

THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI  
TO  
THE NINTH SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST

THE HOLY EUCHARIST — THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS —  
THE MOST HOLY TRINITY — THE DIVINE  
PERFECTIONS — THE THEOLOGICAL  
VIRTUES.



200

*FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI*

THURSDAY AFTER THE FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

PRESENCE OF GOD - "The eternal tide flows hid in living bread.  
That with its heavenly life too be fed..." (*J.C. Poems*).

## MEDITATION

I. We have gone, step by step, in the course of the liturgical year, from the consideration of the mysteries of the life of Jesus to the contemplation of the Blessed Trinity, whose feast we celebrated last Sunday. Jesus, our Mediator, our Way, has taken us by the hand and led us to the Trinity; and today it seems as though the three Persons Themselves wish to take us back to Jesus, considered in His Eucharist. "No man cometh to the Father but by Me" (*Jn* 14,6), Jesus said, and He added, "No man can come to Me except the Father...draw him" (*ibid.* 6,44). This is the journey of the Christian soul : from Jesus to the Father, to the Trinity; from the Trinity, from the Father, to Jesus. Jesus brings us to the Father, the Father draws us to Jesus. A Christian cannot do without Christ; He is, in the strictest sense of the word, our *Pontiff*, the great Bridge-builder who has *spanned the abyss* between God and us. At the end of the liturgical cycle in which we commemorate the mysteries of the Savior, the Church, who like a good Mother knows that our spiritual life cannot subsist without Jesus, leads us to Him, really and truly present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar. The solemnity of the *Corpus Domini* is not just the simple memorial of an historical event which took place almost two thousand years ago at the Last Supper; rather, it recalls us to the ever-present reality of Jesus always living in our midst. We can say, in truth, that He has not "left us orphans," but has willed to *remain permanently* with us, in the integrity of His Person in the fullness of His humanity and His divinity. "There is no other nation so great," the Divine Office enthusiastically sings, "as to have its gods so near as our God is present to us" (*RB*). In the Eucharist, Jesus is really Emmanuel, God with us.

2. The Eucharist is not only Jesus actually living among us, but it is Jesus become our Food. This is the chief aspect under which today's liturgy presents the mystery to us; there is no part of the Mass which does not treat of it directly, or which does not, at least, make some allusion to it. The Introit refers to it when it mentions the wheat and honey with which God once fed the Hebrews in the desert, a miraculous food, and yet a very poor representation of the living, life-giving Bread of the Eucharist. The Epistle (*1 Cor 11, 23-29*) speaks of it, recalling the institution of this Sacrament, when Jesus "took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said, 'Take ye, and eat; this is My Body'"; the Gradual chants, "The eyes of all hope in You, O Lord, and You give them meat in due season." The very beautiful Sequence, *Lauda Sion*, celebrates it at length, and the Gospel (*Jn 6,56-59*), echoing the Alleluia, cites the most significant passage in the discourse when Jesus Himself announced the Eucharist. "My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed." The Communion Hymn repeats a sentence of the Epistle, and reminds us that we receive the Body of the Lord worthily. Finally, the Postcommunion tells us that Eucharistic Communion is the pledge of eternal communion, in heaven. But in order to have a better understanding of the immense value of the Eucharist, we must go back to the very words of Jesus, most opportunely recalled in the Gospel of the day, "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me and I in him." Jesus made Himself our food in order to assimilate us to Himself, to make us live His life, to make us live in Him, as He Himself lives in His Father. The Eucharist is truly the sacrament of union and at the same time it is the clearest and most convincing proof that God calls us and pleads with us to come to intimate union with Himself.

#### COLLOQUY

"O God, O Creator, O Spirit of life overwhelming Your creatures with ever new graces! You grant to Your chosen ones the gift which is ever renewed : the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ!"

"O Jesus, You instituted this Sacrament, not through any desire to draw some advantage from it for Yourself, but solely moved by a love which has no other measure than to be

without measure. You instituted this Sacrament because Your love exceeds all words. Burning with love for us, You desired to give Yourself to us and took up Your dwelling in the consecrated Host, entirely and forever, until the end of time. And You did this, not only to give us a memorial of Your death which is our salvation, but You did it also, to remain with us entirely, and forever.

" My soul, if you wish to penetrate the depths of this mystery, your gaze must be illumined by love! You need to see and understand! Contemplate the Last Supper : see Jesus who knows that He will soon be separated from the body of His humanity, and yet wishing to be united to us forever; contemplate the love by which He institutes this Sacrament which permits Him to be corporeally and forever united to mankind. O inextinguishable love! O love of Christ! O love of the human race! What a true furnace of love! O Jesus, You already saw the death which awaited You; the sorrows and atrocious tortures of the Passion were already breaking Your Heart, and yet You offered Yourself to Your executioners, and permitted them, by means of this Sacrament, to possess You forever as an eternal gift, O You, whose delights are to be with the children of men!

" O my soul, how can you refrain from plunging yourself ever deeper and deeper into the love of Christ, who did not forget you in life or in death, but who willed to give Himself wholly to you, and to unite you to Himself forever? " (St. Angela of Foligno).

### *THE REAL PRESENCE*

PRESENCE OF GOD - " Hidden God, devoutly I adore Thee, truly present beneath these veils : all my heart subdues itself before Thee, since all before Thee faints and fails " (cf. *Adoro Te Devote*).

#### MEDITATION

I. " *Verbum caro factum est* " (*Jn 1,14*). The Incarnation of the Word, the ineffable mystery of the merciful love of God,

who so loved man that He became "flesh" for his salvation, is, in a way, prolonged and extended through the ages, and will be until the end of time, by the Eucharist, the Sacrament by means of which the Incarnate Word became Himself our "food." God was not content with giving us His only Son once for all, willing Him to take flesh in the womb of a Virgin — flesh like ours, so that He might suffer and die for us on the Cross—but He wished Him to remain with us forever, perpetuating His real presence and His sacrifice in the Eucharist. Aided by the Gospel narrative we can reconstruct and relive in our heart the sweet mysteries of the life of Jesus. Had we nothing but the Gospel, however, we would have only nostalgic memories; Jesus would no longer be with us, but only in heaven at the right hand of the Father, having definitively left the earth on the day of His Ascension. With what regret we would think of the thirty-three years of our Savior's earthly life passed centuries ago! Oh, how different the reality! The Eucharist makes the presence of Jesus with us a permanent one. In the consecrated Host we find the same Jesus whom Mary brought into the world, whom the shepherds found wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger; whom Mary and Joseph nurtured and watched over as He grew before their eyes; the Jesus who called the Apostles to follow Him, who captivated and taught the multitudes, who performed the most startling miracles; who said He was the "light" and "life" of the world, who forgave Magdalen and raised Lazarus from the dead; who for love of us sweat blood, received the kiss of a traitor, was made one enormous wound, and died on the Cross; that same Jesus who rose again and appeared to the Apostles and in whose wounds Thomas put his finger; who ascended into heaven, who now is seated in glory at the right hand of His Father, and who, in union with the Father, sends us the Holy Spirit. O Jesus, You are always with us, "yesterday, and today, and the same forever!" (*Heb 13,8*). Always the same in eternity by the immutability of Your divine Person; always the same in time, by the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

2. Jesus is present in the Eucharist with all His divinity and all His humanity. Although His humanity is present "*per modum substantiae*," that is, in substance and not in corporeal extension, it is whole and entire in the consecrated Host—body and soul, and this latter with its faculties of

intellect and will. Therefore our Eucharistic Lord knows and loves us as God and as Man. He is not a passive object for our adoration but He is *living*; He sees us, listens to us, answers our prayers with His graces. Thus we may have, with the gentle Master of the Gospel, living, concrete relations which, although imperceptible to our senses, are similar to those which His contemporaries had with Him. It is true that in the Eucharist not only His divinity but even His humanity is hidden; however, faith supplies for the senses, it substitutes for what we do not see or touch; "*sola fides sufficit*," says St. Thomas, faith alone is sufficient (*Pange Lingua*). As Jesus, disguised as a traveler, once taught the disciples of Emmaus, and inflamed their hearts, so too, Jesus hidden under the Eucharistic veil illuminates our souls, inflames them with His love and inclines them ever more effectively toward sanctity.

Jesus is there, in the consecrated Host, true God and true Man; as He became incarnate for us, so for us too, has He hidden Himself under the Sacred Species. There He waits for us, longs for us, is always ready to welcome and listen to us. And we need Him so much! God, pure Spirit, is present everywhere, it is true; and in His Unity and Trinity, He even deigns to dwell within our souls, vivified by grace. Nevertheless, we always have need of contact with Jesus, the Word made Flesh, God made Man, our Mediator, our Savior, our Brother, and we find Him present in the Eucharist. Here on earth we are never closer to Him than when we are in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

#### COLLOQUY

"O Lord, wealth of the poor, how admirably You can sustain souls, revealing Your great riches to them gradually and not permitting them to see them all at once. When I see Your great Majesty hidden in so small a thing as the Host, I cannot but marvel at Your great wisdom.

"O my God, if You did not conceal Your grandeur, who would dare to come to You so often, to unite with Your ineffable Majesty a soul so stained and miserable? Be forever blessed, O Lord! May the angels and all creatures praise You for having deigned to adapt Your mysteries to our weakness, so that we might enjoy Your treasures without

being frightened by Your infinite power. Otherwise, poor, weak creatures like ourselves would never dare to approach You.

"How would I, a poor sinner, who have so often offended You, dare to approach You, O Lord, if I beheld You in all Your Majesty? Under the appearances of bread, however, it is easy to approach You, for if a king disguises himself, it seems as if we do not have to talk to him with so much circumspection and ceremony. If You were not hidden, O Lord, who would dare to approach You with such coldness, so unworthily, and with so many imperfections?

"Besides, I cannot doubt at all about Your real presence in the Eucharist. You have given me such a lively faith that, when I hear others say they wish they had been living when You were on earth, I laugh to myself, for I know that I possess You as truly in the Blessed Sacrament as people did then, and I wonder what more anyone could possibly want" (T.J. *Life*, 38 — cf. *Way*, 34).

### *THE MYSTERY OF FAITH*

PRESENCE OF GOD - O Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, and I adore You. Increase my faith.

#### MEDITATION

i. In the Canon of the Mass, the Eucharist is called "*Mysterium fidei*," *the Mystery of faith*; indeed, only faith can make us see God present under the appearances of bread. Here, as St. Thomas says, the senses do not help at all—sight, touch, and taste are deceived, finding in the consecrated Host only a little bread. But what matters? We have the word of the Son of God; the word of Christ, who declared : "This is My Body... This is My Blood," and we firmly believe in His word. "*Credo quidquid dixit Dei Filius, nihil*

*hoc verbo Veritatis verius.*" I believe everything the Son of God has said; nothing can be truer than this word of Truth (*Adoro Te Devote*). We firmly believe in the Eucharist, we have no doubts about it; unfortunately, however, we must admit that our faith is often weak and dull. Although we may not live far from a church, although we may perhaps dwell under the same roof with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, it is easy to become rather indifferent, or even cold, in the presence of this great reality. Alas, our coarse nature gradually grows accustomed to even the most sublime and beautiful realities, so that they no longer impress us and have no power to move us, especially when they are near at hand. Thus it happens that while we believe in the ineffable presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, we pay little or no attention to the greatness of this reality, and we fail to have the lively, concrete appreciation of it which the saints had. Let us then repeat, very humbly and confidently, the Apostles' beautiful prayer : "*Domine, adauge nobis fidem,*" Lord, increase our faith! (*Lk* 17,5).

2. When Jesus announced the institution of the Eucharist, many of His hearers were scandalized, and some of His disciples, who had been following Him up to that time "went back and walked no more with Him" (*Jn* 6,67). But Peter, in the name of the Apostles, gave this beautiful testimony of faith : "Lord... Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (*ibid.* 6,69.70). Belief in the Eucharist, therefore, seems to be the touchstone of the true disciples of Jesus, and the more intense this belief, the more it reveals a profound and intimate friendship with Christ. Anyone who like Peter firmly believes in Christ, also believes and accepts all His words, all the mysteries of His life, from the Incarnation to the Eucharist. We know that faith is first of all a gift of God. In the discourse in which He promised the Eucharist—which is, more than any other mystery, a mystery of faith because, more than any other mystery, it transcends every natural law—Jesus repeatedly affirmed the necessity and gratuity of faith, declaring to the incredulous Jews that no one could come to Him, or believe in Him, "except the Father... draw him" (*ibid.* 6,44). He added : "And they shall all be taught of God" (*ibid.* 45). To have a living faith in the Eucharist, as in every

other mystery, we must have that "attraction," and that "interior instruction" which can come from God alone. Nevertheless, we can and should dispose ourselves, both by asking for this grace in humble, trusting prayer, and by an active practice of faith. In fact, since God infused this theological virtue into us at Baptism, and since faith is a *voluntary* adherence of the intellect to revealed truth, we can make acts of faith whenever we wish : it depends on us to will to believe and to put into this act all the strength of our will. In the measure that our faith increases, it will enable us to penetrate the depths of the Eucharistic mystery, to have vital contact with Jesus in the Host, and to enjoy His presence. The more intense our faith, the more it will appear in our attitude toward the Blessed Sacrament. Then when Jesus looks upon us from the tabernacle, He will never be able to make the sad reproach He several times made to the Apostles : "Ye of little faith!" (*Mt 8,26*), one which so many Christians in our day deserve, because they have so little respect for His divine presence. May our conduct in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament always be a living testimony of our faith.

#### COLLOQUY

"Praise and thanks to you, O blessed faith! You tell me with certitude that the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, the heavenly Manna, is no longer bread, but my Lord Jesus Christ who is wholly present there for love of me.

"One day, O Jesus, full of love and of goodness, You sat beside the well to await the Samaritan woman, that You might convert and save her. Now, You dwell on our altars, hidden in the consecrated Host, where You wait and sweetly invite souls, to win them to Your love. From the tabernacle you seem to say to us all : 'O men, why do you not come to Me, who love you so much? I am not come to judge you! I have hidden myself in this Sacrament of love only to do good and to console all who have recourse to Me'; I understand, O Lord; love has made You our prisoner; the passionate love You have for us has so bound You that it does not permit You to leave us.

"O Lord, You find Your delight in being with us, but do we find ours in being with You? Especially do we,

who have the privilege of dwelling so near Your altar, perhaps even in Your very own house, find our delight in being with You? Oh! how much coldness, indifference, and even insults You have to endure in this Sacrament, while You remain there to help us by Your presence!

"O God, present in the Eucharist, O Bread of Angels, O heavenly Food, I love You; but You are not, nor am I, satisfied with my love. I love You, but I love You too little! Banish from my heart, O Jesus, all earthly affections and give place, or better, give the whole place to Your divine love. To fill me with Yourself, and to unite Yourself entirely to me, You come down from heaven upon the altar every day; justly then, should I think of nothing else but of loving, adoring, and pleasing You. I love You with my whole soul, with all my strength. If You want to make a return for my love, increase it and make it always more ardent!" (St. Alphonsus).

## 203

*THE INVITATION TO THE BANQUET*

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O Jesus, grant that I may always answer Your invitation and participate worthily in Your banquet.

## MEDITATION

1. Today's Gospel (*Lk* 14,16-24) fits in perfectly with the feast of *Corpus Christi*. "A certain man made a great supper, and invited many." The man who makes the supper is God; the great supper is His kingdom where souls will find full abundance of spiritual blessings while on earth, and eternal happiness in the next life. This is the real meaning of the parable, but we can also interpret it more specifically, seeing in the supper and in the man who prepares it a figure of the Eucharistic banquet and of Jesus, inviting men to partake of His Flesh and Blood. "The table of the Lord is set for us," sings the Church, "Wisdom [the Incarnate

Word] has prepared the wine and laid the table" (*RB*). Jesus Himself, when announcing the Eucharist, addressed His invitation to all : "I am the Bread of life! He that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst.... Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it, he may not die" (*Jn* 6,35-49,50). Jesus does not limit Himself, like other men, to preparing the table for a supper, inviting many, and serving delicious food; His is an unheard-of procedure, which no man, however rich and powerful he might be, could ever imitate. Jesus offers Himself as Food. St. John Chrysostom said to those who wanted to see Christ in the Eucharist with their bodily eyes, "Behold, you do see Him; you touch Him, you eat Him. You would like to see His garments; He not only permits you to see Him, but also to eat Him, to touch Him, and to receive Him into your heart.... He whom the angels look upon with fear, and dare not gaze upon steadfastly because of His dazzling splendor, becomes our Food; we are united to Him, and are made one body and one flesh with Christ" (*RB*).

2. Jesus could not offer men a more precious banquet than the Eucharist. Yet, how do men answer His invitation? Many, like the unbelieving Jews, shrug their shoulders and turn away, with a skeptical smile on their lips : "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (*Jn* 6,53). However, it is not want of faith alone that keeps us from the Eucharist. Very often this is accompanied by, or sometimes derived from, the moral disorders which are mentioned in today's Gospel : "I have bought a farm and I must needs go out and see it; I pray thee, hold me excused," replies one. Another says : "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them; I pray thee, hold me excused." Excessive preoccupation with earthly goods and attachment to them, total absorption in business affairs cause many people to refuse Jesus' invitation. There is still another reason : "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come," replies a third, representing those, who, being immersed in the pleasures of the senses, have lost their taste for the things of the spirit, and go their way, not even asking to be excused.

We cannot help shuddering at the terrible blindness of a man who prefers the things of earth and the vile pleasures of

the senses, which vanish as quickly as mist before the sun, to Christ's Gift, the Bread of Angels and the pledge of eternal life. And yet, how easily can a shadow of this blindness cover the eyes and hearts even of those whom Christ has invited to follow Him, and whom He has called by the sweet name of friend. They do not refuse His invitation, but they often accept it coldly, almost through force of habit. Is it not true that we pay very little attention to preparing ourselves each day as worthily as we can for the Eucharistic banquet, while we allow ourselves to be absorbed in so many other things : our work, family and friends? Perhaps Jesus comes to us every morning, but does He always get a warm, delicate, attentive, loving welcome? Alas, too often He finds the hearts of His friends filled with a thousand thoughts, trifles, and worldly affections, while there is so little room for Him, the divine Guest! Yet everything should be reserved for Jesus. The thought of our daily meeting with Jesus in the Eucharist should dominate every other thought!

#### COLLOQUY

“ O Sacrament of mercy! O seal of unity! O bond of charity! He who wishes to live, finds the home and the dwelling where he can live. O Lord, I approach Your table with faith, there to become incorporated in You in order to be vivified by You.

“ Grant, O Lord, that I may be inebriated with the riches of Your house, and let me drink from the torrent of Your delights. Since You are the fountain of life, there with You, and not elsewhere, is the source of my life. I will drink of it in order to live; I will not rely upon myself and be lost; I will not be satisfied with what I have and die of thirst; I will approach the source of the spring where the water never fails.

“ I will do away with vain excuses and draw near to the banquet which will enrich me interiorly. Let me not become haughty through pride, and do not permit illicit curiosity to draw me away from You! May sensual pleasure never prevent me from enjoying spiritual joy!

“ Permit me to approach You and be refreshed. Allow me to come, a beggar, weak, crippled, and blind, for the wealthy and strong scorn Your banquet; they consider

themselves on the right path and believe their sight is sure. They are presumptuous, and so much the more incurable the prouder they are. Although a beggar, I come to You because You invite me; You, who being rich became poor for me, so that Your poverty would make me rich. Weak as I am, I shall draw near, for it is not the healthy who need the physician, but the sick. I shall approach you like a cripple and say : ‘ Set my feet in Your paths.’ I shall come like a blind person and say : ‘ Give sight to my eyes, that I may never sleep the sleep of death ’ ” (St. Augustine).

## 204

*MYSTERY OF HOPE*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - Let me hunger for You, O Bread of Angels, pledge of future glory.

**MEDITATION**

1. Jesus said : “ I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever, and the bread that I will give is My Flesh, for the life of the world.” The Jews disliked this speech; they began to question and dispute the Master’s words. But Jesus answered them still more forcefully : “ Amen, amen, I say unto you, except you eat the Flesh of the Son of man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you ” (*Jn 6,51-54*). These are definitive words which leave no room for doubt; if we wish to *live*, we must eat the *Bread of Life*. Jesus came to bring to the world the supernatural life of grace; and this life was given to our souls in Baptism, the Sacrament which grafted us into Christ. Thus it is a gift of His plenitude, but we must nourish it by a deeper penetration into Christ. To enable us to do so, He Himself willed to give us His complete substance as the God-Man, making Himself the Bread of our supernatural life, the Bread of our union with Him. St. John Chrysostom says, “ Many mothers entrust the children they have borne to others to nurse them, but

Jesus does not do that. He feeds us with His own Blood and incorporates us into Himself completely." Baptism is the Sacrament which engrafts us into Christ; the Eucharist is the Sacrament which nourishes Christ's life in us and makes our union with Him always more intimate, or rather, it transforms us into Him. "If into melted wax other wax is poured, it naturally follows that they will be completely mixed with each other; similarly, he who receives the Lord's Flesh and Blood is so united with Him that Christ dwells in him and he in Christ" (St. Cyril of Jerusalem).

2. By nourishing us with Christ's life, the Eucharist nourishes in us a life which has no end. By uniting us to Him who is Life, it frees us from death. In fact, Jesus has said, "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day" (*Jn* 6,55). Notice that He said, "*hath* everlasting life," not *will have*, because the Eucharist, by giving us an increase of grace—the seed of glory—becomes the pledge of eternal life for us, life not only for the soul but also for the body. "The sacred Host communicates the seed of future resurrection; Christ's immortal Body plants within us the seed of immortality which will grow and some day bring forth fruit" (Pope Leo XIII : *Mirae Caritatis*). From this point of view, the Eucharist is truly the Sacrament of hope: hope of celestial glory, of the beatific vision, where our "communion" with Christ will have no end. Our eternal "communion" begins here on earth precisely in the Eucharistic communion which is its prelude, pledge, and even, in a slight degree, its foretaste. But the Blessed Sacrament is a source of great hope and confidence in our present life, too, especially in what concerns our spiritual progress; for, by increasing grace in us, it also increases our charity, and with the growth in charity, our passions are subdued. St. Augustine says, "The increase of charity is the decrease of passion, and the perfection of charity is the absence of passion." If, then, the struggle against a certain fault or temptation sometimes becomes very violent and difficult; if in spite of all our efforts, we do not succeed in overcoming nature, let us have confidence in the Blessed Sacrament. When Jesus comes to us, He can calm any storm and give us strength to win any kind of battle. "The chaste Flesh of Jesus," says St. Cyril of Alexandria, "checks the insubor-

dination of ours; by dwelling in us, Christ effectively overcomes the law of the flesh which rages in our members." The Eucharist, therefore, is our hope both for this life and for the life to come; it sustains us in adversity, fortifies us in the struggle for virtue, saves us for eternal life and brings us to heaven by providing us with the food necessary for our journey.

#### COLLOQUY

"O heavenly Father, You gave us Your Son and sent Him into the world by an act of Your own will. And You, O my Jesus, did not want to leave the world by Your own will, but wanted to remain with us for the greater joy of Your friends. This is why, O heavenly Father, You gave us this most divine Bread, the manna of the sacred humanity of Jesus, to be our perpetual food. Now we can have it whenever we wish, so that if we die of hunger, it will be our own fault.

"O my soul, you will always find in the Blessed Sacrament, under whatever aspect you consider it, great consolation and delight, and once you have begun to relish it, there will be no trials, persecutions, and difficulties which you cannot easily endure.

"Let him who wills ask for ordinary bread. For my part, O eternal Father, I ask to be permitted to receive the heavenly Bread with such dispositions that, if I have not the happiness of contemplating Jesus with the eyes of my body, I may at least contemplate Him with the eyes of my soul. This is Bread which contains all sweetness and delight, and sustains our life" (*T.J. Way*, 34).

"All graces are contained in You, O Jesus in the Eucharist, our celestial Food! What more can a soul wish when it has within itself the One who contains everything? If I wish for charity, then I have within me Him who is perfect charity, I possess the perfection of charity. The same is true of faith, hope, purity, patience, humility, and meekness, for You form all virtues in our soul, O Christ, when You give us the grace of this Food. What more can I want or desire, if all the virtues, graces, and gifts for which I long, are found in You, O Lord, who are as truly present under the sacramental species as You are in heaven, at the right hand of the Father?

Because I have and possess this great wonder, I do not long for, want, or desire, any other!" (St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi).

205

*MYSTERY OF LOVE*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O Jesus, help me to penetrate the mystery of Your infinite love, which constrained You to become our Food and Drink.

**MEDITATION**

I. All God's activity for man's benefit is a work of love; it is summed up in the immense mystery of love which causes Him, the sovereign, infinite Good, to raise man to Himself, making him, a creature, share in His divine nature by communicating His own life to him. It was precisely to communicate this life, to unite man to God, that the Word became incarnate. In His Person the divinity was to be united to our humanity in a most complete and perfect way; it was united directly to the most sacred humanity of Jesus, and through it, to the whole human race. By virtue of the Incarnation of the Word and of the grace He merited for us, every man has the right to call Jesus his Brother, to call God his Father and to aspire to union with Him. The way of union with God is thus opened to man. By becoming incarnate and later dying on the Cross, the Son of God not only removed the obstacles to this union, but He also provided all we need to gain it, or rather, He Himself became the *Way*. Through union with Jesus, man is united to God.

It is not surprising that the love of Jesus, surpassing all measure, impelled Him to find a means of uniting Himself to each one of us in the most intimate and personal manner; this He found in the Eucharist. Having become our Food, Jesus makes us one with Him, and thus makes us share most directly in His divine life, in His union with the Father and with the Trinity.

By assuming our flesh in the Incarnation, the Son of God united Himself once and for all with the human race.

In the Eucharist, He continues to unite Himself to each individual who receives Him. Thus we can understand how the Eucharist, according to the mind of the Fathers of the Church, may really be "considered as a continuation and extension of the Incarnation; by it the substance of the Incarnate Word is united to every man" (*Mirae Caritatis*).

2. The plan of Divine Love, that is, the desire to bring men to God and to communicate the divine nature and life to them, finds its supreme realization in the Blessed Sacrament. In the consecrated Host, we have not only Christ's Body, Blood, and Soul, but also the divinity of the Son of God and, therefore, God Himself. What more potent means could God use to unite us to Himself and to make us share His nature and life? Where could we find a more life-giving food than the Body of Christ, which through its personal union with the Word, is the source of all life and grace? By giving Himself to us, Jesus nourishes us with His substance, assimilates us to Himself, and personally communicates divine life to us. Jesus also gives us grace and thereby communicates the divine nature to us by means of the other Sacraments too; but in them, we have His action only, and that, only during the reception of the Sacrament. For example, when the priest absolves us from our sins, Jesus produces grace in us by His operative power; in the Eucharist, however, it is Jesus Himself who is the Sacrament, coming to us personally in the integrity of His Person, that of the God-Man. When we receive the Sacred Host, we not only receive Christ's *action* in our soul, but we actually possess His *Person*, really and physically present. We are given not only an increase of grace, but Jesus, the very source of grace. We not only enjoy a new participation in divine life, we possess the Incarnate Word, who takes us with Himself to the heart of the Trinity.

Furthermore, whereas *material food* is assimilated by the one who eats it and is changed into that person's body and blood, Jesus, the *Living Bread*, has the power to assimilate and change into Himself those who partake of Him. "Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Christ, tends to transform us into what we eat," says St. Leo, and St. John Chrysostom notes : "Christ has united Himself to us and infused His Body into us, that we may be one thing with Him as a body is fitted to its head. Such is the union of those on fire with love" (*RB*).

## COLLOQUY

"O eternal Trinity! O fire and abyss of charity! How could our redemption benefit You? It could not, for You, our God, have no need of us. To whom then comes this benefit? Only to man. O inestimable charity! Even as You, true God and true Man, gave Yourself entirely to us, so also You left Yourself entirely for us, to be our food, so that during our earthly pilgrimage we would not faint with weariness, but would be strengthened by You, our celestial Bread. O man, what has your God left you? He has left you Himself, wholly God and wholly Man, concealed under this whiteness of bread. O fire of love! Was it not enough for You to have created us to Your image and likeness, and to have re-created us in grace through the Blood of Your Son, without giving Yourself wholly to us as our Food, O God, Divine Essence? What impelled You to do this? Your charity alone. It was not enough for You to send Your Word to us for our redemption; neither were You content to give Him to us as our Food, but in the excess of Your love for Your creature, You gave to man the whole divine essence. And not only, O Lord, do You give Yourself to us, but by nourishing us with this divine Food, You make us strong with Your power against the attacks of the demons, insults from creatures, the rebellion of our flesh, and every sorrow and tribulation, from whatever source it may come.

"O Bread of Angels, sovereign, eternal purity, You ask and want such transparency in a soul who receives You in this sweet Sacrament, that if it were possible, the very angels would have to purify themselves in the presence of such an august mystery. How can my soul become purified? In the fire of Your charity, O eternal God, by bathing itself in the Blood of Your only-begotten Son. O wretched soul of mine, how can you approach such a great mystery without sufficient purification? I will take off, then, the loathsome garments of my will and clothe myself, O Lord, with Your eternal will!" (St. Catherine of Siena).

*THE SACRAMENT OF UNION*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O Jesus, You who nourish me with Your Body and Blood, grant that I may live by You, live of Your Life.

**MEDITATION**

1. In His discourse on the "Bread of Life," Jesus Himself spoke of the Eucharist as the Sacrament of our union with Him. "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me and I in him" (*Jn* 6,57). It is a true inter-penetration : Christ is in us and we are in Christ. Of course, His life and ours, His person and ours, remain distinct; and yet, He so penetrates us with His life, with His Spirit, with His divinity, that we remain immersed in Him and He in us. St. Hilary affirms that "having received, the Body and Blood of Christ, we are in Christ and Christ is in us.... He Himself is in us by His Flesh and we are in Him, and—O marvelous consequence!—with Him, all that we are is in God." We are never so close to Jesus, so penetrated by Him, transformed, deified, and plunged into the divinity as at the moment of sacramental Communion : "with Him, all that we are is in God."

By faith and grace we are united to Christ and are in Him as His members, but this union which began at Baptism, is increased each time we receive the Eucharist worthily. By this Sacrament, Jesus "desired even to make Himself one with us; so that not by faith only but in every deed He makes us His own Body" (St. John Chrysostom). Our union with Christ by faith and grace is a real union, but in Holy Communion we have, in addition, physical union with Christ. Then, at least for a few moments, we have Him within us, as the Blessed Virgin had Him in her pure womb for nine months. And if, to this physical union is joined moral union, consisting in the full conformity of our will and our aspirations to God's will and good pleasure, Holy Communion actually becomes the moment of closest union with God that we can reach on earth.

2. But Jesus speaks of a union which transcends even this physical-moral union, and to explain this close bond established between Him and the soul of the communicant, He does not hesitate to compare it to His union with the Father : "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (*In* 6,58). Jesus lives because the Father communicates life to Him : He lives by the Father alone; He has no life other than that which He shares with the Father. Similarly, one who is nourished by the Eucharist, lives by the life Christ communicates to him, that is, by Christ's own life. This life which the soul has already received through Baptism or Penance is increased principally by the devout reception of Holy Communion, for at that time Christ comes Himself in Person, to communicate His life and even to live this life within the soul. Jesus lives by the Father, because the Father is the one and only source of His life; the communicant lives by Jesus, because Jesus, by becoming his Food, becomes the source of his life in the most direct, profound, and intimate manner. But we can also take another meaning from the words of Jesus. Having received His whole life and all His existence from the Father, Jesus also lives by the Father in the sense that He lives solely for His glory, making use of everything He has received from the Father to accomplish the mission entrusted to Him and to do the Father's will. So too for the communicant : he should not live for himself, leading a selfish life that is concerned only with earthly cares and interests; but he should *live for Jesus*, for His interests, for His glory; he should *live by Jesus*, the source of his life; he should *live in Jesus*, who by nourishing him daily with His Flesh, binds him and unites him more closely to Himself; he should *live for Jesus*, by employing all his strength, all his abilities for Him, giving himself totally to His service. This divine life which Jesus communicates to us should find in our souls a favorable ground for complete development, a ground cleared of pride, egoism, and attachment to creatures, one suitable for producing works worthy of Jesus and agreeable to Him. Just as Christ lived for the glory of the Father, "who sent Him" (*ibid.* 7,18), so must we live for the glory of Christ who, by making Himself our Food, shares His life with us.

## COLLOQUY

"O Lord, how far has love brought You? It has brought You even so far as giving Yourself to Your creature, leaving Your Body and Blood for his Food and Drink. And for how long? Oh! my God, You Yourself have said it : "until the consummation of the world," so that we can possess You not only once, not once a year, once a month, or once a week, but every day, every morning that we wish we can receive You, we can have You within us and remain with You as much as we like. O infinite bounty of the Word, my Spouse! How wretched I am! I have so many riches and I draw so little fruit from them! Still more miserable is he who does not know this gift, who cares not if he is deprived of it for many years, or who receives it in the state of mortal sin, so that the Bread of Life becomes for him the food of death. For these souls I pray, O Lord; do not look upon their sins, but only upon Your own goodness; convert them so that they may realize the great wrong they are doing to themselves, and to Your infinite bounty.

"But O Lord, when a soul receives You with the right dispositions, may it not be said of it as was said of the Virgin Mary : 'Blessed art thou, because thou bearest within thee Him whom the heavens cannot contain!' Like unto Mary, a soul who receives You is clothed with the sun, for You are the Sun, the Sun of Justice, Christ, our God.

"As for me, O Lord, I think I am more obliged to You because You have left Yourself to me as my Food, than because You have created me, for what would I have done if You had created me, but had not given Yourself to me? In the Eucharist, You show how much You wanted to communicate Yourself to us, for You were not content to give Yourself to men only during the thirty years You were on earth; in addition to this, You wanted to leave us Your Body and Blood, so that we might be continually in You and You in us. Thus when You are in a soul, You deify it, so to speak, transforming it into Yourself; You communicate Yourself to it unceasingly, and keep it united to Yourself" (St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi).

*LET US PREPARE FOR UNION*

PRESENCE OF GOD - O Jesus, grant that I may derive great profit from the grace of union with You, which You offer me daily in Holy Communion.

**MEDITATION**

I. The Eucharist unites us to Christ directly; this physical union is the same for all who partake of His Body and Blood. However, it does not produce the same effects in everyone. This is so true that the Sacrament may even become a cause of damnation for those who approach it unworthily : " Whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily," says St. Paul, " eateth and drinketh judgment to himself" (*1 Cor 11,27-29*). But even in those who receive worthily, the effects of the Eucharist are different, for they are always proportioned to the excellence and perfection of one's interior dispositions.

Jesus penetrates me, transforming me into Himself only in the measure that I place no obstacles in His way, and insofar as I am disposed to receive the special grace of the Eucharist, the grace of " union with Christ." Although the physical union with Jesus offered to me in Holy Communion is a tremendous gift, it is, nonetheless, directed to my *spiritual* union with Him and to my transformation in Him by love. The more perfect the dispositions with which I approach the Holy Table, the more complete this union and transformation will be. These dispositions consist in preparing my heart for an ever greater union with the Lord, a union which requires conformity of aspirations, tastes, sentiments, and wills. How can I enjoy the visit of a friend and spend moments of sweet intimacy with him, moments of real union, if differences of desires, affections, and will separate us? This, then, will be the best preparation for my Communion : to rid myself of everything in my life, no matter how trivial it may be, that might be in disagreement with the divine will, with the sentiments and dispositions of the heart of Jesus. " Let this mind be in you, which

was also in Christ Jesus" (*Phil 2,5*), St. Paul tells me; this must be the program of my remote preparation for Holy Communion.

2. In order that the Eucharist may produce its full fruit in me and be the occasion of very close, intimate union with Jesus, it is not enough, as St. Augustine says, for me to eat His Body materially; I also need to eat it "spiritually," that is, my spirit must be well disposed and prepared to receive the Body of Christ, to let itself be invaded and transformed by Christ. If when Jesus comes to me, He finds my heart, will, affections and sentiments entirely conformed to His own, nothing can prevent Him from giving Himself to me in the most complete manner. His spirit, His life, His divinity will penetrate the innermost fibres of my being and transform me into Him. Then I shall be able to say in all truth with St. Paul : "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me" (*Gal 2,20*).

When I receive Holy Communion, my heart must be enlarged by love, so that it will be wide open for the coming of Jesus, and ready to let itself be penetrated and transformed by Him. In addition to the physical presence of Jesus, and because of this presence, each Communion brings me a new increase of grace and charity, but even this increase will be in proportion to my capacity for receiving it. If my heart is closed by selfishness and pride, if it is bound by attachment to creatures, or is too much engrossed by worldly affections and affairs, it will be unable to make room for an increase of divine love, and Jesus will be, so to speak, forced to lessen the outpouring of His charity and to diminish His gifts. Yes, in Holy Communion, Jesus gives Himself completely—His entire Person as God and Man—and He unites Himself entirely to me; but, if I do not give myself entirely to Him, He cannot wholly pour Himself into me, as a friend into the heart of a faithful friend. Every day Jesus offers me in Holy Communion an actual grace to love Him more, to unite myself more closely to Him. Every day I must offer Him a heart always more open to love and union. Intense acts of faith in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist will help to arouse my love and make me *actually love* Him, and precisely during this actuality of love, Jesus will pour out the increase of His charity, the living flame of His infinite love.

**COLLOQUY**

"O my soul, when you receive Holy Communion, try to reanimate your faith, do all you can to detach yourself from exterior things and retire with the Lord into the interior of your being where you know He is abiding. Collect your senses and make them understand the great good they are enjoying, or rather, try to recollect them so that they may not hinder you from understanding it. Imagine yourself at Our Lord's feet, and weep with Magdalen exactly as if you were seeing Him with your bodily eyes in the house of the Pharisee. These moments are very precious; the Master is teaching you now; listen to Him, kiss His feet in gratitude for all He has condescended to do for you, and beg Him to remain always with you. Even should you be deprived of sensible devotion, faith will not fail to assure you that Our Lord is truly within you.

"If I do not want to act like a senseless person who shuts his eyes to the light, I can have no doubt on this point. O my Jesus, this is not a work of the imagination, as when I imagine You on the Cross or in some other mystery of Your Passion, where I picture the scene as it took place. Here, it concerns Your real presence; it is an undeniable truth. O Lord, when I receive Holy Communion, I do not have to go far to find You; as long as the accidents of bread are not consumed, You are within me! And if, during Your mortal life, You healed the sick by a mere touch of Your garments, how, if I have faith, can I doubt that You will work miracles, when You are really present within me? Oh, yes! when You are in my house You will listen to all my requests, for it is not Your custom to pay badly for the lodging given You, if I offer you good hospitality!

"O Lord, if a soul receives Communion with good dispositions, and if, wishing to drive out all coldness, it remains for some time with You, great love for You will burn within it and it will retain its warmth for many hours" (T.J. Way, 34-35).

*FEAST OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS*

FRIDAY FOLLOWING THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PRESENCE OF GOD - O Jesus, grant that I may penetrate the secrets hidden in Your divine Heart.

## MEDITATION

I. After we have contemplated the Eucharist, a gift crowning all the gifts of the love of Jesus for men, the Church invites us to give direct consideration to the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the source and cause of all His gifts. We may call the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus the feast of His love for us. "Behold this Heart which has so loved men," Jesus said to St. Margaret Mary; "Behold this Heart which has so loved men," the Church repeats to us today, showing us that it is truly "in the Heart of Christ, wounded by our sins, that God has deigned to give us the infinite treasures of His love" (cf. *Collect*). Today's liturgy inspired with this thought, reviews the immense benefits we owe to the love of Christ and sings a hymn in praise of His love. "*Cogitationes cordis ejus*," chants the Introit of the Mass : "The thoughts of His Heart" — the Heart of Jesus — "are to all generations : to deliver them from death, to feed them in time of famine." The Heart of Jesus is always in search of souls to save, to free from the snares of sin, to wash in His Blood, to feed with His Body. The Heart of Jesus is always living in the Eucharist to satisfy the hunger of all who long for Him, to welcome and console all those who, disillusioned by the vicissitudes of life, take refuge in Him, seeking peace and refreshment. Jesus Himself is our support on the hard road of life. "Take up My yoke upon you and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls, Alleluia." It is impossible to eliminate sorrow from our life; yet if we live for Jesus we can suffer in peace and find in the Heart of Jesus repose for our weary soul.

2. Today's Gospel and Epistle lead us to consider the Sacred Heart of Jesus even more directly. The Gospel (*Jn* 19,31-37) shows us His Heart pierced with a lance : "One of the soldiers opened His side with a spear," and St. Augustine offers this comment : "The Evangelist says...*opened*, to show us that thereby the door of life was thrown open, through which the Sacraments of the Church flow forth." From the pierced Heart of Christ, symbol of the love which immolated Him on the Cross for us, came forth the Sacraments, represented by the water and the Blood flowing from the wound, and it is through these Sacraments that we receive the life of grace. Yes, it is eminently true to say that the Heart of Jesus was *opened* to bring us into life. Jesus once said, "Narrow is the gate... that leadeth to life" (*Mt* 7,14); but if we understand this gate to be the wound in His Heart, we can say that no gate could open to us with greater welcome.

St. Paul, in his beautiful Epistle (*Eph* 3,8-19), urges us to penetrate further into the Heart of Jesus to contemplate His "unsearchable riches" and to enter into "the mystery which hath been hidden from eternity in God." This is the mystery of the infinite, divine love which has gone before us from all eternity and was revealed to us by the Word made flesh; it is the mystery of the love which willed to redeem us and sanctify us in Christ "in whom we have... [free] access to God."

Again Jesus presents Himself as the door which leads to salvation. "I am the door. By Me if any man enter in he shall be saved" (*Jn* 10,9). This door is His Heart, which, wounded for us, has brought us into life. By love alone can we penetrate this mystery of infinite love, but not any kind of love will suffice. As St. Paul says, we must "be rooted and founded in charity." Only thus shall we be able "to know...the charity of Christ which surpasseth all knowledge, that [we] may be filled unto all the fullness of God."

#### COLLOQUY

"O Jesus, by a divine decree, a soldier was permitted to pierce Your sacred side. As the blood and water came forth, the price of our salvation was poured forth, which flowing from the mysterious fountain of Your Heart, gives

power to the Sacraments of the Church to bestow the life of grace, and becomes for those who live in You, a saving drink of living waters, bubbling up to life eternal. Arise, my soul, beloved of Christ, watch unceasingly, place your lips there, and quench your thirst in the Savior's fount.

"O Jesus, now that I have been brought into Your most sweet Heart, and it is a great good to be here, I do not want to let myself be easily torn away from it. Oh! how good and pleasant it is to dwell in Your Heart! Your Heart, O good Jesus, is a rich treasure, it is the precious pearl which I have found in the secret of Your pierced Body, as in a furrowed field. Who would cast aside this pearl? Rather I will give all the pearls in the world, I will exchange for it all my thoughts and affections and I will purchase it for myself. I shall entrust all my cares to Your Heart, O good Jesus, and without fail it will support me. I have found Your Heart, O Lord, O most benign Jesus : the Heart of my King, my Brother, my Friend! Hidden in Your Heart, what is there that I shall not ask of You? I shall ask that *Your* Heart be *mine* also. If You, O Jesus, are my Head, can I not say that it is mine as well as Yours? Are not the eyes of my head also mine? Then the Heart of my spiritual Head is *my* Heart. What joy for me! You and I have but one heart. Having found this divine Heart which is Yours and mine, O most sweet Jesus, I beseech You, O my God : receive my prayers in that sanctuary where You are attentive to them and, even more, draw me entirely into Your Heart" (St. Bonaventure).

*DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS*

PRESENCE OF GOD - O Sacred Heart of Jesus, teach me how to know You and to love You.

**MEDITATION**

The object of devotion to the Sacred Heart is, properly speaking, the physical Heart of Jesus which is worthy of adoration, because it is a part of His sacred humanity, hypostatically united to the Word. However, the ultimate object of this devotion is the love of Jesus, the symbol of which is His Heart. In other words, "beneath the symbolic image of the Heart, we contemplate and venerate our divine Redeemer's immense charity and generous love" (Pius VI). This is the real meaning of the devotion to the Sacred Heart by which the Church asks us to honor the Heart of Jesus as the visible representation of His invisible love. "Your charity has allowed You to be wounded by the visible blow of the lance," the liturgy of the feast sings, "so that we may venerate the wounds of Your invisible love" (RB). Therefore, the principle object of this devotion is the love of Jesus, an uncreated love with which He, as the Word, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, loved us from all eternity, and from all eternity willed to become incarnate for our salvation. It is also the created love of charity with which, as Man, He loved us even to the death of the Cross, meriting for us by His love that same charity by which we are enabled to love Him in return. Here we find the most profound significance of devotion to the Sacred Heart. St. Teresa Margaret of the Heart of Jesus had such a thorough understanding of this meaning that she made this devotion the center of her life. The process for her canonization says that the Saint "saw the Heart of Jesus as the center, the source of the love with which the divine Word, in the bosom of the Father, loved us from all eternity, and merited for us in time the power to love Him in return, on earth and in heaven, by our sharing in this love."

2. Other devotions to Our Lord have for their object the mysteries or special aspects of His life, as for example, the Incarnation, the hidden life, the Passion. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, on the contrary, has a more general object, the love of Jesus, which constitutes the profound, essential reason for all His mysteries, the love that is the first and only cause of all He has done for us. In this sense, devotion to the Sacred Heart touches, as it were, the mainspring of all the mysteries of the Redeemer, the essential *raison d'être* of His life, His Person. It is the love which explains the Incarnation of the Word, the life of the Man-God, His Passion, His Eucharist. We cannot possibly understand the mystery by which the Son of God became Man, died on the Cross to save mankind, and then became their Food, if we do not admit this infinite love which compelled God the Creator, the Most High, to find a way to give Himself entirely for the salvation of His creatures. The Church gives expression to this interpretation in the hymn at Matins : "*Amor coegerit te tuus mortale corpus sumere.*" "Thy love has impelled Thee"—or rather, has *constrained* Thee, if we accept the Latin word in its full sense—"to assume a mortal body, so that as the new Adam, Thou wouldest restore what the old Adam had lost." The hymn continues, now praising the eternal love of the Word, now the human love of Jesus; two loves which, in fact, cannot be separated, just as the sacred humanity of Jesus cannot be disassociated from the Word which assumed it. Jesus is both God and Man, hence His love is both divine and human. He loved us and continues to love us as God and as Man. His human, created love is made sublime by the eternal love of the Word, or rather, it becomes the very love of the Word who makes it His own, just as all the sentiments and acts of Christ as Man are raised to a supreme dignity. Thus, His divine love becomes sensible, comprehensible, and tangible to us by means of the manifestations of His human love. It is always the humanity of Jesus which reveals His divinity to us, and just as we know the Son of God through His sacred humanity, so do we know His divine love through the human love of Jesus.

## COLLOQUY

"For this, O Jesus, was Your sacred side pierced, that it might give us an easy entrance. Your Heart was opened that we might dwell there, safe from exterior disturbances. In addition to this, You were pierced by a spear, so that through the visible wound, we could see the invisible one which love inflicted on You, for he who burns with love, is wounded by love. What better evidence of Your ardent love could You have given us than by permitting the lance to pierce, not only Your Body, but even Your Heart? The wound in Your flesh then shows forth the wound in Your spirit.

"Who will not love that Heart so deeply wounded? Who will not return love to One who so loved us? Who will not embrace a Spouse so chaste? Certainly the soul loves You in return, O Lord, who, knowing itself to be wounded by Your love, cries to You: Your charity has wounded me! We too, pilgrims in the flesh, love as much as we can, and embrace the One who was wounded for us, whose hands, feet, side, and Heart were pierced. Let us love and pray: 'O Jesus, deign to bind our hearts, still so hard and unrepentant, with the chain of Your love and wound them with its dart'" (St. Bonaventure).

"O Jesus, a soldier opened Your side with his lance, so that, through the gaping wound, we might know the charity of Your Heart, which loved us unto death, and that we might enter into Your unutterable love through the same channel by which it came to us. Approach, then, O my soul, the Heart of Christ, that magnanimous Heart, that hidden Heart, that Heart which thinks of all things and knows all things; that loving Heart, all on fire with love. Make me understand, O Lord, that the door of Your Heart was forced open by the vehemence of Your love. Allow me to enter into the secret of that love which was hidden from all eternity, but is now revealed by the wound in Your Heart" (St. Bernardino of Siena).

*MERCIFUL LOVE*

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PRESENCE OF GOD - O Jesus, reveal to me the infinite treasures of mercy contained in Your Heart.

## MEDITATION

1. Today's liturgy is a warm invitation to confidence in the merciful love of Jesus. Even from the beginning of the Mass, the Church has us pray thus : "Look toward me and have pity on me, O Lord, for I am desolate and unhappy. See my misery and my sadness, and pardon all my sins" (*Introit*); then in the Collect we add : "O God... pour out upon us Your mercy," and a little later we are exhorted : "Cast your care upon the Lord, and He will support you" (*Gradual*). But how can we justify all this confidence in God, since we are always poor sinners? The Gospel (*Lk 15,1-10*) explains the grounds for this justification by relating two parables used by Jesus Himself to teach us that we can never have too much confidence in His infinite mercy : the story of the lost sheep and the account of the missing drachma. First He shows us the good shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep; it is a picture of Jesus coming down from heaven to search for poor human beings lost in the dark caves of sin. In order to find them, rescue them, and bring them back to the sheepfold, He does not hesitate to undergo the greatest sufferings and even death. "And when he hath found it...[he lays] it upon his shoulders, rejoicing : and coming home, [he calls] together his friends and neighbors, saying to them : 'Rejoice with me for I have found my sheep that was lost.' " This is the story of the love of Jesus for all mankind and especially for every individual soul. The story has a beautiful symbolism in the tender figure of the good shepherd, to which Jesus likened Himself. We might say that the image of the good shepherd—which was so greatly loved in the early days of the Church—is the equivalent of that of the Sacred Heart; both are living, concrete expres-

sions of the merciful love of Jesus, and they urge us to go to Him with complete confidence.

2. "I say to you, that even so there will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, more than over ninety-nine just who have no need of repentance." Here we have the underlying idea of all three parables about mercy—the lost sheep, the missing drachma, and the prodigal son—each expressing this thought in a different way. This insistent repetition tells us how earnestly Jesus would inculcate the profound lesson of His infinite mercy, a mercy which is the exact opposite of the hard, scornful attitude of the Pharisees who murmured, saying, "He [Jesus] receives sinners and eats with them." The three parables are the Master's answer to their mean and treacherous insinuations.

It is not easy for finite creatures with a limited spiritual outlook to understand this ineffable mystery completely; not only is it difficult to understand in respect to others, but it presents a problem even in what concerns ourselves. However, Jesus said and repeated : "There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, more than over ninety-nine just" thus giving us to understand what great glory a soul gives to God when, after many falls, it comes back to Him, repentant and confident. The message of this parable applies not only to great sinners, those converted from serious sin, but also to those who turn from venial sins, who humble themselves and rise again after faults committed through weakness or lack of reflection. This is our everyday story : how many times we resolve to overcome our impatience, our quick temper, our sensitiveness, and how many times we fall again! But the Heart of Jesus "thrills with joy when, humbly acknowledging our fault, we come to fling ourselves into His arms, imploring forgiveness; then, He loves us even more tenderly than before we fell" (T.C.J. *L-C*).

The liturgy repeats in the Communion hymn the last verse of the Gospel : "I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God over one sinner doing penance." Let us ask Jesus, when He comes to us in Holy Communion, to help us penetrate the secrets of His infinite, merciful love.

## COLLOQUY

" In whom, Lord, can Your mercies shine forth as in me, who with my evil deeds have thus obscured the great favors which You had begun to show me? Alas, my Creator! If I would make an excuse, I have none, and no one is to blame but I. For had I cooperated even a little with Your love which You had begun to show me, I would not have been able to love aught but Yourself Lord...but as I have not deserved this...may Your mercy be availing for me.

" Yet even from me some good has been brought forth by Your infinite goodness, and, the greater have been my sins, the more has the great blessing of Your mercies shone forth in me. How many reasons have I for singing of them forever! I beseech You, my God, that it may be so : may I sing of them, and that without end, since You have deigned to work such exceeding great mercies in me that they amaze those who behold them, while as for me, I am drawn out of myself continually, that I may be the better able to sing Your praise. For so long as I am in myself, my Lord, and without You, I can do nothing but be cut off like the flowers in this garden, and this miserable earth will become a dunghill again as before. Permit it not, Lord. Let it not be Your will that a soul which You have purchased with so many trials should be lost, when You have so often redeemed it anew and have snatched it from the teeth of the horrible dragon" (*T.J. Life*, 4-14).

" O Jesus, I know that Your Heart is more grieved by the thousand little imperfections of Your friends than by the faults, even grave, which Your enemies commit. Yet, it seems to me, that it is only when those who are Your own are habitually guilty of thoughtlessness and neglect to seek Your pardon, that You can say : ' These wounds which you see in the midst of My hands I have received in the house of those who love Me.' But Your Heart thrills with joy when You have to deal with all those who truly love, and who after each little fault come to fling themselves into Your arms, imploring forgiveness. You say to Your angels what the prodigal's father said to his servants : ' Put a ring upon his finger, and let us rejoice.' O Jesus, how little known is the merciful love of Your Heart!" (cf. *T.C.J. L-C*).

*RETURNING LOVE FOR LOVE*

PRESENCE OF GOD - O Jesus, You have loved me so much; enable me to repay Your love.

## MEDITATION

1. In the Encyclical *Annum Sacrum*, Leo XIII declares, "The Sacred Heart is the symbol and image of the infinite charity of Jesus Christ, the *charity which urges us to give Him love in return.*" Indeed, nothing is more able to arouse love than love itself. "Love is repaid by love alone," the saints have repeatedly said. St. Teresa of Jesus wrote : "Whenever we think of Christ, we should remember with what love He has bestowed all these favors upon us...for love begets love. And though we may be only beginners...let us strive ever to bear this in mind and awaken our own love" (*Life*, 22).

The Church offers us the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in order to stir up our love. After reminding us, in the Divine Office proper to this feast, of the measureless proofs of Christ's love, this good Mother asks us anxiously, "Who would not love Him who has loved us so much? Who among His redeemed would not love Him dearly?" (*RB*). And in order to urge us more and more to repay love with love, she puts on the lips of Jesus the beautiful words of Holy Scripture : "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee"; and again, "*Fili, praebe mihi cor tuum,*" Son, give Me thy heart (*ibid.*). This, then, is the substance of true devotion to the Sacred Heart : to return love for love, "to repay love with love," as St. Margaret Mary, the great disciple of the Sacred Heart, expresses it; "to return love unceasingly to Him who has so loved us," in the words of St. Teresa Margaret of the Heart of Jesus, the hidden but no less ardent disciple of the divine Heart.

2. The attitude we take in our spiritual life depends greatly upon the idea we have of God. If we have a poor, impoverished concept of God, like the slothful servant

in the Gospel (*Mt* 25,14-30), instead of being impelled to love Him and to give ourselves generously to His service, we shall be cold, indolent, calculating; and burying the talent we have received from the Master, we shall not trouble ourselves to use for God the benefits we have received from Him. Unfortunately, many Christians live this kind of life; they serve Him like slaves, and if they do not commit sin, it is only through fear of being punished; if they pray or perform some good work, it is for their own personal interest and is devoid of generosity and love. When, on the other hand, our soul begins to understand that "*Deus caritas est*," God is charity (1 *Jn* 4,8), when we penetrate even slightly the mystery of the infinite love that surrounds us, realizing God's love in the love which Jesus has for us, then everything changes spontaneously, because "love calls to love." Devotion to the Sacred Heart, which is devotion to the infinite love of Jesus, should produce this particular effect in us : it should give us an ever increasing comprehension of "the charity of Christ which surpasseth all knowledge" (*Eph* 3,19). In our meditation, our contemplation of the Heart of Jesus pierced for love of us, we shall learn the science of love, a science which no book on earth can teach us, because it is a science that can be acquired only from the open book of the Heart of Christ, our one and only Teacher. "He taught me a science most delectable" (J.C. *SC*, 27,2), sings the joyful soul who has been introduced into the secrets of His divine Heart. Then the answer to His love is easy : He "loved me and delivered Himself for me...and I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for Him and for the souls that are His treasure" (*Gal* 2,20 — cf. 2 *Cor* 12,15). Behold the love that raises us above all calculation, all self-love.

#### COLLOQUY

"Awake, O my soul. How long will you remain asleep? Beyond the sky there is a King who wishes to possess you; He loves you immeasurably, with all His Heart. He loves you with so much kindness and faithfulness that He left His kingdom and humbled Himself for you, permitting Himself to be bound like a malefactor in order to find you. He loves you so strongly and tenderly, He is so jealous of you and has

given you so many proofs of this, that He willingly gave up His Body to death. He bathed you in His Blood and redeemed you by His death. How long will you wait to love Him in return? Make haste, then, to answer Him.

"Behold, O loving Jesus, I come to You. I come, drawn by Your meekness, Your mercy, Your charity; I come with my whole heart and soul, and all my strength. Who will give me to be entirely conformed to Your Heart, in order that You may find in me everything You desire?

"O Jesus, my King and my God, take me into the sweet shelter of Your divine Heart, and there unite me to Yourself in such a way that I shall live totally for You. Permit me to submerge myself henceforth in that vast sea of Your mercy, abandoning myself entirely to Your goodness, plunging into the burning furnace of Your love, and remaining there forever....

"But what am I, O my God, I, so unlike You, the outcast of all creatures? But You are my supreme confidence, because in You can be found the supplement or rather, the abundance of all the favors I have lost. Enclose me, O Lord, in the sanctuary of Your Heart opened by the spear, establish me there, guarded by Your gentle glance, so that I may be confided to Your care forever : under the shadow of Your paternal love I shall find rest in the everlasting remembrance of Your most precious love" (St. Gertrude).

## 212

*CONSECRATION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O Jesus, make me worthy to consecrate myself to Your loving Heart and to truly live this consecration.

**MEDITATION**

1. Because devotion to the Sacred Heart arouses in us a need to return His infinite love, it expresses itself spontaneously in an Act of Consecration by which the creature gives itself entirely to the God who has loved it so much. Conse-

cration to the Sacred Heart, says Leo XIII, "means a giving of oneself, a binding of oneself to Jesus Christ, since all respect, all homage, and all devotion to the Sacred Heart are really addressed to Jesus Himself" (*Annum Sacrum*). Pius XI explains what this act consists of: "By this Act of Consecration, we offer to the divine Heart of Jesus, ourselves and all we possess, acknowledging that we have received it all from the eternal charity of God" (*Miserentissimus Redemptor*).

To love is to give oneself: "To love is to give all and to give oneself," sang St. Therese of the Child Jesus. When love is real it must make a gift of everything, and in this total gift to God the loving soul finds its peace and rest. The ardent cry of St. Paul: "*Caritas Christi urget nos,*" ends with his triumphant cry: "*ut non sibi vivant, sed ei qui pro ipsis mortuus est;*" the charity of Christ presseth us.... that we may not now live to [ourselves] but unto Him who died for [us]. (2 Cor 5,14.15).

One who consecrates himself to a person gives himself entirely to that person; he no longer belongs to himself; henceforth he cannot live for himself; his tastes, interests, and desires must give way to those of the one to whom he has given himself, and to whom he now belongs. This is the profound meaning of Consecration to the Sacred Heart, a Consecration which, far from being reduced to the recitation of a mere formula, involves and must involve our whole person, life, and abilities so that we use our complete being and all we possess in the service of the divine Heart.

2. This Consecration to the Sacred Heart is not the same as that contained in the three vows of religion, which is reserved for certain souls, but we speak of the total consecration which Jesus Himself, in the Gospel, suggested to everyone and which each one is obliged to carry out according to his state in life. Jesus said to us: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy *whole* heart, and with thy *whole* soul, and with thy *whole* mind, and with thy *whole* strength" (Mk 12,30). By repeating the word "whole," He asks for a total love, and thus for a *total gift* of self; that is, He asks us to give ourselves to Him and to His service, not by halves, but entirely. Jesus shows us how to respond to His appeal, urging us to prove by deeds the truthfulness of our love and our complete gift: "If you love Me, keep My

commandments" (*Jn* 14,15). Therefore, we need not seek in distant places for ways and means of actualizing our Consecration to the Sacred Heart; nor should we make it consist in exceptional, extraordinary things, but should realize that the means are right at hand in our practical, everyday life.

To consecrate oneself totally to the Sacred Heart means preferring His commandments, will, desires, and tastes, as the norm of one's life, being ready to renounce one's own will and desires when they are contrary to His. Many Christians consecrate themselves to the Sacred Heart, but very few actually live their Consecration in its totality. Most people live it by halves; they prefer the will of Jesus to their own when to act otherwise would be to commit a grave sin; but when it is a question of venial sin, or more often, of imperfections, they have no scruple about displeasing the Sacred Heart and doing as they please. Jesus, however, seeks faithful souls, souls who live their Consecration to such a point that they *never* prefer their own desires and personal tastes to His. Should we not wish to be one of these? "My child, give Me thy heart," Jesus says, and might add, "Give it to Me in its totality by living entirely according to My Heart."

#### COLLOQUY

"Adorable Heart of my most loving Jesus, what good have You found in me to make You love me without limit, even though my heart, stained by a thousand faults, was so cold and indifferent toward You? The great proofs of love which You have shown me, even when I did not love You, give me hope that You will now find acceptable the proofs of my love. Receive then, my loving Savior, my desire to consecrate myself entirely to the honor and glory of Your Sacred Heart; accept the gift of all that I am. I consecrate to You my person, my life, my actions, my pains and sufferings, desiring to be in the future a victim consecrated to Your glory, on fire at this moment, and one day to be entirely consumed by the holy flames of Your love. I offer You then, my Lord and my God, my heart with all its desires, that during my whole life it may be perfectly conformed to Yours. I belong, then, wholly to Your Heart, I am entirely Yours. O my God, how great are Your mercies toward me!..."

My adorable Savior, accept my consecration also in reparation for the offenses which I have not ceased to commit against You until now, by corresponding so badly to Your love. I am giving You very little, I know, but at least I wish to give You all that is in my power and all You wish, for that You desire from me; therefore, by consecrating my heart to You, I give it to You never to take it back.

"Teach me, O loving Savior, perfect forgetfulness of self, for that is the one way by which I can enter Your adorable Heart; and since in the future I shall do everything for You, grant that all I do may be worthy of You. Teach me what I must do to arrive at the purity of Your love, but also give me this love, give me a most ardent, generous love. Give me that profound humility without which no one can be pleasing to You, and accomplish in me all Your holy will" (St. Margaret Mary).

## 213

*REPARATION*

**PRESENCE OF GOD -** Heart of Jesus, wounded for love of us, make me worthy to make reparation for all the wounds our sins have inflicted upon You.

**MEDITATION**

1. We find in the hymn for First Vespers of the Feast of the Sacred Heart the following words : "Lo, the proud, insolent procession of our offenses has wounded the innocent Heart of God." And even more realistically it continues : "The lance which the soldier wielded was directed by our sins" (*RB*). These lines recall to our minds the words addressed by Jesus to St. Margaret Mary : "Behold this Heart which has so loved men...but which, in return for its infinite love, finds only ingratitude; it meets only with forgetfulness, indifference, and outrages, and all this at times even from souls bound closely to it by the bonds of a very special love." A soul that loves God cannot remain

indifferent to these complaints; it wants to expiate, repair and console, having "the most powerful motives," as Pius XI teaches, "of justice and of love : of justice, in order to expiate the injury done to God by our sins...and of love, in order to compassionate the suffering Christ, patient and covered with opprobrium, and to bring Him insofar as our human weakness permits, some comfort in His sufferings" (*Miserentissimus Redemptor*). It is easy to understand that we must make reparation for our own sins, but sometimes we do not see as clearly that reparation should also aim at consoling the Heart of Jesus. "But indeed, can acts of expiation console Christ who now reigns happily in heaven?" asks Pius XI "Give me a lover and he will understand what I say" (*ibid.*), replies the great Pope in the words of St. Augustine. In fact, a soul who lovingly penetrates the mystery of Jesus will realize that when, in Gethsemane, He saw all our sins, He also saw the good works we would do in order to comfort Him. What we do today with this intention consoled Him then in reality. This thought spurs us on to further acts of reparation, so that Jesus finds no reason to complain sorrowfully to us : "My Heart hath expected reproach and misery...I looked for one that would comfort Me, and I found none" (*Mass of the Sacred Heart*).

2. The idea of reparation brings to mind that of "victim of reparation" well-known to lovers of the Sacred Heart, and officially recognized by the Church in the Encyclical of Pius XI on reparation. This venerable document explains what should be done by one who intends to offer himself as a victim : "Such a one assuredly cannot but abhor and flee all sin as the greatest of evils. He will also offer himself wholly and entirely to the will of God and will strive to repair the injured divine Majesty by constant prayer, by voluntary penances and by patiently bearing all the misfortunes which may befall him; in a word, he will so organize his life that in all things it will be inspired by the spirit of atonement" (*Miserentissimus Redemptor*). This is far from the fantastic idea of victim which some souls adopt. Under the pretext of being obliged to take upon themselves extraordinary immolations, they avoid the reality of ordinary, daily life and imagine they are capable of enduring all kinds of suffering, whereas actually, they try to escape the sacrifices which present themselves every day. The idea of a

victim of reparation offered by the doctrine of the Church is, on the contrary, something very serious, concrete, and realistic. The victim soul should make reparation for sin; and it will accomplish this by always doing what is contrary to sin. Sin is an act of rebellion against God and His will, as manifested by the commandments and the arrangements of divine Providence. Therefore, to do what is contrary to sin will consist in a total adherence to God's will, by accepting it with our whole heart in all its manifestations, in spite of the repugnances we may feel. This, then, is the program of a victim soul : not only to avoid sin, even the smallest one, but to embrace God's will in such a way that He can really do all that He wants with it. To this docility, the soul will add prayer and voluntary mortifications, which will have value only because they are offered by a heart entirely submissive to the divine will. And let us note that the first penitential act mentioned in the Encyclical is "the patient endurance" of the adversities of life.

#### COLLOQUY

"O God, why can I not bathe with my tears and blood all the places where Your Heart has been insulted? Why am I not permitted to make reparation for so many sacrileges and profanations? Why is it not given to me to be the mistress of the hearts of all men for a single moment, in order to atone, by the sacrifices I would make, for the neglect and folly of all those who have not wished to know You, or who, even knowing You, have loved You so little? But, O my adored Savior, what covers me with confusion and what most grieves me is that I myself have been one of these ungrateful souls. You, my God, see the depths of my soul; You see how I suffer because of my ingratitude and the unworthy treatment I have given You. Behold me, O Lord, my heart broken with grief, humbled and prostrate, ready to accept from Your hand all that it pleases You to ask of me in reparation for so many outrages" (St. Margaret Mary).

"You know, my God, that my one desire is to be a victim of Your Sacred Heart, wholly consumed as a holocaust in the fire of Your holy love. Your Heart will be the altar on which I shall be consumed by You, my dear Spouse,

and You will be the Priest who will consume this victim by the fires of Your most Sacred Heart. But, O my God, how ashamed I am to see how guilty is this victim and how unworthy to have her sacrifice accepted by You! But I am confident that all will be consumed by this divine fire!

“ By offering my whole self to You, I understand that I am giving You my free will, so that henceforth, You alone will be the Master of my heart and Your will alone will regulate my actions. Therefore, dispose of me always according to Your good pleasure; I am content with everything, since I wish to love You with a love that is patient, mortified, wholly abandoned to You, an active love, a strong, undivided love and, what is more important, a persevering love ” (T.M. Sp).

## 214

*THE HEART OF JESUS OUR MODEL*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - Sacred Heart of Jesus, teach me to model the affections of my heart on Yours.

**MEDITATION**

1. A soul consecrated to the Sacred Heart, a soul given to reparation, must feel the need of modeling its life on that of Jesus. How can we say that we are really consecrated to the Sacred Heart, how can we say that we are His victim of reparation, when we retain in our heart feelings, desires, and attractions which are opposed to His?

It is clear that in order to model our heart on the Heart of Christ we cannot limit ourselves to eliminating this or that fault, to acquiring such and such a virtue; rather, we must strive to reform our whole life. However, when the divine Master offered us His Heart as a model, He spoke of two virtues in particular, meekness and humility : “ Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart ” (Mt 11,29). Not without reason has He spoken thus, knowing that when we have removed all movements and feelings of

pride and self-love from our heart, we will also have suppressed all our other faults; and when we have acquired a profound humility, we will have acquired all the other virtues as well. Let us pause, then, to consider this great lesson of the Heart of Jesus.

First, Jesus speaks to us of meekness. This is the virtue by which man is enabled to master everything that falls under the heading of "anger." Meekness gives the power to restrain and dominate all those passionate movements—even slight ones—which sometimes make us exceed just limits, and lose sight of the divine Guide. Since the guide of a soul desirous of giving itself to the service of God, is God Himself, is the Heart of Jesus, we must never lose sight of Our Lord or withdraw from Him, even for a short time; if we do, we will end by following our own self-love and trivial passions. Meekness, however, gives us self-mastery, enabling us to dominate every kind of irritation. If we examine ourselves carefully, we shall see that these irritations are almost always caused by some little hurt to our pride; the irascible appetite has been aroused by something which has wounded our "ego." Meekness, as we can see, is closely connected with humility.

2. Our Lord joins the lesson of meekness to that of humility precisely because the immediate foundation of meekness is humility. It takes only a small amount of pride, of self-love, of attachment to our own way of seeing or doing things to make us unable to stand opposition. Then in the face of the shocks inevitably arising from the common life, we lose, to a greater or lesser extent, our serenity, our interior and exterior peace. If serenity is lost, calmness of judgment is also lost; therefore, we are no longer able to see clearly the divine light showing us which path to follow in order to give Our Lord what He is asking of us. Our soul wavers, loses its vigor, and allows itself to be ruled somewhat by passion. As long as any traces of pride and self-love remain in us, there will always occur circumstances in which we will lose some of our control and self-mastery; consequently, we shall lack meekness. To profit by the lesson of the Heart of Jesus, and to model our heart on His, we must work assiduously to uproot every trace of pride and self-love. It is a task to which we must give our attention day by day, always beginning

again, and never allowing ourselves to be discouraged by the constant recurrence of the attractions and resentments of our "ego." We can only win this battle by never giving up the struggle.

To arouse our courage, let us remind ourselves that our strivings are not only good for our own soul but useful also to others, for, as Pius XI says, "the more we have sacrificed our self-love and passions, the more abundant will be the fruits of propitiation and expiation which we shall reap for ourselves and for others" (*Miserentissimus Redemptor*). The battle against self-love and the practice of humility are both part of the program of a soul consecrated to the Sacred Heart, of one who has offered itself to Him as a victim of reparation.

#### COLLOQUY

"O most Sacred Heart of Jesus, You desire so ardently to shower Your favors upon the unfortunate, and to teach those who want to advance in the school of Your love; You continually invite me to be meek and humble of heart like You. For this reason, You convince me that in order to gain Your friendship and to become Your true disciple, I can do nothing better than to try henceforth to be truly meek and humble. Grant me, then, that sincere humility which keeps me subject to everyone, which makes me bear little humiliations in silence, which even makes me accept them willingly and with serenity, without excuse or complaint, remembering that I really deserve more and greater ones than I receive.

"O Jesus, permit me to enter Your Heart as I would a school. In this school teach me the science of the saints; in this school I shall listen attentively to Your sweet words: 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls.' I can see that the storms I fear arise solely from my self-love, my vanity, my attachment to my own will. Defend me, O Lord, protect the peace of my soul! Your Heart is an abyss in which I find everything and, above all, it is an abyss of love in which I must submerge every other love, especially love of self with its fruits of human respect, vain complacency and egoism. By drowning all these tendencies in the abyss of Your love I shall find there all the riches my soul needs. O Jesus, if I feel in

myself an abyss of pride and vainglory, I shall plunge it immediately into the profound humiliations of Your Heart which is an abyss of humility. If I find in myself an abyss of agitation, impatience or anger, I shall fly to Your Heart which is an abyss of meekness. In every circumstance, at every encounter, I want to abandon myself to Your Heart, the ocean of love and charity, and I will not leave it until I am all penetrated by its divine fire" (cf. St. Margaret Mary).

215

### *THE HEART OF JESUS OUR REFUGE*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O Jesus, deign to take me into Your Sacred Heart. Grand that it may be the sanctuary where I may be recollected, sheltered, and find my rest.

#### MEDITATION

1. The liturgy of the Feast of the Sacred Heart presents to us the Heart of Jesus as the ark of salvation, our shelter and our refuge. "O Heart of Jesus, ark...of grace, pardon and mercy, O Heart, inviolable sanctuary of the New Law, Temple more sacred than the ancient ark!...Who would not want an eternal home in this Heart?" (*RB*). "Close to these blessed wounds in the Heart of Christ," exclaims St. Peter Canisius, "I shall find refuge; in them I shall build my nest in full security." This has always been the hope of contemplative souls, of interior souls : to take refuge in the Heart of Christ as in their chosen asylum. St. Teresa Margaret of the Heart of Jesus wrote in her last resolutions : "My God, I wish to enclose myself now and forever in Your most loving Heart as in a desert, to live there in You, with You, and for You, a hidden life of love and sacrifice" (*Sp*). The soul who wishes to sound the depths of the mysteries of Christ and to understand something of His infinite love, will find no better way than to enter within His Heart or, as St. John of the Cross says, "to hide itself in the breast of

its Beloved, for to these clefts He invites it in the Canticle of Canticles saying : ‘ Arise, and make haste, my love, my fair one, and come into the clefts of the rock, and into the cavern of the enclosure ” (*SC* 31,5). Let us take refuge then, in the Heart of Christ and contemplate His mysteries and His love, but seek there, too, a shelter for our interior life. This is a place of retreat which is always at our disposal and we can retire there even in the midst of occupations and duties. When rumors, curiosity, gossip, and the vanities of the world threaten to overwhelm us, let us quickly retire by a swift interior movement to the Heart of Jesus; there we shall always find recollection and peace.

2. In every temptation, we must fly to the Heart of Christ, reflecting on His goodness and charity, comparing them with our “ vileness, malice, infidelity, and pride ” (St. Peter Canisius). The Heart of Jesus will be our surest refuge in temptation; if we wish to escape Satan’s wiles and our own evil tendencies, we must take shelter in the Heart of Him who conquered Satan, and healed our ills by His wounds. Jesus triumphed over evil; if we take refuge in Him, we will have nothing to fear. Tempests may still rage around us, but our soul will be guarded and protected from shipwreck. No matter what kind of struggles we have to undergo, no matter how bitter or humiliating they may be, if we keep intact our confidence in this divine Heart, it will be our salvation. “ Heart of Jesus, salvation of those who trust in Thee, ” the Church puts on our lips in the litany of the Sacred Heart.

We must have unshaken confidence in this meek Heart in spite of all our faults and daily infidelities. “ Cast all your faults into the abyss of His charity with great confidence and you will immediately be free of them, ” says St. Peter Canisius. And St. Bernard declared even more forcefully, “ I have committed a great sin. My conscience will be troubled but will not despair because I remember the wounds of my Lord. For indeed, He was wounded for our iniquities. What sin is there so deadly that it cannot be remitted through the death of Christ? ” With such confidence we, too, must seek the Heart of Jesus as a sure refuge in all our falls. We will often commit some fault through weakness or surprise in spite of all our good will. Let us then humble ourselves profoundly, acknowledge our weakness

with humility, but we must not let this experience separate us from the Heart of Jesus. We should return to Him like the prodigal son to his Father and ask His pardon while kissing His sacred wounds, and renew our resolution to take up our abode in His Heart so full of goodness and mercy.

#### COLLOQUY

“O most sweet Jesus, the treachery of my sins would forbid my entering Your Heart. But since an inconceivable charity enlarged Your Heart, and since You, who alone are holy, can purify what is defiled, cleanse me from my faults, O good Jesus, and deliver me from my sins. When I am purified by You, I can approach You, O purest One, and enter and abide in Your Heart all the days of my life, to know and to do what You wish me to do” (St. Bonaventure).

“Truly, where is there sure and lasting safety and rest for one who is weak if not in Your wounds, O my Savior? I dwell there all the more securely as You are powerful and can save me.

“The world rages around me, the body weighs upon me, the devil lays snares for me, but I do not fall because I am founded on You, the firm rock.... If then, O Christ, the thought of Your wounds comes to my mind, if I recall such a powerful and efficacious remedy, I can no longer be terrified by the fear that any harm may befall me. Filled with confidence, I shall take what I need from Your Heart, O Lord, for mercies abound there, and Your wounds are open to permit these mercies to flow forth. They pierced Your hands and Your feet, they opened Your side with a spear; and through these clefts I am able...to taste and see how sweet You are, O Lord!....

“The blade pierced Your soul and reached Your Heart so that You might know compassion for my infirmities. Through the wounds in Your Body, the secret of Your Heart, that great mystery of love, was revealed; the inmost heart of Your mercy was opened, through which You came to us from the heights of heaven. Where then can we see more clearly than in Your wounds, O Lord, that You are sweet, gentle and full of mercy? No one indeed shows greater mercy than He who gives His life for the condemned, for those sentenced to death. Hence, all my

hope lies in Your mercy, O Lord, and I shall never be deprived of it so long as You are merciful" (St. Bernard).

## 216

*THE SACRED HEART AND THE EUCHARIST*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - Sacred Heart of Jesus, teach me how to live with You through the Sacrament of Your love.

**MEDITATION**

i. Devotion to the Sacred Heart should bring us to a life of intimate union with Jesus who, we know, is truly present and living in the Eucharist. The two devotions—to the Sacred Heart and to the Eucharist—are closely connected. They call upon one another and, we may even say, they require each other. The Sacred Heart explains the mystery of the love of Jesus by which He becomes bread in order to nourish us with His substance, while in the Eucharist we have the real presence of this same Heart, living in our midst. It is wonderful to contemplate the Heart of Jesus as the symbol of His infinite love, but it is even more wonderful to find Him always near us in the Sacrament of the altar. The Sacred Heart which we honor is not a dead person's heart which no longer palpitates, so that we have only the memory of him, but it is the Heart of a living Person, of One who lives eternally. He lives not only in heaven where His sacred humanity dwells in glory, but He lives also on earth wherever the Eucharist is reserved. In speaking of the Eucharist, Our Lord says to us, "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (*Mt* 28,20). In Holy Communion, then, this Heart beats within us, it touches our heart; through the love of this Heart, we are fed with His Flesh and with His Blood, so that we may abide in Him and He in us. "In the Eucharist," said Benedict XV, "this divine Heart governs us and loves us by living and abiding with us, so that we may live and abide in Him, because in this Sacrament...He

offers and gives Himself to us as victim, companion, viaticum, and the pledge of future glory. ”

2. The Eucharistic presence of Jesus in us is limited to the brief moments while the sacred species last, and ceases as soon as these disappear. However, Jesus expressly said, “ He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood *abideth* in Me and I in him ” (*Jn* 6,57). Now the word “ *abide* ” does not signify a passing visit, but is expressive of a stable, permanent state. Hence, from Our Lord’s own words, we can see that our union with Jesus continues even after the sacred species are consumed. And this is the literal truth. First, union with the divinity of Jesus does not cease, since the three divine Persons dwell continually in souls in the state of grace; but there is also a certain enduring union with His humanity. Even when Christ in His sacred humanity is no longer substantially present in the one who has received Holy Communion, He is there by the influence of His operative presence and by the effusion of His grace. The Heart of Christ is no longer with us sacramentally when the appearances of bread and wine have disappeared, but He still abides with us spiritually by the irradiation of His love and His vivifying action, since we receive through the medium of the sacred humanity all that is given to us in the supernatural order. This spiritual union with Jesus, with His Sacred Heart, does not necessarily require Holy Communion; the state of grace suffices. Nevertheless, the Eucharistic Bread nourishes, consolidates, and strengthens this union, making it more profound in the sense that Jesus always exerts greater influence over the soul of the communicant, and His divine Heart radiates more completely His love and all His virtues in the hearts of those who receive Him in this Sacrament. Hence, it is not extravagant to aspire to an effective, permanent union with Jesus and His Sacred Heart; on the contrary, this is the union which the Church bids us ask for every day in the beautiful prayer before the Communion of the Mass : “ *a te numquam separari permittas,* ” never permit me to be separated from You.

## COLLOQUY

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who, by the will of the Father and the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, hast by Thy death given life to the world, deliver me by this Thy most sacred Body and Blood from all my sins and from every evil. Make me always adhere to Thy commandments and never permit me to be separated from Thee" (*RM*).

"O what a wonderful and intimate union is established between the soul and You, O lovable Lord, when it receives You in the Holy Eucharist! Then the soul becomes one with You, provided it is well disposed by the practice of the virtues, to imitate what You did in the course of Your life, Passion, and death. No, I cannot be perfectly united to You, O Christ, or You to me in Holy Communion, if I do not first make myself like You by renouncing myself and practicing the virtues most pleasing to You, and of which You have given us such wonderful examples.

"My union with You in Holy Communion will be more perfect to the degree that I become more like You by the practice of the virtues" (*cf. St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi*).

"O Jesus, You alone do I love and desire, for You alone do I hunger and thirst, in You I wish to lose myself and be consumed. Envelop me in the flame of Your charity and make me cling so closely to You that I can never be separated from You!"

"O Lord Jesus, O immense ocean, why do You wait to absorb this little drop of water in Your immensity? My soul's one desire is to leave myself and enter into You. Open, O Lord, open Your loving Heart to me, for I desire nothing but You and I wish to cling to You with all my being. O wonderful union! This intimacy with You is, in truth, of more value than life itself! O my Beloved, permit me to embrace You in the depths of my soul so that, united to You, I may remain there, joined to You by an indissoluble bond!" (*St. Gertrude*).

**FIRM CONFIDENCE**

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O Lord, make me understand that I am nothing, that I can do nothing by myself, and that only in You can I accomplish anything.

**MEDITATION**

1. Two ideas dominate the liturgy of today's Mass : great confidence in God and an acute awareness of human misery and insufficiency. These two ideas are closely connected, for it is the consciousness of our nothingness which leads us to put all our confidence in God, and the greater this confidence becomes in us, the more convinced we are of our nothingness.

The Mass begins with a cry of unshakable hope : "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (*Introit*). The Lord is with me in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, the Lord comes to me in Holy Communion. What can separate me from Him? What can make me fear?

Yet I know my weakness; I have ever before my eyes the remembrance of my failures and infidelities. How great, then, is my need to humbly repeat the beautiful prayer of the Gradual : "Save us, O Lord, and pardon our sins.... Help us, O God, our Savior, for the glory of Your Name." Yes, in spite of the continual help of divine grace, in spite of so many confessions and communions, I have to acknowledge new failures every day; daily, I must begin anew. The struggle is arduous and painful, but in today's Epistle (*Rom 8, 18-23*), St. Paul reminds us that "the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us." This thought is one of consolation, hope and confidence; it does not, however, prevent us from longing for freedom and complete redemption. This is what the Apostle experienced when he said : "We also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God,

the redemption of our body in Christ Jesus." The more we suffer because of our wretchedness, the more we should run to Jesus, with full confidence in the power of His Redemption.

2. Today's Gospel (*Lk* 5,1-11) is a practical demonstration of the words of Jesus : "Without Me, you can do nothing" (*Jn* 15,5). Simon and his companions had been fishing all night and had caught nothing; that is all they had been able to do by themselves. If we have had some little experience in the spiritual life, we will recognize that this is often our situation too. How many efforts we have made to rid ourself of this or that attachment, to forget injuries, to adapt ourself to our neighbor's way of doing things, to subject our will to another's! And yet, after all these attempts, we find our hands empty, like Peter's nets. Let us not be discouraged; if we can humbly acknowledge our failure instead of feeling annoyance because of it, the failure itself will turn into victory. So it happened to Peter after he had admitted publicly that he had "taken nothing." St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus comments : "Had the Apostle caught some small fish, perhaps our divine Master would not have worked a miracle; but he had caught *nothing*, and so through the power and goodness of God his nets were soon filled with great fishes. Such is Our Lord's way. He gives as God, with divine generosity, but He insists on *humility of heart*" (*L*).

In spite of our good will to advance in virtue, Our Lord will not permit us to have any success until He sees that we are thoroughly convinced of our own weakness and inability; to give us this conviction, He lets us, as He let Peter, "work all night without catching anything." But afterwards, as He sees our growing awareness of our poverty and our willingness to admit it openly, He will come to our aid. We must, then, have great faith in Him, never allowing ourselves to give up through lack of success. Every day, relying "on His word," we must begin anew. If we have learned not to trust in our own strength, we must also learn to have complete confidence in the divine aid. If we have caught nothing until now, perhaps it is our lack of unshakable confidence that is the cause, and this deficiency, besides being displeasing to Jesus, paralyzes our spiritual life. Then let us repeat with Peter in a similar cry of confidence : "*in verbo tuo laxabo rete*," Lord, at Thy word, I will let down

the net. And let us repeat it every day, every moment, without ever growing weary.

#### COLLOQUY

“ O Lord, You are my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? You are the protector of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? . . . If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. If a battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident. One thing do I ask of You, O Lord, that I may dwell in Your house all the days of my life. . . . Then, in the day of evils, You will protect me in the secret place of Your tabernacle, You will exalt me upon a rock. . . .

“ Hear, O Lord, my voice with which I have cried to You : have mercy on me and hear me. . . . Turn not away Your face from me; decline not in Your wrath from Your servant; be my helper, forsake me not; do not despise me, O God my Savior. Although my father and my mother should abandon me, I am sure that You will never abandon me. . . . O my soul, expect the Lord, do manfully, and let your heart take courage, and wait for Him ” (*Ps 26*).

“ O Lord, You have done great things in me, and the greatest of all is that you have shown me my littleness, and how of myself I am incapable of anything good.

“ Lord, You see how often I fail, but I am never astonished at it. . . . I enter into myself and say : ‘ Alas, I am once more at the first step as before! ’ But I say this in great peace without sadness, because I know that You know perfectly how fragile is our nature and You are always ready to help us. What, then, shall I fear? As soon as You see me fully convinced of my nothingness, You stretch out Your hand to me; but if I should try to do something great, even under the pretext of zeal, You desert me. So all I have to do is to humble myself, to bear with meekness my imperfections. Herein lies, for me, true holiness ” (*T.C.J. St, 9 – NV – C*).

*ABIDING IN CHRIST*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O Jesus, teach me not only how to live with You, but how to live in You, to abide in You.

**MEDITATION**

1. On the evening of the Last Supper Jesus said : " Abide in Me and I in you " (*Jn* 15,4) and shortly afterwards He instituted the Eucharist, the Sacrament whose specific purpose is to nourish our life of union with Him. When Jesus comes to us, He does not depart without leaving on our soul " the impress of grace, like a seal pressed on hot wax... which leaves its impression after it has been removed. Thus the virtue of this sacrament, the warmth of divine charity, remains in the soul " (St. Catherine of Siena). Jesus said, " I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled? " (*Lk* 12,49), and where will He light the fire of His love if not in the soul of the communicant who has the great privilege of giving Him hospitality? Each time we approach the Eucharistic table, Jesus, through the power of this Sacrament, rekindles in us the fire of His love and leaves the imprint of His grace; by this love and grace we remain spiritually united to Him. Even if we do not think of it, this reality is accomplished and is, of itself, very precious. However, Jesus wishes us to be aware of it, that we may live our union with Him in its fullness. Note that in speaking of our union with Himself, Jesus always presupposes our action before His own : " He that eateth My Flesh... abideth in Me and I in Him, " " Abide in Me, and I in you " (*Jn* 6,57 - 15,4); not that our action is the more important—for Jesus always precedes us with His grace, without which any union with Him would be impossible—but He would have us understand that we shall be united to Him in proportion to our correspondence with grace. Each Communion, of itself, brings us a new grace of union with Christ and therefore offers us the possibility of greater intimacy with Him, but we will live this union only according to the measure of our good will and our interior dispositions.

2. If we wish to "abide" in Christ throughout the day—having been nourished by Him in Holy Communion—we must, first of all, keep our heart recollected. If as soon as we leave the Church we forget that we have received the Lord and we submerge ourselves in "other business and occupations and worldly hindrances" says St. Teresa of Avila (*Way*, 34), we will never be able to remain united to Christ. Further, the Saint would tell us that by acting in such a way we seem "to be making all possible haste to prevent the Lord from taking possession of the house which is His own" (*ibid.*). The state of grace suffices, it is true, to keep us spiritually united to Christ, but how much more fruitful this union would be for us, if we tried to live it actually! Therefore, even in the midst of our daily occupations, let us try to remain under the influence of our morning Communion, that is, under the influence of Jesus, of His love, and His unceasing action in our soul. We should return often, at least in spirit, to the tabernacle to keep ourselves in contact with the Eucharist. If our duties oblige us to go out, let every church we pass or see from a distance, be a sweet reminder of the Lord we have received that day or will receive on the following day; let it be the occasion for a quick but fervent impulse of our heart toward Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, or a rapid return to the sanctuary of our soul, there to renew our interior contact with the Lord. We should try to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament every day, in such a way that it will be a real heart-to-heart visit with Jesus. If we truly *hunger* after Him we should feel an urgent need of keeping ourselves under the influence of the Eucharist; we should make use of all possible means to profit as much as we can from the grace of union with Christ, which has been offered to us in Holy Communion. By doing this, our sacramental Communion will be prolonged throughout the day by means of a continual spiritual Communion with Jesus. Then we will be really living by Him, for as He said, "He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (*Jn* 6,58).

#### COLLOQUY

"O Jesus, unite my heart to Yours, and consume everything in it that is displeasing to You; unite all that I am to all

that You are, that You may supply for everything I lack. Unite my prayers and praises to those You address to Your Father from the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, so that Your prayer may supply for the deficiencies of mine.

"In order to make myself like You, who on the altar are obedient to every priest, good or bad, I will obey promptly and will put myself in the hands of my superiors as a victim to be immolated, so that dying to all my own wishes, inclinations, passions, and repugnances, I can be disposed of by my superiors as they see fit, without showing any repugnance. And as Your life in the Blessed Sacrament is completely hidden from the eyes of creatures, who see nothing but the poor appearance of the bread, so I shall strive, for love of You, to live so hidden that I shall always be veiled under the ashes of humility, loving to be despised, and rejoicing to appear the poorest and most abject of all.

"In order to be like You, who are always alone in the Blessed Sacrament, I shall love solitude and try to converse with You as much as possible. Grant that my mind may not seek to know anything but You, that my heart may have no longings or desires but to love You. When I am obliged to take some comfort, I shall take care to see that it be pleasing to Your Heart. In my conversations, O divine Word, I shall consecrate all my words to You so that You will not permit me to pronounce a single one which is not for Your glory.... When I am thirsty, I shall endure it in honor of the thirst You endured for the salvation of souls.... If by chance, I commit some fault, I shall humble myself, and then take the opposite virtue from Your Heart, offering it to the eternal Father in expiation for my failure. All this I intend to do, O Eucharistic Jesus, to unite myself to You in every action of the day" (cf. St. Margaret Mary).

**FROM THE EUCHARIST TO THE TRINITY**

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O Jesus, lead me to the Trinity; help me to live with the Trinity.

**MEDITATION**

1. Jesus came to us from the bosom of the Father to bring us to the Trinity; this was the purpose of the Incarnation and it is also that of the Eucharist, which prolongs the mystery of the Incarnation in time. In the Eucharist Jesus continues to be the Mediator between the three divine Persons and ourselves, holding out His hand to lead us to Them. It is by coming to us in Holy Communion that He continually puts us in more direct contact with the Blessed Trinity; for He then comes in the integrity of His Person as God and Man, humanity and divinity; and as God, as the Word, He is always indissolubly united to the Father and to the Holy Spirit. Jesus can repeat from the consecrated Host what He once said while He was on earth : "He that sent Me is with Me, and He hath not left Me alone," and more explicitly : "I am in the Father and the Father [is] in Me" (*Jn* 8,29 – 14,11). Therefore, when He comes to us in Holy Communion, He does not come alone, but with Him come the Father and the Holy Spirit, because the three divine Persons, although distinct one from another, are inseparable. The presence of the Trinity in our soul is not limited to the moments when Jesus is sacramentally present within us, for the three divine Persons dwell permanently in a soul that is in the state of grace. It is true, however, that the Trinity is present in a very special way in Christ, the Incarnate Word, the one Man personally united to the Trinity and in whom dwells all the fullness of the divinity : "*In quo habitat omnis plenitudo divinitatis*" (Litany of the Sacred Heart). Hence, it is certain that wherever Christ is—and therefore in our soul at the time of Communion—there the Trinity is also present in a very special way.

2. The Blessed Trinity is never so fully present to our souls as in the few moments when we have the sacramental presence of Jesus within us. The three divine Persons are not only present there but are pleased to remain there. The Father takes pleasure in His beloved Son who dwells within us and whom He has given to us in the Eucharist; the Word takes delight in the sacred humanity of Jesus which is wholly and forever His; the Holy Spirit rejoices in Christ, His chosen temple and, because of Him, is pleased to dwell within us. The entire Trinity, finding Jesus in us, abides in our soul with joy, looks on us with special love, and each Person diffuses Himself into us more fully. Thus each Communion nourishes our life of union not only with Jesus, but also with the entire Trinity; each Communion increases our capacity to welcome the three divine Persons and to live in "company" with Them in an increasingly intimate and profound relationship. The prayer of Jesus : " As Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us...I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one" (*Jn 17,21.23*), finds its most perfect realization in the precious moments when Jesus in the Eucharist is living within us. But even when His sacramental presence has gone, its effect remains; namely, this more intimate union with the Blessed Trinity.

Furthermore, we are never able to offer the Trinity a more worthy dwelling place than our soul during the moments when Jesus is sacramentally present within it; and not only a dwelling place, for we can also offer gifts, praises, supplications, and adoration worthy of God's infinite Majesty. In fact, we can offer Jesus present within us, because it is the Trinity, the three divine Persons Themselves, who have given Him to us, and He has given Himself to us with His whole substance : Jesus, the perfect praise of the Blessed Trinity, the beloved Son in whom the three divine Persons take all Their delight and complacency. Together with Him, we offer the love, the adoration, supplication, praise, and reparation of His Sacred Heart. How rich we are when we have Jesus within us! By Him and in Him we can fittingly honor, exalt, and glorify the Most Holy Trinity.

## COLLOQUY

"O Jesus Christ, true God and true Man! My soul rejoices to find You in the Blessed Sacrament, You, the uncreated God who became man, a creature! In this Sacrament, O Christ, I find both Your humanity and Your divinity; from Your humanity I rise to Your divinity, and from it I go back to Your humanity. I see Your ineffable divinity which contains all the treasures of wisdom, of knowledge, of incorruptible riches. I see the inexhaustible fountain of delights which alone can satisfy our intelligence. I see Your most precious soul, O Jesus, with all the virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit, a holy and unspotted oblation; I see Your sacred Body, the price of our redemption; I see Your Blood, which purifies and vivifies us; in brief, I find treasures which are so precious and so great that I cannot comprehend them.

"This Sacrament really contains You, O my God, You whom the Angels adore, in whose presence the Spirits and mighty Powers tremble. Oh! if we could only see You as clearly as they do, with what reverence would we approach this Sacrament, with what humility would we receive You.

"O Most Holy Trinity, You instituted this Sacrament in order to obtain the object of Your love, that is, to attract to Yourself the soul of Your creature, and detaching it from all earthly things, to unite it to Yourself, the uncreated God. In doing this, You make it die to sin and give it spiritual life, eternal life. O Blessed Trinity, this Sacrament was instituted by Your infinite goodness that we might be united to You and You to us; that we might receive You into ourselves and be received by You; that at the same time we might hold You within ourselves and be held by You" (St. Angela of Foligno).

*THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O my God, Trinity whom I adore, teach me to know You and to love You.

**MEDITATION**

1. We had no right, as creatures, to know the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity, which is the mystery of God's intimate life. However, God has made it known to us, for He did not wish to leave us in our natural state, that of a simple creature, but willed to raise us to the dignity of sons, of friends. The Son of God said, "I will not now call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known to you" (*Jn* 15,15). The "all things" is precisely the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity which Jesus, the Son of God, has seen and heard in the bosom of the Father.

In the Old Testament we find some references to this mystery, but its perfect revelation belongs to the New Testament, to the Testament of Love; and we might say that God wanted to reserve this manifestation for Himself. He did not reveal it to us by the prophets but by His only-begotten Son, who is one with Him. "No man hath seen God at any time," says the Evangelist; "the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (*Jn* 1, 18). Jesus came to reveal to us the mystery of the intimate life of God; He spoke of Himself as the Son of God, equal to the Father in all things: "He that seeth Me, seeth the Father also," because "I am in the Father and the Father [is] in Me" (*ibid.* 14,9,11). He spoke to us of the Holy Spirit, without whom we cannot attain eternal life: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (*ibid.* 3,5), and He promised us that He Himself, with the Father, would send us the Spirit who proceeds both from Him, the Word, and from the Father: "It is expedient to you that I go. For...if I go, I will send Him to you" (*ibid.* 16,7); "I will ask the

Father and He shall give you another Paraclete...the Spirit of truth" (*ibid.* 14,16). Jesus often repeated these ideas, thus teaching us that it is good for us to fix our gaze on the sublime mystery of the Blessed Trinity : to admire, to praise, and to return love to this One Triune God, who loves us so much that He wishes to bring us into the secrecy of His own intimate life.

2. God, the sovereign, infinite Good, is self-sufficient. He finds all His happiness in knowing and loving Himself. Because He is the infinitely perfect Being, knowledge and love are essentially fruitful in Him, and from this fecundity comes the mystery of His intimate life, the mystery of the Trinity. The Father knows Himself perfectly from all eternity, and knowing Himself, He generates the Word, the substantial Idea in which the Father expresses, and to whom He communicates, His whole essence, divinity and infinite goodness. Thus the Word is "the brightness of the glory and the figure of the substance" of the Father (*Heb* 1,3); but He is a substantial brightness and figure, because He possesses the same nature and the same perfections as the Father. From all eternity, the Father and the Son contemplate and love each other infinitely, by reason of the infinite, indivisible perfection which they have in common.

In this eternal love, there is a mutual attraction, a mutual giving of Themselves, one to the other, diffusing Their whole nature and divine essence into a third Person, the Holy Spirit, who is the terminus, the pledge, and the substantial gift of Their mutual love. Thus the same nature, the same divine life circulates among the three divine Persons : from the Father to the Son, and from the Father and the Son to the Holy Spirit. The mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity is therefore the mystery of the intimate life of God, a mystery surging from the most perfect operations of knowledge and love by which God knows and loves Himself.

More than any other mystery, that of the Trinity shows us our God as the *living* God, as One whose life is essentially fruitful, so fruitful that the whole divine nature and essence can be communicated by the Father to the Son, and from the Father and the Son to the Holy Spirit without any loss or diminution, all Three thereby possessing the same infinite perfection. This mystery, above all others, reveals to us the perfection of God's goodness. It tells us

that God is good, not only because He is the infinite Good, but also because this infinite good that He is is communicated : from the Father to the Son, and from the Father and the Son to the Holy Spirit. Whereas in works *outside* Himself God communicates His good only partially, in the bosom of the Trinity He communicates it integrally and necessarily, so that His intimate life consists precisely in this eternal, necessary and absolute communication of His whole good, His whole Being. The mystery of the Trinity teaches us that in God there is a boundless, inexhaustible ocean of goodness, love, fruitfulness and life. Precious knowledge this, because more than any other, it enables us to develop a sense of the infinite greatness of God.

#### COLLOQUY

" O incomprehensible God, Your greatness is eternal, and Your goodness ineffable. I see the three divine Persons flowing one into another in an indescribable, inscrutable way, and I rejoice in this sight. The Father flows into the Son, the Son into the Father, and the Father and the Son flow into the Holy Spirit. Eternal God, You are unspeakably good, You who, out of goodness, communicate to a creature, aware of its nothingness, some knowledge of Your eternal Being; but although this communication is wonderful, it might be called in all truth a mere nothing, in comparison with what You really are " (cf. St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi).

" O sovereign, eternal good, what has moved You, O infinite God, to enlighten me, Your finite creature, with the light of Your truth? You Yourself, O Fire of Love, You are the cause. For it is love which has constrained You and which always constrains You to be merciful to us, giving immense and infinite graces to Your creatures. O goodness which surpasses all goodness! You alone are He who is sovereignly good! You have given us the Word, Your only-begotten Son, that He might dwell among us who are nothing but wretchedness and darkness. What is the reason for this gift? Love, for you loved us before we ever were.

" O eternal Trinity! Who can reach You to thank You for the immeasurable gifts and unlimited favors You have showered upon me, as well as for the doctrine of the truth

You have taught me? Answer me, O Lord!... Enlighten me with Your grace, so that by this very light, I may thank You" (St. Catherine of Siena).

### *IN THE PRESENCE OF THE TRINITY*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - The knowledge of Your mystery, O Most Holy Trinity, creates in me profound humility, blind faith, and ardent love.

#### MEDITATION

1. What Jesus has revealed to us, and what the Church, relying on His word, teaches us about the Trinity, is sufficient to prove the existence of this mystery, but it does not suffice to enable us to understand it. Furthermore, it is the mystery of our faith which is least accessible to human reason, making us realize more than ever the infinite disproportion between our intelligence and the divine mysteries, giving us a vivid awareness of the vast distance which separates us, mere creatures that we are, from God, the Supreme Being, the Most High. All this is good—very good—because it makes us take, with regard to God, an attitude truly proper to creatures : an attitude of humility, of humble acknowledgement of our insufficiency, of respectful self-abasement, of reverent adoration. Thus, when we put ourselves in the presence of the great mystery of the Trinity, we feel the need to repeat humbly, "*Nihil sumus, nihil possumus, nihil valemus.*" We are nothing, we can do nothing, we are worth nothing (St. John Eudes), while at the same time praising the inaccessible greatness of our God : "*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth!*" Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts! Thou only art holy, Thou only art almighty, Thou only art worthy, Thou alone art He who is.

Unaided reason is blinded by the greatness of the mystery, but this same reason enlightened by faith is not misled. It admits its limitations, and submitting itself to divine

revelation, it believes. This act of faith is all the more meritorious and supernatural, the less it leans on human reasoning. It gives greater honor to God the more blind its adherence to His word. St. Teresa of Jesus says, "The less of a natural foundation these truths had, the more firmly I held them and the greater was the devotion they inspired in me. I saw I had every reason for praising God" (*Life*, 19). This is the faith of a humble soul in the presence of the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity.

2. Consideration of the mystery of the Trinity inspires us not only with an attitude of humble reverence and blind faith, but also with one of deep filial love. "This is the characteristic of friendship," says St. Thomas, "that the friend confides his secrets to another." This is also characteristic of the love of God for us, because by revealing to us the mystery of the Trinity, He has unveiled to us the secret of His intimate life, toward which we had no right to turn our gaze. If we had no other proofs of the love of friendship which God has for us, the revelation of this mystery would be more than enough to convince us of it. He has confided to us the secrets of His Heart; He has opened to us the mystery of His personal life and has admitted us into intimacy with Himself. All this justly strengthens our conviction of the *exceeding* charity with which God has loved us, especially since, not being satisfied to reveal this mystery, the three Persons of the glorious Trinity willed to give Themselves to us as well! The Father gave Himself to us by bringing us into existence and by sacrificing His only-begotten Son for our salvation; the Son gave Himself to us by becoming Incarnate, by dying for us on the Cross and by making Himself our Food; the Holy Spirit gave Himself to us by coming to dwell in our souls, by infusing grace and charity in us. If the three divine Persons have offered Themselves to us to this degree, it is to elevate us to the status of sons and to bring us, as sons, into Their divine family.

All through the Gospels we see the entire Trinity bending over man to redeem him and to make him share in Their divine nature and eternal beatitude. We see the Father enveloping us in His paternal mercy and providence; the Son becoming man and shedding His Blood for us; the Holy Spirit sanctifying our souls by filling them with grace and love.

Yes, in the presence of the Trinity, we always remain tiny creatures, infinitely distant from the divine Majesty; yet, the Trinity has stooped to us and drawn us, loving us with an eternal love. “*In caritate perpetua dilexi te, ideo attraxi te miserans tui,*” I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee (*Jer 31,3*).

#### COLLOQUY

“ My faith invokes You, O Blessed Trinity, with a clear, sincere voice, that faith which has been nourished by You since my birth, illumined unceasingly by the light of Your grace, and increased and confirmed in me by the doctrine of our Mother, the Church.

“ I call upon You, O supremely happy Trinity, one, blessed, and glorious, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; God, Lord, and Paraclete; charity, grace, and communication.

“ O three divine Persons, equal and co-eternal; One, true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, dwelling alone in eternity and in inaccessible light. By Your power You created the world, and by Your prudence You rule the terrestrial orb; holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, terrible and mighty, just and merciful, admirable, lovable, and worthy of all praise!

“ I implore You, one, indivisible Trinity, open to me who invoke You.... I am knocking at Your door, O sovereign Father. You have said. ‘Knock, and it shall be opened to you’; bid that it be opened for me. I am knocking at Your door, O most merciful Father, by the desires of my eager heart, my cries, and my tears. O Father of mercies, hear the groaning of Your child and hold out to me Your helpful hand.... I know, O Lord, I know and I confess, that I am unworthy to be loved by You but You are indeed worthy to be loved by me. I am not worthy to serve You, but You are most worthy to be served by Your creature. Give me, then, O Lord, what You are worthy of, and I shall be made worthy of that which I do not now deserve.

“ I beseech You, O Blessed Trinity, come to me and make me a temple worthy of Your glory. I pray to the Father through the Son, and to the Son through the Father; I pray to the Holy Spirit through the Father and the Son, to take away all my vices and to implant all the virtues in me” (St. Augustine).

*THE TRINITY WITHIN US*

PRESENCE OF GOD - O Most Holy Trinity, who art pleased to make my soul Your dwelling place, deign to share with me Your divine life.

## MEDITATION

1. Jesus came not only to reveal the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, but also to establish ties of the closest friendship between our souls and the three divine Persons. He is not only the Revealer of the Trinity, but the Mediator, the Way, the Bridge, leading us to the Triune God and uniting us with Him. In the beginning God willed to give Himself to our first parents who had been created in the state of grace, as Creator, and even more, as Trinity. However, sin cut off this intimate communication of friendship, by which God would have wished to treat man not only as a creature, but as a son, a friend for whom He would unveil the mystery of His intimate life in order to share it with him. All this would indeed be given back to man, but only after the Incarnation of the Word, when Jesus, as the God-Man, would restore what had been lost by becoming the Mediator between God and man. By cleansing us in His precious Blood, Jesus endowed our souls anew with the capacity of receiving the divine gift of sanctifying grace. We could once again participate in the divine nature and life; thus Jesus restored us to our original dignity as living temples of the glorious Trinity. Because He redeemed us, He could make this wonderful promise : " If anyone love Me... My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him " (*Jn* 14,23). These words reveal to us the mystery of the indwelling of the Trinity in our souls, an indwelling which implies a very special presence of God within us. It is realized only in a soul who loves, in a soul who lives in charity and grace, because, as St. John says, " He that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him " (*1 Jn* 4,16).

God dwells in a soul in the state of grace as friend delighting to be with friend, conversing with him in sweet

familiarity. "Behold," says the Lord, "I stand at the gate and knock; if any man shall hear My voice and open to Me the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me" (*Ap* 3,20).

2. If we are in the state of grace, God not only dwells in us, but since He is the living God, He lives in us : He lives His intimate life, the life of the Trinity. The Father is living in us, continually generating His Son; the Father and the Son are living in us, and from Them the Holy Spirit unceasingly proceeds. Our soul is the little heaven where this magnificent divine life, the life of the Blessed Trinity, is always unfolding. Why do the three divine Persons live in us, if not to give us a share in Their life, bringing us into this endless stream of divine life?

The Father begets His Son in us and gives Him to us in order to make us share in His divine Sonship, to make us His adopted child; and He does this because of His only-begotten Son who became incarnate for us. The Father and the Son breathe forth the Holy Spirit within our soul, and give Him to us, so that He who is the terminus and bond of Their love and union, may also be the bond of our love and union with Them.

The divine Persons are within us; we receive Them and participate in Their divine life through faith and charity. By faith we *believe* in Them, by charity we are *united* to Them. When we are one with the Father, He receives us into His paternal embrace, sustains us by His almighty power, and draws us with Himself to contemplate and love His Son, according to the words of Jesus Himself : "No man can come to Me except the Father draw him" (*Jn* 6,44). When we are joined to the Son, He clothes us with His splendor, penetrates us with His infinite light, teaches us to know the Father, and covers us with the merits He acquired for us by becoming Incarnate. He takes us with Him to love and praise the Father, thus verifying His word : "No man cometh to the Father but by Me" (*ibid.* 14,6).

When we are united with the Holy Spirit, He infuses within us the grace of the adoption of the children of God, and pours into our soul an ever-increasing participation in the divine life. He thus draws us with Him into an ever more intimate communion with the Father and the Son,

so that, as Jesus said, we may be "made perfect in one" (*ibid.* 17,23).

"O souls created for these grandeurs and called thereto! What are you doing?" exclaimed St. John of the Cross. "Wherein do you occupy yourselves?" (*SC*, 39,7). The Most Blessed Trinity desires to share Its divine life with us, and shall we turn our gaze elsewhere?

#### COLLOQUY

"O eternal Trinity, One God, One in essence and Three in Persons, You created man to Your image, so that by the three powers of his one soul he would resemble Your Trinity and Unity. Through this likeness he is united with You; that is, by His memory, he is joined to and resembles the Father, to whom power is attributed; by his intellect, he resembles and is united to the Son, to whom wisdom is attributed; by his will, he resembles and becomes one with the Holy Spirit, the love of the Father and the Son, to whom mercy is attributed.

"O Father, grant that I may unite my memory to You by always remembering that You are the beginning from which all things proceed. O Son, unite my intellect to Yours and grant that I may perfectly judge all things according to the order established by Your wisdom. O Holy Spirit, grant that I may unite my will to You by loving perfectly that mercy and love which are the reason for my creation and for every grace given to me, without any merit on my part.

"O mighty, eternal Trinity, may You be thanked for all the love You have shown us in forming and sweetly endowing our soul with its powers: an intellect to know You, a memory to remember You, a will to love You above all things! It is reasonable that knowing You, O Infinite Goodness, I would love You; and this love is so strong that neither the devil nor any other creature can take it from me against my will.

"O power of the eternal Father, help me; wisdom of the Son, illumine the eye of my intellect; sweet mercy and love of the Holy Spirit, inflame my heart and unite it to Yourself.

"O eternal Trinity, my sweet Love, You who are Light, give me light; You who are Wisdom, give me wisdom;

O supreme Fortitude, give me strength. O eternal God, You are the calm ocean where souls dwell and are nourished, and where they find rest in the union of love" (St. Catherine of Siena).

223

### *EFFUSION OF THE TRINITY IN THE SOUL*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O Most Holy Trinity, deign to renew Your visit to my soul.

#### MEDITATION

1. At the very moment of our Baptism, the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity take up Their abode in our soul. Yet the Church teaches us in the "*Veni, Sancte Spiritus,*" *Come, Holy Spirit*, to ask continually for the coming of the Holy Spirit and consequently, of the Blessed Trinity; for, by reason of Their indivisible unity, no one of the three divine Persons comes to us without the others. But, if the three divine Persons are within us already, how can They come again? A soul needs to have only a single degree of grace in order to have God—who is already present in it as Creator—present also as Friend, inviting it to live in intimacy with Himself. However, this friendship, this intimacy, has different degrees. It becomes closer and more profound according as the soul, growing in grace and charity, acquires a greater capacity for entering into a deeper relationship with the Blessed Trinity. Something similar is effected between two persons who are friends, and who live in the same house. When their mutual affection increases, their friendship becomes more intense; thus, although they were already present to each other, their reciprocal presence takes on a new aspect, one that is proper to the presence of a very dear friend. Likewise, the Trinity already inhabits the souls of the just, but the presence of the divine Persons can always be made stronger in terms of a more intimate affection; that is to say, They can always enter into deeper

relations of friendship with the soul. This is realized progressively as the soul acquires additional degrees of grace by advancing in charity. Since these new effusions of the Trinity in the souls of the just present aspects and produce effects which are always new, we can rightly call them new comings, new visits of the divine Persons. But, in reality, They are always present in the soul; Their visit does not come from without but from within the soul itself, where They dwell and give Themselves; and even, to a certain degree, reveal Themselves to the soul according to the words of Jesus : "He that loveth Me, shall be loved of My Father and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him" (*Jn* 14,21). Never are we given a better opportunity to understand the great reality contained in the words of the Gospel : "The kingdom of God is within you" (*Lk* 17,21), than when we are in the presence of this ineffable mystery.

2. The first visit or effusion of the Blessed Trinity in our soul took place on the day of our Baptism. The Father sent us His Son; the Father and the Son sent us the Holy Spirit, and because of the indissoluble unity of the Three, without being sent the Father Himself came. Now this visit is renewed every time we acquire an additional degree of grace—through the reception of a Sacrament or by advancing in charity. The promise of Jesus : "If anyone love Me...We will come to him and will make Our abode with him" (*Jn* 14,23), is never exhausted; it is always new, always ready to be actualized every time the conditions for it are renewed, that is, every time we love more intensely. This divine gift which is offered so generously to us, ought to spur us on to generosity and to constant progress in love, for only thus can we have full fruition of it. The Blessed Trinity will set no limits to the effusion of charity and grace in our soul, provided we place no obstacle to their development. Our horizon is broad and boundless, because the model proposed to us by Jesus for our life of union with the Blessed Trinity, is that very union that exists between the three divine Persons Themselves. Even in His priestly prayer on the evening of the Last Supper, Jesus asked His Father to give us a like union : "As Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us" (*ibid.* 17,21). It is evident that as creatures we can never be united to the Trinity as the three divine

Persons are united to one another; yet, Jesus did not hesitate to offer us, and to ask for us, a similar union, in order to urge us on to ever higher levels, and to make us understand that if we do not fail in our correspondence to grace, the three Persons of the Holy Trinity will never cease to diffuse Themselves into our souls nor to unite us to Themselves until we are made " perfect in one " (*ibid.* 17,23).

Only in heaven where we shall contemplate the Trinity unveiled, face to face, will our union with the divine Persons be perfect; but here on earth, we must hasten by faith and love toward the wonderful goal which will be our happiness for all eternity.

#### COLLOQUY

" O Trinity, most high God, merciful, beneficent, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, my hope is in You. Teach me, direct me, sustain me.

" O Father, by Your infinite power, fix my memory in You and fill it with holy and divine thoughts.

" O Son, enlighten my intellect with Your eternal wisdom, give me the knowledge of Your supreme truth and of my wretchedness.

" O Holy Spirit, Love of the Father and the Son, by Your incomprehensible goodness, draw my will to Yourself and inflame it with the fire of Your charity which can never be extinguished.

" O my Lord and my God, O my beginning and my end, O sovereignly simple, calm, and lovable Essence! O abyss of sweetness and delights, O my amiable light, supreme happiness of my soul, ocean of ineffable joy, perfect plenitude of all good things, my God and my All, what is lacking to me when I possess You? You are my one, immutable treasure. I do not have to seek or desire anything outside of You. You alone do I seek and desire. Lord, draw me to You. I knock, O Lord : open to me. Open to a little orphan who implores You. Plunge me into the abyss of Your divinity. Grant that I may be one spirit with You, so that I may possess Your delights within me" (St. Albert the Great).

" O holy Father, by that love with which You cast on me a reflection of the light of Your countenance, give me grace to advance in You by holiness and virtue.

"O my Lord Jesus Christ, by the love which induced You to redeem me with Your Blood, clothe me with the purity of Your most holy life.

"O divine Paraclete! You, whose power equals Your holiness, by the love which made You bind me to Yourself, grant me the grace to love You with my whole heart, to adhere to You with my whole soul, and to use all my strength to love and serve You, so that I may live according to Your inspirations" (St. Gertrude).

## 224

## FRATERNAL HARMONY

## FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O Lord, teach me to live in perfect harmony with my neighbor, so that my prayers and offerings will be pleasing to You.

## MEDITATION

1. This Sunday could well be called the Sunday of *Fraternal Charity*, a virtue so necessary to preserve proper relations with our neighbor. "Be ye all of one mind," says St. Peter in his first Epistle (3,8-15), "having compassion one of another, being lovers of the brotherhood, merciful, modest, humble." The Apostle speaks to us in a very practical and realistic way. He realizes that with our weakness and frailty we cannot preserve peace if we have no compassion for the faults of others, if we do not know how to be kind to those who displease us, and if we cannot bear blame with humility. Anyone who pretends that in achieving a life of perfect harmony with others, he need never suffer any annoyance or displeasure, and that he need never be contradicted or upset, has very little experience of the reality of life and forgets that, far from being pure spirits, we are limited by matter; he forgets that "we are mortal, frail, and weak, bearing about our bodies like vessels

of clay, a source of friction for one another" (St. Augustine), even as clay jars carried in the same vehicle strike against and jostle each other. By reason of our limitations we have mentalities, tastes, desires, and interests that differ from those of others, and thus we do not always succeed in understanding one another.

It even happens that sometimes, without wishing it and without even the shadow of a bad intention, we work against one another. The remedy for these inevitable failures, when the limitations of our nature are the cause of mutual distress, is that suggested by St. Augustine : "*dilatentur spatia caritatis*," let more room be given to charity. In other words, let us enlarge our hearts by greater love, in order that we may better understand and sympathize with one another. Let us likewise practice greater humility, in order to overcome the resentments of our self-love. Even if someone does act against us with ill will, we should know how to forgive him, according to the words of the Apostle : " Not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing.... But if also you suffer anything for justice' sake, blessed are ye.... Sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts."

2. The Gospel (*Mt* 5,20-24) repeats and intensifies the same instruction. First of all Jesus tells us : " Unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." This is a clear allusion to the new law, the law of love, given to us by Jesus Himself and far surpassing the simple law of justice. We cannot content ourselves, as the Pharisees did, with simply not doing harm to our neighbor; we must practice toward him a positive, fraternal charity. It is not enough " not to kill " in order to escape " the judgment," the Master teaches, but " whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment." Another aspect of the new law proposed by Jesus concerns our interior dispositions. It is useless to make an exterior display of goodness if this does not proceed from a good conscience, a sincere heart. It does not suffice to avoid giving outward offense to our neighbor; we must avoid, or rather, repress our inner resentment. The Pharisees, with their materialistic interpretation of the law, had completely lost its spirit; they had forgotten that the eyes of the Lord are always upon us and that He

sees our intentions as well as our acts. Anger and resentment that smolder in our heart do not escape Him. At the same time, Jesus asks great delicacy of us in all our exterior dealings with our neighbor. He demands that we avoid not only offensive acts but even words that might hurt another. Charity and fraternal harmony meant so much to Him that He did not hesitate to tell us : " If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother." How much Our Lord loves us! St. John Chrysostom remarks very aptly : " He does not take account of His own honor, when He requires us to love our neighbor. ' Let My worship be interrupted,' He says, ' but reestablish your charity.' " Indeed, how can our prayers and sacrifices be pleasing to God when something interferes with perfect harmony between ourselves and our neighbor?

#### COLLOQUY

" O Jesus, as I meditated on Your divine words, I understood how imperfect was my love for my sisters in religion and that I did not love them as You do. Now I know that true charity consists in bearing all my neighbor's defects, in not being surprised at mistakes, but in being edified at the smallest virtues. Above all else I have learned that charity must not remain shut up in the heart, for ' No man lighteth a candle and putteth it...under a bushel; but upon a candlestick, that they who come in may see the light.' This candle, it seems to me, O Lord, represents that charity which enlightens and gladdens not only those who are dearest to me, but likewise all those who are of the household.

" O Lord, how often it is said that the practice of charity is difficult. I should rather say that it *seems* difficult, for ' The yoke of the Lord is sweet and His burden light.' And when we submit to that yoke we at once feel its sweetness and can exclaim with the Psalmist : ' I have run in the way of Your commandments since You have dilated my heart.' O Jesus, ever since its sweet flame consumes me, I run with joy in the way of Your new commandment, and I desire so to run until that glorious day when with Your retinue

of virgins I shall follow You through Your boundless realm, singing Your new canticle—the Canticle of Love" (T.C.J. St, 10).

"O Lord Jesus Christ, if I had no other reason to love my neighbor—not only he who loves me but even he who does not—I should resolve to do so solely because of the commandment You have given us to love one another as You have loved us. Just as You, infinite beauty, goodness and perfection, love me, full of evil, and do not reject me because of my faults, so do I, for love of You, wish to love all my brethren" (Ven. John of Jesus Mary).

225

### LIVING WITH THE TRINITY

PRESENCE OF GOD - O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, take me into Your embrace and deign to admit me to intimacy with You.

#### MEDITATION

1. If we wish the great gift of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity to bear its full fruit of intimate friendship with the three divine Persons, we must become accustomed to living with the Trinity, since it is impossible to have a real bond of friendship with someone if, after offering him the hospitality of our home, we immediately forget him. In order to live with the Trinity, it is not necessary to feel God's presence within us; this is a grace which He may give or withhold. It is sufficient to be grounded in the faith by which we know with certitude that the three divine Persons are dwelling within us. By relying on this reality which we cannot see, feel, or understand, but which we know with certainty because it has been revealed by God, we can direct ourselves toward a life of true union with the Blessed Trinity.

First, we should consider the three divine Persons present within us, in Their indivisible unity. We already know that everything done by the Trinity "ad extra,"

that is, outside the Godhead, is the work of all three divine Persons without distinction; hence, this applies to Their action in our soul. All Three dwell equally in us. They are there simultaneously and They all produce the same effects in us. All Three diffuse grace and love in us; They enlighten us, offer us Their friendship and love us with one and the same love. Still this does not prevent each of Them from being present in our soul with the characteristics proper to His Person : the Father is there as the source and origin of the divinity and of all being; the Word is present as the splendor of the Father, as light; the Holy Spirit, as the fruit of the love of the Father and of the Son. Each divine Person, then, loves us in His own personal way and offers us His special gift. The Father offers us His most sweet paternity; the Son clothes us with His shining light; the Holy Spirit penetrates us with His ardent love. And we, insignificant creatures, should try to realize that we have such great gifts, so that we may fully profit by them.

2. You may have special relations with each of the three divine Persons, relations which correspond to Their particular characteristics. When you think of the Father, you will feel a need to live close to Him like a loving and devoted child, trying to please Him in all things, and desiring to do His will alone. At the same time, especially in moments of difficulty and anguish, you will hasten to take refuge in Him, finding in His omnipotence, His greatness and infinite goodness, a support and a remedy for your insufficiency, littleness and wretchedness.

When you contemplate the Word present in your soul, you will have the desire to allow yourself to be penetrated by His light, to be taught by Him who is the Word of the Father, that He may bring you to a true knowledge of the divine mysteries, and show you how to judge everything as God does. You will feel the need of seeking Him in His Incarnation where you find Him more accessible to your humanity, of taking refuge in His Redemption by which He gives you life, makes Himself your Brother and presents you to the Father as His child.

When you consider the Holy Spirit, the delightful fruit of the love of the Father and the Son, a more ardent desire will arise in you to assist His work of love in your soul;

therefore, you will be willing to follow His inspirations with more docility; you will let yourself be guided by Him in all things and, finally, you will allow yourself to be seized by His divine motion, so that He can bring you with Himself into the bosom of the Father and the Son.

In this way you will realize in yourself that very lofty end for which God has created and redeemed us, that is, "that our fellowship may be with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (*I Jn 1,3*). This will not be accomplished through your own merits but only through the infinite merits of Christ, who has shared with you His glory as the Son of God, who has made you participate in the love with which the Father loves Him, who has given you His Spirit, and has become your Food in order to nourish your life of union with the Most Holy Trinity in the most direct manner possible.

#### COLLOQUY

"O my God, Trinity whom I adore! Help me to become wholly forgetful of self, that I may be immovably rooted in Thee, as changeless and calm as though my soul were already in eternity. May nothing disturb my peace or draw me forth from Thee, O my unchanging Lord, but may I, at every moment, penetrate more deeply into the depths of Thy mystery!"

"Establish my soul in peace; make it Thy heaven, Thy cherished abode, and the place of Thy rest. Let me never leave Thee alone, but remain ever there, all absorbed in Thee, in living faith, plunged in adoration, and wholly yielded up to Thy creative action!"

"O my Christ whom I love! Crucified for love! Would that I might be the bride of Thy heart! Would that I might cover Thee with glory and love Thee...even until I die of love! Yet I realize my weakness and beseech Thee to clothe me with Thyself, to identify my soul with all the movements of Thine own. Immerse me in Thyself; possess me wholly; substitute Thyself for me, that my life may be but a radiance of Thy life. Enter my soul as Adorer, as Restorer, as Savior!"

"O eternal Word, Utterance of my God! I long to spend my life in listening to Thee, to become wholly

' teachable,' that I may learn all from Thee! Through all darkness, all privations, all helplessness, I yearn to keep my eyes ever upon Thee, and to dwell beneath Thy great light. O my beloved Star! so fascinate me that I may be unable to withdraw myself from Thy rays!

"O consuming Fire, Spirit of Love! Come down into me and reproduce in me, as it were, an incarnation of the Word, that I may be to Him a super-added humanity, wherein He may renew all His mystery! And Thou, O Father, bend down toward Thy poor little creature and overshadow her, beholding in her none other than Thy beloved Son in whom Thou art well pleased.

"O my 'Three,' my all, my beatitude, infinite solitude, immensity wherein I lose myself! I yield myself to Thee as Thy prey. Immerse Thyself in me that I may be immersed in Thee, until I depart to contemplate in Thy light the abyss of Thy greatness!" (E.T. III).

## 226

## THE GLORY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O most Holy Trinity, You who have created me for Your glory, grant that I may give You all the glory of which I am capable.

## MEDITATION

i. The mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity is the root and center of all the other mysteries of our holy faith : the root from which they all spring and upon which they depend, the center about which they gravitate. For example, the great work of creation and the love-filled work of Redemption are the gifts of the Blessed Trinity, the free, gratuitous outpouring of infinite goodness and love, yet, at the same time, ordered for the glory of the august Trinity. "We have been predestined in Christ," says St. Paul, "according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of His will, that we may be unto the praise of His glory" (cf. *Eph* 1,11.12). The work of

Redemption, which bestowed the greatest of divine benefits on us, and which far exceeds the work of Creation, is, as the Apostle says again, "unto the praise of the glory of His grace" (*ibid.* 1,6), that is, of the infinite goodness of God. If inanimate things, if the heavens and the earth "show forth the glory of God" (*Ps* 18,1) because they testify to His power, wisdom, and infinite beauty, the works which effected our elevation to the supernatural state sing the glory of the Blessed Trinity because they are the most glorious manifestation of His goodness. This goodness is so great that it has impelled God, not through necessity, but solely through love, to impart to us, His little creatures, something of His own sovereign good, of His divine nature, of His eternal felicity. It also caused Him to reveal to us the mystery of His life in the Trinity and to share this divine life with us. All this was done, not through any merit on our part, nor through any need God had for us in His infinite beatitude, in the felicity and glory which He enjoys in Himself, but solely because of His goodness. Who, then, more than man, should be "the praise of God's glory," man, whom He endowed, not only with natural, but also with supernatural beauty, making him like to Himself, and a partaker in His own divine life?

2. By the mere fact that all God's works are a proof of His omnipotence, His wisdom, and His infinite goodness, they all redound to His glory, just as a work of art always gives honor to the artist who made it, because it is an expression of his genius. But whereas man can direct his works to the glory of another being who is superior to himself, God cannot. He is the Supreme Being, the sovereign Good; therefore, He must necessarily work for His own glory. However, because God is infinitely good, He wishes to glorify Himself by working for the happiness and good of His creatures.

As a matter of fact, God is not content with glorifying Himself by works which, though great and beautiful, are incapable, because inanimate or unknowing, of enjoying their own beauty; but He desires above all to glorify Himself in creatures like angels and men, to whom He has given the power of enjoying His gifts and whom He has destined to share in His eternal happiness. This truth gives us a clearer understanding of the overwhelming goodness of

God, who has willed to find His greater glory precisely in those things which turn more to the advantage and honor of His creatures. For example, nothing glorifies the Blessed Trinity more than the Incarnation of the Word and yet, at the same time, nothing is more advantageous or honorable for us.

God, in His infinite goodness, willed that His glory should be identified with our good and our happiness. Should we not, then, try to make our good and our happiness one with His glory, by seeking them in whatever gives the most glory to Him and to His holy Name? All the wonderful gifts showered on us by the Trinity should contribute to the honor of God, and bear fruit for His glory. And, whereas the heavens sing the glory of God all unknowingly, we should sing it from the depths of a being that is informed by knowledge and love. Have we not understood that it is truly right and just that our whole life and all our works should be a hymn of glory to the Blessed Three who, although infinitely happy and glorious in Themselves, wish to be glorified in Their poor little creatures!

#### COLLOQUY

“ O Most Holy Trinity, I adore You, I bless You and glorify You in all Your mysteries, uniting myself to all the mutual love and praise of Your divine Persons. I offer You all the glory You have in Yourself, rendering You infinite thanks together with the whole Church : ‘*Gratias agimus tibi, propter magnam gloriam tuam.*’ We give You thanks, because of Your great glory. O my God and my Father, how I rejoice to see that Your Son and Your Holy Spirit love You and praise You from all eternity and for all eternity with a love and praise worthy of Your greatness! O only-begotten Son of God, my soul exults when it sees the infinite love and glory You receive from Your Father and from Your Holy Spirit! O Holy Spirit, my heart rejoices at the thought of the love and the praises unceasingly given You by the Father and the Son! O Most Holy Trinity, how great is my joy, my exultation, my gladness, to know that You possess indescribable glory, inconceivable beatitude, and an infinite number of incomparable treasures and splendors!

" How joyful I am too, knowing that You, Most Holy Trinity, already infinitely glorious in Yourself, do not look with disdain upon the glory which this wretched creature can give You, but rather, that You have created me precisely for Your glory! Therefore, I consecrate and sacrifice myself entirely to You. If I possessed all creation, the lives of all the angels and of all men, if millions of worlds were in my power, I would be ready to sacrifice them all for Your honor. O my God, exercise Your infinite power and goodness to take me and possess me entirely, so that I may be consecrated to You forever, O my God, and may immolate myself totally for Your glory " (St. John Eudes).

### THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS

PRESENCE OF GOD - Grant, O Lord, that I may understand something of Your infinite perfections.

#### MEDITATION

1. Jesus has said, " Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect " (*Mt* 5,48), thus turning our attention to God's infinite perfection. Here on earth, we can see some pale reflection of this infinite plenitude through the consideration of the limited perfections that we find in creatures, but we cannot know it in itself, for the human mind is incapable of embracing and comprehending the infinite. Our ideas tell us something about God and His infinite perfections, but they cannot show Him to us as He really is. " God, " says St. Paul, " inhabiteth light inaccessible " (1 *Tm* 6,16) : light which infinitely exceeds the capacity of the human intellect, light too bright and dazzling to be gazed at directly by the eye of our mind, even as the sun, which in the full power of its summer brilliance so far exceeds the capacity of our sense of sight that no human eye can look at it fixedly.

Yet on several occasions when Jesus spoke about the divine perfections, He invited us to raise our eyes to these heights. He taught us that although we can understand very little about them, this little will not be useless, but rather, of great value. In fact, the more a soul advances in the knowledge of God, the more it understands that what it knows about Him is nothing compared with what He is in reality. Far beyond its ideas—however lofty and beautiful they may be—there is an infinite ocean of splendor, beauty, goodness, and love which no human intellect can ever fathom. This awareness of God's immensity, which infinitely surpasses the capacity of our mind, is a great grace. St. John of the Cross says : “One of the greatest favors God can bestow on a soul in this life is to give it to understand clearly and to sense manifestly that He cannot be entirely known or sensed” (*SC* 7,9). This is a precious grace, because it infuses into the soul an ever deepening realization of God's immensity and infinite transcendence; and, by contrast, it also gives it a greater understanding of its own nothingness and the extreme limitation of any human perfection.

2. Only in heaven shall we be permitted to see the divinity “face to face,” without the intermediary of ideas. As St. Paul says, “We see now through a glass in a dark manner.... Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known” (*1 Cor* 13,12). This partial knowledge of God, which is all we can have on earth, reaches us through the “glass” of creatures; they give us, it is true, a reflection of His infinite perfections—His goodness, wisdom, justice, and beauty—but a reflection which is very imperfect and limited. For example, there is no man so learned that he knows everything that exists; no man is so good that he does not sometimes fail in goodness because of his frailty; no man is so just that he is not sometimes unjust through too great severity. Only by stripping the perfections that we find in creatures of the defects and limitations that are always found therein, shall we be able to form a vague idea of the divine perfections. God is good : He is always good, infinitely good. “One is good, God” (*Mt* 19,17), said Jesus, meaning that He alone possesses goodness pre-eminently; rather, He is goodness itself, unlimited goodness which never diminishes or fails.

We should reflect, then, how we err when we become attached to any creature. However beautiful, good, or wise it may be, its goodness, beauty, and wisdom are nothing in comparison with the perfections of God. St. John of the Cross goes even further when he says : "All the beauty of creatures, compared with the infinite beauty of God, is the height of deformity.... All the goodness of the creatures of the world, in comparison with the infinite goodness of God, may be described as wickedness.... Therefore, the soul that sets its heart on the good things of the world is supremely evil in the eyes of God. And, as deformity cannot attain to beauty and as wickedness comprehends not goodness, even so, such a soul cannot be united to God who is supreme goodness and beauty" (cf. *AS I*, 4,4). Thus we can understand that if we wish to unite ourselves to God, we cannot allow our heart to be held by the beauty or good qualities of any creature and that we must place our affection and our hope in God alone, without fear of being deceived.

#### COLLOQUY

"When shall we reach You, O fount of wisdom, indefectible light, inextinguishable brilliance, and see You, no longer as in a mirror and darkly, but face to face? Then our desires will be satisfied, since we shall no longer be able to desire anything but You, O Lord, the supreme good. In You, we shall see and love and praise; in Your glory we shall see Your light, for near to You is the fountain of life, and in Your light we shall see the light.

"What light? An immense, incorporeal, incorruptible light; an indefectible, inextinguishable, inaccessible light; an uncreated, true, divine light, which enlightens the angels and gladdens the eternal youth of the saints; light which is the source of all light and life, which is You, O Lord, my God! You are the light in whose light we shall see the light, that is, You in Yourself, in the splendor of Your face, when we shall see You face to face.

"To see You is all the compensation, all the reward, and all the joy we wait for. This is eternal life, that we know You, the only true God.... Then shall we have what we seek, when we shall see You the only true God, the true, living, omnipotent, simple, invisible, unlimited, incomprehensible God.

" O Lord, my God, do not permit me to be distracted any more from You, but take me away from exterior things and make me interiorly recollected. Give Yourself to me, so that I may give You my heart forever. I have sought Your face, O Lord, and I shall seek it, the face of the Lord of Hosts, in which consists the eternal glory of the blessed, in whose sight consists eternal life and the eternal glory of the saints " (St. Augustine).

" Make me understand, O Lord, that beauty and all other gifts of creatures are but dust; that their charm and attractiveness are only smoke and wind, and that I must esteem them for what they are, so as not to fall into vanity. In all these things help me to direct my heart to You, joyfully and cheerfully, remembering that You are, and have in Yourself, all beauties and graces in a most infinite degree; You are infinitely high above all created things, for, as David says, ' They are all like a garment which shall grow old and pass away, and You alone remain immutable forever ' " (cf. *AS III*, 21,2).

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O my God, purify and enlighten my mind so that I shall be able to contemplate You.

#### MEDITATION

1. To the question : " Who is God? " the catechism answers : " God is the Supreme Being, infinitely perfect, the Creator of heaven and earth. " In the first place it says that God is the *Supreme Being*; this is His foremost perfection, the one which distinguishes Him radically from creatures. " I am who am, " God said to Moses, and added : " This is My name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations " (*Ex 3,14.15*). This name by which God called Himself expresses His very essence, and tells us that He is *Being itself*, the eternally subsistent Being, who had

no beginning and will have no end, the self-existing Being, who finds the cause of His Being in Himself. St. John Damascene says : "God possesses Being itself as a kind of sea of substance, infinite and shoreless." God revealed Himself to St. Catherine of Siena under this aspect, when He said to her : "I am He who is, and you are she who is not." All creatures are nothing! "My substance is as nothing before Thee," says the Psalmist, "I am withered like grass. But Thou, O Lord, endurest forever" (*Ps 38,6 – 101,12,13*). The creature receives his being from God, while God is the cause of His own Being. A creature exists only so long as God maintains it in existence; God, however, is His own existence, because He possesses Being by His very nature, and does not receive it from anyone. A creature is always a limited being in every respect—vitality, strength, ability; God, on the contrary, is the infinite Being, who knows no limits, who has all power and virtue. A creature bears within himself the seeds of death and destruction; in God all is life; He is Life : "I am...the life" (*Jn 14,6*), said Jesus.

Only God, the infinite Being, eternal Life, can communicate life, can give existence. Would it be too much, then, for us to consecrate our whole life and being to His service and glory? If we are living for God, we are living for life; if we live for ourselves, we are living for nothing, for death.

2. God is Being, the infinitely perfect Being who possesses all perfections, without defects and without limits. God is the infinitely good, beautiful, wise, just, merciful, omnipotent Being. All these perfections are not accidental qualities in Him, as they are in man, who may be more or less beautiful, good or wise, without ceasing to be a man. In God, however, these perfections are essential; that is, they belong to the very nature of the divine Being, or rather, they are one same thing with it. In order to speak of the divine perfections, we are obliged to enumerate them one after another, whereas, in reality, they are but one infinite perfection : goodness is identified with beauty; goodness and beauty, with wisdom; and these three, with justice; justice is identified with mercy, and so on. There is no multiplicity in God, but only one absolute unity. We need many words to speak of God, but God is not many things; He is the *One* Being, par excel-

lence : One in the Trinity of His Persons, One in the multiplicity of His perfections, One in the variety of His works, One in His thought, will, and love.

Therefore, you who have been created to the image and likeness of God ought to tend to unity. Your spiritual life is weak because it lacks unity. Examine your heart and see what a multiplicity of affections and preoccupations fill it : yes, you love God, but, together with Him, you also cherish your pride, comfort, and interests. You love God, but, at the same time, you love some creature with a disordered affection, that is, in a way and in a measure that does not please God. You are attached to these people, to these things—objects, money, occupations—which give you satisfaction...and all these affections, these attachments weigh upon you, drive you in a thousand different directions, dispersing your strength and preventing you from seeking the one thing necessary : “to love God and serve Him only” (*Imit. I*, 1,3). The more you lack profound unity—unity of affections, desires, and intentions—the weaker you will be and the more greatly will they endanger your interior life, for, as Jesus said, “Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation” (*Lk 11,17*). Look, then, at God, the sovereign Unity, and beseech Him to help you to have unity in yourself.

#### COLLOQUY

“O eternal God, I rejoice that You are He who is, and that nothing can exist without You. I beg You, illumine the eye of my soul, that it may know the Being which You possess by Your essence, and the non-being, which I have by my nature, so that my whole life may gravitate around the axis of these two firm and immutable truths. O eternal God, who said, “I am who am,” I rejoice at the eminence of that Name, so much Your own that it cannot be applied to anyone but You. O venerable, ineffable Name, hidden from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and made known to Moses as a testimony of love! O my God, reveal the inestimable riches of that Name to me, so that I will revere You, adore, love and serve You as You deserve. O my soul, if God alone is *He who is*, containing all the perfections of Being, why do you not join yourself to Him, so that your

being will find nobility and strength in His? Why do you give yourself to creatures, which lack substance and being, since they cannot give you what you want, not having it in themselves? Henceforth, O my God, I will regard everything as worthless, waste and harm, nothing and vanity, that I may unite myself to You, to love and serve You for all eternity" (Ven. Louis Du Pont).

"O Lord, my days are vanished like smoke...and I am smitten as grass.... But Thou, O Lord, endurest forever : and Thy memorial to all generations.... In the beginning, O Lord, Thou foundedst the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou remainest; and all of them shall grow old like a garment. And as a vesture Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed. But Thou art always the selfsame and Thy years shall not fail.... All creatures have received life from Thee, all expect of Thee that Thou give them food in season.... But if Thou turnest away Thy face, they shall be troubled; Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust, but Thou remainest forever.

"I will extol Thee, O God, my King, and I will bless Thy Name forever!.... Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and of His greatness there is no end" (*Ps 101 - 103 - 144*).

## 229

*DIVINE SIMPLICITY*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O Lord, Thou who art infinite simplicity, simplify my mind and my heart, that I may serve Thee in simplicity of spirit.

**MEDITATION**

1. God is the unique simple Being because He is *one* in His essence and in all His perfections. When St. Thomas speaks of God's simplicity, he presents it as the absence of all that is composite. In God there are not quantitative parts

as there are in us who are composed of body and soul. God is simple because in Him there is no matter; He is pure spirit. Angels are also pure spirits; but angels are composite beings because their essence is like ours, distinct from their existence. The angelic essence does not exist by itself but has only the capacity to exist; in fact, no angel, as likewise no man, can exist if God does not call him to life. In God, on the contrary, there is supreme simplicity, infinitely superior to that of the angels: in Him essence and existence are identical. His essence exists of itself; He is the eternally subsistent Being.

Neither do the innumerable perfections of God create in Him any multiplicity: God is not composed of goodness, beauty, wisdom, justice, but He is, at the same time, the infinitely good, beautiful, wise, and just Being. There is no distinction in Him between substance and quality, because all is substance; His infinite perfections *are* His very substance. God contains in one, unique and most simple perfection, the perfection of His divine Being, all the multiple perfections we find divided among creatures in addition to thousands and thousands of others, somewhat as a million dollars contains the value of many dollars. God's simplicity is not, then, poverty, but infinite riches, infinite perfections which we ourselves ought to reflect.

Consider how rich God is in innumerable perfections and how He possesses them all in the same degree. Consider, on the other hand, how poor you are in virtues and if you have any at all, how limited they are, how mixed with faults! Moreover, for one virtue which you possess in some slight degree, how many others you lack! God is simple; you, on the contrary, are complicated! Contemplate the divine simplicity and try to imitate it by means of true simplicity of soul.

2. In God, *being* is not distinct from *acting*; there is no difference between potency and act. He is pure act, the act of an infinite intellect which always subsists and embraces all truth; at the same time, He is the act of a will which always subsists and desires the good. There is no admixture of error in God's eternal thought; there are no deviations toward evil in the eternal will of God. In God, there is no succession of thoughts, but only one single, eternal, immutable, subsistent thought which comprehends all truth. In God,

there are not separate acts of the will which follow one another, but one single act, perfect and immutable, always willing the good with a most pure intention, and if it permits evil, it does so only with a view to a greater good.

If we wish to approach in some way to divine simplicity, we must avoid every form of duplicity. We must avoid duplicity of mind by a passionate search for the truth, loving and accepting the truth even when it exacts sacrifice, or if by revealing our defects and errors it is not to our credit. We must also cultivate the most candid sincerity, fleeing from every form of falsehood. Jesus said : "Let your speech be yes, yes, no, no" (*Mt* 5,37). Even before this simplicity appears in our words it should shine in our thought and mind, for "If thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome" (*ibid.* 6,23). Our thought is the eye which directs our acts; if our thoughts are simple, upright, and sincere, all our acts will be so too.

We will avoid duplicity of the will by rectitude of intention : this will lead us to act solely to please God. Then even in the multiplicity of our acts, there will be simplicity and profound unity. Then we will not halt between two sides : between love of self and love of God, between creatures and the Creator, but we will walk on one road only, the straight road of duty, of God's will and good pleasure.

#### COLLOQUY

"O most high God, in Your one and simple Being You are all the virtues and grandeurs of Your attributes; for You are omnipotent, wise, good, merciful, just, strong, and loving, and You possess other infinite attributes and virtues of which we have no knowledge. You are all these things in Your simple Being.

"O wondrous excellence of God! O abyss of delights, which are the more abundant in proportion as Your riches are all contained in the infinite simplicity and unity of Your sole Being, so that each one is known and experienced in such a way that the perfect knowledge and absorption of the other is not impeded thereby, but rather each grace and virtue that exists in You is light for some other of Your grandeurs, so that through Your purity, O divine Wisdom,

many things are seen in You when one thing is seen" (J.C. *LF*, 3,2.17).

"O divine Essence, bottomless and boundless abyss of wonders! O unfathomable ocean of greatness, O Unity of my God, O Simplicity, O Eternity without beginning and without end, to whom everything is continually present! O Immensity, which fills all things and contains all things! O Infinity, which embraces all imaginable perfections, O Immutability, O Immortality, O inaccessible Splendor! O incomprehensible Truth, O abyss of Knowledge and Wisdom, O Truth of my God.... O divine Power, creating and sustaining all things! O divine Providence, governing all! O Justice, O Goodness, O Mercy, O Beauty, O Glory, O Fidelity!... O great God, in You I adore all the grandeurs and perfections which I have been contemplating, as well as all the innumerable and inconceivable others which are, and will remain, unknown to me. I adore You, praise You, glorify and love You for all that You are. Oh! how my heart rejoices to see You so great, and so overflowing with every kind of treasure and splendor! Certainly, if I possessed all these grandeurs and You had none of them, I would want to strip myself of them at once and give them to You" (St. John Eudes).

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O God, grant that my life on earth may be a continual preparation for the eternity which awaits me.

#### MEDITATION

1. All created things are subject to change, to variation, to progress, to decline, and finally to death. An ignorant, helpless child who requires so much help, and who would perish if no one took care of him, gradually grows and develops, becomes first a sturdy youth, then a strong, mature man, capable of great undertakings. But then, beneath

the weight of years, his vigor decreases, gives way to the weakness of old age, and is eventually extinguished by death. This is the path followed by every creature; every life has its dawn, its noon tide, its sunset.

Only in God, the uncreated, eternal Being, is there "no change, nor shadow of alteration" (*Jas 1,17*). God does not change and cannot change, because He is infinite and eternal. Being infinite, He possesses being and every perfection without limit; in Him there is no limit, no beginning or end. Our souls, although created, will not die with our bodies; therefore, they are immortal, but not eternal, for they had a beginning; this, however, is not true in regard to God, who always was and always will be. Every perfection in man is subject to further development and progress; God, on the contrary, possesses every perfection in the highest degree, that is, in an absolutely infinite degree, to which nothing can be added.

Man, precisely because he is limited, is very much subject to change and variation: his ideas, his mind, his opinions, tastes, desires, and his will, all change. The very thing we had so ardently desired, soon wearies us, and no longer satisfies us; that very idea which seemed so beautiful and clear, corresponding so well to truth, soon appears to us so imperfect and inexact that we regret we cherished and defended it so much. The very good we wanted so eagerly and enthusiastically, sometimes leaves us cold and indifferent, perhaps even disgusted. In God there is nothing of all this: "For I am the Lord, and I change not" (*Mal 3,6*). His mind does not change because His infinite wisdom is immutable, embracing at once all truth, and only truth. His will does not change because it is an infinite will for good, always and indefectibly willing good, the greatest, absolute, infinite good.

How much we need to unite our inconstant and changeable will to the immutable will of God! The more we try to will only what God wills, to love only what He loves, the more will our will be freed from its inconstancy and become fixed in good.

2. St. Augustine says: "God was in the past, is in the present, and will be in the future. He *was* because He never was not; He *will be* because He will never cease to exist; He *is* because He always exists." This is a beautiful com-

mentary on the simple catechism answer : "God always was and always will be; He is the Eternal." God's eternity is the possession of a full, perfect, interminable life, without any change : a full perfect life which subsists by itself, subsists with infinite power, vigor, and perfection; an interminable life which has no beginning and no end; a life without any change, that is, one which is not susceptible to any succession, mutation, or progress. In other words, God possesses the fullness of His infinite life "*tota simul*," all at the same time, without beginning and in an eternal now.

The immutability and eternity of God are not, then, something materially static and motionless, like fixed matter, which indicates negation rather than affirmation of life. Rather, they are the characteristics of the greatest vitality; they are the fullness of an infinite, most perfect life in which there is no possibility of change or variation, because it has in itself all possible perfection.

We, as limited, changeable, mortal beings, live in time, and are subject to the succession of time; yet we are not created for time, but for eternity. God has destined us to share some day His divine immutability and eternity, although in a relative, not absolute, manner. Therefore, let us live with our eyes fixed on eternity, "*sub lumine aeternitatis*," under the light of eternity, not allowing ourselves to be captivated and delayed by anything that is passing and contingent.

The passing moment should be lived in view of the eternity which awaits us. Let us not waste our time gathering treasures that "the rust and moth consume" (*Mt 6,19*), but let us lay up treasures which will remain in eternity; let us accumulate grace and love, which will be the measure of our eternal glory.

Furthermore, in adhering to God alone, the immutable and eternal One, the soul finds that stability, peace, and security which it would seek in vain in changeable, transitory creatures.

#### COLLOQUY

"O God, You are always the same and Your years have no end. Your years neither go nor come. Ours, on the contrary, flow on that they may reach the end. Your

years stand firm because they are lasting. Your years are as one day, O Lord, and not a day to be renewed little by little, but an immutable day, a today without a yesterday or a tomorrow.

" My years pass in groanings, while You, O Lord, my comfort, my Father, are eternal. I am dispersed and scattered in the succession of time, and my thoughts are broken in a continual and tumultuous movement. It is the same with the interior of my soul, until, having been purified by the flame of Your love, I shall cast myself irrevocably in You.

" O my God, I give You thanks for having willed that the day of this life should be brief and uncertain. What length of time is long if it has an end? I cannot call back yesterday; today is closely followed by tomorrow. In this short space of time, grant that I may live a good life, in order to be able to go to that place beyond which there is no passing. Even as I am speaking, I am on my way to it. As my words run on, flying from my lips, so do my acts, my honors, my happiness, my unhappiness. Everything passes!

" But it is not thus with You who are immutably eternal. O God, he who understands exalts You, and he who does not understand, exalts You likewise. Oh! how high You are! yet, in the humble of heart is Your home. You raise up the fallen, and those whose crown you are, do not fall" (St. Augustine).

231

*THE COMPASSION OF JESUS*

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O Jesus, my Lord and Father, have pity on my poor soul and sustain it by Your grace.

**MEDITATION**

1. One thought emerges from today's liturgy in a special way and dominates all : God is a merciful Father who takes pity on us and nourishes our souls. Our souls are always famished, we are always in need of nourishment to sustain our supernatural life.

God alone can give us the proper nourishment as the Church tells us in the beautiful prayer of the day : "O God of all power and might, the giver of all good things; implant in our hearts a deep love of Your name; increase in us true religion and sincere virtue; nourish us with all goodness and...keep us in Your loving care" (Collect). The heavenly Father graciously hears our plea and answers by directing us to His divine, only-begotten Son whom He sent into the world that we might have life in Him. In the Epistle (*Rom 6, 3-11*), St. Paul reminds us that as "we are baptized in Christ Jesus...in His death...so we also may walk in newness of life," that in Him we may "live unto God." It is in Jesus and in His Redemption that we find everything we need for the nourishment and life of our souls; it is in Him that we shall find the grace, love, faith, and the encouragement to virtue which we have petitioned in the Collect. It is a great joy for us to hear again that we are reborn in Christ to "newness of life"; it is a great comfort for our weakness. One point, however, remains obscure. How does it happen that we are always falling? Why are we always so miserable? A more attentive reading of the Epistle will reveal the reason : because we are not yet wholly "dead" with Christ, because the "old man" in us has not yet been "crucified" to the point of our no longer being "slaves of sin." In a word, if we wish to live fully the life that Christ acquired

for us by His death, we must first die with Him. As this does not mean material death of the body but spiritual death to our faults and passions, this death must be continually renewed : “*Quotidie morior*,” I die daily (*I Cor 15,31*). The weakness of our spiritual life is caused by the insufficiency of this death to self.

2. In the Gospel (*Mk 8,1-9*) we hear the words of Jesus, so full of kindness : “I have compassion on the multitude.” Jesus has compassion on us, our weakness, our cowardice, our unstable wills. He sees that our souls are weary, hungry, in need of help, and as He spoke to the crowds who gathered to hear Him, so He repeats to us : “I have compassion!” Jesus pities first of all our spiritual needs. Although His Passion and death have abundantly provided for them, He still continues to take care of us every day in the most direct and personal way—by offering Himself as food for our souls. The Gospel speaks to us about the second multiplication of the loaves. However, we are more fortunate than the people of Palestine; Jesus has reserved for us a bread infinitely more nourishing and precious : the Eucharist.

Fascinated by the words of Jesus, the crowd had followed Him, forgetting even their necessities; three days they remained with Him and had nothing to eat. What a lesson for us who are often much more solicitous for our material food than for our spiritual nourishment! And Jesus, after having provided abundantly for the needs of their souls, thought also of their bodily needs. His disciples, however, were astonished : “From whence can anyone fill them with bread here in the wilderness?” They had already assisted at the first multiplication of the loaves, but here they seemed to have no remembrance of it and remained distrustful. How many times have we too seen miracles of grace and the wonders of divine Providence! And yet, when we are placed in new, bewildering, or difficult circumstances, how often we remain hesitant; it seems as if we doubted God’s almighty power. Let us think, for example, of our spiritual life : there are still things to be overcome or surmounted...we have tried so many times, and perhaps we no longer have the courage to begin again. Oh! if our faith were only greater, if we would only cast ourselves upon God with more confidence! One good act of total abandonment might be all we need to win the victory! Jesus

is looking at us and saying, "I have compassion on the multitude" and His compassion is not sterile, but is vital action, help, and actual grace for our soul : why, then, do we not have more confidence in Him?

#### COLLOQUY

" Ah! my Lord, Your help is absolutely necessary for me; without You I can do nothing. In Your mercy, O God, do not allow my soul to be deceived and to give up the work it has begun. Give me light to know that my whole welfare depends on perseverance.

" Make me understand that my faith in You must rise above my misery, and that I must never be alarmed if I feel weak and fearful. I must make allowance for the flesh, remembering what You said, O Jesus, in Your prayer in the garden : 'The flesh is weak...' If You said that Your divine and sinless flesh was weak, how can I expect mine to be so strong that it does not feel afraid? O Lord, I do not wish to be preoccupied with my fears nor to be discouraged at my weakness. On the contrary, I wish to trust in Your mercy, and to have no confidence whatever in my own strength, convinced that my weakness comes from depending on myself" (*T.J. Int C II, 1 – Con, 3*).

" In You, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded; deliver me in Your justice. Bow down Your ear to me; make haste to deliver me! Be unto me a God, a protector, and a house of refuge to save me. For You are my strength and my refuge; and for Your Name's sake You will lead me and nourish me. Into Your hands I commend my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth. I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy. For You have regarded my humility, You have saved my soul out of distress. And You have not shut me up in the hands of the enemy : You have set my feet in a spacious place. I have put my trust in You, O Lord, save me in Your mercy. Let me not be confounded, O Lord, for I have called upon You. How great is the multitude of Your sweetness, O Lord, which You have hidden for them that fear You, which You have wrought for them that hope in You. Have courage, and let your heart be strengthened, all you that hope in the Lord" (*Ps 30*).

*GOD'S INFINITE GOODNESS*

PRESENCE OF GOD - O my God, You alone are good; deign to clothe me with Your goodness!

**MEDITATION**

1. When Moses asked God to show him His glory, God replied : "I will show thee all good" (*Ex* 33,19), as if to say that His glory is infinite goodness, the good that He possesses in such plenitude that all good is in Him and no good exists independently of Him. God possesses good, not because He has received it from anyone, but because He Himself is, by His nature, the sovereign good, because His Being is infinite goodness. If creatures are good, they are so, only because God has communicated to them a little of His goodness. Of itself, the creature cannot even exist, therefore it cannot possess any good of its own. That is why Jesus said to the young man who had called Him "Good Master," "Why callest thou Me good? None is good but one, that is God" (*Mk* 10,18). Not even Jesus as man possessed goodness as His own; but He possessed it only because the divine nature, which was hypostatically united to His human nature, communicated it to Him. Only of God can it be said that He is good, in the sense that He is goodness itself, that goodness belongs to Him by nature, as divinity belongs to Him by nature; and just as it is impossible for His divinity to be lessened, so it is impossible for His goodness to be lessened. Heaven, earth, and the ages will pass away, but the goodness of God will never pass away. Man's wickedness may accumulate sin upon sin, evil upon evil, but over all, God's goodness will remain unchangeable. The shadow of evil will not mar it; instead, God who is always benevolent, will bend over the evil to change it into good, and to draw a greater good from it. Thus infinite Goodness stooped over man, the sinner, and made an immensely superior good come from Adam's fall : the redemption of the world through the Incarnation of His only-begotten Son. This is the distinctive character

of God's goodness : to will the good, only the good, even to the point of drawing good from evil.

2. God, who is supremely good in Himself, is also good in all His works; from Him, infinite Goodness, only good works can come. "And God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good" (*Gen 1,31*); thus Holy Scripture concludes the account of creation. Everything that has come from the hand of God bears the imprint of His goodness. The sun which illumines and warms the earth is good, the earth which brings forth flowers and fruit is good, the sea is good, the sky is good, the stars are good : everything is good because it is the work of God, who is essential, infinite, and eternal goodness. But God has willed that among His creatures there should be some, such as man, who besides being good because He created them so, might also be good because of the adherence of their free will to that goodness which He has diffused in them. This is the great honor given by God to man : not only has He created him good, as He created heaven and earth good, but He has desired that man's goodness should result from the free concurrence of his will, as if God made him owner of the goodness He had placed in him. This is just why God has given man the great gift of liberty. See, then, how far you withdraw from goodness when you use your free will to choose not good, but evil! Consider the enormous difference between you and God : God is infinite goodness to the extreme of drawing good even out of evil, whereas your profound malice is capable of changing even what is good into evil, of making use of the good of your liberty to follow your egoism, your pride, your self-love. Yet, it would not be hard for you to be good if you adhered to that interior impulse toward good which God has placed within you, if you allowed the good He has infused into your heart to develop. God created you good; He desires you to be good. It is true that your malice—the consequence of sin—is great, but His infinite goodness immensely surpasses it. He can cure it or destroy it altogether, provided you want Him to do it and trust in His goodness.

## COLLOQUY

" If a soul understood Your goodness, O God, it would be moved to work with all its strength to correspond to it; it would run quickly to meet You who are pursuing it and entreating, ' Open to Me, My friend! '

" What advantage does a soul receive from understanding Your goodness? The advantage of being clothed with Your goodness. Oh! if we would only open our eyes and see how great it is! But sometimes we are blind and do not see. The precious Blood of Christ is the only remedy which can open, not only our eyes, but also our heart, and make our soul understand the immensity of God's goodness.... O my God, You reveal Your infinite goodness to me as a great river flowing over the earth, into whose waters all creatures are immersed and nourished like the fish in the sea. I am absorbed in the contemplation of this great river; but when I look around and see human malice so opposed to Your goodness, I grieve exceedingly. O infinite Goodness, my soul desires to honor You in two ways; first by praise—recounting Your splendors, thanking You, blessing You unceasingly for all the gifts and graces You are always bestowing, and narrating all Your grandeurs; and then by my works—not spoiling Your image in me, but keeping it pure and spotless as You created it from the beginning" (cf. St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi).

" O Lord, I want to trust always in Your goodness which is greater than all the evil we can do. When, with full knowledge of ourselves, we desire to return to friendship with You, You remember neither our ingratitude nor our misuse of the favors You have granted us. You might well chastise us for these sins, but You make use of them only to forgive us the more readily, just as You would forgive those who have been members of Your household, and who, as they say, have eaten of Your bread. See what You have done for me, who wearied of offending You before You ceased forgiving me. You are never weary of giving and never can Your mercies be exhausted : let us not grow weary of receiving" (T.J. *Life*, 19).

*GOD'S INFINITE GOODNESS IS DIFFUSIVE*

PRESENCE OF GOD - O infinite Goodness, continually communicated to creatures, teach me how to imitate You.

**MEDITATION**

1. Goodness is not confined within itself; its characteristic is to diffuse itself, that is, to communicate itself to others, "*bonum diffusivum sui*," good is diffusive of itself; the greater the good, the more it tends to diffuse itself. God is the supreme good; therefore, He diffuses Himself sovereignly. He diffuses Himself first in Himself, in the bosom of the Blessed Trinity : the Father communicates to the Son all His divinity—essence, life, goodness and divine beatitude; the Father and the Son together communicate this to the Holy Spirit. The mystery of the Blessed Trinity, the intimate life of God, consists precisely in this essential, total, unceasing, and absolute communication. In it we have the supreme expression of the axiom : "*Bonum diffusivum sui*." Good is diffusive of itself.

But infinite Goodness wills to pour itself out exteriorly also; thus, God calls into existence an immense number of creatures to whom He communicates, in varying ways and degrees, some of His own goodness. God creates creatures, not because He has need of them, for they can add nothing to His beatitude and essential glory; but He creates them solely to extend His infinite goodness outside Himself. God wills creatures not because of any goodness or loveliness already in them, but because in creating them, He gives them a share in His own good and makes them lovable. God communicates Himself to creatures only because He is good and rejoices in sharing His good with other beings. His goodness is so great that it can communicate itself to an infinite number of creatures without being diminished; it is so diffusive that it makes all it touches good. This goodness is the cause of your being and of your life : when you were created, it left its imprint on you, and it is always and unceasingly penetrating and enveloping you. Has your heart retained

the seal of the divine goodness? Examine your thoughts, feelings, actions and see if there shines in them the reflection of the infinite goodness of God.

2. God's goodness is so gratuitous that it gives itself to creatures without any merit on their part; it is so liberal that it always precedes them and never fails to impart its light to them even when, by abusing their liberty, they show themselves unworthy of it. God's goodness is so patient that it does not stop at the ingratitude, the resistance, or even the crimes of His creatures, but His grace always pursues them. God could, in all justice, requite man's sins by depriving him of life and all the other good things He has bestowed upon him, but His infinite goodness prefers to shower upon man new gifts and new proofs of His kindness. Has He not said : "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live" (*Ez 33,11*)?

Consider now your goodness, and see how weak, narrow, calculating, and self-interested it is, when compared with the goodness of God. How often you act like the publicans of whom the Gospel speaks, "who love only those who love them" (cf. *Mt 5,46*). You are good to those who are good to you, you help those who will help you in return; but many times you are hard and miserly with your gifts to those from whom you can expect no recompense. Does it not often happen that you are sweet and benevolent toward those who approve of you and share your opinions, but harsh and unkind toward those who oppose you? In the presence of coldness, ingratitude, insults, or even a trifling lack of consideration, your good nature is offended, closes up, and withdraws into itself and you are no longer capable of benevolence toward your neighbor. See what need you have to meditate on the words of Jesus, inviting you to imitate His heavenly Father's goodness : "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust" (*Mt 5,44-45*).

## COLLOQUY

"O eternal Father! O fire and abyss of charity! O eternal clemency, O hope and refuge of sinners! O eternal, infinite good! Have you any need of your creature? You must have, since You act as if You could not live without her, You, the life of every creature, without whom nothing lives. Why, then, do You act in this way? Because You are in love with Your work, and You delight in it, as if You were overcome with the desire of its salvation. Your creature flees from You and You go looking for her; she moves away, and You draw near. You could come no closer than You did when You took upon Yourself her humanity.

"What shall I say? I must cry with Jeremias : 'Ah! Ah!' because I cannot say anything else, my limited words cannot express the affection of my soul which so greatly desires You. I ought to repeat St. Paul's words : 'Tongue cannot tell, nor ear hear, nor eye see, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to know what I saw.' What did I see? '*Vidi arcana Dei*,' I saw the ineffable mysteries of God. And what can I say? I, with my dull feelings, can add nothing more; I only say to you, my soul, that you have tasted and have seen the abyss of the sovereign, eternal Providence. Now I thank You, O eternal, sovereign Father, for the unlimited goodness You have shown me, so wretched and unworthy of every grace.

"Can I ever thank You sufficiently for the burning charity which You have shown to me and to all creatures? No! But You, O sweet, loving Father, will be grateful for me, that is, the affection of Your charity itself will return thanks to You, for I am she who is not. If I said I could do something by my own power, it would not be true, for You alone are He who is. My being and all other good things have come from You, who give them to me unceasingly because You love me, and not because You owe me anything.

"O infinite goodness, inestimable love, wonderful are the marvels You have worked in Your rational creature!" (St. Catherine of Siena).

*INFINITE WISDOM*

**PRESENCE OF GOD -** O my God, infinite Wisdom, enlighten my mind and teach me the secret of true wisdom.

**MEDITATION**

1. God is infinite wisdom who knows Himself and all things perfectly. In God wisdom is not distinct from being as it is in us, but it is the very Being of God. Therefore, God's Being is supreme wisdom; it is a luminous, resplendent, eternally subsistent ray of intelligence which embraces and penetrates all the divine essence, and at the same time sees in it, as in their cause, all things which have existed or ever can exist. Divine wisdom, says Holy Scripture, "reacheth everywhere by reason of her purity.... She is a vapor of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the almighty God.... She is the brightness of eternal light, the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of His goodness" (*Wis* 7,24-26).

Divine wisdom is, before all, perfect knowledge of God. No creature, not even the angels or the blessed in heaven, can know God to the point of exhausting the depths of the infinite greatness of His Being : God alone knows Himself perfectly. Divine wisdom alone can exhaust the infinite profundity of His essence and of His mysteries. Although we are incapable of knowing God as He really is, it is an immense joy for us to contemplate the infinite wisdom which penetrates all the divine mysteries, and an immense comfort to invoke this infinite wisdom and entrust ourselves to it, that it may be our light and guide in the knowledge of God.

Divine wisdom is, therefore, a perfect knowledge of everything that exists; there can be no error in it, since it is eternal, immutable truth. Nothing is hidden from it nor can anything be a mystery to it : because it has created all things and it penetrates their inmost essence. There is nothing new which it can learn because from all eternity it sees everything in an eternal present; nothing, however minute, can escape its most brilliant light. "The very

hairs of your head are numbered" (*Mt* 10,30), Jesus has said. God knows us much better than we know ourselves; the most secret movements of our hearts, even those which escape our control, are perfectly manifest to Him. Let us ask Him for the grace to know ourselves in His light, in His eternal truth.

2. Divine wisdom knows all things in God, in reference to Him, who is their first cause. It sees all things as depending upon God and ordained by Him to His glory; therefore, it does not judge them according to their outward appearances, but solely according to the value, place, and meaning they have in God's eyes. Consequently, the judgments of divine wisdom are vastly different from our short human judgments which stop at the purely material aspect of things: "O the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" St. Paul exclaims, "How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!" (*Rom* 11,33). They are all the more incomprehensible to us the more we are accustomed to judge them from a point of view opposed to that of divine wisdom.

To know created things in their relation to God, and to esteem them according to the value they have in His eyes, is true wisdom, which we should try to acquire in the reflected light of eternal wisdom. How far we are from it when we judge creatures and events only from a human standpoint, basing our judgment solely on the joy or displeasure they give us. This is the wisdom of the world and it is "foolishness with God" (*1 Cor* 3,19), precisely because it evaluates things according to their relation to man, and not to God, it judges them according to their appearances and not according to their reality. Only by accustoming ourselves to ignore our human view, which is too subjective and self-interested, will we be able to see beyond the appearances of things, to discover, in the light of faith, the significance and value they have in the eyes of God. Then we will clearly see that everything that the world greatly esteems—such as great talents, success, the esteem of creatures—are as nothing in the eyes of divine wisdom, which deems as far superior the slightest degree of grace, the least act of supernatural charity. Let us consider how wrong we are when we preoccupy ourselves more about our success in worldly affairs than about our progress in virtue. How

mistaken we are when we judge our neighbor by his natural qualities, considering the feelings of congeniality or antipathy which he arouses in us, rather than his supernatural worth. May the humble consideration of our foolishness make us feel more keenly than ever the need of invoking divine Wisdom : "O Wisdom who camest forth from the mouth of the Most High, come and teach us the way of prudence" (*RB*).

#### COLLOQUY

"O divine Wisdom, in you is the spirit of understanding : holy, one, manifold, subtle, eloquent, active, undefiled, sure, sweet, loving that which is good, quick, which nothing hindereth, beneficent, gentle, kind, steadfast, assured, secure, having all power, overseeing all things, and containing all spirits, intelligible, pure. You are more active than all active things : and reach everywhere and penetrate everything by reason of your purity. You are a vapor of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of Almighty God, and therefore, no defiled thing comes into you. You are the brightness of eternal light and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty and the image of His goodness. And being but one, you can do all things; and remaining in yourself the same, you renew all things, and through nations you convey yourself into holy souls, and make friends of God and the prophets.... You are more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of the stars; being compared with the light, you are found before it. For after this comes night, but you are never overcome by evil. You reach, therefore, from end to end mightily, and order all things sweetly.

"God of my Fathers and Lord of mercy...with You is Your Wisdom who knows Your works, who also was present when You made the world, and knew what was agreeable to Your eyes, and what was right in Your commandments.... Send her out of Your holy heaven and from the throne of Your Majesty, that she may be with me and may labor with me, that I may know what is acceptable to You. She knows and understands all things, and shall lead me soberly in my works, and shall preserve me by her power.... O Lord...hardly do we guess aright

at things that are upon earth; and with labor do we find the things that are before us. But the things that are in heaven, who shall search out? And who shall know Your thought, except You give wisdom, and send Your Holy Spirit from above?" (cf. *Wis* 7,22-30 – 9,1-17).

## 235

*INFINITE LOVE*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O my God, my only love, kindle in me the fire of Your charity.

**MEDITATION**

1. Sacred Scripture tells us : " *God is charity*" (1 *Jn* 4,16). God is love, eternal, infinite, substantial love. Just as everything in God is beautiful, good, perfect, and holy, so also everything in God is love—His beauty, wisdom, power, providence; even His justice is love. Love is perfect and holy when it turns with all its strength toward the sovereign good, and prefers it to every other good. This is the love with which God loves Himself, precisely because He is the one supreme and eternal Good, to which no other good can be preferred. The infinite love which God has for Himself is therefore, by its very nature, completely holy and has nothing in common with what we call self-love or egoism, that disordered love by which we prefer ourselves—more or less, and sometimes wholly—to God the supreme good. We are egoists because we have a tendency to love ourselves to the exclusion of every other affection, but God is so free from every shadow of egoism that, even though He loves Himself infinitely and is wholly satisfied with His infinite good, He tends by nature to diffuse His love outside Himself. It is thus that God loves creatures; He does not love them because there is some good in them which attracts Him, but it is He Himself who, loving them, creates good in them. " The love of God," says St. Thomas, " is the cause which infuses and creates good in creatures" (I<sup>a</sup>, q. 20, a. 2, co.). See, then, how God loves us, with love entirely

gratuitous and free, with love supremely pure, with love that is both benevolence and beneficence : *benevolence* which *desires* our good, *beneficence* which *does* us good. By loving us, God calls us to life, He infuses His grace in us, invites us to do good, urges us to be saints, draws us to Himself and gives us a share in His eternal happiness. Everything we are and have is the gift of His infinite love.

2. God "first loved us," exclaims St. John the Apostle (*I Jn* 4,10); and, in fact, He has loved us from all eternity. Even when we were not yet in existence, we were already in the mind of God, and seeing us, He loved us and willed to call us into existence in preference to innumerable other beings. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (*Jer* 31,3). This is how God reveals to us the story of our life, which is simply the story of His love for us. This story, once begun, never ends, because God's love has no end; sin alone has the sad possibility of interrupting it, but even then God never ceases to love us with an infinite, eternal, immutable, most faithful love. He loves us when He consoles us, but He loves us too when He sends us trials and leaves us in distress; He loves us when He gives us joy in abundance, as well as when He afflicts us with sorrow. His consolations are love; so too are His chastisements and trials. In all the circumstances of our life, even the saddest and most painful, we are always encompassed by His love. God's love can will nothing but good; even when He leads us by the harsh, rough road of suffering, He is infallibly willing our good. God "makes us die and makes us live.... He scourges us and He saves us" (cf. *I Sm* 2,6 – *Tb* 13,2), always because of His love. Thus it is not rare that He strikes hardest those whom He loves most, for, as the Holy Spirit says, "... acceptable men [are tried] in the furnace of humiliation" (*Sir* 2,5). St. Teresa of Jesus says : This suffering "is what the Father gave to Him whom He loved most of all [Jesus].... These, then, are His gifts in this world. He gives them in proportion to the love He bears us. He gives more to those He loves most and less to those He loves least" (*Way* 32).

To believe in God's love, to believe in it strongly even when He strikes us in what we hold most dear : such is the program of the soul who wishes to entrust itself blindly to infinite love!

## COLLOQUY

" Teach me, O Lord, how to love You; wretched as I am, I will love You with my whole heart and soul, because You loved me first. I exist because You created me; You willed from all eternity to number me among Your creatures. Whence does this blessing come to me, O most benign Lord, Most High God, most merciful Father; for what merits of mine, what grace of mine, did it please Your Majesty to create me? I did not exist and You created me; I was nothing and from nothing You drew me and gave me being. Not the existence of a drop of water, of fire, a bird, a fish or any other irrational animal...but You created me a little lower than the angels, since, like them, I have been given reason by which I may know You, and knowing You, can love You. And I, O Lord, by Your grace, can become Your son, which is impossible to other creatures. Only Your grace, only Your goodness has done this, so that I may share in Your sweetness. Give me then, the grace to be grateful, O You who have created me out of nothing!" (St. Augustine).

" O my God and my infinite Wisdom, without measure and without bounds, high above all the understanding both of angels and of men! O Love, You who love me more than I can love myself or conceive of love! What amazes and bewilders me, considering what we are, is the love You had for us and still have. I am so astounded that I am beside myself.

" How could my will not incline to love You? O Lord, I have received from You so many signs of love and I want to repay You, at least in some small way. I am especially moved by the thought that You, because You truly love me, never leave me but go with me everywhere and give me being and life. I know that I can never have a better friend" (T.J. *Exc*, 17 – *Con*, 2 – *Int C II*, 1).

*INFINITE MERCY*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - Teach me, O Lord, the secrets of Your mercy, that I may fully profit by them.

**MEDITATION**

1. God's love for us assumes a very special character, one that is adapted to our nature as frail, weak creatures : the character of mercy. Mercy is love bending over misery to relieve it, to redeem it, to raise it up to itself. It almost seems that God, in loving us, is attracted by our weakness, not because it is lovable, but because being infinite goodness, His compassion stoops to compensate for it by His mercy. He wants to heal our imperfection by His infinite perfection, our impurity by His purity, our ignorance by His wisdom, our selfishness by His goodness, our weakness by His strength. God, the supreme, eternal good, wants to be the remedy for all our ills, " for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust " (*Ps 102,14*).

Since our greatest evil—rather, the only real evil—is sin, infinite mercy would be the remedy. Assuredly, God hates sin, but, although He is forced to withdraw His friendship, that is, His grace, from the soul of the sinner because of the offense, His mercy still finds a way of continuing to love him. If He can no longer love him as a friend, He loves him as a creature, as the work of His hands; He loves him for the good that is still in him and which gives hope of his conversion. God's mercy is so immense that no misery, however great, can exhaust it; not even the most infamous sin, provided it is repented of, can halt it. This sad power is reserved to one thing only : the proud will of man by which he disdainfully shuts himself up in his wickedness, not wishing to admit how great is his need of God's infinite mercy. In such a case, in spite of the immensity of divine mercy, the solemn words of the Gospel are fulfilled : " God hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart, He hath put down the mighty from their seats...the rich He hath sent empty away " (cf. *Lk 1, 51-53*).

2. There is no limit to God's mercy. He never rejects us because of our sins, He never grows weary of our infidelities, He never refuses to forgive us, He is always ready to forget all our offenses and to repay our ingratitude with graces. He never reproaches us for our offenses, even when we fall again immediately after being forgiven. He is never angered by our repeated failures or weakness in the practice of virtue, but always stretches out His hand to us, wanting to help us. Even when men condemn us, God shows mercy to us; He absolves us and sends us away justified, as Jesus did the woman taken in adultery. "Go, and now sin no more" (*Jn* 8,11). By His words and example, Jesus has shown us the inexhaustible depths of God's mercy : let us think of the prodigal son, the lost sheep, Magdalen, and the good thief. But He has also said to us : "Be ye therefore merciful, as Your Father also is merciful" (*Lk* 6,36). How far does our mercy go? How much compassion do we have for the faults of others? The measure of our mercy toward our neighbor will be the measure of God's mercy toward us, for Jesus has said, "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again" (*Mt* 7,2).

God does not require us to be sinless that He may shower upon us the fullness of His mercy, but He does require us to be merciful to our neighbor, and moreover, to be humble. In fact, to be sinners is not enough to attract divine mercy; we must also humbly acknowledge our sins and turn to God with complete confidence. "What pleases God," said St. Thérèse of Lisieux, "is to see me love my littleness and poverty; it is the blind hope I have in His mercy. This is my sole treasure" (*L*, 176). This is the treasure which supplies for all our miseries, weaknesses, relapses and infidelities, because by means of this humility and confidence we shall obtain the divine mercy. And with this at our disposal, how can our wretchedness discourage us?

#### COLLOQUY

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He has done for you. No, I shall never forget that You have forgiven all my faults, healed all my diseases, crowned me with mercy and compassion and satisfied my desire with good things.

"O Lord, You are compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy. You will not always be angry, nor will You threaten forever. You have not dealt with me according to my sins nor rewarded me according to my iniquities. For according to the height of the heavens above the earth, Your mercy surpasses my merits. As a father has compassion on his children so have You compassion on them that fear You. For You know our frame, You remember that we are dust. Everything will pass; but Your mercy, O Lord, is from eternity unto eternity to them that fear You" (cf. *Ps* 102).

"O Lord, since it has been given me to realize the love of Your heart, all fear has been driven from my heart. The remembrance of my faults humiliates me, leads me never to rely on my strength, which is only weakness; but this remembrance, O Lord, speaks to me still more of Your mercy and Your love. How could my sins fail to be consumed completely if I cast them with wholly filial confidence into the burning furnace of Your love?

"O Lord, even if I had committed every possible crime, my confidence would remain unshaken, for I should then feel—after sincerely repenting of them—that all the multitude of my offenses would vanish as a drop of water in a fiery furnace.

"O Jesus, would that I could tell all little souls of Your ineffable condescension! I feel that if, by any impossibility, You could find a soul weaker than mine, I believe You would take delight in showering upon it still greater favors, if it abandoned itself with perfect trust to Your infinite mercy" (cf. *T.C.J. L*, 220 – *NV* – *St*, 13).

*INFINITE JUSTICE*

PRESENCE OF GOD - O Lord, reveal to me the beauty of Your justice, teach me to love it ardently and trustfully.

**MEDITATION**

1. Although justice does not seem to resemble mercy, it is, like the latter, an aspect of the sanctity of God, of His goodness, and of His infinite perfection. Justice and mercy are, to be more exact, two different—but inseparable—aspects of that one love with which God loves His creatures. Mercy is love, infinite love of the good, and justice is equally so. Mercy and justice penetrate each other. "Precisely because He is just, God is also compassionate," says St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus" (*L*, 203). God is merciful because He is just, and He is just because He is merciful; so, knowing our wretchedness, He bends down to us with infinite mercy. Nevertheless, justice is distinct from mercy, or better, justice is God's love which gives us all we need for our good, for the attainment of our last end; and mercy, on the other hand, is God's love which gives us much more than we need. But justice is never separated from mercy; it rather presupposes it. Could God, for example, provide for the needs of our life—and this is the work of justice—if He had not first created these needs in us when He called us into existence—this being the work of mercy? Justice, then, is always accompanied by mercy, for God invariably gives us much more than our due. As created beings, we are only entitled to a state of natural happiness, but God has willed to call us to a state of supernatural happiness. We could live as children of God with the help of grace alone, but God has given us in addition the great gift of the Eucharist. One drop of the Blood of Jesus would have sufficed to redeem the world from sin, but He willed to die on the Cross. This is mercy, which ever accompanies and surpasses justice. They are always inter-related, since God would not be infinite Justice if He were not infinite Mercy, and vice versa.

2. Mercy is the effusion of the sovereign Good who communicates His goodness to creatures; justice is zeal defending the rights of that sovereign Good who ought to be loved above all things. In this sense, justice intervenes when the creature tramples on God's rights and offends Him instead of loving and honoring Him. The punishment of the sinner is the fruit of justice, but at the same time it is the fruit of mercy, for "whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth" (*Prov 3,12*). God does not punish a sinner in order to destroy him but to convert him. In this life the means used by divine justice are always directed by mercy, insofar as their purpose is always to put the sinner in such conditions as to profit by the divine mercy. Therefore, God is always merciful even when He punishes; His chastisements are not merely punishments, but they are also, and above all, remedies to cure our souls from sin, except in the case of those who refuse to be converted.

In our spiritual life, mercy and justice are continually alternating and intertwining. God's mercy offers us His divine friendship; but, in justice, He cannot receive as an intimate friend anyone who retains the slightest attachment to sin and imperfection. Therefore He subjects us to purifying trials for a twofold purpose : to make us atone for our faults—which is the aim of justice—and to destroy in us the last roots of sin that we may be disposed for union with God—and this is the aim of mercy. Hence, we must accept our trials humbly, realizing that we deserve them. We must accept them with zeal and a love of justice, wishing to avenge in ourselves God's rights, rights which we too often forget and ignore. We ought to accept them too with love, for every trial is a great mercy on the part of God, who wants to make us advance in the way of sanctity.

#### COLLOQUY

"O God, You have manifested to me Your infinite mercy, and in this resplendent mirror, I contemplate Your other attributes. There each appears radiant with love—Your justice perhaps more than the rest. What a sweet joy, O Lord, to think that You are just, that You take into account our weakness and know so well the frailty of our nature. What then need I fear? You, the God of infinite

justice, who deigned to pardon lovingly the sins of the prodigal son, will You not also be just to me who am always with You?

"I know that one must be most pure to appear before You, the God of all holiness, but I know, too, that You are infinitely just; and it is this justice, which terrifies so many souls, that is the basis of my joy and trust. . . . O Lord, I hope as much from Your justice as from Your mercy; precisely because You are just, You are compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy" (*T.C.J. St*, 8 - *L*, 203).

"What will become of me who have so many faults with which to reproach myself? But where sin abounds, grace also abounds. And as Your mercy, O God, is eternal, I shall sing Your goodness forever, Your goodness, Your justice, not mine. I have only Yours because You are my justice. Should I fear that it will not be enough for both of us? But Your justice is infinite and remains forever and it will cover both of us with its immensity. In me it will cover the multitude of my sins, while in You, O Lord, it will only conceal the treasures of Your goodness which await me in the wounds of Christ. Here I shall find Your infinite sweetness, hidden, it is true, and only for those who are willing to surrender themselves" (cf. St. Bernard).

## 238

### THE FRUITS OF LIFE

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - Help me, O Lord, not to be satisfied with words, but to bring forth fruits of sanctity.

#### MEDITATION

- Both the Epistle (*Rom* 6,19-23) and the Gospel (*Mt* 7,15-21) for today speak of the true fruits of the Christian life and invite us to ask ourselves what fruit we have produced

so far. "When you were the servants of sin," says St. Paul, you brought forth the fruits of death, "but now, being made free from sin and become servants of God, you have your fruit unto sanctification." Our sanctification should be the fruit of our Christian life, and we must examine ourselves on this point. What progress are we making in virtue? Are we faithful to our good resolutions?

Every Christian may consider himself a tree in the Lord's vineyard; the divine gardener, Jesus Himself, has planted it in good, fertile, productive ground in the garden of the Church, where it is watered by the living water of grace. He has given it the most tender care, cut off its useless branches by means of trials, cured its diseases by His Passion and death, and watered its roots with His precious Blood. He has taken such good care of it that He can say : "What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard, that I have not done to it?" (*Is 5,4*). After all this solicitude, one day Jesus comes to see what kind of fruit this tree is bearing, and by its fruit He judges it, for "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit." Before the Redemption, mankind was like a wild tree which could bring forth only fruits of death; but with the Redemption, we have been grafted into Christ, and Christ, who nourishes us with His own Blood, has every right to find in us fruits of sanctity, of eternal life. This is why words and sighs and even faith are not enough, for "faith...if it have not works, is dead in itself" (*Jas 2,17*). Works as well as the fulfillment of God's will are necessary, because "not everyone that says to Me 'Lord, Lord!' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of My Father who is in heaven."

2. In the Gospel of the day, Jesus directs our attention to the "false prophets" who appear "in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly are ravening wolves." There are many who claim to be teachers in spiritual or moral matters, but they are false teachers because their works do not correspond to their words. It is easy, in fact, to speak well, but it is not easy to live well. Sometimes false doctrines are offered to us, even though they may not seem false at first because they have the appearance of truth. Thus any doctrine which, in the name of an evangelical principle, offends other doctrines is false : for example, that which in the name

of compassion for individuals does harm to the common good, or that which in the name of charity sanctions injustice or leads to a neglect of obedience to lawful superiors. Equally false is any doctrine which tends to make us lax, disturbs peace and harmony, or under the pretext of a greater good, brings about dissension between superiors and subjects, or does not submit to the voice of authority. Jesus would like us to be as "simple as doves," averse to criticism and severe judgments of our neighbor; but He also wants us to be as "wise as serpents" (*Mt 10,16*), so as not to let ourselves be deceived by false appearances of good which hide dangerous snares.

Furthermore, it is not given to all to be teachers, nor is it expected of all; but of everyone—learned and ignorant, teachers and pupils—Our Lord asks the practice of the Christian life in the concrete. What good would it do us to possess profound, lofty doctrine if, at the same time, we should not live according to this doctrine? Before we begin to instruct others, we must try to instruct ourselves, pledging ourselves to follow all the teachings of the Gospel in imitation of Jesus, "who began to do and to teach" (*Acts 1,1*). The genuine fruit which proves the worth of our doctrine and of our life is always that indicated by Jesus: the fulfillment of His will. This fulfillment means total adherence to the laws of God and of the Church, loyal obedience to our lawful superiors, fidelity to duty—and all these in every kind of circumstance, even at the sacrifice of our own ideas and will.

#### COLLOQUY

"O eternal God, when man was only a tree of death, You made him a tree of life by grafting Yourself onto him! Nevertheless, many people bring forth only fruits of death, due to their sins and to their refusal to be grafted onto You, O eternal life. Many remain in the death of their sins and do not come to the fountain from which Christ's Blood flows to water their tree...and thus it is seen that You created us without our help but You will not save us without it.

"What great dignity, O God, does the soul receive which has been grafted onto You and what excellent fruits it produces! How does this tree bear these fruits, if, by itself,

it is sterile and dead? It bears them in You, O Christ, for if You had not been grafted onto it, it could produce no fruit by its own power, for it is nothing.

“O eternal truth, inestimable love! You brought forth for us, O Christ, fruits of fire, love, light, and prompt obedience, by which You ran like a Lover to the ignominious death of the Cross; You gave us these fruits by grafting Your divinity onto our humanity. Thus, a soul who has been grafted onto You cares for nothing but Your honor and the salvation of souls: it becomes faithful, prudent, and patient. Be ashamed, my soul, that you deprive yourself of so much good on account of your faults! The good I do is of no use to You, O God, and the evil of which I am guilty cannot harm You, but You are pleased when Your creature brings forth fruits of life because she will reap infinite good from them and attain the end for which You created her.

“O God, Your high, eternal will desires only our sanctification; therefore, a soul who desires to sanctify itself, strips itself of its own will and clothes itself with Yours. O my sweet Love, I think this is the true sign of those who have been grafted onto You; they fulfill Your will according to Your pleasure and not according to their own, so that they become clothed in Your will” (cf. St. Catherine of Siena).

### DIVINE PROVIDENCE

**PRESENCE OF GOD -** O my God, You order and dispose everything according to Your own exalted purposes; teach me to trust fully in Your divine Providence.

#### MEDITATION

1. Divine Wisdom, says Holy Scripture, “reacheth...from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly” (*Wis 8,1*). Divine Wisdom is thus identified with divine Providence,

which orders, disposes, and directs everything to the attainment of a well-defined end : the ultimate and supreme end which is the glory of God, the proximate and secondary end which is the good and happiness of creatures. Nothing exists without a reason, nothing in the world happens by chance; everything, everything without the least exception, is part of the magnificent plan of divine Providence. In this plan every creature, even the lowest, has its definite place, its end, and its value; every event, even the most insignificant, has been foreseen from all eternity and regulated even to its slightest detail. In this plan, as vast as it is wonderful, all creatures, from the most sublime—such as the angels—to the humblest—like the dewdrops and the blades of grass—are called upon to contribute to the harmony and good of the whole.

If certain situations seem to us incomprehensible, if we cannot see the reason why particular circumstances and creatures make us suffer, it is because we do not see the place they occupy in the plan of divine Providence in which everything is ordered for our ultimate good. Yes, even suffering itself is ordered for our good, and God, who is infinite goodness, neither wills nor permits it except for this purpose. We believe all this in theory but we easily forget it in practice, so much so, that when we find ourselves in obscure, painful situations which upset or interfere with our plans and wishes, we are disturbed and our lips formulate the anguished question : "Why does God permit this?" However, the answer, as universal and infallible as divine Providence itself, is always the same : God permits it solely for our good. We need to be firmly convinced of this so that we may not be scandalized by the trials of life. "All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth, to them that seek after His covenant and His testimonies" (*Ps 24,10*) ; we can mistrust ourselves, our goodness and our faithfulness, but we cannot mistrust God who is infinite goodness and faithfulness.

2. Having created us, God has not left us to care for ourselves but, like a tender mother, He continues to help us and provide for all our needs. "Can a woman forget her infant?...and if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee" (*Is 49,15*). Each soul can, in all truth, consider these words as addressed to itself for, in actual fact, God's Providence is so immense and powerful that, while it embraces

the whole universe, it simultaneously takes care of each individual creature, even the least. Jesus showed us the Providence of our heavenly Father when He said, "Not one [sparrow] shall fall to the ground without the permission of your Father...Fear not, therefore : better are you than many sparrows" (*Mt 10,29-31*). Since God does not create us *en masse*, but creates individually the soul of every man that comes into the world, so too, His divine Providence is not limited to aiding us as a totality, but it assists each one of us, knowing well our needs, our difficulties, and even our desires; it is fully cognizant of what is most suitable for our ultimate good. The most attentive mother may be unaware of some need of her child, she may forget or make a mistake in providing for it, or she may find it impossible to help the child at all. But this can never happen with God, whose Providence knows, sees, and can do all things. Not even the tiniest bird is forgotten, nor is the humblest flower of the field neglected. "Consider the lilies of the field," Jesus said, "...they labor not, neither do they spin, yet I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is today, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe, how much more you, O ye of little faith?" (*Mt 6,28-30*). God's Providence surrounds us completely; in it we live and move and have our being. Nevertheless, how slow we are to believe in it, how distrustful we are! What need we have to open our hearts to a greater, unlimited confidence, for divine Providence has no limits!

#### COLLOQUY

"O God, having created the world, You govern it with admirable order. You give life to the plants and make them grow; the flowers bloom and the fruits ripen in their season. You control the sun, the moon, and the planets; You have created the universe in perfect order for the benefit of mankind. You have made man for Yourself alone, and Your desire is to live in him; You want him to find no rest or peace outside of You. You have no need of Your creature, yet in him You deign to seek Your rest, so that hereafter he may enjoy You eternally, seeing You face to face, with all the blessed in heaven.

" Your divine Providence, O God, takes care of all Your creatures as though they were but one, and it takes care of each one as though all others were contained in it. Oh! if Your Providence were only understood, everyone would forget the things of this world to be united to it " (St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi).

" Lord, You are good to all and Your tender mercies are over all Your works. Let all Your works praise You, O Lord! Let Your saints bless You.... The eyes of all hope in You, and You give them meat in due season. You open Your hand and fill with blessings every living creature, You execute judgment for them that suffer wrong, and give food to the hungry. You loose them that are fettered, and enlighten the blind. You lift up them that are cast down; You love the just, O Lord. You heal the broken of heart and bind up their bruises. You cover the heavens with clouds, and prepare rain for the earth; You make grass to grow on the mountains. You give to beasts their food and to the young ravens that call upon You. O Lord, at the remembrance of Your immense goodness, all creatures break forth in praise and acclaim Your liberality " (cf. *Ps 144-145 - 146*).

## 240

*DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE*

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - O God, use Your almighty power to convert me entirely to Your love.

**MEDITATION**

1. " I am the Almighty God " (*Gen 17,1*). With these words God revealed Himself to Abraham. God is all-powerful because He can do all that He wills; and this He can do as He wills, when He wills, without any limitations. " Whatsoever the Lord pleased, He hath done, in heaven, in earth, in the sea, and in all the deeps " (*Ps 134,6*). Nothing can impede His action, nor oppose His will; nothing is

difficult to Him. Our works, even the simplest, require time, fatigue, material adaptation, and collaboration; God's works, even the greatest, are performed in one instant by a simple act of His will. God is so omnipotent that with a single word He has brought all things out of nothing : " *fiat* " and light, the heavens, the earth, the seas, and the whole universe were made. Our words are often empty sounds; they are dispersed in the air, producing no effect. God's word, on the contrary, is omnipotent, creative, operative, and effective, so that it infallibly produces whatever it expresses. God is so mighty that, after creating man free, He rules and directs him according to His good pleasure, without prejudicing man's liberty in any way. God is so omnipotent that He can change men, the children of sin, into His adopted sons, called to share His divine life. He is so omnipotent that He can draw good even from evil. The omnipotence of God is always active and working, without ever stopping; and this magnificent, infinite, eternal omnipotence is completely at the service of His infinite goodness, or better, is infinite goodness itself, which can do all the good it wishes. How much we need the help of this omnipotence, we who are so weak that, even seeing and willing the good, we are very often incapable of doing it!

2. God alone is omnipotent; He is the only One who possesses power by nature; we, on the contrary—like all other creatures—are without power, incapable of doing anything. Without the concurrence of divine omnipotence, the sun cannot shine, fire cannot burn nor can the flowers bloom; and man cannot perform even the slightest act. This is the great truth which Jesus taught us : " Without Me you can do nothing " (*Jn 15,5*).

Our power and ability do not have their principle in us, but in God alone : " Our sufficiency is from God " (*2 Cor 3,5*), says St. Paul. This is a thought which should keep us very humble : if there is something we can and know how to do, it is only because God has shared His divine power with us. Left to ourselves, we could not even formulate a thought or utter a word. On the other hand, this our radical impotence should not discourage us, because God, infinite goodness, has communicated being to us, as well as His goodness and His power, and He is disposed to communicate these to us in greater measure, the more humble He sees us to be, and the

more convinced we are of our impotence. Thus God delights in choosing the humble, "the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible...and the things that are not" (*1 Cor 1,28*), to accomplish the most magnificent works. St. Teresa of Avila could rightly say, "Teresa alone can do nothing but with Jesus she can do all things," and St. Paul adds : "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (*Phil 4,13*). The reason for so many of our failures in the works of the apostolate and in our progress in virtue is to be found in the fact that we do not rely sufficiently on the divine omnipotence. We count too much on human means and too little on the help of almighty God. Certainly, we are not to remain idle awaiting God's help; we must do all that is in our power. Nevertheless, we must never hope for success from our own efforts and labors but only from the help of divine omnipotence.

#### COLLOQUY

"Your omnipotent hand, O God, created the angels in heaven, and on the earth the worms, and it was not superior in creating the former, nor inferior in creating the latter for no other hand but Yours could create an angel, and no other could create a worm either; as no other could create heaven, so no other could create the tiniest leaf of a tree, nor any substance. Only Your hand could do these things, Your hand, to which everything is possible. It is no easier for You to create a worm than an angel, but You have done all that You wished in heaven and on earth, in the seas and in all the abysses.

"You created all things from nothing; this You did by Your will alone. You possess each one of Your creatures without difficulty; You govern them without labor; You rule them without tedium, and nothing either above or below can disturb the order of Your kingdom. You are not the author of evil; of this You are incapable, although there is nothing which You cannot do. You have never regretted what You have done; no storm or disturbance of soul can trouble You, nor the perils of the whole earth endanger You" (St. Augustine).

"I rejoice, O God, because Your omnipotence is in the hands of Your just and loving will; and everything that comes

from that will and power, will be good and useful for me and will redound to the glory of Your Name. O God, One and Triune, who are as wise as You are powerful and as powerful as You are good, and in all things infinite, illumine my intellect by Your wisdom, make my will good by Your sovereign goodness, strengthen my faculties by Your wonderful power, so that I may know You, love You, and serve You with fortitude" (Ven. L. Du Pont).

## 241

## FAITH

PRESENCE OF GOD - O Lord, grant that I may understand the great value of faith.

## MEDITATION

1. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God" (*Heb 11,6*) because faith is the foundation of all our relations with Him. For the man without faith, God has neither meaning, nor value, nor place in his life. On the other hand, the more lively our faith is, the more God enters into our life, until finally He becomes our all, the one great reality for which we live, and the One for whom we courageously face sorrow and death. It is only when faith has deeply penetrated a soul that it can exclaim with St. Paul, "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord" (*Rom 14,8*). We do not lack faith, but it is not sufficiently alive and practical to make us see God in everything and over everything, thus giving us the sense of His essential, transcendent, and eternal reality, which infinitely surpasses all the immediate, contingent, and passing realities of this life. Faith does not depend upon data received through the senses, on what we can see and touch, nor is it reduced to what we can understand with the intellect, but surpassing all this, it makes us share in God's own knowledge, in His thoughts, in His understanding. Having raised us to the state of divine sonship, God has made us

capable of sharing His intimate life, His life of knowledge and love. For this purpose He has given us the theological virtues together with grace. Faith allows us to share His life of knowledge, and charity, His life of love.

Faith enables us to know God as He knows Himself, although certainly not exhaustively. God knows Himself not only as the Creator, but also as the Trinity and as the Author of grace; it is under these aspects that faith presents Him to us. By faith we know creatures as He knows them, that is, in relation to Him and dependent upon Him. Our intellect can give us only natural light on God and creatures; faith, on the contrary, gives us the supernatural light that is a participation in the light of God, in the knowledge God has of Himself and of creatures.

2. St. Thomas says that "faith is a habitual disposition of soul by which eternal life begins in us," it is a "beginning of eternal life" (*II<sup>a</sup>, II<sup>ae</sup>, q.4, a.1, co.*). In fact, by faith we begin to know God as we shall one day know Him in heaven. There we shall know Him unveiled in the light of glory; here below we know Him dimly by means of the truths which faith proposes to us to believe, truths which give us, however, the very same God. Faith and the beatific vision are like two phases of the same knowledge of God: faith gives us an initial, obscure, imperfect knowledge; the beatific vision, where faith will end, will give us full, clear, perfect knowledge. Now "we know in part" as St. Paul says, referring to our knowledge by faith, "but when that which is perfect is come," that is, the beatific vision, "that which is in part shall be done away" (*1 Cor 13,9,10*). St. John of the Cross gives us a pleasing comparison to make us understand that faith already contains the germ of the beatific vision. He refers to the episode, narrated in Scripture, of Gideon's soldiers who had "lamps in their hands, which they saw not, because they had them concealed in the darkness of the pitchers; but, when these pitchers were broken, the light was seen. In like manner, faith, which is foreshadowed by those pitchers, contains within itself divine light; which, when it is ended and broken, at the ending and breaking of this mortal life, will allow the glory and light of the divinity, which was contained in it, to appear" (*AS II, 9,3*).

The more lively our faith is, the more we shall enjoy here below an anticipation of the knowledge of God which we

shall possess in heaven. The more lively our faith and the more imbued with love it is, the higher will be our degree of glory and hence, of our vision of God. Today's faith must prepare us for the beatific vision of tomorrow; it should make us enter, even on earth, into communion with the thought and the knowledge of God. In this way, faith elevates us immeasurably above our human reasonings, our human thoughts.

#### COLLOQUY

"O faith of Christ, my Spouse, I turn to You who enclose and conceal within yourself the form and beauty of my Beloved. You are the clear, limpid fount, free from error, from which the waters of all spiritual good flow to the soul. Did You not assure the Samaritan woman, O Christ, that in those who believe in You would surge a fountain whose waters would spring up into everlasting life?

"O faith, such is the likeness between yourself and God, that there is no other difference, save that which exists between seeing God and believing in Him. For even as God is infinite, so You set Him before us as infinite; and as He is Three and One, so You set Him before us as Three and One; and as God is darkness to our understanding, even so do You blind and dazzle our understanding. And thus, O Lord, by this means alone, You manifest Yourself to the soul in divine light which passes all understanding. Increase, then, O Lord, my faith, for the stronger my faith is, the more closely shall I be united to You.

"O my soul, as God is inaccessible, do not concern Yourself with how much your faculties can comprehend and your senses can perceive, that You be not satisfied with less than God, and lose not the swiftness that is needful to attain to Him. But walk in naked, pure faith, which alone is the proximate and proportionate means to your union with God" (J.C. *SC 12, 1-3 - AS II, 9, 1 - SM 1, 52*).

"O infinite Wisdom, O eternal, infinite God, You want to be understood by Your creature because You are the sovereign Good. It can do so, understanding You in the way You show Yourself to it under the veil of faith. It is indeed a veil, but it is translucent, since Your word illuminates and gives light to the humble. Nevertheless, just as it is

impossible for You not to be God, so it is impossible for Your creature to understand You fully. He who wishes to attain to the sublime state of union with You, O Lord, must have great faith. Being the sovereign, infinite, immense, and unsearchable Good, You can be understood only by Yourself. But the more the soul believes in You, so much the more will it come to unite itself to You and participate in Your grandeur" (cf. St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi).

242

### THE OBSCURE LIGHT OF FAITH

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - Teach me to believe, O Lord, even in darkness and obscurity; teach me to believe by relying only on Your word.

#### MEDITATION

1. Through its own efforts, the human mind is able to attain to a knowledge of God the Creator by considering created things; it can know His existence and even some of His perfections, but it cannot attain to the mystery of His intimate life which is beyond the knowledge of creatures, if God Himself does not raise it to this knowledge. God alone knows the mysteries of His intimate life, of the communication of this life to man, and He alone can reveal it. Divine revelation enables us to "know" with certainty that such realities exist, and yet, it does not enable us to "see" them; it tells us that God is Triune, but it does not show us the Trinity. It makes us know that God gives us grace, but we cannot see grace. Precisely because we do not see, to adhere to divine mysteries we must believe trustingly in God who has revealed them to us; and this is just what constitutes the act of faith. Faith is certain because it relies on the word of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived; in this sense we can say that faith is *clear*, "free from errors" (J.C. SC, 12,3), admitting no doubt, since no one can doubt God's word. But at the same time, it remains *obscure*, because it does not show us the truths which it proposes for our

belief and, therefore, they remain mysteries to us. Let us remember the pitcher that contains a lighted but invisible lamp. This obscure side of faith is, at the same time, both painful and glorious for us. It is painful because we cannot see what we believe, painful because an act of faith often exacts a leap in the dark, a thing repugnant to human nature which likes to be in control, to know what it is doing, and to proceed on known facts. The more elevated supernatural realities are, the greater is their obscurity—even darkness—to the intellect, which is incapable of proceeding without the aid of the senses, and incapable of embracing the infinite. On the other hand, however, it is this very obscurity which constitutes the merit and glory of our act of faith : merit, because it is a wholly supernatural act based not on what we can see and verify, but solely on what God has revealed to us; glory, because our act of faith gives all the more glory and honor to God, the more it relies solely on His word.

2. My intellect does not need the concurrence of my will to believe that two and two make four. The truth is evident and I see it. In the case of divine truths, on the contrary, my intellect remains free to give its assent or not, simply because these truths are not evident to me; and I believe only because I *will* to believe. In the case of natural truths that I can verify, such as mathematical truths, my adherence to them depends upon the power of my intellect : the deeper my knowledge and comprehension of them, the stronger is my conviction. But in the presence of supernatural truths, my adherence depends upon the power of my will : the intellect is moved by the will. A free upright will, which loves its God, fully believes all that He reveals, not with a cold acceptance, but with a loving adherence which involves all the powers of the soul.

However, since evidence is lacking, doubt may always arise in the mind, and I should not be astonished at this. It is natural for the human intellect to doubt what it does not see and does not understand. Sometimes doubts are caused by ignorance, in which case we have a duty to seek further instruction; but at other times they will be mere temptations which must be overcome by an act of the will : Lord, I believe because I want to believe; I believe, even if I am in darkness, if I cannot see or understand; I believe

solely on Your word. This is the way we should act when we experience temptations against faith. Instead of losing ourselves in reasoning about them or becoming discouraged, we must simply adhere by an act of the will. St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus wrote at the time of her bitter trials against faith : "I try to live by faith, even though it affords me no consolation. I have made more acts of faith during the past year than in all the rest of my life" (*St.*, 9). These painful trials strengthen our faith and make it purer, more supernatural; the soul believes, not because of the consolation that faith gives it, not because it trusts in its feelings or enthusiasm, nor even in the little it does understand of the divine mysteries, but it believes only because God has spoken. When the Lord wishes to lead souls to a more intimate union with Himself, He almost always makes them undergo such trials; then is the moment to give Him testimony of our faith by throwing ourselves, with our eyes closed, into His arms.

#### COLLOQUY

"O blessed faith, you are certain but you are also obscure. You are obscure because you make us believe truths revealed by God Himself, and which transcend all natural light. Your excessive light, radiance of the divine truths, becomes for me thick darkness because the greater overwhelms the lesser, even as the light of the sun overwhelms all other lights and even exceeds my power of vision.

"You are dark night for the soul and, as night, you illumine it like that dark cloud which lighted the way in the night for the children of Israel. Yes, although you are a dark cloud, your darkness gives light to the darkness of my soul. So I too can say : the night will be my illumination in my delights. In the way of pure contemplation and union with God, your night, O faith, will be my guide.

"Make me comprehend, O Lord, that to be joined in union with You I must not walk by understanding, neither may I lean upon experience or feeling or imagination, but I must believe in Your infinite Being, which is not perceptible to my understanding nor to any other sense" (cf. J.C. *AS II*, 3, 1-6 – 4,4).

"O faith, you are the great friend of our spirit, and to the human sciences which boast that they are more evident

than you are, you can well say what the Spouse said to her companions : ‘ I am black but beautiful.’ You are black because you are in the obscurity of the divine revelations, which, having no apparent evidence, make you appear *black*, and almost unrecognizable; but yet you *are beautiful* in yourself because of your infinite certainty” (cf. St. Francis de Sales).

“ Only the beautiful light of faith can light my way to You, O God. The Psalmist sings, ‘ You made darkness Your covert’ and then, in another place he seems to contradict himself by saying, ‘ You are clothed with light as with a garment.’ This apparent contradiction seems to me to mean that I must plunge into the sacred darkness, keeping all my powers in night and emptiness; then I shall meet You, O my Master, and the light that clothes You as a garment will envelop me also; for You desire Your bride to be shining with Your light, and Yours alone” (E.T. II, 4).

## 243

## THE POWER OF FAITH

PRESENCE OF GOD - “ I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief; increase my faith” (*Mk* 9,23 – cf. *Lk* 17,5).

## MEDITATION

1. Jesus has said : “ All things are possible to him that believeth” (*Mk* 9,22). It would seem that before an act of living faith, blind, unconditional faith, God does not know how to resist and considers Himself almost obliged to grant our requests. The Gospel tells us this on every page : before Jesus performed a miracle, He always asked for an act of faith. “ Do you believe that I can do this unto you?” (*Mt* 9,28); and when faith was sincere, the miracle took place immediately. “ Be of good heart, daughter,” He said to the woman who was troubled with an issue of blood, “ thy faith hath made thee whole” (*ibid.* 9,22). Jesus never said, “ My

omnipotence has saved you, has cured you," but *your faith*, as if to make us understand that faith is the indispensable condition that He requires if we are to benefit from His omnipotence. He, the Almighty, will use His omnipotence only for the benefit of those who firmly believe in Him. This is why the divine Master refused to perform in Nazareth the many miracles He performed elsewhere. The more lively our faith, the more powerful it is with the very power of God. "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed," Jesus affirmed, "you shall say to this mountain, 'Remove from hence hither,' and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you" (*ibid.* 17,19). These words are true, literally true, like everything in the Gospel; if they are not effectual for us, it is only because our faith is very weak. How many difficulties we meet with in life which are for us real mountains to move! Difficulties in the spiritual life : faults we cannot overcome, virtues we cannot seem to acquire; difficulties in our everyday life : insufficient means of support, duties which surpass our ability or our strength.... And we stop, discouraged, at the foot of these mountains : "It is impossible, I cannot do it!" It would take only a little faith like a grain of mustard seed, which is very tiny indeed. But provided that faith is living, capable of sprouting like the mustard seed, provided that faith is certain, resolute, supernatural, and that it counts only on God and trusts in His Name alone, this faith will confront every difficulty whatsoever with courage. Oh! if we could only have such faith! "Nothing is impossible to him that believeth."

2. Although the difficulties we encounter may be serious ones, discouragement is never justified. We become discouraged because we reflect on our powerlessness : on one side, we remember our past failures, and on the other, we place before ourselves the prospect of situations which are beyond our strength, making them appear like insurmountable mountains which crush, smother and paralyze us. But a soul who has faith in God, who is sure of its God, well knows how to find a way to escape from these straits, and makes use of its own impotence and difficulties as a springboard to plunge into God by a strong, determined act of faith.

God sometimes permits us to find ourselves in very difficult situations which cannot be solved by human means. He permits us to undergo painful spiritual trials, resulting in

states of real anguish, and He permits this for the sole purpose of forcing us to practice the virtue of faith, which in certain cases can and must become heroic. If then, God visits us with similar trials, we must believe that it is not because He has abandoned or rejected us, nor that He wants to discourage or destroy us; He acts thus to make us strong, yes, even heroic in our faith. We must believe in Him, in His all-powerful omnipotence; believe in His word. Perhaps God delays to come to our help only because we are not yet to make an act of complete faith! He asks us, as he asked the two blind men in the Gospel : "Do you believe that I can do this?" (*Mt 9,28*); and we do not yet know how to answer a strong determined *yes*, without uncertainty, without any *if* or *but*. Yet, even if our faith were strong, God could still test it as Jesus did that of the Canaanite woman. If He does, we must imitate her : we must not give up, nor cease to believe, but believe even more firmly, so that He will be forced to answer us as He did that humble woman : "Great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt" (*ibid. 15,28*).

#### COLLOQUY

"O my Lord and my God, so weak is our faith that we desire what we see more than what faith tells us—though what we actually see is that people who pursue these visible things meet with nothing but ill fortune.

"If then, grave difficulties appear, oh! how the devil rejoices—if for no other reason than to weaken our faith and to persuade us not to believe, O Lord, that You are powerful and can do works which are incomprehensible to our understanding.

"May You be blessed, O my God! I acknowledge Your great power. If You are mighty, as indeed You are, what is impossible to You who can do all things? Miserable though I am, I firmly believe that You can do what You will; and the greater the marvels I hear of You, the stronger grows my faith, and the more do I reflect that You can work others yet greater. How can I wonder at what is done by the Almighty?" (*T.J. Int C II, 1 – VI, 3 – Exc, 4*).

"Not to believe in You, O my God, requires more faith than to believe in You! Your love for me is so great that I no longer need faith to believe in it" (*St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi*).

" O my God, You are love and omnipotence. You know all, You can do all, You will all, and You guide all for Your own glory and for our advantage. What faith I draw from these truths! What confidence, peace, and love they give me! I know that even when You are not giving me anything tangible, You are still my God, always providing lovingly for the work of Your hands. Hence, I hide myself in You with faith, to withstand the violence of the storm, certain that, when it pleases You, by Your divine omnipotence, You will make the dead rise again" (cf. Bl. M. Thérèse Soubiran).

No, my God, the strength of Your arm is not lessened. If you do not perform miracles in my favor, it is only because my faith is weak. Help my incredulity, O Lord : increase my faith!

## 244

## FAITH IN PRACTICE

PRESENCE OF GOD - O Lord, grant that in every circumstance of my life, I may be guided by the light of faith.

## MEDITATION

i. Faith ought to be the light which envelops not only our moments of prayer but our whole life as well. In prayer we say, " I believe in God, the Father almighty "; but a few minutes afterwards, in the face of some difficult task, a tiresome person, or something which upsets our plans, we forget that these have all been willed and planned by God for our good. We forget that God is our Father, and therefore is more concerned about our welfare than we are ourselves. We forget that God is all-powerful and can help us in every difficulty. In losing sight of the light of faith, which makes us see everything as dependent upon God and ordered by Him for our good, we lose ourselves in merely human considerations and protests, as if God had nothing to do with our life or had very little place in it.

We give way to discouragement as though we had no faith. Yes, we believe in God, the Father Almighty, but we do not believe to the point of seeing His will, or at least His permission, in every circumstance. And yet, until faith becomes such a factor in our life that it makes us see all things in relation to God, and as dependent upon Him, we will not be able to say that the light of faith is the guide of our life. It is, of course, but only partially. How often this true light, which participates in the very light of God, remains hidden under the bushel of a mentality which is still too human, too earthly! Jesus said, "Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house" (*Mt 5,15*). The light of faith was enkindled within us at Baptism; we must hold it aloft, above all our thoughts and reasonings, so that it may illumine our whole life, our whole house, that is, the interior dwelling of our soul and the exterior world in which we live, with all its persons, places, and things.

2. One who lives by faith can repeat the beautiful words of Sr. Elizabeth of the Trinity : "Everything that happens is a message to me of God's great love for my soul." To attain this living and profound gaze of faith, we must accustom ourselves, in our relations with creatures, to pass over secondary causes in order to reach the first cause, God, who by His Providence rules and orders everything for His own holy ends. Since we know and believe that He who directs all things is our Father, we will entrust ourselves to His direction with absolute confidence, and thus we will remain serene even in adversity, strong in the conviction that He can make use of evil, of man's errors, and even of sins and malice for the good of the elect. "To them that love God, all things work together unto good!" (*Rom 8,28*). The gaze of faith is most comprehensive and real, because it takes into account the *total* reality of creatures and events, considering them not only in their material entity, but also in relation to their dependence on God. The more we know how to look at everything in this light, so much the more closely will we approach the eternal thought and infinite wisdom of God, judging everything according to God's infallible truth. With this view of faith it will be easier for us to accept the painful situations and hardships of life, for

we will be able to see in them God's paternal hand ordering everything for our sanctification. If, judging things from a human point of view, we are tempted to protest, to bring forward our own reasons and our rights, to rebel against treatment which in itself is unjust; we should raise our eyes to God, and consider that He permits all this for the exercise of virtue and to spur us on to sanctity. Then we would find the strength to accept everything peacefully, and to maintain a kindly attitude toward those who make us suffer. But at the same time, we should remember that faith is a light that is obscure to our intellect, and therefore, it very often asks us to believe in God's wise, loving guidance, even when we do not understand and are inclined to think that everything is going wrong. This is precisely what constitutes the true life of faith, and "the just man liveth by faith" (*ibid.* 1,17).

#### COLLOQUY

" My God, to give You pleasure and to obtain much from You, I have only to believe in Your love, Your power, and in the sweetness of Your gifts; I should believe that You have an ardent desire to give them to me and that Your desire far exceeds my great longing to receive them. I should believe it because the just man lives by faith. I want to be like an affectionate child who has no desire either to see or to know what means You will choose to shower it with Your ineffable gifts; I must only believe, because the just man lives by faith.

" O Lord, You penetrate everywhere with Your goodness, Your personal, infinite love, and Your omnipotence. Give me a very simple faith by which, without reflection, I can move and remain in this truth as in my center, a haven of peace where nothing can touch me if I remain well hidden within it. O God, You love me more than I can love myself and You can do everything; You desire my well-being above all else; I ought to believe that You desire it more than I do. I place myself constantly before You, because I know that acts of perfect adoration and total abandonment are more true, humble, and simple when devoid of any feeling; they are made with the help of faith alone...especially when my soul, in its inferior part, sees and touches a profound void in time and in eternity. Then O Lord, grant that in this state,

I may remain by faith, more present than ever before You. O wonder of wonders! When it pleases Your divine goodness, the soul, in its superior part can feel itself inundated with peace, even while the tempest continues. O ineffable peace, which surpasses all expression! You take away forever our taste for sensible things and make us run to pure faith as to the one source of the divine good whose ineffable and thousand times blessed fruit you are" (cf. Bl. M. Thérèse Soubiran).

"O Lord, it is so sweet to serve You in darkness and in the midst of trial, for we have only this life in which to live by faith" (T.C.J. C.).

245

*OUR RICHES*

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**PRESENCE OF GOD** - Teach me, O Lord, to be a faithful, wise administrator of Your goods.

## MEDITATION

1. Today again, as last Sunday, St. Paul, in the Epistle of the Mass (*Rom 8,12-17*), compares the two lives which always struggle within us : the life of the old man, a slave to sin and the passions, from which come the fruits of death, and that of the new man, the servant, or better, the child of God, producing fruits of life. "If you live according to the flesh, you shall die, but if, by the spirit, you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live." Baptism has begotten us to the life of the spirit, but it has not suppressed the life of the flesh in us; the new man must always struggle against the old man, the spiritual must fight against the corporeal. Baptismal grace does not excuse us from this battle, but it gives us the power to sustain it. We must be thoroughly convinced of this so that we will not be deceived or disturbed if, after many years of living a spiritual life, certain passions, which we thought we had subdued forever, revive in us.

This is our earthly condition : “ The life of man upon earth is a warfare ” (*Jb* 7,1), so much so that Jesus said : “ The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence ” (*Mt* 11,12). But this continual struggle should not frighten us; for grace has made us children of God, and as such, we have every right to count on His paternal help. “ You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, ” says St. Paul, “ but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry : Abba, Father.” To increase our belief in this great truth, he adds, “ The Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God.” It is as though the Apostle would like to say to us : “ It is not I who tell you this, but the Holy Spirit who says it and testifies to it within you.” The Holy Spirit is in us; in us He supplicates the heavenly Father, and in us He arouses confidence and trust. “ You are not slaves, ” He says to us, “ but children; of what are you afraid? ” This is our great treasure : to be children of God, co-heirs with Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit.

2. Today’s Gospel (*Lk* 16,1-9) teaches us by means of a parable—which at first sight seems a little disconcerting—how to be wise in administering the great riches of our life of grace. When Jesus spoke this parable, He certainly had no intention of praising the conduct of the “ unjust ” steward who, after wasting his master’s goods during his whole stewardship, continued to steal even when he learned that he was to be discharged. However, Jesus did praise him for the clever way he made sure of his own future. The lesson of the parable hinges on this point : “ The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. And I say to you : Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity; that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.” Jesus exhorts the “ children of light ” not to be less shrewd in providing for their eternal interests than the “ children of darkness ” are in assuring for themselves the goods of earth.

We also, like the steward in the parable, have received from God a patrimony to administer, that is, our natural gifts, and more particularly, our supernatural gifts, and all the graces, holy inspirations, and promptings to good which God has bestowed upon us. The hour for rendering an account will come for us too, and we shall have to admit that we have often been unfaithful in trafficking with the

gifts of God, in making the treasures of grace fructify in our soul. How can we atone for our infidelities? This is the moment to put into practice the teaching of the parable by which, as St. Augustine says, "God admonishes all of us to use our earthly goods to make friends for ourselves among the poor. They, in turn, becoming the friends of their benefactors, will be the cause of their admission into heaven." In other words, we must pay our debts to God by charity toward our neighbor, for Sacred Scripture tells us, "Charity covereth a multitude of sins" (*1 Pt 4,8*). This does not mean material charity alone, but also spiritual charity and not in great things only, but in little ones too—yes, even in the very least things, such as a glass of water given for the love of God. These little acts of charity, which are always within our power, are the riches by which we pay our debts and put in order "our stewardship."

#### COLLOQUY

"O Lord, it is Your Spirit which combats within me. You gave it to me to destroy the deeds of the flesh. Moved by Your Spirit, I keep up the struggle because I have a powerful helper; my sins have slain, wounded and humbled me; but You, my Creator, were wounded for me, and by Your death You overcame mine. I bear within myself human frailty and the chains of my former slavery; in my members there is a law which opposes the law of the spirit and would drag me into the slavery of sin; my corruptible body still weighs upon my soul. Although I am made strong by Your grace, as long as I continue to carry Your treasure in this earthen vessel, I shall always have to suffer because of my frailty. You are the stability which makes me firm against all temptations; if they increase and frighten me, You are my refuge. 'You are my hope, my inheritance in the land of the living.'

"Oh! how much I owe You, my Lord God, who redeemed me at so great a price! Oh! how much I ought to love, bless, praise, honor, and glorify You who have loved me so much! I shall give praise to Your Name, O God, who made me capable of receiving the great glory of being Your son. I owe to You all I have, all that is of use for my life, all that I know and love. Who possesses anything