one thing to do, one thing to think of and value, the inner life, which alone can make us like our Master; certainly the older we grow all else grows smaller, and "he does much who loves much," the truest word of all. One good work done with thought, prayer, and self-diffidence, and which it is a duty to do, will go further to glorify God than many undertakings from zeal, which might have been left alone. Intensity—depth—interiority, this is the rare thing, for want of which the world is arid.

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You ought to know by this time that I never praise you without meaning it. Hence I should be sorry if you drew so wrong a conclusion, as to suppose I wished you not to preach, nor even give advice; though of course, the advice gratis, demands an immense knowledge of the ground, especially if it be unpalatable.

Certainly all the preaching you have ever administered to *me*, has given me reason to thank God. I want you to take what I said as a sort of chapter from a treatise on the art of spiritual correspondence. Believe also for this, and for all time, that I never love you more dearly, nor give you greater proof of my esteem or deepest trust, than when I am harsh or unkind in my manner.

.

You decide sometimes very rashly that this is right, and that is best, this is God's will and that is not, and you suffer excessively, because things don't go as you have arranged them. And in all this you grow small, small, small—you who are all the time my own dear, large-hearted child. Talk to your Guardian Angel, and ask him how he manages to keep his peace of mind, with you to look after, and try and learn his lesson. . . .

Experience.

As I cannot answer your letter now, you must,—best loved, *most trusted*—*you must* understand that all I say does not lessen one iota the way I lean on you, love you, and trust you thoroughly.

.

You make me laugh sometimes, by a fresh bit of experience, which has been an old familiar friend to me. And when you find yourself used to do a bit of real but unpleasant work, instead of Almighty God's better children, you bring me face to face with many an item of the past. It is all right, you know, thoroughly right—but woe betide us, my dear, if we let the thought of holy fear escape us. Mind, the idea itself is thoroughly Ignatian—he would have left his soul in peril to save souls, as St. Paul would have been “*anathema*” for his

brethren—but we must be real, and must be clear-sighted and true in these matters. . . .

Oh, my own sister, if once—I often think—we began to appreciate the internal life, we should understand that much of the glory of the saints came from the violence they had to do themselves, to quit it for the good of others, and we! my God, does it not teach us where we are! Let us endeavour to do all, for the consolation of the Divine Heart, in the conversion and sanctification of priests, oh, my best beloved in Jesus Christ.

.

Generally, it is better not to answer angry or unbecoming letters, unless we are in authority. I am “greatly delighted with a phrase in your letter—probably more disagreeable to others than I am aware of;” that sweet probably is delicious! seriously you are taking shape beautifully; love to your Mother, and God make her a saint.¹

.

We feel and know that we have been traitors to the cause of our Heavenly King, but yet if the heart, still unpurified, recollection and prayer still unattained, the joy of the Divine union still unknown, and all this till death—if we have only this one pledge of the Divine Heart’s love, in the wish, the resolution never to give up the fight, let us need no more to fill us with confidence and joy; His will done in us, let us live and die clinging to confidence, even though distractions and temptations fill us even to the very end. . . .

See the room for the exercise of zeal in your life, and recognize it with joy. All this will make your

¹ Mother Mary Gabriel Belton, nineteen years Prioress of the English Convent, Bruges, died beloved and deeply revered, April 19th, 1896.

heart a little more like the Heart of Jesus. But if you nourish this thought not less, but much more, you must watch—and wage war against yourself. It is indeed a new field: “*See the countries, they are white already to harvest,*” but it is a field covered with snares, the subtlest, the most hidden of all. So let zeal do all within, before it is allowed to go abroad—or rather, as both must be worked together, let us have a holy fear.

For her Silver Jubilee.

I wish I could write a long letter; but I can only snatch a few minutes, enough however to tell you how lovingly I rejoice with you, and thank God for all His tenderness for you—you have had your three Masses, and to-morrow you shall have one in thanksgiving.

To a Novice.

Now, my child, I have but little time to answer your two questions, which are in fact one.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Why and how? Why? because we are the recipients of an endless, unchanging, infinite, and certain good. Reason enough surely. And this in our creation, just as much a motive of exultation now as in fruition; for the essence of the good is our relationship with God, combined with the hope which, with the fullest right, we found on it. The ups and downs of life do not make this good intermittent; truly we must “*always rejoice.*” It is a stupendous thing to say in two lines, and I have not time to say it in two hundred; and few care to take the trouble to grasp it. Most pertinently you ask also: “What is the secret of love of self-abjection?” for this contains the *how*. The strength of the chain is that

of its weakest link; and if the joy hangs on the certainty, and the certainty on the hope, so the hope on the self-abjection—and hence the love of it; “all the world will not lift him up, whom *truth* hath subjected to itself; neither will he be moved with the tongues of all that praise him, who hath settled his whole hope in God.” Self-esteem, self-flattery (of body or soul), militate no more directly against love than against hope. Both these equally urge to self-contempt: love, because its supreme exercise is sacrifice; hope, because all assertion of nothing, as something, is a lie, which renders confidence foundationless; and *nos misères* are the means of forcing blind eyes to see the truth of our nothingness. Hope can only live in truth; but in truth it can never die, till it merges in possession. Then, and only then, when this is understood, temptations and falls alike are impotent to discourage us. All our pain is pain for Him: the life-long battle with self is but a succession of offerings laid at His feet; and the reward is—souls. I am only treating you shabbily, my poor little child, but I am doing my best under difficulties. God bless you, and your little Mistress (of Novices).

To a Nun holding an important charge.

I thank God, my child, Who is making you at last despise yourself in earnest, by the only true way, by conviction. In truth you have so much honour, so much esteem, that if the Psalmist's words are true, it must need strong graces, and much pain, to save you from coveting what is given to others.

Cherish, my dear child, the grace which draws you to your charge, and to a more hidden life—the “*pearl of great price*.” God bless you.

To Mother Magdalen, S.M.G.

It was characteristic of Father Dignam to dislike the "Treasury of Good Works" inserted in the French and Irish *Messengers* (and of other countries). He thought it would prove a temptation to vainglory and spiritual ambition. It seems that this opinion was for some time shared by Father Ramière. In answer to a letter in which the writer stated her belief, that a very strong wish existed that the "Treasury of Good Works" should appear in the English *Messenger*, he wrote as follows, in his half-playful way :

I have known more or less distinctly for a long time, as Father Ramière knew for a long time in 1872, that I should have to give in about the "Treasury of Good Works." When every nun looks at you, and writes to you, as if you were to be compassionated, as more or less under the greater excommunication, and you feel that you are being prayed about as a *cause désespérée*—it is shorter, no doubt, and better to give in; but I don't like it for all that. It will, moreover, infallibly entail another hospital in St. Helens!—however, the arrangements have been made, and *ce que la femme veut, Dieu le veut*, will be sweetly verified once more. God bless you, my dear child.

To the same.

In reply to a letter speaking of the trials caused by falsehoods, spread abroad by those who had left the community, he replied :

That they could act thus, confirms the reasons I had for being so glad to get rid of them. Both the devil and nature prompt them now. But the worst that could be said against you could be only a humiliation, and humiliation is always most useful. God bless you—be brave.

To the same.

Concerning a mutual friend, who from a foolish prejudice was led to fail in obedience.

No, my dear child, it is no fidget on your part, but a grave misery, as real as death. It can only be madness that can make the most loyal heart that could be, talk right and left in this fashion—the whole thing is so *utterly* trumpery. I do not know what to do. Try *your* hand. Tell him you have heard, but could not believe it. Give him your opinion hot. It is heartrending. Thank God for His care of you.

To the same.

I thank God for the graces He gives you—leave the future to Him, just as much with regard to your own soul, as to external matters. Live without solicitude, grateful always; God wants you to let trouble come and go, *no matter what it is*; and trust to Him. I can't endure you to say, you feel you have been unfairly treated—if it be true, so much the better for you; you are no loser by that, so mind you say nothing—not a word to show discontent or displeasure, then you will have nothing to regret. . . . Call it injustice, call it humiliation, or what you will, it is only to self-seeking and little faith that these things are intolerable.

One thought of what self really deserves, or of what may be gained for your community by cheerfully bearing, should put an end to all. God will take care of all; lift your head and your heart above everything. Begin to take a great pain in the spirit of faith. . . . Try and resign yourself bravely to our Lord's will, it will bring blessings afterwards. Courage, then, for God loves and pities you. I will do all I can for you by Holy Mass. . . . I thank God for the good word He has put into your heart, "I trust all to Divine Providence." God guide your steps and keep your heart in His.

To a Superior (1).

In truth, if prayer begin well, whatever we have prepared will answer. But the well beginning is frightfully neglected, and no wonder if the results are proportionally serious in Religion. For it is impossible to get into the presence of God without hearty self-humiliation and very real contrition. And suppose this is neglected day by day, what wonder if people's faults do not die. But if we know that we are poor little worms, who have lifted our heads against God, we do, I think, begin to bear better with other worms who lift their heads against us.

Let the effect of every day's prayer be to see more and more clearly, that God is everything, and everything else nothing. . . . Pray courageously, nothing pleases our Lord so much as longanimity. I commend you, child, to the Mother's heart of our sweet Lady, to make you strong, patient, and wise, and always bright. . . .

You must not be surprised, or discouraged, if you find that nuns on their travels cannot pray as recollec-

tedly as in their chapels; our Lord does not expect it, and as long as you are seeking His glory you will not be a loser by your distraction. . . . You cannot have too large a trust in your *grace d'état*; our Lord will make you holy for the sake of your little ones, if only you don't say *no*! . . . Warn them against ruthlessly quoting the names of those from whom they have asked counsel, else they may put the latter into very awkward positions. . . . I am full of sympathy with your cry for good vocations, and with my whole heart I join my petitions to yours. God wants unhesitating trust and resignation, and every care to keep the spirit in its purity. . . . I still recommend the old lines with regard to mortification; "taking a little of it," is the formula I admire.

Cheerful, uniform, deeply loving the Institute and its observances, thirsting for souls. That is about the picture I want to be yours. . . . If ever I write a book on spirituality, it will be on the great advantage of having no time to get into the "*blues*." I am trying very hard to make all perfect souls here as merry as summer. I have a queer idea in my mind that it is one of the conditions for gaining Heaven; a very easy one after all. If more followed it, there would be a great diminution in the number of cracky religious souls. I trust you will never be favoured with them. They are a great nuisance and torment. Never allow singularities, revelations, ecstasies. The best and safest kind of ecstasy granted to God's servants, says St. Francis de Sales, is a true, hearty meekness and submission, self-renunciation, love of abjection, kindness to others. When these flourish, happy are the Religious, and happy is the Superior. . . . All for God's glory and the salvation of souls; this ought to guide you in all your counsels and undertakings. Then

we must most patiently bear all the differences, queer-nesses, and impatience of individual characters, and adapt St. Paul's motto, "*all to all.*" Nothing shelters one better in the spiritual life than the umbrella of patience and kindness; and none more than Superiors are obliged to carry it about with them. In fact, one is not very safe without it at all times, for the old enemy, and poor mortality, are sure to raise up either a blast or a storm. But when we have God in view, and our own perfection, we need not fear; for as a good rain in hot weather is good for everything and every one, so a cloud of fretfulness, and worry, and littleness of mind is good to make us enter into ourselves, and see if there are virtues which we can perfect in ourselves.

Yes, "fairly to meet God," that alone is prayer; not impatiently, for it often will take time, but quiet, calm, persistent; not to rest in the effort till we are there face to face, heart to heart with Him.

St. Ignatius says: "He knows, He can, He wishes; what have you to fear? To be perfectly true with Him is to live."

To a Superior (2).

I suppose, my dear child, that our Lord is trying to teach you the fundamental lesson, that without shame,—habitual, diligently nourished, cordially accepted, there can be no reality between Himself and us. What I have always felt, and taught, as the daily foundation on which true contrition, charity, and prayer can take steadfast roots in sinners' hearts, proves to me more and more evidently, as I see better, that God is simply and utterly everything.

Then this shame is what we all can have, if we will.

The material of it is always ready in our memory ; and I *think* by exercise we can come to see, that even our daily best provides a never-failing food ; for all day long we are preferring self to God—and what more do we want to be ashamed ? I know of course too well, that with all our diligence to use such thoughts, the fruit of them disappears in a moment before a temptation, and we are as proud and bad as ever ; but the fruit of shame is not (though it ought to be) so much to make us humble and wise with creatures, as to save us from separation from God, when creatures are away. I am sure that a soul which loves its own abjection, will never want God's pity, however bad it may be. "*A contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.*"

God bless you.

To a Superior (3).

It is not my way to give people up, though it is quite true I am often prevented from giving them the help which I gladly would. But your temptation has been nothing but one huge fit of discouragement, fed by the perpetual looking back and vaguely speculating on your own spiritual state, which is all self-love. If you will but let yourself alone—humble yourself cheerfully at all shortcomings, and look upwards and onwards, there need not be a happier or a better nun. . . . It is our Lord's own arrangement that I have only one head, and only one right arm, and neither of them of the best ; though bad as they are, they might have served Him so much better.

To a Superior (4).

Yes, I like so many blows on the same nail, all to make your own offering a holocaust. . . .

Is it too much to ask you to take to yourself, in a very special way the words of St. James : "*Count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations.*" It is in your power, and what God asks of you ; these troubles are God's gifts of goodness and favour, and will turn to evident blessings in His own time, and He would like you to receive them all with such absolute faith, as to be glad when you suffer—that He lets you suffer. If you would train yourself to see His business in your anxieties and contradictions, they would not interfere with your union with God. Is it not the simple truth you have nothing of *yours*, not even troubles ! As for indiscretions, He can turn them into quite as good results as the best and wisest things you could say. He has taken such loving pains with you, to gradually take out the little starchness and primness, and you have been so good about it, that if you do burn your fingers in an impetuous moment, you should only laugh and thank Him. It may sound a very big thing to "*count it all joy ;*" but believe you can do it, and it will make both God and you happy. . . . This courage about prayer is exceedingly pleasing to our Lord, and a very fountain of blessing and strength—believe that those bad days are not one of them wasted.

.

As the devil made use of the pride of man to found the Jansenist heresy, the very object of which was to persuade men that neither our Lord nor His Blessed Mother wished them to draw near ; so our Lord revealed the love of His Sacred Heart for sinners, for no purpose so much as this—to convince the worst sinners that they could never draw near to Him without giving Him pleasure, and drawing mercies from His Heart. The more grievous our ingratitude, the more

true it is, that our fittest place is at His feet ; no true reverence will ever keep us away from there.

Our Lord wants the stone wall to be removed ; or rather there is *none*, except in your own imagination. Place yourself in His presence, try to realize that He is there, speak to Him, and go on till He speaks to you ; and if He does so for the last five minutes, it will be worth all the labours and efforts. This is what St. Ignatius means by placing yourself in the presence of God. Spend that hour before Him, in His company, to prepare you for the duties of the day, and it will give you strength, consolation, and courage. Say, "Here I am again, Lord"—stay, like Magdalen, at His feet, talk to Him about yourself—but rather about *Himself*, His goodness, His love ; then, if still dry and cold, self-humiliation and compunction is almost infallible ; He cannot resist that. It is a subtle temptation to think our Lord likes you to be out in the cold, living on dry bread, and taking this for granted. He wants you *to be happy in this life*, by living close to Him, finding Him in prayer ; and He wants you to make every effort to this end, not to sit contentedly out in the cold. If in spite of all you can do, the trial and darkness continues, then we must take it as His will. Meditate on the New Testament, because there are His words and acts recorded ; next come the Psalms. "The substance of religious life is gratitude." Ask St. Austin for the grace of fortitude.

The best mortification is to take what comes and think nothing about it. The thought of God as our Creator is perhaps the most profitable. He knows us inside and outside, He *alone* understands us completely. Get a more human love of our Lord. Do you kiss the wounds of your crucifix with real love and affection,

or only as you would your scapular? We must put self carefully aside during life—look to God, to His glory, as the servant of God should. We are all so inclined to say—“have mercy on *me*.”

On these bad days make up your mind, by hook or by crook, you will get into the presence of God. There are many ways, the more simple and childlike the better, coaxing, asserting, protesting, upbraiding, but above all humbling ourselves and quietly beating the breast.

“*What have I in Heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire on earth?*” Thou art here, why hide Thyself, since I know Thou lovest me? why let my littleness, my misery hide Thy *great* mercy? The *Miserere* is a sure way to God’s presence for those who love it. Then if you cannot get in, do not be troubled, say to yourself, “Too often have I kept *Him* waiting, refused to open; I need not complain to kneel at His feet and wait; He will look at me presently if I am patient, *Lord I am not worthy.*”

Take all He does in good part, and at the end of a bad meditation, offer His Prayer in the Garden instead of and along with your *own*.

Boldly take the thought, that since you have for so many years gone on grubbing, and pulling, and pining about your poor little self, with small fruit, you will in future leave it quite to our Lord’s care, while you take care of Him. Offer Him to exchange promptly every thought of selfish solicitude for the hearty cry, “*Thy Kingdom come.*” Offer your Mass and your Office all for Him, tell Him magnanimously that you are not going to pray for anything you are anxious about, but, trusting all to Him, pray only that He may be loved everywhere, and everywhere His interests triumph, His will be done, His greater glory be accomplished,

even in the evil He permits; and say at least every hour in the day, "*My soul doth magnify the Lord, and hath rejoiced.*"

To a Superior (5).

The Apostleship grows gradually into a very real and solid work; and the good it does is equally, thank God, slowly growing and, I trust, lasting.

But there are still forests of prejudice and misapprehension to be dealt with, and depths of apathy to be stirred. God is very very good. . . .

Small fruit is to be gained from frequent Communions, if there be not cheerful resignation when God decrees the privation. . . .

All that you tell me about yourself means in one word, that what old Anna had to go through in the Temple, "*serving night and day,*" you are having to bear in the convent, and what our Lord bore when "*He began to be weary;*" He gives you a share of it too. I am not a bit sorry that you are losing your love for prayer, as you call it; you will not, I think, pray less; you will certainly pray with more merit. So little goes by feeling, that when we are growing old, it is not an uncommon providence of God, that we should be tried by the subtraction of the sensible fervour of younger days, and have to live on deep convictions and formed habits. Do not let anything of that sort make you think yourself worse, for it is not so.

True holiness does not consist in not feeling the Cross, but in bearing the pain with true conformity to God's will, Be brave, my dear child, and look with happy confidence to the crown that is coming.

To a Superior (6).

I shall of course be very willing to help any whom you like to write to me, as far as ever my strength and time makes possible; I forget none of them. . . . I think you are pushing the mortification (you have undertaken for your alms) too far *for a community*, and for three months. Total abstinence from sugar is, in the long run, a considerable privation of nourishment. I wish you all to reduce it to one meal only, and exempt Sunday altogether. This will cause a loss in the savings, and I will make that part up, and will say thirteen Masses in our dear Lady's honour, for the one who is next to die, and if it be Sister —, I shall be very glad for her sake: she will find the confidence which has sometimes failed her in life, will be laid up to help her in the time of need. I rely on your help, you know. I was reduced to a whisper at my Mass this morning, and I want my pipes to be in working order to-morrow night. A happy feast for our Lady's birthday. . . . I do not forget all you are doing for God, and hope He will give you great peace and joy, like Deichal. Mind and let Him. . . . I am so truly *truly* glad, that you have been showing our Lord some fortitude and calm; how I wish that we could get those children of yours to a *sticking-place*.

The principles upon which our peace alone can rest are eternal and unchanging; and they ought to be able at least to right themselves after the storms are past. It is, however, and it is meant to be, a fierce battle, this fight against self, and if they cry a little over the wounds we must not wonder. What I complain of is, if they let the *brains* get twisted, and fail to see *right is right*. I pray for you, my dear child, and hope for great graces for you, from our Lord's great love.

To a Superior (7).

You say, particular examen neglected; imagine it, and you a Superior—why what is the profit, what do you gain by the neglect?

It takes hardly any time, a few minutes to make it *well*, and how are you to be good without?

Therefore the advice is simple. Never make it without heartfelt contrition. Let it be on unvarying sweetness of manner, which never gives way to weakness.

Make it twice a day, before you dare to utter your act of contrition.

Lay every trouble and every failure down at our Lord's feet, before you leave the chapel at night; and promise Him, so dearly loved, not to think of them till after Mass, and never mind cold Communions; our Lord will not be displeased.

To a Superior (8).

I do not think there is any great mystery about why it is such slow work for you to reach familiarity with the Sacred Heart. I believe you have never acknowledged that you can do anything to help our Lord at all. For you to unite your Mass with His intention, and then to run off with joy, thinking gleefully of all the help you had given to poor souls—still more if you offered your Office, or your discipline, and your dinner, and then were to find yourself rejoicing at having saved a soul by this offering, why you would think you had been guilty of some horrid presumption in such a thought.

I put a bit in the *Handbook* for your picture: but dear me, you no more think it like you, than if I had painted a black man; and yet that is the secret. . . .

Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

I know of no other way to gain devotion to the Sacred Heart, than to believe in reality that the Sacred Heart has a devotion to me. . . .

Never resist consolation, that is against humility; if you are simply grateful, it will never do you harm. Do not dwell on it afterwards, and I am very glad you have caught yourself thus wasting time, for that is also a sign of want of humility and detachment. Never be sorry when God gives joy, it is the best of helps at all times; that you *can't see* good results, would be the worst reason in the world for dispensing with it.

I think the great merit of penances is the *love* of them. . . .

Perhaps even yet you have still to learn what true humility is; you have not yet learnt how to find hearty self-humiliation outside of wilful faults; and hence to be told how contemptible you are, has always to some degree thrown you into a flutter, making you think you are in fault, and cannot see "what will become of me." But when St. Ignatius teaches us to recognize ourselves in the ulcer, he does not rely on wilful faults, or indeed upon acts at all. . . .

In reality you must never doubt that your thoughts about yourself are practical. It is a great sign that God is helping you, by giving sweetness, evenness, union with Himself and good thanksgivings. Do not falter because there are shortcomings, wonder rather and blush, that God is so good to you, as to save you from far worse. And so encouraged by His goodness, believe that He wants you to aim high. But then you begin to shiver, because you know very well that means suffering. But do not fear to ask our Lord, if He sees that suffering would make you more useful to religion,

and more dear to Him, to teach you to prepare for it, to put into your heart the courage and magnanimity which make suffering so immensely profitable. For all that is what He alone can do—but He likes to be asked. Don't say make me suffer—but make me such, that if suffering come, I may turn it to Thy pure true glory. . . . The art of being a perfect listener, is for everybody a great part of charity; but for Superiors, one of the greatest. . . .

As to wandering thoughts in prayer, and over-anxiety about others, the best way is to say when they come—poor silly little things, come along with me to our Lord; and leave them there, till your heart is warmed with the memory of His care and compassion. Surely, if we can trust our souls to Him, He can be trusted to look after others. . . .

I pray for you indeed, for the interest of so many souls is centred in you now. God give you fortitude and wisdom, and do not let any thought of sadness or constraint come near your heart. The crosses will be thick, and the pain keen, if you are to do all that God is asking of you; and your preparation for death at present must be (it is the best) to pray, to work, and to bear.

“All is Thine, dispose of it all according to Thy will.”

To a Superior (9).

ON PARTICULAR EXAMEN.

I feel that even amongst the few souls who make this exercise with *real* good-will, that it is for the most part frittered away, from want of being directed to the right thing. The end of the Exercises is self-conquest; the chief means, the particular examen. Often of course,

the best means for approaching self-conquest, is to do so indirectly; but when we can do it directly, to do it indirectly is what I call frittering.

When a Religious is young, and when there are still a number of surface faults, and self-knowledge is still in its infancy, indirect means are doubtless the best—when again the brains and the will are feeble, and fit only for very easy, obvious tasks, indirect means are the only ones available—none of these cases apply to you. You see then what I am driving at: so long as your particular examen was not hitting the very centre of the target, I should look on it as frittered away. But you will answer me, How can I possibly be hitting the centre of the target if I find nothing to mark? Well (in your case), I answer: Not by setting up another target nearer to you, but by improving your aim.

The definite subject-matter therefore, it seems to me, ought never to be abandoned, unless of course temporarily for some express motive (as you understand well), because of the difficulty in detecting it in particular acts—if we allow that to happen we shall, I firmly believe, *never* be aiming at the real centre at all. Rather our prayer for light, our study should always be, to discover the particular shape into which to throw it, so that it may be more easily discovered in our lives: but ever without any chagrin, if we are still unable to catch hold of it at the examen itself. The purpose made, the constant petition for light, the acts of contrition, are all acting constantly on the spot, though we can't always recognize the corruption at the time it comes out.

When, however, we have a life-long subject to grapple with, and it is still in very deep shadow, there is no doubt it does need courage and faith of no ordinary sort—and so I don't a bit mind your grumbling. *That*

is all right. But I should like you to see that in such a work as this, if our convictions are anything less than *utter*, light can scarcely come, and weariness is inevitable.

If the devil is allowed to whisper perpetually: It is not the right point after all—I *am* losing my time—never shall make anything of it—I don't believe it is my predominant passion at all;—why, who can be surprised if presently we give up?

I don't, I think, forget one of the really heroic efforts you have made to accomplish this, nor the partial success you have by God's grace achieved: but you must let me tell you, that even yet it is only partial, and conviction is not entire. Nor ought you to be astonished, or pained, or discouraged, at my saying so. If (and I have told you this before) it is to be, as I am convinced, nothing less than an uprooting of self—why even should we fear, if death come and find it still undone. "*Blessed*," He says, when He shall find us "*so doing*"—still at work on the spot, not "*beating the air*" as St. Paul expresses it. Repugnance I take rather to be evidence than otherwise—to be overcome by faith, by submission, by all the means which bring about what we have talked so much of—deep convictions. The change you have made, is of course quite right. I never meant the express object to be permanent: but do, my dear child, try hard to reconcile yourself to a life's work.

You are getting old you know; don't be discouraged. And this is what occurs to me to-night. God bless you. . . .

I would willingly consent to a change of the particular examen, if I were sure of deep convictions about it, if there were a genuine horror—as of a bad thing—a thing which is not a means (which every child of St. Ignatius should have a horror of), then we should be safe.

NOTES OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION.

Perpetual Adoration.

Thanks for Père Eymard; it will be useful to me, for whatever makes us value the Blessed Sacrament, makes it so much easier for a priest to lead a holy life.

The *thought* of Perpetual Adoration is indeed all you say; but, oh, my dear child, what—dare I say so? What a little understood vocation! To me it always brings awe. Does it not suppose either a pre-given simplicity, and purity of heart almost unique, or else the process of the soul's death to self?

Fancy a selfish nun at Perpetual Adoration!

The Communion of Atonement.

The Communion of Atonement certainly does not derive its efficacy from the mere devotion and love of the communicant: neither is it merely that our Lord in the Host makes reparation to Himself, but in the Sacramental Union of the soul with our Lord in the Holy Communion, which is also the highest act of homage that His creature is capable of rendering Him; in this, when offered for the intention of Reparation, our Lord finds so great a delight that He has promised that His Heart "shall expand Itself, to shed abundant love upon those who shall pay It this honour."

This we could not have known unless He Himself had deigned to reveal it: but after He has done so, an humble effort to fulfil His desire is more becoming than the humility which stays away because it is not more fervent. Such humility is self-love in disguise.

Charity.

Real charity will prevent me from seeking my own pleasure, as long as there is another to please. . . .

The perfection of charity is to accommodate one's self to the humours of others. . . . An act of charity is always preferable to prayer as a preparation for Holy Communion.

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Beware of unkind judgments, and little feelings of jealousy, against those who succeed better in charges than we do. If we are never unkind in thought, word, or deed, God will not let us fall into graver faults. Think of the serious harm you do by an unkind thought. . . . A sin against charity arms against ourselves the very love of the Sacred Heart, which has loved men unto death. . . . We ought to take as a rule, never to trust ourselves to speak about any one whom we have the least feeling against.

Contrition.

Contrition is the salt of our spiritual exercises. They soon grow insipid if it is not there. Simplicity asks but one question, What does God want? It looks straight at Him and obeys then and there. And when we have failed it is prompt to say: "I am sorry, I know you forgive me; now I begin again;" and there it ends. . . . Remember, contrition cannot be kept up without effort. Everybody sees the suitableness of contrition, but very few practise it.

.
Go to our Blessed Lord with loving sorrow and contrition: tell Him you are sorry you have grieved

His Sacred Heart. Humble yourself, trust to His mercy; particularly when dying trust to His mercy. . . . Your faults and sins do not lessen the love of our Lord; but they cause Him pain. The love of His Sacred Heart is unchanging; if you could be convinced of that, consolation would come. . . .

The words, "*Transcend your faults by love*," I should regard rather as a youthful expression; it probably means what Père Lallemand says far better: "Hearty sorrow, and then no solicitude."

Courtesy.

When the natural manner is a little brusque, when the tendency is to be short or impatient; then, remember, we are told, "not only to resist, but to overthrow," and this means, that when you feel inclined to be short, you must overcome yourself, and be more courteous, more gentle, more *obsequious*.

It is difficult to find the right word to express my meaning.

And mind, that this holds good even in a contrary temptation. Whenever we go against the natural bent, it is most noble self-sacrifice.

Desolation.

I understand, of course, the desolating feeling which arises from long continued prayer without any light or consolation, or even the ability to speak: but it is a great mistake to suppose there is any hypocrisy in it. Be more simple, and don't listen to any such suggestions at all, but go on. The real remedy is to insist more and more on realizing the facts of the case—He is

really there, looking, listening, loving, yes, loving; I believe it. It is His doing that I am here. He put me here; knowing all about me, He put me here. And I, is there anything I wish He does not? If there is, I desire only to renounce it. What, in truth, can I wish but His will? Whom do I rely upon except Himself? My miseries, which are so great, do not displease Him if I humble myself at the sight of them, and bear them patiently. Very soon it will be all over, and I shall be in His bosom! Whatever I have done wrong, I am sorry for. Why should I fear? Then with your eyes fixed on the tabernacle, make short acts, and short petitions, *forcing* your lips to talk to Him. That kind of prayer soon puts an end to the listless, dreamy state which is so distressing; and when you are tired go away, and come again presently.

Dreaming.

I am greatly pleased with what you say. All this will soon cease to be a matter of fear to you, if only you can speak so frankly about it. It is a valuable help and stimulus to a more vigorous check to dreaming, which, in sincerity, I don't think you have ever attacked as you ought.

To dwell upon, and ponder over, persons, words, tones, looks, all this is ruin to prayer, and a very selfish, unworthy gratification. Now mind, I don't think you deliberately indulge it, but I fear your horror of it is a lazy one, and that you are not half conscious enough of the harm it does to the spiritual life and to all thorough union with God. Take care to make strong acts of shame for any want of earnestness in mortification of all dreams or speculations whatever.

Failure.

What I think you most want is to recognize that chapter xi. of the *Imitation* is a chapter to read with great *contentment*. This indeed, I may truly think and say: "Lord, I am nothing, I can do nothing, I have nothing of myself that is good; but I fail and am defective in all things and ever tend to nothingness."

To love to fail, because it is good for me. To wonder when I succeed, and thank God because He has done *all Himself*; and this without the least touch of sadness about it, is what you must strive after. . . . Efforts are crowned, not success. . . .

We are putrid sores, always exhaling corruption; the great business of our lives is to wash and dress them. God will build His glory on our infirmity.

Gossip.

Do not listen to talk about the *faults of others, or others' characters*; the very things said in excuse of people, are sometimes calumnies; few reputations can stand it, least of all those of priests. . . .

There is not a more solid act of mortification, than to deny one's self the pleasure of making remarks upon others. If even at the cost of a conversation flagging, it is better to do so. Even if we commence by praising a person, one so easily passes on to blame.

If we do fail we can of course humble ourselves on account of it.

Humility.

Look at our true selves, how weak, how malicious, how proud, how bad in every way! If you who have

been so guarded, so surrounded with preventing grace, are still so inclined to seek self as you are, what sins would you not have fallen into, if you had been placed in those dangerous occasions and circumstances, in which so many are placed? This is a very powerful thought for humility; for it shows that if *God's hand* for one moment left us, we should be capable of falling into the greatest sins. It is a kind of humility not often realized; but it is a very solid kind.

True humility teaches us, therefore, to be always on our guard, always to avoid dangerous occasions. It says: "Others could do this safely, but I cannot." Without humility we say: "Oh, it is all nonsense; I can do this, it is no harm, I shall be all right!" But true humility teaches us how frail we are, how likely to fall, how little we can count on ourselves. It takes advantage also of everything; it says: "Others could do without this, I cannot;" and here is poverty of spirit: that what others put aside and take no care of, I take; I can afford to lose nothing. St. Peter Claver, although a man endowed with the greatest and highest gift of prayer, yet had a habit of using all sorts of little pictures for his composition of place at meditation. Whenever he came across one that he thought would help him, he kept it, and used it for his meditation, and after his death they were all found about him. This was just the spirit of, "Others can do without this, I cannot."

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The best way of conquering and rooting out pride is what I told you before about—attention to little things.

In your retreat I told you how St. Ignatius, gifted though he was with such a marvellous gift of prayer, yet never failed to observe each of the Additions; and this thought we apply to everything. I cannot afford to

waste the least opportunity, to let pass the smallest thing that will help me, to lose the least chance of grace, to fail in the least particular.

Substantial humility must see that, of myself and apart from my sins, I am but a putrid worm, from which evil, pride, spite, falsehood, and selfishness are likely to drop. When I know this practically, then I begin to be humble indeed ; and all God's gifts, all God's graces make in this no difference. They are God's gifts ; I remain the same all the time. All the other virtues must wait for humility, before they can have their excellence.

My zeal and labour, my obedience, my modesty, my self-denial, my charity, all of them at the best are poor things, until I sincerely contemn myself. If I love God much, I must despise myself ; and if I truly believe that I am of my own nature nothingness, admiration of God, delight in God, love for God, will become something so different in me to what they were before, that I shall think I had never known love at all. And in the same way, kindness is in truth nothing but a skin (it is so shallow and poor), until I know I am vile, and my neighbour is a creature God loves with an everlasting love. Humility knows how to be angry with no one but itself.

Your humility has begun to exist, by realizing that you are a great sinner : but do not let it end there. Remember that if you had thought little of yourself, our Lord would never have had to bear the Agony, which your sins cost Him.

Our "little sins" pain Him, as He is also pained by the big mortal sins of those who have had no such graces. The former are such acts of meanness and ingratitude. If *you* had committed, or were to commit big sins, who knows if how once the passions were

aroused you would ever turn back to our dear Lord; and you would have given Him such exquisite pain. Magdalen made magnificent reparation to our Lord, but she first cost Him dear—so you must aim at Magdalen's sorrow without Magdalen's sin. You can always find plenty of opportunity, and food for humiliation in your proneness to evil, in your capacity for it; and remember, that if our Lord were to take away His hand for a moment from you, you would fall into the most horrible sins. . . .

You would have learnt humility by this time, if your will had been whole. Whenever you go against obedience, you are busy, as St. Paul says, "*crucifying again the Son of God*;" so don't disguise it to yourself. . . . But it is not so long since you found out that you were proud, so we cannot expect great things too soon. There are three things equally important: one is to subdue yourself *in the occasion*; and this would, in reality, be very rarely beyond your strength, if you no longer pondered and moped. The only questions *then at that time* should be: "Shall I not *please Him* if I submit?" "And ten-fold if I do it *now*—at once? it is true I cannot do it with a good grace, but I *can* do it, and I can say I *want* to do it well—I mean to do it well. Forgive me if I do it badly."

The other is when I have utterly failed to make profit of the failure. Tell our Lord that humiliation must and shall bring humility, and that as He is always ready to forgive you, you never mean to say die. How could such a being like you ever grow good, without giving a lot of bother to those who love her! it would be extravagant to expect such an unheard-of miracle. The truth is, our Lord is too good to you. God bless you, my dear child. . . .

The only way to fit ourselves for doing good to

souls is *humility*. We ought to begin every work for souls by an act of humiliation. . . .

The most fruitful remedy for you at this moment is the *Ecce ancilla*, rightly understood, if you have virtue enough to adopt it. I mean, that you should feel that it is an infinite joy, to stand and wait and serve; expecting no smile, no recognition, content only to be happy, when allowed to sit at His feet awhile, and to know that I am there, and that He sees me. This is the most thorough-going practice of humility and joy. Sarcasm kills it. God's tenderest blessing, my child. . . .

It is *no small thing* for a year's work, to have conquered the horror of humiliation; and you may prudently reckon it as a step towards humility. There may be—will be—plenty of faults, I dare say; but if you go on in the same road, the horror will be at last converted into a welcome. But for that to come, you must get conviction deep deep into your brains.

I am very sorry to have left you so long without news: I know how I try (against my will) the patience of those who write. I have been unwell and have been *set to work to idle*.

Humility is Truth.

Comparisons which are *most odious* in every other part of the spiritual life, yet as helps to humility are most useful. When we think of how we have abused God's graces, then we can truly say and feel that we are as "the mud of the streets" before others. A holy Superior reproving a foolish novice, is not to try and think that the novice is much holier than she is; that would not be true, and humility is essentially true.

But let her say to herself: If all the graces I have received were laid open here, and all the graces she has received, and my correspondence to my graces, and her correspondence to her graces, where should I be then? What a poor figure I should cut! And also we must remember, that whatever people may be now, it is not at all certain what they will become. The very same person we look down upon now, may one day be far far above us in sanctity.

On our Blessed Lady.

Try to have a little more worthy thoughts about our Lady; comprehend that her love for you is far far too great, too tender and sublime to be affected by your littleness and poverty, except to compassionate you more. You "feel no love"—well, don't expect to feel it; believe thoroughly that you don't deserve to feel it, and that feeling it would not make you better. The thought that she is discontented, at the poverty or selfishness of your homage and love, is the very antipodes of the truth.

Mass.

Think of the wondrous words, *per Ipsum, et cum Ipso, et in Ipso*, which the priest says after the *Nobis quoque*, and after he has taken Chalice and Host together, and elevated them from the altar; and if we were not *more than half* animals, we should all get up off the ground at that time, as St. Francis Xavier did, and St. Philip Neri. If you take those three words and apply them to the four intentions (of adoration, thanksgiving, satisfaction, and impetration), you get a fuller idea of

the immensity of the Mass than, I think, by any other means.

Every time the priest says these words in the Mass the whole face of the spiritual world is changed. A plenitude of grace is poured out upon it.

Meditation.

We ought to feel the *need* of our meditation, and go to it as to our breakfast. We go to our breakfast, feeling we must take it, or we shall faint before lunch-time; so we ought to go to our meditation feeling that we want it, and if we do not make it well, we shall not have strength to go through the day in the proper spirit, and keep our resolutions.

The enemy always comes when we are rising and puts *his* thoughts if we are not faithful in keeping to God's thoughts. . . .

Do not let yourself begin any prayer, even an ejaculation, without the moment of silence, and until you can speak straight to God. It is a habit easy to form, and its fruits are incalculable. Many persons who find a difficulty in making ordinary meditation, turn their vocal prayer into mental prayer of a very high and solid nature, by this means. . . . Before your meditation, think that you are going to sit for half an hour at our Lord's feet, at the foot of the Cross, and that you are going to give Him the greatest honour and glory you can for that time. When you prepare your meditation and have read the points, think if there is nothing there that will apply to you; nothing that you can improve or amend; because it won't do to go and expect our Lord to help us, without

any endeavour on our part; and then when you make your meditation, and our Lord *does* choose to speak to you, and to give you some good thought, thank Him for it, and if *not*, you know you have done what you could for Him, and go away *content*, and say humbly, "*What she had, she hath done.*"

The Divine Office.

Sin comes from want of reverence, and if the neglect (of rubrics) comes from will or carelessness, which is want of will, there is so far sin, at least imperfection from want of reverence. The holiest priests often make mistakes in rubrics—the most empty hearted are sometimes most accurate. So too with regard to attitude at Office; when reciting privately, if there is reverence in the heart, it will manifest itself in the pose; *but not in the same way in all.*

The Particular Examen.

The particular examen faithfully made, forms habits of courage and of humility.

It is a small means by which wounded creatures creep close to God. It is the practice which makes us become like little children. It requires childlike simplicity to keep to it constantly; but if we will only take the means, little people can do great things, where sublime geniuses fail. Any one is able to avoid a fault for a few hours; by degrees the will stiffens, and virtue grows. The particular examen is a mark of love to our Lord, and a proof of sincerity in His service. It is a sure means of becoming a saint; and what shall we be able to answer at the Judgment if we have

despised or neglected it? Secret self-presumption is often the cause of the omission.

On acquiring Patience.

Is it, you ask, possible to be always watchful? If you mean by that, can watchfulness alone cure impatience, I say no. While watchfulness represses the ebullitions, the main work is done in our prayers, in the sacraments, in the whole growth of the spiritual life, by which the sources, the roots of our impatience are slowly, imperceptibly, undermined as we grow in self-knowledge and the knowledge of God; learn to despise ourselves and the things which used to fret us, and to subject ourselves more and more perfectly to God: without which, the watchfulness alone could not do much; and even with both going on together, in nothing is patience more wanted than in acquiring patience. In reality, you silly child, you are doing excellent work, though it is true that from time to time your exploits are rather more of a Bashi-bazouk than of a disciplined soldier.

It is a question of a large-hearted recognition of God's large-heartedness. Fervour has quite other shapes than you know yet; be content for the present, while I tell you that you are neither tepid, nor in danger of tepidity. Use the brief moments He gives you to tell Him your love; and for the rest be content to grub on as you may, and humble yourself most cheerfully at the end of it. . . . I would freely use Scripture or anything else which interested me at Mass, and change the means as the attraction changed without fear—I would stick to my attitude as a victim,

even when all feeling had gone, insisting on the words :
“ My soul hath desired to desire.” . . .

“ Do what thou hast to do ”—teach, do your work, labour at your prayer, go on—that is the way to seek Him. Mind and do it cheerfully, undoubtingly—cling to candour, submission, and kindness, and you have nothing to fear. . . .

Full days, as you have it in the Epistle of the Mass of St. Stanislaus, never leave us lonely. . . .

It is very possible that in your quiet life at—you may be able to influence quite as many souls as our Lady did at Nazareth. You must think that our Lord calls you to imitate Him and our Lady, at Nazareth, in the perfection of quiet daily life ; that there you may please Him best ; and that as the Crucifixion was the consummation and crown of His life, so perhaps this may also be *your* preparation. Our Lord all His life through did nothing, undertook nothing, without great preparation. His life at Nazareth, as a preparation for the Public Life and for the Cross—the long nights of prayer, before the simplest actions or discourses. . . .

Take each hour as it comes, and say : “ *Thy will be done.* ” You must sacrifice *self* ; it is always appearing in one form or another, and we shall have it to combat until we die.

Prayer.

You know what you have learnt during retreats, in order to pray well. You are to think that Almighty God is present in all His Majesty, and purity, and sanctity ; and that He is listening, and say, “ Does He then love me ? Who am I ? a poor little miserable wretch ! ” Then try to abase yourself. . . . In prayer

try not to let your surroundings affect you. Give yourself up wholly to God. . . .

Try to live to please God *alone*. Be very fervent in your Morning Oblation. Think of the interests of Jesus instead of your own selfish ends. . . . Tell our Lord that you have tried, and that you have failed. Ask Him to strengthen you : "*Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and you shall find : knock, and it shall be opened to you.*"

If in the morning you resolve to make one person love our Blessed Lord more, you will be bright and cheerful. . . .

Do you look at your crucifix when you pray ? do you look at the tabernacle, and realize the presence of our Lord ? . . .

Do not fret about aimlessness. Make your offering very real, and believe that they penetrate the work of the day. "Live from day to day," is what Surin tells you ; and lay all down at the Master's feet when the day is done, with a true act of gratitude, and then He will pour out His own merits over all. At your prayer if you can't think, then say the prayers you like best slowly.

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What is a genuflection, what is a sign of the Cross, what is the joining of our hands before us, but the acknowledgment of the presence of Majesty ? *Age quod agis* ; do that at least. If you put your knee to the ground before Jesus Christ, let it *be* before Jesus Christ, and not before the moon ; if you make the sign of the Cross, do not do so before you have brought yourself to mean the act. Do not let yourself begin prayer until in your own words you have protested that He is present, and that you have not forgotten who you are.

If it takes all your time to say this, that time has been well spent.

Simplicity.

It is fortunate your letter shows so much common sense, for that is exactly what is needed. The only fear of making yourself ridiculous that I see, is the fear that you do so when you speak truly of your soul's wants to a director. God rid you of a thought so false and so foolish! It can have no other origin than self-conceit. . . .

The ruin of simplicity is the habit of inspecting ourselves to discover how good or bad we are, and to reckon our progress; this is the subtlest form of self-love. All the self-examination should be definite, from such a time till the next examen—brisk, thorough, and then done with. This may be done ten times a day without damage to simplicity. The fruit is shame, sorrow, and a resolution to try again. Vagueness of speech encourages vagueness of thought; I think it can be corrected with real industry. . . .

Bad intentions such as vainglory, rob God of His glory: duplicity in intention, or no intention, is like sewing all day with a needle which has no thread. To have a pure intention will help us to heap up merit; and if we make a good, fervent intention of pleasing God in our Morning Oblation, our Angel Guardian will, we may hope, check us when other intentions come.

On teaching Spirituality.

You ask about giving definite instructions in spirituality? See why I say no. One of the greatest

mistakes of teachers, is to suppose that whatever they themselves find exceedingly clear and useful must be no less so to their scholars.

They forget that a long process of preparation has been going on in themselves, and that they cannot confer the results of that long experience, by merely shooting off highly condensed pellets of wisdom. Teach self-respect to children as the most perfect imitation of our Lady.

Union with God.

God, Who is Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, has created those who are capable of union with Him.

That union is *His* end in creating us, and ours also. We may regard it from two points of view. In all our prayers and struggles, we may be intent on His good pleasure, or our gain. When I say: "*Wash me yet more from my iniquity,*" it may be that the word in my heart means: "*Thy Kingdom come;*" or it may be that I am quite engrossed by fear of personal suffering.

God longs for us to be united to Him. He is always on the look-out for something good in us. If we even lift a finger in sign of love, He will not forget it; nor does even the very least wish to please Him, pass unnoticed. And this is true even of those in mortal sin: for though they cannot merit, yet even the very least thing they do to please God is noted, so as to make their reconciliation easier. God longs for us to be united to Him; and although our hearts are far worse than the most clear-sighted can understand, He turns His eyes away from the foulness, and says: "See; *there* is a desire to please Me! there is an act of

good-will!" and that delights Him. There is no punishment in this life; even when it seems as if pain were sent in punishment, it is not so; it is only the remedy of a wise and kind physician who puts the plaster on the sore.

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See what an inexhaustible treasure you have in the merits of our Lord.

He has given them all to you, and there is no need of your life, for which they will not suffice. To make use of them frequently, is the most delicate flattery to our Lord. If you want to make *reparation*, there are these merits, offer them; if you want to avert the evil your indiscretion may have done, offer them; if you have no good thoughts, beg our Lord to offer His: they are far better than the best of yours could be. It is as if you had a drawer, full of money, medicines, and plasters, what folly not to make use of them! A man who has a treasure which he knows he can never exhaust, acts very differently from one who has an empty purse.

The Heart of Jesus.

True zeal for souls must, however, always begin with self-conquest. To our own hearts first must His Kingdom come. If you strive for zeal for souls and self-conquest, you will be truly happy. Love what Jesus loves, fear what Jesus fears, and wish the same wishes that are in the Heart of Jesus.

To one who had consecrated herself to God.

No fear of my forgetting my child on her bridal-day. It is the end of long efforts and the accomplishment of many aspirations. Mind, a real *accomplishment*, for no aspirations can reach higher than the perfect fulfilment of our dear Lord's will. . . . And this is but the beginning of what our Lord will do. Only be very grateful, and very happy, and leave every fear and every desire there behind you at His feet, sure that He has blessed your offering and given you His Heart's love.

Section 30.

SERMONS AND INSTRUCTIONS.

(1) ASH WEDNESDAY.

THE CHURCH on this day puts ashes on the heads of her children, and while we have the ashes on our brows, let us bow down those brows in the true spirit with which the children of the Church should enter upon the season of Lent. Some, acknowledging their great weakness and need, enter into Lent as a time of humiliation and penance; a time given to recover, as far as possible, the innocence we have lost; others treat the whole idea of penance with contempt. Some say they are delicate; but the delicate can do penance, as well as the strong; and if there be not the spirit of penance in the heart, there should at least be the desire of doing penance. No one should go through the truly touching, truly solemn ceremony of to-day, without feeling themselves deeply impressed, and without a sense of their great need.

The day will come when the words of our Lord will be accomplished, "*I will search Jerusalem with lamps,*" I will search the innermost recesses of the heart, and see the good and the evil, the excuses for the evil, and the reasons which tarnish the good. Each step we take brings us nearer to our eternity, and ought we not to

thank the Church for putting before us this time for solemn penance.

Turn to your Missals, and see what the Preface for Lent teaches us. It says: "Bodily penance elevates the mind." We are the slaves of our little habits of comfort. De Rancé, Abbé de la Trappe, when he found himself called to a life of penance, spent sleepless nights in the mere thought of having to get up without a fire. Let us give a keen glance at our little ways and habits of making ourselves comfortable, and see if by mortifying ourselves concerning these, we cannot do penance.

The Preface goes on to say, that penance bestows virtue and its reward. The devil makes use of those habits of ours, and it depends on ourselves whether we will or will not be their slaves. The devil has no power over us but that which we give him. If our hearts are instinct with faith we should seize on the chance offered to us to win, by a little mortification for God's sake, the love of our dear Lord, an incorruptible crown, instead of perishable comfort. If a little street Arab were told that by picking up straws in the street he might get gold in exchange, he would kill himself running over London; especially if he knew that his time was limited. We are these street Arabs, for every little act of bodily mortification we may obtain, not perishable gold, but everlasting gems.

Resolve then to begin Lent in the right spirit, that you may benefit by God's grace. Do not regard it only as a time when we submit to certain restrictions in our food, but as a time when the Church, not harshly, but most kindly, most wisely, most considerately, exhorts us to do penance, and it behoves us to use it well. So may we hope to enjoy a happy Easter when it comes.

(2) *Feast of the Holy Crown of Thorns.*

See our Lord with those piercing sharp thorns driven into His Head, which only God's hand could make, and did make, for the solitary suffering of His Son. Let us contemplate Him now as He sits there expiating our sins of pride. Those who delight in being loved and esteemed, what can they say now, still more those who have *sought* it? Does not the sight of Jesus Crowned with Thorns, make honour loathsome? does not the heart wring with pain, if esteem and admiration are its share, while He was shown to the multitude in shame and ignominy, and they were bidden to "*Behold the Man*"? Pilate was not a bad man, he was just and disinterested (that is the worst of it), and when a feeling of human respect crept in, the fear that the report would get to Rome that he was unpopular — then he went against our Lord and delivered Him up.

Human respect may not lead to mortal sin, but requires many a victory over self before it is subdued. There is no personal love of our Lord possible in a soul dominated by this fault. It is a spring either of conquest, or of humiliating weakness.

(3) *Interior Mortification.*

Well now, passing from the subject of mere bodily mortification, we come to that of internal mortification, which appears at first sight much more agreeable to flesh and blood than the former, in this point of view.

When you speak to eager persons of the extreme superiority of internal mortification, they will say: "Yes, that is what I always thought; but as for that

bodily mortification, I do not care for it, I am too weak for that." Bodily mortification is truly the handmaid of internal mortification, but if handmaids all struck we should be badly off. So it is with internal mortification ; without bodily penance you cannot practise it. We are going into a sea, we have one foot on the land, and another on the water of an ocean of good things. Let us see the simplest meaning of internal mortification. It means self-correction—the wish, the will, the effort to correct ourselves. As the work of fathers, mothers, masters and mistresses, is the correction of troublesome children, so God wishes to correct us, with this difference, that we must also wish to know, and to correct ourselves. Can you be corrected ? for the worst thing you can say of any one is to say he is incorrigible. If we wish to know our faults and correct them, then we can do it in time, and we may during this Lent lay up a bit here and a bit somewhere else, and advance a step for life, a step towards Heaven.

I want you to have high principles. Even if you do not act up to them, they are far preferable to low ones. In all the words of our Lord we see that He wished to make us high-principled. Take for example that one saying : "*And to him that striketh thee on the one cheek, offer also the other.*" Let us apply that to two different men ; one will say, "Oh, it is very fine for our Lord to say that if you receive a blow on one cheek, you must give the other ; that will not do for me. If I get struck, I shall strike back !" The other, on the contrary, will say, "Well, it is very difficult ; but our Lord has said it, so I will try and do it." Perhaps if they both received a blow, they would both yield to the temptation and return it ; but the one who had aimed highest would be more pleasing to God, and have greater grace for repentance. Aiming high, that is to be your motto.

Experience teaches us two things concerning correction. First, what pain it gives us to be corrected, even by those who have the right to do so; but when persons who have not, or seem not to have this right, give us correction, it causes us not only pain, but also a considerable amount of passion. Experience ought, however, having shown us the difficulty of correction, to teach us a second lesson, its necessity, its value. We see in all those around us certain faults, and most persons would not take two minutes to name the principal faults of their neighbours; we should say, one was too sarcastic, another too free, another too choleric. Now these faults are the exaggeration of those characters which God gave us, with the intention that we should spend our lives in forming ourselves. We have all some fault like these, and we go about with it marked on our forehead, and yet we do not act as though we knew it. Those who are always being snubbed are those who are really making great strides in sanctity. We ourselves can see that such persons become meeker, they become accustomed to the dose, it comes natural to them, and thus by meekness they advance in virtue; of course, if we burst into a rage and flap our wings against the bars of the cage, it is different; but if we bear it with ordinary patience it helps us greatly to advance in sanctity. I do not wish to encourage you to snub others, only to bear it patiently if it happens that *you* are snubbed, and to believe that those who snub you through life are in reality your greatest benefactors. If you really get so far as this, you will have made a great step towards Heaven.

Let us frankly recognize, that we all have hearts full of selfishness, which our self-love is always trying to hide from us, and we are unwilling to tear away the veil which it puts over this mean heart of ours; we do

not like to know the truth, because it is humiliating; our self-love always throws a cloak over our bad motives. But we must examine our hearts and purify them, and strive to do all our actions from the motive of pure love of God. This is internal mortification, and all other mortifications are mere helps to it. If a man sets himself to this, though he does not undertake a single act of bodily mortification, he is making himself a saint. But with all these mortifications you must not expect a sudden cure; it is to be a work of years. What God requires of you is quiet, humble, patient, persevering service, and this is just what human nature cannot bear. Some people think that because all goes on quietly, all must be going on wrong; if there were a great deal of excitement, a great many events, they would persevere; but because all goes on quietly they are disgusted, and say, "Where is the good?—I am making no progress."

As we read in the Gospel, they require "a sign from Heaven."

If God told them that to be confirmed in virtue they had to put their hand in the fire, in it would go in a minute. This is always the way with eager people who wish to be good; if only they can pay something down immediately, they are quite ready to give up their fortune, or anything else of that sort, if they could secure God's friendship thus. God means it to be quiet work. He does not require of you actions which appear great to all the world or great sacrifices; He does not often send you great temptations; true, He sometimes sees good to try you by sending you some great sorrow, or suffering in some shape or form.

To bear patiently the suffering, the crosses that God sends, in perfect conformity to His will and submission of our will to His, this is the holocaust He asks; and

not only from the very devout and perfect, but from all alike. And at the last it will be a consolation to you to remember, that even the wish and desire to give yourselves, in spite of all your imperfections and miseries, to Him, is a great grace and mark of His favour: and if you persevere in it, you will come at last to fall in love with sacrifice and the Cross, and to long for them, and to clasp them to your heart as a preparation for the glory which God is longing with more than a mother's love to give you for ever hereafter. Courage then, and offer yourselves unreservedly to God for ever!

(4) *Prayer.*

I want to speak to you about prayer, which is called the twin-sister of mortification. But it is more than a twin-sister; with prayer and mortification, if one pines, the other will pine; if one dies, the other will not live long. Let us look at them in a common sense point of view: if there cannot be prayer without mortification, nor mortification without prayer, you will say, "Where must I begin?" You must begin with both, and go on with both. Prayer means communication with God, of one sort or another. You ask God to pardon your faults, and for grace to overcome yourself; my wish is that you should get out of your heads that meditation is impossible; it is not so difficult as you imagine, for if those who wish to practise interior lives, do not acquire the habit of mental prayer, the interior life cannot last long. A great difference exists amongst Catholics in the intensity of their faith. Thus faith drops upon some hearts like water upon oil silk; upon others like water on a sponge. Try to look upon all things in the light of eternity. St. Aloysius was in the habit of saying when any joy, suffering, or pleasure presented itself to

him: "What will this be to me in eternity?" and by this means he acquired a just appreciation of the value of earthly things. Endeavour to imitate this example by acquiring the habit of mental prayer, which will teach you the true value of all around you.

The great and solid fruit of mental prayer is the making our relations with God real; some people have only conventional relations with God, they say a great many vocal prayers out of a book—page upon page, and they mean about half a dozen of the sentiments which they express. Some persons will say prayers, for instance, expressing vehement desires of martyrdom, great willingness to bear crosses, and when they come out of the chapel, if you ask them if they wish to be martyrs, they answer: "Oh dear no! we leave that to the saints." But if you think of what you are saying when you pray, if you examine whether those are your sentiments, it will be quite different with you. If you do this, you will find that the Our Father, for instance, would last all your life, each word would suggest new thoughts to you, which would help to realize your relations with God. I dare say I have often told you the story that is told of St. Francis of Assisi. Some fortunate persons one day caught him praying out loud in the church, after all the rest of the community had left it, and they said: "Let us listen to his prayer." They were anxious to know what was in the heart of this Seraphic Saint while the stigmata were on his body. So they listened, and heard him murmuring the same words, over and over again, from the beginning to the end of his prayer, which lasted all through the night, "My God and my All, my God and my All"—that was his prayer; and if you said a few words like this, and felt them, it would do you good. If you would only make your vocal prayers, mental! and make up your

mind to mean what you say. When you come into the chapel, knowing that you have offended God perhaps but half an hour ago, do not begin by falling on your knees and saying: "O my God, I love Thee above all things, and I would not offend Thee for all the world," but say, "My God, I know I have offended Thee, and I am very much ashamed of myself for it." But to begin with an oblation of your heart to God, to suffer whatever He wills, when only a few minutes before you have been very selfish and very unkind, this is odious.

Try then to be real in your prayers. Can you not spend at least a quarter of an hour daily, in good company, in company with our Lord? If you do so, you may be sure that you will gain something every day; and at the end of a year thus spent, you will have made great progress. Take, for example, that beautiful history, which we can hardly read with a firm voice, of the poor woman who was dragged into the Temple by the hypocritical Pharisees because she had been taken in adultery. Are we not often like the Pharisees? Should we not have helped to haul the poor woman into the Temple? Watch the Divine Wisdom of our Lord. He sent away her enemies, giving them each to understand, though without betraying them, their own badness, so that they all sneaked one after another out of the Temple. Then He was alone with her. It was with her just as it is with us after Holy Communion—face to face with Him. He speaks to her: "*Where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee?*" And to her answer, "*No man, Lord,*" He replied, "*Neither will I.*" See what a picture this is; more striking than you will find in any novel, a far prettier story too. And this is not the only one; you will find a hundred of them in the Life of our Lord, and if you will take one every day, and think of it for only a quarter of an hour,

you will fulfil what the Apostle spoke of, which now you do not understand—" *But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

(5) *Helps and hindrances to Prayer.*

A great help to prayer is peace of mind ; and people lose this peace for all sorts of different reasons, and some for very small reasons indeed. They will lose this peace the first thing in the morning, again before luncheon, several times before dinner, and a good deal in the night. You let yourselves be robbed of your peace by things which are of no value, while your peace of mind is most precious, and you ought to esteem it very highly. If you let your peace go easily, you cannot appreciate its value. If a shrewd lawyer came to you, and tried to get some papers from you, to which you had not formerly attached any value, you would naturally be led to think that they must have some value you did not know of. The devil is this lawyer ; he tries to take away your peace, which is your greatest treasure, and he thinks a day's work will be repaid if he succeeds in taking it away for an hour ; and how often does he not succeed ? The sorrows which are really worth the name are very rare ; and when they do come, great graces come also, and those are not the things which rob you of your peace ; those things which do so are not really sorrows, they are only made so by yourselves. A great help both to prayer and peace is the guard of the eyes.

How many sins may be avoided by the guard of the eyes, how many unkind and uncharitable thoughts and words, may we trace to the unmortified use of the eyes ? I lay great importance on guarding the eyes. You go to church with the intention of seeing what your

neighbour has got on, who is at church, and everything that happens. If you examine yourselves well, you will find how hard it would be to give up this habit. You kneel by someone who looks very devout, and find that your dress has been examined, your exact age proximated, your particular complexion studied; and some persons by putting all these things together, will have made a very fair guess at your tastes and occupations, though they did not exactly turn round and eye you from head to foot. Persons who have guard over their eyes are so rare, that they are a sermon wherever they go, and if you kneel beside such a person in the church, you will go away and say you have knelt beside a person uncommonly holy. But you will find this guard over the eyes a very useful thing; for at present I am only talking of the necessary guard over the eyes at prayers; but you will find that your eyes are the cause of a great many sins, if you do not know how to guard them. Are you in earnest? If so, domineer your eyes bravely at prayer, and remember that this is the sense with which you may offend God most, after the tongue, about which an Apostle has given us a whole chapter.

Have I sufficiently tried to show you the importance of the guard of the eyes? A door that is left open, it is said, generally lets in a quantity of dirt: so it is with the eyes. But still this is not the most important part, the interior is the most important. Your peace of mind is a great thing to possess. To use the trite simile the Fathers are so fond of, if you throw a stone into a lake, its mirror is destroyed; so in a soul, when its peace is ruffled, God can no longer be reflected. This shows you that you should not allow it to be disturbed at every little thing. We cannot *command* peace, that I know, but what I wish you to do is to desire peace. In all the

things about which I have spoken to you I do not think I have once told you, nor even wished you, to succeed ; my wish is that you should try, and persevere in trying ; *that* is your work, success comes from God.

I want you to desire peace, and as a first step to desiring it, look into yourselves, see whether you have desired it hitherto, whether you have not let it be too easily disturbed, whether you do not lose it at least half a dozen times in the day ? For instance, some persons would lose their peace because a child's pinafore was put on inside out. I am trying to find the most contemptible thing I can ; for such a trifle they would be disturbed, angry, or even sorrowful. Of course, my pinafore would take a different form in each of you. To abdicate your reason for every small joy or sorrow is something you can conquer if you try.

Another great help to prayer is charity.

Be full of kindness to others, in thought, word, and deed. It is wonderful to see how God rewards acts of charity. I do not mean merely almsgiving, but kindness to others.

It is told us of one of our beatified Fathers, a missionary, that he had an extraordinary power of overcoming hearts. When he was in the Indies, persons whom others had tried in vain to convert, had hardly had two words from him before they were at his feet, —confessions made, conversions accomplished. He observed this and wondered how it could be ; he was a solid, sensible man, there was no false humility about him, he did not pride himself on it, he saw it and wondered : “ How is it that I should have this power,” he said. “ I have never undertaken any great bodily mortifications, I have tried to keep my Rule, but I have not done anything in particular ; I do not pretend to be like Blessed Claver, or St. Francis Xavier ; many others

better than I have not this power." And God revealed, I forget now whether it was to himself or to someone else, that this power was all the reward of one little act done when a boy at school. They were all going out for a weekly holiday ; but there was an old priest who was laid up with a cough, and did not get up till late ; just as they were starting, the question was put, who was to stop to serve the old man's Mass. One said, " Why can't the old man go without his Mass for once ? " Another said, " Why can't the old man get up with other people ? "

But this boy stayed quietly behind without a sour word or a sour face, and gave up his whole holiday to serve the priest's Mass, thinking it was only an act of kindness to an old man. But God marked this, and it was written down in the Book of Life, and years after, when he had himself forgotten all about it, God rewarded him with this success in his missions. God will do much for us, for every little act we do. And surely everybody must see that it is folly to be discouraged when God is like this. He seizes hold of every little trumpery act you do, and attaches graces to it without measure.

A great hindrance to prayer is discouragement.

It very often causes discouragement and irritation to find that sanctity is within our reach ; and you are accustomed to console yourselves with the thought that sanctity was far beyond you, but you find that it is much easier than you thought, though it is difficult because it gives you trouble. Discouragement is falsehood, it cannot be true unless you have made up your minds to sin. The devil only ought to be discouraged, for discouragement, despondency, and melancholy are his characteristics. You feel sad because you have not kept your resolutions ; well, would you be any better if

you were deluded and did not see your faults? Do you wish to be like the ostrich, who being pursued on the sands of the desert, poked his head into a hole in the sand, thinking himself safe because his eyes were hidden? On the contrary, it is far better that you should know your faults, so that you may make an act of humiliation, and be ashamed of yourselves; for that is the thing, you are not half ashamed enough of yourselves. You say: "I see that I must do this, and cut off that, and prevent something else; I did not before think it was necessary, but I cannot take the trouble to do it."

Then you are not in earnest, you are lazy. St. Ignatius says the angels fell, "being unwilling to help themselves." You know that you might be much holier than you are, but you wish not to know it, because you do not like the trouble; but what good will despondency do you? Now I know it is on the tips of half your tongues to say: "Why you are only making us worse, giving us more cause to be discouraged." Well, here is salve for the wound; does it never occur to you to think that God is much more anxious to reward than to punish? His justice is strict, but it is in measure, while His mercy is without measure; every little act you do is written in Heaven, stored up in the memory of God, that a reward may be waiting for you at your death. So it is with Jesus Christ, and can you be discouraged when you know He is anxiously watching to reward each little victory you gain over yourself? God is anxious to pick out every small thing to reward. The mind and Heart of Christ is always searching for something to reward. Each time you overcome some temptation to passion, unkindness or other sins, though it is but the act of a moment that you are faithful to Him, He will reward this with very great graces. Who

will not see the folly of discouragement when dealing with a God like this, Who will take hold of every little act of kindness or mortification to pour into you graces without measure?

Another great hindrance to prayer is impatience.

Very few of you, I think, understand what a great fault impatience is. Many of you, perhaps, hardly care to become patient, and it is a very difficult virtue to acquire, for if you all begin to examine your hearts, you will be surprised to find how often you are impatient. Of course, there are different forms of impatience. Some people, for the least little thing (because a needle won't thread, or something like that) get, if not into a positive rage, at least very impatient. In the Bible it says: "*In patience possess your souls*," and how few of you think of that. When you are impatient to a servant, or to a child, do you consider how much more you have offended God than they can possibly have offended you, and therefore how much more cause He has to be impatient with you? While your fit of impatience or state of anger lasts, you are no better than an irrational animal; for the time, you have lost your reason. Yet how many of you think little of it? After a burst of rage you say, "Oh, yes, I know I am of a very hasty temperament." But it is soon over, perhaps, and so you do not consider of what an atrocious thing you have been guilty. Try to be patient, and go on trying, although perhaps you will have to fight against impatience till death; for if even at the end of your life you have acquired this virtue, you have not been idle.

Feast of Our Lady of Dolours.

To-day is the feast of Our Lady of Dolours, who was so patient in the midst of her sorrows; ask her to obtain for you this virtue, or at least the desire of having it.

And now to bring an end to our talks this Lent. Put all that I have said to you into one thought. I have told you that sanctity consists in adapting means to an end; the means are examining and correcting our hearts; so that if you really understand what sanctity is, you will not find it so hard to adapt these means to their end. I have spoken about the advantages and necessity of bodily mortification, as well as internal mortification, and about prayer; but all these things cluster round one thought, that you must examine and correct your hearts, and that you must unite all your efforts to the Sacred Heart of our Lord, to His personal love, and this may be done by rough men in the world, while pious men and women may not understand it. It does not depend on your duties, position, ages; men, women, even children can comprehend this thought. Some children begin their little lives with it, and they are, even when young, true to God; they have true relations with Him, while those who have grown old in the midst of dignities, have not understood it. You must learn when others praise you, if you have been talked about, if your vanity or self-love has been flattered, to look into yourselves and say: "I see what a selfish, disloyal man I was;" and thus you will come and kneel before God, and be in your true relation to Him, that of a penitent. If you fully understand this thought, you will be astonished at what you have acquired this Lent. It is not those who have grown old amid rosaries, confraternities, and all

the paraphernalia of religion that always understand it; but it is sometimes those who have not much appearance of piety. What is religion, with all its appurtenances? It is a means of fixing for ourselves true relations with God, and by it the common conventional actions of the nineteenth century may be made into golden acts. Try to find out what God thinks of your actions, not what men think, and by this means those engaged in ordinary duties may be more pleasing to God than others kneeling before the altar, and you may, in the little ordinary acts of life, find occasion for many acts of self-abnegation and for true charity. But all this is too stern, too hard. I will boldly say, if you are not united to our Lord; if you do not trust in Him, how can you become saints? But by this your least actions will be sanctified. Do not say: "If I were shut up in a cloister I could serve God better." The field in which you each are is the best for you; but when you traverse this field it must be with a knowledge of your own hearts and a wish to correct them; otherwise you may be inflated with pride for a long time, then the keen finger of God will touch the ball and it will collapse. Let this be the last thought: "I, who every day know more of my own meanness and vileness, still trust in Thee, O my God; and the more I see how vile I am, the more I will trust in Thee." If you do this, though you fall a thousand times, it will be but to rise again a thousand times, and your very falls will give you glory. If you are afraid of Him, how can you expect to become holy? But if you trust in Him you will have nothing to fear. There are many ways by which you may honour Him, but the supreme way is by trusting Him, and by trusting Him you will be at last heart to heart with Him, without a veil between you, your heart one with His for eternity.

Palm Sunday.

It would be indeed sad, dear brethren in Jesus Christ, if you did not see and understand the hidden meaning of the Church in the ceremony of to-day—celebrating the event which had been foretold centuries before by the Prophets, and which when the time was fulfilled was accomplished. Our Lord wished to have a triumph on earth, and He chose it in this way. Some poor fishermen brought to Him a young ass and threw over it His own garments, and He then consented to join a triumphal procession, collecting around Him all the simple villagers, who threw the branches of palm-trees, that grew on the roadside, under the feet of the ass on which He rode, and cried out: “*Hosanna to the Son of David.*”

We see by this that our Lord's idea of glory was very different from ours, and the more you see this the nearer you come to the truth. It might seem natural to us that God the Son should not care for worldly honours. He had the angels to honour Him, and the glory which belongs only to the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, but He did choose to have a triumph, and this was what He chose. And how little worldly honour do we see Him receive in this land of ours? The churches in which He deigns to dwell in His Sacrament are generally poor, small, and hardly paid for. True, all over poor old England there are traces of those times when magnificent churches were raised in His honour, and their pinnacles, as it were, lift themselves up to beg for the glory of those days of faith back again; but now we no longer give Him such honour. Thousands sacrifice their lives, even, in the vain hope of making their names last as long as the world, but few, very few devote themselves entirely to

God. He created man, and this man, whom He yet made capable of great things, He formed out of dust. But God, notwithstanding, wishes to receive our homage; shall we not learn a lesson from the procession, the ceremonies of to-day? The lesson is this—that though we may think that God does not care for the miserable offerings of our souls, He does care for them and wish for them with tender love. And the palms on which the Church has poured down her approval, the palms which are fragrant with the blessings of the Church, which commemorate those strewn at the feet of our Lord this day, are the figures of those palms which you will hold aloft in your hands when you reach the eternal gates, and wait till they are lifted up to receive you. Carry them to your homes, into which they are to bring so many blessings; fix to them, nail to them, as it were, the thought that He desires and receives your half-accomplished actions, temptations hesitatingly resisted, duties sluggishly performed, sacrifices niggardly offered; and this after He has received the homage of angels and saints. Still, in spite of our poverty and weakness, He will receive all that we can give Him, and He desires we should give it to Him; and when at the end you see all, you will be surprised that your miserable life has produced such great fruits, but you will know that it is through the merits of Jesus Christ that the treasures of the Sacred Heart Itself have been poured into your poor actions, and your little plants have been nurtured by Him, till they have grown up into great trees, under which you will repose for all eternity.

GOOD FRIDAY.

Before the Adoration of the Cross.

Dear brethren, now that you have, so to speak, seen Jesus Christ dead at your feet, now that the Church invites you to press your lips to the figure of His Sacred Wounds, let the disposition of your hearts correspond with this invitation, let them be worthy of the action you are about to perform.

It is possible that while you prostrate yourselves externally before the image of our Lord stretched on the Cross, in your hearts there should be no thought, no feeling, no sentiment to correspond; or worse, it is possible there should be malice therein; and God is looking down on your souls and sees what is there, and you will all be responsible before Him for the manner in which you perform this action of to-day. The little band of mourners beside the Cross kissed those Sacred Wounds, and in imitation and memory of their love, the Church has instituted this yearly ceremony of kissing the Crucifix. With what reverence and love they pressed their lips to those Sacred Wounds. They brought spices for the burial, myrrh and aloes. Let your myrrh be the memory of your sins. Bring your burden to the foot of the Cross, and if that burden has been lightened, if your sins have been washed away, it is not through your merit, but through that bounty which caused Jesus Christ to die for you. As far as you are concerned your sins are all the same as when they were committed. Bring your sorrow for your worst sins to the foot of the Cross to-day; this will be the most acceptable gift you can bring to God. The aloes are a resolution never more to offend God for the fear or the love of anything.

Do not press your lips to His Sacred Wounds without at least, if you are in a state of mortal sin, resolving to be made clean in the course of the week. We know that our Lord once received a kiss, and meek and gentle as He was, His answer was a reproach: "*Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?*" And why was this? Because in spite of the external love, reverence, and honour of the act, in the heart was mortal sin persevered in. Let not your kiss be like this. If there be one of you who still has the intention to prefer his own will to that of God, then in God's name I forbid him to approach.

Let none of you come without the wholesome memory of your sins, and as you prostrate yourselves before the Image of Jesus Christ crucified, think what He has done for you and what you have ever done for Him; what you have ever asked that He has refused, and what He has ever asked of you that you have not refused; think, as you see the state to which your sins and mine have reduced Him, as you see the torments that He suffered on the Cross to save you from the agonizing memory of your sins through the long centuries of eternity, how you have served Him in times past, how you are serving Him this day, and how you feel you ought to serve Him for the future. Remember that His piercing eye is looking down into your heart, reading in it just as you would read in a book at mid-day; and as you press your lips to those Wounds which open themselves as so many mouths to speak (but all words of forgiveness), open your heart to receive grace from the fountains of His mercy, and be sure that the grace you receive will not be less than you expect.

Say to Him: "Heart of Jesus most loving, Thou lovest, Thou art not loved, would that Thou wert

loved." Make at least one act of ardent gratitude, of sincere sorrow for the past, and of good purpose for the future; make the resolution that Jesus is to be henceforth your friend, as He is your God and your all.

GOOD FRIDAY.

(*Evening.*)

To-day, dear brethren in Jesus Christ, our holy mother the Church excites our devotion in a way quite different to that which she generally does; her sanctuary is desolate, her tabernacle is empty; to-day alone, of all days in the year, she gives no Communion to her children, she offers no Sacrifice; and even if you did not know it, you would see that she sits desolate, because she has lost her Beloved; her Spouse has been reft from her, and to-day all that eloquence can do is used to commemorate this event. It produces different feelings in the hearts of all; to some it brings tears, to others trembling; to some gratitude, and to all love; but though it brings different feelings to all, to all it brings right ones.

Of course, it is the custom to draw some lesson from the Passion and Death of our Lord, to think on to-day. But perhaps it will better accommodate your devotion, as it certainly will my capacities, to give a brief description of the Passion. Let us leave the supper-room with Him. The hymn had been said in thanksgiving for the new Gift which had been given to the world, the Gift which makes you happy, the Gift which makes your sorrows tolerable, but for which you are so often ungrateful to the Divine Giver. But this was all over, and now let us follow Jesus. He is (and, dear brethren, it is a strange phenomenon), He is sad,

He proceeds in sorrow to the Garden of Gethsemane, and, stranger still, He seeks consolation from His creatures. He, Who was the Consoler of the world, from Whom no one had ever gone away without receiving consolation, He, in the hour of His agony, was destitute of consolation, and He sought it from His Apostles; but He did not receive it, and in His agony and desolation He fell prostrate on the ground, with His face in the dust. See Him there in the state to which your sins and mine have reduced Him, crushed as it were to the earth like "*a worm, and no man.*" Again He seeks consolation from His disciples, but until the Angel came He received none. The devil, in that terrible hour, showed Him the whole mass of iniquity which would be committed in every corner of the world, and all the material suffering He had taken on His Body, and also the whole weight of sin which He had resolved to bear for us, and our ingratitude, yours and mine. And He was bowed down to the ground, once, twice, thrice, till the Blood poured from His veins, pressed from them by the agony which the burden of our sins caused Him, till the Angel came and gave consolation. Then when courage returned to His Heart, He was met by the mob, which the Jewish priests had sent to apprehend Him, and at the head of them was he who had sat at table with Him, who had received the morsel of bread from His hands, whom He had loaded with His favours—he was at their head; and here we have the picture of a true hypocrite. He advanced with an affectation of piety to betray Him, and then gave Him a kiss for a sign, and Jesus was seized and dragged in the footsteps of the traitor Judas through the streets, those streets through which He had so often passed doing good, to the tribunal of the High Priest Annas. All those old men of whom

we read in the Passion are types of those grown old in vice. This old man, who was covered with dignities, ought to have been venerable with age, instead of which his heart had become hardened because he had given way to his passions. Jesus was dragged before him and arrogantly questioned, and He answered meekly. Then a Jewish soldier struck Him a blow on His mouth with his gauntleted hand ; He struck Jesus, an outrage uncalled for, and cruel, contrary to all humanity. And when all those around Him had withdrawn for the night, Jesus was left in the ante-chamber, and those who were too dissipated to sleep, stayed with Him to torment and insult Him, to make Him their toy. We know what cruelty, hard hearts, and blunt feelings can work upon the helpless, and we see there this beautiful, meek, and humble man, in the hands of these hard-hearted ruffians. There would be foul jesting more painful to His Sacred Heart than a thousand blows, and if they saw Him shiver, they would spit on Him or give Him a cruel blow. Oh, how good it must be for us to think of how He passed that night, defiled as perhaps no other man has ever been, buried in the depth of shame, and overwhelmed with horror at their impiety. And when the morning dawned grey and quiet, His judges uprose and came round Him. Everything that was noble and beautiful in Him had, as it were, been strung to the utmost. But He did not remain there. The outrages He had suffered there were not sufficient. He was hauled off to Caiphas ; here He stood up to show that He was the Son of God, and to testify for what He had come into the world ; and the High Priest rent his garments and declared Him worthy of death. Thence Jesus was led before Pilate. The poor shallow man, who wished only to be popular, was too weak and cowardly to release Him, even when he himself owned

there was no cause in Him, and as soon as he could find an occasion was only too glad to send Him off to another tribunal, and Jesus was dragged before Herod. Now here is a lesson for us. Herod was an image of those sensual men who love the pleasures of the body. Jesus had spoken to Annas, He had spoken to Caiphas, and to Pilate; but to Herod He said not a word. This shows us His loathing for sins of the flesh, and for a soft, sensual life. After being here subjected to all kinds of mockery, Jesus was brought back before Pilate, and the sight of Him so meek and humble, which we would think would move any heart to compassion, only increased the animosity and rage of the multitude. Their hearts were like yours; but they had become hardened by resisting Divine grace, and now Jesus is condemned to be scourged. Those hands of Him Who made the world were bound, and He Who was purity itself had His garments torn from Him. No one was or could be more refined than He; so what a humiliation must it have been for Him, to be stripped in the sight of those horrible men and fastened to a pillar. Then chains and ropes were used, and *Jesus was scourged*. It is a short word, but what did our Lord not suffer in this scourging.

It continued till the skin was torn away from His Body and the flesh itself was rent, and the bone was left bare; but God was with Him and sustained Him, or else how could He have lived, while the great strips of flesh were torn from Him. After all this He was unbound, and now, the Jews having had their night, the Romans too must have their fun and make sport of Him Who had created them. They took Him up from the ground where He lay weltering in His Blood, they put Him on a bench with a reed in His hand and a purple rag on His shoulders. Then the devil, who

was inciting them to worse things if possible, invented a new torture. They platted the stems of the thorny acacia into a crown, which they pressed on His Sacred Head, the thorns running in deep on all sides, and each seizes the reed which is a mock sceptre, and strikes with it a blow on His thorn-crowned Head, so that the thorns are driven yet deeper into it, till they pierce as it were the very bone, and this continued all day.

Pilate then made an appeal for justice to the people; they would not listen to him, but appealed to the predominant passion of the one who stands between them and the object of their rage: "*If thou release this Man thou art not Cæsar's friend.*" Pilate feared to lose the protection of his patron; on whom depended his office, his position, and, as he considered, his all, and therefore he gave Jesus over into their hands. Jesus is given over into your hands in the Holy Communion, do not you sometimes abuse this power, as the Jews did?—Pilate gave Jesus into their hands to be crucified, and then, as all cowards will do, when their cowardice has forced them to sin, he tried to prove himself innocent of the Blood of Jesus, he washed his hands as though he could ever wash away the guilt with which they are stained.

And the Jews cried out those awful words: "*His blood be upon us and upon our children.*" This is an example of those persons so infatuated, so intent upon the object of their passions, that they care not for the consequences, even when they are eternal, and the Jews, when they knew that such would be the consequences of their sin, even accepted the consequences. Then the Cross was laid on the shoulders of Jesus and He carried it till He tottered, when they gave it to another to carry, that *He* might live to endure the

cruel torments they have prepared for Him. Can we follow Him up that hill? There are scarcely any in all that crowd who compassionate with Him. But yes, there is one little group of holy women who weep. Jesus speaks to them, let us weigh His words: "*Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. . . . For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?*" At last Jesus arrives at the top of the hill of Calvary, where the Cross has been prepared for Him. He is cast down on it. Oh, how can we bear the sight! One of these ruffians kneels on the breast of Jesus, takes His hand and pulls it to the hole which had been prepared for it in the wood of the Cross, and puts the point of the rough nail to the palm of His hand—the hammer is raised, and down it comes with all the force a strong man's arm can give, and drives the nail through the flesh and veins, sinew and bone right into the wood of the Cross. Jesus writhes with pain, but He is kept still by the weight of the man kneeling on Him, the blow is repeated again and again till His Body is convulsed with agony. Then they proceed to the other arm, and we read how they fastened ropes to it in order to stretch His shrunken Body that the hand might reach the hole that had been prepared for it, and when this was done, His Body stood out stiff as a bar of iron; but then His feet had to be pulled down, that they too might be nailed to the Cross, and this was perhaps still more painful. And next the Cross had to be lifted up that it might be fixed upright in "*the cleft of the rock,*" and His every nerve was strained with the jolt as it was jerked into the hole. There He was suspended between Heaven and earth, rejected by earth, and, seemingly so, no less by Heaven. Let us see how Jesus passed the remaining hours of His life,

for He did not die yet, He hung on the Cross for three hours; such was His love that He would die of nothing but a broken Heart to prove to men, to convince them, that He loved them "even unto death," and as He hung there on the Cross, and His bloodshot eyes wandered round over that sea of faces, there were hardly any eyes fixed on Him with a look of compassion; for the most part they were mocking Him; but one looked on Him from the foot of the Cross, with eyes full of deepest compassion and sympathy—Mary's eyes expressed unutterable anguish, and perhaps the gaze of her eyes was harder for Him to bear than that of all the others around Him; then after He had recommended her to St. John, promised Paradise to the Good Thief and owned His thirst, and having given one long cry, *Jesus died*.—All the life was gone from His Body, and when Blood and water came from His Sacred Heart pierced by the soldier's spear, there was no more life in Him, it was only to show us that His Heart loved us more than any one else could ever love us. If we had read this in a sensational page of profane history, our hearts would have been moved with sympathy, but it would be nothing to us. But with Jesus it is different. He has something to do with us, He is our Father, our Brother, our Friend, our Lover, and it was for us He died. He thought of us to the last moment of His life. If your heart can be insensible to this love, then indeed, it is not human, it cannot be. Ask Him to-day by His sufferings, by His Passion and Death, to grant you that henceforth it may give you the greatest pain to offend Him, and that you may always be solicitous for His glory. Ask it of Mary, who had the privilege of suffering, after Him, more than all creatures. And now, my dear children, I will leave you to yourselves. Resolve that

you will suffer willingly all the sorrows He sends you in this world, that you may come at last to partake of His glory in Heaven; for every suffering is little and even good, if it brings you at last to His arms, to rest for ever in His Sacred Heart.

Easter Sunday.

“*Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, Who having joy set before Him, endured the Cross . . . and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God.*” Dear brethren in Jesus Christ, is it not true that those who have been sympathizing most with the sorrows of our Lord during the past week, are those who now feel the most joy? Those who always avoid, spurn, and hide away the Cross, never feel any real joy, no great joy comes to them. The world has learnt its lesson so well, that it has managed to arrange for itself a circle of pleasure, where all pain is cut off; it goes from London to Paris, or from London to Brighton, and from Brighton to somewhere else, just as the fashion goes, but for those who live like this there is no real joy; they go from the boredom of one place to the boredom of another, from one circle of pleasure to another, and each is as dull as the last, or rather each becomes duller than the preceding ones. If there are any among you (and I am sure there are not many) who have gone through the ceremonies of last week merely as a matter of curiosity, and have not sympathized with the sufferings of our Lord, for those there is no joy to-day; but those who have been earnest and sincere in sympathizing with our Lord’s sorrows, they shall partake of His joy now that He is risen in glory and “*dieth now no more* ;” His glory is theirs.

You know it is His great desire to put you in possession of the glory He now enjoys, but still you are not yet sure of it, you must labour here first. Let us go back a little to last Sunday with its palms and its ceremonies. We saw Him enter the arena amid the people who sang, "*Hosanna to the Son of David,*" and like David, this Son went out against a Goliath, and what a Goliath! and with what glory did He not conquer! Truly we may say to-day: "*The lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David hath prevailed.*"

Looking into the Heart of Jesus Christ, as you can into the heart of no hero in history, you see that He loves you, that He died to save you, and surely you will say none but God could conceive such heroism.

Look at Mary, our dear Mother, she was the spectator of the agony of Him Whom she loved with all her heart's strength, she saw Jesus die, and saw His Body laid in the sepulchre, then was led home to her solitude and agony. Perfect was the act of resignation she made, though her heart was breaking. But what must have been the meeting on that Easter morning, for if every sorrow of Jesus was echoed in the heart of His Mother, how much deeper was her joy when He appeared to her? Mary knew that every lash with which Jesus had been struck, every blow He had received, every injurious word, every ignominy, would be as a fresh mark of glory on His adorable Body, and be written on Him for ever, to make Him more glorious, more beautiful, and this was to be eternal. This was Mary's joy to-day, let it be yours too. Let the Alleluia which is in your hearts be real, and let it not consist merely in a hymn of joy. Mary, after this meeting, after she had seen in vision what we only see in faith, had to return to the same life as

before, she had to endure the same little trials and inconveniences as before; those petty trials which make saints, she had to attend to her household duties, to console those who were troubled or afflicted among the faithful, she had her prayers to say, and to live in union with God. She gained fresh strength from that vision, for her daily occupations during the twelve years that passed between that day and her death. She is your model.

You too must return to the dull world after this Holy Week, not to a life of foolish pleasure, but to one of pleasure and pain alike, instinct with duty and faith.

Strive to suffer pain for our Lord if you would be partakers of His glory. Do not say that your lot is hard, that you have so much to bear; this word *hard* is heard on all sides, but think of what our Lady would have said; would she not have bid you turn away from the idea of repining; would she not say that no lot can be hard which had been arranged for you by those hands which she had seen nailed to the Cross for you? Take her for your model, suffer crosses bravely, nobly, and your Angel Guardian, who has seen the glorious triumph of Jesus Christ, will be impatient to witness yours also. Never complain that your lot is hard, bear crosses without repining, and the life of our Lord will teach you another lesson, a lesson of joy.

Sunday after the Ascension.

Let us turn our thoughts, dear brethren, to the mystery which the Church celebrates during these ten days, the Ascension of our Lord. This feast is full of lessons of joy.

Let us contemplate the scene on Mount Olivet. There when all the Apostles were gathered round Him, He gave them the last charge, making them His witnesses to the world. Then by His Divine power He lifted His blessed feet from the earth on which they had so long walked, and raised Himself through the air into the heavens, then the cloud hid Him from the sight of His Apostles. Our Lord is still with us, as He was all the time of His sufferings and Death, though He has ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of His Father in glory. What must have been His reception into Heaven? We cannot realize it, but we may think of it with humble admiration and astonishment. What the Apostles saw was but the preface, the prelude of that gorgeous reception He met with when He was hidden from their sight. What Alleluias must the Angels have sung; how must they have honoured Him! And when we think that with His lips He called us His brethren as He ascended into Heaven, shall not we who are of this nature rejoice, we who are called to be participators of the jubilee which began on this day when He rose into Heaven with so much joy?

Let us take it practically and see what is the lesson we are to learn from this mystery; for when we think of the Ascension of our Lord, our thoughts must revert to His Incarnation, which was the beginning of this mystery; and we see that His transcendent glory was the fruit of the labours He had undergone, the reproaches He had accepted, the humiliations He had borne with so much patience. In the Incarnation, as the Apostle says, "*He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant.*" If we would be partakers of His glory we must partake of His humiliations and sorrows, we must accept willingly the crosses which He sends us; we must accept them with our will; we cannot change the course

of events; our destiny is traced for us by God, and we cannot change the distribution He has made of His gifts. To one He has given wealth, to another poverty. To one He has given great talents, another is less gifted; but all these things do not change the will; the will is what He requires, do not refuse Him. If you wish to reach the end you must willingly accept crosses. Does it seem strange to you to insist on this in speaking of the Ascension of our Lord? Dear brethren in Jesus Christ, it is no use your standing gazing up to heaven with the Apostles, if you do not say: "This is the end to which I am invited; but in order to attain to it, I must accept the means." And as the Ascension of our Lord reminds us that Heaven is the end of all things, and that when we have passed our time of suffering and probation on earth, we shall, like our Blessed Lord, find our rest in Heaven, we become really strong to bear patiently whatsoever we have to endure, as we shall feel then that nothing on earth is worth many smiles or many tears, for Heaven is the end of all.

Think of the end, and accept humiliations as the means to reach it; accept the Cross, take it to your heart, clasp it in your arms. And though we must think humbly of ourselves, yet we must have high thoughts of our dignity as sons of God. Perhaps I have told you of one of the old Novice Masters who always ended his instructions to the novices by saying: "Do not degenerate from the high thoughts of the sons of God." This does for you no less than if you were novices, so say to-day, although your life may sometimes seem so poor and low and earthly: "I was created for Heaven, Heaven is waiting for me;" and if you constantly think of this, you will find that those crosses which seemed to you so heavy before will appear light, and those humiliations which seemed so hard to

bear, but which after all come from the loving hands of a Father, will be easy to bear, and each day your life will be a step towards death, which is but a breaking up of the chains, and which is to be followed by your ascension to join our Lord in Heaven.

The Month of Mary.

To-day, the first of our Lady's month, I intend to say a few words to you about her.

When angels appeared to men, they always did so with a consciousness of their superiority; but to our Lady they came with respect, they humbled themselves before her. Let us take some examples. When the Angel appeared to Daniel, he was filled with terror, and even those who did not see the Angel were terrified at the sound of his voice. Daniel was a good man; he had no more cause for self-reproach than most men, yet he tells us, he could not speak from fear; all those around him fled, and he was left alone with the Angel, and he says: "*The appearance of my countenance was changed in me, and I fainted away. . . . I lay in a consternation upon my face.*" You are all familiar with the beautiful story of Tobias. The Angel appeared in a most delightful form to Tobias, and praised him for his charity to the persecuted Jews, yet when he made himself known to him and his son, as the Archangel Raphael, down they both fell on their faces with terror, until after awhile he raised them up. Consider the beautiful vision when the Angel Gabriel appeared to Zachary, and foretold the birth of St. John the Baptist: "*And Zachary seeing him was troubled, and fear fell upon him:*" and when he would not believe, "*the Angel answering said to him, I am Gabriel, who stand before God.*"

. . . *And behold thou shalt be dumb, . . . because thou hast not believed my words.*"

The angels have always appeared to men with a due and lawful consciousness that they were beings of a higher order. To all others they appeared as superiors—but it was different when one came to Mary: before this humble, simple child, this girl of fifteen or sixteen, who was kneeling in prayer in the virginal privacy of her oratory, the Angel bowed down, and owned her as his Lady, his Superior, and addressed her by the words, *Ave gratia plena*, highly favoured, full of grace; showing the grandeur of the dignity to which she was raised. What effect had these words on her? far from making her glory in herself, when she heard that her cousin St. Elizabeth was in need of her, she set off immediately on her Visitation; and the Scripture takes care to tell us that "*Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost*," and the infant leaped in her womb, a greeting and a welcome to the Mother of God. And then Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, said the words: "*Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?*" Thus do the saints of God speak of Mary when the Holy Ghost is in them. Then our Lady answered: "*For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.*" Although we may not require it, to make us honour our Lady, we should do well to think of what the Scripture says to make us love her. But now, in what dispositions should you begin this month of May? Now, I am going to tell you a truth which you have often heard from me before: if you would bring away any real, good, solid treasures, you must put aside all idea of your own merits and deserts; do not, like some people, say, "Well now, God must think I have suffered enough," for probably God is not thinking about that at all, He is only wishing that you should bear the

sufferings He sends you with patience and get fruit from them. Bring these sentiments every day to the feet of our Lady; say in the words of the *Imitation*: "I am nothing, I can do nothing, I have nothing of myself that is good." So much for yourselves, now for your needs; say: "I know I need God's grace and Mary's prayers (for that is the real way to obtain everything), I need grace to do my actions well, grace not to be impatient when reproved, to be kind when provoked or inclined to be unjust;" for remember you can do nothing without God's strong hand and Mary's helping prayers. Bring this sense of your own nothingness to the altar; say: "I am a poor, worthless creature in whom there is no good." If these are your feelings, then I ask for a great blessing for you, which you are sure to obtain. But if you wish to make progress during the month of May, we must begin it, as we began Lent, by praying for each other, for God has promised that when many cry to Him together, He will hear them. Let heart help heart, and need help need, let us lift up our voices together, that our hearts may be knitted into one, and this union will give glory to God and honour to Mary, and bring down graces on us all. Our Blessed Lady will grant us graces in proportion to our desires, and our hope and confidence in her. Ask then a fresh grace each day of her month, a grace to increase our love and filial devotion to her, and thereby also to her Divine Son.

Let us daily make for our Blessed Mother two nosegays, one of contrition for our sins, the other of our good purposes and resolutions. There is no more solid foundation for hope than contrition and the memory of our sins, not in bitterness, for where there is bitterness there is pride, but with true sorrow and humility, recognizing how of ourselves we can do no

good and that whatever small good there may be in us, it is all the work of God's grace and mercy.

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Towards the end of May.

The blessed days of the month of May are fast slipping by. And I want you before its close, to see if you have gathered in the harvest God intended you to glean, when He gave you this precious month.

And what is this harvest to consist of? You know that in the autumn, farmers gather in their crops, and this corn is to feed the world for the whole of the coming year. What then is the special fruit of Mary's month to be?—An increase of love and confidence in her. The Holy Fathers, the Saints of God, and the voice of the Church itself proclaim, that no one who loves our Lady during his life will ever lose his soul. The worst of sinners, if he but seek her aid with sincerity, will never be sent away unheard, Mary's power and Mary's prayers have saved many a soul in bygone days. Mary's power and Mary's prayers can and will save each soul, now struggling with temptation, if it only cast itself into her arms and trust in her for the gaining of its salvation. Let us often use the words of St. Bernard, that beautiful prayer which he has taught us, the *Memorare*.

Feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross.

(An instruction given in French to the pupils of the Convent
of the Holy Cross, Bournemouth.)

I shall speak to you to-day of two subjects which meet together—it is the feast of the Holy Cross, and also the month of Mary. These subjects recall to my

mind the old well-known words : " In the Cross is light, in the Cross is rest, in the Cross is glory, and all by Mary." Do you understand this ? " In the Cross is light." Some of you have to suffer, but for the greater number the Cross is submission. You must begin by submitting your understanding, for without that there is no submission of heart. You must submit the ideas of your little heads to those who are above you ; if you are too much attached to your own will to do this, it is folly indeed. If you formed a great community of learned men and theologians, there might be some difficulty, although there is really no difference between the most learned man and the smallest child among you in the eyes of the Eternal Wisdom of God ; everyone of you is able to understand that.

" In the Cross is rest." If you submit you will find rest, otherwise your peace will be troubled, as the *Imitation* says : " If thou seek thyself, thou wilt indeed find thyself but to thy own ruin." Submission is the means of finding rest in this world.

" In the Cross is glory." If you desire to have an eternity of happiness, by the Cross you will obtain it.

" And all by Mary." In this as in all other things she is our model. When the Angel told her she was to be the Mother of God, she would not trust to her own lights, she believed the word of the Angel, and when holy Elizabeth, that aged woman full of the Holy Spirit, said to her : "*Blessed art thou that hast believed,*" Mary replied in these words of the *Magnificat* : "*Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid.*"

She says that it is on account of her submission.

I speak now to your hearts, knowing the special needs of each of you, and though at your age you will not be able thoroughly to understand it, I have at heart the sanctification of each one among you. And you

must conquer this fault of self-will which, since the fall of our first parents, has been so difficult for us to overcome, and you all have need of this lesson. If you try, you will obtain this grace during the month of Mary. Ask of Mary during the month to give you the virtue of submission. Do not say, "I am going to make my month of Mary, because everyone else makes it," but make it well and employ it in submitting your mind and heart. Pray to Mary and you will obtain this virtue, which you do not now possess, submission of mind and heart.

The Month of the Sacred Heart.

The devotion, dear brethren in Jesus Christ, which begins on the first day of the month of June, is one which some of you perhaps do not sufficiently understand.

Some may ask why do we pay special honour to the *Heart* of our Divine Lord? I answer, it is because the Heart of Jesus Christ is the symbol of His love for us. The heart is considered as identical with love, therefore our Lord gives us in this devotion to His Sacred Heart, the type of the great love He bears to us.

Ever since the sad day when Adam hid himself from the face of the Lord God, and gave as his reason "*I was afraid*," a fear and terror of their Creator has troubled the hearts of men. When our Lord became Incarnate, He desired that this excessive fear should cease; and when two centuries ago He appeared to a holy nun, holding His Heart in His hands, He said, "Behold this Heart, which has so loved men." Our Lord wants us to love and trust Him.

This doctrine is not new. Ever since St. John made that Sacred Heart the pillow for his head, it has been

known, but not to all the world. It burst from the great heart of St. Paul, we find it constantly in the writings of St. Austin, in St. Gertrude, St. Bernard, and many other saints; but our Lord did not mean it to be a devotion only for canonized saints, but for all the Church, and now it has spread through all the Catholic Church. Our Lord wishes to prove to us by it that there is no need for us to be afraid of Him, that even when we have sinned, He is far more anxious to take us in His arms and draw us to His bosom than we are to be drawn. Whatever may have been your sins you have only to return to Him, to cast yourself at His feet, and ask His pardon and He will receive you, forgive and take you back to His Sacred Heart. If this is the case, how can any one fail to understand this devotion?

When you comprehend it, it is well with you. But you must learn another lesson—that though our Lord has dwelt for so many centuries in the Tabernacle for love of us, you have made but a poor return. Take His interests more to heart, make them more your own.

It is always the case with those you love, and with those by whom you are cherished and protected, or whom you cherish and protect, that your interests become so bound up with theirs, that their joys are your joys, their sorrows are your sorrows.

Well, why cannot it be so with our Lord? What parent, what child, has ever loved you, or could ever love you, as He has loved you? And not only loved you, for He has shown that sufficiently by creating you, but Who is so willing to forgive you as He?

You may say, "But I cannot see God, I cannot feel like this towards Him." You can, if you try; think of Him as He is, as a Lover, a Father, a Friend, Who knows not how to delay His forgiveness. Well then is it right, is it just, is it human that you should

withhold your confidence? Why should you stand outside the door like a child in disgrace, when you have only to enter with courage and confidence, and you will be restored to your place in the Sacred Heart? Well, try to be like this with our Lord; if He is honoured, rejoice with Him, but if He is dishonoured or loses one of those souls for which He shed His Blood, with such a yearning desire to save them, let Him read your sorrow in your hearts. I dare say many of you think, "Oh! this is very well for high and holy persons; those who go to Communion every day may very likely understand something of it, but I cannot, I am too weak." You are wrong; He is content with your love, however poor it may be, and with whatever sins your past life may be stained, even if you are still steeped in mortal sin, He is willing to forgive you. But probably, for most of you, it is not mortal sin that makes you fear, but your small infidelities.

Put aside this fear, this scrupulosity. Make your home in the Heart of God. There are special graces for those who do so; those who have a devotion to the Sacred Heart are, and it stands to reason that it should be so, His own, and He reserves for them His special treasures. Do not think it requires much church-going, much time given to prayer; priests find this sympathy of interest with our Lord in the hearts of those whose hands are busy, those who gain their bread by the sweat of their brow. Let those of you who can, offer up Masses during this month in honour of the Sacred Heart. Let your Communions be frequent and regular; let the thought for this month be: "I will strive every day to be, if I can, more worthy of the mercy and kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ; more fervent in devotion to His loving, adorable, and most Sacred Heart."

