

MEDITATIONS AND READINGS
ST. ALPHONSUS LIGOURI

Volume IV

Part I

After Pentecost XI to XVIII Sunday

Part II

After Pentecost - XVIII to XXIV Sunday

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Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

I. - THE PASSING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN OUT OF THIS WORLD

A Novena of Meditations and Readings for the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary begins here.

Let us consider how holy Mary passed from this world by a sweet and happy death. Three things render death bitter -- attachment to the world, remorse for sins, and the uncertainty of salvation. Mary died as she had lived, entirely detached from the things of the world; she died in the most perfect peace; she died in the certainty of eternal glory.

I.

Death being the punishment of sin, it would seem that the Divine Mother -- all holy, and exempt as she was from its slightest stain -- should also have been exempt from death, and from encountering the misfortunes to which the children of Adam, infected by the poison of sin, are subject. But God was pleased that Mary should in all things resemble Jesus; and as the Son died, it was becoming that the Mother should also die; because, moreover, He wished to give the just an example of the precious death prepared for them, He willed that even the most Blessed Virgin should die, but by a sweet and happy death. Let us, therefore, consider how precious was Mary's death, on account of the special favours by which it was accompanied.

There are three things that render death bitter: attachment to the world, remorse for sins, and the uncertainty of salvation. The death of Mary was entirely free from these causes of bitterness, and was accompanied by three special graces, which rendered it precious and joyful. She died as she had lived, entirely detached from the things of the world; she died in the most perfect peace; she died in the certainty of eternal glory.

There can be no doubt that attachment to earthly things renders the death of the worldly bitter and miserable, as the Holy Ghost says: *O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions!* (Ecclus. xli. 1). But because

the Saints die detached from the things of the world, their death is not bitter, but sweet, lovely, and precious; that is to say, as St. Bernard remarks, worth purchasing at any price, however great. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord* (Apoc. xiv. 13). Who are they who, being already dead, die? They are those happy souls who pass into eternity already detached, and, so to say, dead to all affection for terrestrial things; who, like St. Francis of Assisi, find in God alone all their happiness, and with him can say: "My God and my All!"

II.

What soul was ever more detached from earthly goods, and more united to God, than the beautiful soul of Mary? She was detached from her parents, for at the age of three years, when children are most attached to them, and stand in the greatest need of their assistance, Mary, with the greatest intrepidity, left them, and went to shut herself up in the Temple to attend to God alone. She was detached from riches, contenting herself always to live poor, and supporting herself with the labour of her own hands. She was detached from honours, loving an humble and abject life, though the honours due to a queen were hers, as she was descended from the kings of Israel. The Blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Elizabeth of Hungary that when her parents left her in the temple, she resolved in her heart to have no father, and to love no other good than God.

St. John saw Mary represented in that woman, clothed with the sun, who held the moon under her feet. *And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet* (Apoc. xii. 1). Interpreters explain the moon to signify the goods of this world, which, like the moon, are uncertain and changeable. Mary never had these goods in her heart, but always despised them and trampled them under her feet; living in this world as a solitary turtle-dove in a desert, never allowing her affection to centre itself on any earthly thing; so that of her it was said: *The voice of the turtle is heard in our land* (Cant. ii. 12). And elsewhere: *Who is she that goeth up by the desert?* (Cant. iii. 6). Whence the Abbot Rupert says "Thus didst thou go up by the desert; that is, having a solitary soul." Mary, then, having lived always and in all things detached from the earth, and united to

God alone, death was not bitter, but, on the contrary, very sweet and dear to her; since it united her more closely to God in Heaven, by an eternal bond.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE

I.-THE PROMPTITUDE OF MARY IN ASSISTING THOSE WHO INVOKE HER.

Truly unfortunate are we poor children of Eve; for, guilty before God of her fault, and condemned to the same penalty, we have to wander about in this valley of tears as exiles from our country, and to weep over our many afflictions of body and soul. But blessed is he who, in the midst of these sorrows, often turns to the comfortress of the world, to the refuge of the unfortunate, to the great Mother of God, and devoutly calls upon her and invokes her! *Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates* (Prov. viii. 34). Blessed, says Mary, is he who listens to my counsels, and watches continually at the gate of my mercy, and invokes my intercession and aid.

The holy Church carefully teaches us her children with what attention and confidence we should unceasingly have recourse to this loving protectress; and for this purpose commands a worship peculiar to Mary. And not only this, but she has instituted many Festivals that are celebrated throughout the year in honour of this great Queen: she devotes one day in the week, in an especial manner, to her honour: in the Divine Office all Ecclesiastics and Religious are daily obliged to invoke her in the name of all Christians; and, finally, she desires that all the faithful should salute this most holy Mother of God three times a day, at the sound of the Angelus-bell. And that we may understand the confidence that the holy Church has in Mary we need only remember that in all public calamities she invariably invites all to have recourse to the protection of this Divine Mother, by novenas, prayers, processions, by visiting the churches dedicated to her honour, and her images. And this is what Mary desires. She wishes us always to seek her and invoke her aid; not as if she were begging of us these honours and marks of veneration, for they are in no way proportioned to her merit; but she desires

them, that by such means our confidence and devotion may be increased, and that so she may be able to give us greater succour and comfort. "She seeks for those," says St. Bonaventure, "who approach her devoutly and with reverence, for such she loves, nourishes, and adopts as her children."

The Saint remarks that Ruth, whose name signifies, "seeing and hastening," was a figure of Mary; "for Mary, seeing our miseries, hastens in her mercy to succour us." Novarino adds that "Mary, in the greatness of her desire to help us, cannot admit of delay, for she is in no way an avaricious guardian of the graces she has at her disposal as Mother of Mercy, and cannot do otherwise than immediately shower down the treasures of her liberality on her servants."

Oh, how prompt is this good Mother to help those who call upon her! *Thy two breasts*, says the sacred Canticle, *are like two roes that are twins* (Cant. iv. 5). Richard of St. Laurence explains this verse, and says, that as roes are swift in their course, so are the breasts of Mary prompt to bestow the milk of mercy on all who ask it. By the light pressure of a devout salutation and prayer they distil large drops." The same author assures us that the compassion of Mary is poured out on every one who asks it, even should it be sought for by no other prayer than a simple "Hail Mary." Wherefore Novarino declares that the Blessed Virgin not only runs but flies to assist him who invokes her. "She," says this author, "in the exercise of her mercy, knows not how to act differently from God; for, as He flies at once to the assistance of those who beg His aid, faithful to His promise, *Ask, and you shall receive* (John xvi. 24), so Mary, whenever she is invoked, is at once ready to assist him who prays to her. "God has wings when He assists His own, and immediately flies to them; Mary also takes wing when she is about to fly to our aid." And hence we see who the woman was, spoken of in the following verse of the Apocalypse, to whom two great eagle's wings were given, that she might fly to the desert. *And there were given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert* (Apoc. xii. 14). Ribeiro explains these wings to mean the love with which Mary always flew to God. "She has the wings of an eagle, for she flies with the love of God." But the Blessed Amadeus, more

to our purpose, remarks that these wings of an eagle signify "the velocity, exceeding that of the seraphim with which Mary always flies to the succour of her children."

This will explain a passage in the Gospel of St. Luke, in which we are told that when Mary went to visit and shower graces on St. Elizabeth and her whole family, she was not slow, but went with speed. The Gospel says: *And Mary, rising up, went into the hill country with haste* (Luke i. 39). And this is not said of her return. For a similar reason, we are told in the sacred Canticles that *her hands are skilful at the wheel* (Cant. v. 14), meaning, says Richard of St. Laurence, "that as the art of turning is the easiest and most expeditious mode of working, so also is Mary the most willing and prompt of all the Saints to assist her clients." And truly "she has the most ardent desire to console all, and is no sooner invoked than accepts our prayers and helps us." St. Bonaventure, then, was right in calling Mary the "salvation of all who call upon her," meaning, that it suffices to invoke this Divine Mother in order to be saved; for, according to Richard of St. Laurence, she is always ready to help those who seek her aid. "Thou wilt always find her ready to help thee." And Bernardine de Bustis adds that "this great lady is more desirous to grant us graces than we are desirous to receive them."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

The Prophet David predicted many circumstances, and in great detail, respecting the Passion of Jesus Christ. Especially in the twenty-first Psalm he foretold that Jesus would be pierced with nails in His hands and in His feet, and that they would be able to count all His bones. He foretold that before He should be crucified, His garments would be stripped from Him and divided among the executioners. He spoke of His outer garments, because the inner vestment, which was made without seam, was to be given by lot: *They parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture they cast lots* (Ps. xxi. 19). This Prophecy is recalled both by St. Matthew and St. John (Matt. xxvii. 35; Jo. xix. 23).

David also foretold what St. Matthew relates respecting the blasphemies and mockeries of the Jews against Jesus Christ while

He hung upon the Cross: *They that passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads and saying, Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save thy own self; if thou be the son of God, come down from the cross. In like manner also, the chief priests, with the scribes and ancients, mocking, said: He saved others, himself he cannot save; if he be the king of Israel, let him come now down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let him now deliver him if he will have him; for he said: I am the Son of God* (Matt. xxvii. 39-43). All this was in accordance with what David had foretold: *All they that saw me have laughed me to scorn; they have spoken with the lips and wagged the head. He hoped in the Lord, let him deliver him, let him save him seeing he delighteth in him* (Ps. xxi. 8, 9).

II.

The Royal Prophet further foretold the great pains Jesus would suffer on the Cross in seeing Himself abandoned by all, and even by His own, except St. John and the Blessed Virgin; while His beloved Mother, by her presence, would not lessen the sufferings of her Son, but rather increased them through the compassion He felt for her, in seeing her thus afflicted by His death. Thus our suffering Lord, in the agonies of His bitter death, had none to comfort Him. This also was foretold by David: *I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me, and I found none* (Ps. lxviii. 21). The greatest suffering, however, of our afflicted Redeemer consisted in His beholding Himself abandoned by His Eternal Father, upon which He cried out, according to the prophecy of David: *O God, my God, look upon me; why hast thou forsaken me? Far from my salvation are the words of my sins* (Ps. xxi. 2), as though He had said, "O my Father, the sins of men, which I call My own, because I have taken them upon Me, forbid Me to be delivered from these sufferings which are ending My life; and why hast Thou, O My God, abandoned Me in this My great agony?" To these words of David correspond the words which St. Matthew records as uttered by Jesus upon the Cross a little while before His death: *Eli, Eli, lamma sabachthani?* that is: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* (Matt. xxvii. 46).

Monday--Eleventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

II. - THE PASSING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN OUT OF THIS WORLD

Peace of mind renders the death of the just precious. Sins committed during life are the worms that so cruelly torment and gnaw at the hearts of poor dying sinners. But holy Mary could not be tormented at death by any remorse for she was always pure, and free from the least stain of sin. *Thou art fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee.*

Peace of mind renders the death of the just precious. Sins committed during life are the worms that so cruelly torment and gnaw the hearts of poor dying sinners, who, about to appear before the Divine tribunal, see themselves at that moment surrounded by their sins, which terrify them, and cry out, according to St. Bernard: "We are thy works; we will not abandon thee!" Mary certainly could not be tormented at death by any remorse of conscience, for she was always pure, and always free from the least shade of actual or original sin; so much so, that of her it was said: *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee* (Cant. iv. 7). From the moment that she had the use of reason, that is, from the first moment of her Immaculate Conception in the womb of St. Anne, she began to love God with all her strength, and continued to do so, always advancing more and more throughout her whole life in love and perfection. And all her thoughts, desires, and affections were of and for God alone; she never uttered a word, made a movement, cast a glance, or breathed, but for God and His glory; and never departed a step or detached herself for a single moment from Divine love. Ah, how did all the lovely virtues that she had practised during life surround her blessed bed in the happy hour of her death! That Faith so constant; that loving confidence in God; that unconquerable patience in the midst of so many sufferings; that humility in the midst of so many privileges; that modesty; that meekness; that tender compassion for souls; that insatiable zeal for the glory of God; and, above all, that most perfect love towards Him, with that entire conformity to the Divine will: all,

in a word, surrounded her, and consoling her, said: "We are thy works; we will not abandon thee!" Our Lady and Mother, we are all daughters of thy beautiful heart; now that thou art leaving this miserable life, we will not leave thee; we also will go, and be thy eternal accompaniment and honour in Paradise, where, by our means, thou wilt reign as Queen of all men and of all Angels.

II.

The certainty of eternal salvation renders death sweet. Death is called a passage; for by death we pass from a short to an eternal life. And as the dread of those is indeed great who die in doubt of their salvation, and who approach the solemn moment with well-grounded fear of passing into eternal death; thus, on the other hand, the joy of the Saints is indeed great at the close of life, hoping with some security to go and possess God in Heaven. A nun of the Order of St. Teresa, when the doctor announced to her her approaching death, was so filled with joy that she exclaimed: "Oh, how is it, sir, that you announce to me such welcome news, and demand no fee?" St. Laurence Justinian, being at the point of death, and perceiving his servants weeping round him, said: "Away, away with your tears; this is no time to mourn." Go elsewhere to weep; if you would remain with me, rejoice, as I rejoice, in seeing the gates of Heaven open to me, that I may be united to my God. Thus also a St. Peter of Alcantara, a St. Aloysius Gonzaga, and so many other Saints, on hearing that death was at hand, burst forth into exclamations of joy and gladness. And yet they were not certain of being in possession of Divine grace, nor were they secure of their own sanctity, as Mary was.

But what joy must the Divine Mother have felt in receiving the news of her approaching death -- she who had the fullest certainty of the possession of Divine grace, especially after the Angel Gabriel had assured her that she was full of grace, and that she already possessed God. *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!* And well did she herself know that her heart was continually burning with Divine love; so that, as Bernardine de Bustis says, "Mary, by a singular privilege granted to no other Saint, loved, and was always actually loving God, in every moment of her life,

with such ardour, that St. Bernard declares it required a continued miracle to preserve her life in the midst of such flames."

Of Mary it had already been asked in the Sacred Canticles: *Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke, of aromatic spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and all the powders of the perfumer?* (Cant. iii. 6). Her entire mortification typified by the myrrh, her fervent prayers signified by the incense, and all her holy virtues united to her perfect love for God, kindled in her a flame so great that her beautiful soul, wholly devoted to and consumed by Divine love, arose continually to God as a pillar of smoke, breathing forth on every side a most sweet odour. As the loving Virgin lived, so did she die. As Divine love gave her life, so did it cause her death; for the Doctors and holy Fathers of the Church generally say she died of no other infirmity than pure love; St. Ildephonsus says that Mary either ought not to die, or only die of love.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE

2.-THE PROMPTITUDE OF MARY IN ASSISTING THOSE WHO INVOKE HER.

The multitude of our sins should not diminish our confidence that Mary will grant our petitions when we cast ourselves at her feet. She is the Mother of Mercy; but mercy would not be needed did none exist who require it. On this subject Richard of St. Laurence remarks, "that as a good mother does not shrink from applying a remedy to her child infected with ulcers, however nauseous and revolting they may be, so also is our good Mother unable to abandon us when we have recourse to her, that she may heal the wounds caused by our sins, however loathsome they may have rendered us." This is exactly what Mary gave St. Gertrude to understand, when she showed herself to her with her mantle spread out to receive all who have recourse to her. At the same time the Saint was told that "Angels constantly guard the clients of this Blessed Virgin from the assaults of hell."

This good Mother's compassion is so great, and the love she bears us is such, that she does not even wait for our prayers in order to assist us; but, as it is expressed in the Book of Wisdom: *she*

preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them (Wisd. vi. 14). St. Anselm applies these words to Mary, and says that she is beforehand with those who desire her protection. By this we are to understand that she obtains us many favours from God before we have recourse to her. For this reason Richard of St. Victor remarks that she is called the moon, *fair as the moon* (Cant. vi. 9), meaning, not only that she is swift as the moon in its course, by flying to the aid of those who invoke her, but that she is still more so, for her love for us is so tender that in our wants she anticipates our prayers, and her mercy is more prompt to help us than we are to ask her aid. "And this arises," adds the same Richard, "from the fact that the heart of Mary is so filled with compassion for poor sinners, that she no sooner sees our miseries than she pours her tender mercies upon us. Nor is it possible for this benign Queen to behold the want of any soul without immediately assisting it."

Mary, even when living in this world, showed at the marriage-feast of Cana the great compassion that she would afterwards exercise towards us in our necessities, and which now, as it were, forces her to have pity on us and assist us, even before we ask her to do so. In the Second Chapter of St. Luke we read that at this Feast the compassionate Mother saw the embarrassment in which the bride and bridegroom were, and that they were quite ashamed on seeing the wine fail; and therefore, without being asked, and listening only to the dictates of her compassionate heart, which could never behold the afflictions of others without feeling for them, she begged her Son to console them. This she did by laying their distress before Him: *they have no wine* (Jo. ii. 3). No sooner had she done so than our Lord, in order to satisfy all present, and still more to console the compassionate heart of His Mother, who had asked the favour, worked the well-known miracle by which He changed the water, brought to Him in jars, into wine. From this Novarinus argues that "if Mary, unasked, is thus prompt to succour the needy, how much more so will she be to succour those who invoke her and ask for her help?"

Should there be any one who doubts as to whether Mary will aid him if he has recourse to her, Innocent III thus reproves him: "Who is there that ever, when in the night of sin, had re-

course to this sweet Lady without being relieved?"

"Who ever," exclaims the Blessed Eutychian, "faithfully implored thy all-powerful aid and was abandoned by thee?" Indeed, no one for thou, Mary, canst relieve the most wretched and save the most abandoned. Such a case certainly never did and never will occur.

"I am satisfied," says St. Bernard, "that whoever has had recourse to thee, O Blessed Virgin, in his wants, and can remember that he did so in vain, should no more speak of or praise thy mercy."

"Sooner," says the devout Blossius, "would Heaven and earth be destroyed than would Mary fail to assist any one who asks for her help, provided he does so with a good intention and with confidence in her."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

It is clear how unjustly the Jews refused to recognise Jesus as the true Messias because He died so shameful a death. They do not perceive that if, instead of dying as a malefactor upon the Cross, Jesus Christ had died a death accounted honourable and glorious by men, He would not have been that Messias Who was promised by God and predicted by the Prophets, who, so many ages before, had foretold that our Redeemer should die loaded with insults: *He shall give his cheek to the smiter, he shall be overwhelmed with insults* (Lam. iii. 30). All these humiliations, and all the sufferings of Jesus Christ, already foretold by the Prophets, were not understood even by His disciples until after His Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven: *These things his disciples did not understand at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of him* (Jo. xii. 16).

In a word, by the Passion of Jesus Christ, which was accompanied by so great sufferings and so great ignominy, that which David wrote was fulfilled: *Justice and peace have kissed* (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). They kissed each other, because, by the merits of Jesus Christ, men obtained peace with God, while, at the same time, the Divine justice was more than abundantly satisfied by the death of the Redeemer. We say, more than abundantly, because

to save us, it was not actually necessary that Jesus Christ should endure so many sufferings and insults. One single drop of Blood, one single prayer, would have been sufficient to save the whole world; while, in order to strengthen our hopes, and to inflame our love, Jesus Christ thought fit that our redemption should not only be sufficient, but more than abundant, as David foretold: *Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plentiful redemption* (Ps. cxxix. 6, 7).

O Jesus, Infinite Goodness, I deserved to continue blind, and Thou hast enlightened me with new light; I deserved to continue still more hardened, and Thou hast given me tenderness and compunction; wherefore I now abhor the offences I have committed against Thee more than death, and I feel a great desire to love Thee. These graces, which I have received from Thee, assure me that Thou hast now pardoned me, and desirest to save me. O my Jesus, who could cease to love Thee henceforth, or could love anything apart from Thee? I love Thee, O my Jesus, and I trust in Thee; increase in me this confidence and this love, that henceforth I may forget everything, and think of nothing but loving Thee and giving Thee pleasure.

O Mary, Mother of God, obtain for me the grace of being faithful to thy Son and my Redeemer.

II.

When speaking in the person of the Messias, Job said: *O that my sins ... and the calamity that I suffer were weighed in a balance. As the sand of the sea this would appear heavier* (Job vi. 2, 3). Here Jesus, by the mouth of Job, calls our sins His sins, because He had bound Himself to make satisfaction for us, in order to make His justice ours, as St. Augustine expresses it. On this account the *gloss* upon the text quoted from Job contains this remark: "In the balance of the Divine justice the Passion of Christ outweighs the sins of human nature." All the lives of men would not have been sufficient to make satisfaction for a single sin; but the pains of Jesus Christ have paid for all our sins: *He is the propitiation of our sins* (1 Jo. ii. 2). Therefore, St. Laurence Justinian encourages every sinner who truly repents to hope confidently for pardon through the merits of Jesus Christ, saying to them: "Measure thy sins by the afflictions of Christ the Sufferer"; meaning thereby

to say: "O sinner, measure not thy guilt by thy contrition, for all thy works cannot obtain thee pardon; measure it by the pains of Jesus Christ, and from them hope for pardon, for thy Redeemer hath abundantly paid thy debt."

O Saviour of the world, in Thy flesh, torn with scourgings, with thorns, and with nails, I comprehend the love Thou hast borne me, and my ingratitude in having so injured Thee after such love; but Thy Blood is my hope, for, with the price of Thy Blood, Thou hast redeemed me from hell as often as I have deserved it. O God, what would become of me through all eternity if Thou hadst not determined to save me by Thy death! Miserable man that I am, I knew full well that, by losing Thy grace, I condemned myself to live forever in despair, and far from Thee in hell; and yet I repeatedly dared to turn my back upon Thee. But still I will ever say, Thy Blood is my hope. Oh, that I had died and not offended Thee!

Tuesday--Eleventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

III. - THE PASSING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN OUT OF THIS WORLD.

After the Ascension of her Divine Son, Mary remained, indeed, willingly on this earth, knowing that such was the will of God, but she could not but feel the pain of being far from the sight of her beloved Son. Hence she was sending up continual sighs to her Lord, saying with the Psalmist: *Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly away and be at rest?*

I.

Let us now consider how Mary's blessed death took place.

After the Ascension of Jesus Christ, she remained on earth to attend to the propagation of the Faith. Hence the disciples of our Lord had recourse to her, and she solved their doubts, comforted them in their persecutions, and encouraged them to labour for the Divine glory and the salvation of redeemed souls. She willingly remained on earth, knowing that such was the will of God, for the good of the Church; but she could not but feel the pain of being far from the presence and sight of her beloved Son, Who had ascended to Heaven. *Where your treasure is, there will your heart*

be also (Luke xii. 34), said the Redeemer. Where any one believes his treasure and his happiness to be, there he always holds the love and desires of his heart fixed. If Mary, then, loved no other good than Jesus, He being in Heaven, all her desires were in Heaven.

Tauler says that Heaven was the dwelling-place of the most Blessed Virgin Mary; for, being there with all her desires and affections, she made it her continual abode. Her school was eternity; for she was always detached and free from temporal possessions. Her teacher was Divine Truth; for her whole life was guided by this alone. Her book was the purity of her own conscience, in which she always found occasion to rejoice in the Lord. Her mirror was the Divinity; for she never admitted any representations into her soul but such as were transformed into and clothed with God, that so she might always conform herself to His will. Her ornament was devotion; for she attended solely to her interior sanctification, and was always ready to fulfil the Divine commands. Her repose was union with God; for He alone was her treasure and the resting-place of her heart.

II.

The most holy Virgin consoled her loving heart during this painful separation by visiting, as it is related, the Holy Places of Palestine, where her Son had been during His life. She frequently visited -- at one time the Stable at Bethlehem, where her Son was born; at another, the Workshop of Nazareth, where her Son had lived so many years poor and despised; now the Garden of Gethsemanai, where her Son began His Passion; then the Praetorium of Pilate, where He was scourged, and the spot on which He was crowned with thorns; but she visited most frequently the Mount of Calvary, where her Son expired; and the Holy Sepulchre in which she had finally left Him: thus did the most loving Mother soothe the pains of her cruel exile. But this could not be sufficient to satisfy her heart, which was unable to find perfect repose in this world. Hence she was continually sending up sighs to her Lord, exclaiming with David: *Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?* (Ps. liv. 7). Who will give me wings like a dove, that I may fly to my God, and there find my repose? *As the hart panteth after the fountains of water: so my soul*

panteth after thee, O God (Ps. xli. 1). As the wounded stag pants for the fountain, so does my soul, wounded by Thy love, O my God, desire and sigh after Thee.

Yes, indeed, the sighs of this holy turtle-dove could not but deeply penetrate the Heart of her God, Who indeed so tenderly loved her. *The voice of the turtle is heard in our land* (Cant. ii. 12). Wherefore being unwilling to defer any longer the so-much-desired consolation of His beloved, behold, He graciously hears her desire, and calls her to His kingdom.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE

3.-THE PROMPTITUDE OF MARY IN ASSISTING THOSE WHO INVOKE HER.

To increase our confidence in Mary, St. Anselm says that "when we have recourse to this Divine Mother, not only may we be sure of her protection, but that often we shall be heard more quickly, and be thus preserved, if we have recourse to Mary and call on her holy name, than we should be if we called on the Name of Jesus our Saviour." And the reason he gives for it is, that "to Jesus, as Judge, it belongs also to punish; but Mercy alone belongs to the Blessed Virgin as a patroness." Meaning, that we more easily find salvation by having recourse to the Mother than by going to the Son -- not as if Mary was more powerful than her Son to save us, for we know that Jesus Christ is our only Saviour, and that He alone by His merits has obtained and still obtains salvation for us; but it is for this reason: that when we have recourse to Jesus we consider Him at the same time as our Judge, to whom it belongs also to chastise ungrateful souls, and therefore the confidence necessary to be heard may fail us; but when we go to Mary, who has no other office than to compassionate us as Mother of Mercy, and to defend us as our advocate, our confidence is more easily established, and is often greater. "We often obtain more promptly what we ask by calling on the name of Mary than by invoking that of Jesus. Her Son is Lord and Judge of all, and discerns the merits of each one; and therefore if He does not immediately grant the prayers of all, He is just. When, however, the Mother's name is invoked, though

the merits of the suppliant are not such as to deserve that his prayer should be granted, those of the Mother supply that he may receive."

"Many things," says Nicephorus, "are asked from God, and are not granted: they are asked from Mary, and are obtained." And how is this? It is "because God has thus decreed to honour His Mother." St. Bridget heard our Lord make a most sweet and consoling promise; for in the 50th chapter of the first book of her Revelations we read that Jesus addressed His Mother in the following words: "Thou shalt present Me with no petition that shall be refused. My Mother, ask what thou wilt, for never will I refuse thee anything; and know," He added, "that I promise graciously to hear all those who ask any favour of Me in thy name, though they may be sinners, if only they have the will to amend their lives." The same thing was revealed to St. Gertrude, when she heard our Divine Redeemer assure His Mother, that in His Omnipotence He granted her power to show mercy, in whatever manner she might please, to sinners who invoke her.

Let all, then, say, with full confidence in the words of that beautiful prayer addressed to the Mother of Mercy, and commonly attributed to St. Bernard: "Remember, O most pious Virgin Mary, that it never was heard of in any age that any one having recourse to thy protection was abandoned."

We read in the Life of St. Francis de Sales that he experienced the efficacy of this prayer, the *Memorare*. When he was about seventeen years of age he was in Paris, pursuing his studies. At the same time he devoted himself to exercises of piety and to the holy love of God, in which he found the joys of Paradise. Our Lord, in order to try him, and to strengthen the bands which united him to Himself, allowed the evil spirit to persuade him that all that he did was in vain, as he was already condemned in the eternal decrees of God. The darkness and spiritual dryness in which God was pleased at the same time to leave him (for he was then insensible to all the sweeter thoughts of the goodness of God) caused the temptation to have greater power over the heart of the holy youth: and, indeed, it reached such a pitch that his fears and his interior desolation took away his appetite, deprived him of sleep, made him pale and melancholy;

so much so that he excited the compassion of all who saw him.

As long as this terrible storm lasted, the Saint could only conceive thoughts and utter words of despondency and bitter grief. "Then," said he, "I am to be deprived of the grace of my God, Who hitherto has shown Himself so lovely and sweet to me! O Love, O Beauty, to which I have consecrated all my affections, I am no longer to enjoy Thy consolations! O Virgin, Mother of God, the fairest amongst all the daughters of Jerusalem, then I am never to see thee in Heaven! Ah, Lady, if I am not to behold thy beautiful countenance in Paradise, at least permit me not to blaspheme thee in hell!" Such were the tender sentiments of that afflicted, but at the same time loving heart. The temptation had lasted a month when it pleased our Lord to deliver him by the means of that comfortress of the world, the most Blessed Mary, to whom the Saint had some time before consecrated his virginity, and in whom, as he declared, he had placed all his hopes. One evening, on returning home, he entered a church, and saw a tablet hanging on the wall. He read it, and found the following well-known prayer, commonly called the "Prayer of St. Bernard": Remember, O most pious Virgin Mary, that it never has been heard of in any age, that any one having recourse to thy protection was abandoned." Falling on his knees before the altar of the Divine Mother, he recited this prayer with tender fervour, renewed his vow of chastity, promised to say the Rosary every day, and then added: "My Queen, be my advocate with thy Son, Whom I dare not approach. My Mother, if I am so unfortunate as not to be able to love my Lord in the next world, Him whom I know to be so worthy of love, at least do thou obtain that I may love Him in this world as much as possible. This is the grace I ask and hope for from thee." Having thus addressed the Blessed Virgin he cast himself into the arms of Divine Mercy, and resigned himself entirely to the will of God. Scarcely had he finished his prayer, when in an instant he was delivered from his temptation by his most sweet Mother. He immediately regained the peace of his soul, and with it his bodily health; and from that time forward he lived most devoted to Mary, whose praises and mercies he constantly extolled, both in his sermons and writings, during the remainder of his life.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

St. Paul says of Jesus Christ: *He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant* (Phil. ii. 7). On this text St. Bernard remarks: "He took not only the form of a servant, that He might obey, but that of a slave, that He might be beaten." Our Redeemer, Who is the Lord of all, was willing not only to take upon Him the condition of a servant, but even that of a bad servant, that He might be punished as a malefactor, and thus make satisfaction for our sins.

It is certain that the scourging was the most cruel of the tortures that shortened the life of our Redeemer; for the great effusion of Blood (already foretold by Him, when He said: *This is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many*) (Matt. xxvi. 28), was the principal cause of His death. It is true that this Blood was first poured forth in the Garden, and was also poured forth in the Crowning with Thorns, and by the driving-in of the Nails; but the largest portion was shed in the Scourging, which was also a cause of great shame and insult to Jesus Christ, because this was a punishment inflicted only on slaves. On this account, also, the tyrants who condemned the holy Martyrs to death scourged them after their condemnation, and then slew them; while our Lord was scourged before He was condemned to death. He had Himself particularly predicted the scourging to His disciples during His life: *He shall be given up to the Gentiles, and mocked and scourged* (Luke xviii. 32). Thus He signified to them the great anguish which this torture would inflict upon Him.

Behold me, O my Jesus, I am one of Thy most cruel executioners, who have scourged Thee with my sins; have pity upon me. O my loving Saviour, one heart is too little with which to love Thee. I desire no longer to live for myself, I desire to live only for Thee, my Love, my All!

II.

It was revealed to St. Bridget that one of the executioners first commanded Jesus Christ to strip Himself of His garments. He obeyed, and then embraced the pillar to which He was bound, and was then so cruelly scourged that His whole body was lacerated. The revelation stated that the stripes not only

struck Him, but ploughed into His most holy flesh. He was so torn open that, as the same revelation declares, His ribs were laid bare. With this agrees what was written by St. Jerome: "The stripes cut the most holy body of God"; and also what St. Peter Damian wrote, that the executioners exhausted themselves with fatigue in scourging our Lord. All this was already foretold by Isaias in the words, *He was bruised for our sins* (Is. liii. 5); the word bruised signifying the same as being broken to pieces, or as being pounded in a mortar.

O Jesus, I say to Thee, with St. Catharine of Genoa: "O Love! O Love! Let there be no more sins! It is enough that I have already offended Thee so much! Now I hope to be wholly Thine, and with Thy grace I desire to be ever Thine through all eternity."

Wednesday--Eleventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

IV. - THE PASSING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN OUT OF THIS WORLD.

It is related that our Lord sent St. Gabriel, the same Archangel who announced to her that she was chosen to be the Mother of God, to announce now that her Divine Son willed to call her to Heaven. On this happy Annunciation, what could the most humble and holy Virgin do, but answer: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord!* Behold, I am ready!

I.

Nicephorus, Metaphrastes, and others relate that some days before her death, our Lord sent her the Archangel Gabriel, the same that announced to her that she was that blessed woman chosen to be the Mother of God: "My Lady and Queen," said the Angel, "God has already graciously heard thy holy desires, and has sent me to tell thee to prepare thyself to leave the earth; for He wills thee in Heaven. Come, then, to take possession of thy kingdom; for I and all its holy inhabitants await and desire thee." On this happy Annunciation, what else could our most humble and most holy Virgin do, but, with the most profound humility, answer again in the same words in which she had answered St. Gabriel when he announced to her that she was to

become the Mother of God: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke i. 38). Behold, she answered, the slave of the Lord. He in His pure goodness chose me and made me His Mother. He now calls me to Paradise. I did not deserve that honour, nor do I deserve this. But since He is pleased to show in my person His infinite liberality, behold, I am ready to go where He pleases. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord!* May the will of my God and Lord be ever accomplished in me!

After receiving this welcome intelligence she imparted it to St. John. We may well imagine with what grief and tender feelings he heard the news; he who for so many years had attended upon her as a son, and had enjoyed the heavenly conversation of this most holy Mother. She then once more visited the Holy Places of Jerusalem, tenderly taking leave of them, and especially of Mount Calvary, where her beloved Son had died. She then retired to her poor cottage, there to prepare for death.

II.

During this time the Angels did not cease their visits to their beloved Queen, consoling themselves with the thought that they would soon see her crowned in Heaven. Many authors, such as Andrew of Crete, St. John Damascene, Euthymius, assert that, before her death, the Apostles, and also many Disciples who were scattered in different parts of the world, were miraculously assembled in Mary's room, and that when she saw all these dear children in her presence, she thus addressed them: "My beloved children, through love for you and to help you my Son left me on this earth. The holy Faith is now spread throughout the world and already the fruit of the Divine seed is grown up; hence my Lord, seeing that my assistance on earth is no longer necessary, and compassionating my grief in being separated from Him, has graciously listened to my desire to quit this life and to go and see Him in Heaven. Do you remain, then, to labour for His glory. If I leave you, my heart remains with you; the great love I bear you I shall carry with me and always preserve. I go to Paradise to pray for you."

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE

4.-THE GREATNESS OF MARY'S POWER TO DEFEND THOSE WHO INVOKE HER WHEN TEMPTED.

The Most Blessed Virgin is not only Queen of Heaven and of all Saints, but she is also Queen of hell and of all evil spirits; for she overcame them valiantly by her virtues. From the very beginning God foretold the victory and empire our Queen would one day obtain over the serpent, when He announced that a woman should come into the world to conquer him: *I will put enmities between thee and the woman ... she shall crush thy head* (Gen. iii. 15).

Who could this woman, Satan's enemy, be but Mary, who by her fair humility and holy life always conquered him and beat down his strength? The Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ was promised in the person of that woman, as is remarked by St. Cyprian. Therefore God did not say, "I place," but "I will place"; lest He might seem to refer to Eve. God said, *I will place enmities between thee and the woman*, to signify that the serpent's opponent was not to be Eve, who was then living, but would be another woman descending from her, and who, as St. Vincent Ferrer observes, "would bring our First Parents far greater advantages than those which they had lost by their sin." Mary, then, was this great and valiant woman, who conquered the devil and crushed his head by bringing down his pride, as it was foretold by God Himself: *she shall crush thy head*. Some doubt as to whether these words refer to Mary, or whether they do not rather refer to Jesus Christ; for the Septuagint renders them, *He shall crush thy head*. But in the Vulgate, which alone was approved of by the Sacred Council of Trent, we find *She* and not *He*; and thus it was understood by St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and a great many others. However, be it as it may, it is certain that either the Son by means of the Mother, or the Mother by means of the Son, has overcome Lucifer; so that, as St. Bernard remarks, this proud spirit, in spite of himself, was beaten down and trampled under foot by this most Blessed Virgin; so that, as a slave conquered in war, he is forced always to obey the commands of this

Queen. "Beaten down and trampled under the feet of Mary, he endures a wretched slavery." St. Bruno says "that Eve was the cause of death," by allowing herself to be overcome by the serpent, "but that Mary," by conquering the devil, "restored life to us." And she bound him in such a way that this enemy cannot stir so as to do the least injury to any of her clients.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

The Divine Mother revealed to St. Bridget that the Crown of Thorns surrounded the whole sacred head of her Son, as low down as the middle of His forehead; and that the thorns were driven in with such violence that the Blood gushed out in streams over all His countenance, so that the whole face of Jesus Christ appeared covered with Blood.

Origen writes that this Crown of Thorns was not taken from the head of the Lord until He had expired upon the Cross. In the meantime, as the inner garment of Christ was not sewed together, but woven all in one piece, on this account it was not divided among the soldiers, like his outer garments, but it was given by lot, as St. John writes: *The soldiers, therefore, when they had crucified him, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also his coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said then one to another: Let us not cut it; but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be* (Jo. xix. 23, 24). As this garment, then, must have been drawn off over the head, many authors write with great probability, that when Jesus was stripped of it, the crown of thorns was taken from His head, and was replaced before He was nailed to the Cross.

O my Jesus, what thorns have I added to this crown with my sinful thoughts to which I have consented! Would that I could die with grief! Pardon me, through the merit of the grief Thou didst then accept in order to pardon me. O my Lord, thus bruised and thus despised! Thou hast loaded Thyself with all these pains and mockeries in order to move me to have compassion upon Thee, that, at least through compassion, I may love Thee, and no more displease Thee.

II.

In the book of Genesis it is written: *Cursed is the earth in thy work; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee* (Gen. iii. 17). This curse was inflicted by God upon Adam and upon all his posterity; and by the earth here spoken of we must understand, not only the material earth, but the flesh of man, which, being infected by the sin of Adam, brings forth only the thorns of sin. In order to remedy this infection, says Tertullian, it was necessary that Jesus Christ should offer to God in sacrifice this great torment of the Crowning with Thorns.

This torture also, besides being in itself most acute, was accompanied by blows and spitting, and by the mockings of the soldiers, as St. Matthew and St. John relate: *And plaiting a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews! And spitting upon him, they took the reed, and struck his head* (Matt. xxvii. 29-30). *And the soldiers plaiting a crown of thorns, put it upon his head; and they put on him a purple garment. And they came to him and said: Hail, King of the Jews! and they gave him blows* (Jo. xix. 3).

It is enough, O my Jesus; cease to suffer more; I am convinced of the love Thou bearest to me, and I love Thee with all my heart. But now I see that it is not enough for Thee; Thou art not satisfied with thorns, until Thou findest Thyself dead with anguish upon the Cross. O Goodness! O infinite Love! Miserable is the heart that loves Thee not!

Thursday--Eleventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

V.-THE PASSING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN OUT OF THIS WORLD.

Who can form an idea of the tears and lamentations of the holy Disciples when holy Mary told them she was about to leave them, and they were to be separated from their Mother! But the Blessed Virgin consoled them by saying: "My children, I do not leave you to abandon you, but to help you still more in Heaven. Be at peace! One day we shall meet again in Paradise never to be separated for all eternity."

I.

Who can form an idea of the tears and lamentations of the holy Disciples at the sad announcement that holy Mary was leaving them, and at the thought that soon they were to be separated from their Mother? All then, weeping, exclaimed, "Then, O Mother, thou art already about to leave us. It is true that this world is not a place worthy of or fit for thee; and as for us, we are unworthy to enjoy the society of the Mother of God; but, remember, thou art our Mother; hitherto thou hast enlightened us in our doubts; thou hast consoled us in our afflictions; thou hast been our strength in persecutions; and now, how canst thou abandon us, leaving us alone in the midst of so many enemies and so many conflicts, deprived of thy consolations? We have already lost on earth Jesus, our Master and Father, Who has ascended into Heaven; until now we have found consolation in thee, our Mother; and now, how canst thou also leave us orphans without father or mother? Our own sweet Lady, either remain with us, or take us with thee." St. John Damascene makes the loving Queen speak sweetly thus: "No, my children, this is not according to the will of God. Be satisfied to do that which He has decreed for me and for you. To you it yet remains to labour on earth for the glory of your Redeemer, and to make up your eternal crown. I do not leave you to abandon you, but to help you still more in Heaven by my intercession with God. Be satisfied. I commend the holy Church to you; I commend redeemed souls to you; let this be my last farewell, and the only remembrance I leave you. Execute it if you love me, labour for the good of souls and for the glory of my Son; for one day we shall meet again in Paradise, never more for all eternity to be separated."

II.

The Blessed Virgin then begged them to give burial to her body after death; blessed them, and desired St. John; as St. John Damascene relates, to give after her death two of her gowns to two virgins who had served her for some time. She then decently composed herself on her poor little bed, where she laid herself to await death, and with it the meeting with the Divine Spouse, Who shortly was to come and take her with Him to the King-

dom of the Blessed. Behold, she already feels in her heart a great joy, the forerunner of the coming of the Bridegroom, which inundates her with a new and unaccustomed sweetness. The holy Apostles, seeing that Mary was already on the point of leaving this world, renewing their tears, all threw themselves on their knees around her bed; some kissed her holy feet, some sought a special blessing from her, some recommended a particular want, and all wept bitterly; for their hearts were pierced with grief at being obliged to separate themselves for the rest of their lives from their beloved Lady. And she, the most loving Mother, compassionated all, and consoled each one; to some promising her patronage, blessing others with particular affection, and encouraging others to the work of the conversion of the world; especially, she called St. Peter to her, and as head of the Church and vicar of her Son, recommended to him in a particular manner the propagation of the Faith, promising him at the same time her especial protection in Heaven. But more particularly did she wish St. John to come to her, who more than any other was grieved at this moment when he had to part with his holy Mother; and the most gracious Lady, remembering the affection and attention with which this holy disciple had served her during all the years she had remained on earth since the death of her Son, said: "My own John, I thank thee for all the assistance thou hast afforded me. My son, be assured of it, I shall not be ungrateful. If I now leave thee, I go to pray for thee. Remain in peace in this life until we meet again in Heaven, where I await thee. Never forget me. In all thy wants call me to thy aid, for I will never forget thee, my beloved son. I bless thee. I leave thee my blessing. Remain in peace. Farewell!"

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE.

5.-THE GREATNESS OF MARY'S POWER TO DEFEND THOSE WHO INVOKE HER WHEN TEMPTED.

Beautiful is the explanation given by Richard St. Laurence of the following words of the Book Proverbs: *The heart of her husband trusteth in her, and he shall have no need of spoils* (Prov. xxxi. 11). He says, applying them to Jesus and Mary: "The heart of

her Spouse, that is Christ, trusteth in her, and He shall have no need of spoils; for she endows Him with those whom by her prayers, merits, and example, she snatches from the devil." "God has entrusted the Heart of Jesus to the hands of Mary, that she may insure it the love of men," says Cornelius a Lapide; and thus He will not need spoils; that is, He will be abundantly supplied with souls; for she enriches Him with those whom she has snatched from hell, and saved from the devil by her powerful assistance.

It is well known that the palm is a sign of victory and therefore our Queen is placed on a high throne, in sight of all the powers, as a palm, for a sign of the certain victory that all may promise themselves who place themselves under her protection. *I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades*, says Ecclesiasticus (Ecclus. xxiv. 18) "that is, to defend," adds Blessed Albert the Great; "My children," Mary seems to say, "when the enemy assails you, fly to me; cast your eyes on me, and be of good heart; for as I am your defender, victory is assured to you." So that recourse to Mary is a most secure means to conquer all the assaults of hell; for she, says St. Bernardine of Sienna, is even the Queen of hell and sovereign mistress of the devils: since she it is who tames and crushes them, He thus expresses his thought; "The most Blessed Virgin rules over the infernal regions. She is therefore called the ruling mistress of the devils, because she brings them into subjection." For this reason Mary is said in the sacred Canticles to be terrible to the infernal powers *as an army set in array* (Cant. vi. 3), and she is called thus terrible, because she well knows how to array her power, her mercy, and her prayers, to the discomfiture of her enemies, and for the benefit of her servants, who in their temptations have recourse to her most powerful aid.

As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odour (Ecclus. xxiv. 23). Thus does the Holy Ghost make Mary speak in the Book of Ecclesiasticus. "We are told," says St. Bernard on this passage, that "all venomous reptiles fly from flowering vines"; and as poisonous reptiles fly from flowering vines, so do devils fly from those fortunate souls in whom they perceive the perfume of devotion to Mary. And therefore she also calls herself, in the same Book, a cedar: *I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus* (Ecclus.

xxiv. 17). Not only because she was untainted by sin, as the cedar is incorruptible, but also, as Cardinal Hugo remarks on the foregoing text, because, "like the cedar, which by its odour keeps off worms, so also does Mary by her sanctity drive away the devils."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

The Cross began to torture Jesus Christ before He was nailed upon it; for after He was condemned by Pilate, the Cross on which He was to die was given Him to carry to Calvary, and, without refusing, He took it upon His shoulders. Speaking of this, St. Augustine writes: "If we regard the wickedness of His tormentors, the insult was great; if we regard the love of Jesus, the mystery is great; for in carrying the Cross, our Captain then lifted up the Standard under which His followers upon this earth must be enrolled and fight, in order to be made His companions in the kingdom of Heaven."

St. Basil, speaking of the passage in Isaías: *A child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder* (Is. ix. 6), says that "earthly tyrants load their subjects with unjust burdens, in order to increase their own power; but Jesus Christ chose to take upon Himself the burden of the Cross, and to carry it, in order that, leaving life to us therein, He might obtain salvation for us." He further remarks that the kings of the earth founded their sovereignties on force of arms and in the heaping up of riches; but Jesus Christ founded His sovereignty in the insults of the Cross -- that is, in humbling Himself and in suffering, -- and on this account He willingly accepted it, and carried it on that painful journey, in order, by His example, to give us courage to embrace with resignation every cross, and thus to follow Him. Wherefore, also, He said to His disciples: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me* (Matt. xvi. 24).

II.

Let us here meditate upon the beautiful expressions applied to the Cross by St. John Chrysostom:

He calls it *the hope of the despairing*; for what hope of salvation would sinners have were it not for the Cross on which Jesus

Christ died to save them?

The guide of the voyager; for the humiliation of the Cross (that is, of tribulation) is the cause which, in the dangerous ocean of this life, gives us grace to keep the Divine law, and to correct ourselves after our transgressions, as the Psalmist says: *It is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I might learn thy justifications* (Ps. cxviii. 71).

The Cross is *the counsellor of the just*; because in adversities the just learn wisdom, and gain motives for uniting themselves more closely to God.

The Cross is *the rest of the troubled*; for where can the troubled find relief but in beholding that Cross on which their Redeemer and God died of pain for love of them?

The Cross is *the exultation of the Martyrs*; because in this consists the glory of the holy Martyrs, that they were able to unite their deaths to the pains and death Jesus Christ suffered on the Cross; as St. Paul says: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Gal. vi. 14).

The Cross is *the physician of the sick*; and great indeed is the remedy of the Cross to those who are sick in spirit; tribulations make them repent, and detach them from the world.

The Cross is *the fount for the thirsty*; for the Cross, that is, suffering for Jesus Christ, was the desire of the Saints, as St. Teresa was wont to say: "Oh that I might suffer! Or that I might die!" and as St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi said, "May I suffer, and not die!" meaning that she would refuse to die in order that she might continue to suffer upon this earth, rather than go to rejoice in Heaven.

Finally, to speak of all alike, both the just and sinners, every one has his own cross. The just, though they enjoy peace of conscience, yet all have their vicissitudes; at one time they are comforted by visits of Divine mercy, at another they are afflicted by bodily vexations and infirmities, and especially by desolation of spirit, by darkness and weariness, by scruples and temptations, and by fears for their salvation. Much heavier are the crosses of sinners, through remorse of conscience, through the terrors of eternal punishment, which from time to time affright them, and through the pains they suffer when things go wrong with them.

The Saints, when adversities befall them, unite themselves with the Divine will, and suffer with patience; but how can the sinner calm himself by the remembrance of the Divine will when he is living at enmity with God? The pains of the enemies of God are unmixed pains, pains without relief. Wherefore St. Teresa was wont to say that "he who loves God embraces the cross, and thus does not feel it, while he who does not love God drags the cross and thus cannot but feel it."

Friday--Eleventh Week after Pentecost

(First Friday of August)

Morning Meditation

THE AMIABLE HEART OF JESUS.

The Heart of Jesus is all pure, all holy, all full of love towards God and towards us. Every perfection, every virtue reigns in this Heart. This is the Heart in which God Himself finds all His delight. O amiable Heart of Jesus, Thou dost well deserve the love of all hearts.

I.

He who shows himself amiable in everything must necessarily make himself loved. Oh, if we only applied ourselves to discover all the good qualities by which Jesus Christ renders Himself worthy of our love, we should all be under the happy necessity of loving Him. And what heart among all hearts can be found more worthy of love than the Heart of Jesus? A Heart all pure, all holy, all full of love towards God and towards us; because all Its desires are only for the Divine glory and our good. This is the Heart in which God finds all His delight. Every perfection, every virtue reigns in this Heart; -- a most ardent love for God, His Father, united to the greatest humility and respect that can possibly exist; a sovereign confusion for our sins, which He has taken upon Himself, united to the extreme confidence of a most affectionate Son; a sovereign abhorrence of our sins, united to a lively compassion for our miseries; an extreme sorrow, united to a perfect conformity to the Will of God; so that in Jesus is found everything that is most amiable.

O my amiable Redeemer, what object more worthy of love could the Eternal Father command me to love than Thee? Thou

art the Beauty of Paradise, Thou art the Love of Thy Father, Thy Heart is the throne of all virtues. O amiable Heart of my Jesus, Thou dost well deserve the love of all hearts; poor and wretched is that heart which loves Thee not! Thus miserable, O my God, has my heart been during all the time in which it has not loved Thee. But I will not continue to be thus wretched; I love Thee, I will always continue to love Thee, O my Jesus. O my Lord, I have hitherto forgotten Thee, and now what can I expect? That my ingratitude will oblige Thee to forget me entirely and forsake me forever? No, my Saviour, do not permit it. Thou art the object of the love of God; and shalt Thou not, then, be loved by a miserable sinner such as I am, who have been so favoured and loved by Thee? O lovely flames that burn in the amiable Heart of my Jesus, enkindle in my poor heart that holy fire which Jesus came down from Heaven to kindle on earth. Consume and destroy all the impure affections that dwell in my heart and prevent it from being entirely His.

II.

Some are attracted to love others by their beauty, others by their innocence, others by living with them, others by devotion. But if there were a person in whom these and all good qualities were united, who could help loving him? If we heard that there was in a distant foreign country a prince who was handsome, humble, courteous, devout, full of charity, affable to all, who rendered good to those who did him evil; then, although we knew not who he was, and though he knew not us, and though we were not acquainted with him, nor was there any possibility of our ever being so, yet we should be enamoured of him, and should be constrained to love him. How is it, then, possible, that Jesus Christ, Who possesses in Himself all these virtues, and in the most perfect degree, and Who loves us so tenderly, how is it possible that He should be so little loved by men, and should not be the only object of our love? O my God, how is it that Jesus, Who alone is worthy of love, and Who has given us so many proofs of the love that He bears us, should be alone, as it were, the unlucky One with us, Who cannot arrive at making us love Him; as if He were not sufficiently worthy of our love! This is what caused floods of tears to St. Rose of Lima, St. Catherine of

Genoa, St. Teresa, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, who, on considering the ingratitude of men, exclaimed, weeping: "Love is not loved! Love is not loved!"

O my God, grant that I may exist only to love Thee, and Thee alone, my dearest Saviour. If at one time I despised Thee, Thou art now the only object of my love. I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee, and I will never love any but Thee! My beloved Lord, do not disdain to accept the love of a heart which once afflicted Thee by my sins. Let it be Thy glory to exhibit to the Angels a heart now burning with love, a heart which hitherto shunned and despised Thee. Most holy Virgin Mary, my hope, do thou assist me, and beseech Jesus to make me, by His grace, all that He wishes me to be.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE

6. -- THE GREATNESS OF MARY'S POWER TO DEFEND US WHEN TEMPTED.

In Judea victories were gained by means of the ark. Thus it was that Moses conquered his enemies, as we learn from the Book of Numbers. *And when the ark was lifted up, Moses said: Arise, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered* (Num. x. 35). Thus was Jericho conquered; thus also the Philistines; for the Ark of God was there (1 Kings xiv. 18). It is well known that this ark was a figure of Mary. Cornelius a Lapide says, "In time of danger Christians should fly to the most Blessed Virgin, who contained Christ as manna in the ark of her womb, and brought Him forth to be the food and salvation of the world." For as manna was in the ark, so is Jesus (of whom manna was a figure) in Mary; and by means of this ark we gain the victory over our earthly and infernal enemies. And thus, St. Bernardine of Sienna well observes, when Mary, the ark of the New Testament, was raised to the dignity of Queen of Heaven, the power of hell over men was weakened and dissolved.

The infernal spirits tremble at the very thought of Mary, and of her august name, says St. Bonaventure. "Oh, how terrible is Mary to the devils!" The Saint compares these enemies to those of whom Job speaks: *He diggeth through houses in the dark ... If the*

morning suddenly appear, it is to them the shadow of death (Job. xxiv. 16, 17). Thieves go and rob houses in the dark; but as soon as morning dawns they fly, as if they beheld the shadow of death. "Precisely thus," in the words of the same St. Bonaventure, "do the devils enter the soul in the time of darkness"; meaning when the soul is in the obscurity of ignorance. They dig through the house of our mind when it is in the darkness of ignorance. But then, he adds, "if suddenly they are overtaken by the dawn, that is, if the grace and mercy of Mary enters the soul, its brightness instantly dispels the darkness, and puts the infernal enemies to flight, as if they fled from death." Oh, blessed is he who always invokes the beautiful name of Mary in his conflicts with hell!

In confirmation of this, it was revealed to St. Bridget that "God had rendered Mary so powerful over the devils, that as often as they assault a devout client who calls on this most Blessed Virgin for help, she at a single glance instantly terrifies them, so that they fly far away, preferring to have their pains redoubled rather than see themselves thus subject to the power of Mary."

The Divine Bridegroom, when speaking of this His beloved bride, calls her a lily: *As the lily is amongst the thorns, so is my beloved amongst the daughters* (Cant. ii. 2). On these words, Cornelius a Lapide makes the reflection: "As the lily is a remedy against serpents and venomous things, so is the invocation of Mary a specific by which we may overcome all temptations, and especially those against purity, as all find who put it in practice."

St. John Damascene used to say: "While I keep my hope in thee unconquerable, O Mother of God, I shall be safe. I will fight and overcome my enemies with no other buckler than thy protection and thy all-powerful aid." And all who are so fortunate as to be the servants of this great Queen can say the same thing. O Mother of God, if I hope in thee, I most certainly shall not be overcome; for, defended by thee, I will pursue my enemies, and oppose them with the shield of thy protection and thy all-powerful help; and then without doubt I shall conquer. For, says St. James the Monk (who was a Doctor amongst the Greeks), addressing our Lord: "Thou, O Lord, hast given us in Mary arms that no force of war can overcome, and a trophy never to be destroyed."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

It was revealed to St. Bridget that when the Saviour was laid upon the Cross, He stretched out His right hand to the place where it was to be nailed. Executioners immediately nailed the other hand, and then His sacred feet; and Jesus Christ was left to die upon this bed of anguish. St. Augustine says that the punishment of the cross was a most bitter torment, because, upon the Cross death itself was prolonged, lest the pain should be speedily ended.

O God! what horror must then have smitten Heaven at the sight of the Son of the Eternal Father crucified between two thieves! Such, in truth, was the Prophecy of Isaias: *He was reputed with the wicked* (Is. liii. 12). Wherefore St. John Chrysostom, contemplating Jesus upon the Cross, cried out, full of amazement and love: "I see Him in the midst, in the holy Trinity! I see Him in the midst, between Moses and Elias! I see Him in the midst, between two thieves!" As though he had said: "I see my Saviour first in Heaven between the Father and the Holy Ghost; I see Him upon Mount Tabor, between two Saints, Moses and Elias; how, then, is it I see Him crucified upon Calvary between two thieves?" How could this come to pass, but through the Divine decree, that thus He must die, to satisfy by His death for the sins of men, and to save men from death, as Isaias had foretold: *He was reputed with the wicked, and he hath borne the sins of many* (Is. liii. 12).

II.

The same Prophet asks: *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra; this beautiful one in his robe, walking in the greatness of his strength?* (Is. lxiii. 1). And he gives the answer: *I that speak justice, and am a defender to save* (Is. lxiii. 1). The person who thus replies is, according to the interpreters, Jesus Christ, Who says: I am the promised Messiah, Who am come to save men, by my triumph over their enemies.

Then, further, He is again asked: *Why is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that tread in the wine-press?* (Is. lxiii. 2). And He answers, *I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the Gentiles*

there is not a man with me (Is. lxiii. 3). Tertullian, St. Cyprian, and St. Augustine explain the wine-press to mean the Passion of Jesus Christ, in which His garments -- that is, His most holy flesh -- was covered with blood and wounds, according to what St. John wrote: *He was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood; and his name is called the Word of God* (Apoc. xix. 13). St. Gregory, explaining the expression, *I have trodden the wine-press alone*, says, "He trod the wine-press, and was Himself trodden." He trod it, because Jesus Christ, by His Passion, overcame the devil; He was trodden, because, in His Passion, His body was bruised and broken, as the grapes are broken in the wine-press, and, as Isaias expresses it in another text: *The Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity* (Is. liii. 10).

Saturday--Eleventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

VI. - THE HOLY DEATH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

The death of Mary is now at hand. Divine Love, with its vehement and blessed flames, had almost entirely consumed her, and the heavenly phoenix is already losing her life in the midst of this fire. Wrapped in the flames of Divine love, and in the midst of her sighs of love, Mary gave a last sigh of still more ardent love of God, and breathing forth her soul, expired.

I.

The death of Mary is now at hand; Divine love, with its vehement and blessed flames, had already almost entirely consumed the vital spirits; the heavenly phoenix is already losing her life in the midst of this fire. Then the host of Angels come in choirs to meet her, as if to be ready for the great triumph with which they were to accompany her to Paradise. Mary was indeed consoled at the sight of these holy spirits, but was not fully consoled; for she did not yet see her beloved Jesus, Who was the whole love of her heart. Hence she often repeated to the Angels who descended to salute her: *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love* (Cant. v. 8). Holy Angels, O fair citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, you come in choirs kindly to console me; and you

all console me with your sweet presence. I thank you; but you do not fully satisfy me, for as yet I do not see my Son coming to console me. Go, if you love me, return to Paradise, and on my part tell my Beloved that *I languish with love*. Tell Him to come, and to come quickly, for I am dying with the vehemence of my desire to see Him.

But, behold, Jesus is now come to take His Mother to the Kingdom of the Blessed. It was revealed to St. Elizabeth that her Son appeared to Mary before she expired with His Cross in His hands, to show the special glory he had obtained by the Redemption; having, by His death, made acquisition of that great creature, who for all eternity was to honour Him more than all men and Angels. St. John Damascene relates that our Lord Himself gave her the Viaticum, saying with tender love "Receive, O my Mother, from my hands that same Body that thou gavest to me." And the Mother, having received with the greatest love that last Communion, with her last breath said: "My Son, into Thy hands do I commend my spirit. I commend to Thee this soul, which from the beginning Thou didst create rich in so many graces, and by a singular privilege didst preserve from the stain of original sin. I commend to Thee my body, from which Thou didst deign to take Thy flesh and blood. I also commend to Thee these my beloved children [speaking of the holy disciples, who surrounded her]; they are grieved at my departure. Do Thou, Who lovest them more than I do, console them; bless them, and give them strength to do great things for Thy glory."

II.

The life of Mary is now closing. The most delicious music, as St. Jerome relates, was heard in the apartment where she lay; and, according to a revelation of St. Bridget, the room was filled with a brilliant light. The sweet music, and the unaccustomed splendour, warned the holy Apostles that Mary was then departing. This caused them again to burst forth in tears and prayers; and raising their hands, with one voice they exclaimed: "O Mother, thou already goest to Heaven! Thou leavest us! Give us thy last blessing, and never forget us miserable creatures!" Mary, turning her eyes around upon all, as if to bid them a last farewell, said: "Adieu, my children; I bless you; fear not, I will never forget

you." And now death came; not indeed clothed in mourning and grief, as it does to others, but adorned with light and gladness. But what do we say? Why speak of death? Let us rather say that Divine love came, and cut the thread of that noble life. And as a light, before going out, gives a last and brighter flash than ever, so did this beautiful creature, on hearing her Son's invitation to follow Him, wrapped in the flames of love, and in the midst of her loving sighs, give a last sigh of still more ardent love, and breathing forth her soul, expired. Thus was that great soul, that beautiful dove of the Lord, loosened from the bands of this life; thus did she enter into the glory of the Blessed, where she is now throned, and will be throned, Queen of Paradise, for all eternity.

Mary, then has left this world; she is now in Heaven. Thence does this compassionate Mother look down upon us who are still in this valley of tears. She pities us, and, if we wish it, promises to help us. Let us always beseech her by the merits of her blessed death, to obtain us a happy death; and should such be the pleasure of God, let us beg her to obtain us the grace to die on a Saturday, which is a day dedicated in her honour, or on a day of a Novena, or within the Octave of one of her Feasts; for this she has obtained for so many of her clients, and especially for St. Stanislaus Kostka, for whom she obtained that he should die on the Feast of her Assumption.

O sweetest Lady and Mother, thou hast already left the earth and reached thy kingdom, where, as Queen, thou art enthroned above all the choirs of Angels, as the Church sings: *She is exalted above the choirs of Angels to the celestial kingdom.* We well know that we sinners are not worthy to possess thee in this valley of darkness; but we also know that thou, in thy greatness, hast never forgotten us miserable creatures, and that by being exalted to so great glory thou hast never lost compassion for us poor children of Adam; nay, even that it is increased in thee. From the high throne, then, to which thou art exalted, turn thy compassionate eyes upon us, and pity us. Remember, also, that in leaving this world thou didst promise not to forget us. Behold us and succour us! See in the midst of what tempests and dangers we constantly are, and shall be until the end of our lives. By the merits of thy happy death obtain us holy perseverance in the Di-

vine friendship, that we may finally quit this life in God's grace; and thus we also shall one day come to kiss thy feet in Paradise, and unite with the blessed Spirits in praising thee and singing thy glories as thou deservest. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE

7.-THE GREATNESS OF MARY'S POWER TO DEFEND US WHEN TEMPTED

It is said in the Old Testament that God guided His people from Egypt to the Land of Promise, *by day in a pillar of a cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire* (Exod. xiii. 21). This stupendous pillar, at one time as a cloud, at another as fire, says Richard of St. Laurence, was a figure of Mary fulfilling the double office she constantly exercises for our good: as a cloud she protects us from the ardour of Divine justice; and as fire she protects us from the devils. "Behold the twofold object for which Mary is given to us; as a cloud, to shelter us from the heat of the sun of justice, and, as fire, to protect us all against the devil." She protects us as a burning fire: for, St. Bonaventure remarks: "As wax melts before the fire, so do the devils lose their power against those souls who often remember the name of Mary, and devoutly invoke it; and still more so, if they also endeavour to imitate her virtues."

The devils tremble even if they only hear the name of Mary. St. Bernard declares that in "the name of Mary every knee bows; and that the devils not only fear but tremble at the very sound of that name." And as men fall prostrate with fear if a thunderbolt falls near them, so do the devils if they hear the name of Mary. Thomas a Kempis thus expresses the same sentiment: "The evil spirits greatly fear the Queen of Heaven, and fly at the sound of her name, as if from fire. At the very sound of the word *Mary*, they are prostrated as by thunder."

Oh, how many victories have the clients of Mary gained by only making use of her most holy name! It was thus that St. Anthony of Padua was always victorious; thus the Blessed Henry Suso; thus so many other lovers of this great Queen have conquered. We learn from the history of the missions in Japan, that many devils appeared under the form of fierce animals

to a certain Christian, to alarm and threaten him; but he thus addressed them: "I have no arms that you can fear; and if the Most High permits it, do whatever you please with me. In the meantime, however, I take the holy Names of Jesus and Mary for my defence." At the very sound of these tremendous names, the earth opened, and the proud spirits cast themselves headlong into it. St. Anselm declares that he himself "knew and had seen and heard many who had invoked the name of Mary in time of danger, and were immediately delivered."

"Glorious, indeed, and admirable," exclaims St. Bonaventure, "is thy name, O Mary; for those who pronounce it at death need not fear all the powers of hell"; for the devils on hearing that name instantly fly, and leave the soul in peace. The same Saint adds that "men do not fear a powerful hostile army as much as the powers of hell fear the name and protection of Mary." "Thou, O Lady," says St. Germanus, "by the simple invocation of thy most powerful name, givest security to thy servants against all the assaults of the enemy." Oh, were Christians but careful in their temptations to pronounce the name of Mary with confidence, never would they fall; for, as Blessed Allan remarks: "At the very sound of these words, *Hail Mary!* Satan flies, and hell trembles." Our Blessed Lady herself revealed to St. Bridget that the enemy flies even from the most abandoned sinners, and who consequently are the farthest from God, and fully possessed by the devil, if they only invoke her most powerful name with a true purpose of amendment. "All devils on hearing this name of Mary, filled with terror, leave the soul." But at the same time our Blessed Lady added that "if the soul does not amend and wipe out its sins by sorrow, the devils almost immediately return and continue to possess it."

In Reichersperg, in Bavaria, there was a Canon Regular of the name of Arnold, surnamed the Pious on account of the sanctity of his life, who had the most tender devotion to our Blessed Lady. When at the point of death, and having received the last Sacraments, he summoned his Religious brethren, and begged that they would not abandon him in his last passage. Scarcely had he uttered these words, when, in the presence of all, he began to tremble, to roll his eyes, and, bathed in a cold sweat,

with a faltering voice, he said: "Ah, do you not see the devils who are endeavouring to drag me to hell?" He then cried out, "Brothers, implore the aid of Mary for me; in her I confide; she will give me the victory." On hearing this his brethren recited the Litany of our Blessed Lady, and as they said "Holy Mary, pray for him," the dying man exclaimed, "Repeat, repeat the name of Mary, for I am already before God's tribunal." He was silent for a moment, and then added, "It is true that I did that, but I have done penance for it." And then turning to our Blessed Lady, he said: "O Mary, I shall be delivered if thou helpst me." Again the devils attacked him; but he defended himself with his Crucifix and the name of Mary. Thus was the night spent; but no sooner did morning dawn than Arnold exclaimed with the greatest calmness, and full of holy joy: "Mary, my sovereign Lady, my refuge, has obtained me pardon and salvation." Then casting his eyes on that Blessed Virgin who was inviting him to follow her, he said: "I come, O Lady, I come!" and making an effort to do so even with his body, his soul fled after her to the realms of eternal bliss, as we trust, for he sweetly expired.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

And now behold this Lord, Who was fairest among men, appears on Calvary, His form so disfigured by torments, that it struck horror into all who saw it. Yet this deformity makes Him seem more beautiful in the eyes of souls that love Him, because these Wounds, these marks of the scourging, this lacerated flesh, are all tokens and proofs of the love He bears them; upon which the poet Petrucci beautifully sings, "O Lord, if Thou sufferest scourgings for us, to the souls who love Thee, the more deformed Thou art the more fair dost Thou appear."

St. Augustine says: "He hung in deformity upon the Cross, but His deformity has made us beautiful." And truly so, because this deformity of Jesus crucified was the cause of the beauty of our souls, which, when they were deformed, were washed with His Divine Blood, and became fair and lovely, according to what St. John wrote: *Who are these that are clothed in white garments? These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed*

their garments, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Apoc. vii. 13, 14). All the Saints, as being children of Adam, were (with the exception of the Blessed Virgin), at one time covered with a foul garment, and soiled with Adam's sin and with their own; but being washed with the Blood of the Lamb, they became white and agreeable in the sight of God.

II.

Well, didst Thou say, then, O my Jesus, that, when Thou shouldst be lifted up upon the Cross, Thou wouldst draw everything unto Thee (Jo. xii. 32); *and this he said, signifying by what death he should die*. Truly Thou hast left nothing undone to draw all hearts unto Thee. Many are the happy souls who, on seeing Thee crucified and dying for love of them, have abandoned everything -- possessions, dignities, country, and kindred, even to the embracing of torments and death -- in order to give themselves wholly to Thee. Unhappy they who resist the graces Thou hast gained for them with Thy great labours and sorrows. O my God, this will be their great torment in hell, to think that they have lost a God Who, to draw them to love Him, gave His life upon a Cross; that of their own choice they have perished, and that there will be no remedy for their ruin through all eternity! O my Redeemer, I have already deserved to perish through the sins I have committed against Thee. Alas, how often have I resisted Thy grace, which sought to draw me unto Thee, and, in order to cleave to my own inclinations, have despised Thy love, and turned my back upon Thee! Oh that I had died before I had offended Thee! Oh that I had always loved Thee! I thank Thee, O my Love, that Thou hast borne with me with so much patience, and that, instead of abandoning me, as I deserved, Thou hast repeated Thy invitations, and increased Thy lights and Thy loving impulses. *I will sing the mercies of the Lord forever* (Ps. lxxxviii. 2). Oh, cease not, my Saviour and my Hope, to continue to draw me, and to multiply Thy graces upon me, that I may love Thee in Heaven with more fervour, remembering the many mercies Thou hast shown me, after all my offences against Thee. I hope for all, through that precious Blood Thou hast shed for me, and that bitter death Thou hast endured for me.

O holy Virgin Mary, protect me; pray to Jesus for me.

Sunday--Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

VII. - THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY INTO HEAVEN.

It would seem that, on the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into Heaven, the holy Church should invite us to mourn rather than rejoice, since our dear Mother has quitted this world and left us deprived of her sweet presence. But no: the holy Church rightly invites us to rejoice, for Mary is going to possess a kingdom and to be crowned Queen of Heaven. Let us therefore rejoice in the glorious triumph of our Mother.

I.

It would seem that on the day of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven the holy Church should rather invite us to mourn than to rejoice, since our sweet Mother has quitted this world and left us deprived of her sweet presence. St. Bernard says "It seems that we should rather weep than rejoice." But no; the holy Church invites us to rejoice: "Let us all rejoice in the Lord, celebrating a Festival in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary." And justly so; for, if we love our Mother, we ought to congratulate ourselves more upon her glory than on our own personal happiness. What son does not rejoice, though on account of it he has to be separated from his mother, if he knows that she is going to take possession of a kingdom? Mary is to be crowned Queen of Heaven; and shall we not keep it a festival and rejoice if we truly love her? Let us rejoice, then; let us all rejoice! And that we may rejoice, and be consoled the more by her exaltation, let us consider how glorious was the triumph of Mary when she ascended to Heaven.

After Jesus Christ our Saviour had completed, by His death, the work of Redemption, the Angels ardently desired to possess Him in their heavenly country; hence they were continually supplicating Him in the words of David: *Arise, O Lord, into thy resting-place, thou and the ark which thou hast sanctified* (Ps. cxxxi. 8). Come, O Lord, come quickly, now that Thou hast redeemed men; come to Thy kingdom and dwell with us, and bring with Thee the living ark of Thy sanctification, Thy Mother, who was

the ark Thou didst sanctify by dwelling in her womb. Precisely thus does St. Bernardine make the Angels say: "Let Mary, Thy most holy Mother, sanctified by Thy conception, also ascend." Our Lord was at last pleased to satisfy the desire of these heavenly citizens by calling Mary to Paradise. But if it was His will that the ark of the old dispensation should be brought with great pomp into the city of David -- *And David and all the house of Israel brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord with joyful shouting, and with sound of trumpet* (2 Kings vi. 15) -- with how much greater and more glorious pomp did He ordain that His Mother should enter Heaven!

II.

The Prophet Elias was carried to Heaven in a fiery chariot, which, according to interpreters, was no other than a group of Angels who bore him off from the earth. "But to conduct thee to Heaven, O Mother of God," says the Abbot Rupert, "a fiery chariot was not enough; the whole court of Heaven, headed by its King thy Son, went forth to meet and accompany thee."

St. Bernardine of Sienna says, that "Jesus," to honour the triumph of His most sweet Mother, "went forth in His glory to meet and accompany her." St. Anselm also says, that "it was precisely for this purpose that the Redeemer was pleased to ascend to Heaven before His Mother; that is, He did so, not only to prepare a throne for her in that kingdom, but also that He might Himself accompany her with all the blessed Spirits, and thus render her entry into Heaven more glorious, and such as became one who was His Mother." St. Peter Damian, contemplating the splendour of this Assumption of Mary into Heaven, says that "we shall find it more glorious than the Ascension of Jesus Christ; for to meet the Redeemer, Angels only went forth; but when the Blessed Virgin was assumed to glory, she was met and accompanied by the Lord of glory Himself, and by the whole blessed company of Saints and Angels." For this reason the Abbot Guerric supposes the Divine Word thus speaking: "To honour the Father, I descended from Heaven; to honour My Mother, I reascended there": that thus I might be enabled to go forth to meet her, and myself accompany her to Paradise.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE SIGH, MOURNING AND WEEPING, IN
THIS VALLEY OF TEARS!

1.-THE NECESSITY OF MARY'S INTERCESSION FOR OUR SALVATION.

That it is not only lawful but useful to invoke and pray to the Saints, and more especially to the Queen of Saints, the most holy and ever blessed Virgin Mary, in order that they may obtain us Divine grace, is an Article of Faith, and has been defined by General Councils, against heretics who condemned it as injurious to Jesus Christ, Who is our only Mediator. But if a Jeremias after his death prayed for Jerusalem (2 Mach. xv. 14); if the Ancients of the Apocalypse presented the prayers of the Saints to God (Apoc. v. 8); if a St. Peter promises his disciples that after his death He will be mindful of them (2 Pet. i. 15); if a holy Stephen prays for his persecutors (Acts vii. 59); if a St. Paul prays for his companions (Acts xxvii. 24; Eph. ii. 16; Phil. i. 4; Col. i. 3); if, in fine, the Saints can pray for us, why cannot we beseech the Saints to intercede for us? St. Paul recommends himself to the prayers of his disciples: *Brethren, pray for us* (1 Thess. v. 25). St. James exhorts us to pray one for another: *Pray one for another, that you may be saved* (James v. 16). Then we can do the same.

No one denies that Jesus Christ is our only Mediator of justice, and that He by His merits has obtained our reconciliation with God. But, on the other hand, it is impious to assert that God is not pleased to grant graces at the intercession of His Saints, and more especially of Mary, His Mother, whom Jesus desires so much to see loved and honoured by all. Who can pretend that the honour bestowed on a mother does not redound to the honour of the son? *The glory of children are their fathers* (Prov. xvii. 6). Whence St. Bernard says: "Let us not imagine that we obscure the glory of the Son by the great praise we lavish on the Mother; for the more she is honoured, the greater is the glory of her Son." "There can be no doubt," says the Saint, "that whatever we say in praise of the Mother is equally in praise of the Son." And St. Ildephonsus also says: "That which is given to the Mother redounds to the Son; the honour given to the Queen is honour bestowed on the King." There can be no doubt that by

the merits of Jesus, Mary was made the mediatrix of our salvation; not indeed a mediatrix of justice, but of grace and intercession; as St. Bonaventure expressly calls her, "Mary, the most faithful mediatrix of our salvation." And St. Laurence Justinian asks -- "How can she be otherwise than full of grace, who has been made the ladder to Paradise, the gate of Heaven, the most true mediatrix between God and man?"

Hence the learned Suarez justly remarks that if we implore our Blessed Lady to obtain us a favour, it is not because we distrust the Divine mercy, but rather that we fear our own unworthiness and the absence of proper dispositions; and we recommend ourselves to Mary, that her dignity may supply for our lowliness. He says that we apply to Mary "in order that the dignity of the intercessor may supply for our misery. Hence, to invoke the aid of the most Blessed Virgin is not diffidence in the Divine mercy, but dread of our own unworthiness."

That it is most useful and holy to have recourse to the intercession of Mary can only be doubted by those who have not the Faith. But that which we intend to prove here is that the intercession of Mary is even necessary to salvation; we say necessary -- not absolutely, but morally. This necessity proceeds from the will itself of God, that all the graces He dispenses should pass through the hands of Mary, according to the opinion of St. Bernard, and which we may now with safety call the general opinion of Theologians and learned men. The author of the *Reign of Mary* positively asserts that such is the case. It is maintained by Vega, Mendoza, Paciucchelli, Segneri, Poire, Crasset, and by innumerable other learned authors. Even Father Natalis Alexander, who always uses so much reserve in his propositions, even he says that it is the will of God that we should expect all graces through the intercession of Mary. I will give his own words: "God wills that we should obtain all good things that we hope for from Him through the powerful intercession of the Virgin Mother, and we shall obtain them whenever (as we are in duty bound) we invoke her." In confirmation of this, he quotes the following celebrated passage of St. Bernard: "Such is God's will, that we should have all through Mary." Father Contenson is also of the same opinion; for, explaining the words addressed by our Lord

on the Cross to St. John: *Behold thy Mother!* (Jo. xix. 27) he says: It is the same thing as if Jesus had said: As no one can be saved except through the merits of My sufferings and death, so no one will be a partaker of the Blood then shed otherwise than through the prayer of My Mother. He alone is a son of My sorrows who has Mary for his Mother. My Wounds are ever-flowing fountains of grace; but their streams will reach no one but by the channel of Mary. In vain will he invoke Me as a Father who has not venerated Mary as a Mother. And thou, My disciple John, if thou lovest Me, love her; for thou wilt be beloved by Me in proportion to thy love for her.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

Jesus upon the Cross was a spectacle which filled Heaven and earth with amazement -- the sight of an Almighty God, the Lord of all, dying upon an infamous gibbet, condemned as a malefactor between two thieves. It was a spectacle of justice -- the Eternal Father, in order that His justice might be satisfied, punishing the sins of men in the person of His only-begotten Son Who was loved by Him as Himself. It was a spectacle of mercy, when His innocent Son died a death so shameful and so bitter, in order to save His creatures from the punishment that was due to them. Especially was it a display of love, in a God offering His life to redeem from death His slaves and enemies!

It is this spectacle which ever was, and ever will be, the dearest object of the contemplation of the Saints, who have counted it little to strip themselves of all earthly pleasures and goods, and to embrace with desire and joy both pain and death, in order to make some return of gratitude to a God Who died for love of them.

Comforted by the sight of Jesus derided upon the Cross, the Saints have loved contempt more than worldly people have loved the honours of the world. At the sight of Jesus naked and dying upon the Cross, they have sought to abandon all the good things of this earth. At the sight of Him all wounded upon the Cross, while the blood flowed forth from all His limbs, they have learnt to abhor sensual pleasures, and have sought to afflict their

flesh as much as they could, in order to accompany with their own sufferings the sufferings of the Crucified. At the sight of the obedience and conformity of will practised by Jesus Christ to the will of His Father, they laboured to conquer all those appetites which were not conformed to the Divine pleasure; while many, though occupied in works of piety, yet, knowing that to be deprived of their own will was their most welcome sacrifice to the Heart of God, entered into some Religious Order, to lead a life of obedience, and subject their own will to that of others. At the sight of the patience of Jesus Christ, in being willing to suffer so many pains and insults for the love of us, they received with satisfaction and joy injuries, infirmities, persecutions, and the torments of tyrants. At the sight of the love Jesus Christ has shown to us in sacrificing to God His life upon the Cross for us, they sacrificed to Jesus Christ all they possessed, -- their property, their pleasures, their honours, and their life.

II.

How is it that so many Christians, although they know by Faith that Jesus Christ died for love of them, instead of devoting themselves wholly to love and serve Him, give themselves up to offending and despising Him for the sake of brief and miserable pleasures? Whence comes this ingratitude? It comes from forgetfulness of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ. And, O my God, what will be their remorse and shame at the Day of Judgment, when the Lord shall reproach them with all that He has done and suffered for them?

Let us, then, never cease, O devout souls, to keep before our eyes Jesus crucified, and dying in the midst of torments and insults through love of us. From the Passion of Jesus Christ all the Saints have drawn those flames of love which made them forget all the good things of this world, and even their own selves, to give themselves up wholly to love and please this Divine Saviour, Who has so loved men that it seems as if He could not have done more in order to be loved by them. In a word, the Cross, that is, the Passion of Jesus Christ, is that which will gain for us the victory over all our passions, and over all the temptations that hell will hold out to us, in order to separate us from God. The Cross is the road and ladder by which we mount to Heaven. Happy

he who embraces it during his life, and does not put it off till the hour of death. He that dies embracing the Cross has that sure pledge of eternal life which is promised to all those who follow Jesus Christ.

O my crucified Jesus, to make Thyself loved by men Thou hast spared nothing; Thou hast even given Thy life in a most painful death; how, then, can men who love their kindred, their friends, and even animals from whom they receive any token of affection, be so ungrateful to Thee as to despise Thy grace and Thy love, for the sake of miserable and vain delights! Oh, wretched me, I am one of those ungrateful beings who, for things of no worth, have renounced Thy friendship, and have turned my back upon Thee. I have deserved that Thou shouldst drive me from Thy face, as I have often banished Thee from my heart. But I know that Thou dost not cease to ask my heart of me: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God* (Deut. vi. 5). Yea, O my Jesus, as Thou desirest that I should love Thee and offerest me pardon, I renounce all creatures, and henceforth I desire to love Thee alone, my Creator and my Redeemer. Thou dost deserve to be the only object of my soul's love.

O Mary, Mother of God, refuge of sinners, pray for me; obtain for me the grace to love God, and I ask for nothing more.

Monday--Twelfth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

VIII. - THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY INTO HEAVEN.

Let us consider how Jesus Christ came forth from Heaven to meet His Mother. On first meeting her, and to console her, He said: *Arise! Make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come, for winter is now past* (Cant. ii. 10, 11). Come, My dearest Mother, My pure and beautiful dove! Leave the valley of tears in which for My love, thou hast suffered so much! Thou shalt be crowned.

I.

Let us consider how Jesus Christ came forth from Heaven to meet His Mother. On first meeting her, and to console her, He said: *Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come, for winter is now past* (Cant. ii. 10, 11). Come, My own dear

Mother, My pure and beautiful dove; leave that valley of tears, in which, for My love, thou hast suffered so much. *Come from Libanus, my Spouse; come from Libanus, come: thou shalt be crowned* (Cant. iv. 8). Come, soul and body, to enjoy the recompense of thy holy life. If thy sufferings have been great on earth, far greater is the glory I have prepared for thee in Heaven. Enter, then, that kingdom, and take thy seat near me. Come to receive that crown which I will bestow upon thee as Queen of the Universe. Behold, Mary already leaves the earth, at which she looks with affection and compassion: with affection, remembering the many graces she had there received from her Lord; and with affection and compassion, because in it she leaves so many poor children surrounded with miseries and dangers. But see, Jesus offers her His hand, and the Blessed Mother already ascends; already she has passed beyond the clouds, beyond the spheres. Behold her already at the gates of Heaven. When monarchs make their solemn entry into the capital of their kingdom, they do not pass through the gates, for they are removed to make way for them on this occasion. Hence, when Jesus Christ entered Paradise, the Angels cried out: *Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates; and the King of glory shall enter in* (Ps. xxiii, 7). Thus also, now that Mary goes to take possession of the Kingdom of Heaven, the Angels who accompany her cry out to those within: "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates; and the Queen of glory shall enter in."

II.

Behold, Mary already enters that blessed country. But on her entrance the celestial Spirits, seeing her so beautiful and glorious, ask the Angels without the gates, as Origen supposes it, with united voices of exultation: *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her Beloved?* (Cant. viii. 5). And who can this creature so beautiful be, that comes from the desert of the earth -- a place of thorns and tribulation? But this one comes pure and rich in virtue, leaning on her beloved Lord, Who is graciously pleased Himself to accompany her with so great honour. Who is she? The Angels accompanying her answer: "She is the Mother of our King; she is our Queen, and the Blessed one among women; full of grace, the Saint of Saints,

the beloved of God, the Immaculate one, the dove, the fairest of all creatures." Then all the blessed Spirits begin to bless and praise her; singing with far more reason than the Hebrews did to Judith: *Thou art the glory of Jerusalem; thou art the joy of Israel; thou art the honour of our people* (Judith xv. 10). Ah, our Lady and our Queen, thou, then, art the glory of Paradise, the joy of our country; thou art the honour of us all: be thou ever welcome, be thou ever blessed! Behold thy kingdom; behold us also, who are thy servants, ever ready to obey thy commands!

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE SIGH, MOURNING AND WEEPING, IN THIS VALLEY OF TEARS!

2. -- THE NECESSITY OF MARY'S INTERCESSION FOR OUR SALVATION.

This proposition -- that all we receive from our Lord comes through Mary -- does not exactly please a certain modern writer,* who, although in other respects he speaks of true and false devotion with much learning and piety, yet when he treats of devotion towards the Divine Mother, seems to grudge her that glory which was given her without scruple by a St. Germanus, a St. Anselm, a St. John Damascene, a St. Bonaventure, a St. Antoninus, a St. Bernardine, the Venerable Abbot of Celles, and so many other learned men, who had no difficulty in affirming that the intercession of Mary is not only useful but necessary. This same author says that the proposition that God grants no grace otherwise than through Mary is hyperbolic and exaggerated, having dropped from the lips of some Saints in the heat of fervour, but which, correctly speaking, is only to be understood as meaning that through Mary we received Jesus Christ, by whose merits we obtain all graces; for he adds: "To believe that God can grant us no graces without the intercession of Mary would be contrary to the Faith and the doctrine of St. Paul, who says that we acknowledge *there is one God and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus* (1 Tim. ii. 5).

* This was the celebrated Muratori. -- ED.

But with his leave, and going upon his own admissions, *mediation of justice* by way of merit is one thing, and *mediation by grace* by way of prayer is another. And again, it is one thing to

say that God *cannot*, and another that He *will not*, grant graces without the intercession of Mary. We willingly admit that God is the Source of every good, and the absolute Master of all graces; and that Mary is only a pure creature, who receives whatever she obtains as a pure favour from God. But who can ever deny that it is most reasonable and proper to assert that God, in order to exalt this great creature, who more than all others honoured and loved Him during her life, and whom, moreover, He had chosen to be the Mother of His Son, our common Redeemer, wills that all graces that are granted to those whom He has redeemed should pass through and be dispensed by the hands of Mary? We most readily admit that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator of justice, according to the distinction just made, and that by His merits He obtains us all graces and salvation; but we say that Mary is the Mediatrix of grace; and that receiving all she obtains through Jesus Christ, and because she prays and asks for it in the Name of Jesus Christ, yet all the same whatever graces we receive come to us through her intercession.

There is certainly nothing contrary to Faith in this, but the reverse. It is quite in accordance with the sentiments of the Church, which, in its public and approved prayers, teaches us continually to have recourse to this Divine Mother, and to invoke her as the "health of the weak, the refuge of sinners, the help of Christians, and as our life and hope." In the Office appointed to be said on the Feasts of Mary, this same holy Church, applying the words of Ecclesiasticus to this Blessed Virgin, gives us to understand that in her we find all hope. *In me is all hope of life and of virtue!* (Ecclus. xxiv. 25). In Mary is every grace. *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth* (Ecclus. xxiv. 25). In Mary, finally, we find life and eternal salvation: *He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord* (Prov. viii. 35). And elsewhere: *They that work by me shall not sin; they that explain me shall have life everlasting* (Ecclus. xxiv. 30, 31). And surely such expressions as these sufficiently prove that we require the intercession of Mary.

Moreover, we are confirmed in this opinion by so many Theologians and Fathers, of whom it is certainly incorrect to say, as the above-named author does, that, in exalting Mary,

they spoke hyperbolically and allowed great exaggerations to fall from their lips. To exaggerate and speak hyperbolically is to exceed the limits of truth; and surely we cannot say that Saints who were animated by the Spirit of God, which is Truth itself, spoke thus. If I may be allowed to make a short digression and give my own sentiment, it is, that when an opinion tends in any way to the honour of the most Blessed Virgin, when it has some foundation, and is not repugnant to the Faith, nor to the decrees of the Church, nor to truth, the refusal to hold it, or to oppose it because the reverse *may* be true, shows little devotion to the Mother of God. Of the number of such as these I do not choose to be, nor do I wish my reader to be, but rather of the number of those who fully and firmly believe all that can without error be believed of the greatness of Mary, according to the Abbot Rupert, who, amongst the acts of homage most pleasing to this good Mother, places that of firmly believing all that redounds to her honour. If there was nothing else to take away our fear of exceeding in the praises of Mary, St. Augustine should suffice; for he declares that whatever we may say in praise of Mary is little in comparison with that which she deserves on account of her dignity of Mother of God; and, moreover, the Church says, in the Mass appointed for her Festivals: "Thou art happy, O sacred Virgin Mary, and most worthy of all praise."

But let us return to the point, and examine what the Saints say on the subject. St. Bernard says that "God has filled Mary with all graces, so that men may receive by her means, as by a channel, every good thing that comes to them." He says that "she is a full aqueduct, that others may receive of her plenitude." On this the Saint makes the following significant remark: "Before the birth of the Blessed Virgin, a constant flow of graces was wanting, because this aqueduct did not exist." But now that Mary has been given to the world, heavenly graces constantly flow through her on all.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

Pride was the cause of the sin of Adam, and, consequently, of the ruin of the human race. On this account Jesus Christ

came to repair this ruin by His own humiliation, not refusing to embrace the shame of all the insults His enemies offered Him, as He had Himself predicted by David: *Because for thy sake I have borne reproach, confusion hath covered my face* (Ps. lxxviii. 8). The whole life of our Redeemer was filled with shame and insults which He received from men; and He did not refuse to accept them, even to the extent of death itself, in order to deliver us from eternal shame: *Who, having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame* (Heb. xii. 2).

O God, who would not mourn for Jesus, and who would not love Him, if he would but consider what He suffered for the three hours during which His crucifixion lasted and in His agony upon the Cross? All His limbs were stricken and tormented, and one could not relieve the other. The afflicted Lord on that bed of pain could not move, being fastened with nails in His hands and feet; all His most sacred flesh was full of wounds, while the wounds of His hands and feet were most painful, and were compelled to sustain His whole body; so that wheresoever He rested upon that Cross, whether on His hands or His feet, there His pains increased. It may be truly said that in those three hours of agony Jesus suffered as many deaths as He passed moments upon the Cross. O innocent Lamb Who hast suffered such things for me, have mercy upon me! Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon me!

Yet these outward pains of the body were the least bitter; the inward pains of the soul were far greater. His blessed soul was all desolate, and deprived of every drop of consolation and sensible relief; all was weariness, sorrow, and affliction. This He uttered in the words: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* (Matt. xxvii. 46). Drowned in this sea of inward and outward grief, our Saviour, so worthy of our love, thought fit to end His life, as He had foretold by the mouth of David: *I am come into the depths of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me* (Ps. lxxviii. 3).

II.

Behold, at the very time that Jesus was in agony upon the Cross, and was drawing near to death, all they who stood near Him, priests, scribes, elders, and soldiers, never ceased adding to His pangs with insults and mockeries. St. Matthew writes: *They*

that passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads (Matt. xxvii. 39). This was already prophesied by David, when he wrote, speaking in the person of Christ: *All they that saw me reviled me, they spoke with their lips, and wagged their head* (Ps. xxi. 8).

They who passed before Him said: *Vah! Thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save thy own self; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross* (Matt. xxvii. 40). Thou hast boasted, they said, that Thou wouldst destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. Yet Jesus had not said that He could destroy the material temple and raise it again in three days; but He had said: *Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again* (Jo. ii. 19). With these words He indeed intended to express His own power; but He really (as Euthymius and others explain it) spoke allegorically, foretelling that, through the act of the Jews, His soul would be one day separated from His body, but that in three days it would rise again.

They said: *Save thyself*. O ungrateful men! If this great Son of God when He was made Man, had chosen to save Himself, He would not voluntarily have chosen death.

If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross (Matt. xxvii. 40); yet, if Jesus had come down, He would not have accomplished our Redemption by His death. We could not have been delivered from eternal death. "He would not come down," says St. Ambrose, "lest when He came down, I should die." Theophylact writes, that they who said this spoke by the instigation of the devil who sought to hinder our salvation which Jesus was about to accomplish by means of the Cross. And he adds that the Lord would not have ascended the Cross had He been willing to descend from it without accomplishing our Redemption. St. John Chrysostom also says that the Jews uttered this insult in order that Jesus might die insulted as an impostor in the sight of all men, and be proved unable to deliver Himself from the Cross, after He had boasted that He was the Son of God.

St. John Chrysostom remarks that the Jews ignorantly said: *If thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross*; for if Jesus had come down from the Cross before He had died, He would not have been that Son of God Who was promised, and Who was to save us by His death. On this account, says the Saint, He did not

come down from the Cross until He was dead, because He had come down from Heaven for the very purpose of giving His life for our salvation. St. Athanasius makes the same remark, saying that our Redeemer chose to be known as the true Son of God, not by coming down from the Cross, but by remaining upon it till He was dead. And thus it was foretold by the Prophets that our Redeemer must be crucified and die, as St. Paul wrote: *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written: Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree* (Gal. iii. 13).

Tuesday--Twelfth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

IX. - THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY INTO HEAVEN.

Consider how all the Saints in Paradise welcomed holy Mary on her entrance into Heaven, and saluted her as their Queen. And the Three Divine Persons, placing her throne on the right of that of Jesus, declared her Sovereign of Heaven and earth, and commanded the Angels and all creatures to acknowledge her as Queen and to serve and obey her.

I.

Consider how all the Saints then in Paradise welcomed holy Mary on her entrance into Heaven and saluted her as their Queen. All the holy Virgins came: *The daughters saw her, and declared her most blessed ... and they praised her* (Cant. vi. 8). "We," they said, "O most Blessed Lady, are also queens in this kingdom, but thou art our Queen; for thou wast the first to give us the great example of consecrating our virginity to God; we all bless and thank thee for it." Then came the holy Confessors to salute her as their mistress; who, by her holy life, had taught them so many beautiful virtues. The holy Martyrs also came to salute her as their Queen; for she, by her great constancy in the sorrows of her Son's Passion, had taught them, and also by her merits had obtained them strength, to lay down their lives for the Faith. St. James, the only one of the Apostles who was yet in Heaven, also came to thank her in the name of all the other Apostles for all the comfort and help she had afforded them while she was on earth. The Prophets next came to salute her, and said: "Ah,

Lady, thou wast the one foreshadowed in our prophecies." The holy Patriarchs then came and said: O Mary, it is thou who wast our hope; for thee it was that we sighed with such ardour and for so long a time." But amongst these latter came our First Parents, Adam and Eve, to thank her with the greatest affection. "Ah, beloved daughter," they said, "thou hast repaired the injury which we inflicted on the human race; thou hast obtained for the world that blessing which we lost by our crime; by thee we are saved, and for it be ever blessed."

St. Simeon then came to kiss her feet, and with joy reminded her of the day when he received the Infant Jesus from her hands. St. Zachary and St. Elizabeth also came, and again thanked her for that loving visit which, with so great humility and charity, she had paid them in their dwelling, and by which they had received such treasures of grace. St. John the Baptist came with still greater affection to thank her for having sanctified him by her voice. But how must her holy parents, St. Joachim and St. Anne, have spoken when they came to salute her! O God, with what tenderness must they have blessed her, saying: "Ah, beloved daughter, what a favour it was for us to have such a child! Be thou now our Queen; for thou art the Mother of our God, and as such we salute and worship thee."

II.

Who can ever form an idea of the affection with which her dear spouse, St. Joseph, came to salute her? Who can ever describe the joy which the holy Patriarch felt at seeing his spouse so triumphantly enter Heaven and made its Queen. With what tenderness must he have addressed her: "Ah, my Lady and spouse, how can I ever thank our God as I ought, for having made me thy spouse, thou who art His true Mother! Through thee I merited to assist on earth the childhood of the Eternal Word, to carry Him so often in my arms, and to receive so many special graces. Ever blessed be those moments which I spent in life in serving Jesus and thee, my holy spouse. Behold our Jesus! Let us rejoice that now He no longer lies on straw in a manger, as we saw Him at His birth in Bethlehem. He no longer lives poor and despised in a shop, as He once lived with us in Nazareth; He is no longer nailed to an infamous gibbet, as when He died in Jeru-

saalem for the salvation of the world; but He is seated at the right hand of His Father, as King and Lord of Heaven and earth. And now, O my Queen, we shall never more be separated from His feet; we shall there bless Him and love Him for all eternity."

All the Angels then came to salute her; and she, the great Queen, thanked all for the assistance they had given her on earth, and more especially she thanked the Archangel Gabriel, who was the happy ambassador, the bearer of all her glories, when he came to announce to her that she was the chosen Mother of God.

The humble and holy Virgin, then kneeling, adored the Divine Majesty, and all absorbed in the consciousness of her own nothingness, thanked God for all the graces bestowed upon her by His pure goodness, and especially for having made her the Mother of the Eternal Word. And then let him who can, comprehend with what love the Most Holy Trinity blessed her! Let him comprehend the welcome given to His daughter by the Eternal Father; to His Mother by the Son; to His spouse by the Holy Ghost. The Father crowned her by imparting His power to her; the Son, His wisdom; the Holy Ghost, His love. And the Three Divine Persons, placing her throne at the right of that of Jesus, declared her Sovereign of Heaven and earth; and commanded the Angels and all creatures to acknowledge her as their Queen, and as such to serve and obey her.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE SIGH, MOURNING AND WEEPING IN THIS VALLEY OF TEARS!

3.-THE NECESSITY OF MARY'S INTERCESSION FOR OUR SALVATION.

The devil, like Holofernes, who, in order to gain possession of the city of Bethulia, ordered the aqueducts to be destroyed, exerts himself to his utmost to destroy devotion to the Mother of God in souls; for if this channel of grace is closed, he easily gains possession of them. St. Bernard says: "See, O men, with what tender devotion our Lord wills that we should honour our Queen, by always having recourse to her protection; and by relying on it; for in Mary God has placed the plenitude of every good, so that henceforward we may know and acknowledge that

whatever hope, grace, or other advantage we possess, all comes from the hands of Mary." St. Antoninus says the same thing: "All graces that have ever been bestowed on men, all came through Mary." And on this account she is called the moon, according to the following remark of St. Bonaventure: "As the moon, which stands between the sun and the earth, transmits to this latter whatever it receives from the former, so does Mary pour out upon us who are in this world the heavenly graces that she receives from the Divine Sun of justice."

Again, the holy Church calls her "the happy gate of heaven"; for, as the same St. Bernard remarks: "As every mandate of grace that is sent by a king passes through the palace-gates, so does every grace that comes from Heaven to the world pass through the hands of Mary." St. Bonaventure says that Mary is called "the gate of Heaven, because no one can enter that blessed kingdom without passing through her."

An ancient author, probably St. Sophronius, in a sermon on the Assumption, published with the works of St. Jerome, says that the plenitude of grace which is in Jesus Christ came into Mary, though in a different way; meaning that it is our Lord, as the Head, from Whom the vital spirits (that is, Divine help to obtain eternal salvation), flow into us, who are the members of His mystical body; and that the same plenitude is in Mary, as in the neck, through which these vital spirits pass to the members. The same idea is confirmed by St. Bernardine of Sienna, who explains it more clearly, saying, "that all graces of the spiritual life that descend from Christ, their Head, to the faithful, who are His mystical body, are transmitted through the instrumentality of Mary." The same St. Bernardine endeavours to assign a reason for this when he says that "as God was pleased to dwell in the womb of this holy Virgin, she acquired, so to speak, a kind of jurisdiction over all graces; for when Jesus Christ issued forth from her most sacred womb, all the streams of Divine gifts flowed from her as from a celestial ocean." Elsewhere, repeating the same idea in more distinct terms, he asserts that "from the moment that this Virgin Mother conceived the Divine Word in her womb, she acquired a special jurisdiction, so to say, over all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, so that no creature has since received

any grace from God otherwise than through the hands of Mary."

Another author, in a commentary on a passage of Jeremias, in which the Prophet, speaking of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, and of Mary His Mother, says that *a woman shall compass a man* (Jer.xxxi. 22), remarks, that "as no line can be drawn from the centre of a circle without passing through the circumference, so no grace proceeds from Jesus, Who is the centre of every good thing, without passing through Mary, who compassed Him when she received Him into her womb."

St. Bernardine says that for this reason, "all gifts, all virtues, and all graces are dispensed by the hands of Mary to whomsoever, whensoever, and, as she pleases." Richard of St. Laurence also asserts that, "God wills that whatever good things He bestows on His creatures should pass through the hands of Mary." And therefore the Venerable Abbot of Celles exhorts all to have recourse to this "treasury of graces," as he calls her, for the world and the whole human race have to receive every good that can be hoped for through her alone. "Address yourselves to the Blessed Virgin," he says; "for by her, and in her, and with her, and from her, the world receives, and is to receive, every good."

It must now be evident to all that when these Saints and authors tell us in such terms that all graces come to us through Mary, they do not simply mean to say that we "received Jesus Christ, the source of every good, through Mary," as the before-named writer pretends; but that they assure us that God, Who gave us Jesus Christ, wills that all graces that have been, that are, and will be dispensed to men to the end of the world through the merits of Christ, should be dispensed by the hands and through the intercession of Mary.

And thus Father Suarez concludes that it is the sentiment of the universal Church that, "the intercession and prayers of Mary are, above those of all others, not only useful, but necessary." Necessary, in accordance with what we have already said, not with an absolute necessity; for the mediation of Jesus Christ alone is absolutely necessary; but with a moral necessity; for the Church believes with St. Bernard that God has determined that no grace shall be granted otherwise than by the hands of Mary. "God wills," says the Saint, "that we should have nothing that has

not passed through the hands of Mary"; and before St. Bernard, St. Ildephonsus asserted the same thing, addressing the Blessed Virgin in the following terms: "O Mary, God has decided on committing all good gifts that He has provided for men to thy hands, and therefore He has entrusted all treasures and riches of grace to thee." And therefore St. Peter Damian remarks that, "God would not become man without the consent of Mary; in the first place, that we might feel ourselves under great obligations to her; and in the second, that we might understand that the salvation of all is left to the care of this Blessed Virgin."

St. Bonaventure, on the words of the Prophet Isaias, *And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root, and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him* (Is. xi. 1, 2), makes a beautiful remark, saying: "Whoever desires the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit, let him seek for the flower of the Holy Ghost in the rod." That is, for Jesus in Mary; "For by the rod we find the flower, and by the flower, God." And in the twelfth chapter of the same work, he adds: "If you desire to possess this flower, bend down the rod, which bears the flower, by prayer; and so you will obtain it." The seraphical Father, in his sermon for the Epiphany, on the words of St. Matthew, *They found the child with Mary his mother* (Matt. ii. 11), reminds us that if we wish to find Jesus we must go to Mary. We may, then, conclude, that in vain shall we seek for Jesus unless we endeavour to find Him with Mary. And so St. Ildephonsus says, "I desire to be the servant of the Son; because no one will ever be so without serving the Mother, for this reason I desire the servitude of Mary."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

St. Matthew goes on to relate other insults which the Jews offered Jesus Christ: *He saved others, himself he cannot save* (Matt. xxvii. 42).

Thus they treated Him as an impostor, by referring to the miracles wrought by Him in the restoration of the dead to life, and by treating Him as one Who was unable to save His own life.

St. Leo replies that this was not the proper hour for Jesus to display His Divine power; and that He would not hinder the Redemption of man in order to confound their blasphemies.

St. Gregory also suggests a motive why Jesus would not descend from the Cross: "If He had then come down, He would not have shown to us the virtue of patience." Of course Jesus Christ could deliver Himself from the Cross and from these insults; yet this was not the time to display His power, but rather to teach us patience in our toils, in order that we may fulfil the Divine pleasure; and therefore Jesus would not deliver Himself from death before He had fulfilled His Father's will, that we might not be deprived of this great example of patience. "Because He taught patience, He laid aside His power," says St. Augustine.

II.

The patience Jesus Christ exercised in enduring the shame of all the insults offered Him by the Jews obtained for us grace to endure with patience and peace of mind all the humiliations and persecutions of the world. Therefore St. Paul, speaking of the journey of Jesus Christ to Calvary when He carried the Cross, thus exhorts us to accompany Him: *Let us, therefore, go forth to meet him without the camp, bearing his reproach* (Heb. xiii. 13). The Saints, when they received injuries, did not think of revenging themselves, nor were they disturbed; they were even comforted at seeing themselves despised, as Jesus Christ was despised. Therefore let us not hesitate to embrace, for the love of Jesus Christ, the very insults that were offered to Him, since Jesus Christ suffered those insults for love of us.

O my Redeemer, for the time past I have not done this. For the future I desire to suffer everything for love of Thee: give me strength to put my desires into execution.

Wednesday--Twelfth Week after Pentecost **Morning Meditation**

X. - THE GLORY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN HEAVEN.

Let us consider how exalted was the throne to which our Lady was raised in Heaven. "If the mind of man," says St. Ber-

nard, "can never comprehend the immense glory prepared by God in Heaven for those who love Him, as St. Paul assures us, who then can ever comprehend the glory God prepared for His beloved Mother!"

I.

Let us consider how exalted was the throne to which our Lady was raised in Heaven.

"If the mind of man," says St. Bernard, "can never comprehend the immense glory prepared in Heaven by God for those who on earth have loved Him, as the Apostle tells us, who can ever comprehend the glory God prepared for His beloved Mother, who, more than all men, loved Him on earth; nay, even from the very first moment of her creation, loved Him more than all men and Angels united? Rightly, then, does the Church sing that Mary, having loved God more than all the Angels, "the Mother of God has been exalted above them all in the heavenly kingdom." *Exaltata est sancta Dei Genitrix super choros Angelorum ad coelestia regna*. Yes, she was exalted, says the abbot Gueric, above the Angels; so that she sees none above her but her Son, Who is the only-begotten of the Father.

Hence it is that the learned Gerson asserts that, as all the orders of Angels and Saints are divided into three Hierarchies, so does Mary of herself constitute a Hierarchy apart, the sublimest of all, and next to that of God. And, says St. Antoninus, as the mistress is, without comparison, above her servants, so is "Mary, who is the sovereign Lady of the Angels, exalted incomparably above the angelic hierarchies." To understand this, we need only know what David said: *The Queen stood on thy right hand* (Ps. xlv. 10). And as an ancient author says, these words are explained as meaning that "Mary is placed at the right hand of God."

II.

It is certain, as St. Ildephonsus says, that Mary's good works incomparably surpassed in merit those of all the Saints, and therefore her reward must have surpassed theirs in the same proportion; for "as that which she bore was incomprehensible, so is the reward which she merited and received incomprehensibly greater than that of all the Saints." And since it is certain that God rewards according to merit, as the Apostle writes, *who will*

render to every man according to his works (Rom. ii. 6), it is also certain, as St. Thomas teaches, that the Blessed Virgin, "who was equal to and even superior in merit to all men and Angels, was exalted above all the celestial orders." "In fine," adds St. Bernard, "let us measure the singular grace that she acquired on earth, and then we may measure the singular glory which she obtained in Heaven"; for, "according to the measure of her grace on earth is the measure of her glory in the kingdom of the Blessed."

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE SIGH, MOURNING AND WEEPING IN THIS VALLEY OF TEARS

4.-THE NECESSITY OF MARY'S INTERCESSION FOR OUR SALVATION.

St. Bernard say that "as a man and a woman co-operated in our ruin, so it was proper that another man and another woman should co-operate in our Redemption, and these two were Jesus and His Mother Mary." "There is no doubt," says the Saint, "that Jesus Christ alone was more than sufficient to redeem us; but it was more becoming that both sexes should co-operate in the reparation of an evil in causing which both had shared." Hence Blessed Albert the Great calls Mary, the "helper of the redemption": and the Blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Bridget, that "as Adam and Eve sold the world for an apple, so did she with her Son redeem it as it were with one heart." This is confirmed by St. Anselm, who says that "although God could create the world out of nothing, yet, when it was lost by sin, he would not repair the evil without the co-operation of Mary."

Suarez says that "Mary co-operated in our salvation in three ways; first, by having merited, by a merit of congruity, the Incarnation of the Word; secondly, by having continually prayed for us whilst she was living in this world; thirdly, by having willingly sacrificed the life of her Son to God." For this reason our Lord has justly decreed, that, as Mary co-operated in the salvation of man with so much love, and at the same time gave such glory to God, so all men through her intercession are to obtain their salvation.

Mary is called "the co-operator in our justification"; for to her God has entrusted all graces intended for us; and therefore

St. Bernard affirms that "all men, past, present, and to come, should look upon Mary as the means and negotiator of the salvation of all generations."

Jesus Christ says that no one can find Him unless the Eternal Father first draws him by the means of Divine grace: *No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him* (Jo. vi. 44). Thus also does Jesus Christ address His Mother, says Richard of St. Laurence: "No one comes to Me unless My Mother first of all draw him by her prayers." Jesus was the fruit of Mary, as St. Elizabeth told her: *Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb* (Luke i. 42). Whoever, therefore, desires the fruit must go to the tree; whoever desires Jesus must go to Mary; and whoever finds Mary will most certainly find Jesus.

When St. Elizabeth saw that the most Blessed Virgin had come to visit her in her own house, not knowing how to thank her, and filled with humility, she exclaimed: *And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?* (Luke i. 43). But, we may ask, how could this be? Did not St. Elizabeth already know that not only Mary, but also Jesus, had entered her house? Why then does she say that she is unworthy to receive the Mother, and not, rather, that she is unworthy to receive the Son, Who had come to visit her? Ah, yes, it was because the Saint knew full well that when Mary comes she brings Jesus, and therefore it was sufficient to thank the Mother without naming the Son.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST I.

The Jews, not satisfied with the injuries and blasphemies they had offered to Jesus Christ, reproached Him with the Name of His Father, saying: *He trusted in God, let him now deliver him, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God* (Matt. xxvii. 43). This sacrilegious expression of the Jews was already foretold by David, when he said in the Name of Christ: *All they that saw me laughed me to scorn ... saying: He trusted in God, let him deliver him, let him save him, seeing he delighted in him* (Ps. xxi. 8, 9). These very men who thus spoke were called bulls, dogs, and lions by David in the same Psalm: *Fat bulls have besieged me ... Many dogs have encompassed me ... Save me from the mouth of the lion* (Ps. xxi.). Thus,

when the Jews said: *Let him now deliver him if he will have him* (Matt. xxvii. 43), they truly showed that they were these bulls, dogs, and lions foretold by David.

These very same blasphemies, which were one day to be spoken against the Saviour and against God, were already foretold by the Wise Man with even more exactness: *He boasteth that he hath the knowledge of God, and calleth himself the son of God ... He glorieth that he hath God for his father ... If he be the true son of God he will befriend him and will deliver him from the hands of his enemies ... Let us examine him, by outrages and tortures that we may know his meekness and try his patience. Let us condemn him to a most shameful death* (Wis. ii. 13-20).

The chief priests were stirred up by envy and hatred against Jesus Christ thus to insult Him; but, at the same time, they were not exempt from the fear of some great punishment, as they could not deny the miracles wrought by our Lord. Wherefore all the priests and chiefs of the Synagogue continued disturbed and in terror, and therefore desired to be present at His death, in order to be freed from this fear which tormented them. Seeing Him then fastened upon the Cross, and that He was not delivered from it by His Father, they proceeded with increased audacity to taunt Him with His helplessness and His saying He was the Son of God. They said: "He gloried that He had God for His Father; why, then, does not God deliver Him if He loves Him as His Son?" But these malicious men were in grievous error, for God did truly love Jesus Christ, and loved Him as His Son; and He loved Him on this very account, that Jesus was sacrificing His life upon the Cross for the salvation of men, in order to obey His Father. This Jesus Himself had said: *I lay down my life for my sheep ... therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life* (Jo. x. 15, 17). The Father had already destined Him to be the victim of this great sacrifice which would bring Him infinite glory -- the Sacrifice of the God-man Himself -- and which would ensure the salvation of all men; but if the Father had delivered Him from death, the sacrifice would have been imperfect, and then the Father would have been deprived of that glory, while men would have been deprived of their salvation.

II.

Tertullian writes that all the insults that were offered to Jesus Christ were a secret remedy for our pride; for these injuries, which were unjust, and undeserved, were nevertheless necessary for our salvation, and becoming a God Who chose to suffer so much to save man. And then, speaking of the reproaches laid against Jesus, he adds: "Of Him they were unworthy, but to us they were necessary, and, for that reason, they were worthy of God, because nothing is so worthy of God as the salvation of man."

Let us, therefore, who glory in being disciples of Jesus Christ, be ashamed of angrily resenting the injuries we receive from men, because the God Who made us, suffered the same for our salvation with so much patience. And let us not be ashamed of imitating Jesus Christ in pardoning those who offend us, for He Himself declares, in the Day of Judgment He will be ashamed of those who in this life have been ashamed of Him.

O my Jesus, how can I grieve over any insults I may receive, who have so often deserved to be trodden under foot by the devils in hell! Oh, by the merit of all the insults which Thou didst suffer in Thy Passion, give me grace to suffer with patience all the insults which may be offered to me, through love of Thee, Who hast embraced so many for love of me. I love Thee above all things, and desire to suffer for Thee, Who hast suffered so much for me. I hope for everything from Thee, Who hast bought me with Thy Blood. And I also hope in thy intercession, O my Mother Mary.

Thursday--Twelfth Week after Pentecost **Morning Meditation**

XI. - THE GLORY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN HEAVEN.

"As the splendour of the sun exceeds that of all the stars united," says St. Basil of Seleucia, "so does Mary's glory surpass that of all the Blessed in Heaven." The greatest glory of the Blessed is, after the vision of God, the presence of Heaven's most beautiful Queen.

I.

"As the splendour of the sun exceeds that of all the stars united," says St. Basil of Seleucia, "so does Mary's glory exceed that of all the blessed." St. Peter Damian adds, that "as the light of the moon and stars is so entirely eclipsed on the appearance of the sun, that it is as if it was not, so also does Mary's glory so far exceed the splendour of all men and Angels that, so to say, they do not appear in Heaven." Hence St. Bernardine of Sienna asserts, with St. Bernard, that the Blessed participate in part in the Divine glory; but that the Blessed Virgin has been, in a certain way, so greatly enriched with it, that it would seem that no creature could be more closely united with God than Mary is: "She has penetrated into the bottom of the deep, and seems immersed as deeply as it is possible for a creature in that inaccessible light." Blessed Albert the Great confirms this, saying that our Queen "contemplates the Majesty of God in incomparably closer proximity than all other creatures." St. Bernardine of Sienna, moreover, says that as the various planets are illumined by the sun, so all the Blessed receive light and an increase of happiness from the sight of Mary." And in another place he also asserts that when the glorious Virgin Mother of God ascended to Heaven, she augmented the joy of all its inhabitants. For the same reason St. Peter Damian says that the greatest glory of the Blessed in Heaven is, after the vision of God, the presence of this most beautiful Queen. And St. Bonaventure says that, "after God, our greatest glory and our greatest joy is Mary."

O great, exalted, and most glorious Lady, prostrate at the foot of thy throne we worship thee from this valley of tears. We rejoice at the immense glory with which our Lord has enriched thee; and now that thou art enthroned as Queen of Heaven and earth, ah, forget not us, thy poor servants. Disdain not, from the high throne on which thou reignest, to cast thine eyes of mercy on us miserable creatures. The nearer thou art to the source of graces, in the greater abundance canst thou procure those graces for us. In Heaven thou seest more plainly our miseries; hence thou must compassionate and succour us the more. Make us thy faithful servants on earth, that thus we may one day bless thee in Heaven.

II.

Let us, then, rejoice with Mary that God has exalted her to so high a throne in Heaven. Let us also rejoice on our own account; for though our Mother is no longer present with us on earth, having ascended in glory to Heaven, yet in affection she is always with us. Nay, even being there nearer to God, she better knows our miseries; and her pity for us is greater, while she is better able to help us. "Is it possible, O Blessed Virgin," asks St. Peter Damian, "because thou art so greatly exalted, thou hast forgotten us in our miseries? Ah, no, God forbid that we should have such a thought! So compassionate a heart cannot but pity our so great miseries." "If Mary's compassion for the miserable," says St. Bonaventure, "was great when she lived upon earth, it is far greater now that she reigns in Heaven."

Let us dedicate ourselves to the service of this Queen, to honour and love her as much as we can; for, as Richard of St. Laurence remarks, "she is not like other rulers, who oppress their vassals with burdens and taxes; but she enriches her servants with graces, merits and rewards." Let us also entreat her in the words of the Abbot Guerric: "O Mother of mercy, thou who, sittest on so lofty a throne and so near to God, satiate thyself with the glory of thy Jesus, and send us, thy servants, the fragments that are left. Thou dost now enjoy the heavenly banquet of thy Lord; and we, who are still on earth, as dogs under the table, ask thy mercy."

On thy Assumption into Heaven, O Mary, when thou wast made Queen of the universe, we also consecrate ourselves to thy service. In the midst of thy so great joy console us also by accepting us as thy servants. Thou art, then, our Mother. Ah, most sweet Mother, most amiable Mother, thine altars are surrounded by many people: some ask to be cured of sickness, some to be relieved in their necessities, some for an abundant harvest, and some for success in litigation. We ask thee for graces more pleasing to thy heart; obtain for us that we may be humble, detached from the world, resigned to the Divine will; obtain for us the holy fear of God, a good death, and Paradise. O Lady, change us from sinners into saints; work this miracle, which will redound more to thy honour than if thou didst restore sight to a thousand

blind persons, or didst raise a thousand from the dead. Thou art all-powerful with God, for we know that thou art His Mother, His beloved one, His most dear one, filled with His grace. What can He ever deny thee? O most beautiful Queen, we have no claim that thou shouldst show thyself to us here on earth, but we do desire to go to see thee in Paradise; and it is thou who must obtain us this grace. For it we hope with confidence. Amen, amen.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE SIGH, MOURNING AND WEEPING IN THIS VALLEY OF TEARS!

5.-THE NECESSITY OF MARY'S INTERCESSION FOR OUR SALVATION.

She is like the merchant's ship, she bringeth her bread from afar (Prov. xxxi. 14). Mary was this fortunate ship that brought us Jesus Christ from Heaven, Who is the Living Bread that comes down from Heaven to give us eternal life, as He Himself says: *I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever* (Jo. vi. 51, 52). And hence Richard of St. Laurence says that "in the sea of this world all will be lost who are not received into this ship; that is to say, all who are not protected by Mary"; and therefore he adds: "As often as we see ourselves in danger of perishing in the midst of the temptations and contending passions of this life, let us have recourse to Mary, and cry out quickly: *O Lady, save us, we perish!*"

Remark that this writer does not scruple to address these words to Mary: "*Save us, we perish!*" as does a certain author already noticed, who asserts that we cannot ask Mary to save us, as this belongs to God alone. But since a culprit condemned to death can beg a royal favourite to save him by interceding with the king that his life may be spared, why cannot we ask the Mother of God to save us by obtaining us eternal life? St. John Damascene scrupled not to address her in these words: "Pure and immaculate Virgin, save me, and deliver me from eternal damnation." St. Bonaventure called Mary "the salvation of those who invoked her." The holy Church approves of the invocation by also calling her the "salvation of the weak." And shall we scruple to ask her to save us, when "the way of salvation is open

to none otherwise than through Mary," as a certain author remarks? And before him St. Germanus had said the same thing, speaking of Mary: "No one is saved but through thee."

But let us now see what else the Saints say of the need in which we are of the intercession of the Divine Mother. The glorious St. Cajetan used to say that we may seek for graces, but shall never find them without the intercession of Mary. This is confirmed by St. Antoninus, who thus beautifully expresses himself: "Whoever asks and expects to obtain graces without the intercession of Mary endeavours to fly without wings"; for, as Pharaoh said to Joseph: *the land of Egypt is in thy hands*, and directed all who came to him for food to go to Joseph: *Go to Joseph* (Gen. xli. 55); so does God send us to Mary when we seek for grace: "Go to Mary"; for He has decreed," says St. Bernard, "that He will grant no graces otherwise than by the hands of Mary." "And thus," says Richard of St. Laurence, "our salvation is in the hands of Mary; so that we Christians may with much greater reason say to Mary than the Egyptians to Joseph: *Our life is in thy hands* (Gen. 25). The venerable Raymond Jordano speaks in the same way of Mary: "Our salvation is in her hands." Cassian speaks in still stronger terms. He says absolutely, that "the salvation of all depends on their being favoured and protected by Mary." He who is protected by Mary will be saved; he who is not, will be lost. St. Bernardine of Sienna thus addresses this Blessed Virgin: "O Lady, since thou art the dispenser of all graces, and since the grace of salvation can only come through thy hands, our salvation depends on thee."

Therefore Richard of St. Laurence had good reason for saying that, "as we should fall into the abyss if the ground were withdrawn from under our feet, so does a soul deprived of the succour of Mary first fall into sin, and then into hell." St. Bonaventure says that "God will not save us without the intercession of Mary." And that "as a child cannot live without a nurse to suckle it, so no one can be saved without the protection of Mary." Therefore he exhorts us "to thirst after devotion to her, to preserve it with care, and never to abandon it until we have received her maternal blessing in Heaven." "And whoever," exclaims St. Germanus, "could know God, were it not for

thee, O most holy Mary? Who could be saved? Who would be preserved from dangers? Who would receive any grace, were it not for thee, O Mother of God, O full of grace?" These are his own beautiful words: "There is no one, O most holy Mary, who can know God but through thee! No one who can be saved or redeemed but through thee, O Mother of God! No one who can be delivered from dangers but through thee, O Virgin Mother! No one who obtains mercy but through thee, O thou who art filled with all grace!" And in another place, addressing her, he says, "No one would be free from the effects of the concupiscence of the flesh and from sin, unless thou didst open the way to him."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST
THE SOLEMN WORDS OF JESUS ON THE CROSS.

I.

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do! (Luke xxiii. 34).

O loving tenderness of Jesus towards men! St. Augustine says that when the Saviour was injured by His enemies, He besought pardon for them; for He thought, not so much of the injuries He received from them, and the death they inflicted upon Him, as upon the love which brought Him to die for them.

But some ask: Why did Jesus pray to the Father to pardon them, when He Himself could have forgiven their crimes? St. Bernard replies that He prayed to the Father, not because He could not Himself forgive them, but that He might teach us to pray for them that persecute us. The holy abbot says also in another place: "O wonderful thing! He cries: *Forgive!* They cry: *Crucify!*" Arnold of Chartres remarks that while Jesus was labouring to save the Jews, they were labouring to destroy themselves; but the love of the Son had more power with God than the blindness of that ungrateful people. St. Cyprian writes: "Even he who sheds the Blood of Christ is made to live by the Blood of Christ." Jesus Christ, in dying, had so great a desire to save all men, that He made even those enemies who shed His Blood with torments partakers of that Blood. Look, says St. Augustine, at thy God upon His Cross; see how He prays for them that crucify Him; and then deny pardon to thy brother who has offended thee!

II.

St. Leo says that it was through this prayer of Christ that so many thousands of Jews were converted by the preaching of St. Paul, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles. And St. Jerome says that God did not will that the prayer of Jesus Christ should continue without effect, and therefore at the very time He caused many of the Jews to embrace the Faith. But why were they not all converted? I reply that the prayer of Jesus Christ was conditional, and that they who were converted were not of the number of those of whom it was said, *You always resist the Holy Ghost* (Acts vii. 51).

In this prayer Jesus Christ included all sinners, so that we all may say to God:

O Eternal Father, hear the prayer of Thy beloved Son, Who prayed to Thee to pardon us. We deserve not this pardon, but Jesus Christ has merited it, Who by His death has more than abundantly satisfied for our sins. No, my God, I will not be obstinate like the Jews; I repent, O my Father, with all my heart, for having offended Thee, and through the merits of Jesus Christ I ask for pardon. And Thou, O my Jesus, Thou dost know that I am poor and sick, and lost through my sins; but Thou didst come from Heaven on purpose to heal the sick and to save the lost who repent of having offended Thee. The Prophet Isaias said Thou wouldst *heal the contrite of heart* (Is. lxi. 1). And of Thee St. Matthew writes: *The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost* (Matt. xviii. 11).

Friday--Twelfth Week after Pentecost

(First Friday of September)

Morning Meditation

THE COMPASSIONATE HEART OF JESUS.

O my Jesus, Thou dost pardon penitent sinners, and Thou dost not refuse to give them in this world everything in Holy Communion, and in the next world everything in eternal glory. Where, then, is a heart to be found so amiable and so compassionate as Thine, O my dearest Saviour?

I.

Where shall we find a heart more compassionate or tender

than the Heart of Jesus, or one that has greater pity for our miseries?

This pity induced Him to descend from Heaven to this earth; it made Him say that He was that Good Shepherd Who came to give His life to save His sheep. In order to obtain the pardon of our sins, He would not spare Himself, but would sacrifice Himself on the Cross, that by His sufferings He might satisfy for the punishment due to us. This pity and compassion makes Him say even now: *Why will ye die, O house of Israel? Return ye and live* (Ezech. xviii. 31, 32). O men, He says, my poor children, why will you damn yourselves by flying from Me? Do you not see that by separating yourselves from Me you are hastening to eternal death? I desire not to see you lost; do not despair; as long as you wish to return, return and you shall recover your life: *Return ye and live*.

O compassionate Heart of my Jesus, have pity on me. Most sweet Jesus, have mercy on me. I say now, and beseech Thee to give me the grace always to say to Thee; "Most sweet Jesus, have mercy on me!" Even before I offended Thee, my Redeemer, I certainly did not deserve any of the favours Thou hast bestowed upon me. Thou hast created me, Thou hast given me so much light and knowledge; and all without any merit of mine. But after I had offended Thee, I not only did not deserve Thy favour, but I deserved to be forsaken by Thee and cast into hell. Thy compassion has made Thee wait for me and preserve my life even when I had offended Thee. Thy compassion has enlightened me and offered me pardon; it has given me sorrow for my sins, and the desire of loving Thee; and now I hope from Thy mercy to remain always in Thy grace.

II.

This compassion even makes Jesus say that He is that loving Father Who, though He sees Himself despised by His son, yet, if the son returns a penitent, He cannot reject him, but embraces him tenderly and forgets all the injuries He has received: *I will not remember all his iniquities* (Ezech. xviii. 22). It is not thus that men behave; for though they may forgive, yet they nevertheless retain the remembrance of the offence received, and feel inclined to revenge themselves; and even if they do not revenge them-

selves, because they fear God, at least they always feel a very great repugnance to converse or entertain themselves with those persons who have injured them.

O my Jesus, Thou dost pardon penitent sinners, and dost not refuse in this world to give them everything in Holy Communion during their life, and everything in the other world in eternal glory, without retaining the slightest repugnance towards being united for ever to the soul that offended Thee so often. Where, therefore, is to be found a Heart so amiable and compassionate as Thine, O my dearest Saviour?

O my Jesus, cease not to show Thy compassion towards me. The mercy which I would implore of Thee is that Thou wouldst grant me light and strength to be no longer ungrateful towards Thee. No, O my Love, I do not expect that Thou shouldst again forgive me if I again turn my back against Thee; this would be presumption, and would prevent Thee from showing mercy to me any more. For what pity, O Jesus, could I expect from Thee if I were so ungrateful as to despise Thy friendship again, and to separate myself from Thee. No, my Jesus, I love Thee and I will always love Thee; and this is the mercy which I hope for and seek from Thee: "Permit me not to be separated from Thee! Permit me not to be separated from Thee!"

And I beseech thee, also, O Mary, my Mother, permit me not to be ever again separated from my God.

Spiritual Reading

THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST

His father saw him and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him.

What sinner can be so hardened as not to go instantly and cast himself at the feet of his Saviour, when he knows the tender compassion with which Jesus Christ is prepared to embrace him, and carry him on His shoulders, as soon as he repents of his sins?

The Lord has also declared His tenderness towards penitent sinners in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. In that Parable the Son of God says that a certain young man, unwilling to be any longer under the control of his father, and desiring to live according to his caprice and corrupt inclinations, asked the por-

tion of his father's substance which fell to him. The father gave it with sorrow, weeping over the ruin of his son. The son departed from his father's house. Having in a short time squandered his substance, he was reduced to such a degree of misery that, to procure the necessities of life he was obliged to become a swineherd. All this is a figure of the sinner, who, after departing from God, and losing Divine grace and all the merits he has acquired, leads a life of misery under the slavery of the devil. In the Gospel it is added that the young man, seeing his wretched condition, resolved to return to his father; and the father, who is a figure of Jesus Christ, seeing his son return to him, was instantly moved to pity. *His father saw him, and was moved with compassion* (Luke xv. 20); and, instead of driving him away, as the ungrateful son had deserved, *running to him, he fell upon his neck and kissed him*. He ran with open arms to meet him, and, through tenderness, fell upon his neck, and consoled him by his embraces. He then said to his servants: *Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him*. According to St. Jerome and St. Augustine, the first robe signifies Divine grace, which, in addition to new celestial gifts, God, by granting pardon, gives to the penitent sinner. *And put a ring on his hand*. By recovering the grace of God, the soul becomes again the spouse of Jesus Christ. *And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry*. Bring hither the fatted calf -- which signifies the Holy Communion, or Jesus in the holy sacrament mystically killed and offered in sacrifice on the altar; let us eat and rejoice. But why, O Divine Father, so much joy at the return of so ungrateful a child? *Because*, answered the Father, *this my son was dead, and he is come to life again, was lost and is found* (Luke xv.).

This compassion of Jesus Christ was experienced by the sinful woman who cast herself at the feet of Jesus, and washed them with her tears. The Lord, turning to her with sweetness, consoled her by saying: *Thy sins are forgiven ... thy faith hath made thee safe; go in peace* (Luke vii. 48, 50). Child, thy sins are pardoned; thy confidence in Me has saved thee; go in peace! The tender compassion of Jesus Christ was experienced also by the man who was ailing for thirty-eight years, and who was infirm both in body and soul. The Lord cured his malady, and pardoned his

sins. *Behold*, says Jesus to him, *thou art made whole; sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee*. The tenderness of the Redeemer was also felt by the leper who said to Jesus Christ: *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*. Jesus answered: *I will: be thou made clean*. As if He said: Yes, I will that thou be made clean; for I have come down from Heaven for the purpose of consoling all. Be healed, then, according to thy desire. *And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed* (Matt. viii. 2-3).

We have also a proof of the tender compassion of the Son of God for sinners in His conduct towards the woman taken in adultery. The scribes and pharisees brought her before Jesus and said: *This woman was even now taken in adultery. Now Moses, in the law, commands us to stone such a one. But what sayest thou?* And this they did, as St. John says, tempting Him. They intended to accuse Him of transgressing the law of Moses, if He said that she ought to be liberated; and they expected to destroy His character for meekness, if He said that she should be stoned, says St. Augustine. But what was the answer of our Lord? He neither said that she should be stoned nor dismissed: *but, bowing himself down, he wrote with his finger on the ground*. The interpreters say that, probably, what He wrote on the ground was a text of Scripture admonishing the accusers of their own sins, which were, perhaps, greater than that of the woman charged with adultery. He then lifted himself up, and said to them: *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her*. The scribes and pharisees went away one by one, and the woman stood there alone. Jesus Christ, turning to her, said: *Hath no man condemned thee? Who said: No man, Lord. And Jesus said: Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more* (Jo. viii. 3-11). Since no one has condemned you, fear not that you shall be condemned by Me, Who have come on earth, not to condemn, but to pardon and save sinners. Go in peace, and sin no more.

Jesus Christ has come, not to condemn, but to deliver sinners from hell, as soon as they resolve to amend their lives. And when He sees them obstinately bent on their own perdition, He addresses them with tears, in the words of Ezechiel: *Why will you die, O house of Israel?* (Ezech. xviii. 31). My children, why will you die? Why do you voluntarily rush into hell, when I have come

from Heaven to deliver you from it by death? You are already dead to the grace of God. But I will not your death: return to Me, and I will restore to you the life you have lost. *For I desire not the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: return ye and live* (Ezech. xviii. 32). But some sinners, who are immersed in the abyss of sin, may say: Perhaps, if we return to Jesus Christ, He will drive us away. No; for the Redeemer has said: *And him that cometh to me I will not cast out* (Jo. vi. 37). No one that comes to me with sorrow for his past sins, however manifold and enormous they may have been, shall be rejected.

Behold how, in another place, the Redeemer encourages us to throw ourselves at His feet with the certain hope of consolation and pardon. *Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you* (Matt. xi. 28). Come to Me, all ye poor sinners, who labour for your own damnation, and groan under the weight of your crimes; come, and I will deliver you from all your troubles. Again God speaks: *Come and accuse me, saith the Lord; if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool* (Is. i. 18). Come with sorrow for the offences you committed against Me, and if I do not give you pardon, accuse Me. As if He said: Upbraid Me; rebuke Me as untruthful; for I promise that, though your sins were of scarlet -- that is, of the most horrid enormity -- your soul, by My Blood, in which I shall wash it, will become white and beautiful as snow.

Let us, then, O sinners, return at once to Jesus Christ. Let us immediately return, before death overtakes us in sin and sends us to hell, where the mercies and graces of the Lord shall, if we do not amend, be so many swords to lacerate the heart for all eternity.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise!

St. Luke writes that of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus Christ, one continued obstinate, the other was converted; who seeing his miserable companion blaspheming Jesus Christ: *If thou art the Christ, save thyself and us*, turned and

reproved him, saying that they were deservedly punished, but that Jesus was innocent. Then he turned to Jesus Himself and said: *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*; by which words he recognised Jesus Christ as his true Lord and the King of Heaven. Jesus then promised him Paradise on that very day: *Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise* (Luke xxiii. 39-43). A learned author writes that, in conformity with this promise, the Lord, on that very day, immediately after His death, showed Himself openly, and rendered the repentant thief blessed, though He did not confer on him all the delight of Heaven before he entered there.

Arnold of Chartres, in his treatise on the Seven Words, remarks upon all the virtues which the good thief exercised at the time of his death: "He believed, he repented, he confessed, he preached, he loved, he trusted, he prayed."

He exercised Faith when he said, *When thou comest into thy kingdom*; believing that Jesus Christ, after His death, would enter into His glorious kingdom. He believed, says St. Gregory, that He Whom he saw dying was about to reign.

He exercised penitence together with the confession of his sins, saying: *We indeed justly; for we received the due reward of our deeds*. St. Augustine observes that before his confession he had not boldness to hope for pardon; he did not dare to say *Remember me*, until, by the confession of his guilt, he had thrown off the burden of his sins. On this St. Athanasius exclaims: O blessed thief, thou hast stolen a kingdom by that confession!

II.

This holy penitent also exercised other noble virtues; he preached, declaring the innocence of Jesus Christ, *This man hath done no evil*. He exercised love of God, receiving death with resignation, as the punishment due to his sins, saying: *We receive the due reward of our deeds*. Hence St. Cyprian, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine do not scruple to call him a Martyr; and Silveira says that this happy thief was a true Martyr, as the executioners broke his legs with increased fury, because he had declared the innocence of Jesus; and that the Saint willingly accepted this torment for the love of his Lord.

Let us also in this circumstance remark the goodness of God,

Who always gives us more than we ask for, as St. Ambrose says: "The Lord always grants more than we ask; the thief prayed that Jesus would remember him, and Jesus said: *Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise.*" St. John Chrysostom further remarks that no one merited the possession of Paradise before this thief. Thus is confirmed what God said by Ezechiel, that, when the sinner heartily repents of his sins, God pardons him in the same way as if he had forgotten all the sins he had committed. And Isaias gives us to understand that God is so urgent for our good, that when we pray He instantly hears us. St. Augustine says that God is ever prepared to embrace penitent sinners.

And thus it was that the cross of the wicked thief, being endured with impatience, became to him a precipice leading to hell; while the cross endured with patience by the good thief became to him a ladder to Paradise. Happy wert thou, O holy thief, who hadst the fortune to unite thy death to the death of thy Saviour.

O my Jesus, henceforth I sacrifice to Thee my life, and I seek for grace to enable me, at the hour of my death, to unite the sacrifice of my life to that which Thou didst offer to God upon the Cross, and through which I hope to die in Thy grace, and, loving Thee with pure love stripped of every earthly affection, to attain to love Thee with all my powers through all eternity.

Saturday--Twelfth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE CLEMENCY AND COMPASSION OF MARY

"I am called the Mother of Mercy," said our Blessed Lady to St. Bridget, "and truly God's mercy hath made me thus merciful." "What, then," says St. Bernard, "can ever flow from a source of compassion but compassion itself?"

I.

St. Bernard, speaking of the great compassion of Mary, towards us poor creatures, says that "she is the land overflowing with milk and honey promised by God." Hence St. Leo observes that "the Blessed Virgin has so merciful a heart that she deserves not only to be called merciful, but to be styled *Mercy* itself." St. Bonaventure also, considering that Mary was made Mother of

God on account of the miserable, and that to her is committed the charge of dispensing mercy; and considering, moreover, the tender care she takes of all, and that her compassion is so great that she seems to have no other desire than that of relieving the needy; says, that when he looks at her, he seems no longer to see the justice of God, but only the Divine mercy, of which Mary is full. "O Lady, when I behold thee I can only discern mercy, for thou wast made Mother of God for the wretched, and then intrusted with their charge: thou art all solicitude for them; thou art walled in with mercy; thy only wish is to show it."

The compassion of Mary is indeed so great towards us that the Abbot Guericc says that "her loving heart can never remain a moment without bringing forth its fruits of tenderness." "And what," exclaims St. Bernard, "can ever flow from a source of compassion but compassion itself?"

Mary is called an olive-tree: *As a fair olive-tree in the plains* (Ecclus. xxiv. 19). For, as from the olive, oil (a symbol of mercy) alone is extracted, so from the hands of Mary graces and mercy alone proceed. When we go to this good Mother for the oil of her mercy, we cannot fear that she will deny it to us, as the wise virgins in the Gospel did to the foolish ones: *lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you* (Matt. xxv. 9). Oh, no! for she is indeed rich in this oil of mercy, as St. Bonaventure assures us, "Mary is filled with the oil of compassion." She is called by the Church not only a prudent Virgin, but most prudent, that we may understand, says Hugo of St. Victor, that she is so full of grace and compassion, that she can supply all, without losing any herself. "Thou, O Blessed Virgin, art full of grace, and indeed so full, that the whole world may draw of this overflowing oil. For if the prudent virgins provided oil in vessels with their lamps, thou, O most prudent Virgin, hast borne an overflowing and inexhaustible vessel, from which, the oil of mercy streaming, thou replenishest the lamps of all."

II.

But why, I ask, is this beautiful olive-tree said to stand in the midst of the plains, and not rather in the midst of a garden, surrounded by walls and hedges? Hugo of St. Victor tells us that it is in the plains, "that all sinners may see her, that all may go

to her for refuge"; that all may see her easily, and as easily have recourse to her, to obtain remedies for all their ills. This beautiful explanation is confirmed by St. Antoninus, who says: "All can go to and gather the fruit of an olive-tree in the midst of a plain; and thus all, both just and sinners, can have recourse to Mary to obtain her mercy." He then adds: "O how many sentences of condemnation has not this most Blessed Virgin revoked by her compassionate prayers, in favour of sinners who have had recourse to her?" "And what safer refuge," says the devout Thomas a Kempis, "can we ever find than the compassionate heart of Mary? There the poor find a home, the infirm a remedy, the afflicted relief, the doubtful counsel, and the abandoned succour."

Wretched indeed should we be had we not this Mother of Mercy always attentive and solicitous to relieve us in our wants! *Where there is no woman, he mourneth that is in want* (Ecclus. xxxvi. 27), says the Holy Ghost. "This woman," says St. John Damascene, "is precisely the most Blessed Virgin Mary, and wherever this most holy woman is not, the sick man groans." And surely it cannot be otherwise, since all graces are dispensed at the prayers of Mary; and where this is wanting, there can be no hope of mercy, as our Lord gave St. Bridget to understand in these words: "Unless the prayers of Mary interposed, there could be no hope of mercy."

O Mary, thou art clement with the miserable; compassionate towards those who pray to thee; sweet towards those who love thee; clement with the penitent; compassionate towards those who advance; and sweet to the perfect. Thou art clement in delivering us from chastisement, compassionate in bestowing graces, and sweet in giving thyself to those who seek thee!

Spiritual Reading

I. - "WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE I PLEASED THE MOST HIGH."

Mary was born a Saint, and a great Saint; for the grace with which God enriched her from the beginning was great, and the fidelity with which she immediately corresponded to it was great.

But to form an idea of the greatness of Mary's sanctity, even at this early period, we must consider, first, the greatness of the first grace with which God enriched her; and secondly, the

greatness of her fidelity in immediately corresponding to it.

To begin with the first point, it is certain that Mary's soul was the most beautiful God had ever created: nay more, after the work of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, this was the greatest and most worthy of Himself that an Omnipotent God ever did in the world. St. Peter Damian calls it "a work only surpassed by God Himself." Hence it follows that Divine grace did not come into Mary by drops as in other Saints, *but like rain on the fleece* (Ps. lxxi. 6), as it was foretold by David. So the soul of Mary, like the fleece, imbibed the whole shower of grace, without losing a drop. St. Basil of Seleucia says that "the holy Virgin was full of grace, because she was elected and pre-elected by God, and the Holy Spirit was about to take full possession of her." Hence she said, by the lips of Ecclesiasticus: *My abode is in the full assembly of saints* (Ecclus. xxiv. 16); that is, as St. Bonaventure explains it, "I hold in plenitude all that other Saints have held in part." And St. Vincent Ferrer, speaking particularly of the sanctity of Mary before her birth, says "that the Blessed Virgin was sanctified" (surpassed in sanctity) "in her mother's womb above all Saints and Angels."

The grace that the Blessed Virgin received exceeded not only that of each particular Saint, but of all the Angels and Saints put together, as the most learned Father Francis Pepe, of the Society of Jesus, proves in his beautiful work on the greatness of Jesus and Mary. And he asserts that this opinion, so glorious for our Queen, is now generally admitted, and considered as beyond doubt by modern Theologians (such as Carthagena, Suarez, Spinelli, Recupito, and Guerra, who have professedly examined the question, and this was never done by the more ancient Theologians). And besides this, he relates that the Divine Mother sent Father Martin Gutierrez to thank Father Suarez, on her part, for having so courageously defended this most probable opinion, and which, according to Father Segneri, in his *Client of Mary*, was afterwards believed and defended by the University of Salamanca.

But if this opinion is general and certain, that other is also very probable, namely, that Mary received this grace, exceeding that of all men and Angels together, in the first instance of her

Immaculate Conception. Father Suarez strongly maintains this opinion, as do also Father Spinelli, Father Recupito, and Father La Colombiere. But besides the authority of Theologians, there are two great and convincing arguments which sufficiently prove the correctness of the above-mentioned opinion.

The first is that Mary was chosen by God to be the Mother of the Divine Word. Hence Denis the Carthusian says that as she was chosen to an order superior to that of all other creatures (for in a certain sense the dignity of the Mother of God, as Fr. Suarez asserts, belongs to the order of hypostatic union), it is reasonable to suppose that from the very beginning of her life gifts of a superior order were conferred upon her, and such gifts as must have incomparably surpassed those granted to all other creatures. And indeed it cannot be doubted that when the Person of the Eternal Word was, in the Divine decrees, predestined to make Himself man, a Mother was also destined for Him, from whom He was to take His human nature; and our infant Mary was to be this Mother. Now St. Thomas teaches that "God gives every one grace proportioned to the dignity for which He destines him." And St. Paul teaches us the same thing when he says, *Who also hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament* (2 Cor. iii. 6), that is, the Apostles received gifts from God, proportioned to the greatness of the office with which they were charged. St. Bernardine of Sienna adds that it is an axiom in Theology that when a person is chosen by God for any state, he receives not only the dispositions necessary for it, but even the gifts he needs to sustain that state with decorum. But as Mary was chosen to be the Mother of God, it was quite becoming that God should adorn her, in the first moment of her existence, with an immense grace, and one of a superior order to that of all other men and Angels, since it had to correspond to the immense and most high dignity to which God exalted her. And all Theologians come to this conclusion with St. Thomas, who says, "the Blessed Virgin was chosen to be the Mother of God; and therefore it is not to be doubted that God fitted her for it by His grace"; so much so that Mary, before becoming Mother of God, was adorned with a sanctity so perfect that it rendered her fit for this great dignity. The holy Doctor says that "in the Blessed Virgin there was a

preparatory perfection, which rendered her fit to be the Mother of Christ, and this was the perfection of sanctification."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

He saith to his Mother: Woman, behold thy Son! After that he saith to the disciple: Behold thy Mother!

We read in St. Mark that on Calvary there were present many women, who watched Jesus on the Cross, but from afar off, among whom was Mary Magdalen. We believe also, that among these holy women was the Divine Mother also; while St. John says that the Blessed Virgin stood, not afar off, but close to the Cross, together with Mary of Cleophas and Mary Magdalen (John xix. 25). Euthymius attempts to reconcile this discrepancy, and says that the Holy Virgin, seeing her Son drawing near to death, came from among the rest of the women close up to the Cross, overcoming her fear of the soldiers who surrounded it, and enduring with patience all the insults and repulses she had to suffer from these soldiers who watched the condemned, in order that she might draw near her beloved Son. Thus also a learned author, who wrote the Life of Jesus Christ, says: "There were His friends, who watched Him from afar; but the Holy Virgin, the Magdalen, and another Mary stood close to the Cross with John; wherefore Jesus, seeing His Mother and John, spoke to them the words above mentioned. Truly she was a Mother who, even in the terror of death, deserted not her Son. Some mothers fly when they see their children dying; their love does not suffer them to be present at their death when they have not the power of relieving them; but the holy Mother, the nearer her Son approached death, the nearer she drew to His Cross."

The afflicted Mother thus was standing close to the Cross; and as the Son sacrificed His life, so she offered her pangs for the salvation of men, sharing with perfect resignation all the pains and insults which her Son suffered in His death. A writer says that they who would describe her fainting at the foot of the Cross dishonour the constancy of Mary. She was the *valiant woman*, who neither fainted nor wept. "I read of her standing, but not of her weeping," says St. Ambrose.

II.

The anguish the Holy Virgin endured in the Passion of her Son exceeded all the pain a human heart can endure: but the grief of Mary was not a barren grief, like that of other mothers who behold the sufferings of their children; it was a fruitful grief, since through the merits of her great grief, and through her love, according to the opinion of St. Augustine, as she was the natural Mother of our Head, Jesus Christ, so she then became the spiritual Mother of us who are His faithful members, in co-operating with Him by her love in causing us to be born, and to be the children of the Church.

St. Bernard writes that upon Mount Calvary both of these two great Martyrs, Jesus and Mary, were silent, because the great pain that they endured took from them the power of speaking. The Mother looked upon her Son in agony upon the Cross, and the Son looked upon the Mother in agony at the foot of the Cross, all wounded with compassion for the pains He suffered.

Mary and John, then, stood nearer to the Cross than the others, so that they could more easily hear the words and mark the looks of Jesus Christ in the midst of so great a tumult. St. John writes: *When Jesus then saw his mother and the disciple standing, whom he loved, he saith to his mother: Woman, behold thy son* (John xix. 26). But if Mary and John were accompanied by other women, why is it said that Jesus saw His Mother and the disciple, as if the others had not been perceived by Him? St. John Chrysostom writes that love always makes us look more closely at the object of our love. And St. Ambrose in a similar way writes: It is natural that we should see those we love before any others. The Blessed Virgin revealed to St. Bridget that in order that Jesus might look upon His Mother, who stood by the side of the Cross, He was obliged first to compress His eyebrows in order to remove the blood from His eyes, which prevented Him from seeing.

Jesus said to her: *Woman, behold thy son!* with His eyes turned towards St. John, who stood by His side. But why did He call her woman and not mother? He called her woman, we may say, because, drawing now near to death, He spoke as if departing from her and saying: Woman, in a little while I shall be dead, and thou wilt have no Son upon earth; I leave thee, therefore, John,

who will serve and love thee as a son. And from this we may understand that St. Joseph was already dead, since if he had been still alive he would have been still the guardian of the Mother.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE HOUSE OF ETERNITY

We err in calling the place where we now dwell our home. After a little while the grave will be the home of our body until the Day of Judgment, and the home of our soul will be the House of Eternity, in Heaven or Hell for ever!

I.

We err in calling the place where we now dwell our home. After a little while the grave will be the home of our body until the Day of Judgment, and the home of our soul will be the House of Eternity, in Heaven or Hell for ever, *because man shall go into the house of his eternity* (Eccles. xii. 5). At our burial our corpses do not go to the grave of themselves; they are carried there by others; but the soul goes to the place which awaits it, either of eternal joy or eternal woe. *A man shall go to the house of his eternity.* According as a man lives well or ill, so he goes to the home prepared, in Paradise or in Hell, which he shall never change.

Those who live on this earth often change their home, either to please themselves or because they are compelled. In eternity the habitation is never changed; where we enter the first time, there we abide forever. *If the tree fall to the south or to the north, in whatever place it shall fall, there shall it be* (Eccles. xi. 3). He that enters into the South, which is Heaven, will be ever happy; he that enters the North, which is Hell, will be ever miserable.

He, then, who enters Heaven, will be always united with God, always in company with the Saints, always in the profoundest peace, always abundantly contented; because every blessed soul is filled and satisfied with joy, nor will he ever know the fear of losing it. If fear of losing their happiness could enter among the Blessed, they would be no longer happy; for the mere thought of losing the joy they possess would disturb the peace they enjoy.

On the other hand, whoever enters into Hell will be forever

far from God. He will ever suffer in the fire of the damned. Let us not think that the pains of Hell will be like those of earth, where, through the force of habit, a trouble continually grows less; for, as in Paradise, delights never cause weariness, but seem ever new, as though they were for the first time enjoyed, which is implied by the expression of "the new canticle" which the Blessed are ever singing; so, in Hell, the pains never grow less through all eternity. Long custom will never diminish their torment. The miserable beings who are damned will feel the same anguish through eternity that they feel the first moment they experience its pangs.

II.

St. Augustine says that he who believes in eternity and is not converted to God has either lost his senses or his Faith. Woe, cries St. Cesarius, woe to sinners who enter eternity without knowing it, through having neglected to think upon it! And then he adds: "But, oh, double woe! They enter it and they never come forth!" It is a double woe, the first will be to fall into that abyss of fire; the second, that he who falls into it will never come forth: the gates of hell open only to those who enter, not to those who would depart.

No; the Saints did not do too much when they went to hide themselves in caves and deserts, to eat herbs, and to sleep on the ground, in order to save their souls. "They did not do too much," says St. Bernard, "because, where eternity is in question, no security can be too great." When, then, God visits us with any cross of infirmity, poverty, or any evil, let us think of the hell we have deserved, and thus every sorrow will appear light. Let us say, with Job: *I have sinned, and indeed I have offended, and I have not received what I have deserved* (Job, xxxiii. 27). O Lord, I have offended Thee, and many times betrayed Thee, and I have not been punished as I deserved; how, then, can I lament if Thou sendest me tribulation -- I, who have so often deserved hell?

O my Jesus, send me not to Hell, to the Hell in which I could no longer love Thee, but should hate Thee forever. Deprive me of everything -- of property, health, life; but deprive me not of Thyself. Grant that I may love Thee and praise Thee forever; and then chastise me, and do with me what Thou wilt.

O Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Spiritual Reading

2. - *"WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE I PLEASED THE MOST HIGH."*

St. Thomas says that Mary was called *full of grace*, not on the part of grace itself, for she had it not in the highest possible degree, since even the habitual grace of Jesus Christ (according to the same holy Doctor) was not such that the absolute power of God could not have made it greater, although it was a grace sufficient for the end for which His humanity was ordained by Divine Wisdom, that is, for its union with the Person of the Eternal Word. Although Divine power could make something greater and better than the habitual grace of Christ, it could not fit it for anything greater than the personal union with the only-begotten Son of the Father, and to which union that measure of grace sufficiently corresponds, according to the limit placed by Divine Wisdom. For the same angelic Doctor teaches that the Divine power is so great that, however much it gives, it can always give more; and although the natural capacity of creatures is in itself limited as to receiving, so that it can be entirely filled, nevertheless its power to obey the Divine will is unlimited, and God can always fill it more by increasing its capacity to receive. "As far as its natural capacity goes, it can be filled; but it cannot be filled as far as its power of obeying goes." But now to return to our proposition: St. Thomas says that the Blessed Virgin was not filled with grace, as to grace itself, nevertheless she is called full of grace as to herself, for she had an immense grace, one which was sufficient, and corresponded to her immense dignity, so much so that it fitted her to be the Mother of God: "The Blessed Virgin is full of grace, not with the fulness of grace itself, for she had not grace in the highest degree of excellence in which it can be had, nor had she it as to all its effects; but she was said to be full of grace as to herself, because she had sufficient grace for that state to which she was chosen by God, that is, to be the Mother of His only-begotten Son." Hence Benedict Fernandez says that "the measure whereby we may know the greatness of the grace communicated to Mary is her dignity of Mother of God."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

"Behold thy Son! ... Behold thy Mother!"

I.

All antiquity asserts that St. John was ever a virgin, and especially on this account was he given as a son to Mary, and honoured in being made to occupy the place of Jesus Christ; on which account the holy Church sings: "To John, a virgin, He commended His Virgin Mother." And from the moment of the Lord's death, as it is written, St. John received Mary into his own house, and assisted and obeyed her throughout her life, as if she had been his own mother. Jesus Christ willed that this beloved disciple should be an eye-witness of His death, in order that he might more confidently bear witness to it in his Gospel, and might be able to say: *He that saw it hath given testimony* (Jo. xix. 35). And on this account the Lord, at the time when the other disciples abandoned Him, gave St. John strength to be present until His death in the midst of so many enemies.

But let us examine more deeply the reason why Jesus called Mary *woman*, and not *mother*. By this expression He desired to show that she was the woman foretold in the Book of Genesis, who would crush the serpent's head: *I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel* (Gen. iii. 15). It is doubted by none that this *woman* was the Blessed Virgin Mary, who, by means of her Son, would crush the head of Satan -- if it be not more correct to say that her Son, by means of her who would bear Him, would do this. Naturally Mary was the enemy of the serpent, because Lucifer was haughty, ungrateful, disobedient, while she was humble, grateful, and obedient. It is said, *She shall crush thy head*, because Mary, by means of her Son, beat down the pride of Lucifer, who lay in wait for the heel of Jesus Christ, which means His holy humanity, which was the part of Him which was nearest to the earth; while the Saviour by His death had the glory of conquering him, and of depriving him of that empire which, through sin, he had obtained over the human race.

O suffering Mother, thou knowest that I have deserved hell;

I have no hope of being saved, except by the merits of the death of Jesus Christ. Thou must pray for me, that I may obtain this grace; and I pray thee to obtain it for me by the love of that Son Whom thou sawest bow His head and expire on Calvary before thine eyes. O Queen of Martyrs, O advocate of sinners, help me always, and especially in the hour of my death!

II.

God said to the serpent: *I will put enmities ... between thy seed and her seed.* This shows that after the fall of man, through sin, notwithstanding all that would be done by the Redemption of Jesus Christ, there would be two families and two posterities in the world, the children of Satan signifying the family of sinners, his children corrupted by him; and the children of Mary, signifying the holy family, which includes all the just, with their Head Jesus Christ. Hence Mary was destined to be the Mother both of the Head and of the members, namely, the faithful. The Apostle writes: *Ye are all one in Christ Jesus; and if ye are Christ's, then ye are the seed of Abraham* (Gal. iii. 28, 29). Thus Jesus Christ and the faithful are one single body, because the Head cannot be divided from the members, and these members are all spiritual children of Mary, as they have the same spirit of her Son according to nature, who was Jesus Christ. Therefore, St. John was not called John but *the disciple* beloved by the Lord, that we might understand that Mary is the Mother of every good Christian who is beloved by Jesus Christ, and in whom Jesus Christ lives by His Spirit. This was expressed by Origen: "Jesus said to Mary: *Behold thy son!* as if He had said: This is Jesus, whom thou hast borne, for he who is perfect lives no more himself, but Christ lives in him."

Denis the Carthusian writes that in the Passion of Jesus Christ the breast of Mary was filled with the blood which flowed from His Wounds, in order that with it she might nourish her children. And he adds that this divine Mother by her prayers and merits, which she especially acquired by sharing in the death of Jesus Christ, obtained for us a participation in the merits of the Passion of the Redeemer.

O my advocate, Mary, even now I seem to see the devils, who, in my last agony, will strive to make me despair at the

sight of my sins. Oh! abandon me not then, when thou seest me thus assaulted; help me with thy prayers, and obtain for me confidence and holy perseverance. And because then, when my speech will be gone, and perhaps my senses, I shall not be able to invoke thy name and that of thy Son, I now call upon thee -- *Jesus and Mary, I recommend my soul unto you!*

Monday--Thirteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

OUR BLESSED MOTHER'S BIRTH-DAY

Other children are born into this world, not only deprived of grace and reason, but infected with sin and children of wrath, condemned to misery and death; but holy Mary came into this world a babe, it is true, in age, but great in merit and virtue. She was sanctified in her Mother's womb above all Saints and Angels, and was born a Saint, and a great Saint.

I.

Men usually celebrate the birth-day of their children with great feastings and rejoicings; but, indeed, they should pity them rather and show signs of mourning and grief when they reflect that their children are born, not only deprived of grace and reason, but worse than this, -- they are infected with sin and are children of wrath condemned to misery and death. But it is right to celebrate with festivity and universal joy the birth of our holy infant Mary. She saw the light of this world, a babe it is true in age, but great in merit and virtue. She was born a Saint and a great Saint.

Speaking particularly of Mary's sanctity before her birth, St. Vincent Ferrar says that "the Blessed Virgin was sanctified in her mother's womb above all Saints and Angels." For as Mary was chosen to be the Mother of God, it was becoming that God should adorn her, in the very first moment of her existence, with an immense grace and one of a superior order to that of all men and Angels, since her grace had to correspond to the immense and most glorious dignity to which God exalted her. The measure whereby we may know the greatness of Mary's graces is her dignity of Mother of God.

And not only was Mary the predestined Mother of God, but

she was destined to be the universal mediatrix of the world's salvation, the mediatrix of all the graces conferred on men and Angels. The holy Church wishes us to understand this when she honours the Divine Mother by applying to her the words of Ecclesiasticus: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth. In me is all hope of life and of virtue* (Ecclus. xxiv. 25). "Magnify the finder of grace," says St. Bernard, "the mediatrix of salvation, the restorer of worlds -- this am I taught by the Church proclaiming it; and thus also does she teach me to proclaim it to others." And Richard of St. Victor says: "By Mary every creature is repaired; by her the ruin of the Angels was remedied; and by her the human race was reconciled." "By this holy Virgin all creation has been restored and reinstated in its primitive condition," says St. Anselm.

O holy and heavenly infant, thou who art the destined Mother of my Redeemer, and the great mediatrix of miserable sinners, have pity on me! Behold now at thy feet another ungrateful sinner who has recourse to thee seeking thy compassion. It is true that for my ingratitude to God and to thee I deserve that God and thou should abandon me, but thou dost not refuse to succour all who recommend themselves to thee with confidence. Receive then the supplication of a sinner who places in thee the whole hope of his salvation.

II.

Let us be convinced, then, that our heavenly child Mary, as the appointed mediatrix of the world and the destined Mother of the Redeemer, received at the very beginning of her existence graces exceeding in greatness that of all the Saints together. How delightful a sight, therefore, must the beautiful soul of this happy child have been to Heaven and earth, even while yet in her mother's womb! She was the most amiable creature in the eyes of God, because already laden with grace and merit she could say: *When I was a little one I pleased the Most High*. And she was at the same time the creature who, above all others the world had ever known, loved God the most; so much so, indeed, that if she had been born after her most pure Conception, she would have come into the world richer in merits and more holy than all the Saints together. Oh, how much greater must her sanctity, then,

have been at her Nativity, coming into the world, as she did, with all the merits she acquired during the whole of the nine months she remained in the womb of her mother.

Let us, then, rejoice with our beloved infant Mary, who was so holy, so dear to God, so full of grace! And let us rejoice not only on her account, but also on our own, for Mary was born full of grace for her own glory, but also for our good. For what St. John says of Jesus, *And of his fulness we have all received*, the Saints say of Mary "of whose plenitude we all receive."

O most exalted of all creatures in the world, O Saint of Saints, O holy Mary! O abyss of charity, full of grace, succour a miserable sinner who by his own fault has lost the Divine friendship! O Lady, do this for the love of God Who has made thee so great, so powerful, and so compassionate. This is my hope. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

3. - "*WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE I PLEASED THE MOST HIGH.*"

It was not without reason that David said that the foundations of this city of God, that is, Mary, are planted above the summits of the mountains: *The foundations thereof are in the holy mountains* (Ps. lxxxvi. 1). Whereby we are to understand that Mary, in the very beginning of her life, was to be more perfect than the united perfections of the entire lives of the Saints could have made her. And the Prophet continues: *The Lord loveth the gates of Sion above all the tabernacles of Jacob* (Ps. lxxxvi. 2). And the same king David tells us why God thus loved her; it was because He was to become man in her virginal womb: *A man is born in her* (Ps. lxxxvi. 5). Hence it was becoming that God should give this Blessed Virgin, in the very moment that He created her, a grace corresponding to the dignity of Mother of God.

Isaias signified the same thing when he said that, in a time to come, a mountain of the house of the Lord (which was the Blessed Virgin) was to be prepared on the top of all other mountains; and that, in consequence, all nations would run to this mountain to receive the Divine mercies. *And in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it* (Is. ii.

2). St. Gregory, explaining this passage, says: "It is a mountain on the top of mountains; for the perfection of Mary is resplendent above that of all the Saints." And St. John Damascene, that it is *a mountain in which God is well pleased to dwell* (Ps. lxvii. 17). Therefore Mary was called a cypress, but *a cypress of Mount Sion*; she was called a cedar, but *a cedar of Libanus*; an olive-tree, but *a fair olive-tree*; beautiful, but *beautiful as the sun*; for as St. Peter Damian said: "As the light of the sun so greatly surpasses that of the stars, that in it they are no longer visible; it so overwhelms them that they are as if they were not; so does the great Virgin Mother surpass in sanctity the whole court of Heaven." So much so that St. Bernard beautifully remarks that the sanctity of Mary was so sublime that "no other Mother than Mary was becoming a God, and no other Son than God befitted Mary."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

Eli! Eli! Lamma sabacthani? My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?

I.

St. Matthew writes that Jesus uttered these words with a loud voice. "Why did He thus utter them? Euthymius says that He thus cried out in order to show us His Divine power, inasmuch as, though He was on the point of expiring, He was able thus to cry aloud, which would be impossible to dying men, through their extreme exhaustion. Also, Jesus thus cried out in order to show us the anguish in which He died. It might, perhaps, have been said that as Jesus was both God and man, He had by the power of His divinity, diminished the pains of His torments; and in order to prevent this idea, He thought fit in these words to declare that His death was more bitter than any man had ever endured, and that while the Martyrs in their torments were comforted with Divine sweetness, He, the King of Martyrs, chose to die deprived of every consolation, satisfying the utmost rigour of the Divine justice for all the sins of men. And therefore Silveira remarks that Jesus called His Father *God*, and not *Father*, because He was then regarding Him as a *Judge*, and not as a son regards his father.

St. Leo writes that this cry of the Lord was not a lamenta-

tion, but a doctrine, because He thus desired to teach us how great is the wickedness of sin, which, as it were, compelled God to abandon His beloved Son to die without comfort, because He had taken upon Himself to make satisfaction for our sins. At the same time, Jesus was not abandoned by the Divinity, nor deprived of the glory which had been communicated to His blessed soul from the first moment of its creation; but He was deprived of all that sensible relief by which God is wont to comfort His faithful servants in their sufferings; and He was left in darkness, fear, and bitterness, pangs which were deserved by us. This deprivation of the sensible consciousness of the Divine presence was also endured by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemani; but that which He suffered on the Cross was greater and more bitter.

O Eternal Father, what offence had this Thy innocent and most obedient Son ever given Thee, that Thou shouldst punish Him with a death so bitter? Look at Him as He hangs upon this Cross, His head tortured with thorns, hanging upon the three iron nails, and supported by His own wounds! All have abandoned Him, even His own disciples; all deride Him upon the Cross and blaspheme Him; and why hast Thou abandoned Him, Who hast so greatly loved Him? We must understand that Jesus had taken upon Himself the sins of the whole world, although He was Himself the most holy of all men, and even Sanctity itself; since He had taken upon Himself to satisfy for all our sins, He seemed the greatest of all sinners; and having thus made Himself guilty for all, He offered Himself to pay the price for all. Because we had deserved to be abandoned forever in hell to eternal despair, therefore He chose to be given up to a death deprived of every relief, that thus He might deliver us from eternal death.

II.

In his commentary on St. John, Calvin blasphemously asserts that Jesus Christ, in order to appease His Father, experienced all the wrath which God feels towards sinners, and felt all the pains of the damned, and particularly that of despair. O blasphemy and shocking thought! How could He satisfy for our sins by committing a sin so great as that of despair? And how could this despair, which Calvin imagines, be reconciled with the

other words which Jesus uttered, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit* (Luke xxiii. 46). The truth is, as St. Jerome and others explain it, that our Saviour uttered this lamentation to show not despair, but the bitterness He endured in a death without consolation. And, further, despair could only have been produced in Jesus Christ by a knowledge that He was hated by God; but how could God hate that Son Who, to obey His will, had offered Himself to satisfy for the sins of men? It was this very obedience in return for which the Father looked upon Him, and granted Him the salvation of the human race, as the Apostle writes: *Who in the days of his flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to him that was able to save him from death, was heard for his reverence* (Heb. v. 7).

Further, this abandonment of Jesus Christ was the most dreadful suffering in all His Passion; for we know that after suffering so many bitter pangs without complaining, He lamented over this, and cried with a loud voice, and with many tears and prayers, as St. Paul tells us. Yet all these prayers and tears were poured forth in order to teach us how much He suffered to obtain the Divine mercy for us; and to enable us at the same time to comprehend how dreadful a punishment it would be for the guilty soul to be driven from God, and to be deprived forever of His love, according to the Divine threat, *I will cast them forth out of my house, I will love them no more* (Osee ix. 15).

St. Augustine also says that Jesus Christ was troubled at the sight of His death, but that it was so for the comfort of His servants, in order that if they should find themselves disturbed at the hour of their own death, they should not suppose themselves reprobates, or abandon themselves to despair, because even He was disturbed at the sight of death.

Therefore, let us give thanks to the goodness of our Saviour for having been willing to take upon Himself the pains which were due to us, and thus to deliver us from eternal death; and let us labour henceforth to be grateful to this our Deliverer, banishing from our hearts every affection which is not for Him. And when we find ourselves desolate in spirit, and deprived of the sense of the Divine presence, let us unite our desolation to that which Jesus Christ suffered in His death. Sometimes Jesus hides

Himself from the souls He most loves, but He does not really leave their hearts; He aids them with His inward grace. He is not offended if, in such an abandonment, we say, as He Himself said in the Garden to His Divine Father: *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me*. But at the same time we must add: *Yet, not as I will, but as thou wilt* (Matt. xxvi. 39). And if the desolation continues we must continue the same acts of conformity to the Divine will, as He Himself repeated them for the three hours during which He prayed in the Garden. St. Francis de Sales says that Jesus is as worthy of love when He hides Himself as when He shows Himself. Further, he who has deserved hell, and finds himself out of it, should say only: *I will bless the Lord at all times* (Ps. xxxiii. !2). O Lord, I do not deserve consolations; grant that through Thy grace I may love Thee, and I am content to live in desolation as long as it pleases Thee! If the damned could thus in their pains unite themselves to the Divine will, hell would be no longer hell to them.

But thou, O Lord, remove not thy help to a distance from me; look towards my defence (Ps. xxi. 20). O my Jesus, through the merits of Thy desolate death, deprive me not of Thy help in that great battle which, in the hour of my death, I shall have to fight with hell. At that hour all things of earth will have deserted me and cannot help me; do not Thou abandon me, Who hast died for me, and canst alone help me in my extremity. Do this through the merits of those pains Thou didst suffer in Thy abandonment, by which Thou hast merited for us that we should not be abandoned by the Divine grace, as we have deserved through our sins.

Tuesday--Thirteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE VANITY OF ALL EARTHLY THINGS

What is your life? St. James answers: *It is a vapour*. After death the rich man is carried out of his palace to return no more! His servants accompany him to the grave, and leave him there to be devoured by worms! *Why is earth and ashes proud?*

I.

What is your life? St. James answers: It is only a vapour which

appears for a little time and then is seen no more! For what is your life? *It is a vapour which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away* (James iv. 15). The vapours which arise from the earth and are raised into the air and surrounded by the rays of the sun appear brilliant and beautiful; but the least wind disperses them, and they are seen no more. Such is the grandeur of this world. Behold that prince; to-day he is feared, attended upon, and honoured by thousands; tomorrow he will be dead, despised and hated by all. In a word, honours, pleasures, and riches must all end in death.

O my God, make me sensible of the immensity of Thy goodness, that I may love nothing but Thee.

Death deprives man of whatever he may possess in this world. What a sad sight, to behold a rich man, after death, carried out of his palace, to return thither no more! How sad to behold others taking possession of the estates he has left, of his wealth, and of whatever else he so lately enjoyed! His servants, after having accompanied him to the grave, abandon him, and leave him there, to be devoured by worms; no one esteeming him, no one flattering him. Formerly everyone obeyed his nod, but now no one takes the least notice of his orders.

How wretched have I been, O Lord, in having, for so many years, gone after the vanities of the world, and left Thee, my sovereign Good! But from this day forward I desire to possess Thee as my only treasure, as the only love of my soul.

II.

Why is earth and ashes proud? (Ecclus. x. 9). O man, says the Almighty, seest thou not that in a short time thou wilt become dust and ashes? And on what dost thou fix thy thoughts and affections? Reflect that death will soon rob thee of everything, and separate thee from the whole world. And if, when thou givest in thy account, thou be found wanting, what will become of thee for eternity?

I give Thee thanks, my Lord and my God. Thou speakest thus to me, because thou desirest to save me. Let Thy mercies now prevail. Thou hast promised to pardon such as repent of their offences against Thee. From the bottom of my heart do I repent: grant me therefore pardon. Thou hast promised to love

those who love Thee: and I now love Thee above all things. Wherefore do Thou love me also, and hate me not any more, as I have deserved. O Mary, my advocate, in thy protection is my hope.

Spiritual Reading

4. - "WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE I PLEASED THE MOST HIGH."

The second argument by which it is proved that Mary was more holy in the first moment of her existence than all the Saints together, is founded on the great office of Mediatrix of men, with which she was charged from the beginning; and which made it necessary that she should possess a greater treasure of grace from the beginning than all other men together. It is well known with what unanimity Theologians and holy Fathers give Mary this title of Mediatrix, on account of her having obtained salvation for all, by her powerful intercession and her merit of "congruity," thereby procuring the great benefit of Redemption for the lost world. I say by her merit of congruity, for Jesus Christ alone is our Mediator by way of justice and by merit, "de condigno," as the Scholastics say, He having offered His merits to the Eternal Father, Who accepted them for our salvation. Mary, on the other hand, is a Mediatrix of grace, by way of simple intercession and merit of congruity, she having offered to God, as Theologians say with St. Bonaventure, her merits, for the salvation of all men; and God, as a favour, accepted them with the merits of Jesus Christ. On this account Arnold of Chartres says that "she effected our salvation in common with Christ." And Richard of St. Victor says that "Mary desired, sought, and obtained the salvation of all; nay, even she effected the salvation of all." So that everything good, and every gift in the order of grace, which each of the Saints received from God, Mary obtained for them.

And the holy Church wishes us to understand this when she honours the Divine Mother by applying the the following verses of Ecclesiasticus to her: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth. Of the way*, because by Mary all graces are dispensed to wayfarers. *Of the truth*, because the light of truth is imparted by her. *In me is all hope of life and of virtue. Of life*, for by Mary we hope to

obtain the life of grace in this world, and that of glory in Heaven. *And of virtue*, for through her we acquire virtues, and especially the theological virtues which are the principal virtues of the Saints. *I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope* (Ecclus. xxiv. 24-25). Mary, by her intercession, obtains for her servants the gifts of Divine love, holy fear, heavenly light, and holy perseverance. From which St. Bernard concludes that it is a doctrine of the Church that Mary is the universal Mediatrix of our salvation. He says: "Magnify the finder of grace, the mediatrix of salvation, the restorer of ages. This I am taught by the Church proclaiming it; and thus also she teaches me to proclaim the same thing to others."

St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, asserts that the reason for which the Archangel Gabriel called her full of grace -- *Hail, full of grace!* -- was because only limited grace was given to others, but it was given to Mary in all its plenitude: "Truly was she full, for grace is given to other Saints partially, but the whole plenitude of grace poured itself into Mary." St. Basil of Seleucia declares that she received this plenitude that she might thus be a worthy Mediatrix between men and God: "Hail, full of grace, Mediatrix between God and men, and by whom Heaven and earth are brought together and united." "Otherwise," says St. Laurence Justinian, "had not the Blessed Virgin been full of Divine grace, how could she have become the ladder to Heaven, the advocate of the world, and the most true Mediatrix between men and God?"

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST
I thirst!

I.

St. John writes: *Afterwards Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said: I thirst!* (Jo. xix. 28). Scripture here refers to the words of David: *They gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink* (Ps. lxviii. 22).

Most severe was this bodily thirst which Jesus Christ endured on the Cross through loss of Blood, first in the Garden, and afterwards in the Hall of Judgment, at His scourging and

crowning with thorns; and lastly upon the Cross, where four streams of Blood gushed forth from the Wounds of His pierced hands and feet as from four fountains. But far more terrible was His spiritual thirst, that is, His ardent desire to save all mankind and to suffer still more for us, as Blossius says, in order to show us His love. On this St. Laurence Justinian writes: "This thirst came from the ardour of His charity."

O my Jesus, Thou hast thus desired to suffer for me; and I, when my sufferings at all increase, become so impatient that I am insupportable both to others and to myself. O my Jesus, through the merits of Thy patience, make me patient and resigned in the sicknesses and crosses which befall me; make me like unto Thyself before I die.

II.

Jesus, drawing nigh unto death, said: *Sitio - I thirst!* Tell me, Lord, says Leo of Ostia, for what dost Thou thirst? Thou makest no mention of those immense pains Thou dost suffer upon the Cross; but Thou complainest only of thirst: "Lord, what dost Thou thirst for? Thou art silent about the Cross, and criest out about the thirst." "My thirst is for your salvation," is the reply which St. Augustine makes for Jesus. O soul, says Jesus, this thirst of Mine is nothing but the desire I have for thy salvation. Yes, the loving Redeemer, with extremest ardour, desired our souls, and therefore He panted to give Himself wholly to us by His death. This was His thirst, wrote St. Laurence Justinian: "He thirsted for us, and desired to give Himself to us." St. Basil of Seleucia says, moreover, that Jesus Christ, in saying that He thirsted, would give us to understand that He, for the love which He bore us, was dying with the desire of suffering for us even more than what He had suffered: "O that desire of His, greater than the Passion!"

O most lovely God, because Thou lovest us, Thou dost desire that we should desire Thee! "God thirsts to be thirsted for," as St. Gregory says. Ah, my Lord, dost Thou thirst for me, most vile worm that I am? And shall I not thirst for Thee, my infinite God? Oh, by the merits of this thirst endured upon the Cross, give me a great thirst to love Thee, and to please Thee in all things. Thou hast promised to grant us whatever we seek

from Thee: *Ask, and ye shall receive* (Jo. xvi. 24). I ask of Thee but this one gift -- the gift of loving Thee. I am, indeed, unworthy of it; but in this has to be the glory of Thy Blood, -- the turning of a heart into a great lover of Thee, a heart which at one time, so greatly despised Thee; to make a perfect flame of charity of a sinner who is altogether full of mire and of sins. Much more than this hast Thou done in dying for me. Would that I could love Thee, O Lord infinitely good, as much as Thou dost deserve! I delight in the love that is borne Thee by the souls that are enamoured of Thee, and still more in the love Thou bearest towards Thyself. With this I unite my own wretched love. I love Thee, O Eternal God; I love Thee O infinite Loveliness. Make me ever to increase in Thy love, repeating frequent acts of love of Thee, and striving to please Thee in everything, without intermission and without reserve. Make me, wretched and insignificant though I am, make me at least to be all Thine own.

Wednesday--Thirteenth Week after Pentecost **Morning Meditation**

THE END OF MAN

You have not come into this world for the sake of enjoyment, to grow rich and powerful; to eat, to drink, to sleep like irrational animals, but solely to love your God and work out your eternal salvation. And is this the object I have had hitherto in view?

I.

Consider, O my soul, that the being you enjoy was given to you by God: He created you to His own Image, without any merit on your part; He adopted you for His child by Baptism; He loved you more than the most affectionate parent could have loved you; He has made you all you are, that you might know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this life, and thereby arrive at the eternal possession of Him in Heaven. Hence you did not come into this world for the sake of enjoyment to grow rich and powerful; to eat, drink, and sleep like irrational animals, but solely to love your God and to work out your eternal salvation. And is this the object I have hitherto had in view? Oh, how unfortunate have I been, in having thought of everything else rather than of my last end! O God, I beg of Thee, in the Name

and for the love of Jesus, to grant that I may begin a new life of perfect holiness and conformity to Thy Divine will.

What deep remorse and bitter regret you will feel at the hour of death, if, during life, you have not devoted yourself to the service of God! How great will be your disappointment when, at the close of your days, you will perceive that nothing remains at that sorrowful moment, of all your goods, of all your pleasures, and of all your earthly glory, but a shadow that flies before you, and a bitter remembrance which pursues you! What will be your consternation when you discover that, for the sake of miserable vanities, you have lost your God, your soul, and your salvation, without the possibility of being able to repair your misfortune? O despair! O cruel torment! You will then see the value of the time you are now wasting; but it will be too late. Gladly would you then purchase time at the price of all you have; but you will not be able to do so. Oh I how full of bitterness and sorrow will that day be for every soul that has not loved and served the Lord!

II.

Consider the general disregard of men for their last end. Their ordinary thoughts are upon the accumulation of wealth, the gratification of their senses, parties of pleasure, amusement, and festivities. They think nothing of God or of His service; they do nothing for the salvation of their souls; they regard the affair of salvation as a trifle not worthy of notice. Thus, O deplorable misfortune! the greater part of Christians, by indulging in foolish pleasures and criminal gratifications, precipitate themselves into hell. O man, you go to great pains to damn yourself, and will you do nothing for your salvation? Listen to the dying sentiments of a Secretary of State of one of the kings of England: "How great," said he, "is my misfortune! I have used much paper in writing letters for my sovereign, and, alas! I have not used one sheet to help me in the recollection of my sins, that I might make a good Confession!" Listen to the death-bed sentiments of a king of Spain: "Oh that I had spent my life in a desert, occupied in serving God, and had never been a king!" But to what do these sighs and lamentations then serve, but only to augment the horrors of despair? Learn, then, this day, at the expense of others, to devote yourself to the salvation of your soul: remember well that all your

actions, all your words, and all your thoughts that are not directed to God are entirely lost. Oh it is time then to amend your life. Do not wait, therefore, to be convinced of this till you arrive at the gates of eternity, and the jaws of hell: it will be then too late. O my God, pardon me all the sins of my life: I love Thee above all things. I am sorry, from the bottom of my heart, for all my sins. O Mary, my hope, intercede with Jesus in my behalf.

Spiritual Reading

5. - *"WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE I PLEASED THE MOST HIGH."*

If Holy Mary, then, as the already destined Mother of our common Redeemer, received from the very beginning the office of Mediatrix of all men, and consequently even of the Saints, it was also requisite from the very beginning she should have a grace exceeding that of all the Saints for whom she was to intercede. I will explain myself more clearly. If, by the means of Mary, all men were to render themselves dear to God, necessarily Mary was more holy and more dear to Him than all men together. Otherwise, how could she have interceded for all others? That an intercessor may obtain the favour of a prince for all his vassals it is absolutely necessary that he should be more dear to his prince than all the other vassals. And therefore St. Anselm concludes that Mary deserved to be made the worthy repairer of the lost world, because she was the most holy and the most pure of all creatures. "The pure sanctity of her heart, surpassing the purity and sanctity of all other creatures, merited for her that she should be made the repairer of the lost world."

Mary, then, was the Mediatrix of men. It may be asked, but how can she be called also the Mediatrix of the Angels? Many Theologians maintain that Jesus Christ merited the grace of perseverance for the Angels also; so that as Jesus was their Mediator *de condigno*, so also Mary may be said to be the Mediatrix even of the Angels *de congruo*, she having hastened the coming of the Redeemer by her prayers. At least meriting *de congruo* to become the Mother of the Messiah, she merited for the Angels that the thrones lost by the devils should be filled up. Thus she at least merited this accidental glory for them; and therefore Richard of St. Victor says: "By her every creature is repaired; by her the

ruin of the Angels is remedied; and by her human nature is reconciled." And before him St. Anselm said: "All things are recalled and reinstated in their primitive state by this Blessed Virgin."

Let us conclude that our heavenly child, because she was appointed Mediatrix of the world, as also because she was destined to be the Mother of the Redeemer, received at the very beginning of her existence, grace exceeding in greatness that of all the Saints together. Hence, how delightful a sight must the beautiful soul of this happy child have been to Heaven and earth, although still enclosed in her mother's womb! She was the most amiable creature in the eyes of God, because she was already laden with grace and merit, and could say: "*When I was a little one I pleased the Most High.*" And she was at the same time the creature above all others that had ever appeared in the world up to that moment, who loved God the most; so much so, that had Mary been born immediately after her most pure Conception, she would have come into the world richer in merits and more holy than all the Saints united. Then let us only reflect how much greater her sanctity must have been at her nativity; coming into the world after acquiring all the merits that she did acquire during the whole of the nine months that she remained in the womb of her mother.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST
It is consummated!

I.

St. John writes: *Jesus, therefore, when he had taken the vinegar, said, It is consummated* (Jo. xix. 30). At this moment Jesus, before breathing out His soul, placed before His eyes all the sacrifices of the Old Law (which were all figures of the Sacrifice upon the Cross), all the prayers of the Patriarchs, and all the prophecies which had been uttered respecting His life and His death, all the injuries and insults which it was predicted He would suffer; and, seeing that all was now accomplished, He said: *It is consummated.*

St. Paul encourages us to run generously and face with patience the struggle which awaits us in this life with our enemies, in order to obtain salvation: *Let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us: looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of Faith,*

who, having joy set before him, endured the Cross (Heb. xii. 1, 2). The Apostle thus exhorts us to resist temptations with patience unto the end, after the example of Jesus Christ, Who would not come down from the Cross while life remained. On this St. Augustine says: "What did He teach thee, Who, when He hung upon the Cross, would not come down, but that thou shouldst be strong in thy God?" Jesus thought fit to complete His sacrifice even to death, in order to convince us that the reward of glory is not given by God except to those who persevere to the end, as He teaches us in St. Matthew: *He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved* (Matt. x. 22).

Therefore, when, through our own passions, or the temptations of the devil, or the persecutions of men, we feel ourselves disturbed and excited to lose our patience, and to abandon ourselves to displeasing God, let us cast our eyes on Jesus crucified, Who poured forth all His Blood for our salvation, and let us reflect that we have not yet poured forth one drop of blood for love of Him: *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin* (Heb. xii. 4). When, therefore, we are called to yield up any point of honour, to abstain from any resentful feeling; to deprive ourselves of any satisfaction, or of anything we are curious to see, or to do anything which is not to our taste, let us be ashamed to deny this gift to Jesus Christ. He has treated us without holding anything back; He has given His own life and all His Blood; let us, then, be ashamed to treat Him with reserve.

II.

Let us oppose to our enemies all the resistance we are bound to make, and hope for victory from the merits of Jesus Christ alone, by means of which alone the Saints, and especially the holy Martyrs, have overcome torments and death: *In all these things we overcome, because of him that hath loved us* (Rom. viii. 37). Therefore, when the devil pictures to us obstacles which, through our weakness, seem extremely difficult to overcome, let us turn our eyes to Jesus crucified, and, wholly trusting in His help and merits, let us say, with the Apostle: *I can do all things in him who strengthens me* (Phil. iv. 13). By myself I can do nothing, but by the help of Jesus I can do everything.

Thus let us animate ourselves to endure the tribulations of

the present life, by the sight of the pains of Jesus on the Cross. Behold, says the Lord from this Cross -- behold the great multitude of pains and of wrongs I suffer for thee upon this tree. My body hangs by three nails, and rests alone upon My very Wounds. The people who surround Me blaspheme Me and afflict Me, and My spirit within Me is more afflicted than My body. I suffer all for love of thee; behold the affection I bear thee, and love Me; and be not wearied at suffering anything for Me, Who, for thee, have lived a life so afflicted, and now am dying so bitter a death.

O my Jesus, Thou hast placed me in the world that I might serve Thee and love Thee; Thou hast given me so many lights and graces that I might be faithful to Thee; but, in my ingratitude, how often, in order that I might not deprive myself of my own satisfaction -- how often have I been willing to lose Thy grace and turn my back upon Thee! Oh, through Thy desolate death, which Thou didst accept for my sake, give me strength to be grateful to Thee during what remains to me of life, while from this day forth I intend to drive from my heart every affection which is not for Thee, my God, my Love, and my All.

Mary, my Mother, help me to be faithful to thy Son, Who has loved me so much.

Thursday--Thirteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR LAST END

Consider it well and say to thyself: I have a soul and if I lose it, all is lost! I have a soul, and if I were to gain the whole world and in the end lose that soul, what would the gaining of the world profit me then? For where are now the dignities, the pleasures, the luxuries of all those great ones of the world whose bodies are mouldering in the dust, and whose souls are a prey to the fires of hell? My salvation is, therefore, of the highest importance to me, for eternal happiness is at stake.

I.

Consider, O man, how important it is to you to save your soul. Your dearest interests are there concerned, because, if you attain salvation, you will be eternally happy in the enjoyment of

every good both of soul and body; but, in losing your soul, you lose your soul and body; Heaven and God for ever. You will be eternally miserable, eternally damned. Your only important, your only necessary affair, therefore, is to serve your God and to save your soul. Do not, then, O Christian, think of serving your passions now, and of giving yourself to God hereafter. Oh, how many has this false and deceitful hope precipitated into hell! Thousands of sinners have flattered themselves with the hope of future repentance; but the day for which they hoped never arrived, and they are now suffering without remedy the torments of the damned. And who amongst them all ever thought of falling into that place of woe? Which of them had not the intention of saving his soul? But God curses him that sins in the hope of pardon. You say perhaps, within yourself, I will commit this sin and then repent: but are you sure that time will be allowed you for repentance? You may die the moment you have sinned. By sinning you lose the grace of God; and what if you never more recover it? God shows mercy to those who fear Him (Luke i. 50), but not to those who condemn and despise Him. Think not, therefore, that it will cost you no more to repent of and confess three sins than to repent of and confess one sin. No: in this thought you are deceived; God might pardon you a first or a second sin, but not a third. He has patience with the sinner for a time, but not forever when the time comes. When the measure of iniquity is filled up, His mercy ceases, and He punishes the impenitent sinner either by death, or by abandoning him to a reprobate sense, in which state he goes on from sin to sin without remorse, and at length is precipitated into hell. O Christian, attend seriously to this. It is time you should put an end to your disorders and return to God; you should fear lest this may be the last warning that He will ever send you. You have offended Him long enough, and He has borne with you long enough. Tremble, then, lest God should forsake you after the next mortal sin. Oh! how many souls has this striking thought of eternity caused to retire from the disorders and dangers of the world, to live in cloisters, solitudes, and deserts! Unfortunate sinner that I have been what is the fruit of all my crimes? -- a conscience gnawed with despair, a troubled heart, a soul overwhelmed with grief,

hell deserved, and God lost! Ah! my God, my heavenly Father, bind me to Thy love!

II.

Consider, O man, that this affair of eternity is the most neglected of all affairs. Men have time to think of everything but God and salvation. If a man of the world is advised to frequent the Sacraments, or to spend a quarter of an hour daily in Meditation, he will immediately say: I have a family to provide for; I have my business to attend to; I have quite sufficient to keep me busy. Good God! and have you not a soul to save? Will your riches and your family be able to assist you at the hour of your death, or deliver you from hell if you are condemned? No, no; flatter yourself not that you are able to reconcile God and the world, Heaven and sin. Salvation is not to be attained by a life of indolence and ease. It is necessary to use violence and to make great efforts in order to obtain the crown of immortality. How many Christians have flattered themselves with the idea of serving God and saving their souls hereafter, and are at this moment, and will forever be, in the flames of hell! How great is the folly of men in attending to what will so shortly terminate, and thinking so little of that state which will never end! Ah, Christian, put your affairs in order. Reflect that your all is at stake: remember that, in a very short time, your body will be deposited in the earth, and your soul will go to dwell in the house of eternity. How dreadful, then, will be your misfortune if you are condemned to an eternity of woe! Reflect well on this now, for then you shall find no remedy.

O my God, I am forced to acknowledge with shame and confusion that I have hitherto blindly wandered astray from Thee! I have scarcely ever thought seriously of saving my soul. O God, my Father, save me, through Jesus Christ. I am willing to part with everything here, provided I do not lose Thee. O Mary, my surest hope, save me by thy powerful intercession.

Spiritual Reading

6. - *"WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE I PLEASED THE MOST HIGH."*

Let us pass to consider the greatness of the fidelity with which Mary immediately corresponded to Divine grace.

It is not a private opinion only, says a learned author, Father La Colombiere, but it is the opinion of all, that the holy child, when she received sanctifying grace in the womb of St. Anne, received also the perfect use of her reason, and was also divinely enlightened, in a degree corresponding to the grace with which she was enriched. So that we may well believe that from the first moment that her beautiful soul was united to her most pure body, she, by the light she had received from the wisdom of God, knew well the eternal truths, the beauty of virtue, and, above all, the infinite goodness of God; and how much He deserved to be loved by all, and particularly by herself, on account of the singular gifts with which He had adorned and distinguished her above all creatures, by preserving her from the stain of original sin, by bestowing on her so immense graces and destining her to be the Mother of the Eternal Word, and Queen of the universe.

Hence from that first moment Mary, grateful to God, began to do all that she could do, by immediately and faithfully trafficking with that great capital of grace which had been bestowed upon her; and applying herself entirely to please and love the Divine goodness. She from that moment, loved God with all her strength, and continued thus to love Him always, during the whole of the nine months preceding her birth, during which she never ceased for a moment to unite herself more and more closely to God by fervent acts of love.

She was already free from original sin, and hence was exempt from every earthly affection, from every irregular movement, from every distraction from every opposition on the part of the senses, which could in any way have hindered her from always advancing more and more in Divine love: her senses also concurred with her blessed spirit in tending towards God. Hence her beautiful soul, free from every impediment, never lingered, but always flew towards God, always loved Him, and always increased in love towards Him.

It was for this reason that she called herself a plane-tree, planted by flowing waters: *As a plane-tree by the waters ... was I exalted* (Ecclus. xxiv. 19). For she was that noble plant of God which always grew close by the streams of Divine grace. And therefore she also calls herself a vine: *As a vine I have brought forth*

a pleasant odour (Ecclus. xxiv. 23). Not only because she was so humble in the eyes of the world, but because she was like the vine, which, according to the common proverb, "never ceases to grow." Other trees -- the orange-tree, the mulberry, the pear-tree -- have a determined height, which they attain; but the vine always grows, and grows to the height of the tree to which it is attached. And thus did the most Blessed Virgin always grow in perfection. "Hail, then, O vine, always growing!" says St. Gregory Thaumaturgus; for she was always united to God, on Whom alone she depended. Hence it was of her that the Holy Ghost spoke, saying, *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?* (Cant. viii. 5), which St. Ambroses thus paraphrases: "She it is that cometh up, clinging to the Eternal Word, as a vine to a vine-stock." Who is this accompanied by the Divine Word, that grows as a vine planted against a great tree?

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST
Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

I.

And Jesus crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit (Luke xxiii. 46).

Eutychius says that Jesus uttered these words with a loud voice that all hearing Him calling upon God His Father, all might understand He was the true Son of God. But St. John Chrysostom writes that Jesus cried with a loud voice to teach us that He did not die of necessity, but of His own free will, uttering so strong a voice at the very moment when He was so weak and about to end His life. This was in conformity with what Jesus had said during His life, that He voluntarily sacrificed His life for His sheep, and not through the will and malice of His enemies: *I lay down my life for my sheep ... No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself* (Jo. x. 15, 18).

St. Athanasius adds that Jesus Christ, in thus recommending Himself to the Father, recommended at the same time all the faithful, who through Him would obtain salvation, since the head with the members form one single body. On which the Saint remarks that Jesus then intended to repeat the prayer that

He had before offered: *Holy Father, keep them in thy name ... that they may be one, as we also are.* And then He added: *Father, I will that where I am they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me* (Jo. xvii. 11, 24).

This made St. Paul say: *I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day* (2 Tim. 1. 12). Thus the Apostle wrote, while he was in prison, suffering for Jesus Christ, into whose hands he committed the deposit of his sufferings, and of all his hopes, knowing how grateful and faithful Jesus is to those who suffer for His love.

II.

David placed all his hopes in the future Redeemer when he said: *Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth* (Ps. xxx. 6). And how much more ought not we to trust in Jesus Christ, Who has now completed our Redemption? Let us pray with great confidence: *Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord! Into thy hands I commend my spirit! Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!* Great comfort do these words bring to the dying at the moment of death, against the temptations of hell, and their fears on account of their sins.

But, O Jesus, my Redeemer! I will not wait for death to recommend my soul to Thee; I commend it to Thee now; suffer me not to turn my back upon Thee again. I see that my past life has served only to dishonour Thee. Suffer me not to continue to displease Thee for the days that yet remain. O Lamb of God, sacrificed upon the Cross, and dead for me as a Victim of love, and consumed by sorrows, grant by the merits of Thy death that I may love Thee with all my heart, and be wholly Thine whilst life remains. And when I shall reach the end of my days, grant me to die burning with love for Thee. Thou hast died through love of me: I would die for love of Thee. Thou hast given Thyself wholly to me; I give myself wholly to Thee: *Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth!* Thou hast poured forth all Thy Blood; Thou hast given Thy life to save me; suffer not that through my fault all this should be lost to me. O my Jesus, I love Thee, and I hope through Thy merits that I shall love Thee forever. In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let

me never be confounded (Ps. xxx. 2).

O Mary, Mother of God, I trust in thy prayers; pray that I may live and die faithful to thy Son. To thee I would say, with St. Bonaventure: "In thee, O Lady, have I hoped; I shall never be confounded."

Friday--Thirteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

MORTAL SIN

The wicked have said to God: *Depart from us!* (Job xxi. 14). When a man consents to mortal sin he says to God: "Go out from my soul, O Lord, and make room for Satan!" Our Blessed Lord complained to St. Bridget, saying: "I am like a monarch banished from his dominions, and on my throne is placed the vilest of plunderers!"

I.

Consider, O my soul, that having been created to love God you rebelled against Him and thereby have been guilty of the basest ingratitude. You have treated Him as an enemy; you have despised His grace and friendship. You were aware how much sin offends Him, and still you committed it. Yes, you turned your back on God; you insulted Him; you have in a manner raised your hand to strike Him; you have grieved His Holy Spirit. The man who sins says to God, if not in words, at least in effect: *Depart from me: I will not serve Thee, I will not acknowledge Thee for my God: the god whom I adore is this pleasure of mine, this interest, this revenge.* Such has been the language of your heart every time that you preferred any creature to God.

St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi could not conceive how a Christian could knowingly commit a mortal sin. O you who are reading these lines, what are your sentiments? How many mortal sins have you committed? O my God, pardon me; have mercy on me. I detest all my sins; I love Thee, and grieve sincerely for the insults I have offered to Thee Who art deserving of infinite love.

God spoke to your heart at the moment you were offending Him: My Son, I am your God Who created you, and redeemed you with the price of My Blood. I command you, then, not to

commit that sin under pain of incurring My eternal displeasure. But in yielding to the temptation you have replied: Lord, I will not obey Thee; I am resolved to gratify my passions; I value not Thy friendship. *Thou saidst: I will not serve* (Jer. ii. 20). Ah! my God, and this I have done many, perhaps a thousand times. How couldst Thou bear with my insults? Why did I not die rather than live to offend Thee? But, O infinite Goodness, I will do so no more; henceforth I will love Thee with all my heart. Give me perseverance; give me Thy holy love.

II.

Consider, O my soul, that, when sins reach a certain number, they cause God to abandon the sinner. *The Lord patiently expecteth that when the day of judgment shall come, he may punish them in the fulness of sins* (2 Mach. vi. 14). If, therefore, you are again tempted to return to your sins, say no more within yourself: I will commit this one, and will repent. For what if the Lord should instantly strike you dead? Or what if He should forsake you forever? What has been the fate of thousands who have thus lost the grace of God? They flattered themselves with the hope of pardon; but death surprised them, and hell enveloped them in its fires. Tremble, then, lest your fate be the same. Those who abuse the goodness of God in order to offend Him are not deserving of His Mercy. After the multitude of crimes that He has pardoned, you have too much reason to fear that, if you relapse into another mortal sin, He will pardon you no more. Thank Him, then, a thousand times for having borne patiently with you until now, and form the resolution rather to die than to offend Him any more. Say frequently to Him: My God, I have already offended Thee enough: the remainder of my life shall be spent in loving Thee and in bewailing my past ingratitude. O my Jesus, I wish to love Thee; grant me the grace to do so. O Blessed Virgin, my Mother, assist me by thy prayers. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

7. - "*WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE I PLEASED THE MOST HIGH.*"

Many learned Theologians say that a soul that possesses a habit of virtue, as long as it corresponds faithfully to the actual grace which it receives from God, always produces an act equal

in intensity to the habit it possesses; so much so that it acquires each time a new and double merit, equal to the sum of all the merits previously acquired. This kind of augmentation was, it is said, granted to the Angels in the time of their probation; and if it was granted to the Angels, who can ever deny that it was granted to the Divine Mother when living in this world, and especially during the time of which I speak, that she was in the womb of her mother, in which she was certainly more faithful than the Angels in corresponding to Divine grace? Mary, then, during the whole of that time, in each moment, doubled that sublime grace which she possessed from the first instant; for, corresponding with her whole strength, and in the most perfect manner in her every act, she subsequently doubled her merits in every instance. So that, supposing she had a thousand degrees of grace in the first instant, in the second she had two thousand, in the third four thousand, in the fourth eight thousand, in the fifth sixteen thousand, in the sixth thirty-two thousand. And we are as yet only at the sixth instant; but multiplied thus for an entire day, multiplied for nine months, consider what treasures of grace, merit, and sanctity Mary had already acquired at the moment of her birth!

Let us, then, rejoice with our beloved infant Mary, who was born so holy, so dear to God, and so full of grace. And let us rejoice, not only on her account, but also on our own; for she came into the world full of grace, not only for her own glory, but also for our good. St. Thomas remarks that the most Blessed Virgin was full of grace in three ways: first, she was filled with grace as to her soul, so that from the beginning her beautiful soul belonged all to God. Secondly, she was filled with grace as to her body, so that she merited to clothe the Eternal Word with her most pure flesh. Thirdly, she was filled with grace for the benefit of all, so that all men might partake of it. The Angelical Doctor adds that some Saints have so much grace that it is not only sufficient for themselves, but also for the salvation of many, though not for all men; only to Jesus Christ and to Mary was such a grace given as sufficed to save all: "Should any one have as much as would suffice for the salvation of all, this would be the greatest: and this was in Christ and in the Blessed Virgin." So

that what St. John (i. 16) says of Jesus: *And of his fulness we all have received*, the Saints say of Mary. St. Thomas of Villanova calls her "full of grace, of whose plenitude all receive"; so much so that St. Anselm says that "there is no one who does not partake of the grace of Mary." And who is there in the world to whom Mary is not benign, and does not dispense some mercy? Who was ever found to whom the Blessed Virgin was not propitious? Who is there whom her mercy does not reach?

From Jesus, however, it is that we receive grace as the Author of grace, from Mary as a Mediatrix; from Jesus as a Saviour, from Mary as an Advocate; from Jesus as a Source, from Mary as a Channel. Hence St. Bernard says that God established Mary as the channel of the mercies that He wished to dispense to men; therefore He filled her with grace, that each one's part might be communicated to Him from her fulness: "A full aqueduct, that others may receive of her fulness, but not fulness itself." Therefore the Saint exhorts all to consider with how much love God wills that we should honour this great Virgin, since He has deposited the whole treasure of His graces in her; so that whatever we possess of hope, grace, and salvation, we may thank our most loving Queen for all, since all comes to us from her hands and by her powerful intercession. The Saint thus beautifully expresses himself: "Behold with what tender feelings of devotion God wills that we should honour her! He has placed the plenitude of all good in Mary, that thus, if we have any hope, or anything salutary in us, we may know that it was from her that it overflowed."

Miserable is that soul that closes this channel of grace against itself by neglecting to recommend itself to Mary! When Holofernes wished to gain possession of the city of Bethulia, he took care to destroy the aqueducts: *He commanded their aqueduct to be cut off* (Judith vii. 6). And this the devil does when he wishes to become master of a soul; he causes it to give up devotion to the most Blessed Virgin Mary; and when once this channel is closed, it easily loses supernatural light, the fear of God, and finally eternal salvation.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

St. John writes that our Redeemer, before He breathed His last, bowed His head. He bowed His head as a sign that He accepted death with full submission from the hands of His Father, and thus accomplished the most humble obedience: *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross* (Phil. ii. 8).

Jesus upon the Cross, with His hands and feet nailed, could move no part of His body except His head. St. Athanasius says that death did not dare to approach to take away life from the Author of life; wherefore it was needed that He Himself, by bowing His head (which alone He then could move), should call death to approach and slay Him. On St. Matthew's words: *Jesus again crying with a loud voice yielded up the ghost* (Matt. xxvii. 50), St. Ambrose remarks that the Evangelist used the expression *yielded up* to show that Jesus did not die of necessity, or through the violence of the executioners, but because He voluntarily chose to die. He chose willingly to die, to save man from the eternal death to which he was condemned.

This was already foretold by the Prophet Osee in the words: *I will deliver them out of the hand of death. I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy death; O hell, I will be thy bite* (Osee xiii. 14). This is testified by the holy Fathers St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Gregory; and St. Paul, as we have seen, applies the Prophecy literally to Jesus Christ, Who, with His death delivered us from death, that is, from hell.

Draw near, O my soul, to the foot of the Altar of the Cross whereon the Lamb of God is now lying dead, sacrificed for thy salvation. He is dead for the love He bore thee! Speak to thy dead Lord. O Jesus, behold to what Thy love for man has at length reduced Thee! I thank Thee for all men, especially for myself. Into Thy wounded hands I commend my poor soul. May I die for the love of Thy love who didst vouchsafe to die for the love of my love!

II.

How, then, was Jesus Christ the death of death? *O death, I*

will be thy death! Because by His death our Saviour conquered death, and destroyed the death which had resulted from sin. Therefore the Apostle writes, *Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin* (1 Cor. xv. 54-56). Jesus, the Divine Lamb, by His death destroyed sin, which was the cause of our death; and this was the victory of Jesus, since by dying He banished sin from the world, and consequently delivered it from eternal death, to which the entire human race was subjected.

To this corresponds that other text of the Apostle: *That through death he might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is, the devil* (Heb. ii. 14). Jesus destroyed the devil, that is, the power of the devil, who, through sin, had the power of death; that is, who had power to inflict temporal and eternal death on all the sons of Adam who were corrupted with sin. This was the victory of the Cross, on which Jesus, the Author of life, acquired life for us by His very death. Whence the Church sings of the Cross that by it "Life endured death, and by death brought forth life."

And all this was the work of the Divine Love, which brought this Priest to sacrifice to the Eternal Father the life of His only-begotten Son for the salvation of men; for which reason the Church also sings, "The Priest, who is love, sacrifices the limbs of His tender body."

And therefore St. Francis of Sales cries out: "Let us look upon this Divine Saviour stretched upon the Cross, as upon the altar of His love, where He dies for love of us. Ah, why do we not cast ourselves in spirit upon the same, that we may die upon the Cross with Him Who has been willing to die for love of us?"

Yes, O my sweet Redeemer, I embrace Thy Cross; and holding it in my embrace, I would live and die ever lovingly kissing Thy feet, wounded and pierced for me.

Saturday--Thirteenth Week after Pentecost

(The Feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary)

Morning Meditation

THE SWEETNESS OF THE NAME OF MARY

The great name of Mary, which was given to the Divine Mother, did not come to her from her parents, nor was it given

to her by the mind or will of man, as is the case with other names given to children, but it came from Heaven, as many of the Holy Fathers tell us, and was given by a Divine ordinance. "The name of Mary came from the treasury of the Divinity."

I.

The great name of Mary, which was given to the Divine Mother, did not come to her from her parents, nor was it given to her by the mind or will of man, as is the case with other names given to children, but it came from Heaven, as many of the Holy Fathers tell us, and was given by a Divine ordinance. "The name of Mary came from the treasury of the Divinity." This is attested by St. Jerome, St. Epiphanius, St. Antoninus, St. Peter Damian, and many others. Ah, yes, O Mary, it was from that treasury that thy high and admirable name came forth; for the most Blessed Trinity, says Richard of St. Laurence, bestowed on thee a name above every other name after that of thy Son, and ennobled it with such majesty and power that He willed that all Heaven, earth, and hell, on only hearing it, should fall down and venerate it; but I will give the author's own words: "The whole Trinity, O Mary, gave thee a name after that of thy Son above every other name, that in thy name every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth." But among the many privileges of the name of Mary, and which were given to it by God, we will now examine that of the peculiar sweetness found in it by the servants of this most holy Lady during life and in death.

The holy anchorite Honorius used to say that "this name of Mary is filled with every sweetness and Divine savour"; so much so, that the glorious St. Anthony of Padua found the same sweetness in the name of Mary that St. Bernard found in that of Jesus. "Name of Jesus!" exclaimed the one. "O name of Mary!" replied the other; "joy in the heart, honey in the mouth, melody to the ear of her devout clients." It is narrated in the life of the Venerable Juvenal Ancina, Bishop of Saluzzo, that in pronouncing the name of Mary he tasted so great and sensible a sweetness, that, after doing so, he licked his lips. We read also that a lady at Cologne told the Bishop Massilius that as often as she pronounced the name of Mary she experienced a taste far sweeter than hon-

ey. The Bishop imitated her, and experienced the same thing.

O great Mother of God and my Mother Mary, it is true that I am unworthy to name thee; but thou, who lovest me and desirest my salvation, must, notwithstanding the unworthiness of my tongue, grant that I may always invoke thy most holy and powerful name in my necessities, for thy name is the succour of the living and the salvation of the dying. Ah, Mary most pure, Mary most sweet, grant that henceforth thy name may be the very breath of my life. O Lady, delay not to help me when I invoke thee, for in all the temptations which assail me, and in all my wants, I will never cease calling upon thee, and repeating again and again: Mary Mary! Thus I hope to act during my life, and particularly at my death, that after the last struggle I may eternally praise thy beloved name in Heaven, O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary.

II.

We gather from the Sacred Canticles, that on the Assumption of our Blessed Lady, the Angels asked her name three times. *Who is she that goeth up by the desert as a pillar of smoke?* (Cant. iii. 6). Again: *Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?* (Cant. vi. 9). And again: *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights?* (Cant. viii. 5). "And why," asks Richard of St. Laurence, "do the Angels so often ask the name of their Queen?" He answers: "It was so sweet even to the Angels to hear it pronounced, that they desired to hear that sweet name in reply."

But here I do not intend to speak of that sensible sweetness, for it is not granted to all; I speak of that salutary sweetness of consolation, of love, of joy, of confidence, of strength, which the name of Mary ordinarily brings to those who pronounce it with devotion.

The Abbot Francone, speaking on this subject, says, "there is no other name after that of the Son, in Heaven or on earth, whence pious minds derive so much grace, hope and sweetness." After the most sacred Name of Jesus, the name of Mary is so rich in every good thing that on earth and in heaven there is no other from which devout souls receive so much grace, hope, and sweetness. "For," he continues, "there is something so admirable, sweet, and Divine in this name of Mary that when it meets

with friendly hearts it breathes into them an odour of delightful sweetness." And he adds, in conclusion, "that the wonder of this great name is that if heard pronounced by the lovers of Mary a thousand times, it is always heard again with renewed pleasure, for they always experience the same sweetness each time they hear it."

Ah, Mary, most amiable Mary, what consolation, what sweetness, what confidence, what tenderness does my soul feel in the mere mention of thy name, in the very thought of thee! I thank my Lord and God Who for my good has given thee a name so sweet, so deserving of love, and at the same time so powerful. But, my sovereign Lady, I am not satisfied with only naming thee, I wish to do so out of love: I desire that my love may every hour remind me to call on thee, so that I may be able to exclaim with St. Bonaventure: "O name of the Mother of God, thou art my love! My own dear Mary, O my beloved Jesus, may your most sweet Names reign in my heart, and in all hearts! Grant that I may forget all others to remember, and always invoke, your adorable Names alone. Ah! Jesus, my Redeemer, and Mary my Mother, when the moment of death comes and I must breathe forth my soul and leave this world, deign to grant that my last words may be: I love Thee, O Jesus! I love thee, O Mary! To you do I give my heart and my soul!"

Spiritual Reading

"FOR A MAN IS KNOWN BY HIS CHILDREN."

It is certain that a child's good or evil conduct in life depends on his being brought up well or ill. Nature itself teaches every parent to attend to the education of his offspring. He who has given them being ought to endeavour to make life useful to them. God gives children to parents, not that they may assist the family, but that they may be brought up in the fear and love of God, and be directed in the way of eternal salvation. "We have," says St. John Chrysostom, "a great deposit in children; let us attend to them with great care." Children have not been given to parents as a gift which they may dispose of as they please, but as a trust, for which, if lost through their negligence, they must render an account to God. The Scripture tells us that when a father observes the Divine law, both he and his children shall prosper.

That it may be well with thee and thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is pleasing in the sight of God (Deut. xii. 25). The good or bad conduct of a parent may be known from the kind of life his children lead. *For by the fruit the tree is known* (Matt. xii. 33). A father who leaves a family, when he departs this life, is as if he had not died; because his children remain, and exhibit his habits and character. *His father is dead, and he is as if he were not dead; for he hath left one behind him that is like himself* (Ecclus. xxx. 4). When we find a son addicted to blasphemies, to obscenities, and to theft, we have reason to suspect that such, too, was the character of the father. *For a man is known by his children* (Ecclus. xi. 30).

Hence Origen says that on the Day of Judgment parents shall have to render an account for all the sins of their children. Hence, he who teaches his son to live well, shall die a happy and tranquil death. *He that teacheth his son ... when he died he was not sorrowful, neither was he confounded before his enemies* (Ecclus. xxx. 3-5). And he shall save his soul by means of his children; that is, by the virtuous education he has given them. *She shall be saved through child-bearing* (1 Tim. ii. 15). But, on the other hand, a very uneasy and unhappy death shall be the lot of those who have laboured only to increase the possessions, or to multiply the honours of their family; or who have sought only to lead a life of ease and pleasure, but have not watched over the morals of their children. St. Paul says that such parents are worse than infidels. *But if any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel* (1 Tim. v. 8). Were fathers or mothers to lead a life of piety and continual prayer, and to communicate every day, they would be damned if they neglected the care of their children. Would to God that certain parents paid as much attention to their children as they do to their horses! How careful are they to see that their horses are fed and well trained! And they take no pains to make their children attend to Catechism, hear Mass, or go to Confession. "We take more care," says St. John Chrysostom, "of mules and horses than of the children."

If all fathers fulfilled their duty of watching after the education of their children, we should have but few crimes and

few death penalties. By the bad education parents give to their offspring, they cause their children, says St. John Chrysostom, to rush into many grievous vices; and thus they deliver them up to the hands of the executioner. Hence, in Lacedemon, a parent, as being the cause of all the irregularities of his children, was justly punished for their crimes with greater severity than the children themselves. Great, indeed, is the misfortune of the child whose parents are vicious and incapable of bringing up their children in the fear of God, and who, when they see their children engaged in dangerous friendships and in quarrels, instead of correcting and chastising them, rather take compassion on them and say: "What can be done? They are young and must take their course." Oh what wicked maxims! What a cruel education! Do you hope that when your children grow up they will become holy? Listen to what Solomon says: *A young man, according to his way. Even when he is old, he will not depart from it* (Prov. xxii. 6). A young man who has contracted a habit of sin will not abandon it even in his old age. *His bones, says Job, shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust* (Job xx. 11). When a young person has lived in evil habits, his bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, so that he will carry them with him to death; and the impurities, blasphemies and hatred to which he was accustomed in his youth will accompany him to the grave, and sleep with him after his bones shall be reduced to dust and ashes. It is very easy, when they are young, to train up children to habits of virtue; but, when they have come to manhood, it is just as difficult to correct them, if they have learned habits of vice.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

Let us pause awhile to contemplate our Redeemer dead upon the Cross. Let us pray to His Divine Father—O Eternal Father, *look on the face of thy Christ!* (Ps. lxxxiii. 10). Look upon this Thy only-begotten Son, Who, in order to satisfy Thy will that lost man should be saved, came down upon earth, took human nature, and with that flesh took upon Himself all our miseries, save sin. In a word, He made Himself man, and lived all His life

among men as the poorest, the most despised, the most suffering of all; in the end He was condemned to death, as Thou seest Him, after these very men had torn His flesh with scourgings, wounded His head with thorns, and pierced His hands and feet with nails upon the Cross. Thus He died on this tree of unmixed anguish, despised as the vilest of men, derided as a false prophet, blasphemed as a sacrilegious impostor for having said that He was Thy Son, and condemned to die as one of the most guilty of malefactors. Thou Thyself didst give Him up to endure this terrible and desolate death, depriving Him of all relief. Tell us, what fault did Thy beloved Son commit that He should deserve so horrible a punishment? Thou knowest His innocence and His sanctity; why hast Thou thus treated Him? O my God, I hear Thee reply: *For the wickedness of my people have I struck him* (Is. liii. 8). My Son did not deserve, He could not deserve any punishment, being innocence and holiness itself. The punishment was due to you for your sins by which you deserved eternal death; and that I might not see you, the beloved creatures of My hand, lost eternally, to deliver you from so dreadful a destruction, I gave up this My Son to so mournful a life and to so bitter a death. Think, O men, to what an excess I have loved you. *God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son* (Jo. iii. 16).

II.

My soul, turn to Jesus dead upon the Cross. O Jesus, my Redeemer, I behold Thee upon this Cross, pale and desolate; Thou speakest no more, nor breathest, for Thou no longer livest: Thou hast no more Blood, for Thou hast poured forth it all, as Thou didst Thyself foretell: *This is my blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many* (Mark xiv. 24). Thou hast no longer life, for Thou didst sacrifice it in order to give life to my soul, which was dead through its sins. But why didst Thou give up Thy life and pour forth Thy Blood for us miserable sinners? Behold, St. Paul tells us: *He loved us and delivered himself for us* (Eph. v. 2).

And there at the foot of the Cross stands Mary the Mother of Jesus, watching her Son! Her Son! But, O God, what a Son! A Son Who was, at one and the same time, her Son and her God! A Son Who had from all eternity chosen her to be His Mother, and had given her a preference in His love before all mankind

and all the Angels! A Son so beautiful, so holy, and so lovely; a Son Who had been ever obedient unto her; a Son Who was her one and only Love, and she had to see such a Son die of pain before her very eyes! O Mary, O Mother, most afflicted of all mothers, I compassionate thy heart more especially when thou didst behold thy Jesus surrender Himself to death on the Cross, open His mouth, and expire; and, for love of this thy Son, now dead for my salvation, do thou recommend unto Him my soul. And do Thou, my Jesus, for the sake of the merits of Mary's sorrows, have mercy upon me, and grant me the grace of dying for Thee, as Thou hast died for me: 'May I die, O my Lord,' will I say unto Thee with St. Francis of Assisi, 'for love of the love of Thee, Who has vouchsafed to die for love of the love of me.'

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

ALL ENDS AND SOON ENDS

The grass of the field which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven (Matt. vi. 30). Behold, the goods of the earth are like the grass of the field, which to-day is blooming and beautiful, but by the evening withers, and its flowers fade, and the next day it is cast into the fire! All flesh is grass and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field.

I.

Behold, the goods of the earth are like the grass of the field, which to-day is blooming and beautiful, but by the evening it withers and its flowers fade, and the next day it is cast into the fire. This is what God commanded the Prophet Isaías to preach: *Cry. And I said: What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field (Is. xl. 6).* Hence St. James compares the rich ones of this world to the flower of the grass: at the end of their journey through life they rot, and all their riches and grandeurs with them. *The flower of the grass shall he pass away. For the sun rose with a burning heat, and parched the grass, and the flower thereof fell off, and the beauty of the shape thereof perished: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways (James i. 10, 11).* They fade away and are cast into the fire, like the rich glutton, who made a splendid appearance in this life but afterwards was buried in hell.

Let us, then, dearly beloved Christian, attend to the salvation of our souls, and to the acquisition of riches for eternity, which never ends; for everything in this world ends, and ends very soon.

When some great one of this world is in the full enjoyment of the riches and honours he has acquired, death shall come, and he shall be told: *Take order with thy house; for thou shalt die, and not live* (Is. xxxviii. 1). Oh, what doleful tidings! The unhappy man must then say: Farewell, O world! Farewell, O my villa! Farewell, O my beautiful gardens! Farewell, relatives and friends! Farewell sports and balls! Farewell, festivities and banquets! Farewell, honours! All is over for me! There is no remedy: whether he will or not he must leave all. *For when he shall die, he shall take nothing away; nor shall his glory descend with him* (Ps. xlviii. 18). St. Bernard says that death produces a horrible separation of the soul from the body, and from all the things of this earth. *Opus mortis, horrendum divortium*. To the great of this world, whom worldlings regard as the most fortunate of mortals, the bare mention of death is so full of bitterness that they are unwilling even to hear it mentioned; for their entire concern is to find peace in their earthly goods. *O death!* says Ecclesiasticus, *how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions* (Ecclus. xli. 1).

O my Jesus I give Thee thanks for having waited for me and for not having called me out of this world in my sins. During the remainder of my life I will weep over my iniquities. I will love Thee with all my strength. I know I must die, and by Thy grace I will prepare to die a happy death.

II.

If the bare mention of death is full of bitterness, how much greater bitterness shall death itself cause when it actually comes. Miserable the man who is attached to the goods of this world! Every separation produces pain. Hence, when the soul shall be separated by the stroke of death from the goods on which it had fixed all its affections, the pain must be excruciating. It was this that made king Agag exclaim, when the news of approaching death was announced to him: *Doth bitter death separate in this manner?* (1 Kings xv. 32). The great misfortune of worldlings is that

when they are on the point of being summoned to Judgment, instead of endeavouring to adjust the account of their souls, they direct all their attention to earthly things. But, says St. John Chrysostom, the punishment which awaits the sinner on account of having forgotten God during life is that at the hour of death he forgets himself.

But how great soever a man's attachment to the things of this world may be, he must take leave of them at death. Naked he has entered into this world, and naked he shall depart from it. *Naked*, says Job, *I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither* (Job i. 21.). In a word, they who have spent their whole life sacrificing sleep, health, and their very soul in accumulating riches and possessions, shall take nothing with them at the hour of death. Their eyes shall then be opened, and of all they had so dearly acquired, they shall find nothing in their hands. Hence, on that night of confusion, they shall be overwhelmed in a tempest of pains and sadness. *The rich man, when he shall sleep, shall take away nothing with him. He shall open his eyes and find nothing; ... a tempest shall oppress him in the night* (Job xxvii. 19-20).

St. Antoninus relates that Saladin, king of the Saracens, gave orders at the hour of death that the winding-sheet in which he was to be buried should be carried before him to the grave, and that a person should cry out: "Of all his possessions, only this shall Saladin bring with him." The Saint also relates that a certain philosopher, speaking of Alexander the Great after his death, said: "Behold the man that made the earth tremble!" *The earth*, as the Scripture says, *was quiet before him*. He is now under the earth. Behold the man whom the dominion of the whole world could not satisfy: now six feet of earth is sufficient for him. An ancient writer says that having gone to see the tomb of Caesar, he exclaimed: "Princes feared thee; cities worshipped thee; all trembled before thee; whither has thy magnificence gone?" Listen to what David says: *I have seen the wicked highly exalted and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus. And I passed by, and lo! he was not* (Ps. xxxvi. 35-36). Oh, how many such spectacles are seen every day in the world! A sinner who had been born in lowliness and poverty afterwards acquires wealth and honours, so as to excite

the envy of all. When he dies, men say: He made a fortune in the world; but now he is dead, and with death all is over for him!

Spiritual Reading

DANGERS TO SALVATION

A boat on the waves of the sea represents man in this world. As a vessel on the sea is exposed to a thousand dangers -- to pirates, to quicksands, to hidden rocks, and to tempests, so man in this life is encompassed with perils arising from the temptations of hell -- from the occasions of sin, from the scandals or bad counsels of men, from human respect, and, above all, from the bad passions of corrupt nature, represented by the winds that agitate the sea and expose the vessel to great danger of being lost.

St. Leo says our life is full of dangers, of snares, and of enemies. The first enemy of the salvation of every Christian is his own corruption. *But every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured* (James i. 14).

Along with the corrupt inclinations within us that drag us to evil, we have many enemies from without that fight against us. We have the devils, with whom the contest is very difficult, because they are stronger than we are. Hence, because we have to contend with powerful enemies, St. Paul exhorts us to arm ourselves with the Divine aid: *Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places* (Ephes. vi. 11-12). The devil, according to St. Peter, is a lion continually going about roaring with rage and hunger for our souls. *Your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour* (1 Pet. v. 8). St. Cyprian says that Satan is continually lying in wait for us in order to make us his slaves.

Even the men with whom we must converse endanger our salvation. They persecute or betray us, or they deceive us by their flattery and wicked counsels. St. Augustine says that among the faithful there are in every profession insincere and deceitful men. Now if a fortress were full of rebels within, and encompassed by enemies without, who would not regard it as lost? Such is the condition of each of us as long as we live in this

world. Who shall be able to deliver us from so many powerful enemies? Only God: *Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it* (Ps. cxxvi. 1).

What, then, is the means by which we can save our souls in the midst of so many dangers? It is to imitate the holy disciples -- to have recourse to our Divine Master, and to say to Him: *Lord, save us; we perish - Domine, salva nos; perimus*. Save us, O Lord; if Thou dost not, we are lost. When the tempest is violent, the pilot never takes his eyes from the light which guides him to the port. In like manner we should keep our eyes always turned to God Who alone can deliver us from the many dangers to which we are exposed. It was thus David acted when he found himself assailed by the dangers of sin. *I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me* (Ps. cxx. 1). To teach us to recommend ourselves continually to Him who alone can save us by His grace, the Lord has ordained that, as long as we remain on this earth we shall have to live in the midst of a continual tempest and be surrounded by enemies. The temptations of the devil, the persecutions of men, the adversity which we suffer in this world, are not evils; they are, on the contrary, advantages, if we know how to use them as God wishes, Who sends or permits them for our welfare. They detach our affections from this earth, and inspire a disgust for this world, by making us feel bitterness and thorns even in its honours, its riches, its delights, and amusements. The Lord permits all these apparent evils, that we may take away our affections from fading goods, in which we meet with so many dangers of perdition, and that we may seek to unite ourselves with Him Who alone can make us happy.

The error and mistake is that when we find ourselves harassed by infirmities, poverty, persecutions, and all such tribulations, instead of having recourse to the Lord, we turn to creatures and place our confidence in their assistance, and thus draw upon ourselves the maledictions of God, Who says: *Cursed be the man who trusteth in man* (Jer. xvii. 5). The Lord does not forbid us in our afflictions and dangers to have recourse to human means; but He curses those who place their whole trust in them. He wishes us to have recourse to Himself before all others and to place our only hope in Him, so that we may also centre in Him

all our love.

As long as we live on this earth, we must, according to St. Paul, work out our salvation with fear and trembling in the midst of the dangers by which we are beset. Whilst a certain vessel was in the open sea a great tempest arose which made the captain tremble. In the hold of the vessel there was an animal eating with as much tranquillity as if the sea were perfectly calm. The captain being asked why he was so much afraid, replied: "If I had a soul like the soul of that brute, I too would be tranquil and without fear; but because I have a rational and an immortal soul, I am afraid of death, after which I must appear before the Judgment-seat of God; and therefore I tremble through fear." Let us tremble. The salvation of our immortal souls is at stake. They who do not tremble, are, as St. Paul says, in great danger of being lost; because they who fear not, seldom recommend themselves to God, and labour but little to adopt the means of salvation. Let us beware, for we are, says St. Cyprian, still in the front of the fight, and combating for eternal salvation.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST I.

The Divine Priest, Jesus Christ, Who was both Priest and Victim, by the sacrifice of His life for the salvation of men completed the Sacrifice of the Cross and accomplished the work of the world's Redemption. By His death Jesus Christ stripped our death of its terrors. Until then it was but the punishment of rebels; but by grace and the merits of our Saviour it becomes a sacrifice so dear to God that when we unite it to the death of Jesus, it makes us worthy to enjoy the same glory that God enjoys, and to hear Him one day say to us, as we hope: *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!* (Matt. xxv.21).

Thus death, which was an object of pain and dread, was changed by the death of Jesus into a passage from a state of peril and danger of hell, into one of security and of eternal blessedness, and from the miseries of this life to the boundless delights of Paradise.

Therefore the Saints have ever regarded death with joy and desire, and no longer with fear. St. Augustine says that they who

love the Crucified One "live with patience and die with joy." And common experience shows that they who in life have been most troubled with persecutions, temptations, scruples, or other painful events are in death most comforted by Jesus Crucified, conquering with great peace of mind all the terrors and pains of death. And if it has sometimes happened that some of the Saints, as we read in their Lives, died in great fear of death, the Lord God permitted this in order to increase their merits; because the more painful the sacrifice, the more acceptable it was to God, and the more profitable to them for eternity.

Oh, how much more bitter was death of old, before the time of the death of Jesus Christ! The Saviour was not yet come, and men sighed for His coming; they waited for His promise, but they knew not when it would be fulfilled. The devil had great power upon earth; Heaven was closed to men. But after the death of the Redeemer, hell was conquered. Divine grace was given to souls, God was reconciled to men, and the Kingdom of Heaven was opened to all those who die innocent, or have expiated their sins by repentance. And if some who die in grace do not immediately enter Heaven, this only results from the faults of which they are not yet cleansed; and death merely bursts their bonds, in order that they may be free to unite themselves perfectly to God, from Whom they are far away in this land of exile.

II.

Let us, then, take heed, O Christian souls, while we are in this exile, not to look at death as a misfortune, but as the end of our pilgrimage, which is full of difficulties and dangers, and as the beginning of our eternal happiness, which we hope one day to attain through the merits of Jesus Christ. And with this thought of Heaven, let us detach ourselves as much as possible from earthly things, which may cause us to lose Heaven and give us over to eternal pains. Let us offer ourselves to God declaring that we wish to die when it pleases Him, and to accept death in the manner and at the time which He has appointed; ever praying Him that, through the merits of Jesus Christ, He will cause us to depart from this life in His grace.

O my Jesus and my Saviour, Who, to obtain for me a happy death, hast chosen for Thyself a death so painful and desolate.

I abandon myself into the arms of Thy mercy. For many years past I have deserved to be in hell, for the sins I have committed against Thee, and to be separated from Thee forever. But Thou, instead of punishing me as I deserved, hast called me to repentance, and I hope that now Thou hast pardoned me; but if Thou hast not already pardoned me through my fault, pardon me now that in sorrow I ask for mercy at Thy feet. O my Jesus, I could die of grief when I think of the injuries I have offered Thee!

"O Blood of the Innocent, wash away the sins of the penitent!" pardon me, and give me grace to love Thee with all my strength till death; and when I shall reach the end of my life, make me to die burning with love for Thee, that I may continue to love Thee forever. Jesus, henceforth I unite my death to Thy holy death, through which I hope to be saved. *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded* (Ps. xxx. 2).

O thou great Mother of God, next to Jesus thou art my hope. "In thee, O Lady, have I hoped; I shall not be confounded forever."

Monday--Fourteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

EARNEST LABOUR FOR ETERNAL SALVATION

"No security is too great where Eternity is at stake," says St. Bernard. We should, therefore, resolve: "I will save my soul, cost what it may!" Perish all things else -- property, friends, even life itself, if I can but only save my soul!

I.

To be saved it is not sufficient to profess to do merely what is absolutely necessary. If, for example, a person wishes to avoid only mortal sins, without taking any account of those which are venial, he will easily fall into mortal sins and lose his soul. He who desires to avoid only such dangers as are absolutely the immediate occasions of sin will most probably one day discover that he has fallen into grievous crimes and is lost. O my God, with what attention are the princes of this world served! Everything is avoided that can possibly give them the least offence for fear of losing their favour; but with what carelessness Thou art served! Everything that can endanger the life of the body

is shunned with the greatest caution, while the dangers which threaten the life of the soul are not feared!

O my God, how negligently have I hitherto served Thee. Henceforth I will serve Thee with the greatest attention; be Thou my helper and assist me.

O my brother, if God should act as sparingly with you as you do with Him, what would become of you? If He should grant you only the grace barely sufficient -- would you be saved? You would be able to obtain salvation, but you would not obtain it; because in this life temptations frequently occur so violent that it is morally impossible not to yield to them without a special assistance from God. But God does not afford His special assistance to those who deal sparingly with Him: *He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly* (2 Cor. ix. 6).

But, O God, Thou hast not dealt sparingly with me: while I have been so ungrateful towards Thee as to repay Thy many favours with offences, Thou, instead of chastising me, hast redoubled Thy graces towards me. No, my God, I will never more be ungrateful to Thee, as I have hitherto been.

II.

To save our immortal souls is not an easy task, but a difficult, and indeed a very difficult one. We carry about us the rebellious flesh, which allures to the gratification of sense; and we have, moreover, numberless enemies to contend with in the world, in hell, and even within our own selves, who are ever tempting us to evil. It is true, the grace of God is never wanting to us; but still this grace demands of us a hard struggle to overcome temptations, and fervent prayer in order to obtain more powerful assistance as the danger becomes greater.

O Jesus, I desire never more to be separated from Thee or deprived of Thy love. Hitherto I have been ungrateful to Thee and have turned my back upon Thee, but I will now love Thee with my whole soul, and fear nothing so much as to cease to love Thee. Thou knowest my weakness; assist me, therefore, Thou Who art my only hope and confidence. And thou, O ever-blessed Virgin Mary, cease not to intercede for me.

Spiritual Reading

DANGERS TO SALVATION

A General Confession is a powerful help to a change of life. When the tempest is violent the burden of the vessel is diminished, and each person on board throws his goods into the sea in order to save the ship and save his life. O folly of sinners, who, in the midst of so great dangers of eternal perdition, instead of diminishing the burden of the vessel -- that is, instead of unburdening the soul of her sins -- load her with a greater weight. Instead of flying from the dangers of sin, they fearlessly continue to put themselves voluntarily into dangerous occasions; and, instead of having recourse to God's mercy for the pardon of their offences, they offend Him still more, and compel Him to abandon them.

Another means is to labour strenuously to prevent ourselves becoming the slaves of irregular passions. *Give me not over to a shameless and foolish mind* (Ecclus. xxiii. 6). Do not, O Lord, deliver me up to a mind blinded by passion. He who is blind sees not what he is doing, and therefore he is in danger of falling into every crime. Thus so many are lost by submitting to the tyranny of their passions. Some are slaves to the passion of avarice. A person who is now in the other world said: Alas! I perceive that a desire of riches is beginning to tyrannize over me. So said the unhappy man; but he applied no remedy. He did not resist the passion in the beginning, but nurtured it till death, and thus at his last moments left but little reason to hope for his salvation. Others are slaves to sensual pleasures. They are not content with lawful gratifications, and therefore they pass to the indulgence of those that are forbidden. Others are subject to anger; and because they are not careful to check the fire at its commencement, when it is small, it increases and grows into a spirit of revenge.

Disorderly affections, if they are not beaten down in the beginning, become our greatest tyrants. Many, says St. Ambrose, after having victoriously resisted the persecutions of the enemies of the Faith, were afterwards lost because they did not resist the first assaults of some earthly passion. Of this, Origen was a miserable example. He fought for, and was prepared to give his life in defence of the Faith; but afterwards, yielding to human respect, he was led to deny the Faith, as we are told by Natalis Alexander. We have still a more miserable example in Solomon, who, after having received so many gifts from God, and after

being inspired by the Holy Ghost, was, by indulging a passion for certain pagan women, induced to offer incense to idols. The unhappy man who submits to the slavery of his wicked passions resembles the miserable ox that is sent to the slaughter after a life of constant labour. During their whole lives worldlings groan under the weight of their sins, and, at the end of their days they fall into hell.

When the winds are strong and violent the pilot lowers the sails and casts anchor. So when we find ourselves assailed by any bad passion, we should lower the sails; that is, we should avoid all the occasions which may increase the passion, and should cast anchor by uniting ourselves to God, and by begging of Him to give us strength not to offend Him.

But some of you will say: What am I to do? I live in the midst of the world where my passions continually assail me even against my will. I will answer in the words of Origen: "The man who lives in the darkness of the world and in the midst of secular business, can with difficulty serve God." Whoever, then, wishes to insure his eternal salvation, let him retire from the world and take refuge in one of those exact Religious Communities which are the secure harbours in the sea of this world. If he cannot actually leave the world, let him leave it at least in affection by detaching his heart from the things of this world, and from his own evil inclinations: *Go not after thy lusts, says the Holy Ghost, but turn away from thy own will* (Ecclus. xviii. 30). Follow not your own concupiscence; and when your will would impel you to evil, you must not indulge, but must resist its inclinations.

The time is short ... the fashion of this world passeth away (1 Cor. vii. 29-31). The time of life is short; we should then prepare for death which is rapidly approaching; and to prepare for that awful moment let us reflect that everything in this world shall soon end.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST I.

The soldiers came, and broke the legs of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus, but when they came to Jesus, they saw that He was already dead, and abstained from doing the same to

Him. One of them, however, with a spear pierced His side, from which immediately came forth Blood and water (Jo. xix. 34).

St. Cyprian says that the spear pierced straight into the Heart of Jesus Christ, and the same was revealed to St. Bridget. From which we understand that, as both Blood and water flowed forth, the spear, in order to strike the heart, must first have pierced the pericardium.

St. Augustine says that St. John used the words *opened the side*, because in the Heart of the Lord the way of life was opened, whence came forth the Sacraments by means of which we enter upon eternal life. Further, it is said that the Blood and water which came from the side of Jesus were figures of the Sacraments; the water, of Baptism, which is the first of the Sacraments; and the Blood, of the Eucharist, which is the greatest.

St. Bernard further says that, by receiving this visible stroke, Jesus Christ wished to signify the invisible stroke of love by which His Heart was pierced for us.

St. Augustine, speaking of the Eucharist, says that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass today is not less efficacious before God than the Blood and water which flowed that day from the side of Jesus Christ.

II.

Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And he hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross (Colos. ii. 14). The sentence was already recorded against us that was to condemn us to eternal death, as rebels against the offended Majesty of God. And what has Jesus Christ done? With His Blood He has cancelled the writing of the condemnation, and, to deliver us from all fear, He has fastened it to His own Cross, on which He died to satisfy for us to the Divine justice. My soul, behold the obligation thou art under to thy Redeemer; and hear how the Holy Spirit now reminds thee: *Forget not the kindness of thy surety* (Ecclus. xxix. 19). Forget not the kindness of thy Surety, Who, taking upon Himself thy debts, has paid them for thee, and behold, the pledge of the payment has been already fixed to the Cross. When, therefore, thou dost remember thy sins, look upon the Cross, and have confidence; look on that sacred wood stained with the Blood of the Lamb

of God sacrificed for thy love, and hope in and love a God Who has loved thee so much.

Tuesday--Fourteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE CERTAINTY OF BEING SAVED OR LOST

God desires all men to be saved, and He gives His graces to all, but many will not use these means of salvation and are lost, for "Heaven is not for the slothful."

I.

With fear and trembling work out your salvation, wrote St. Paul to the Philippians (Phil. ii. 12). In order to be saved we should tremble lest we be lost, for there is no middle course. We must be either saved or lost forever. He who trembles not is in great danger of being lost, because he takes but little care to employ the means of obtaining salvation. God desires that all should be saved, and He gives to all His grace; but He requires that all should co-operate for this end. All desire to be saved, yet multitudes, because they will not employ the means of salvation, are lost. St. Philip Neri used to say: *Heaven is not made for the slothful*.

Enlighten me, O Lord, that I may know what I ought to do, and what to avoid, for I desire to do all Thou requirest of me. I am determined, by Thy grace, to save my soul.

St. Teresa said to her Religious: *One soul!* my daughters, one *Eternity!* She meant that in this world we ought not to attend to anything but the salvation of our souls; because if the soul be lost, all is lost; and if once lost, it is lost forever! Benedict XII, being asked by a prince for a favour that he could not grant without committing sin, answered the ambassador: "Tell your prince that if I had two souls I would give him one; but as I have only one I cannot consent to lose it for his sake." Thus should we answer the devil or the world when they offer us forbidden fruit.

O God, how often have I lost my soul by forfeiting Thy grace! But since Thou offerest me pardon, I detest all the offences I have committed against Thee, and will love Thee above all things.

II.

Would that we were fully impressed with the meaning of that

great maxim of St. Francis Xavier: *There is but one evil, and there is but one good in the world!* The only evil is damnation; the only good, salvation. Poverty, infirmity, ignominies are not evils. No; for these when embraced with resignation will increase our glory in Heaven. On the other hand, health, riches, and honours are not really *goods* for too many Christians, because they become to them greater occasion of losing their souls.

Save me, then, O my God, and do with me what Thou pleasest. Thou knowest and wilt what is best for me. I abandon myself to Thy mercy: *Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit* (Ps. xxx. 6). I am sorry for having been hitherto opposed to Thy will, and am ready to die in order to expiate my offences; but now I love Thee, and wish for nothing but what Thou wilt. Grant me Thy love, that I may be faithful to Thee. And Mary, give me thy powerful assistance.

Spiritual Reading

THE EVIL EFFECTS OF A BAD HABIT

I.-IT BLINDS THE UNDERSTANDING.

Speaking of those who live in the habit of sin, St. Augustine says: "The very habit itself does not allow them to see the evil they do." The habit of sin blinds sinners, so that they no longer see the evil which they do, nor the ruin which they bring upon themselves; hence they live in blindness as if there was neither God, nor Heaven, nor hell, nor eternity. "Sins," adds the Saint, "however enormous, when habitual, appear to be small, or not to be sins at all." How, then, can the soul guard against them when she is no longer sensible of their deformity, or the evil which they bring upon her?

St. Jerome says that habitual sinners "are not even ashamed of their crimes." Bad actions naturally produce a certain shame; but this feeling is destroyed by the habit of sin. St. Peter compares habitual sinners to swine wallowing in mire. *The sow that was washed is returned to her wallowing in the mire* (2 Pet. ii. 22). The very mire of sin blinds them; and, therefore, instead of feeling sorrow and shame at their uncleanness, they revel and exult in it. *A fool worketh mischief as it were for sport* (Prov. x. 23). *They are glad when they have done evil* (Prov. ii. 14). Hence the Saints continually seek light from God; for they know that, should He

withdraw His light, they may become the greatest of sinners. How, then, do so many Christians, who know by Faith that there is a hell, and a just God Who cannot but chastise the wicked, how, I say, do they continue to live in sin till death, and thus bring themselves to perdition? *Their own malice blinded them* (Wis. 21). Sin blinds them, and thus they are lost.

Job says that habitual sinners are full of iniquities. *His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth* (Job xx. 11). Every sin produces darkness in the understanding. Hence the more sins are multiplied by a bad habit, the greater the blindness they cause. The light of the sun cannot enter a vessel filled with clay; and a heart full of vices cannot admit the light of God, which would make visible to the soul the abyss into which she is running. Bereft of light, the habitual sinner goes on from sin to sin, without ever thinking of repentance. *The wicked walk round about* (Ps. xi. 9). Fallen into the dark pit of evil habits, he thinks only of sinning, he speaks only of sins, and no longer sees the evil of sin. In fine, he becomes like a brute beast, devoid of reason, and seeks and desires only what pleases the senses. *And man, when he was in honour, did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them* (Ps. xlviii. 13). Hence the words of the Wise Man are fulfilled with regard to habitual sinners. *The wicked man when he comes into the depth of sins, contemneth* (Prov. xviii. 3). This passage St. John Chrysostom applies to habitual sinners, who, shut up in a pit of darkness, despise sermons, calls of God, admonitions, censures, hell, and God, and become like the vulture that waits to be killed by the fowler, rather than abandon the corrupt carcass on which it feeds.

Let us tremble, as David did when he said: *Let not the tempest of water drown me, nor the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me* (Ps. lxxviii. 16). Should a person fall into a pit there is hope of deliverance as long as the mouth of the pit is not closed; but as soon as it is shut, he is lost. When a sinner falls into a bad habit, the mouth of the pit is gradually closed as his sins are multiplied; the moment the mouth of the pit is shut he is abandoned by God. If you have contracted a habit of any sin, endeavour instantly to go out of that pit before God deprives you entirely of His light, and abandons you; for, as soon as He

abandons you by the total withdrawal of His light, all is over and you are lost.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

Jesus came into the world, not only to redeem us, but by His own example to teach us all virtues, and especially humility, and holy poverty which is inseparably united with humility. On this account He chose to be born in a cave; to live a poor Man in a workshop for thirty years; and finally to die, poor and naked, upon a Cross, and seeing His garments divided among the soldiers before He breathed His last. While after His death He had to receive His winding-sheet for burial as an alms from others. Let the poor be consoled, on seeing Jesus Christ, the King of Heaven and earth, thus living and dying in poverty in order to enrich us with His merits and gifts, as the Apostle says: *Being rich he became poor for your sakes, that through his poverty you might be rich* (2 Cor. viii. 9). For this cause, the Saints, to become like Jesus in His poverty, have despised all earthly riches and honours, that they might go one day to enjoy with Jesus Christ the riches and honours prepared by God in Heaven for them that love Him; of which blessings the Apostle says that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the mind of man to conceive what God has prepared for them that love Him. (1 Cor. ii. 9).

II.

Jesus Christ, then, rose with the glory of possessing all power in Heaven and earth, not as God alone, but as man; wherefore all Angels and men are subject to Him. Let us rejoice in thus seeing in glory our Saviour, our Father, and the best Friend we possess. And let us rejoice for ourselves, because the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is for us a sure pledge of our own resurrection and of the glory we hope one day to have in Heaven, both in soul and in body. This hope gave courage to the holy Martyrs to suffer with gladness all the evils of this life, and the most cruel torments of tyrants. We must rest assured, however, that none will rejoice with Jesus Christ but they who are willing to suffer with Him; nor will he obtain the crown who does not fight as he ought to fight. *He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned unless*

he strive lawfully (2 Tim. ii. 5). At the same time let us remember what the same Apostle says, that all the sufferings of this life are short and light in comparison with the boundless and eternal joys we shall enjoy in Paradise (2 Cor. iv. 17). Let us labour the more to continue in the grace of God, and to pray continually for perseverance in His grace and favour; for without prayer, and persevering prayer, we shall not obtain this perseverance; and without perseverance we shall not obtain salvation.

O sweet Jesus, worthy of all love, Thou hast so loved men that, in order to show Thy love, Thou hast not refused to die wounded and dishonoured upon an infamous tree! O my God, how is it that there are so few among men who love Thee with all their heart? My dear Redeemer, of these few I will be one! Miserable that I am, for in my past life I have forgotten Thy love, and given up Thy grace for miserable pleasures. I know the evil I have done; I grieve for it with all my heart; I would die of grief. Now, O my beloved Redeemer, I love Thee more than myself; and I am ready to die a thousand times rather than lose Thy friendship. I thank Thee for the light Thou hast given me. O my Jesus, my Hope, leave me not in my own hands; help me until my death.

O Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Wednesday--Fourteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE UNCERTAINTY OF GRACE

Delay not to be converted to the Lord. The measure of grace is not the same for all: for some greater, for others less. But any one grace may be the last we shall receive from God, and by despising that grace, that light, that call, we may lose our souls.

I.

Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for his wrath shall come on a sudden and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee (Ecclus. v. 8-9). The Lord admonishes us to be speedily converted, if we would be saved, because if we go on putting off our conversion from day to day, the time of vengeance will come, when God will neither call nor wait for us any longer; death will overtake us in sin, and there will be no means

of escaping eternal damnation. God admonishes us in this manner, because He loves us and does not wish to see us perish.

I am convinced, O God, that Thou desirest my salvation; I know that Thou desirest to deal with me in Thy mercy; and it is my desire never more to despise Thee.

Alas! to how many the admonitions given by God during life, become the most cruel swords that pierce their souls in hell! In proportion as the mercies which God showed them were greater, so were their crimes more enormous.

Hadst Thou, O Jesus, condemned me to hell, as I deserved, how great would have been my punishment, since Thy graces and favours have been so abundant towards me! No, I will no longer be ungrateful to Thee. Say to me what Thou plearest and I will obey Thee in all things. I am sorry for having so often offended Thee; henceforward I will not seek to please myself, but to please Thee alone, my God and only Good.

II.

How careful men are in their temporal affairs, and yet how negligent in the affairs of eternity! If a man has to receive a sum of money from another, he uses every expedient to obtain it as quickly as possible, saying: "Who knows what may happen?" And yet, why do so many live months and years in sin? When the soul is at stake they do not think of saying: "Who knows what may happen?" If money be lost, however much it may be, all is not lost; but if the soul be lost, all is lost, and lost forever, without hope of recovery.

My beloved Redeemer, Thou hast given me life that I may become worthy of Thy grace; and yet I have often renounced Thy grace for something worse than nothing. Pardon me, O infinite Goodness, for I am sorry from the bottom of my heart for having done so. O Jesus, Thou hast done too much to oblige me to love Thee, and I desire to love Thee to the utmost of my power. I love Thee, my sovereign Good, I love Thee more than myself. Permit me not, O God, ever to cease to love Thee. O Mary, holy Queen, protect me.

Spiritual Reading

THE EVIL EFFECTS OF A BAD HABIT

2. IT HARDENS THE HEART.

The habit of sin not only blinds the mind, but it also hardens the heart of the sinner. *His heart shall be as hard as a stone, and as firm as a smith's anvil* (Job xli. 15). By the habit of sin the heart becomes like a stone; and, as the anvil is hardened by repeated strokes of the hammer, so, instead of being softened by Divine inspirations or by instructions, the soul of the habitual sinner is rendered more obdurate by sermons on the Judgment of God, on the torments of the damned, or on the Passion of Jesus Christ: *his heart shall be firm as a smith's anvil*. "The heart," says St. Augustine, "is hardened against the dew of grace, so as to produce no fruit." Divine calls, remorse of conscience, the terrors of Divine justice, are showers of Divine grace; but when, instead of drawing fruit from these Divine blessings, the habitual sinner continues to commit sin, he hardens his heart, and thus, according to St. Thomas of Villanova, he gives a sign of certain damnation, for, from the loss of God's light, and the hardness of his heart, the sinner will, according to the terrible threat of the Holy Ghost, remain obstinate till death. *A hard heart shall fare evil at the last* (Ecclus. iii. 27).

Of what use are Confessions, when, in a short time after them, the sinner returns to the same vices? "He who strikes his breast," says St. Augustine, "and does not amend, makes firm rather than takes away his sins." When you strike your breast in the tribunal of penance, but do not amend and remove the occasions of sin, you then, according to the Saint, do not take away your sins, but you make them more firm and permanent; that is, you render yourself more obstinate in sin. *The wicked walk round about*. Such is the unhappy life of habitual sinners. They go round about from sin to sin; and if they abstain for a little, they immediately, in the first occasion of temptation, return to their former iniquities. St. Bernard regards as certain the damnation of such sinners.

But some young persons may say: I will hereafter amend, and sincerely give myself to God. But, if a habit of sin takes possession of you, when will you amend? The Holy Ghost declares

that a young man who contracts an evil habit will not relinquish it even in his old age. *A young man, according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it* (Prov. xxii. 6). Habitual sinners have been known to yield, even at the hour of death, to the sins they have been in the habit of committing. Father Recupito relates that a person condemned to death, even while on his way to the place of execution, raised his eyes, saw a young woman, and consented to a bad thought. We read in a work of Father Gisolfo that a certain blasphemer, who had been likewise condemned to death, when thrown off the scaffold, broke out into a blasphemy, and died in that miserable state.

He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth (Rom. ix. 18). God shows mercy for a certain time, and then He hardens the heart of the sinner. How does God harden the heart of sinners? St. Augustine answers: "God hardens hearts by not having mercy." The Lord does not directly harden the hearts of habitual sinners; but, in punishment of their ingratitude for His benefits, He withdraws from them His graces, and thus their hearts are hardened and become like a stone. "God does not harden the heart by imparting malice, but by withholding mercy." God does not render sinners obdurate by infusing the malice of obstinacy, but by not giving them the efficacious graces by which they would be converted. By the withdrawal of the sun's heat from the earth, water is hardened into ice.

St. Bernard teaches that hardness or obstinacy of heart does not take place suddenly; but by degrees the soul becomes insensible to the Divine threats and more obstinate by Divine chastisements. In habitual sinners are verified the words of David: *At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, they have slumbered* (Ps. lxxv. 7). Even earthquakes, thunders, and sudden deaths do not terrify an habitual sinner. Instead of awakening him to a sense of his miserable state, they rather bring on that deadly sleep in which he slumbers and is lost.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

St. Francis de Sales called Mount Calvary "the Mountain of lovers," and says that the love which springs not from the Passion

is weak; meaning that the Passion of Jesus Christ is the most powerful incentive to inflame us with love of our Saviour. To be able to comprehend even a part, for to comprehend the whole is impossible, of the great love which God has shown us in the Passion of Jesus Christ, it is sufficient to glance at what is said of it in the Divine Scriptures, of which I shall here set forth some of the principal passages. Nor let any one complain that I thus repeat the texts which I have already repeated several times in my other works when speaking of the Passion. Many writers of mischievous books constantly repeat their immodest jests, in order the more to excite the passions of their thoughtless readers; and shall it not be permitted to me to repeat those holy texts which most inflame souls with Divine love?

Speaking of this love, Jesus Himself said: *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son* (Jo. iii. 16). The word *so* expresses much. It teaches us that when God gave His only-begotten Son, He displayed a love for us we can never comprehend. Through sin we were all dead, having lost the life of grace; but the Eternal Father, in order to make known His goodness to the world, and to show us how much He loved us, chose to send on earth His Son, that by His death He might restore us to the life we had lost. *In this appeared the love of God to us, in that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live by him* (1 Jo. iv. 9). Thus, in order to pardon us, God refused that pardon to His own Son, desiring that He should take upon Himself to satisfy the Divine justice for all our sins: *He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all* (Rom. viii. 32). The words *delivered up* are used because God gave Him into the hands of the executioners that they might load Him with insults and pains, until He expired in agony on a shameful tree. Thus He first loaded Him with all our sins. *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all*. And then He chose to see His Son consumed with the most bitter inward and outward pangs and afflictions: *For the wickedness of my people have I stricken him. The Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity* (Is. liii. 6-8).

II.

St. Paul, considering the great love of God for us, says: *But God (who is rich in mercy) for his exceeding charity wherewith he loved*

us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ (Eph. ii. 4-5). The Apostle calls it *exceeding charity*. Could there be anything, indeed, of excess in God? Yes; by this he gives us to understand that God has done such things for us, that if Faith had not assured us, none could have believed it. And therefore the Church cries out in astonishment: "How wonderful the condescension of Thy mercy towards us! How incomparable the predilection of Thy love! That Thou mightest ransom Thy slave Thou gavest up Thine own Son!" Remark here the words: *the predilection of Thy love*; for the love of God to us is more than He has shown to any other creatures. God being Love itself, as St. John says, He loves all His creatures: *Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which thou hast made* (Wis. xi. 25). But the love He bears to man seems to be that which is the dearest to Him and most beloved, for it appears as though, in love, He had preferred man to the Angels, since He has been willing to die for men and not for the fallen angels.

Thursday--Fourteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE DESIRE OF GOD TO SAVE ALL MEN

I have loved thee with an everlasting love. And so God has from all eternity loved every human soul. It was for us and for our salvation He sent His only Son into the world to die upon the Cross. Alas, how often have I withdrawn myself from God and sold myself for a nothing to Satan, God's enemy and my own!

I.

It is, indeed, amazing that man, a worm of the earth, should dare to offend His Creator and turn his back upon Him, by despising His graces after God has so favoured and loved him as to lay down His life to save him. But it is still more surprising that God, after having been thus despised by man, should seek after him, invite him to repentance and offer him pardon, as though God stood in need of us and not we of God.

O Jesus, Thou seekest me, and I seek after Thee. Thou desirest me, and I desire only Thee.

For Christ, says the Apostle, *we beseech you, be reconciled to God* (2 Cor. v. 20). "And does God," exclaims St. Chrysostom, "call

thus upon sinners? And what does He ask of them? That they be reconciled, and in peace with Him."

My Redeemer, Jesus Christ, how couldst Thou have had so much love for me, who have so often offended Thee? I detest all my offences against Thee; give me still greater grief, still greater love, that I may deplore my sins, not so much on account of the punishments I have deserved by them, as for the injury I have offered to Thee, my God, Who art infinitely good and amiable.

II.

What is man, exclaims holy Job, that thou shouldst magnify him? Or why dost thou set thy heart upon him? (Job vii. 17).

What good, O Lord, hast Thou ever derived from me? And what canst Thou expect from me, that Thou lovest me so much, and comest so near to me? Hast Thou, then, forgotten all the injuries and treasons I have committed against Thee? But since Thou hast so much loved me, I, a miserable worm, must also love Thee, my Creator and my Redeemer. Yes, I do love Thee, my God; I love Thee with my whole heart; I love Thee more than myself, and because I love Thee I will do everything to please Thee. Thou knowest that nothing is so grievous to me as the remembrance of my having so often despised Thy love. I hope for the future to be able to compensate by my love for the frequent displeasure which I have given Thee. Help me for the sake of that Precious Blood Thou hast shed for me. Help me also, O holy Mary, for the love of thy Son Who died for me.

Spiritual Reading

THE EVIL EFFECTS OF A BAD HABIT

3. IT DIMINISHES SPIRITUAL STRENGTH.

He hath torn me with wound upon wound; he hath rushed in upon me like a giant (Job. xvi. 15). On this text St. Gregory reasons thus: A person assailed by an enemy is rendered unable to defend himself by the first wound which he receives; but, should he receive a second and a third, his strength will be so much exhausted, that death will be the consequence. It is so with sin: after the first and second wound which it inflicts on the soul, she will still have some strength, but only through the Divine grace. But, if she continue to indulge in vice, sin, becoming habitual, rushes upon her like a giant and leaves her without any power

to resist it. St. Bernard compares the habitual sinner to a person who has fallen under a large rock, which he is unable to remove. A person in such a case will rise only with difficulty. "The man on whom the weight of a bad habit presses, rises with difficulty."

St. Thomas of Villanova teaches that a soul which is deprived of the grace of God cannot long abstain from new sins. In expounding the words of David: *O my God, make them like a wheel, and as a stubble before the wind* (Ps. lxxxii. 14), St. Gregory says that the man who contracts the habit of sin yields and yields again to every temptation with as much facility as a straw is moved by the slightest blast of wind. Habitual sinners, according to St. John Chrysostom, become so weak in resisting the attacks of the devil, that, dragged to sin by their evil habit, they are sometimes driven to sin against their will. Yes; because, as St. Augustine says, "a bad habit in the course of time brings on a certain necessity of falling into sin."

St. Bernardine of Sienna says that evil habits become part of one's very nature. Hence, as it is necessary for men to breathe, so it appears it becomes necessary for habitual sinners to commit sins. They are thus made the slaves of sin. I say the *slaves*. In society there are servants, who serve for wages, and there are slaves, who serve by force, and without remuneration. Having sold themselves as slaves to the devil, habitual sinners are reduced to such a degree of slavery that they sometimes sin without pleasure, and sometimes even without being in the occasion of sin. St. Bernardine compares them to the wings of a wind-mill, which continue to turn the mill even when there is no corn to grind; that is, they continue to commit sin, at least by indulging bad thoughts, even when there is no occasion of sin presented to them. The unhappy beings, as St. John Chrysostom says, having lost the Divine aid, no longer do what they wish themselves, but what the devil wishes.

Listen to what happened in a city in Italy. A certain young man, who had contracted a vicious habit, though frequently called by God, and admonished by friends to amend his life, continued to live in sin. One day he saw his sister suddenly struck dead. He was terrified for a short time; but she was scarcely buried when he forgot her death and returned to his abominations.

In two months after he was confined to bed by a slow fever. He then sent for a confessor and made his Confession. But after all this, on a certain day, he exclaimed: Alas! how late have I known the rigour of Divine justice! And turning to his physician, he said: Do not torment me any longer with your medicines, for my disease is incurable. I know for certain that it will bring me to the grave. And to his friends, who stood around, he said: As for the life of this body of mine there is no remedy, so, for the life of my poor soul there is no hope of salvation. I expect eternal death. God has abandoned me; this I see in the hardness of my heart. Friends and Religious came to encourage him to hope in the mercy of God; but his answer to all their exhortations was: God has abandoned me. The writer who relates this fact says that, being alone with the young man, he said to him: Have courage; unite yourself to God and receive the Viaticum. Friend, replied the young man, speak to a stone! The Confession I have made has been null for want of sorrow. I do not wish for a confessor, nor for the Sacraments. Do not bring me the Viaticum; for, should you bring it, I will do that which must excite your horror. The friend then went away quite disconsolate; and returning next day to see the young man he learned from his relatives that he expired during the night without the aid of a priest, and that near his room frightful howlings were heard.

Behold the end of habitual sinners! If you have had the misfortune to contract a habit of sin make a General Confession as soon as possible; for your past Confessions can scarcely have been valid. Abandon instantly the slavery of the devil. Attend to the advice of the Holy Ghost. *Give not ... thy years to the cruel* (Prov. v. 9). Why will you serve the devil, your enemy, who is so cruel a master -- who makes you lead a life of misery here, to bring you to a life of still greater misery in hell for all eternity? *Lazarus, come forth* (Jo. xi. 43). Go out of the pit of sin! Give yourself immediately to God Who calls you, and is ready to receive you if you turn to Him. Tremble! this may be for you the last call, to which, if you do not correspond, you shall be lost!

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

When considering the love of the Son of God for men, we should ever bear in mind that when He saw, on the one hand all men condemned because of sin, and on the other Divine Justice requiring a full and perfect satisfaction, He voluntarily offered Himself to make satisfaction for the offences committed by man, who was himself unable to offer such a satisfaction: *He was offered, because it was his own will* (Is. liii. 7). And this humble Lamb gave Himself to the torturers, suffering them to lacerate His flesh, and to lead Him to death, without lamenting or opening His mouth, as it was foretold: *He shall be brought as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, he shall not open his mouth* (Is. liii. 7). St. Paul writes that Jesus Christ accepted the death of the Cross to obey His Father. But let us not imagine that the Redeemer was crucified solely to obey His Father, and not with His own full will; He freely offered Himself to this death, and of His own will chose to die for man, moved by the love He bore him, as He Himself declares by St. John: *I lay down my life; no man taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself* (Jo. x. 17-18). And He said that it was the work of the Good Shepherd to give His life for His sheep. And why was this? What obligation was there on the Shepherd to give His life for the sheep? *Christ also hath loved us, and delivered himself for us* (Eph. v. 2).

This, indeed, our loving Redeemer Himself declared, when He said: *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself* (Jo. xii. 32), thereby showing the kind of death that He would die upon the Cross, as the Evangelist himself explains it: *Now this he said, signifying what death he should die* (Jo. xii. 33). On these words St. John Chrysostom remarks that He draws souls as it were from the hands of a tyrant. By His death He draws us from the hands of Lucifer, who, as a tyrant, keeps us enchained as slaves, to torment us after our death forever in hell.

II.

Miserable should we be if Jesus Christ had not died for us. We should all have been imprisoned in hell. For us who have

deserved hell, it is a great motive for us to love Jesus Christ, to think, that by His death, He delivered us from this hell by pouring forth His Blood.

Let us, then, in passing, glance at the pains of hell, where at this hour are so many wretched souls. Oh, miserable beings! There they are sunk in a sea of fire, where they endure ceaseless agony, since in this fire they experience all kinds of pains. There they are given into the hands of devils, who, full of fury, are busied only in tormenting these miserable condemned ones. There, still more than by the fire and the other tortures, are they tormented by remorse of conscience in recalling the sins of their life, which were the cause of their damnation. They see the way of escape from this abyss of torments for ever closed, and find themselves for ever excluded from the company of the Saints, and from their country, Heaven, for which they were created. But what most afflicts them, and constitutes their hell, is to see themselves abandoned by God, and condemned nevermore to be able to love Him, and to look upon themselves with hatred and madness.

Now from this hell Jesus Christ has delivered us, redeeming us not with gold or any earthly treasure, but by giving His own life and Blood upon the Cross. The kings of the earth send their subjects to die in war to preserve their own security; Jesus Christ chose Himself to die, in order to give safety to His creatures.

Friday--Fourteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"IF I AM LOST, I SHALL NOT BE LOST ALONE"

What do you say? If you are lost, and are damned you will not be alone! But what consolation will the company of the wicked be to you in hell? O accursed sin, how it can blind men gifted with reason!

I.

What do you say? If you are lost, and are damned, you will not be alone! But what consolation will the company of the wicked be to you in hell? Every condemned soul in hell weeps and laments, saying: Although I am condemned to suffer forever, oh, would that I might suffer alone! The wretched company which

you will meet with there will increase your torments by their despairing groans and moanings. What a torment to hear even a dog howling all night long, or a child crying for hours, and not to be able to sleep! And what will it be to hear the yells and howlings of so many wretched souls in despair, who will continually torment one another with their dismal noises, and this, not for one night, nor for many nights only, but for all Eternity!

Again, your companions will but increase the torments of hell by the stench of their burning carcasses. *Out of their carcasses* says the Prophet Isaias, *shall a stench arise* (Is. xxxiv. 3). They are called carcasses, not because they are dead, for they are alive to pain, but because of the stench they will give forth. Your companions will also increase the torments of hell by their numbers; they will be in that pit as grapes in the winepress of the anger of God: *He treadeth*, said St. John, *the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty* (Apoc. xix. 15). They will be straitened on every side, so as to be unable to move hand or foot so long as God shall be God.

II.

O accursed sin, how it can blind men who are gifted with reason! Sinners who affect to despise damnation, are yet very careful to preserve their goods, their situations, and their health; they do not say: "If I lose my property, my place, my health, I shall not be the only one who will lose such things." Yet when the soul is at stake, they say, "If I be lost, I shall not be lost alone!" He who loses the good things of this world and saves his soul will find a recompense for all he has lost; but he who loses his soul, what indemnity will he find? *What exchange shall a man give for his soul?* (Matt. xvi. 26).

O my God, enlighten me and do not forsake me. How often have I sold my soul to the devil, and exchanged Thy grace and favour for a wretched transitory indulgence of sense! I am sorry, O God, for having thus dishonoured Thy infinite majesty. My God, I love Thee! Suffer me not to lose Thee any more. O Mary, Mother of God, deliver me from hell, and from the guilt of sin, by thy holy intercession.

Spiritual Reading

THE MISERY OF RELAPSING INTO SIN

St. Jerome says that *many begin well but few persevere*. The Holy Ghost declares that he who *perseveres in holiness* to death, and not he who *begins a good life*, shall be saved. *But he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved* (Matt. xxiv. 13). The crown of Paradise, says St. Bernard, is *promised* to those who *commence*, but it is *given* only to those who *persevere*.

Since, then, you have resolved to give yourselves to God, listen to the admonition of the Holy Ghost: *Son, when thou earnest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation* (Ecclus. ii. 1). Do not imagine that you will have no more temptations, but rather prepare yourself for the combat, and guard against a relapse into the sins you have confessed; for, if you lose the grace of God again, you shall find it difficult to recover it.

When you rise from sin by a sincere Confession, Jesus Christ says to you what He said to the paralytic: *Behold, thou art made whole. Sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee* (John v. 14). By the Confessions you have made your soul is healed, but not yet saved; for, if you return to sin, you will be again condemned to hell, and the injury caused by the relapse will be far greater, says St. Bernard, than that which you sustained from your former sins. If a man recovers from a mortal disease, and afterwards falls back into it, he will have lost so much of his natural strength that his recovery from the relapse will be impossible. This is precisely what will happen to relapsing sinners; returning to the vomit -- that is, taking back into the soul the sins vomited forth in Confession -- they shall be so weak that they will become objects of derision to the devil. St. Anselm says that the devil acquires a certain dominion over them, so that he makes them fall, and fall again as he pleases. Hence the miserable beings become like birds with which a child amuses himself. He allows them, from time to time, to fly to a certain height, and then draws them back again when he pleases, by means of a cord that binds them. Such, says the Saint, is the manner in which the devil treats relapsing sinners.

St. Paul tells us that we have to contend not with men like

ourselves, made of flesh and blood, but with the princes of hell. *Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers* (Ephes. vi. 12). By these words he wishes to admonish us that we have not strength to resist the powers of hell, and that, to resist them, the Divine aid is absolutely necessary: without it, we shall always be defeated; but, with the assistance of God's grace, we shall, according to the same Apostle, be able to do all things, and shall conquer all enemies. *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me* (Phil. iv. 13). But this assistance God gives only to those who pray for it. *Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find* (Matt. vii. 7). They who neglect to ask do not receive. Let us, then, be careful not to trust in our resolutions: if we place our confidence in them, we shall be lost. When we are tempted to relapse into sin, we must put our whole trust in the assistance of God, Who infallibly hears all who invoke His aid.

He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall (1 Cor x. 12). They who are in the state of grace should, according to St. Paul, be careful not to fall into sin, particularly if they have been ever guilty of mortal sin; for a relapse into sin brings greater evil than ever on the soul. *And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first* (Luke xi. 26).

We are told in the holy Scriptures that the enemy *will offer victims to his drag, and will sacrifice to his net; because through them ... his meat is made dainty* (Habac. i. 16). In explaining this passage St. Jerome says that the devil seeks to catch in his nets all men, in order to sacrifice them to the Divine justice by their damnation. Sinners who are already in the net he endeavours to bind with new chains; but the friends of God are his *dainty meats*. To make them his slaves, and to rob them of all they have acquired, he prepares stronger snares. "The more fervently," says Denis the Carthusian, "a soul endeavours to serve God, the more fiercely does the adversary rage against it." The closer the union of a Christian with God, and the greater his efforts to serve God, the more the enemy is armed with rage, and the more strenuously he labours to enter into the soul from which he has been expelled. *When, says the Redeemer, the unclean spirit is gone out of a man .. seeking rest, and not finding, he saith: I will return into my house, whence I came out* (Luke xi. 24). Should he succeed in re-en-

tering, he will not enter alone, but will bring with him associates to fortify himself in the soul of which he has again got possession. Thus, the second fall of that miserable soul shall be greater than the first. *And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first* (Luke xi. 26).

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

Behold Jesus, then, presented by the Scribes and priests to Pilate as a malefactor, that he might judge Him and condemn Him to the death of the Cross; and see how they follow Him, in order to see Him condemned and crucified. Oh, marvellous thing, cries St. Augustine, to see the Judge judged! To see Justice condemned! To see life dying! And by what were these marvels accomplished except by the love which Jesus Christ bore to men? *Christ hath loved us and delivered himself for us.* Oh, that these words of St. Paul were ever before our eyes! Truly then would every affection for earthly things depart from our heart, and we should think only of loving our Redeemer, reflecting that it was love which brought Him to pour forth all His Blood, to make for us a bath of salvation. *He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood* (Apoc. i. 5). St. Bernardine of Sienna says that Jesus Christ from the Cross looked at every single sin of every one of us, and offered His Blood for every one of them. In a word, love brought the Lord of all to appear the vilest and lowest of all things upon earth.

"O power of love!" cries out St. Bernard; "The Supreme God of all is made the lowest of all! Who hath done this? Love, forgetful of its dignity, powerful in its affections! Love triumphs over God!" Love has done this, because, in order to make itself known to the beloved, it has brought the loving One to lay aside His dignity, and to do that alone which is to the advantage and pleasure of the beloved. Therefore, St. Bernard says that God, Who can be conquered by none, allows Himself to be conquered by the love He bore to men.

We must, moreover, bear in mind that whatever Jesus Christ suffered in His Passion, He suffered for each one of us individually. On which account St. Paul says: *I live in the faith of the Son*

of God, who loved me, and delivered himself for me (Gal. ii. 20). And what the Apostle said every one of us may say. Wherefore St. Augustine writes that each man was redeemed at such a price that each seems to be of equal value with God. The Saint also goes on to say: "Thou hast loved me, not as Thyself, but more than Thyself, since, to deliver me from death, Thou hast been willing to die for me."

II.

Since Jesus could have saved us by a single drop of His Blood, why did He pour it all forth in torments, even so as to die of pure agony on the Cross? "Yes," says St. Bernard, "what a drop might have done, He chose to do with a flood, in order to show us the excessive love He bore us." He calls it *excessive*, as Moses and Elias on Mount Thabor called the Passion of the Redeemer an excess -- an excess of mercy and love: *They spoke of his excess, which he should accomplish in Jerusalem* (Luke ix. 31). St. Augustine, speaking of the Passion of our Lord, says that "His mercy exceeded the debt of our sins." Thus the value of the death of Jesus Christ being infinite, infinitely exceeded the satisfaction due by us for our sins to the Divine justice. Truly had the Apostle cause to say: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Gal. vi. 14). And what St. Paul says we may all say; what greater glory can we have, or hope for in the world, than to see a God dying for love of us?

O Eternal God, I have dishonoured Thee by my sins; but Jesus, by making satisfaction for me by His death, has more than abundantly restored the honour due to Thee; for the love of Jesus, then, have mercy upon me. And Thou, my Redeemer, Who hast died for me, in order to oblige me to love Thee, grant that I may love Thee. For, having despised Thy grace and Thy love, I have deserved to be condemned to be able to love Thee no more. But, O my Jesus, inflict on me any punishment but this. And therefore, I pray Thee, consign me not to hell, for in hell I could not love Thee. Cause me to love Thee, and then chastise me as Thou wilt. Deprive me of everything, but not of Thyself. I accept every infirmity, every ignominy, every pain Thou wiltest me to suffer; it is enough that I love Thee. Now, I know, by the light Thou hast given me, that Thou art most worthy of love,

and hast so much loved me: I trust to live no longer without loving Thee. For the time past I have loved creatures, and have turned my back upon Thee, the infinite Good; but now I say to Thee that I will love Thee alone and nothing else. O my beloved Saviour, if Thou seest that at any future time I should cease to love Thee, I pray Thee to cause me to die, and I shall be content to die before I am separated from Thee.

O holy Virgin Mary and Mother of God, help me with thy prayers; obtain for me that I may never cease to love my Jesus Who died for me and for thee, my Queen, who hast already obtained for me so many mercies.

Saturday--Fourteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE HUMILITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Jesus Christ said: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart.* As holy Mary was the first and most perfect disciple of Jesus Christ in the practice of all virtues, she was the first also in Humility, and merited to be exalted above all creatures.

I.

"Humility," says St. Bernard, "is the foundation and guardian of virtues," for without humility no other virtue can exist in the soul. Should the soul possess all virtues, all will depart when humility goes. But, on the other hand, as St. Francis de Sales wrote to St. Jane Frances de Chantal, "God so loves humility that whenever He sees it He is immediately drawn thither." This beautiful and so necessary virtue was unknown in the world; but the Son of God Himself came on earth to teach it by His own example, and willed that in this virtue in particular we should endeavour to imitate Him: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt. xi. 29). Mary, being the first and most perfect disciple of Jesus Christ in the practice of all virtues, was the first also in that of humility, and by it merited to be exalted above all creatures. It was revealed to St. Matilda that the first virtue in which the Blessed Mother particularly exercised herself from her very childhood was that of humility.

The first effect of humility of heart is a lowly opinion of ourselves: "Mary had always so humble an opinion of herself,

that, as it was revealed to the same St. Matilda, although she saw herself enriched with greater graces than all other creatures, she never preferred herself to any one." Not indeed that Mary considered herself a sinner: for "humility is truth," as St. Teresa remarks: and Mary knew that she had never offended God: nor was it that she did not acknowledge that she had received greater graces from God than all other creatures; for an humble heart always acknowledges the special favours of the Lord, to humble itself the more: but the Divine Mother, by the greater light wherewith she knew the infinite greatness and goodness of God, also knew her own nothingness, and therefore more than all others she humbled herself. "The most Blessed Virgin had always the majesty of God, and her own nothingness, present to her mind," says St. Bernardine. As a beggar, when clothed with a rich garment, which has been bestowed upon her, does not pride herself on it in the presence of the giver, but is rather humbled, being reminded thereby of her own poverty; so also, the more Mary saw herself enriched, the more did she humble herself, remembering that all was God's gift; whence she herself told St. Elizabeth of Hungary that "she might rest assured that she looked upon herself as most vile and unworthy of God's grace." Therefore St. Bernardine says that "after the Son of God, no creature in the world was so exalted as Mary, because no creature in the world ever humbled herself so much as she did."

II.

It is an act of Humility to conceal heavenly gifts. Mary wished to conceal from St. Joseph the great favour whereby she had become the Mother of God, although it seemed necessary to make it known to him, if only to remove from the mind of her poor spouse any suspicions as to her virtue, which he might have entertained on seeing her pregnant: or, at least, the perplexity into which it indeed threw him: for St. Joseph, on the one hand unwilling to doubt Mary's chastity, and on the other ignorant of the mystery, *was minded to put her away privately* (Matt. i. 19). This he would have done had not the Angel revealed to him that his spouse was pregnant by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

Again, a soul that is truly humble refuses her own praise; and should praises be bestowed on her, she refers them all to

God. Behold, Mary is disturbed at hearing herself praised by St. Gabriel; and when St. Elizabeth said: *Blessed art thou amongst women...and whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ... Blessed art thou that hast believed* (Luke i. 42-45), Mary referred all to God, and answered in that humble Canticle: *My soul doth magnify the Lord* (Luke i. 46-55), as if she had said: Thou dost praise me, Elizabeth; but I praise the Lord, to Whom alone honour is due; thou wonderest that I should come to thee, and I wonder at the Divine goodness in which alone my spirit exults: *and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour*. Thou praisest me because I have believed; I praise my God because He hath been pleased to exalt my nothingness: *because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid*. Hence Mary said to St. Bridget: "I humbled myself so much, and thereby merited so great a grace, because I thought, and knew, that of myself I possessed nothing. For this same reason I did not desire to be praised; I only desired that praises should be given to the Creator and Giver of all." Wherefore an ancient author, speaking of the humility of Mary, says: "O truly blessed humility, which hath given God to men, opened Heaven, and delivered souls from hell."

It is also a part of humility to serve others. Mary did not refuse to go and serve Elizabeth for three months. Hence St. Bernard says, "Elizabeth wondered that Mary should have come to visit her; but that which is still more admirable is that she came not to be ministered to but to minister."

Spiritual Reading

THE HUMILITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Those who are humble are retiring, and choose the last place; and therefore it was, as remarks St. Bernard, that Mary, when her Son was preaching in a house, as is related by St. Matthew, and she wished to speak to Him, would not of her own accord enter, but remained outside, and did not avail herself of her maternal authority to interrupt Him. For the same reason also when she was with the Apostles awaiting the coming of the Holy Ghost, she took the lowest place, as St. Luke relates, *All these were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus* (Acts i. 14). Not that St. Luke was ignorant of the Divine Mother's merits, on account of which he should

have named her in the first place, but because she had taken the last place amongst the Apostles and women; and therefore he described them all, as an author remarks, in the order in which they were. Hence St. Bernard says: "Justly has the last become the first, who being the first of all became the last."

In fine, those who are humble, love to be contemned; therefore, we do not read that Mary showed herself in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, when her Son was received by the people with so much honour: but on the other hand, at the death of her Son she did not shrink from appearing on Calvary, through fear of the dishonour which would accrue to her when it was known that she was the Mother of Him Who was condemned to die an infamous death as a criminal. Therefore she said to St. Bridget: "What is more humbling than to be called a fool, to be in want of all things, and to believe one's self the most unworthy of all? Such, O daughter, was my humility; this was my joy; this was all my desire with which I thought how to please my Son alone."

The Venerable Sister Paula of Foligno was given to understand in an ecstasy how great was the humility of our Blessed Lady; and giving an account of it to her confessor, she was so filled with astonishment at its greatness that she could only exclaim: "Oh, the humility of the Blessed Virgin! O Father, the humility of the Blessed Virgin! How great was the humility of the Blessed Virgin! In the world there is no such thing as humility, not even in its lowest degree, when you see the humility of Mary." On another occasion our Lord showed St. Bridget two ladies. The one was all pomp and vanity. "She," He said, "is pride; but the other one whom thou seest with her head bent down, courteous towards all, having God alone in her mind, and considering herself as no one, is Humility, and her name is Mary." Hereby God was pleased to make known to us that the humility of His Blessed Mother was such that she was humility itself.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

St. Augustine says that Jesus Christ, having first given His life for us, has bound us to give our life for Him; and, further, that

when we go to the Eucharistic table to communicate, as we go to feed there upon the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, we ought also, in gratitude, to prepare for Him the offering of our blood and of our life, if there is need for us to give them for His glory.

Full of tenderness are the words of St. Francis de Sales on this text of St. Paul: *The charity of Christ presseth us* (2 Cor. v. 14). To what does it press us? To love Him. But let us hear what St. Francis de Sales says: "When we know that Jesus has loved us even to death, and that the death of the Cross, is not this to feel our hearts constrained by a violence as great as it is full of delight?" And then he adds: "My Jesus gives Himself wholly to me, and I give myself wholly to Him; I will live and die upon His breast, and neither death nor life shall ever separate me from Him."

St. Peter, in order that we might remember to be ever grateful to our Saviour reminds us that we were not redeemed from the slavery of hell with gold or silver, but with the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, which He, the innocent Lamb, sacrificed for us upon the altar of the Cross. Great, therefore will be the punishment of those who are thankless for such a blessing. It is true that Jesus came to save all men who were lost; but what was said by the Venerable Simeon, when Mary presented the Child Jesus in the Temple is also true: *Behold, this child is set for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted* (Luke ii. 34). By the words *for the resurrection* he expresses the salvation which all believers should receive from Jesus Christ, who by Faith should rise from death to the life of grace. But first, by the words *he is set for the fall*, he foretells that many shall fall into a greater ruin by their ingratitude to the Son of God, Who came into the world to become a contradiction to His enemies, as the following words imply: *This child is for a sign which shall be contradicted*; Jesus Christ was set up as a sign, against which were hurled all the calumnies, the injuries, and the insults the Jews devised against Him. And this sign is contradicted not only by the Jews of the present day, who deny Him to be the Messiah, but by those Christians who ungratefully return His love with offences, and neglect His commands.

II.

Our Redeemer, says St. Paul, went so far as to give His life for us, in order to make Himself the Lord of all our hearts, by the manifestation of His love in dying for us. *For to this end Christ died and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living* (Rom. xiv. 9). No, we are no longer our own, writes the Apostle, since we have been redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ. *Therefore, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's* (Rom. xiv. 8). If, then, we do not love Him and obey His precepts, of which the first is that we love Him, we are not only ungrateful, but unjust, and deserve a double punishment. The obligation of a slave rescued by Jesus Christ from the hands of the devil is to devote himself wholly to love and serve Him, whether he live or whether he die.

St. John Chrysostom makes an excellent reflection upon the above-quoted text of St. Paul, saying that God has more care for us than we have for ourselves; and therefore regards our life as His own gain, and our death as His own loss; so that if we die, we die not to ourselves, but also to God. Oh, how great is our glory while we live in this valley of tears, in the midst of so many dangers of perishing, that we should be able to say: *We are the Lord's!* We are His possession; He will take care to preserve us in His grace in this life, and keep us with Himself throughout eternity in the life that is to come!

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost **Morning Meditation**

"BEHOLD, A DEAD MAN WAS CARRIED OUT."

(Gosp. Luke vii.).

Oh, would to God that men kept Death always before their eyes! If they did they certainly would not lead such sinful lives. Poor sinners! They put away the thought of Death whenever it presents itself, and think only of living for pleasure and amusement, as if they were never to die. But one day the end will come for all.

I.

During their lives the constant thought of the Saints was to please God and sanctify themselves. Hence when death

approaches, they go with confidence to meet it, for death will deliver them from the miseries and dangers of the present life, and unite them perfectly with God. But the man who has thought only of his pleasures and his own ease, and has neglected to recommend himself to God, or to reflect on the account which he must one day render, cannot meet death with confidence. Poor sinners! They banish the thought of death whenever it presents itself to them, and think only of living for pleasure and amusement, as if they never were to die. But for each of them the end must one day come. *The end is come; the end is come* (Ezech. vii. 2). And when this end comes every one must gather the fruit he has sown during his life. *For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap* (Gal. vi. 8). If he has sown deeds of holiness, he shall receive rewards of eternal life; but if he has sown evil deeds he shall reap chastisements and eternal death.

The scenes of his past life are the first things that will rush on the mind of the dying man, when the news of death is announced to him. He will then see things in a light far different from that in which he viewed them during life. The acts of revenge which appeared to him lawful, the scandals he thought so little of, speaking obscenely, injuring the character of his neighbour, the pleasures which were regarded as innocent, the acts of injustice he held to be allowable -- all these things will then appear what they really were -- grievous sins and offences against God, each of which merited hell. Alas! Those blind sinners who voluntarily blind themselves during life by shutting their eyes to the light shall, at death, involuntarily see all the evil they have done. *Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened* (Is. xxxv. 5).

II.

By the light of the candle which lights him to death *the wicked shall see and shall be angry* (Ps. cxl. 10).

He shall see all the irregularities of his past life -- his frequent abuse of the Sacraments; Confessions made without sorrow or purpose of amendment; contracts entered into and completed with an uneasy conscience; injury done to the property and reputation of others; immodest jests, rancours, and vindictive thoughts.

He shall then see the bad example he gave to the young who

feared God, and whom he treated with contempt and turned into derision by calling them pious hypocrites and other reproachful names.

He shall see so many lights and calls received from God, so many admonitions of confessors, and so many resolutions and promises made but afterwards neglected.

He shall see particularly the bad maxims by which he regulated his conduct during life. "It is necessary to seek the esteem of the world, and to preserve one's honour." But is it necessary for a man to preserve his honour by trampling on the honour due to God? "We must have our amusements as often as we can." As if he could indulge in amusements that insult God! "Of what use to the world is a man who has no money?" "If we do not make money we cannot appear among our equals." Such are the maxims of the worldling during life; but at death he will change his language. He will then see the truth of that maxim of Christ: *What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?* (Matt. xvi. 26). Unhappy me, the worldling will exclaim on the bed of death, I have had so much time to settle my conscience, and behold I am now at the point of death, and I find my soul burdened with many sins! How little it would have cost me to have broken off such a friendship; to have gone to Confession every week; to have avoided certain occasions of sin! Ah! very little, but even should it have cost me a great deal of pain and labour, I should have submitted to every inconvenience in order to save my soul. Salvation is of greater importance to me than the dominion of the entire world. But, alas! the sentiments of negligent Christians at death are as fruitless as the sorrows of the damned, who mourn in hell over their sins as the cause of their perdition, but mourn in vain.

At death they will derive no consolation from their past amusements or pomps, from their exalted dignities, or from the humiliation of their rivals. On the contrary these things, like so many swords, shall pierce their hearts. *Evil shall catch the unjust man unto destruction* (Ps. cxxxix. 12). At present the lovers of the world seek after banquets, dances, gambling, and scenes of laughter and joy; but, at death this laughter and joy, as St. James says, shall be turned into mourning and affliction. *Let your laugh-*

ter be turned into mourning, and your joy into sorrow (James iv. 9).

Of this we see frequent examples. A young man who entertains his companions by sallies of wit, and by immodest jests, is seized with a severe illness. His friends come to see him, and find him overwhelmed with grief and melancholy. He indulges no more in jests, or laughter, or conversation. If he speaks at all, his words are words of terror or despair. His friends ask why he speaks so despondently -- why he is so melancholy. Have courage, they say, your illness is not dangerous. They endeavour to inspire hope and cheerfulness, but he is silent. And how can he be cheerful when he feels his conscience is burdened with so many sins, and sees he must soon appear before Jesus Christ to give an account of his entire life, and that he has much reason to fear he shall receive the sentence of eternal death? He will then say: O fool that I have been! Oh, that I had loved God! Had I loved Him, I should not now find myself in these straits, in this anguish! Oh, that I had time to settle the troubles of my conscience!

Spiritual Reading

THE MISERY OF RELAPSING INTO SIN

Let us tremble at the thought of relapsing into sin, and let us take care not to avail ourselves of the mercy of God to continue to offend Him. "He," says St. Augustine, "Who has promised pardon to those who repent, has promised repentance to no one." God has indeed promised pardon to all who repent of their sins, but He has not promised to any one the grace to repent of the faults he has committed. Sorrow for sin is a pure gift of God; if He withholds it, how will you repent? And without repentance, how can you obtain pardon? Ah! the Lord will not allow Himself to be mocked. *Be not deceived*, says St. Paul, *God is not mocked* (Gal. vi. 7). St. Isidore tells us that the man who repeats the sin which he before detested is not a penitent, but a scoffer of God's majesty. And Tertullian teaches that where there is no amendment repentance is not sincere.

Repent, therefore, said Saint Peter, in a discourse to the Jews, *and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out* (Acts. iii. 19).

Many repent, but are not converted. They feel a certain sorrow for the irregularities of their lives, but do not sincerely return to God. They go to Confession, strike their breast, and promise to

amend; but they do not make a firm resolution to change their lives. They who resolve firmly on a change of life, persevere, or at least preserve themselves for a considerable time in the grace of God. But they who relapse into sin soon after Confession show, indeed, that they repent but that they are not converted; and such persons shall in the end die an unhappy death. "Ofentimes," says St. Gregory, "that happens to the wicked in their compunction, which happens to the just in their temptations to sin." As the just have frequent temptations to sin, but yield not to them, because their will abhors sin, so sinners feel certain impulses to virtue; but these are not sufficient to produce a true conversion. The Wise Man tells us that mercy shall be shown to him who confesses his sins and abandons them, but he does not say mercy is for those who merely confess them. *He that shall confess (his sins) and forsake them, shall obtain mercy* (Prov. xxviii. 13). He, then, who does not give up, but returns to sin after Confession, shall not obtain mercy from God, but shall die a victim of Divine justice. He may expect to die the death of a certain young man, who, as is related in the history of England, was in the habit of relapsing into sins against purity. He always fell back into the same sins after Confession. At the hour of death he confessed his sins, and died in a manner which gave reason to hope for his salvation. But, while a holy priest was celebrating or preparing to celebrate Mass for his departed soul, the miserable young man appeared to him and said that he was damned. He added that, at the point of death, being tempted to indulge a bad thought, he felt himself, as it were, forced to consent, and, as he was accustomed to do, he yielded to the temptation, and thus was lost.

Is there, then, no means of salvation for relapsing sinners? I do not say this; but I adopt the maxim of physicians: "In malignant diseases powerful remedies are necessary." To return to the way of salvation, the relapsing sinner must do great violence to himself. *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away* (Matt. xi. 12). In the beginning of a new life the relapsing sinner must do violence to himself in order to root out the bad habits he has contracted, and to acquire habits of virtue; for when he has acquired habits of virtue, the observance of the Divine commands will become easy and even sweet. The Lord

once said to St. Bridget, that, for those who bear with fortitude the first punctures of the thorns which they experience in the attacks of the senses, in, avoiding occasions of sin, and in withdrawing from dangerous conversations, these thorns are by degrees changed into roses.

But to use the necessary violence, and to lead a life of regularity, you must adopt the proper means; otherwise you will do nothing. These are the means:

1. After rising in the morning you must make acts of thanksgiving, of the love of God, and an offering of the actions of the day. You must also renew your resolution never to offend God, and beg of Jesus Christ and His holy Mother to preserve you from sin during the day. Afterwards make your Meditation and hear Mass.

2. During the day make a Spiritual Reading and a Visit to the Most Holy Sacrament.

3. In the evening say the Rosary and make an examination of conscience.

4. Receive Holy Communion at least once a week, or more frequently if your directors advise you. Be careful to choose a Confessor to whom you will regularly go to Confession.

5. It is also very useful to make a Spiritual Retreat every year in some Religious house.

6. Honour the Mother of God every day by some particular devotion, and by fasting every Saturday.

She is the Mother of perseverance, and promises to obtain it for all who serve her. *They that work by me shall not sin* (Ecclus. xxiv. 30). Above all, it is necessary to ask of God every morning the gift of perseverance, and to beg of the Blessed Virgin to obtain it for you, and particularly in the time of temptation, by invoking the Names of Jesus and Mary as long as the temptation lasts. Happy the man who will continue to act in this manner, and shall be found so doing when Jesus Christ shall come to judge him. *Blessed is that servant, whom, when his lord shall come, he shall find so doing* (Matt. xxiv. 46).

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

Jesus Christ, then, died for each one of us, in order that each one of us might live only to his Redeemer, Who died for love of us. *Christ died for all, that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again* (2 Cor. v. 15). He that lives for himself directs all his desires, fears, and pains, and places all his happiness in himself. But he that lives to Jesus Christ places all his desires in loving and pleasing Jesus Christ; all his joys in gratifying Him; all his fears lest he should displease Him. He is only afflicted when he sees Jesus despised, and he rejoices only in seeing Him loved by others. This it is to live to Jesus Christ, and this He justly claims from us all. To win this from us He has offered all the pains He suffered for love of us.

Does He ask too much in this? No, says St. Gregory, He cannot ask too much when He has given such tokens of His love that He seems to have become a fool for our sake. Without reserve He has given Himself wholly for us; He has, therefore, a right to require that we should give ourselves wholly to Him, and fix all our love upon Him; and if we take from Him any portion of it, by loving anything either apart from Him or not for His sake, He has reason to complain of us; for then we do not love Him as we should.

II.

If we love not Jesus Christ, we must love creatures. And, in comparison with Jesus Christ, what are creatures but worms of the earth, dust, smoke, and vanity? To St. Clement, Pope, was offered a heap of silver, gold, and gems, if he would renounce Jesus Christ; the Saint, however, gave only a sigh, and then exclaimed: "O my Jesus, Thou infinite Good! How dost Thou endure to be esteemed by men as less than the rubbish of this earth?" "No," says St. Bernard, "it was not rashness which made the Martyrs encounter hot irons, nails, and the most cruel deaths; it was love for Jesus Christ, when they saw Him dead upon the Cross." Behold the example of St. Mark and St. Marcellian who, when they were fastened with nails through their hands and feet, and were rebuked by the tyrants as fools for suf-

fering so cruel a torment rather than renounce Jesus Christ, replied that they had never known greater delights than they then experienced when transfixed with these nails. And all Saints, in order to give pleasure to Jesus Christ Who was thus tormented and despised for our sake, gladly embrace poverty, persecutions, contempt, infirmities, pains and death. Souls betrothed to Jesus Christ upon the Cross know nothing more glorious to them than to bear the signs of the Crucified, which are His sufferings.

Monday--Fifteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"OH, THAT I HAD TIME TO REPAIR THE PAST!"

One of the greatest causes of distress and anguish to the careless Christian at the hour of death is the remembrance of the bad use he made of the time he should have employed to acquire merits for Heaven, but which he used, alas, only to heap up punishment for himself in hell. Oh, that I had time to repair the past! *Time shall be no longer!*

I.

Oh, that I had time to repair the past! Thus will the careless Christian speak. But when? When the oil in the lamp is consumed: when he is on the point of entering into eternity. One of the greatest causes of the distress and anguish of the careless Christian at the hour of death is the remembrance of the bad use he has made of the time he ought to have used to acquire merits for Heaven, but which he has used to damn his soul. *Oh, that I had time!* Do you seek for time? You have lost so many nights in gambling, and so many years in indulging the senses, without ever thinking of your soul, and now you seek for time! But now *time shall be no longer* (Apoc. x. 6). Were you not already admonished by preachers to be prepared for death? Were you not told that it would come upon you when you least expected it? *Be you ready*, says Jesus Christ, *for at what hour you think not the Son of man will come* (Luke xii. 40). You have despised My admonitions, and voluntarily squandered the time My goodness bestowed upon you in spite of your demerits; but now time is at an end! Listen to the words in which the priest that assists you will tell you to depart from this world: Go forth, Christian soul, from this

world. And where will you go? To eternity! To eternity! Death respects neither subjects nor monarchs; when it comes, it does not wait even for a moment. *Thou hast appointed his bounds, which cannot be passed* (Job xiv. 5).

Oh, what terror will the dying man feel at hearing the assisting priest tell him to depart from this world! What dismay will he experience in saying to himself: "This morning I am living, and this evening I shall be dead! Today I am in this house; tomorrow I shall be in the grave; and where will my soul be found?" His terror will be increased when he sees the death-candle lighted, and when he hears the confessor order the relatives to withdraw from his chamber, and to return to it no more. It shall be still more increased when the confessor gives him the Crucifix, and tells him to embrace it, saying: "Take Jesus Christ to your heart, and think no more of this world." He takes the Crucifix, and kisses it; but, in kissing it, he trembles at the remembrance of the many injuries he has offered to Jesus Christ. He would now wish to repent sincerely of all his injuries to his Saviour, but he sees that his repentance is forced by the necessity of his approaching death. "He," says St. Augustine "who is abandoned by sin before he abandons it, gives it up not freely, but through necessity."

II.

The common delusion of worldlings is that earthly things are great, and that the things of Heaven, as being distant and uncertain, appear to be of little value. They regard tribulations as insupportable, and grievous sins as unimportant. The miserable beings are as if they were shut up in a room filled with smoke, which hinders them from seeing the objects before their eyes. But at the hour of death this darkness will vanish, and the soul will begin to see things in their real colours. At that hour all temporal things appear to be what they really are -- vanity, lies, deception; and the things of eternity will assume their true value. Oh! How important will Judgment, Hell, and Eternity, so much disregarded during life, appear at the time of death! According as they will begin to appear in their true colours, the fears of the dying man will increase. "The nearer the sentence of the Judge approaches, the more sensible the fear of condemnation becomes," says St. Gregory. Hence the sick man will say: "Oh, in

what anguish do I die! Unhappy me! Oh, that I knew that so unhappy a death awaited me!" You did not know it, but you should have foreseen it; for you knew that a good death should not be expected after a wicked life.

Spiritual Reading

THE PREDOMINANT PASSION.

Our passions are not of themselves bad or hurtful. When regulated according to the dictates of reason and prudence, they do us no injury, but are, on the contrary, profitable to the soul; but, when disorderly, they are productive of irreparable mischief to those who obey them; for, when any passion takes possession of the heart, it obscures the truth, and makes the soul incapable of distinguishing between good and evil. Ecclesiasticus implored the Lord to deliver him from a mind under the sway of passion. *Give me not over to a shameless and foolish mind* (Ecclus. xxiii. 6). Let us, then, be careful not to allow any bad passion to rule over us.

Only this have I found, said Solomon, *that God made man right, and he hath entangled himself with an infinity of questions* (Eccles. vii. 30). *God made man right* -- that is, in the state of justice; but, by giving ear to the serpent, man exposed himself to temptation, and was conquered. He rebelled against God, and his passions rebelled against himself. These are the passions which, according to St. Paul, cause a continual war between the flesh and the spirit. *For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh* (Gal. v. 17). However, with the aid of Divine grace, it is in man's power to resist these passions, and not allow them to rule over him. It is, as the Lord told Cain, even in the power of man to rule over them, and to bring them into subjection to reason. *But the lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it* (Gen. iv. 7). Let the assaults of the flesh and of the devil, to make us abandon the way of God, be ever so violent, Jesus Christ has said: *Lo! the kingdom of God is within you* (Luke xvii. 21). Within us God has established a kingdom, in which the will is the queen that ought to rule over all the senses and passions. And what greater honour or glory can a man have than to be the master of his passions?

The proper regulation of the motions of the mind constitutes the interior mortification so much recommended by spiritual

masters, and secures the salvation of the soul. The health of the body depends on the regulation of the humours -- if one of them predominate to excess, it causes death. But the health of the soul consists in the proper control of the passions by reason. But, when any passion rules over reason, it first enslaves, and then kills the soul.

Many pay great attention to their external conduct; they endeavour to appear modest and respectful; but, at the same time, they cherish in their hearts sinful affections against justice, charity, humility, or chastity. For them is prepared the chastisement with which the Saviour threatened the Scribes and Pharisees, who were careful to have their cups and dishes clean, but nourished within unjust and unclean thoughts. *Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees - hypocrites; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish; but, within you are full of rapine and uncleanness* (Matt. xxiii. 25). The Royal Prophet says that all the beauty of a soul that is the true daughter of God consists in an interior good will. *All the glory of the king's daughter is within* (Ps. xlv. 14). Of what use is it, says St. Jerome, to abstain from food, and at the same time to allow the mind to swell with pride? or to abstain from wine, and to be intoxicated with anger? Christians who act in this manner do not lay aside their vices; they only cover them with the mantle of devotion. A man, then, must divest himself of all bad passions; otherwise he will not be the king over but the slave of his passions, and in opposition to the command of the Apostle sin shall reign in his heart. *Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof* (Rom. vi. 12). Man, then, is, as St. Thomas says, the king of himself when he regulates his body and his carnal affections according to reason. But, according to St. Jerome, "when the soul serves vice she loses the honour of a throne." She loses the honour of a queen, and becomes, as our Lord says, the slave of sin. *Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin* (Jo. viii. 34).

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST I.

St. Augustine says to us: "It is not permitted to you to love a little: let Him Who was wholly fixed upon the Cross for you be

wholly fixed in your hearts." Let us, therefore, unite ourselves wholly with St. Paul, and say with him: *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me... I live in the faith of the Son of God who loved me and delivered himself for me* (Gal. ii. 20). On this St. Bernard remarks: "It is as if he had said, -- To all other things I am dead and for them I have no feeling or regard; but the things which are of Christ, these find me a living man, and prepared to act. Therefore St. Paul says: *To me to live is Christ* (Phil. i. 21), meaning by these brief words, "Jesus Christ is my life, for He is all my mind, all my hope, all my desire, because He is all my love." It is a sure promise; if we are dead with Him we shall also live with Him; if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will also deny us." The kings of the earth, after a victory over their enemies, confer a part of all they have gained upon those who have fought on their side. This Jesus Christ does on the Day of Judgment; He gives a share of the blessings of Heaven to all who have toiled and suffered for His glory. O my Jesus, infinitely lovely, grant that I may no longer live ungrateful to so great a good! For the past I have lived in forgetfulness of Thy love, and of all Thou hast suffered for me; but henceforth I will think of nothing but loving Thee. O Wounds of Jesus, Wounds of love! O Blood of Jesus, inebriating with love! O death of Jesus, cause me to die to every love which is not love for Him. O Jesus, I love Thee above everything. I love Thee with all my soul; I love Thee more than myself. I love Thee, and because I love Thee, I wish to die of grief because I have so often turned my back upon Thee, and have despised Thy grace. By Thy merits, O my crucified Saviour, give me Thy love, and make me all Thine own.

O Mary, my hope, make me love Jesus Christ, and I ask for nothing more.

II.

The Apostle says: *If we be dead with him, we shall live also with him* (2 Tim. ii. 11). To die with Christ means the denial of ourselves, that is, of our own inclinations, which, if we deny not, we shall come to deny Jesus Christ, Who will justly deny us on the day of account. And here we must remark that we not only deny Jesus Christ when we deny the Faith, but also when we refuse to obey Him in anything He desires of us; as, for example, when,

for love of Him, we will not forgive an injury we have received, when we give way to the love of vain honour, when we will not break through a friendship which imperils the friendship of Jesus Christ, or we yield to the fear of being counted ungrateful, while our first gratitude is due to Jesus Christ, Who has given His Blood and Life for us, which no creature whatever has done.

O Divine Love! how is it that Thou art despised by men? O man, look at this Cross of the Son of God, Who as an innocent Lamb, sacrifices Himself to pay for thy sins, and thus to gain thy love! Look at Him! Look at Him! And love Him!

Tuesday--Fifteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

DEATH IS NOT THE FIT TIME FOR REPAIRING THE PAST.

A dying man may appear to have true and sincere sorrow for the wickedness of his past life. But is his sorrow true sorrow? The wailings of many careless Christians on their death bed do not proceed from sorrow but from fear. As St. Augustine says; *They are not afraid of sin but of burning.*

The time a careless Christian will have when death comes will not be fitted for settling troubles of conscience. First of all the time itself will be very short; for at the commencement, and for some days during the progress of the disease, the sick man thinks only of physicians, of remedies, and of making his last will. During that time his relatives, friends, and even the physicians deceive him by holding out hopes of recovery. Hence, deluded by these hopes, he will not be able for some time to persuade himself that his death is near at hand. When will he begin to persuade himself that death is near? Only when he will be at the very point of death. This is another reason why that time is unfit for repairing the evils of the soul. At that time the dying man is sick in mind as well as in body. He will be assailed by pains in the chest, debility, spasms, and delirium. These will render him unable to make any effort to excite true detestation of his past sins, or to apply to the disorders of his past life a remedy which will calm the terrors of his conscience. The news of his approaching death will astound him to such a degree that he will

scarcely be alive at all.

A person labouring under a severe headache, which deprives him of sleep for two or three nights, will not even attempt to dictate a letter. And at death, when he feels but little, understands but little, and sees only a medley of things which fills him with terror, the careless Christian begins to settle a conscience burdened with the sins of thirty or forty years. Then are verified the words of the Gospel: *The night cometh when no man can work* (Jo. ix. 4). Then his conscience will say to him: *Now thou canst be steward no longer* (Luke xvi. 2). There is no more time for negotiation; what is done, is done! *When distress cometh upon them they will seek for peace, and there shall be none. Trouble shall come upon trouble* (Ezech. vii. 25, 26).

We often hear it said that some person who led a bad life afterwards died a good death; that by his sighs and tears he gave proof of his sincere repentance. The wailings of such persons proceed not from sorrow for their sins but from the fear of imminent death, says St. Augustine. He was not afraid of *sinning*, says the holy Doctor, but of *burning*. Till that moment the dying man loved sinful objects: will he then detest them? Perhaps he will then love them with more tenderness; for the objects of our affections become more dear to us when we are afraid of losing them. The celebrated master of St. Bruno died with signs of repentance; but from his coffin he spoke and said he was damned. If at the hour of death, even the Saints lament that on account of the state of the head they can think but little of God, or make but little effort to excite good acts, how can the negligent Christian make these acts at death, when he was not in the habit of making them during life? It may be said that he appeared to have a sincere sorrow for the wickedness of his past life. But, was his sorrow true sorrow? The devil persuades him that the wish to have sorrow is true sorrow; but he deceives him. The dying man will say: "I am sorry from the bottom of my heart," but these words shall come from a heart of stone. *From the midst of the rocks they shall give forth their voices* (Ps. viii. 12). But he has been frequently at Confession, and has received all the Sacraments; he has died in perfect resignation. Ah! the criminal who goes to be executed appears to be perfectly resigned: but why? Because

he cannot escape from the officers of justice, who bring him in chains to the place of execution.

II.

O moment on which Eternity depends! This moment made the Saints tremble at the hour of death, and made them exclaim: "O God, where shall I be in a few hours?" "Sometimes," says St. Gregory, "the soul even of the just man is disturbed by the terror of vengeance." What, then, shall the careless Christian, who has disregarded God, feel when he sees the scaffold prepared on which he must die? *His eyes shall see his own destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty* (Job xxi. 20). He shall see with his own eyes death prepared for his soul, and shall from that moment begin to feel the anger of the Lord. The Viaticum which he must receive, the Extreme Unction which will be administered to him, the Crucifix placed in his hands, the recommendation of the soul which is read by the assisting priest, the lighting of the blessed candle -- all these shall form, as it were, the scaffold of Divine justice. The poor sick man perceives that he is already in a cold sweat, that he can no longer move or speak, that his breathing has begun to fail: in a word, he sees that the moment of death is at hand; his soul defiled with sins; the Judge waiting for him; hell opening under his feet; and in this confusion of darkness and terror he shall enter into Eternity.

Oh, that they would be wise, and would understand, and would provide for their last end (Deut. xxxii. 29). Behold, how the Holy Ghost exhorts us to provide now for the terrible straits and distress by which we shall be encompassed at death, and to adjust at once the accounts we must render to God; for it will be then impossible to settle these accounts so as to save our souls.

My crucified Jesus, I will not wait till death to embrace Thee; I embrace Thee at this moment. I love Thee above all things; and because I love Thee I repent with my whole heart of all the offences and insults I have offered to Thee, Who art infinite goodness; and I purpose and hope, with Thy grace, to love Thee always and never more offend Thee. Through the merits of Thy Passion I ask Thee to assist me.

Spiritual Reading

THE PREDOMINANT PASSION

St. James exhorts us to treat the body and its lusts as we would treat a horse. We put a bridle in the mouth of a horse, and we bring him wherever we please. *We put bits in the mouths of horses, that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body* (James iii. 3). Hence, as soon as we feel the cravings of any bad passion, we must restrain it with the bridle of reason; for, if we yield to its demands, it will bring us down to the level of brute animals that obey not the dictates of reason but the impulse of their appetites. *And man, when he was in honour, did not understand: he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them* (Ps. xlviii. 13). "It is worse," says St. John Chrysostom, "to become like a senseless beast than to be born one, for, to be naturally without reason is tolerable." The Saint says that to want reason by nature is not disgraceful; but, to be born with the gift of reason and afterwards to live like a beast, obeying the lusts of the flesh, is degrading to man, and makes him worse than a senseless brute. What would you say if you saw a man who would of his own accord live in a stable with horses, feed with them on the same food, and sleep on the same bedding? The man who submits to the tyranny of a passion does what is far worse in the eyes of God.

It was thus the Gentiles lived, who, because the darkness of their understanding prevented them from discerning between good and evil, went wherever their sensual appetite led them. *That you walk not, says St. Paul, as also the Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having their understanding darkened* (Ephes. iv. 17, 18). Hence they were abandoned to their vices -- impurity and avarice, and blindly obeyed the commands of their passions. *Who, despairing, have given themselves up to lasciviousness, unto the working of all uncleanness, unto covetousness* (Ephes. iv. 19). To this miserable state are all Christians reduced who, despising reason and God, follow the dictates of passion. In punishment of their sins God abandons them, as He abandoned the Gentiles, to their own wicked desires. *Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their own heart* (Rom. i. 24). This is the greatest of all chastisements.

St. Augustine writes that two cities may be built up in the heart of a Christian: one by the love of God, the other by self-

love. Thus, if the love of God reign within us, we shall despise ourselves: if self-love reign, we shall despise God. But, in conquering self-love consists the victory to which will be given a crown of eternal glory. This was the great maxim St. Francis Xavier always inculcated upon his disciples: "Conquer yourself! Conquer yourself!" All the thoughts and feelings of a man, says the Scripture, are inclined to evil from his youth. *The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth* (Gen. viii. 21). Hence we must, during our whole life, zealously combat and conquer the evil inclinations which continually rise within us, as noxious weeds spring up in our gardens. Some will ask how they can free themselves from bad passions, and how prevent them from springing up within them. St. Gregory gives the answer: It is one thing to look at these beasts in the fields and another to lodge them within the heart. It is one thing, says the Saint, to look at these beasts, or bad passions, when they are outside, and another to harbour them in the heart. As long as they are outside they can do us no harm; but if we admit them into the soul they devour us.

All bad passions spring from self-love. This is, as Jesus Christ teaches all who wish to follow Him, the principal enemy we have to contend with; and this enemy we must conquer by self-denial. *If any one shall come after me, let him deny himself* (Matt. xvi. 24). "Unless we banish self-love from the heart the love of God cannot enter," says Thomas a Kempis. Blessed Angela of Foligno used to say that she was more afraid of self-love than of the devil, because self-love has greater power than the devil to draw us into sin. St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi used to say the same, as we read in her Life: "Self-love is the greatest traitor we have to guard against. Like Judas, it betrays us with a kiss. He who conquers it conquers all enemies; he who does not conquer it is lost." The Saint then adds: "If you cannot kill it with a single stroke, give it poison." She meant that, since we are not able to destroy this accursed enemy, which, according to St. Francis de Sales, dies only with our latest breath, we must at least labour to weaken it as much as possible; for if it grow strong, it kills us. Death, says St. Basil, is the reward which self-love gives its followers. The wages of self-love is death; it is the beginning of every evil. Self-

love seeks not what is just and honourable, but what is agreeable to the senses. Hence Jesus Christ has said: *He that loveth his life* -- that is, his sensual appetite or self-will -- *shall lose it* (Jo. xii. 25). He who truly loves himself, and wishes to save his soul, should refuse to the senses whatever God has forbidden; otherwise he shall lose his God and himself.

There are two principal passions which reign within us: -- the concupiscible and irascible appetites -- that is, love and hatred. I have said *two principal passions*; for each of them, when vicious, draws in its train many other bad passions. The concupiscible appetite brings with it temerity, ambition, greediness, avarice, jealousy, scandal. The irascible brings with it revenge, injustice, slander, envy. St. Augustine advises us, in our combat with the passions, not to endeavour to beat them all down in a single conflict. We must trample on the passion which we have cast to the ground, so that it may be no longer able to contend with us, and then we must endeavour to subdue the other passions which resist our efforts.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST I.

Neither is there salvation in any other (Acts iv. 12) St. Peter says that our whole salvation is in Jesus Christ, Who, by means of the Cross, where He sacrificed His life for us, opened to us a way for hoping for every blessing from God, if we would be faithful to His commands.

Let us hear what St. John Chrysostom says of the Cross. He says: "The Cross is the hope of Christians, the staff of the lame, the comfort of the poor, the destruction of all pride, the victory over devils, the guide of youth, the pilot of mariners, the refuge of those who are in danger, the counsellor of the just, the rest of the afflicted, the physician of the sick, the glory of Martyrs." The Cross, that is, Jesus crucified, is --

The *hope* of the faithful, because if we had not Jesus Christ we should have no hope of salvation.

It is the *staff* of the lame, because we are all lame in our present state of corruption and weakness. We have in truth no strength to walk in the way of salvation except that which is com-

municated to us by the grace of Jesus Christ.

It is the *comfort* of the poor, and we all are poor, for all we have we have received from Jesus Christ.

It is the *destruction of all pride*, for the followers of the Crucified cannot be proud, seeing Him dead as a malefactor upon the Cross.

It is *victory* over the devils, for the very Sign of the Cross is sufficient to put them to flight.

It is the *instructor* of the young, for admirable is the teaching which they who are beginning to walk in the ways of God learn from the Cross.

It is the *pilot* of mariners, and guides us through the storms of this present life.

It is the *haven* in peril, for they who are in peril of perishing, through temptations of strong passions, find a secure harbour by flying to the Cross.

It is the *counsellor* of the just, for how many Saints learn wisdom from the Cross, that is, from the troubles of this life.

It is the *rest* of the afflicted, for where can they find greater relief than in contemplating the Cross, on which a God suffers for love of them?

It is the *physician* of the sick, for when they embrace it, they are healed of the wounds of the soul.

It is the *glory* of Martyrs, for to be made like Jesus Christ, the King of Martyrs, is the greatest glory they could possess.

II.

In a word, all our hope is placed in the merits of Jesus Christ. The Apostle says: *I know both how to be brought low and I know how to abound ... both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to suffer need* (Philipp. iv. 12). Thus St. Paul, instructed by the Lord, says: I know how I ought to conduct myself; when God humbles me I resign myself to His will; when He exalts me, to Him I give all the honour; when He gives me abundance, I thank Him; when He makes me endure poverty, still I bless Him; and I do all this not by my own strength, but by the strength of the grace God gives me. For he that trusts in Jesus Christ is strengthened with invincible power.

The Lord, says St. Bernard, makes those who hope in Him

all powerful. The Saint also adds that a soul which does not presume upon its own strength, but is strengthened by the Word, can govern itself so that no evil shall have power over it; and no force, no fraud, can cast it down.

The Apostle prayed thrice to God that the impure temptations which troubled him might be driven away, and he was answered: *My grace is sufficient for thee, for power is made perfect in infirmity* (2 Cor. xii. 9). How is this that the virtue of perfection consists in weakness? St. Thomas, with St. Chrysostom, explains it, that the greater our weakness and inclination to evil, the greater is the strength given us by God. Therefore St. Paul himself says: *Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may dwell in me. For which cause I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ. For when I am weak then am I powerful* (2 Cor. xii. 9-10).

Wednesday--Fifteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

PREPARATION FOR DEATH

I. PREPARE AT ONCE.

Would not that general be thought mad who did not begin to lay in stores of provisions and arms till the city was besieged by the enemy? And the captain of the ship insane who neglected to provide anchors and cables till overtaken by the storm? Such, precisely, is the folly of the Christian who waits till the hour of death to settle the affairs of his conscience.

I.

All admit that they must die, and die only once, and that nothing is of greater importance than to die well, because on death depends whether we shall be forever in bliss or forever in despair. All know that our eternal happiness or our eternal unhappiness depends on leading a good or a bad life. How then does it happen that the greater part of Christians live as if they were never to die, or as if to die well or ill were of little moment! They live in sin because they do not think of death. *In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin* (Ecclus. vii. 40). We must be persuaded that the hour of death is not fit for settling the accounts of the soul, and securing the great affair of

eternal salvation. In worldly matters prudent men take measures in due time to secure temporal gain -- to obtain a position of emolument. To preserve or restore bodily health the necessary remedies are not deferred a single moment. What would you say of the man who should put off his preparation for a trial on which his life depended till the day of trial arrived? Would you not stigmatize as a fool the general who should not begin to lay in a supply of provisions and arms till the city is besieged? Would it not be folly in a pilot to neglect till the time of the tempest to provide the vessel with an anchor and a helm? Such precisely is the folly of the Christian who neglects to settle his conscience till death is at hand.

When sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction, as a tempest ... then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear ... Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way (Prov. i. 27-31). The time of death is a time of storm and confusion. At that awful hour sinners call on God for assistance; but they invoke His aid through the fear of hell, which they see at hand, and not with true contrition of heart. Hence it is that God is deaf to their cry; and hence also will they then taste the fruit of their wicked life. What they have sown they shall reap. Ah! it will not then be enough to receive the Sacraments; it is necessary at death to hate sin, and to love God above all things. But how can he hate forbidden pleasures who has loved them till that moment? How can he love God above all things who has till then loved creatures more than he has loved God?

O my Jesus, by the merits of that Blood Thou hast shed for my sake, do not permit me ever more to offend Thee. Give me holy perseverance, give me Thy love. I love Thee, and I will never cease to love Thee till death. My God, have mercy on me for the love of Jesus Christ. O Mary, my hope, do thou too have pity on me; recommend me to God: thy recommendations are never rejected by that God Who loves thee so tenderly.

II.

The Lord called those virgins *foolish* who wished to prepare their lamps when the bridegroom was nigh. All have a horror of a sudden death, because there is no time to settle the accounts of conscience. All confess that the Saints have been truly wise, be-

cause they prepared for death during life. And what are we doing? Shall we expose ourselves to the danger of having little time to prepare for death? We ought to do at present what we shall then wish to have done. Oh! what pain will then arise from the remembrance of time lost, and still more from the remembrance of time spent in sin: time given by God to merit eternal life; but now past, and never to return! What anguish will the sinner feel when he shall be told: *Thou canst be steward no longer!* (Luke xvi. 2). There is no more time for doing penance, for frequenting the Sacraments, for hearing sermons, for visiting Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament, or for prayer. What is done is done. To make a good confession, to remove several grievous scruples, and thus tranquillize the conscience, would require a better state of mind and time more free from confusion and agitation. *But time shall be no more* (Apoc. x. 6).

Ah, my God, had I died on one of the nights known to Thee, where should I be at present? I thank Thee for having waited for me; I thank Thee for giving me the time I should have spent in hell from the first moment that I offended Thee. Ah! give me light, and make me sensible of the great evil I have done Thee in voluntarily losing Thy grace, which Thou didst merit for me by the sacrifice of Thy life on the Cross. Ah, my Jesus, pardon me! I am sorry from the bottom of my heart, and above all things, for having despised Thee Who art infinite goodness. Assist me, O my Saviour, that I may never lose Thee again. Alas, my Lord, if I return again to sin, after the many lights and graces Thou hast bestowed upon me, should I not deserve a hell for myself?

Spiritual Reading

THE PREDOMINANT PASSION

We must endeavour, above all, to find out what is our predominant passion. He who conquers it conquers all his passions; he who allows himself to be overcome by it is lost. God commanded Saul to destroy all the Amalecites, along with all their animals and all their property. He destroyed everything that was vile or cheap, but spared the life of King Agag, and preserved all that was valuable and beautiful. *And Saul and the people spared Agag and the rest of the flocks of sheep ... and all that was beautiful, and would not destroy them; but everything that was vile and*

good for nothing, that they destroyed (1 Kings xv. 9). In this Saul was afterwards imitated by the Scribes and Pharisees, to whom our Lord said: *Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, because you tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, and have left the weightier things of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith* (Matt. xxiii. 23). They were careful to pay the tithe of things of least value, and neglected the more important things of the Law, such as justice, charity to their neighbour, and faith in God. Some persons act in a similar manner; they abstain from certain defects of minor importance, and, at the same time, allow themselves to be ruled by their predominant passion; but if they do not destroy this passion they never shall gain the victory of salvation. The King of Syria commanded the captains of his cavalry to kill the King of Israel only, and not to mind the others. *Fight ye not with small or great, but with the King of Israel only* (2 Par. xviii. 30). They obeyed the order, slew King Achab, and gained the victory.

We must imitate the captains of Syria: unless we kill the king -- that is, the predominant passion -- we shall never be able to obtain salvation. The passion which brings man under its sway first blinds him and prevents him from seeing his danger. Now, how can a blind man, led by a blind guide, such as passion, which follows not reason, but sensuality, possibly avoid falling into some abyss? *If the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit* (Matt. xv. 14). St. Gregory says that it is a common artifice of the devil to inflame daily more and more our predominant passion, and thus he brings us into many horrible excesses. Through passion for a kingdom Herod spilled the blood of so many innocent babes at Bethlehem; through love for a woman Henry the Eighth of England was the cause of so many frightful spiritual evils, put to death several most worthy individuals, and in the end lost the Faith. No wonder: for he who is under the domination of any passion no longer sees what he does. Therefore he disregards corrections, excommunications, and even his own damnation: he seeks only his own pleasures, and says: "Come what will, I will satisfy this passion." And, as eminent virtue is accompanied by other virtues, so an enormous vice brings in its train other vices, says St. Laurence Justinian.

It is necessary, then, as soon as we perceive any passion

beginning to reign within us, to beat it down instantly before it acquires strength. "Let not cupidity gain strength," says St. Augustine; "strike it down while it is weak." St. Ephrem gives the same advice: "Unless you quickly destroy passions, they cause an ulcer." A wound, if it be not closed up, will soon become an incurable ulcer. To illustrate this by an example: a certain monk, as St. Dorotheus relates, commanded one of his disciples to pluck up a small cypress. The disciple obeyed, and drew it up with a slight effort. The monk then ordered him to pull up another tree which was somewhat larger. He succeeded in the task, but not without a good deal of labour. The disciple was then told to pluck up a tree which had taken deep root; but all his efforts were ineffectual. The monk then said to him: Thus it is, my son, with our passions; when they have taken deep root in the heart we shall not be able to extirpate them. Let us keep always before our eyes this maxim: that either the spirit must trample on the flesh or the flesh shall trample on the spirit.

Cassian has laid down an excellent rule for conquering our passions. Let us endeavour, he says, to change the object of our passions; and thus from being vicious they shall become holy. Some are prone to anger against all who treat them with disrespect. Such persons ought to change the object of their passions and turn their indignation into a hatred of sin, which is more injurious to them than all the devils in hell. Others are inclined to love every one who possesses amiable qualities: they should fix all their affections on God, Who is infinitely amiable. But to recommend ourselves to God, and to beg of Him to deliver us from our passions is the best remedy against them. And when any passion becomes very violent, we must multiply prayers. Reasoning and reflections are then of little use; for passion obscures our faculties; and the more we reflect the more delightful the object of passion appears. Hence there is no other remedy than to have recourse to Jesus and to most holy Mary, saying with tears and sighs: *Lord, save us, or we perish! Do not permit us to be ever separated from thee! We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God!* O souls created to love God, let us raise ourselves above the earth; let us cease to fix our thought and affections on the miserable things of this world; let us cease to love dross and smoke and mire. Let

us endeavour with all our strength to love the Supreme Infinite Good, our most amiable God, Who has made us for Himself, and expects us in Heaven to make us happy, and to give us the very glory which He Himself enjoys for eternity.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

For the word of the Cross, to them that perish, is foolishness; but to them that are saved, that is to us, it is the power of God (1 Cor. i. 18). Thus St. Paul warns us not to follow after worldly men, who place their trust in riches, in their relatives and friends in the world, and account the Saints fools for despising those earthly goods; but to place all our hopes in the love of the Cross -- that is, of Jesus crucified, Who gives every blessing to those who trust in Him. We must further remark that the power and strength of the world is altogether different from that of God; it is exercised in worldly riches and honours, but the latter in humility and endurance. Wherefore St. Augustine says that our strength lies in knowing that we are weak, and in humbly confessing what we are. And St. Jerome says that this one thing constitutes the perfection of the present life, that we should know that we are imperfect. For then we distrust our own strength, and abandon ourselves to God Who protects and saves those who trust in Him. *He is the protector of all who trust in him*, says David. *Who savest those who trust in thee* (Ps. xvii. 31; xvi. 7). *They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion* (Ps. cxxiv. 1). Therefore St. Augustine reminds us that, when we are tempted, we must hasten to abandon ourselves to Jesus Christ. Who will not suffer us to fall, but will embrace and hold us up, and thus remedy our weakness.

When Jesus Christ took upon Himself the weaknesses of humanity, He merited for us a strength which conquers our weakness: *For in that he himself hath suffered and been tempted, he is powerful to help those who are tempted* (Heb. ii. 18). How is this that the Saviour in being Himself tempted, was able to strengthen us in our temptations? It is meant that Jesus Christ, by being afflicted by temptations, became more ready to feel for us and help us when we are tempted. To this corresponds that other text of the same Apostle, *We have not a High Priest who cannot feel compassion*

for our infirmities; but was in all things tempted like us, though without sin. Therefore let us go with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in the help we need (Heb. iv. 15, 16).

Jesus Himself endured fears, weariness, and sorrows, as the Evangelists bear witness, speaking especially of the afflictions He endured in the garden of Gethsemane the night before He suffered, and thereby merited for us courage to resist the threats of those who would corrupt us, strength to overcome the weariness we experience in prayer, in mortifications, and other devout exercises, and the power of enduring with peace of mind that sadness which afflicts us in adversity.

I.

Jesus, at the sight of all the pains and the desolate death He was about to endure, chose to suffer this human weakness. *The spirit indeed is ready, but the flesh is weak* (Matt. xxvi. 41); and He prayed to His Divine Father that, if it were possible, the chalice might pass from Him. But immediately He added: *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt* (Matt. xxvi. 39). And for the whole time that He continued praying in the Garden He repeated the same prayer: *Thy will be done! and for the third time he prayed, saying the same thing* (Matt. xxvi. 42-44). With those words, *Thy will be done!* Jesus Christ merited and obtained for us resignation in all adversity, and gained for His Martyrs and Confessors strength to resist all the persecutions and torments of tyrants. "This word," says St. Leo, "inflamed all the Confessors, it crowned all the Martyrs."

Thus also, by the horror He experienced at our sins, which caused Him to fall into a bitter agony in the Garden, Jesus merited for us contrition for our sins. His abandonment by the Father on the Cross merited for us strength to retain our courage in all desolations and darknesses of spirit. By bowing His head in death on the Cross, in obedience to the will of the Father, He merited for us all the victories we gain over passions and temptations; and patience in the pains of life, and especially in the bitternesses and straits we endure in death. In a word, St. Leo writes that Jesus Christ came to take our infirmities and distresses, in order to communicate to us His strength and constancy.

St. Paul says that though Jesus Christ was the Son of God,

He learned obedience by the things He suffered; from which we are to understand not that Jesus in His Passion learned the virtue of obedience not known previously, but, as St. Anselm says, He learned not only by the knowledge He had before, but by actual experience in the grievous death He endured in order to obey His Father. And at the same time He experienced how great is the merit of obedience, for by this He obtained for Himself the utmost height of glory, a throne at His Father's right hand, and eternal salvation for us. Therefore the Apostle adds: *And being consummated, he became to all that obey him the cause of eternal salvation* (Heb. v. 9). He says, *being consummated*, because, having completely fulfilled all obedience, by suffering patiently what He endured in His Passion, Jesus Christ became the cause of eternal life to all those who obediently suffer with patience the troubles of this present life.

Thursday--Fifteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

PREPARATION FOR DEATH

II. WE MUST DETACH OURSELVES FROM THE WORLD.

St. Ambrose says that they die well who, at the hour of death, are found dead to the world. Unless we detach ourselves from everything in this world, and do so voluntarily, we shall have to do it of necessity at death, but then with great sorrow and at peril to our eternal salvation.

I.

In order to die a happy death it is necessary to endeavour to be at all times such as we desire to be found at the hour of death. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord* (Apoc. xiv. 13). St. Ambrose says that they die well who, at the hour of death, are found dead to the world; that is, detached from the goods from which death will separate us by force. We ought then, from this moment, to accept the spoliation of our goods, and the separation from relatives and from everything in this world. Unless we do it voluntarily during life, we shall have to do it through necessity at death, but with extreme pain and great danger of eternal perdition. Hence St. Augustine says that to settle during

life all temporal matters and dispose by will of all the goods we shall have to bequeath, contributes greatly to a tranquil death; because when all worldly affairs are already adjusted, the soul can be entirely occupied in uniting itself to God. At that hour we should think and speak only of God and of Paradise. Those last moments are too precious to be squandered in earthly thoughts. At death is completed the crown of the elect; for it is then, perhaps that they reap the greatest harvest of merits, by embracing, with resignation and love, death and all its pains.

But the Christian who has not been in the habit of exciting these sentiments during life, will not have them at the hour of death. Hence some devout souls, with great spiritual profit to themselves, are accustomed to renew every month, after being at Confession and Communion, the *Protestation for Death** along with the Christian acts, imagining themselves at the point of death, and to be near their departure from this world. Unless you do this during life you will find it very difficult to do it at death. In her last illness, that great servant of God, Sister Catherine of St. Albert, of the Order of St. Teresa, sent forth a sigh, and said, "Sisters, I do not sigh through fear of death, for I have lived for twenty-five years in expectation of it; but I sigh at the sight of so many deluded Christians, who spend their life in sin and reduce themselves to the necessity of making peace with God at death, when I can scarcely pronounce the Name of Jesus."

O my Redeemer, Thy death is my hope. To Thy wounded hands I recommend my soul. *Into thy hands I commend my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of Truth* (Ps. xxx. 6). O my Jesus, Thou hast given Thy Blood for my salvation: do not suffer me to be separated from Thee. I love Thee, O eternal God, and hope to love Thee for eternity. Mary, my Mother, assist me at the awful moment of death. To thee I now consign my soul; I recommend myself to thee. Deliver me from hell.

*See Prayers and Devotional Exercises of St. Alphonsus, Saturday after Septuagesima; Spiritual Reading or Volume I, Part II, pages 377-385.

II.

Examine, then, if you are now attached to anything on

this earth, to any person, to any honour, to your house, to your money, to conversations or amusements; and reflect that you are not immortal. You must one day, and perhaps very soon, take leave of them all. Why, then, do you cherish any attachment to them, and thus expose yourself to the risk of an unhappy death? Offer from this moment all to God: tell Him you are ready to give up all things whenever He pleases to deprive you of them. If you wish to die with resignation you must from this moment resign yourself to all the contradictions and adversities which may happen to you, and must divest yourself of all affections to earthly things. Imagine yourself to be on the bed of death, and you will despise all things in this world. "He," says St. Jerome, "who always thinks that he is one day to die readily despises all things."

If you have not yet chosen a state of life, make choice of that state of life which at death you will wish to have selected, and which will make you die with greater peace. If you have already made your choice of a state of life, do now what at death you will wish to have done in that state. Spend every day as if it were the last of your life; and perform every action, every exercise of prayer; make every Confession and Communion as if they were the last of your life. Imagine yourself every hour at the point of death, stretched on a bed, and that you hear that *Proficiscere de hoc mundo* which announces your departure from this world. Oh! how powerfully will this thought assist you to walk in the way of God, and to detach your heart from this earth! *Blessed is that servant whom, when his Lord shall come, he shall find him so doing* (Matt. xxiv. 46). He who expects death every hour will die well, though death should come suddenly upon him.

Every Christian should be prepared to say at the moment the news of death is announced to him: Then, my God, only a few hours remain; during the short remainder of the present life, I wish to love Thee to the utmost of my power, that I may love Thee more perfectly in Heaven. But little remains for me to offer to Thee. I offer Thee these pains, and the sacrifice of my life in union with the sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered for me on the Cross. Lord, the pains which I suffer are few and light compared with what I have deserved; such as they are, I embrace them as a

mark of the love which I bear Thee. Provided I am to love Thee for eternity, I resign myself to all the punishments Thou wishest to send me in this or the next life. Chastise me as much as Thou pleasest, but do not deprive me of Thy love. I know that, on account of having so often despised Thy love, I deserved never more to love Thee; but Thou canst not reject a penitent soul. I am sorry, O Sovereign Good, for having offended Thee. I love Thee with my whole heart, and place all my trust in Thee.

Spiritual Reading

AVOIDING THE OCCASIONS OF SIN.

We read in the Gospel that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and also that Lazarus rose. Christ rose to die no more -- *Christ rising from the dead dieth now no more* (Rom. vi. 9). Lazarus, too, rose, but died again. The Abbot Gueric remarks that Christ arose free and unbound, but Lazarus *came forth bound feet and hands* (Jo. xi. 44). Miserable the man, adds this author, who rises from sin, yet linked to any dangerous occasion: he will die again by losing the Divine grace. He, then, who wishes to save his soul, must not only abandon sin, but also the occasions of sin; that is, he must renounce such an intimacy, such a house; he must renounce those wicked companions, and all similar occasions that incite him to sin.

In consequence of original sin we all have an inclination to do what is forbidden. Hence St. Paul complained that he experienced in himself a law opposed to reason: *But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin* (Rom. vii. 23). Now, when a dangerous occasion is present, it violently excites our corrupt desires, so that it is then very difficult to resist them: because God withholds efficacious helps from those who voluntarily expose themselves by going into or remaining in the occasion of sin. *He that loveth danger shall perish in it* (Ecclus. iii. 27). "When," says St. Thomas, "we expose ourselves to danger, God abandons us in it." St. Bernardine of Sienna teaches that the counsel of avoiding the occasions of sin is the best of all counsels, and, as it were, the foundation of religion.

St. Peter says that *the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour* (1 Pet. v. 8). He is constantly going about

seeking our souls, and endeavouring to enter and take possession of them. Hence he seeks to place before us the occasions of sin, by which he enters the soul, says St. Cyprian. When the soul yields to the suggestions of the devil, and exposes itself to the occasions of sin, he easily enters and devours it. The ruin of our First Parents arose from their not flying from the occasion of sin. We read that in answer to the wicked serpent tempting her Eve said: *God hath commanded us that we should not eat, and that we should not touch it* (Gen. 3). But *she saw, took, and ate* the forbidden fruit: she first *looked at it*, she then *took it into her hands*, and afterwards *ate it*. This is what ordinarily happens to all who expose themselves to the occasions of sin. Hence, being once compelled by exorcisms to tell what sermon displeased him the most, the devil confessed that it was the sermon on avoiding the occasions of sin. As long as we expose ourselves to the occasions of sin, the devil laughs at all our good purposes and all our promises made to God. The greatest care of the enemy is to induce us not to abandon evil occasions; for these occasions, like a veil placed before the eyes, prevent us from seeing either the lights received from God, or the Eternal Truths, or the resolutions we have made: in a word, they make us forget all, and as it were force us into sin.

Know it to be a communication with death; for thou art going in the midst of snares (Ecclus. ix. 20). Every one born in this world enters into the midst of snares. Hence the Wise Man advises those who wish to guard themselves securely against the snares of the world to withdraw from them, for *he that is aware of the snares shall be secure* (Prov. xi. 15). But if, instead of withdrawing from them, a Christian goes near to them; how can he avoid being caught by them? Hence, after having with so much loss learned the danger of exposing himself to the danger of sin, David said that to continue faithful to God he kept at a distance from every occasion which could lead him to relapse. *I have restrained my feet from every evil way that I may keep thy words* (Ps. cxviii. 101). He does not say from every sin, but from every evil way which conducts to sin.

The devil is careful to find pretexts to make us believe that certain occasions to which we expose ourselves are not voluntary but necessary. When the occasion in which we are placed

is really necessary, the Lord always helps us to avoid sin; but we sometimes imagine certain necessities which are not sufficient to excuse us. "A treasure is never safe," says St. Cyprian, "as long as a robber is harboured within; nor is a lamb secure while it dwells in the same den with a wolf." The Saint speaks against those who do not wish to remove themselves from the occasions of sin, and say: "I am not afraid I shall fall." As no one can be secure of his treasure if he keeps a thief in his house, and as a lamb cannot be sure of its life if it remains in the den of a wolf, so likewise no one can be secure of the treasure of Divine grace if he is resolved to continue in the occasion of sin. St. James teaches that every man has within himself a powerful enemy, that is, his own evil inclinations, which tempt him to sin. *Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, drawn away and allured* (James i. 14). If, then, we do not fly from the external occasions, how can we resist temptations and avoid sin? Let us, therefore, place before our eyes the general remedy which Jesus has prescribed for conquering temptations and saving our souls. *If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee* (Matt. v. 29). if you find that your right eye is to you a cause of damnation, you must pull it out and cast it far from you; which means that when there is danger of losing your soul you must fly from all evil occasions, cost what it may.

St. Francis of Assisi used to say that the devil does not seek, in the beginning, to bind timorous souls with the chain of mortal sin; because they would be alarmed at the thought of committing mortal sin, and would fly from it with horror. He endeavours to bind them by a single thread which does not excite much fear; for by this means he will succeed more easily in strengthening their bonds and by degrees make them his slaves. Hence he who wishes to be free from the danger of being the slave of hell must break all the threads by which the enemy attempts to bind him; that is, he must avoid all occasions of sin, such as certain salutations, letters, little presents, and words of affection. With regard to those who have had a habit of impurity, it will not be sufficient to avoid proximate occasions; if they do not fly from remote occasions they will very easily relapse into their former sins.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

By the patience of Jesus Christ the holy Martyrs were animated and strengthened to embrace with patience the most cruel torments the cruelty of tyrants could devise; and not only with patience, but with joy and a desire to suffer for the love of Jesus Christ. In the celebrated letter which St. Ignatius the Martyr wrote to the Romans after he had been condemned to be thrown to the wild beasts, and was on his way to the place of his Martyrdom, we read: "Suffer me, my children, to be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may become corn for my Redeemer. I seek only Him Who died for me. He Who is the only object of my love was crucified for me, and the love I bear to Him makes me desire to be crucified for Him." St. Leo writes of St. Laurence the Martyr that when he lay upon the grid-iron the flames which burned him without were less hot than the fire that burned within him. Eusebius and Palladius relate of St. Potamena, a virgin of Alexandria, that when she was condemned to be thrown into a cauldron of boiling pitch that she might suffer the more for the love of her crucified Spouse, she prayed the tyrant to have her thrust in little by little, that her death might become more torturing; and she had her desire, for they began by thrusting her feet into the pitch, so that she was for three hours in this torment, and did not die till the pitch reached her neck. Such was the patience, such the fortitude which the Martyrs gained from the Passion of Jesus Christ.

II.

It was the courage and fortitude which Jesus crucified infuses into those who love Him that made St. Paul say: *Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness or danger, or persecution, or the sword?* (Rom. viii. 35). And at the same time he says: *In all these things we overcome because of him that hath loved us* (Rom. viii. 37). The love of the Martyrs for Jesus Christ was unconquerable, because it gained its strength from Him Who is unconquerable, Who strengthened them to suffer. And let us not imagine that the torments of the Martyrs were miraculously deprived of their power

of torturing, or that their heavenly consolations dulled the pains of the torments; this perhaps may sometimes have happened, but ordinarily they truly felt all their pains, and many through weakness yielded to the pangs; so that in the case of those who were constant in suffering, their patience was entirely the gift of God Who gave them their strength.

The first object of our hope is eternal blessedness, that is, the blessedness of God -- *the fruition of God*, as St. Thomas teaches. And all the means which are necessary for obtaining salvation, which consists in the enjoyment of God -- such as the pardon of our sins, final perseverance in Divine grace, and a good death -- we must hope for, not from our own strength, nor our good resolutions, but solely from the merits and grace of Jesus Christ. That our confidence, therefore, may be firm, let us believe with infallible certainty that we must look for the accomplishment of all these means of salvation only to the merits of Jesus Christ.

Friday--Fifteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

JUDGMENT AFTER DEATH

The soul goes forth and leaves the body. The priest recites the prayers of the Church: Come to his assistance all ye Saints of God! Meet him all ye Angels of God, receive his soul and present it before the Lord. But of what avail will it be to call upon the Saints and Angels to assist, if the soul has already departed as an enemy of God and the sentence has already been passed?

I.

Consider that your soul will no sooner have departed from the body than it will appear before the Tribunal of God to be judged. This Judge is the Almighty Whose wrath is provoked by your sins. Your accuser will be your mortal enemy, the devil. The matter of your trial will be your sins. Your sentence will be without appeal; and if found guilty, your punishment will be hell. You will not have the power of calling your parents, friends, and companions to your aid: all must be concluded between God and your soul. You will then see the deformity of your crimes, and will not be able, as at present, to excuse them. You will be examined upon all your sins, of thought, of word, of action, of

omission, of scandal; you will be weighed in the awful scales of Divine justice, and, if found wanting in a single point, you will be lost.

Consider that, at the end of the world, our bodies will rise again to participate in the reward or punishment of the soul according to our works, when all the nations of the earth will be assembled in the Valley of Josaphat to be judged. If you are condemned you will resume your body as an eternal prison for your unfortunate soul. At this sorrowful reunion the soul will curse the body and the body the soul, so that, although at present they mutually consent to pursue unlawful pleasures, after death they will become each other's tormentors. On the other hand, if you are saved, your body will arise beautiful, impassible, and glorious, and thus, both in body and soul, you will be judged worthy of eternal happiness. Thus will close the scene of this world: thus will terminate all the greatness, all the pleasures, and all the pomps of the earth. Yes, all will be at an end; nothing will remain but two Eternities, one of glory the other of pain; one of joy, the other of torments: the just will dwell in Heaven, the wicked in hell. Woe, then, to him who has loved the world! Woe to him who for the vain and fleeting pleasures of the earth has lost his soul, his body, Heaven, and God!

O my Jesus, pardon me before Thou comest to judge me!

II.

Consider the Eternal Sentence Jesus Christ will pass upon the reprobate and the Elect. This sovereign Judge, turning towards the reprobate, will say: "Behold, ye ungrateful wretches, the result of your crimes! My hour is come -- the hour of truth, of justice, of vengeance, and of wrath. Criminal souls, you have chosen My curse; let it fall upon you: be ye cursed for all eternity. Depart from Me, despoiled of every good and laden with all evil, into eternal fire." Then turning towards the Elect Jesus will thus address them: "Come, ye blessed children of My heavenly Father, come and take possession of the Kingdom of Heaven which is prepared for you. Come, no longer to carry your cross after Me, but to wear a crown. Come to inherit My riches, and to be the companions of My glory. Come from the land of exile to your true country; come from sufferings to glory, from tears to joy." O

my Jesus, I hope to be one of those whom Thou wilt then bless. I love Thee above all things. Bless me at this moment. O my Mother Mary, do thou also bless me.

Spiritual Reading

AVOIDING THE OCCASIONS OF SIN

Impurity is a vice which makes war on all men, says St. Augustine, and which only the few conquer. The fight is constant, the victory rare. Oh, how many miserable souls have exposed themselves in a battle with this vice, and have been defeated! To induce you to expose yourselves to occasions of this sin, the devil will tell you not to be afraid of being overcome by the temptation. "I do not wish," says St. Jerome, "to risk a fight for the joy of the victory lest I should sometimes lose the victory." I will not expose myself to the combat with the hope of conquering, because, by voluntarily engaging in the fight, I may lose my soul and my God. To escape defeat in this struggle a great grace of God is necessary; and to render ourselves worthy of this grace we must, on our part, avoid the occasions of sin. To practise the virtue of chastity it is necessary to recommend ourselves continually to God; we have not strength to preserve it; that strength must be the gift of God. *And as I knew*, says the Wise Man, *that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it ... I went to the Lord, and besought him* (Wis. viii. 21). But if we expose ourselves to the occasions of sin, we ourselves shall provide our rebellious flesh with arms to make war against our soul. *Neither*, says the Apostle, *yield ye your members as instruments of sin unto iniquity* (Rom. vi. 13). In explaining this passage, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "You stimulate the flesh; you arm it, and make it powerful against the spirit." St. Philip Neri used to say that in the war against the vice of impurity, the victory is gained by cowards -- that is, by those who fly from the occasions of this sin. But the man who exposes himself to it arms the flesh and renders it so powerful that it will be morally impossible for him to resist its attacks.

The Lord said to Isaias the Prophet: *Cry: all flesh is grass* (Is. xl. 6). Now, says St. John Chrysostom, if all flesh is grass, it is as foolish for a man who exposes himself to the occasion of sin to hope to preserve the virtue of purity as to expect that dry grass, into which a torch has been thrown, will not take fire. "Put a

torch into hay and then dare to deny that the hay will burn." No, says St. Cyprian; it is impossible to stand in the midst of flames, and not to burn. *Can a man, says the Holy Ghost, hide fire in his bosom and his garments not burn? or can he walk upon hot coals and his feet not be burnt?* (Prov. vi. 27). Not to be burnt in such circumstances would be a miracle. St. Bernard teaches that to preserve chastity and at the same time to expose one's self to the proximate occasion of sin, "is a greater miracle than to raise a dead man to life."

In explaining the Fifth Psalm, St. Augustine says that "he who is unwilling to fly from danger wishes to perish in it." Hence, in another place, he exhorts those who wish to conquer, and not to perish, to avoid dangerous occasions. "In the danger of falling into sin; take flight if you desire to gain the victory." Some foolishly trust in their own strength, and do not see that their strength is like that of tow placed in the fire. *And your strength shall be as the ashes of tow* (Is. i. 31). Others, trusting in the change which has taken place in their life, in their Confessions, and in the promises they have made to God, say: Through the grace of the Lord I have now no bad motive in seeking the company of such a person; her presence is not even an occasion of temptations. There are bears that go in quest of monkeys and feed upon them: as soon as a bear appears the monkeys run up the trees and thus save themselves. But what does the bear do? He stretches himself on the ground as if dead, and waits till they descend from the trees. The moment they have descended the bear springs up and devours them. It is thus the devil acts: he makes the temptation appear to be dead; but when a soul descends and exposes itself to the occasion of sin, he stirs up temptation and devours it.

Oh, how many miserable souls, devoted to spiritual things, to mental prayer, to frequent Communion, and to a life of holiness, have, by exposing themselves to the occasion of sin, become the slaves of the devil! We find in Ecclesiastical History that a holy woman who employed herself in the pious office of burying the Martyrs once found among them one who was not as yet dead. She brought him into her own house and procured a physician till he recovered. But what happened? These two

saints -- as they might be called (one of them on the point of being a Martyr, the other devoting her time to works of mercy with so much risk of being persecuted by the tyrants) first fell into sin and lost the grace of God, and, becoming weaker by sin, afterwards denied the Faith. St. Macarius relates a similar fact regarding an old man who suffered to be half-burned in defence of the Faith, but being brought back into prison, he, unfortunately for himself, formed an intimacy with a devout woman who served the Martyrs, and fell into sin.

The Holy Ghost tells us that we must fly from sin as from a serpent. *Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent* (Ecclus. xxi. 2). Hence, as we not only avoid the bite of a serpent, but are careful neither to touch nor approach it, so we must fly not only from sin but also from the occasion of sin -- that is, from the house, the conversation, the person that would lead us to sin. St. Isidore says that he who wishes to remain near a serpent will not remain long unhurt. Hence, if any person is likely to prove an occasion of your ruin, the admonition of the Wise Man is: *Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the doors of her house* (Prov. v. 8). He not only tells you not to enter the house which has been to you a road to hell -- *Her house is the way to hell* (Prov. vii. 27) -- but he also cautions you not to approach it, and even to keep at a distance from it: *Remove thy way far from her*.

But, you will say, if I abandon that house my temporal affairs will suffer. It is better that you should suffer a temporal loss than that you should lose your soul and your God. You must be persuaded that, in whatever regards chastity, there cannot be too great caution. If we wish to save our souls from sin and hell we must always fear and tremble. *With fear and trembling work out your salvation* (Phil. ii. 12). He who is not fearful, but exposes himself to occasions of sin, shall scarcely be saved. Hence in our prayers we ought to say every day, and several times in the day, that petition of the *Our Father* -- "and lead us not into temptation." Lord, do not permit me to be attacked by those temptations which would deprive me of Thy grace. We cannot merit the grace of perseverance; but, according to St. Augustine, God grants it to every one that asks it, because He has promised to hear all who pray to Him. Hence the holy Doctor says that the

Lord "by His promises has made Himself a debtor."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

In speaking of the pardon of our sins we should ever remember that it was for this very end that our Redeemer came upon earth -- to pardon sinners: *The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost* (Matt. xviii. 11). Therefore the Baptist, when he showed to the Jews that the Messiah was already come, said: *Behold the Lamb of God ... that taketh away the sin of the world* (Jo. i. 29). As it was foretold by Isaias: *As a lamb before his shearers, he shall be dumb* (Is. liii. 7); and also by Jeremias: *I am as a meek lamb that is carried to be a victim* (Jer. xi. 19). And first, He was fore-shadowed by Moses in the Paschal Lamb, and by the sacrifice of a lamb to God under the Law every morning, and by other evening sacrifices. All these lambs, however, could not take away a single sin; they served only to represent the sacrifice of the Divine Lamb Jesus Christ, Who with His Blood would wash our souls, and thus free them both from the stain of sin and from the eternal punishment of sin, for this is implied by the words *take away*; taking upon Himself the duty of satisfying the Divine justice for us by His death, according to what Isaias wrote: *The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all* (Is. liii. 6). Wherefore St. Cyril writes; "One is slain for all and the whole human race is restored to God the Father." By dying, Jesus desired to regain for God all mankind that was lost.

Oh, how great is the debt we owe to Jesus Christ! If a criminal condemned to death were already standing at the gibbet with the rope around his neck, and a friend were to come and take the rope and bind it around himself and die in place of the guilty man, how great would be that man's obligation to love him! This is what Jesus Christ has done; He has been willing to die on the Cross to deliver us from eternal death.

II.

Jesus Christ, as St. Peter says, *bore our sins in his body upon the tree that we being dead to sin should live to justice, by whose stripes you are healed* (1 Pet. ii. 24). "What can be more wonderful," says St. Bonaventure, "than that wounds should heal, and death give

life?" St. Paul says that God *has graced us in his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace, which hath superabounded in us* (Eph. i. 6). And this resulted from the covenant made by Jesus Christ with His Divine Father, that He would pardon us our offences, and receive us into His favour for the sake of the Passion and Death of His Son. As in the Old Law, by the blood of the victims the outward defilement of sins was taken away, and the temporal punishment due to them was remitted; so, in the New Law, the Blood of Jesus Christ washes away the inward stain of sin, according to St. John's words: *He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood* (Apoc. i. 5).

St. Paul thus explains the whole truth in his Epistle to the Hebrews: *Christ being come an High Priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, neither by the blood of goats ... but by his own blood, entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption* (Heb. ix. 11-12). The high-priest entered into the Holy of Holies, and, by the sprinkling of the blood of animals, purged sinners from their outward defilement and from temporal punishment; for in order to obtain the pardon of sin, and for their liberation from eternal punishment, Contrition, Faith, and Hope in the coming of the Messias, Who was about to die to obtain pardon for them, were absolutely necessary for the Jews. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, by means of His own body (which was the greater and more perfect tabernacle spoken of by the Apostle), which was sacrificed on the Cross, entered into the Holy of Holies of Heaven, which was closed to us, and opened it to us by means of this Redemption.

Therefore St. Paul, in order to encourage us to hope for the pardon of all our sins, by trusting in the Blood of Jesus Christ, goes on to say: *If the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkled, sanctify to the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, by the Holy Spirit, offered himself without stain to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God* (Heb. ix. 13, 14).

Saturday--Fifteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE HUMILITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

If, says St. Bernard, thou canst not imitate the virginity, imitate the humility of this humble Virgin. She detests the proud and invites only the humble to come to her: *Whoever is a little one let him come to me.*

I.

There can be no doubt, as St. Gregory of Nyssa says, that of all virtues there is, perhaps none the practice of which is more difficult to our nature, corrupted as it is by sin, than that of humility. But there is no escape; we can never be true children of Mary if we are not humble. "If," says St. Bernard, thou canst not imitate the virginity of this humble Virgin, imitate her humility." She detests the proud, and invites only the humble to come to her: *Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me* (Prov. ix. 4). "Mary," says Richard of St. Laurence, "protects us under the mantle of humility." The Mother of God herself explained to St. Bridget what her mantle was, saying, "Come, my daughter, and hide thyself under my mantle; this mantle is my humility." She then added that the consideration of her humility was a good mantle with which we could warm ourselves; but that as a mantle only renders this service to those who wear it, not in thought but in deed, "so also would her humility be of no avail except to those who endeavoured to imitate it." She then concluded in these words: "Therefore, my daughter, clothe thyself with this humility."

II.

"Oh, how dear to Mary are humble souls!" says St. Bernard. This Blessed Virgin, he says, recognizes and loves those who love her, and is near to all who call upon her; and especially to those whom she sees like unto herself in chastity and humility. Hence the Saint exhorts all who love Mary to be humble: "Emulate this virtue of Mary if thou lovest her." Marinus, or Martin d'Alberto, of the Society of Jesus, used to sweep the house and collect the refuse through love for this Blessed Virgin. The Divine Mother one day appeared to him, as Father Nieremberg relates in his

Life, and, thanking him, said: "Oh, how pleasing to me is this humble action done for my love!"

Then, O my Queen, I can never be really thy child unless I am humble; but dost thou not see that my sins, after having rendered me ungrateful to my Lord, have also made me proud? O my Mother, do thou supply a remedy. By the merit of thy humility obtain that I may be truly humble, and thus become thy child. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE SIGH, MOURNING AND WEEPING IN THIS VALLEY OF TEARS.

As we have access to the Eternal Father, says St. Bernard, only through Jesus Christ, so have we access to Jesus Christ only through Mary: "By thee we have access to the Son, O blessed finder of grace, bearer of life, and Mother of Salvation, that we may receive Him by thee, Who through thee was given to us." This is the reason given by the Saint why our Lord has determined that all men shall be saved by the intercession of Mary; and therefore he calls her the Mother of Grace and of our Salvation.

"Then," asks St. Germanus, "what will become of us? What hope can we have of salvation, if thou dost abandon us, O Mary, who art the life of Christians?"

"But," says a modern critic already quoted, "if all graces come through Mary, when we implore the intercession of the other Saints, they must have recourse to the mediation of Mary. But that," he says, "no one believes or ever dreamed of."

As to believing it, I reply that in that there can be no error or difficulty. What difficulty can there be in saying that God, in order to honour His Mother, and having made her Queen of Saints, and willing that all graces shall be dispensed by her hands, should also will that the Saints should address themselves to her to obtain favours for their clients?

And as to saying that no one ever dreamed of such a thing, I find that St. Bernard, St. Anselm, St. Bonaventure, Suarez, and others, expressly declare it to be the case. "In vain," says St. Bernard, "would a person ask other Saints for a favour if Mary did not interpose to obtain it." Another author, explaining the words

of the Psalm: *All the rich among the people shall entreat thy countenance* (Ps. xlv. 13), says "that the Saints are the rich of that great people of God, who, when they wish to obtain a favour from God for their clients, recommend themselves to Mary, and she immediately obtains it." And Father Suarez correctly remarks that "we beg the Saints to be our intercessors with Mary, because she is their Queen and sovereign Lady." "Amongst the Saints," he says, "we do not make use of one to intercede with the other, as all are of the same order; but we do ask them to intercede with Mary, because she is their Sovereign and Queen." And this is precisely what St. Benedict promised to St. Frances of Rome, as we read in Father Marchese; for he appeared to her, and taking her under his protection, he promised that he would be her advocate with the Divine Mother.

In confirmation of this, St. Anselm addresses our Blessed Lady and says: "O Lady, whatever all the Saints, united with thee, can obtain, thou canst obtain alone." "And why is this?" asks the Saint; "why is it that thou alone hast such great power? Ah, it is because thou alone art the Mother of our common Redeemer; thou art the Spouse of God; thou art the universal Queen of Heaven and earth. If thou dost not speak for us, no Saint will pray for or help us. But if thou beginnest to pray for us, then will all the Saints do the same and succour us."

So that Father Segneri, in his *Devout Client of Mary*, applying with the Catholic Church the words of Ecclesiasticus to her: *I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven* (Ecclus. xxiv. 8), says that "as the first sphere by its motion sets all the others in motion, so it is when Mary prays for a soul; immediately the whole heavenly court begins to pray with her." "Nay, more," says St. Bonaventure, "whenever the most sacred Virgin goes to God to intercede for us, she, as Queen, commands all the Angels and Saints to accompany her, and unite their prayers to hers."

And thus, finally, do we understand why the Holy Church requires that we should salute and invoke the Divine Mother under the glorious title of "our hope." *Spes nostra, salve!* The impious Luther said that he "could not endure that the Roman Church should call Mary, who is only a creature, 'our hope';" "for," said he, "God alone, and Jesus Christ as our Mediator,

are our Hope: and God curses those who place their hope in a creature, according to the Prophet Jeremias *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man*" (Jer. xvii. 5). But the Church teaches us to invoke Mary on all occasions, and to call her "Our Hope" -- Hail, our hope! Whoever places his confidence in a creature independently of God, certainly is cursed by God; for God is the only source and dispenser of every good, and the creature without God is nothing, and can give nothing. But if our Lord has so disposed it, as we have already proved that He has done, that all graces should pass through Mary as by a channel of mercy, we not only can but ought to assert that she, by whose means we receive the Divine graces, is truly our hope.

Therefore St. Bernard says that "she is his greatest confidence and the whole foundation of his hope." St. John Damascene says the same thing, for he thus addresses the most Blessed Virgin: "O Lady, in thee have I placed all my hope; and with my eyes fixed on thee, from thee do I expect salvation." St. Thomas says that "Mary is the whole hope of our salvation," and St. Ephrem, addressing her, says: "O most holy Virgin, receive us under thy protection, if thou wilt see us saved, for we have no hope of salvation but through thy means."

Let us, then, in the words of St. Bernard, "endeavour to venerate this Divine Mother with the whole affection of our hearts; for such is the will of God, Who is pleased that we should receive every good thing from her hand." And therefore the Saint exhorts us, whenever we desire or ask for any grace, to recommend ourselves to Mary, and to be assured that we shall receive it by her means; for he says that if thou dost not deserve the favour from God, Mary, who will ask it for thee, will deserve to receive it. "Because thou wast unworthy of the gift, it was bestowed on Mary, that through her thou mightest receive all that thou hast." The Saint then advises us to recommend all that we offer to God to the care of Mary, be they good works or prayers, if we wish our Lord to accept them. "Whatever thou mayest offer to God, be sure to recommend it to Mary, in order not to meet with a repulse."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

To obtain perseverance in well-doing we must not trust in our resolutions and in the promises we have made to God; if we trust in our own strength we are lost. All our hope of preserving the grace of God must be placed in the merits of Jesus Christ, and thus, trusting in His help, we shall persevere till death, though we be attacked by all our enemies in earth and in hell. Sometimes we find ourselves so cast down in mind and so assaulted by temptations, that we seem to be almost lost; let us not then lose courage, nor abandon ourselves to despair; let us go to the Crucified, and He will sustain us.

The Lord permits His Saints sometimes to find themselves in tempests and fears. St. Paul says that the afflictions and terrors he suffered in Asia were so overpowering that he became weary of life; meaning that he was so, as far as he depended on his own strength. This is to teach us that God, from time to time, leaves us in desolations, in order that we may know our misery, and, distrusting ourselves, may humbly have recourse to His goodness, and obtain from Him strength not to fall. More clearly he expresses the same in another place: *We are cast down, but we perish not* (2 Cor. iv. 9). We find ourselves oppressed with sadness and passions, but do not abandon ourselves to despair; we are tossed about on the water, but do not sink, because the Lord, by His grace, gives us strength against our enemies. But the Apostle exhorts us ever to keep before our eyes that we are weak, and prone to lose the treasure of Divine grace, and that all our strength for preserving it comes not from ourselves but from God: *We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency may be of the power of God and not of us* (2 Cor. iv.

II.

Let us be firmly persuaded that in this life we must ever beware of placing any confidence in our own works. Our strongest armour with which we shall ever win the victory over the assaults of hell is prayer. This is the armour of God of which St. Paul speaks: *Put on the armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and*

blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places. Therefore, take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one; and take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit (which is the word of God), by all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the Spirit (Eph. vi. 11-18).

Wherefore the Apostle continues: *By all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit; and in the same watching with all instance and supplication for all the saints* (Eph. vi. 18). Thus, prayer is the most powerful of all the arms with which God gives us victory over our evil passions and the temptations of hell; but this prayer must be made *in the spirit*; that is, not with the lips only, but with the heart. Moreover, it must last through our life -- *at all times*; for as the struggle is constant, so must our prayer be. It must be urgent and repeated; if the temptation does not yield at the first prayer, we must repeat it a second, third, or fourth time; and if it still continues, we must add sighs, tears, importunity, vehemence, as if we would do violence to God, that He may give us the grace of victory. This is what the Apostle's words, *with all instance and supplication*, mean. The Apostle adds, *for all the saints*, which means that we are not to pray for ourselves alone, but for the perseverance of all the faithful who are in the grace of God, and especially of priests, that they may labour for the conversion of unbelievers and all sinners, repeating in our prayers the words of Zachary: *To enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death* (Luke i. 79).

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"THE CHARITY OF CHRIST"

(Ep. Ephesians iii. 13-21)

Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end. Jesus, knowing that the hour of His death was at hand,

wished to leave men the greatest proof of His love by leaving us Himself in the Holy Eucharist. *He loved them unto the end.* That is "with an extreme affection," says St. John Chrysostom.

I.

Jesus, knowing that his hour was come ... having loved his own ... he loved them unto the end (Jo. xiii. 1). Let us consider the love of Jesus Christ in leaving us Himself in the Most Holy Eucharist: *He loved them unto the end.* That is, according to St. John Chrysostom, "with an extreme affection."

St. Bernardine of Sienna says that the tokens of love which are given at death make a more lasting impression on the mind, and are more highly esteemed. But, whilst others leave a ring, or a piece of money, as a mark of their affection, Jesus has left us His entire Self in this Sacrament of love.

And when did Jesus Christ institute this Sacrament? He instituted it, as the Apostle has remarked, on the night before His Passion. *The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat: this is my body* (1 Cor. xi. 23-24). Thus, at the very time that men were preparing to put Him to death, our loving Redeemer resolved to bestow upon us this gift. Jesus Christ, then, was not content with giving His life for us on a Cross: He wished also, before His death, to pour out, as the Council of Trent says, all the riches of His love, by leaving Himself as our food in the Holy Communion. "He, as it were, poured out the riches of His love towards man." If Faith had not taught it, who could ever imagine that a God would become Man, and the food of His own creatures? When Jesus Christ revealed to His followers this Sacrament which He intended to leave us, St. John says that they could not bring themselves to believe it, and many departed from Him, saying: *How can this man give us his flesh to eat? ... This saying is hard, and who can hear it?* (Jo. vi. 53-61). But what men could not imagine, the great love of Jesus Christ has invented and effected. *Take ye and eat: this is my body* (1 Cor. xi. 24). These words He addressed to His Apostles on the night before He suffered, and He now, after His death, addresses them to us.

II.

How highly honoured, says St. Francis de Sales, would that

man feel to whom a prince sent from his table a portion of what he had on his own plate! But Jesus gives us not a portion of His own food but His entire Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. "He gave you all," says St. John Chrysostom, reproving our ingratitude: "He left nothing for Himself." And St. Thomas teaches that in the Eucharist God has given us all that He is and all that He has. Justly, then, has the same saint called the Eucharist "a Sacrament of love, a pledge of love." It is a Sacrament of love, because it was pure love that induced Jesus Christ to give us this gift and pledge of love; for He wished that, should a doubt of His having loved us ever enter into our minds, we should have in this Sacrament a pledge of His love. St. Bernard calls this Sacrament "Love of loves." By His Incarnation the Lord has given Himself to all men in general; but, in this Sacrament He has given Himself to each of us in particular, to make us understand the special love He entertains for each of us.

Oh, how ardently does Jesus Christ desire to come to our souls in the Holy Communion! This vehement desire He expressed at the time of the institution of this Sacrament, when He said to the Apostles: *With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you* (Luke xxii. 15). St. Laurence Justinian says that these words proceeded from the enamoured Heart of Jesus Christ, Who by such tender expressions, wished to show us the ardent love with which He loved us. "This is the voice of the most burning charity." And, to induce us to receive Him frequently in the Holy Communion, He promises eternal life -- that is, the *kingdom of Heaven* -- to those who eat His Flesh. *He that eateth this bread shall live forever* (Jo. vi. 59). On the other hand, He threatens to deprive us of His grace and Paradise if we neglect Communion. *Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you* (Jo. vi. 54). These promises and these threats all sprung from a burning desire to come to us in this Sacrament.

Spiritual Reading

"THE CHARITY OF CHRIST"

Why does Jesus so ardently desire that we should receive Him in the Holy Communion? It is because He takes delight in being united with each of us. By Holy Communion, Jesus is really united to our soul and to our body, and we are then united

to Jesus. *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him* (Jo. vi. 57). Thus, after Communion, we are, says St. John Chrysostom, one body and one flesh with Jesus Christ. Hence St. Laurence Justinian exclaims " Oh, how wonderful is Thy love, O Lord Jesus, Who hast wished to incorporate us in such a manner with Thy Body that we should have one heart and one soul inseparably united with Thee!" Thus, to every soul that receives the Eucharist, the Lord says what He once said to His beloved servant Margaret of Ypres -- "Behold, my daughter, the close union made between me and Thee! Love Me, then, and let us remain forever united in love; let us nevermore be separated." This union between Jesus Christ and us is, according to St. John Chrysostom, the effect of the Charity of Christ towards us.

But, O Lord, such intimate union with man is not suited to Thy Divine majesty. But love seeks not reason; it goes not where it should, but where it is drawn. St. Bernardine of Sienna says that, in giving Himself for our food, Jesus Christ loved us to the last degree; because He united Himself entirely to us, as food is united to those who eat it. The same doctrine has been beautifully expressed by St. Francis de Sales: "No action of the Saviour can be more loving or more tender than the institution of the Holy Eucharist, in which Jesus, as it were, annihilates Himself, and takes the form of food, to unite Himself to the souls and bodies of His faithful servants."

Hence there is nothing from which we can draw so much fruit as the Holy Communion. St. Denis teaches that the Most Holy Sacrament has greater efficacy to sanctify souls than all other spiritual means. St. Vincent Ferrer says that a soul derives more profit from one Communion than from fasting for a week on bread and water. The Eucharist is, according to the holy Council of Trent, a medicine which delivers us from daily faults, and preserves us from mortal sins. Jesus Himself has said that they who eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, which is the Fountain of life, shall receive permanently the life of grace. *He that eateth me, the same shall also live by me* (Jo. vi. 58). Innocent III teaches that by the Passion Jesus Christ delivers us from the sins we have committed, and by the Eucharist saves us from

committing others. According to St. John Chrysostom, the Holy Communion inflames us with the fire of Divine love, and makes us objects of terror to the devil. "The Eucharist is a fire which inflames us, so that, like lions breathing fire, we may retire from the altar, being made terrible to the devil." In explaining the words of the Spouse in the Canticles: *He brought me into the cellar of wine; He set in order charity in me* (Cant. ii. 4), St. Gregory says that the Communion is this cellar of wine in which the soul is so inebriated with Divine Charity that she forgets and loses sight of all earthly things.

Some will say: "I do not communicate often; because I am cold in Divine love." In answer to them Gerson asks: Will you, then, because you feel cold, remove from the fire? When you are tepid you should more frequently approach this Sacrament. St. Bonaventure says: "Trusting in the mercy of God, though you feel tepid, approach: let him who thinks himself unworthy reflect that the more infirm he feels himself, the more he requires a physician." And St. Francis de Sales writes: "Two sorts of persons ought to communicate often: the perfect, in order to persevere in holiness; and the imperfect, to arrive at perfection."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

In resisting our enemies in our spiritual combats it is of the very greatest benefit to anticipate them in our meditations, by preparing ourselves to do violence to them to our utmost power, on all occasions when they may suddenly come upon us. Thus the Saints have been able to preserve the greatest mildness, or at least not to reply by a single word, and not to be disturbed, when they met with a great trial, a violent persecution, a severe pang in body or in mind, the loss of property of great value, the death of a much-loved relative. Such victories are ordinarily not acquired by anyone without the aid of long discipline, without frequenting Sacraments, and a continual exercise of Meditation, Spiritual Reading, and Prayer. Therefore these victories are with difficulty obtained by those who have not taken great heed to avoid dangerous occasions, or who are attached to the vanities or pleasures of the world, and practise very little mortification

of the senses; by those, in a word, who live a soft and easy life. St. Augustine says that in the spiritual life, "first pleasures are to be conquered, then pains"; meaning that a person who is given to seeking the pleasures of the senses will scarcely resist a strong passion or a temptation which assails him; a man who loves the esteem of the world will scarcely endure a grave affront without losing the grace of God.

It is true that we must look for all our strength to live sinless lives, and to do good works, not from ourselves, but from the grace of Jesus Christ; but we must take great care not to make ourselves weaker than we are by nature, through our own fault. The defects of which we take no account will cause the Divine light to fail, and the devil will become stronger against us. For example, a desire to make a parade of our learning or our rank, or vanity in dress; the seeking of any superfluous pleasure; resentment at every inattentive word or action; a wish to please everyone though to our spiritual loss; neglect of works of piety through the fear of man; little acts of disobedience towards our Superiors; little murmurings; trifling but cherished aversions; trivial falsehoods; slight attacks upon our neighbour; loss of time in gossip; or the indulgence of curiosity -- in a word, every attachment to earthly things, and every act of inordinate self-love, can help our enemy to drag us over some precipice; or, at least deprive us of that abundance of Divine help without which we may find ourselves in utter spiritual ruin.

II.

We grieve when we find ourselves so dry in spirit and desolate in prayer, in our Communions, and in all our devout exercises; but how can God give us to enjoy His presence and loving visits while we are niggardly and inattentive to Him? *He that sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly* (2 Cor. ix. 6). If we cause Him so much displeasure, how can we expect to enjoy His heavenly consolations? If we do not detach ourselves from everything earthly, we shall never wholly belong to Jesus Christ, and where shall we look for protection? Jesus, by His humility, merited for us the grace of conquering pride; and by His poverty He merited strength for us to despise earthly goods; and by His patience, constancy in overcoming slights and injuries. "What

pride," writes St. Augustine, "could have been healed, if not healed by the humility of the Son of God? What avarice, except by the poverty of Christ? What anger, except by the Saviour's patience?" But if we are cold in the love of Jesus Christ, and neglect to pray continually to Him to help us, and nourish in our hearts any earthly affection, with difficulty shall we persevere in a holy life. Let us pray. Let us pray always. With prayer we shall obtain everything.

O Saviour of the world, Thou art my only hope! By the merits of Thy Passion, deliver me from every impure desire which may hinder me from loving Thee as I ought. May I be stripped of all desires that savour of the world; grant that the only object of my desires may be Thyself, Who art the sovereign Good, and the only Good that is worthy of love. By Thy sacred Wounds heal my infirmities; give me grace to keep far from my heart every love which is not for Thee Who deservest all my love. O Jesus, my Love, Thou art my hope! O sweet words! sweet consolation -- *Jesus, my Love! Thou art my hope!*

Monday--Sixteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"THE CHARITY OF CHRIST"

Jesus Christ, Who gives Himself to us through pure love, should be received by us through love, says St. Francis de Sales. When you communicate, then, desire, as our Lord directed St. Matilda, all the love any soul ever had for Jesus, and He will accept it in proportion to the fervour with which you wish for it.

I.

Two things are necessary in order to draw great fruit from Communion -- Preparation for, and Thanksgiving after Communion. As to the Preparation, it is certain that the Saints derived great profit from their Communions only because they were careful to prepare themselves well for receiving the Holy Eucharist. It is easy, then, to understand why so many souls remain subject to the same imperfections after all their Communions. Cardinal Bona says that the defect is not in the food, but in the want of the proper dispositions. For frequent Communion two principal dispositions are required. The first is detachment

from creatures, and disengagement of the heart from everything that is not God. The more the heart is occupied with earthly concerns, the less room there is in it for Divine Charity. Hence to give full possession of the whole heart to God it is necessary to purify it from worldly attachments. This is the preparation which Jesus Himself recommended to St. Gertrude: "I ask nothing more of thee," said He to her, "than that thou come to receive Me with a heart divested of thyself." Let us, then, withdraw our affections from creatures, and our hearts will belong entirely to the Creator.

The second disposition necessary to draw great fruit from Communion is a desire of receiving Jesus Christ in order to advance in His love. "He," says St. Francis de Sales, "Who gives Himself through pure love, ought to be received only through love." Thus the principal end of our Communions must be to advance in the love of Jesus Christ. He once said to St. Matilda: "When you communicate, desire all the love that any soul has ever had for me, and I will accept your love in proportion to the fervour with which you wished for it."

II.

Thanksgiving after Communion is also necessary. The prayer we make after Communion is the most acceptable to God, and the most profitable to us. After Communion the soul should be employed in affections and petitions. The affections ought to consist not only in acts of thanksgiving, but also in acts of humility, of love, and of oblation of ourselves to God. Let us, then, humble ourselves as much as possible at the sight of a God made our Food even after we had offended Him. A learned author says that, for a soul after Communion, the most appropriate sentiment is one of astonishment at the thought of receiving a God. She should exclaim: "What! God is come to me! A God is come to me!" Let us also make many acts of the love of Jesus Christ. He has come into our souls in order to be loved. Hence He is greatly pleased with those who, after Communion, say to Him: "My Jesus, I love Thee; I desire only Thee!" Let us also offer ourselves and all that we have to Jesus Christ that He may dispose of all as He pleases: and let us frequently say: "My Jesus, Thou art all mine; Thou hast given Thyself entirely to me; I give

myself entirely to Thee."

After Communion we should not only make these affections, but we ought also to present to God with great confidence many petitions for His graces. The time after Communion is a time in which we can gain treasures of Divine graces. St. Teresa says that at that time Jesus Christ remains in the soul as on a throne, saying to her what He said to the blind man: *What wilt thou that I should do to thee?* (Mark x. 51). Now that you possess Me within you, ask Me for graces. *Me you have not always* (Jo. xii. 8). I have come down from Heaven on purpose to dispense them to you; ask whatever you wish, and you shall obtain it. Oh! what great graces are lost by those who spend but little time in prayer after Communion!

Let us also turn to the Eternal Father, and, bearing in mind the promise of Jesus Christ -- *Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you* (Jo. xvi. 23) -- let us say to Him: O my God, for the love of this Thy Son, Whom I have within my heart, give me Thy love; make me all Thine. He who acts thus may become a Saint by a single Communion.

Spiritual Reading

I. HUMAN RESPECT

Oh, how many souls has not human respect -- that great enemy of our salvation -- sent to hell! We cannot avoid seeing bad example and scandal unless, as St. Paul says, *we go out of this world* (1 Cor. v. 10). But it is in our power to avoid familiarity with those who give scandal and bad example. Hence the Apostle adds: *But now I have written to you not to keep company ... with such an one, not so much as to eat* (1 Cor. v. 11). We should be beware of contracting intimacy with such sinners; for, should we be united with them in the bonds of friendship, we shall feel an unwillingness to oppose their bad practices and evil counsels. Thus through human respect and the fear of contradicting them, we shall imitate their example, and lose the friendship of God.

Such lovers of the world not only glory in their own iniquities -- *They rejoice in most wicked things* (Prov. ii. 14) -- but what is worse, they wish to have companions in wickedness, and ridicule all who endeavour to live like true Christians and to avoid the danger of offending God. This is very displeasing to God, and

a sin He forbids in a particular manner: *Despise not a man that turneth away from sin, nor reproach him therewith* (Ecclus. viii. 6). Despise not those who keep at a distance from sin, and seek not to draw them to evil by your reproaches and your irregularities. The Lord declares that, for those who throw ridicule on virtuous people, chastisements are prepared in this and in the next life. *Judgments are prepared for scorners, and striking hammers for the bodies of fools* (Prov. xix. 29). They mock the servants of God, and He shall mock them in eternity. *But the Lord shall laugh them to scorn. And they shall fall after this without honour, and be a reproach among the dead forever* (Wis. iv. 18, 19). They endeavour to make the Saints contemptible in the eyes of the world, and God shall make themselves die unhonoured, and send them to hell to suffer eternal ignominy among the damned.

Not only to offend God, but even to endeavour to make others offend Him, is truly an enormous excess of wickedness. This execrable intention arises from a conviction that there are many weak and pusillanimous souls who, to escape derision and contempt, abandon the practice of virtue and give themselves up to a life of sin. After his conversion to God, St. Augustine wept for having associated with those agents of Lucifer, and confessed that formerly he felt ashamed not to be as wicked and as shameless as they were. How many, to avoid the scoffs of wicked friends, have been induced to imitate their wickedness. "Behold the Saint!" these impious scoffers will say; "get me a piece of his garment, I will preserve it as a relic. Why does he not become a monk?" How many also, when they receive an insult, resolve to take revenge, not so much through passion as to escape the reputation of being cowards? How many there are who, after having inadvertently given expression to a scandalous maxim, neglect to retract it (as they are bound to do), through fear of losing the esteem of others! How many, because they are afraid of forfeiting the favour of a friend, sell their souls to the devil! They imitate the conduct of Pilate, who, for fear of losing the friendship of Caesar, condemned Jesus Christ to death.

Brethren, if we wish to save our souls, we must overcome human respect and bear the little confusion which may arise from the scoffs of the enemies of the Cross of Jesus Christ. *For there*

is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace (Ecclus. iv. 25). If we do not suffer this confusion with patience, it will lead us into the pit of sin; but if we submit to it for God's sake, it will obtain for us Divine grace here, and great glory hereafter. "As bashfulness is praiseworthy in evil," says St. Gregory, "so it is reprehensible in good."

Some one will say: I wish to save my soul; why, then, should I be persecuted? But there is no remedy; it is impossible to serve God and not be persecuted. *The wicked loathe them that are in the right way* (Prov. xxix. 27). Sinners cannot bear the sight of the man who lives according to the Gospel, because his life is a continual censure of their own disorderly conduct; and therefore they say: *Let us therefore lie in wait for the just; because he is not for our turn, and he is contrary to our doings, and upbraideth us with transgressions of the law* (Wis. ii. 12). The proud man, who seeks revenge for every insult which he receives, would wish that all should avenge the offences that may be offered them. The avaricious, who grow rich by injustice, wish that all should imitate their fraudulent practices. The drunkard wishes to see others indulge like himself. The immoral, who boast of their impurities, and can scarcely utter a word which does not savour of obscenity, desire that all should act and speak as they do; and those who do not imitate their conduct, they regard as mean, clownish, and intractable -- as men without honour and education. *They are of the world, therefore of the world they speak* (1 Jo. iv. 5). Worldlings can speak no other language than that of the world. Oh, how great is their poverty and blindness! It has blinded them, and therefore they speak so profanely. *These things they thought, and were deceived; for their own malice blinded them* (Wis. ii. 21).

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST I.

And therefore he is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of his death ... they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance (Heb. ix. 15). Here St. Paul speaks of the New Testament not as a covenant, but as a promise, or testamentary disposition, by which Jesus Christ left us heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. And because a testament is not in force until the death

of the testator, therefore it was necessary that Jesus Christ should die that we might become His heirs, and enter into the possession of Paradise. Wherefore the Apostle adds: *For where there is a testament the death of the testator must of necessity come in. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is as yet of no strength whilst the testator liveth* (Heb. ix. 16-17). Through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Mediator, we have received grace in Baptism to become the sons of God; unlike the Jews, who, under the old covenant, though they were the elect, were yet all servants. Whence the Apostle writes: *For there are two covenants, the one from Mount Sina engendering unto bondage* (Gal. iv. 24). The first mediation was made with God by Moses on Mount Sina, when God, through Moses, promised to the Jews the abundance of temporal blessings if they observed the laws which He gave them; but this mediation, says St. Paul, only produced servants, unlike the mediation of Jesus Christ, which produces sons: *We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise* (Gal. iv. 28). If, then, being Christians, we are the sons of God, by consequence, says the Apostle, we are also heirs; for a portion of the father's inheritance is given to all sons, and this is the inheritance of eternal glory in Paradise, which Jesus Christ has merited for us by His death.

II.

St. Paul writes: *If we suffer with him that we may be also glorified with him* (Rom. viii. 17). It is true that, by our sonship to God, which Jesus Christ has obtained for us by His death, we have acquired a right to Paradise; but this is on the supposition that we are faithful to correspond to the Divine grace by our good works, and especially by holy patience. Hence the Apostle says that in order to obtain eternal glory, as Jesus Christ has obtained it, we must suffer upon earth as Jesus Christ suffered. He goes before, as our Captain, with His Cross; under this standard we must follow Him, each bearing his own cross, as the same Lord admonishes us: *He that will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me* (Matt. xvi. 24).

St. Paul also exhorts us to suffer with courage, strengthened by the hope of Paradise, reminding us that the glory which will be given to us in the next life will be infinitely greater than all our sufferings, that is, if we suffer here with good will in order to

fulfil the Divine pleasure: *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us* (Rom. viii. 18). What beggar would be so foolish as not to give gladly all his rags for a great kingdom? We do not as yet enjoy this glory, because we are not yet saved, not having finished our life in the grace of God; but hope in the merits of Jesus Christ, says St. Paul, will save us: *We are saved by hope* (Rom. viii. 24). He will not fail to give us every help to save us, if we are faithful to Him, and continue to pray; and the promise of Jesus Christ assures us that He hears every one who prays: *Every one that seeketh, receiveth* (Luke xi. 10). Some one will say: I fear, not that God will refuse to hear me, if I pray to Him, but I fear for myself, that I should not know how to pray as I ought. No, says St. Paul, fear not this, for when we pray, God Himself aids our weakness, and makes us pray so as to be heard. *The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity ... and asketh for us* (Rom. viii. 26). He asks, explains St. Augustine, that is, He helps us to ask.

Tuesday--Sixteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"THE CHARITY OF CHRIST"

On the night our Redeemer took leave of His disciples to go to His death, as they were weeping for grief at the coming separation from their beloved Master, Jesus comforted them, saying what He now says to us: "My children, I am going to die for you to show you the love I bear you, but even in death I will not leave you alone. As long as you remain on earth I will remain with you in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. *Come to me ... and I will refresh you!*"

I.

Come to me, all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you (Matt. xi. 28). Our loving Saviour, being about to quit this world, after having completed the work of our Redemption by His death, would not leave us alone in this valley of tears. St. Peter of Alcantara says: "No tongue would suffice to describe the greatness of the love which Jesus bears to each soul; this loving Spouse being about to depart from this world, wishing that His absence should not make us forget Him, left us as a memorial

the Most Holy Sacrament, in which He Himself remains; not willing that there should be any pledge between us but Himself to keep the memory of Him alive in our hearts." This great proof of the love of Jesus deserves, therefore, great love on our part; and for this reason He has been pleased, in recent times, to institute the festival in honour of His Most Sacred Heart, as He revealed to His holy servant, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, in order that, by our homage and love, we might offer some return for His loving dwelling upon our altars, and might thus, at the same time, atone for the contempt and insults which He has received, and still receives, in this Sacrament of love from heretics and bad Christians.

Jesus has left us Himself in the Most Holy Sacrament: first, that He might be found by all; secondly, that He may give audience to all; thirdly, that He may grant favours to all. And first, He is on so many different altars that He may be found by all who desire to find Him. On the night on which our Redeemer took leave of His disciples to go to His death, as they were weeping in grief, thinking of their separation from their beloved Master, He comforted them by saying what He now says to us: "My children, I am going to die for you, to show you the love I bear you: but even in death I will not leave you alone; as long as you remain on earth I will remain with you in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. I leave you My Body, My Soul, My Divinity, My whole Self: as long as you remain on earth I will not separate Myself from you." *Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world* (Matt. xxviii. 20). St. Peter of Alcantara writes that the Spouse would not leave His spouse solitary during His long absence; wherefore He has left us this Sacrament, in which He Himself remains -- the best companion He could leave us. The heathens imagined to themselves many gods; but they could not invent a god more loving than our God, or one who remains so near to us and helps us with so much love: *Neither is there any other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions* (Deut. iv. 7). This passage the Church applies to our Lord in the Most Holy Sacrament.

Behold, then, Jesus Christ remaining on our altars, as if confined in so many prisons of love! The Priest takes Him from

the tabernacle and places Him on the throne, or gives Him in Communion, and when he replaces Him and closes the tabernacle, Jesus is content to remain enclosed there night and day. But why, my dearest Redeemer, dost Thou stay there even at night, when people close the doors and leave Thee alone? It would be enough to be there in the daytime only; but no, He is pleased to remain also the whole night, awaiting the morning, that He may be immediately found by those who seek Him. The spouse in the Canticles went about seeking her Beloved, and asking those she met, *Have you seen him whom my soul loveth?* (Cant. iii. 3); and not finding Him, she raised her voice, saying, *Show me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where thou liest in the midday* (Cant. i. 6). The spouse could not find Him then, because the Most Holy Sacrament did not exist; but now if a soul wishes to find Jesus, she need only go to some parish-church or Monastery, and there she will find the Beloved One awaiting her. There is no village however poor, no Monastery of Religious, that has not the Blessed Sacrament; and in all these places the King of Heaven is content to dwell, enclosed in a case of wood or of stone, often quite alone, with hardly a lamp, and with no one to stand before Him. "O Lord," exclaims St. Bernard, "this does not become Thy majesty." "It matters not," replies Jesus; "if this be not befitting My majesty it befits My love."

I love Thee, O Jesus, my Supreme Good, Who above all other goods dost deserve our love. Grant that I may forget myself and all things to remember only Thy love, and to spend whatever life may remain to me solely in pleasing Thee. Grant that from this day forward I may find no greater delight than in remaining at Thy feet; there may I burn with love of Thee! Mary, my Mother, obtain for me a great love towards the Most Holy Sacrament; and if thou seest me negligent, remind me, I beseech thee, of the promise I now make of visiting Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament every day.

II.

What tender love do pilgrims feel in visiting the holy church of Loretto, or the Holy Places in the Holy Land -- the Stable of Bethlehem, Calvary, the Holy Sepulchre, -- where Jesus Christ was born, or lived, or died, or was buried! But how much more

tender should our love be when we are in a church, in the presence of Jesus Himself, Who remains in the Most Holy Sacrament. The Blessed John Avila used to say that he could find no more devout or consoling sanctuary than a church in which Jesus is veiled in His Sacrament; and Father Balthazar Alvarez used to weep at seeing the palaces of princes full of people, and the churches, in which Jesus dwells, so empty and deserted. O God, if our Lord had left Himself to us in only one church in the world -- in that of St. Peter's at Rome, for example -- and there on only one day of the year, how many pilgrims, how many nobles and monarchs would make every effort to have the happiness of being there on that day, to pay their court to the King of Heaven come back to earth! What a splendid tabernacle of gold and gems would be there prepared for Him! With what illuminations would that visit of Jesus Christ be celebrated on that day! "But no," our dear Redeemer says, "I will not remain only in one Church, nor on one single day; nor will I require such riches, or such brilliant displays. I will be present continually every day, and in all places, wherever My faithful are to be found, that they may come to Me without difficulty and at any hour they wish."

If Jesus Christ had not Himself thought of this refinement of love, who could ever have thought of it? If when He was going up to Heaven some one had said to Him: "Lord, if Thou wilt show Thy love to us, remain on our altars, under the species of bread, that we may there find Thee whenever we choose," how daring would this request have seemed! But what no man could ever have thought of our Lord has both thought of and done. But alas, where is our gratitude for such favours? If a prince were to come from a distance to a country-place, that he might be visited by a peasant, how ungrateful would that peasant be if he would not go to him or went only for a passing visit!

O Jesus, my Redeemer, Beloved of my soul, how much it has cost Thee to remain with us in this Sacrament! Thou hadst first to suffer death, that Thou mightest remain on our altars; and then Thou hast had to suffer so many insults in this Sacrament, that Thou mightest help us by Thy presence. Yet how indolent, how negligent, we are in coming to visit Thee, though we know how much our visits please Thee, because Thou delightest to

see us in Thy presence, that Thou mayest load us with gifts! Lord, forgive me, for I have been among these ungrateful ones. Henceforward, my Jesus, I will often visit Thee, and stay as long as I can in Thy presence, thanking Thee, and loving Thee, and seeking graces from Thee; since for this very purpose Thou dost remain hidden in our Tabernacles, and become our Prisoner of love. I love Thee, Infinite Goodness; I love Thee, O God of infinite love.

Spiritual Reading

II. HUMAN RESPECT

Yes, it is impossible to serve God and escape persecution of some kind. And I say again there is no remedy. All, as St. Paul says, who wish to live united with Jesus Christ must be persecuted by the world. *And all that will live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution* (2 Tim. iii. 12). All the Saints have been persecuted. You say: I do not injure anyone; why, then, am I not left in peace? Well, what evil have the Saints and the Martyrs done? They were full of charity; they loved all, and laboured to do good to all; and how were they treated by the world? They were flayed alive; tortured with red-hot plates of iron; and put to death in the most cruel manner. And whom did Jesus Christ -- the Saint of Saints -- injure? He consoled all: He healed all. *Virtue went out from him, and healed all* (Luke vi. 19). And how did the world treat Him? It persecuted Him, so as to make Him die through pain on an infamous gibbet.

This happens because the maxims of the world are diametrically opposed to the maxims of Jesus Christ. What the world esteems, Jesus Christ regards as folly. *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God* (1 Cor. iii. 19). And what is folly in the eyes of the world -- that is, crosses, sickness, contempt, and ignominy -- Jesus Christ holds in great estimation. *For the word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness* (1 Cor. i. 18). How can a man think himself to be a Christian, asks St. Cyprian, when he is afraid to be a Christian? If we are Christians, let us show that we are Christians in name and in truth; for, if we are ashamed of Jesus Christ, He will be ashamed of us, and cannot give us a place on His right hand on the Last Day. *For he that shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him the Son of man shall be ashamed when he*

shall come in his majesty (Luke ix. 26). On the Day of Judgment God will say: You have been ashamed of Me on earth: I am now ashamed to see you with Me in Paradise. Depart, accursed souls; go into hell to meet your companions who have been ashamed of Me. But mark the words: *he that shall be ashamed of me and of my words*. St. Augustine says that some are ashamed to deny Jesus Christ, but do not blush to deny the *maxims* of Jesus Christ. But you may tell me that if you say you cannot do such an act, because it is contrary to the Gospel, your friends will turn you into ridicule and will call you a hypocrite. Then, says St. John Chrysostom, you will not suffer to be treated with derision by a companion, and you are not unwilling to be hated by God!

The Apostle, who gloried in being a follower of Christ, said: *The world is crucified to me, and I to the world* (Gal. vi. 14). As I am a person crucified to the world -- an object of its scoffs and ill-treatment -- so the world is to me an object of contempt and abomination. It is necessary to be convinced that if we do not trample on the world, the world will trample on our souls. But what is the world and all its goods? *All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life* (1 Jo. ii. 16). To what are all the goods of this earth reduced? To riches, which are but dung; to honours, which are only smoke; and to carnal pleasures. But what shall all these profit us if we lose our souls? *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?* (Matt. xvi. 26).

He that loves God and wishes to save his soul must despise the world and all human respect; and to do this every one must offer violence to himself. St. Mary Magdalen had to do great violence to herself in order to overcome human respect and the comments and scoffs of the world, when, in the presence of so many, she cast herself at the feet of Jesus Christ to wash them with her tears. But she thus became a Saint, and merited from Jesus Christ pardon of her sins, and praise for her great love. *Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much* (Luke vii. 47). One day, as St. Francis Borgia carried to certain prisoners a vessel of broth under his cloak, he met his son mounted on a fine horse, and accompanied by noblemen. The Saint felt ashamed to show what he carried under his cloak. But in order to conquer

human respect he took the vessel of broth and carried it on his head, and thus showed his contempt for the world. Jesus Christ, our Head and Master, when nailed to the Cross, was mocked by the soldiers: *If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.* He was mocked by the Jewish priests, saying: *He saved others; himself he cannot save* (Matt. xxvii. 40-42). But He remained on the Cross, and cheerfully died upon it, and thus conquered the world.

"I give thanks to God," says St. Jerome, "that I am worthy to be hated by the world." The Saint returns thanks to God for having made him worthy of the hatred of the world. Jesus Christ pronounced His disciples blessed when they should be hated by men: *Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you* (Luke vi. 22). Christians, let us rejoice; for if worldlings curse and upbraid us God praises and blesses us. *They will curse, and thou wilt bless* (Ps. cviii. 28). Is it not enough for us to be praised by God, to be praised by the Queen of Heaven, by all the Angels, by all the Saints, and by all just men? Let worldlings say what they wish; but let us continue to please God Who will give us in the next life a reward proportioned to the violence we shall have done to ourselves in despising the contradictions of men. Each should try to consider that there is no one in the world but himself and God. When the wicked treat us with contempt, let us recommend to God these blind and miserable men who run the road to perdition; and let us thank the Lord for giving to us the light which He refuses to them. Let us continue on our own way. To obtain all it is necessary to conquer all.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

The Apostle wishes to increase our confidence when he says: *We know that to them that love God all things work together unto good* (Rom. viii. 28). By this he teaches us that shame, sickness, poverty, persecutions, are not evils, as men of the world account them; for God turns them all into blessings and glory for those who suffer with patience. Finally, he says: *For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son* (Rom. viii. 29). With these words he would persuade us that, if

we would be saved, we must resolve to suffer everything rather than lose Divine grace, for no one can be admitted to the glory of the Blessed, unless at the Day of Judgment his life be found conformed to the life of Jesus Christ.

O my God, it is true that in my ingratitude I have had the heart to cause Thee so much displeasure and sorrow! But what is past is past! At least for the rest of my life, O my Lord, I will love Thee with all my power; I will live only for Thee; I will be wholly Thine; wholly, wholly, wholly Thine. But Thou must accomplish this. Detach me from every earthly thing, and give me light and strength to seek Thee alone, my only Good, my Love, my All.

O Mary, hope of sinners, thou must help me with thy prayers. Pray, pray for me, and cease not to pray, until thou seest me belonging wholly to God.

II.

That sinners may not abandon themselves to despair on account of their guilt, St. Paul encourages them to hope for pardon, telling them that for this end the Eternal Father has not spared His own Son, Who was offered to satisfy for our sins, but gave Him up to death, that He might pardon us sinners; and still further to increase the hope of penitent sinners, he says: *Who is he that shall condemn? Jesus Christ that died?* (Rom. viii. 34), as though he had said: Sinners, you who detest your sins, why do you fear to be condemned to hell? Tell me who is your Judge? -- who is to condemn you? Is it not Jesus Christ? How, then, can you fear that you will be condemned to death by this loving Redeemer Who, that He might not condemn you, has been willing to condemn Himself to die as a malefactor upon the infamous gibbet of the Cross? He speaks, indeed of those sinners who, being contrite, have washed their souls in the Blood of the Lamb, according to the words of St. John: *These are they who ... have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb* (Apoc. vii. 14).

O my Jesus, if I look at my sins I am ashamed to ask for Paradise, after the many times that I have openly renounced Thee, for the sake of short and miserable pleasures; but looking to Thee upon this Cross, I cannot cease to hope for Paradise,

knowing that Thou hast been willing to die upon this tree to atone for my sins, and to obtain for me the Paradise I had despised. O my sweet Redeemer, I hope, through the merits of Thy death, that Thou hast already pardoned me the sins I have committed against Thee, for which I repent, and now I would rather die of grief for them.

Wednesday--Sixteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

I. THE MERCY OF GOD

As God is by nature infinite Goodness, He has a sovereign desire to communicate His happiness to us, and therefore His inclination is not to punish but to show mercy. And when He does punish it is in love, that we may be delivered from eternal punishment.

I.

Mercy exalteth itself above judgment (James ii. 13). Goodness is by nature diffusive -- that is, inclined to communicate itself to others. Now God, Who by nature is infinite Goodness, has a sovereign desire to communicate His happiness to us; and therefore His inclination is not to punish, but to show mercy to all. Punishment, says Isaias, is a work opposed to the inclination of God: *He shall be angry ... that he may do his work, his strange work ... his work is strange to him* (Is. xxviii. 21). And when the Lord chastises in this life, He chastises that He may show mercy in the next: *Thou hast been angry, and hast had mercy on us* (Ps. lix. 3). He appears angry in order that we may amend and detest sin: *Thou hast shown thy people hard things; thou hast made us drink the wine of sorrow* (Ps. lix. 5). And if He punishes, it is in love, that we may be delivered from eternal punishment: *Thou hast given a warning to them that fear thee, that they may flee from before the bow, that thy beloved may be delivered* (Ps. lix. 6). Who can ever sufficiently admire and praise the mercy of God towards sinners in waiting for them, in calling them, and in receiving them when they return! And in the first place, oh, how great is the patience of God in waiting for our repentance! My brother, when you offended God He might have struck you dead; but He waited for you, and, instead of chastising you, He conferred benefits on you, He preserved your life,

He provided for you. He feigned not to see your sins, in order that you might return to His grace: *Thou overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance* (Wis. xi. 24). But how is it, O Lord, that Thou canst not endure a single sin, and yet beholdest so many in silence? Thou beholdest the unchaste, the vindictive, the blasphemer, each day increasing their offences against Thee, and Thou dost not punish them! And why so much patience? God waits for the sinner that he may amend: *Therefore the Lord waiteth, that he may have mercy on you* (Is. xxx. 18); and that He may thus pardon and save him.

Ah, my Lord, I well know that at this moment my portion ought to be in hell: *Hell is my house*. But at this moment, through Thy mercy, I am not in hell, but here at Thy feet; and I feel Thee within me, whispering to me the commandment that I should love Thee: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*. Thou assurest me that Thou wilt pardon me if I repent of my offences against Thee. My God, since Thou desirest to be loved even by me, a wretched rebel against Thy Majesty, I love Thee with my whole heart; and I grieve for having offended Thee above any other evil that could have befallen me. Ah, enlighten me, O Infinite Goodness, and make me perceive the wrong I have done Thee. Never more will I resist Thy calls. Never more will I displease a God Who has so much loved me, and so often and so lovingly pardoned me. Ah, would that I had never offended Thee, O my Jesus!

II.

St. Thomas says that all creatures -- fire, earth, air, and water -- would, through their natural instinct, punish the sinner to avenge the injuries done to their Creator; but God withholds them in His mercy: "All creation, in its service to Thee the Creator, is enraged against the unjust." But, O Lord, Thou waitest for these impious men that they may enter into themselves; and seest Thou not that they ungratefully make use of Thy mercy only to offend Thee more? *Thou hast been favourable to the nation, O Lord, thou hast been favourable to the nation: art thou glorified?* (Is. xxvi. 15). And why so much patience? Because God desires not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live: *I desire not the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his way and live* (Ezech. xxxiii. 11). O patience of God! St. Augustine goes so far

as to say that if God were not God He would be unjust in respect of the excessive patience He shows to sinners: "O God, my God, pardon me if I say that, wert Thou not God, Thou wouldst be unjust." It appears an injustice to the Divine honour to wait for those who make use of patience only to become more insolent. "We sin," continues the Saint; "we are attached to sin." Some make peace with sin, and sleep in sin for months and years. "We rejoice in sin" (others go so far as to boast of their wickedness), "and Thou art appeased. We provoke Thee to anger, and Thou invitest us to mercy." It would seem as if we entered into a contest with God: we to provoke Him to chastise us, and He to invite us to pardon.

O my Jesus, pardon me and grant that from this day henceforth I may love Thee alone; that I may live only for Thee Who didst die for me; that I may suffer for Thy love, since Thou hast suffered so much for the love of me. Thou hast loved me from eternity; grant that in eternity I may burn with Thy love. I hope for all, my Saviour, through Thy merits. I confide also in thee, O Mary; it is for thee to save me by thy intercession.

Spiritual Reading

III. HUMAN RESPECT

THE MEANS OF OVERCOMING HUMAN RESPECT

In order to overcome human respect it is necessary to fix in our hearts the holy resolution of preferring the grace of God to all the goods and favours of the world, and to say with St. Paul: *Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers ... nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God* (Rom. viii. 38). Jesus Christ exhorts us not to fear those who can take away the life of the body; but to fear Him only Who can condemn the soul and body to hell. *And fear ye not them that kill the body ... but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body into hell* (Matt. x. 28). We wish either to follow God or the world; if we wish to follow God we must give up the world. *How long do you halt between two sides?* said Elias to the people. *If the Lord be God, follow him* (3 Kings xviii. 21). You cannot serve God and the world. He that seeks to please men cannot please God. *If*, says the Apostle, *I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ* (Gal. i. 10).

The true servants of God rejoice at seeing themselves despised and maltreated for the sake of Jesus Christ. The holy Apostles *went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus* (Acts v. 41). Moses could have prevented the anger of Pharaoh by not contradicting the current report that he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter. But he denied that he was her son, preferring, as St. Paul says, the opprobrium of Christ to all the riches of the world. *Choosing rather to be afflicted with the people of God; ... esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians* (Heb. xi. 25-26).

Wicked friends come to you and say: What extravagances are these in which you indulge? Why do you not act like others? Say to them: My conduct is not opposed to that of all men; there are others who lead holy lives. They are indeed few; but I will try and follow their example; for the Gospel says: *Many are called, but few are chosen* (Matt. xx. 16). "If," says St. John Climacus, "you wish to be saved with the few, live like the few." But, they will say: Do you not see that all murmur against you, and condemn your manner of living? Let your answer be: It is enough for me that God does not censure my conduct. Is it not better to obey God than to obey men? Such was the answer of St. Peter and St. John to the Jewish priests: *If it be just in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, judge ye* (Acts iv. 19). If they ask you how can you bear an insult? or if you submit to it how you can appear among your equals? Answer them by saying that you are a Christian, and that it is enough for you to be right in the eyes of God. Such should be your answer to all those satellites of Satan; you must despise all their maxims and reproaches. And when it is necessary to reprove those who make little of God's law, you must take courage and correct them publicly. *Them that sin, reprove before all* (1 Tim. v. 20). And when there is question of the Divine honour, we should not be frightened by the dignity of the man who offends God; let us say to him openly: That is sinful; it cannot be done. Let us imitate St. John the Baptist who reproved King Herod for living with his brother's wife, and said to him: *It is not lawful for thee to have her* (Matt. xiv. 4). Men, indeed, will regard us as fools, and turn us into derision; but on the Day of Judgment

ment they will acknowledge that they have been fools, and we shall have the glory of being numbered among the Saints. They shall say: *These are they whom we had sometime in derision ... We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints* (Wis. v. 3-5).

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

Suffering with Patience is a virtue not practised nor even understood by those who love the world. It is understood and practised only by souls who love God. "O Lord," said St. John of the Cross to Jesus Christ, "I ask nothing of Thee but to suffer and to be despised for Thy sake." St. Teresa frequently exclaimed: "O my Jesus, either to suffer or to die." St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi was wont to say: "To suffer and not to die." Thus speak the Saints who love God, because a soul can give no surer mark to God of love than voluntarily to suffer to please Him. This is the great proof which Jesus Christ has given of His love for us. As God He loved us in creating us; in providing us with so many blessings; in calling us to enjoy the same glory that He Himself enjoys; but in nothing else has He more fully shown how much He loves us than in becoming Man, and embracing a painful life, and a death full of pangs and ignominies, for love of us. And how shall we show our love for Jesus Christ? Is it by leading a life full of pleasures and earthly delights?

II.

Let us not think for a moment that God takes delight in our pains. The Lord is not of so cruel a nature as to delight to see us, His creatures, groan and suffer. He is a God of infinite goodness, Who desires to see us fully content and happy, so that He is full of sweetness, affability, and compassion to all who come to Him. But our unhappy condition, as sinners, and the gratitude we owe to the love of Jesus Christ, require that, for His love, we should renounce the delights of this earth, and embrace with affection the cross He gives us to carry during this life, after Him Who goes before, bearing a Cross far heavier than ours; and all this in order to bring us, after our death, to a blessed life, which will

never end. God, then, has no desire to see us suffer, but, being Himself infinite justice, He cannot leave our faults unpunished; so that, in order that they may be punished, and that we may one day attain eternal happiness, He would have us purge away our sins with patience, and thus deserve to be eternally blessed. What can be more beautiful and sweet than this rule of Divine Providence, where we see at once justice satisfied and ourselves saved and happy?

Thursday--Sixteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

II. THE MERCY OF GOD

When Adam rebelled against the Lord and hid himself from His grace, behold the Lord goes in search of the lost Adam, and almost weeping calls him: *Adam, where art thou?* Ah, this good Lord goes all day in quest of sinners, saying to them: Ungrateful that you are, do not fly from me! *Why will you die, O house of Israel?*

I.

Consider the mercy of God in calling sinners to repentance. When Adam rebelled against the Lord, and afterwards hid himself from His face, behold God, having lost Adam, goes in search of him, and, almost weeping, calls him; *Adam, where art thou?* (Gen. iii. 9). "They are words of a father," observes Father Pereira, "who seeks his lost son." My brother, how often has God done the same for you? You fled from God, and God continued to call you: now by inspirations, now by remorse of conscience, now by sermons, now by tribulations, now by the death of your friends. Jesus Christ appears to say, speaking of you: *I have laboured with crying: my jaws have become hoarse* (Ps. lxxviii. 4). My son, My voice is weary crying after thee. "Remember, O sinners," says St. Teresa, "that the same Lord Who cries to you now will one day be your Judge."

My brother, how many times have you been deaf to the voice of God Who called you! You have deserved that He should call you no more. But no, your God has not ceased to call you, because He desired to make peace with you and to save you. Who was it that called you? A God of infinite majesty. And you, who

were you, but a miserable worm? And why did He call you but to restore to you that life of grace you had lost: *Return ye and live* (Ezech. xviii. 32). To obtain Divine grace it would be but little to live in a desert during a whole life; but God offered to you that you could receive His grace in a moment, if you chose it, by an act of contrition; and you refused it. And after all this God has not abandoned you; He has sought you, as it were, weeping, and saying: "My son, why wilt thou damn thyself?" *Why will you die, O house of Israel?* (Ezech. xviii. 31).

Behold, O Lord, at Thy feet an ungrateful sinner, imploring Thy pity! My Father, pardon me! I call Thee Father because Thou desirest I should so call Thee. I do not deserve compassion, for after Thou hast been good to me I have been the more ungrateful to Thee. Ah, by that goodness which has withheld Thee, my God, from abandoning me when I fled from Thee, by that same goodness receive me now that I return to Thee. Give me, my Jesus, a great sorrow for my offences against Thee, and bestow on me the kiss of peace.

II.

When a man commits a mortal sin he drives God from his soul: *The wicked have said to God: Depart from us* (Job xxi. 14). But what does God do? He stands at the door of the ungrateful heart: *I stand at the door and knock* (Apoc. iii. 20); and prays, as it were, the soul to admit Him: *Open to me, my sister* (Cant. v. 2); and He wearies Himself with entreaties: *I am wearied of entreating thee* (Jer. xv. 6). Yes, says St. Denis the Areopagite, God follows sinners like a despised lover, beseeching them not to lose their souls: "God lovingly follows even those who turn away from Him, and beseeches them not to perish." This precisely was signified by St. Paul when he wrote to his disciples: *For Christ, we beseech you, be reconciled to God* (2 Cor. v. 20). Commenting upon this passage St. John Chrysostom makes a beautiful reflection: "Christ Himself conjures you. And for what? To reconcile yourselves to God: since it is not He that is the enemy but you." By which the Saint means that, far from striving to move God to make peace with him, the sinner has only to resolve to make peace with God, since he, and not God, flies from peace.

Ah, this good Lord goes all day in quest of sinners, saying to

them: "Ungrateful that you are, do not fly any more from Me; tell me why you fly from Me? I love your welfare, and only desire to make you happy; why will you lose your souls?" But, Lord, what art Thou about? Why so much patience and so much love for these rebels? What good canst Thou hope from them? It redounds but little to Thy honour to show such ardent love for miserable worms who leave Thee: *What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? Or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?* (Job vii. 17).

O Lord, I grieve more for the injuries done to Thee than for any evil whatsoever; I detest them, I abhor them; and I unite this my abhorrence to that which Thou my Redeemer didst feel for them in the Garden of Gethsemane. Ah, pardon me through the merits of that Blood which Thou didst shed for me in that Garden. I firmly promise that I will never more depart from Thee, and that I will banish from my heart every affection that is not for Thee. My Jesus, my Love, I love Thee above all things; I will always love Thee, and love only Thee; but give me strength to do this; make me wholly Thine. O Mary, my hope, thou art the Mother of mercy; pray to God for me, and have pity on me.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER: I. ITS NECESSITY

St. Paul writes: *God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Tim. ii. 4). According to St. Peter, He does not wish any one to be lost. *The Lord dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance* (2 Pet. iii. 9). Hence St. Leo teaches that, as God wishes us to observe His commands, so He comes to our assistance, that we may fulfil them. And St. Thomas, in explaining the words of the Apostle: *God, who will have all men to be saved*, says: "Therefore, grace is wanting to no one; but God, on His part, communicates it to all." And in another place the holy Doctor writes: "To provide every man with the means necessary for his salvation, provided on his part he puts no obstacle to it, belongs to Divine Providence."

But, according to Gennadius, God grants the assistance of His grace only to those who pray for it. "We believe ... that no one works out his salvation but by God's assistance; and that only he who prays merits aid from God." And St. Augustine

teaches that, except the first graces of vocation to the Faith and to repentance, all other graces, and particularly the grace of perseverance, are granted only to those who ask them. "It is evident that God gives some graces, such as the beginning of Faith, without prayer -- and that He has prepared other graces, such as perseverance to the end -- only for those who pray." And in another place he writes that "God wishes to bestow His favours; but He gives them only to those who ask."

Hence Theologians commonly teach, after St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, Clement of Alexandria, and others, that, for adults, prayer is necessary as *a means* of salvation; that is, without prayer *it is impossible for them to be saved*. This doctrine may be inferred from the following passages of Scripture: *We ought always to pray* (Luke xviii. 1). *Ask, and you shall receive* (Jo. xvi. 24). *Pray without ceasing* (1 Thess. v. 17). The words *we ought, ask, pray*, according to St. Thomas, and the generality of Theologians, imply a precept which obliges, under grievous sin, particularly in three cases: (1) When a man is in the state of sin; (2) When he is in danger of falling into sin; and (3) When he is in danger of death. Theologians teach, that he who, at other times neglects prayer for a month, or at most for two months, cannot be excused from mortal sin; because without prayer we cannot procure the helps necessary for the observance of the law of God. St. John Chrysostom teaches that as water is necessary to prevent trees from withering, so prayer is necessary to save us from perishing.

It was a mere groundless assertion of Jansenius that there are some commands, the fulfilment of which is impossible to us, and that we have not even grace to render their observance possible. For, the Council of Trent teaches, in the words of St. Augustine, that though man is not able, with the aid of the grace ordinarily given, to fulfil all the commandments, still he can, by prayer, obtain the additional helps necessary for their observance. "God does not command impossibilities; but, by His precepts, He admonishes you to do what you can, and to ask what you cannot do; and He assists you that you may be able to do it." To this may be added another celebrated passage of St. Augustine: "By our faith, which teaches that God does not command

impossibilities, we are admonished what to do in things that are easy, and what to ask in things that are difficult."

But why does God Who knows our weakness, permit us to be assailed by enemies which we are not able to resist? The Lord, answers the holy Doctor, seeing the great advantages which we derive from the necessity of prayer, permits us to be attacked by enemies more powerful than we are, that we may ask His assistance. Hence they who are conquered cannot excuse themselves by saying that they had not strength to resist the assault of the enemy; for had they asked aid from God, He would have given it; and had they prayed, they would have been victorious. Therefore, if they are defeated, God will punish them. St. Bonaventure says that if a general lose a fortress in consequence of not having sought timely succour from his sovereign, he will be branded as a traitor. Thus God regards as a traitor the Christian who, when he finds himself assailed by temptations, neglects to seek Divine aid. *Ask*, says Jesus Christ, *and you shall receive*. Then, concludes St. Teresa, he that does not ask does not receive. This is conformable to the doctrine of St. James *You have not, because you do not ask* (James iv. 2). St. John Chrysostom says that prayer is a powerful weapon of defence against all enemies. "Truly prayer is a strong armour." St. Ephrem writes that he who fortifies himself beforehand by prayer, prevents the entrance of sin into the soul. "If you pray before you work the passage into the soul will not be open to sin." David said the same: *Praising I will call upon the Lord, and I shall be saved from my enemies* (Ps. xvii. 4).

If we wish to lead a good life, and to save our souls, we must learn to pray. "He," says St. Augustine, "knows how to live well who knows how to pray well." In order to obtain God's graces by prayer, certain conditions are necessary:

First, *sin must be given up, for God does not hear obstinate sinners*. For example: if a person entertains hatred towards another, and wishes to take revenge, God does not hear his prayer. *I will not hear*, says God, *for your hands are full of blood* (Is. i. 15). St. John Chrysostom says that he who prays while he cherishes a sinful affection does not pray but mocks God. But if he ask the Lord to take away hatred from his heart, the Lord will hear him.

Secondly, *it is necessary to pray with attention*. Some imagine that they pray by repeating many Our Fathers with such distraction that they do not know what they are saying. These speak, but do not pray. Of them the Lord says, by the Prophet Isaias: *With their lips they glorify me, but their hearts are far from me* (Is. xxix. 13).

Thirdly, *it is necessary to take away the occasions which hinder our prayer*. He who is occupied in a thousand affairs unprofitable to the soul, so places a cloud that his prayer is prevented from passing to the throne of grace. *Thou hast set a cloud before thee, that our prayer may not pass through* (Lam. iii. 44). Let us not forget the exhortation of St. Bernard to ask graces of God through the intercession of His Divine Mother. "Let us ask grace, and ask through Mary; for she is a Mother, and her prayer cannot be fruitless." St. Anselm says: "Many things are asked of God and are not obtained: what is asked of Mary is obtained, not because she is more powerful, but because God decreed thus to honour her, that men may know that she can obtain all things from God."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST I.

All our hopes, then, we must build upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and from Him we must hope for all aid to live holily, and save ourselves; and we cannot doubt that it is His desire to see us holy: *This is the will of God, your sanctification* (1 Thess. iv. 3). But true as this is, we must not neglect to do our part to satisfy God for the injuries we have done Him, and to attain by our good works to eternal life. This the Apostle expressed when he said: *I fill up that which is wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh* (Col. i. 24). Was the Passion of Christ, then, not complete and not enough in itself to save us? It was most complete in its value, and more than sufficient to save all men; nevertheless, in order that the merits of the Passion may be applied to us, says St. Teresa, we must do our part, and suffer with patience the crosses God sends us that we may be like our Head, Jesus Christ, according to what the Apostle writes to the Romans: *Whom he foreknew, them he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his*

Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren (Rom. viii. 29).

II.

Still we must ever remember, as the Angelic Doctor warns us, that all the virtue of our good works, satisfactions, and penances, is communicated to them by the satisfaction of Jesus Christ: "The satisfaction of man has its efficacy from the satisfaction of Christ." And thus we reply to the heretics, who call our penances injurious to the Passion of Jesus Christ, as if it were not sufficient to satisfy for our sins.

But what we hold and say is, that in order to be partakers in the merits of Jesus Christ, it is necessary that we labour to fulfil the Divine precepts, even by doing violence to ourselves, so that we may not yield to the temptations of hell. And this is what our Lord meant when He said: *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away* (Matt. xi. 12.) It is necessary, when occasions occur, that we do violence to ourselves by continence, by the mortification of our senses, that we may not be conquered by our enemies. And when we find ourselves guilty before God through the sins we have committed, we must do violence to God with our tears, says St. Ambrose, in order to obtain pardon. And then, to console us, the Saint adds: "O blessed violence which is not punished with the wrath of God, but is welcomed and rewarded with mercy!" The more violent a man is with Christ, the more religious is he accounted by Christ. For we must first rule over ourselves by conquering our passions, that we may one day seize upon Heaven, which our Saviour has merited for us. And therefore we must do violence to ourselves by suffering contradictions and persecutions, and by conquering the temptations and passions which, without violence, are never conquered.

Friday--Sixteenth Week after Pentecost **Morning Meditation**

III. THE MERCY OF GOD

The princes of the earth disdain even to look upon those rebel subjects who come to ask their pardon; but God does not so act with us when we return to Him: *Return to me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee* (Jer. iii. 1).

I.

The princes of the earth disdain even to look upon those rebel subjects who come to ask their pardon; but God does not act thus in our regard: *He will not turn away his face from you if you return to him* (2 Par. xxx. 9). God cannot turn His face from those who return to cast themselves at His feet: no, for He Himself invites them and promises to receive them as soon as they come: *Return to me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee* (Jer. iii. 1). *Turn to me, saith the Lord, and I will turn to you* (Zach. i. 3). Oh, the love and tenderness with which God embraces the sinner who returns to Him! This is precisely what Jesus Christ would have us understand by the Parable of the lost sheep, which, when the shepherd had found, *he laid it on his shoulders rejoicing* (Luke xv. 5), and called his friends to rejoice with him: *Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost* (Luke xv. 6). And St. Luke adds: *There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance*. This was more fully explained by the Redeemer in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, saying that He is that Father Who, when He beholds His lost son returning, runs to meet him, and before he can speak embraces and kisses him; and in embracing him almost swoons away through tenderness for the consolation He experiences: *Returning to him, he fell upon his neck and kissed him* (Luke xv. 20).

O my Jesus, hear me, and pardon me for the sake of the Blood Thou hast shed for me. We therefore beseech Thee, assist Thy servants whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood. O Mary, my Mother, look with pity upon me; turn thine eyes of mercy towards us, and draw us entirely to God.

II.

The Lord promises that if sinners repent He will even forget their sins, as if they had never offended Him. *If the wicked do penance ... living he shall live ... I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done* (Ezech. xviii. 21). He even goes so far as to say: *Come and accuse me, saith the Lord; if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow* (Is. i. 18). As if He said: Sinners, *come and accuse me!* If I do not pardon you, reprove Me, upbraid Me with having been unfaithful to My promises! But no; God knows not how to despise an humble and contrite heart.

The Lord glories in showing mercy and granting pardon to sinners. *And therefore shall he be exalted sparing you* (Is. xxx. 18). And how long does He defer this granting pardon? Not an instant: He grants it immediately. *Weeping*, says the Prophet Isaias, *thou shalt not weep; he will surely have pity on thee* (Is. xxx. 19). Sinners, exclaims the Prophet, you have not long to weep; at the first tear the Lord will be moved to pity: *At the voice of thy cry, as soon as he shall hear, he will answer thee* (Is. xxx. 19). God does not treat us as we treat Him. We are deaf to the calls of God, but *as soon as he shall hear, he will answer thee*. The very instant you repent and ask forgiveness, God answers and grants your pardon.

O my God, against whom have I rebelled? Against Thee, Who art so good, against Thee Who hast created me, and died for me. After so many acts of treason Thou hast borne with me. Ah! the thought of the patience Thou hast had with me ought to make me live always on fire with Thy love. And who would have borne so long as Thou hast the injuries which I have done Thee? Miserable, indeed, shall I be, if I ever again offend Thee, and condemn myself to hell! I already see that Thy mercy can bear with me no longer. I am sorry, O Sovereign Good, for having offended Thee. I love Thee with my whole heart: I am resolved to give Thee all the remainder of my life. Hear me, O Eternal Father, through the merits of Jesus Christ, and give me holy perseverance and Thy love.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER: II. ITS EFFICACY AND VALUE

To understand the efficacy and value of Prayer, we need only consider the great promises God has made to everyone who prays. *Call upon me, ... I will deliver thee* (Ps. xlix. 15). Call upon Me, and I will save you from every danger. *He shall cry to me, I will hear him* (Jer. xxxiii. 3). *Cry to me, and I will hear thee. You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you* (Jo. xv. 7). Ask whatsoever you wish and it shall be given to you. There are a thousand similar passages in the Old and New Testaments. By His nature God is, as St. Leo says, Goodness itself. Hence He desires, with a great desire, to make us partakers of His own good. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say that when any one prays to God for any grace, God feels in a certain manner

under an obligation to him, and thanks him; because by prayer the soul opens to Him a way of satisfying His desire to dispense His graces to us. Hence, in the Holy Scriptures, the Lord appears to recommend and inculcate nothing more forcibly than to ask and pray. To show this, the words which we read in the Gospel of St. Matthew are sufficient. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you* (Matt. vii. 7). St. Augustine teaches that by these promises God has bound Himself to grant all we ask in prayer. "By His promises God has made Himself a debtor." And the Saint says that if the Lord did not wish to bestow His graces upon us He would not exhort us so strenuously to ask them. "He would not exhort us to ask unless He wished to give." Hence we see that the Psalms of David and the Books of Solomon and of the Prophets are full of prayers.

Theodoret has written that prayer is so efficacious before God that, "though it be one, it can do all things." St. Bernard teaches that when we pray, the Lord, if He does not give us the grace we ask, will grant a more useful gift. "He will give either what we ask, or what He knows to be more profitable to us." And whom has God ever despised by not listening to his petition? *Who hath called upon him, and he despised him?* (Ecclus. ii. 12). The Scripture says that among the Gentile nations there is none that has its gods so willing to hear their prayers as our true God is to hear ours. *Neither is there any other nation so great that hath gods so nigh to them as our God is present to all our petitions* (Deut. iv. 7).

The princes of the earth, says St. John Chrysostom, give few audiences; but God grants audience to every one that wishes for it. David tells us that this goodness of God in hearing us at whatever time we pray to Him, shows us that He is our true God, Whose love for us surpasses the love of all others. *In what day soever I shall call upon thee, behold I know thou art my God* (Ps. lv. 10). He wishes and ardently desires to confer favours upon us; but He requires us to pray for them. Jesus Christ said one day to His disciples: *Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name; ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full* (Jo. xvi. 24). As if He said: You complain of Me for not making you perfectly content; but you ought to complain of yourselves for not having asked of Me all the gifts you stood in need of; ask, henceforth, whatsoever you

want, and your prayer shall be heard. Many, says St. Bernard, complain that the Lord is wanting to them. But God complains with more justice that they are wanting to Him, by neglecting to ask Him for His graces.

The ancient Fathers, after having consulted together about the exercise most conducive to salvation, came to the conclusion that the best means of securing eternal life is to pray continually, saying: Lord, assist me; Lord, hasten to my assistance. "Incline unto my aid, O God; O Lord, make haste to help me." Hence the Holy Church commands these two petitions to be often repeated in the Canonical Hours by all the Clergy and by all Religious, who pray not only for themselves, but also for the whole Christian world. St. John Climacus says that our prayers as it were compel God by a holy violence to hear us. "Prayer does pious violence to God." Hence, when we pray to the Lord, He instantly answers by bestowing upon us the grace we ask. *At the voice of thy cry, as soon as he shall hear, he will answer thee* (Is. xxx. 19). Hence St. Ambrose says that "he who asks of God receives while he asks." And He not only grants His graces instantly, but also abundantly, giving us more than we pray for. St. Paul tells us that God is rich -- that is, liberal of His graces to every one that prays to Him. *Rich unto all that call upon him* (Rom. x. 12). And St. James says: *If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not* (James i. 5). *He upbraideth not.* When we pray to God, He does not reproach us with our sins, but seems to forget all the insults we have offered Him, and to delight in enriching us with His graces.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

God teaches us that in order not to lose our souls we must be prepared to suffer the agonies of death, and to die; but, at the same time, He says that for him who is thus prepared He Himself will fight, and will destroy his enemies. St. John saw before the throne of God a great multitude of Saints clothed in white garments (because into Heaven nothing defiled can enter), and he beheld that every one of them bore in his hand a palm branch, the token of Martyrdom. Are all the Saints, then,

Martyrs? Yes, all grown up persons who are saved must either be Martyrs in blood, or Martyrs in patience, in conquering the assaults of hell and the inordinate desires of the flesh. Bodily pleasures send innumerable souls to hell, and, therefore, we must resolve with courage to despise them. Let us be assured that either the soul must tread the body under foot, or the body trample on the soul.

II.

We must, then, I repeat, do ourselves violence in order to be saved. But this violence is such (it will be said by some one) that I cannot do it of myself, if God does not give it me through His grace. To such a one St. Ambrose says: "If you look to yourself, you can do nothing; but if you trust in God, strength will be given you." But, in doing this, we must suffer, and it is impossible to avoid it. If we would enter into the glory of the Blessed, says the Scripture, we must suffer much tribulation. Thus St. John, beholding the glory of the Saints in Heaven, heard a voice saying; These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their garments, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is true that they all attained Heaven by being washed in the Blood of the Lamb, but they all went there after suffering great tribulation.

Saturday--Sixteenth Week after Pentecost **Morning Meditation**

THE BLESSED VIRGIN'S LOVE OF GOD

Our Lady revealed to St. Bridget that in this world she never had a thought, a desire, or a joy but in God and for God. Mary did not so much repeat acts of the love of God like other Saints: her whole life was one continued act of Divine charity.

I.

Our Lady revealed to St. Bridget that in this world she never had a thought, a desire, or a joy, but in and for God: "I thought," she said, "of nothing but God, nothing pleased me but God"; so that her blessed soul, being in the almost continual contemplation of God whilst on earth, the acts of love which she formed were innumerable, as Father Suarez writes: "The acts of perfect charity formed by the Blessed Virgin in this life were without

number; for nearly the whole of her life was spent in contemplation, and in that state she constantly repeated acts of love." But a remark of Bernardine de Bustis pleases me still more. He says that Mary did not so much repeat acts of love as other Saints do, but that her whole life was one continued act of love; for, by a special privilege, she always actually loved God. As a royal eagle, she always kept her eyes fixed on the Divine Sun of Justice: "so that," as St. Peter Damian says, "the duties of active life did not prevent her from loving, and love did not prevent her from attending to those duties." Therefore St. Germanus says that the Altar of Propitiation, on which the fire was never extinguished day or night, was a type of Mary.

Nor was sleep an obstacle to Mary's love for God; since, as St. Augustine asserts, "the dreams, when sleeping, of our first parents, in their state of innocence, were as happy as their lives when waking"; and if such a privilege was granted them, it certainly cannot be denied that it was also granted to the Divine Mother, as Suarez, the Abbot Rupert, and St. Bernardine fully admit. St. Ambrose is also of this opinion; for speaking of Mary, he says: "while her body rested, her soul watched," verifying in herself the words of the Wise Man: *Her lamp shall not be put out in the night* (Prov. xxxi. 18). Yes, for while her blessed body took its necessary repose in gentle sleep, "her soul," says St. Bernardine, "freely tended towards God; so much so that she was then wrapped in more perfect contemplation than any other person ever was when awake." Therefore could she well say with the Spouse in the Canticles: *I sleep, and my heart watcheth* (Cant. v. 2). "As happy in sleep as when awake," as Suarez says. In fine, St. Bernardine asserts that as long as Mary lived in this world she was continually loving God: "The mind of the Blessed Virgin was always wrapped in the ardour of love." The Saint, moreover adds that "she never did anything that the Divine Wisdom did not show her to be pleasing to Him; and that she loved God as much as she thought He was to be loved by her."

Indeed, according to Blessed Albert the Great, we can well say that Mary was filled with so great charity that greater was not possible in any pure creature on earth. Hence St. Thomas of Villanova affirms that by her ardent charity the Blessed Virgin

became so beautiful and so enamoured of her God that, captivated as it were by her love, He descended into her womb and became Man. Wherefore St. Bernardine exclaims: "Behold the power of the Virgin Mother: she wounded and took captive the Heart of God."

II.

As Mary herself loved God so much there can be nothing she requires more of her clients than that they also should love Him to their utmost. This precisely she one day told Blessed Angela of Foligno after Communion, saying: "Angela, be thou blessed by my Son, and endeavour to love Him as much as thou canst." She also said to St. Bridget: "Daughter, if thou desirest to bind me to thee, love my Son." Mary desires nothing more than to see her Beloved, Who is God, loved. Novarinus asks why the Blessed Virgin, with the spouse in the Canticles, begged the Angels to make the great love she bore Him known to our Lord, saying: *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love* (Cant. v. 8). Did not God know how much she loved Him? Why did she seek to show the wound to her Beloved, since He it was Who had inflicted it?" The same author answers that the Divine Mother thereby wished to make her love known to us, not to God; that as she was herself wounded, so might she also be enabled to wound us with Divine love. And "because Mary was all on fire with the love of God; all who love and approach her are inflamed by her with this same love; for she renders them like unto herself." For this reason St. Catharine of Sienna called Mary "the bearer of fire," the bearer of the flames of Divine love. If we also desire to burn with these blessed flames, let us endeavour always to draw nearer to our Mother by our prayers and the affections of our souls.

Ah, Mary, thou Queen of love, of all creatures the most amiable, the most beloved, and the most loving, as St. Francis de Sales called thee, -- my own sweet Mother, thou wast always and in all things inflamed with love towards God; deign, then, to bestow at least a spark of it on me. Thou didst pray thy Son for the spouses whose wine had failed: *They have no wine* (Jo. ii. 3). And wilt thou not pray for us, in whom the love of God, Whom we

are under such obligations to love, is wanting? Say also: *They have no love*, and obtain us this love. This is the only grace for which we ask. O Mother, by the love thou bearest to Jesus, graciously hear us and pray for us. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

NOVENAS IN HONOUR OF OUR BLESSED LADY

The devout clients of Mary are all care and fervour in celebrating Novenas- or Nine Days' Prayer preceding her Festivals; and the Blessed Virgin is all love, in dispensing innumerable and most special graces to them. St. Gertrude one day saw under Mary's mantle a band of souls whom the great Lady was considering with the most tender affection; and she was given to understand that they were persons who, during the preceding days, had prepared themselves by various devotions for the Feast of the Assumption. The following devotions are some of those which may be used during the novenas:

1. We may make mental prayer in the morning and evening, and a Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, adding nine times the "Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be to the Father."

2. We may pay Mary three visits (visiting her statue or picture), and thank our Lord for the graces He granted His Blessed Mother, and each time ask the Blessed Virgin for some special grace.

3. We may make many acts of love towards Mary (at least fifty or a hundred), and also towards Jesus; for we can do nothing that pleases her more than to love her Son, as she said to St. Bridget: "If thou wishest to bind thyself to me, love my Son."

4. We may read every day of the Novena, for a quarter of an hour, some book that treats of her glories.

5. We may perform some external mortification, such as a fast, abstaining from fruit or some favourite dish, or at least a part of it, or chew some bitter herbs. On the Vigil of the Feast we may fast on bread and water: but none of these things should be done without the permission of one's confessor. Interior mortifications, however, are the best of all to practise during these Novenas, such as to avoid looking at or listening to things out of curiosity; to remain in retirement; observe silence; be obedient; not to give impatient answers; to bear contradictions, and such

things; which can all be practised with less danger of vanity, with greater merit, and which do not need the confessor's permission. The most useful exercise is to propose, from the beginning of the Novena, to correct some fault into which we fall the most frequently. For this purpose it will be well, in the visits spoken of above, to ask pardon for past faults, to renew our resolutions not to commit them any more, and to implore Mary's help. The devotion most dear and pleasing to Mary is to endeavour to imitate her virtues; therefore it would be well always to propose to ourselves the imitation of some virtue that corresponds to the Festival; as, for example -- for the Feast of her Immaculate Conception, purity of intention; for her Nativity, renewal of fervour to throw off tepidity; for her Presentation, detachment from something to which we are most attached; for her Annunciation, humility in supporting contempt; for her Visitation, charity towards our neighbour, giving alms, or at least praying for sinners; for her Purification, obedience to Superiors; and finally, for the Feast of her Assumption, let us endeavour to detach ourselves from the world, do all to prepare ourselves for death, and regulate each day of our lives as if it was to be our last.

6. Besides going to Communion on the day of the Feast, it would be well to ask leave from our confessor to go more frequently during the Novena. Father Segneri used to say that we cannot honour Mary better than with Jesus. She herself revealed to a holy soul (as Father Crasset relates), that we can offer her nothing that is more pleasing to her than Holy Communion. For in that Sacrament it is that Jesus gathers the fruit of His Passion in our soul. Hence it appears that the Blessed Virgin desires nothing so much of her clients as Communion, saying: *Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you* (Prov. ix. 5).

7. Finally, on the day of the Feast, after Holy Communion, we must offer ourselves to the service of this Divine Mother, and ask of her the grace to practise the virtue we had proposed to ourselves during the Novena. It is well every year to choose, amongst the Feasts of the Blessed Virgin one for which we have the greatest and most tender devotion; and for this one to make a very special preparation by dedicating ourselves anew, and

in a more particular manner, to her service, choosing her for our Sovereign Lady, Advocate, and Mother. Then we must ask her pardon for all our negligence in her service during the past year, and promise greater fidelity for the next; and conclude by begging her to accept us for her servants, and to obtain us a holy death.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

Be assured, St. Paul wrote to his disciples, that God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able. God has promised to give us sufficient help to conquer every temptation, if only we ask Him. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find* (Matt. vii. 7). He cannot, therefore, fail of His promise. It is a fatal error of the heretics to say that God commands things which it is impossible for us to observe. The Council of Trent teaches: *God does not command impossible things; but when he commands, he bids us do what we can, and seek help for what we cannot do, and he will help us that we may be able.* St. Ephrem writes: "If men do not put upon their beasts a greater burden than they can bear, much less does God lay greater trials upon men than they can endure."

Thomas a Kempis writes: "The cross everywhere awaits thee; it is needful for thee everywhere to preserve patience, if thou wouldst have peace. If thou willingly bearest the Cross, it will bear thee to thy desired end." In this world we all of us go about seeking peace, and would find it without suffering; but this is not possible in our present state; we must suffer; the cross awaits us wherever we turn.

II.

How, then, can we find peace in the midst of these crosses? By patience, by embracing the cross which presents itself to us. St. Teresa says that "he who drags the cross along feels its weight, however small it is; but he who willingly embraces it and carries it, however great it is, does not feel it."

The same Thomas a Kempis says: "Which of the Saints is without a cross? The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom, and dost thou seek for pleasure?" Jesus, so innocent,

so holy, and the Son of God, was willing to suffer through His whole life, and shall we go in search of pleasures and comforts? To give us an example of patience He chose a life full of ignominies and pains within and without; and shall we wish to be saved without suffering, or shall we suffer without patience, which is a double suffering, and without fruit, which only increases our pain? How can we pretend to be lovers of Jesus Christ if we will not suffer for love of Him Who has suffered so much for love of us? How can he glory in being a follower of the Crucified who refuses or receives with the fruits of the cross, which are sufferings, contempt, poverty, pains, infirmities, and all things contrary to our self-love?

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE FOLLY OF POOR SINNERS.

The Blessed John of Avila would have wished to divide the world into two great prisons -- one for those who do not believe and the other for those who do believe and yet live in sin! The prison for these last he would call the prison for fools.

I.

The Blessed John of Avila would have wished to divide the world into two prisons: one for *those who do not believe*, and the other for *those who believe and yet live in sin* at a distance from God -- the prison for these last he would call the prison for fools. But the great misery and misfortune of these unhappy men is that they imagine themselves wise and prudent, whereas they are the most foolish and the most stupid people in the world; and the worst is, that they are innumerable: *The number of fools is infinite* (Eccles. i. 15). Some are mad for the honours of this world, some for its pleasures, some for the filthy things of this earth. And such as these presume to designate as mad the Saints who despise the goods of this world to gain eternal salvation and the only true Good, which is God. They call it madness to embrace contempt, and to pardon injuries; madness to deprive themselves of sensual pleasures and to embrace mortifications: madness to renounce honours and riches and to love solitude and a humble and hidden life. But they do not reflect that their wisdom is called folly

by the Lord: *The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God* (1 Cor. iii. 19).

Ah, my Jesus, I am not worthy to be called Thy child because I have so often insulted Thee to Thy face: *Father, I am not worthy to be called thy son: I have sinned against heaven and before thee.* But I know that Thou goest in search of the lost sheep, and Thy consolation is to embrace Thy lost children. My beloved Father, I grieve for having offended Thee; I cast myself at Thy feet and embrace Thee; I will not depart until Thou dost pardon and bless me: *I will not let thee go except thou bless me.* Bless me, O my Father, and may Thy blessing give me a great sorrow for my sins, and a great love for Thee. I love Thee, O my Father; I love Thee with all my heart. Do not permit me again to separate myself from Thee. Deprive me of all; but deprive me not of Thy love. O Mary, if God is my Father, thou art my Mother. Do thou likewise bless me. I do not deserve to be thy child; accept me for thy servant; but grant that I may be a servant who always tenderly loves thee, and always confides in thy protection.

II.

Sinners will surely one day confess their folly -- but when? When there will be no remedy, and they will say in despair: *We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour* (Wis. v. 4). Ah, fools that we have been, we regarded the lives of the Saints as folly; but now we know that we ourselves have been the fools: *Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the Saints* (Wis. v. 5). Behold, how they are already placed amongst the happy number of the children of God, and have secured their lot with the Saints -- an eternal lot, which will render them happy for ever; and we remain among the number of the slaves of the devil, condemned to burn in this pit of torments for all eternity: *Therefore we have erred* (thus will they conclude their lamentation) *from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us* (Wis. v. 6). We have erred, and have chosen to shut our eyes against the Divine light; and that which will render us most miserable is that our error will be without remedy as long as God shall be God.

What madness, then, for a vile interest, for a passing vapour, for a brief pleasure, to lose the grace of God! What does a subject

not do to obtain the favour of his prince! O God, for a wretched gratification to lose the Sovereign Good, which is God! To lose Heaven! To lose even peace in this life, giving entrance into the soul to sin, which by its remorse will unceasingly torment it, and voluntarily to condemn oneself to everlasting misery!

Would you indulge in that forbidden pleasure if for it you were afterwards to have your hand burnt, or to be shut up for a year in a tomb? Would you commit that sin if after it you were to lose a hundred crowns? And yet you believe and know that by sinning you lose Heaven and God, and are for ever condemned to the fire of hell -- and yet you sin!

O God of my soul, what would have been my lot at this moment if Thou hadst not shown so many mercies to me! I should have been in hell, in that abode of fools like myself. I thank Thee, O Lord; and I beseech Thee not to abandon me to my blindness. I deserved to be deprived of Thy light; but I perceive that Thy grace has not yet forsaken me. I feel that it tenderly calls me, and invites me to ask pardon of Thee, and to hope for great things from Thee, notwithstanding my grievous offences against Thee. Yes, my Saviour, I hope to be accepted by Thee as a child.

Spiritual Reading

THE DANGER TO WHICH TEPIDITY EXPOSES THE SOUL

Jesus Christ enlightens all men -- *the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world* (Jo. i. 9) -- but there are some He cannot enlighten, because they voluntarily close their eyes to the light, and walk in darkness. They are those who lead tepid lives in the service of God.

A tepid soul is not one that lives in enmity with God, nor one that sometimes commits venial sins through mere human frailty. On account of the corruption of nature by original sin, no man can be exempt from some venial faults. This corruption of nature renders it impossible for us, without a most special grace, which has been given only to the Mother of God, to avoid all venial sins during our whole lives. Hence St. John has said: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 Jo. i. 8). God permits defects of this kind, even in the Saints, to keep them humble, and to make them feel that, as they

commit such faults in spite of all their good purposes and promises, so also, were they not supported by His Divine hand, they would fall into mortal sin. Hence, when we find that we have committed these light faults, we must humble ourselves, and acknowledging our own weakness, we must be careful to recommend ourselves to God, and implore of Him to preserve us, by His Almighty hand, from more grievous transgressions, and to deliver us from those we have committed.

What, then, are we to understand by a tepid soul? A tepid soul is one that frequently falls into fully deliberate venial sins -- such as deliberate lies, deliberate acts of impatience, deliberate imprecations, and the like. These faults may be easily avoided by those who are resolved to suffer death rather than commit a deliberate venial offence against God. St. Teresa used to say that one venial sin does us more harm than all the devils. Hence she would say to her nuns: "My children, from deliberate sin, however venial it may be, may the Lord deliver you." Some complain of being left in aridity and dryness and without any spiritual sweetness. But how can we expect that God will be liberal with His favours to us, when we are ungenerous to Him? We know that such a lie, such an imprecation, such an injury to our neighbour, and such detraction, though not mortal sins, are displeasing to God, and still we do not abstain from them. Why, then, should we expect that God will give us His Divine consolations?

But some of you will say: Venial sins, however great they may be, do not deprive the soul of the grace of God: even though I commit them I shall be saved; and for me it is enough to obtain eternal life. You say that for you it is enough to be saved. But remember St. Augustine says that "where you have said, 'It is enough,' there you have perished." To understand correctly the meaning of these words of St. Augustine, and to see the danger to which the state of tepidity exposes those who commit habitual and deliberate venial sins, without feeling remorse for them, and without endeavouring to avoid them, it is necessary to know that the habit of light faults leads the soul insensibly to mortal sins. For example: the habit of venial acts of aversion leads to mortal hatred; the habit of small thefts leads to grievous rapine; the habit of venial attachments leads to affections which are mortally

sinful. "The soul," says St. Gregory, "never lies where it falls." No; it continues to sink deeper and deeper. Just as mortal diseases do not generally proceed from serious indisposition, but from many slight and continued infirmities, so likewise the fall of many souls into mortal sin follows from habitual venial sins; for these render the soul so weak that when a strong temptation assails her she has not strength to resist it and she falls.

Many are unwilling to be separated from God by mortal sins. They wish to follow Him but, at a distance, and they disregard venial sins. But to them shall probably happen what befell St. Peter. When Jesus Christ was seized in the Garden, St. Peter was unwilling to abandon the Lord, but *followed him afar off* (Matt. xxvi. 58). After entering the house of Caiphas he was charged with being a disciple of Jesus Christ. He was instantly seized with fear, and thrice denied his Master. The Holy Ghost says: *He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little* (Ecclus. xix. 1). They who despise small falls will probably one day fall into an abyss; for, being in the habit of committing light offences against God, they will feel but little repugnance to offer to Him some grievous insult.

The Lord says: *Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines* (Cant. ii. 15). He does not tell us to catch the lions or the bears, but the little foxes. Lions and bears strike terror, and therefore all are careful to keep at a distance through fear of being devoured by them; but the little foxes, though they do not excite dismay, destroy the vines. Mortal sin terrifies the timorous soul; but if it accustom itself to the commission of many venial sins with full deliberation, and without endeavouring to correct them, they, like the little foxes, shall destroy the roots -- that is, the remorse of conscience, the fear of offending God, and the holy desires of advancing in Divine love; and thus, being in a state of tepidity, and impelled to sin by some passion, the soul will easily abandon God and lose Divine grace.

Moreover, deliberate and habitual venial sins not only deprive us of strength to resist temptations, but also of the special helps without which we fall into grievous sins. This is a point of great importance that requires very serious attention. It is certain that of ourselves we have not sufficient strength to resist the

temptations of the devil, of the flesh, and of the world. It is God that prevents our enemies from assailing us with temptations by which we would be conquered. Hence Jesus Christ has taught us the following prayer: *And lead us not into temptation.* He teaches us to pray that God may deliver us from the temptations to which we would yield, and thus lose His grace. Now, venial sins, when they are deliberate and habitual, deprive us of the special helps of God which are necessary for perseverance in His grace. I say necessary, because the Council of Trent anathematizes those who assert that we can persevere in grace without a special help from God. "If any one saith that the justified either is able to persevere, without the special help of God, in the justice received; or that, with that help, he is not able, let him be anathema." Thus, with the ordinary assistance of God, we cannot avoid falling into some mortal sin: a special aid is necessary. But this special aid God will justly withhold from tepid souls who are regardless of committing many and fully deliberate venial sins. Thus these unhappy souls shall not persevere in grace.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST I.

Let us not lose courage but keep our eyes ever fixed on the Crucified One, because from Him we shall draw strength to endure the evils of this life not only with patience, but even with joy and gladness, as the Saints have done: *Ye shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains* (Is. xii. 3); that is, says St. Bonaventure, from the Wounds of Jesus Christ. Therefore the Saint exhorts us ever to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus dying upon the Cross, if we would live always united to God. "Devotion," says St. Thomas, "consists in being ready to accomplish in ourselves whatever God demands of us."

Observe the excellent advice St. Paul gives us, that we may live ever united with God, and may patiently endure the troubles of this present life: *Think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds* (Heb. xii. 3). He says *think diligently*; for in order to suffer with resignation and peace present troubles, it is not enough to give a hasty glance, a few times in the year, at the Pas-

sion of Jesus Christ; we must often meditate on it, and every day turn our eyes to the pain the Lord suffered for love of us. And what were the pains He suffered? The Apostle says: *He endured such contradiction*. The contradiction Jesus Christ endured from His enemies was such as to make Him, as it had been foretold by the Prophet, the vilest of men, and the man of sorrows, until He died of agony, overwhelmed with insults, upon a gibbet fit only for the most reprobate. And why did Jesus Christ embrace this burden of pain and insult? *That ye might not be wearied fainting in your minds*; that, seeing how much a God has been willing to endure, in order to give us an example of patience, we might be patient, and endure all to be delivered from our sins.

II.

The Apostle, St. Paul, encourages us, saying: *Ye have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin* (Heb. xii. 4). Remember therefore, that Christ poured forth for you all His Blood in His Passion through torments, and that the holy Martyrs, after the example of Him, their King, have courageously endured hot plates, and iron nails which have torn open their very bowels; but you have not shed a single drop of blood for Jesus Christ, while we ought to be ready to give our life rather than offend God, and to say with St. Edmund: I would rather leap into a flaming furnace than commit a sin against my God." And thus St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, said: "Had I to endure all the bodily pains of hell or commit a sin, rather than commit it, I would choose hell."

The infernal lion ceases not through all our life to go about seeking to devour us; therefore St. Peter tells us that, by thinking of the Passion of Christ, we ought to arm ourselves against his attacks. St. Thomas says that the mere recollection of the Passion is a great defence against all the temptations of hell. And St. Ambrose says: "If there had been any better way of salvation for men than the way of suffering, Christ would have shown it to us both by word and example; but now, going before us with the Cross upon His shoulders, He has shown us that there is no better way of obtaining salvation than suffering with patience and resignation, and He Himself has given us the example in His own Person."

Monday--Seventeenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"AH, THAT THEY WOULD BE WISE!"

Poor sinners! They labour, they spare not themselves in order to acquire worldly knowledge, and the art of gaining the good things of this life which is so soon to end! And these very men neglect the riches of the life that never ends! Oh, that they would be wise!

I.

Poor sinners! They labour, they spare not themselves in order to acquire worldly knowledge and the art of gaining the good things of this life which is so soon to end! And these very men neglect the riches of the life which never ends. They lose their reason to such a manner that they become not only mad-men but brute beasts; for, living as such, they do not consider what is good and what is evil, but follow only the brutal instincts of sense, embracing that which at the moment is pleasing to the flesh, without reflecting upon what they lose, and the eternal ruin they draw down upon themselves. And thus they act, not as men but as brute beasts. St. John Chrysostom says: "We call him a man who preserves intact the image of man; but what is this image of man? To be rational." To be man is to be rational, that is, to act according to reason; not according to the sensual appetite. If God were to give to a beast the use of reason, and it were to act according to reason, we should say that it acted like a man; so, on the contrary, when a man acts according to the senses, and contrary to reason, we must say that the man acts like a beast.

Ah, my God, Thou hast given me understanding, Thou hast given me the light of Faith; and I have hitherto acted like a brute beast, losing Thy grace for the wretched pleasures of sense, which have passed away as a breath of air; and now nothing remains of them but remorse of conscience, and a long account to render to Thy Divine justice. Ah, Lord, do not judge me according to my deserts, but according to Thy mercy! Give me light, give me sorrow for my offences against Thee, and pardon me. I am the lost sheep; and if Thou seekest me not I shall be for ever

lost. Have pity on me for the sake of that Blood which Thou hast shed for the love of me.

II.

Oh, that they would be wise, and would understand, and would provide for their last end! (Deut. xxxii. 29). He who acts with prudence, and according to reason, looks to the future, that is, to what must happen to him at the end of life; to Death, Judgment, and after that, Hell or Heaven. Oh, how much more wise is the peasant who saves his soul than the monarch who loses it! *Better is a child that is poor and wise, than a king that is old and foolish, who knoweth not to foresee for hereafter* (Eccles. iv. 13). O my God, would not that man be universally considered mad, who, to gain a small sum at the present moment, should risk the loss of all his possessions! And shall we not consider him as such, who, for a momentary gratification imperils his soul and incurs the risk of losing it forever? The ruin of so many souls who are now lost was their caring only for present goods and ills, and not thinking upon those that are eternal.

God most certainly has not placed us in this world to become rich, to acquire honours, or to gratify our senses, but to gain eternal life: *And the end life everlasting* (Rom. vi. 22); and to attain this end is all we ought to care for: *One thing is necessary* (Luke x. 42). But this end is just what sinners most despise; they think only of the present; they hasten forward to death; they approach the entrance to eternity, and they know not where they go! What would you think of a pilot, says St. Augustine, who, when asked where he was going, should answer that he did not know? Is he not bringing his ship to destruction? Such are those wise ones of the world, who know how to acquire wealth, to amuse themselves, to obtain high places; but know not how to save their souls. The glutton in the Gospel was well versed in the art of becoming rich; but he died and was buried in hell. Alexander the Great knew well how to conquer numerous kingdoms; but in a few years he died and all was lost to him. Henry VIII knew how to maintain his throne by rebelling against the Church; but in the end he himself, seeing that his soul was lost, confessed: "We have lost all!" How many wretches now weep and cry out in hell: *What hath pride profited us, or what advantage hath*

the boasting of riches brought us? All those things have passed away like a shadow (Wis. v. 8). Behold, for us all the goods of the world have passed as a shadow, and nothing remains of them but tears and eternal suffering.

Before man is life and death; ... that which he shall choose shall be given him (Ecclus. xv. 18). My brother, life and death are placed before you in this world: that is, to deprive yourself of forbidden pleasures, and gain eternal life; or to accept them, and with them eternal death. What say you? Which do you prefer? Choose as a man, and not as a beast. Choose as a Christian who has Faith, and says: *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?*

O my sovereign Good, I repent of having left Thee, and of having voluntarily renounced Thy grace. I wish I could die of grief; but do Thou give me greater sorrow. Grant that I may gain Heaven, and there sing Thy mercies. O Mary, my Mother, thou art my refuge; pray to Jesus for me; pray that He may pardon me, and may give me holy perseverance.

Spiritual Reading

THE DANGER TO WHICH TEPIDITY EXPOSES THE SOUL

He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly (2 Cor. ix. 6). They who are ungenerous with God well deserve that God should not be liberal with them. To such souls the Lord will give graces common to all, but will probably withhold His special assistance; and without this, as we have seen, they cannot persevere in the state of grace. God Himself revealed to Blessed Henry Suso that, for tepid souls who are content with leading a life exempt from mortal sin, and continue to commit many deliberate venial sins, it is very difficult to preserve themselves from mortal sins. The Venerable Louis da Ponte used to say: "I commit many defects, but I never make peace with them." Woe to him who is at peace with his faults! St. Bernard teaches that, as long as a person who is guilty of defects detests his faults, there is reason to hope that he will one day correct them and amend his life: but when he commits faults without endeavouring to amend, he will continually go from bad to worse, till he loses God's grace. St. Augustine says that, like a certain disease of the

skin which makes the body an object of disgust, habitual faults, when committed without any effort of amendment, render the soul so disgusting to God that He deprives it of His embraces. Hence the soul finding no more nourishment and consolation in its devout exercises, in its prayers, Communions, or Visits to the Blessed Sacrament will soon neglect them, and thus neglecting the means of eternal salvation, it will be in great danger of being lost.

This danger will be still greater for those who commit many venial sins through attachment to any passion, such as pride, ambition, aversion to a neighbour, or an inordinate affection for any person. St. Francis of Assisi says that, in endeavouring to draw to sin any one that is afraid of being at enmity with God, the devil does not seek in the beginning to bind him with the chain of a slave, by tempting him to commit mortal sin, because he would have a horror of yielding to mortal sin, and would guard himself against it. He first endeavours to bind him by a single hair; then by a slender thread; next by a cord; afterwards by a rope; and in the end by a chain of hell -- that is, by mortal sin; and thus he makes him his slave. For example: A person cherishes an affection for a woman through a motive of courtesy or of gratitude, or from an esteem for her good qualities. This affection is followed by mutual presents; to these succeed words of tenderness; and after the first violent assault of the devil, the miserable man shall find that he has fallen into mortal sin. He meets with the fate of gamblers, who, after frequently losing large sums of money, yield to an impulse of passion, risk their all, and, in the end, lose their whole property.

Miserable the soul that allows itself to be the slave of any passion. *Behold, how small a fire what a great wood it kindleth* (James iii. 5). A small spark, if it be not extinguished, will set an entire forest on fire. An unmortified passion shall bring the soul to ruin. Passion blinds us; and the blind often fall into an abyss when they least expect it. According to St. Ambrose, the devil is constantly endeavouring to find out the passion which rules in our heart, and the pleasures which have the greatest attraction for us. When he discovers them, he presents occasions of indulging them: he then excites concupiscence, and prepares a chain to

make us the slaves of hell.

St. John Chrysostom asserts that he himself knew many persons who were gifted with great virtues, and who, because they disregarded light faults, fell into an abyss of crime. When the devil cannot gain much from us he is in the beginning content with very little; by many trifling victories he will make a great conquest. No one, says St. Bernard, suddenly falls from the state of grace into the abyss of wickedness. They who rush into the most grievous irregularities, he says, begin by committing light faults. It is necessary also to understand that, when any one that has been favoured by God with special lights and graces consents to mortal sin, his fall will not be a simple fall, from which he will easily rise again, but it will be a precipitous one, from which he will find it very difficult ever to return to God.

Addressing a person in the state of tepidity, our Lord said: *I would that thou wert cold or hot; but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth* (Apoc. iii. 15). *I would thou wert cold* -- that is, it would be better for thee to be deprived of My grace, because there would then be greater hopes of thy amendment; but, because thou livest in tepidity, without any desire of improvement, *I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth*. By these words God means that He will begin to abandon the soul.

A certain author says that tepidity is a hectic fever, which does not excite alarm because it is not perceived; but it is, at the same time, so malignant that it is rarely cured. The comparison is very just; for tepidity makes the soul insensible to remorse of conscience; and, as she is accustomed to feel no remorse for venial faults, she will by degrees become insensible to the stings of remorse which arise from mortal sins.

Let us come to the remedy. The amendment of a tepid soul is difficult; but there are remedies for those who wish to adopt them.

1. The tepid must sincerely desire to be delivered from a state which, as we have seen, is so miserable and dangerous; for, without this desire, they will not take pains to employ the proper means.

2. They must resolve to remove the occasions of their faults;

otherwise they will always relapse into the same defects.

3. They must earnestly beg of the Lord to raise them from so wretched a state. By their own strength they can do nothing; but they can do all things with the assistance of God Who has promised to hear the prayers of all. *Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find* (Luke xi. 9). We must pray and continue to pray without interruption. If we cease to pray we shall be defeated; but if we persevere in prayer we shall conquer.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

St. Bernard says that when we look upon the afflictions of our Lord, we shall find our own lighter to bear. And in another place he says: "What can be other than sweet to thee when thou takest to thyself all the bitterness of the Lord." St. Eleazar, being one day asked by his good wife, Delphina, how he bore so many injuries with a calm mind, replied: "When I see myself injured I think on the injuries of my crucified Saviour, and cease not to think of them until I am calmed." "Sweet is the ignominy of the Cross to him who is not ungrateful to the Crucified," says St. Bernard.

To souls that wish to be grateful to Jesus Christ the contempt they receive is welcome. Who will not gladly embrace opprobrium and ill-treatment when he thinks of the ill-treatment Jesus endured in the commencement of His Passion, when, in the house of Caiphas, He was on that night struck with blows and stripes, spit upon in the face, and, with a cloth covering His eyes, derided as a false prophet?

And how did it ever happen that the Martyrs endured with such patience the torments of executioners? They were torn with irons, they were burned upon hot gratings. Were they not made of flesh and blood, or had they lost all sense? No; when the Martyr sees his blood, he thinks not of his own wounds but of those of his Redeemer; he does not feel pain -- not that there is none, but for Jesus Christ's sake it is despised. There is nothing so bitter, even in death, that it is not sweetened by the death of Christ.

II.

The Apostle writes that through the merits of Jesus Christ we are all made rich. But Jesus Christ desires that in order to obtain the graces we need, we should ever have recourse to God in prayer, and beseech Him to hear us through the merits of His Son; and Jesus Himself promises that whatever we ask the Father in His Name He will give it to us. Thus did the Martyrs act; for when the pain of their torments was too sharp and bitter they went to God, and God gave them patience to endure. The Martyr St. Theodore, in the midst of all the cruelties inflicted on him, feeling at one time a most terrible torture from the balls of hot chalk the tyrant had put upon his wounds, besought Jesus Christ to give him strength to suffer, and thus remained conqueror, ending his life in torments.

We need not fear the attacks we have to endure from the world and from hell; if we take heed to have constant recourse to Jesus Christ with prayer, He will grant us every blessing and give us patience in all our labours, perseverance to the end, and a good death.

Tuesday--Seventeenth Week after Pentecost **Morning Meditation**

TRUE WISDOM

We see that the truly wise are those who know how to acquire Divine grace and Heaven. Let us pray the Lord to give us the wisdom of the Saints which He bestows on those who ask it of Him. *She gave him the knowledge of holy things.*

I.

We see that the truly wise are those who know how to acquire Divine grace and Heaven. Let us pray the Lord to give us the wisdom of the Saints which He bestows on those who ask it of Him. *She gave him the knowledge of holy things* (Wis. x. 10). Oh, it is a noble science, to know how to love God, and to save our souls, which consists in knowing how to choose the way of eternal salvation and the means of obtaining it. The affair of salvation is, of all affairs, the most necessary. If we should know all things, and not know how to save our souls, it would avail us nothing, and we should be eternally miserable; but, on the other

hand, we shall be for ever happy if we know how to love God, even though we should be ignorant of all other things: "Blessed is he who knows Thee, though he be ignorant of all besides," said St. Augustine. One day Brother Giles said to St. Bonaventure: "Happy art thou, Father Bonaventure, who knowest so many things; and I, poor ignorant man, know nothing; thou canst become more holy than I can." "Attend to me," replied the Saint, "if a poor ignorant old woman were to know how to love God more than I do, she would be more holy than I am." Upon which Brother Giles began to cry aloud: "O poor old woman, poor old woman, listen! listen! If you love God, you can become more holy than Father Bonaventure!"

St. Augustine says: "The ignorant rise up and bear away the Kingdom of Heaven." How many rude peasants are there who know not how to read, but know how to love God and so save their souls; and how many of the learned ones of this world lose their souls! The former, then, and not the latter, are truly wise. Oh, how truly wise was a St. Paschal, a St. Felix the Capuchin, a St. John of God, although ignorant of all human sciences! How truly wise have those been who, leaving the world, have shut themselves up in cloisters or lived in the desert, like a St. Benedict, a St. Francis of Assisi, or a St. Louis of Toulouse who renounced his throne. How truly wise so many Martyrs and so many Virgins, who renounced the nuptials of the great ones of this world to go and die for Jesus Christ. Even worldlings recognise this truth, and hesitate not to say of such a one who has given himself to God: Blessed is he who is thus truly wise, and saves his soul! In fine, those who leave the good things of this world to give themselves to God are said to be undeceived. What, then, ought those to be called who leave God for worldly goods, but deluded men? My brother, to which of these two classes do you wish to belong?

O Father of Mercies, look upon my misery, and have pity on me! Give me light, and make me sensible of my past folly, in order that I may weep over it, and know Thy infinite goodness, that I may love it. My Jesus, *deliver not up to beasts the souls that confess to thee* (Ps. lxxiii. 19). Thou hast shed Thy Blood for my sake; do not permit me any longer to be a slave of devils, as

I have hitherto been. I repent, O Sovereign Good, of having abandoned Thee. I curse all those moments in which I willingly consented to sin; and I embrace Thy holy will, which desires my good alone. Eternal Father, through the merits of Jesus Christ, give me strength to do all that is pleasing to Thee.

II.

In order that you may make the right choice, St. John Chrysostom advises you, saying: "Let us go to the tombs of the dead!" They are excellent schools for learning the vanity of this world's perishable riches and the Science of the Saints. Tell me, says Chrysostom, canst thou distinguish them -- who has been a prince, who a noble, who a man of letters? "For my part," the Saint declares, "I see only rottenness, bones, and worms! All is fable, a dream, a shadow!" All the things of this world will ere long come to an end, and vanish like a comedy, a dream, a shadow. But, dear Christian, if you wish to be wise, it is not enough to know the importance of your end; you must adopt the means for obtaining eternal happiness. All men would wish to save their souls and to become saints; but because they do not employ suitable means, they do not become saints, and they lose their souls. We must fly the occasions of sin, frequent the Sacraments, pray, and above all, establish in our hearts these maxims of the Gospel: *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world?* (Matt. xvi. 26). *He that loveth his life shall lose it* (Jo. xii. 25); that is to say, we must even sacrifice life itself to save our souls. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself* (Matt. xvi. 24). In order to follow Jesus Christ, we must deny our self-love the gratifications it seeks. Our salvation depends upon doing the Divine will: *Life is in his will* (Ps. xxix. 6). These and similar maxims must be graven on our hearts.

Let me die, O Lord, rather than any more oppose Thy will. Assist me with Thy grace to place all my love in Thee alone, and to detach my heart from all such affections as do not tend to Thee. I love Thee, O God of my soul, I love Thee above all things; and from Thee I hope for all my good, for pardon, for perseverance in Thy love, and for Paradise, that I may there love Thee in eternity. O Mary, ask these graces for me. Thy Son denies thee nothing. My hope, in thee I confide.

Spiritual Reading

CONFORMITY TO THE HOLY WILL OF GOD

In order to acquire a facility in doing, on all occasions, the holy will of God, we must beforehand offer ourselves continually to embrace in peace whatever God ordains or wills. Such was the practice of holy David. He would say: *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready* (Ps. cvii. 2). And he continually besought the Lord to teach him to do the Divine will. *Teach me to do thy will* (Ps. cxlii. 10). He thus deserved to be called a man according to God's own heart. *I have found David the son of Jesse, a man according to my own heart, who shall do all my wills* (Acts xiii. 22). And why? Because the holy king was always ready to do whatever God wished him to do.

St. Teresa offered herself to God fifty times in the day, that He might dispose of her as He pleased; and she declared her readiness to embrace either prosperity or adversity. The perfection of our oblation consists in our offering ourselves to God without reserve. All are prepared to unite themselves to the Divine will when things are prosperous, but perfection consists in conforming to it even in adversity. To thank God in all things that are agreeable to us, is acceptable to Him; but to accept with cheerfulness what is repugnant to our inclinations is still more pleasing to Him. Blessed John of Avila used to say: "A single *Blessed be God!* in adversity, is better than six thousand thanksgivings in prosperity."

We should conform to the Divine will, not only in misfortunes which come directly from God -- such as sickness, loss of property, privation of friends and relatives -- but also in crosses which come to us from men, but indirectly from God -- such as acts of injustice, defamations, calumnies, injuries, and all other sorts of persecutions. But, you may ask, does God will that others commit sin, by injuring us in our property or in our reputation? No; God wills not their sin; but He does will that we should bear with such a loss and with such a humiliation; and to conform ourselves on all such occasions to His Divine will.

Good things and evil ... are from God (Ecclus. xi. 14). All blessings -- such as riches and honours -- and all misfortunes -- such as sickness and persecutions -- come from God. But mark that

the Scriptures call them evils, only because we, through the want of conformity to the will of God, regard them as evils or misfortunes. For in reality, if we accepted them from the hands of God with Christian resignation, they would be blessings and not evils. The jewels which give the greatest splendour to the crown of the Saints in Heaven are the tribulations they bore with patience, as coming from the hands of the Lord. On hearing that the Sabeans had taken away all his oxen and asses, holy Job said: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away* (Job i. 21). He did not say that the Lord gave, and that the Sabeans had taken away; but that the Lord gave, and that the Lord had taken away: and therefore he blessed the Lord, believing that all had happened through the Divine will. *As it has pleased the Lord, so it is done; blessed be the name of the Lord* (Job i. 21). Being tormented with iron hooks and burning torches, the holy Martyrs Epictetus and Atone said: "Lord, Thy will be done in us." And their last words were: "May Thou be blessed, O Eternal God, for having given us the grace to accomplish Thy will."

Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad (Prov. xii. 21). A soul that loves God is not disturbed by any misfortune that may happen to her. Cesarius relates that a certain monk who did not perform greater austerities than his companions wrought many miracles. Being astonished at this, the Abbot asked him one day what were the works of piety he practised. He answered, that he was more imperfect than the other monks; but that his sole concern was to conform himself to the Divine will. Were you displeased, said the Abbot, with the person who injured us so grievously a few days ago? No, Father, replied the monk; I on the contrary, thanked God for it; because I know that He does or permits all things for our good. From this answer the Abbot perceived the sanctity of the good Religious. We should act in a similar manner under all the crosses that come upon us. Let us always say: *Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in thy sight* (Matt. xi. 26). Lord, this is pleasing to Thee, let it be done.

He that acts in this manner enjoys that peace which the Angels announced at the Birth of Jesus Christ to men of good will -- that is, to those whose wills are united to the will of God.

These, as the Apostle says, enjoy that peace which exceeds all earthly delights. *The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding* (Phil. iv. 7). A great and solid peace, which is not liable to change. *A holy man continueth in wisdom like the sun; but a fool is changed like the moon* (Ecclus. xxvii. 12). Fools -- that is, sinners -- are changed like the moon, which increases today and wanes tomorrow; today they are seen to laugh through folly, tomorrow to weep through despair; today they are humble and meek; tomorrow proud and furious. In a word, sinners change with prosperity and adversity; but the just are like the sun, always the same, always serene in whatever happens to them. In the inferior part of the soul they cannot but feel some pain at the misfortunes which befall them; but, as long as the will remains united to the will of God, nothing can deprive them of that spiritual joy which is not subject to the vicissitudes of this life. *Your joy no man shall take from you* (Jo. xvi. 22).

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST I.

The bitterness we shall have to endure at the hour of death will be very great. Only Jesus Christ can give us constancy to suffer with patience and merit. Especially great then are the temptations of hell, which will strive with might and main to destroy us, seeing us near our end. Rinaldus relates that St. Eleazar, at the point of death, endured horrible attacks from the devils, after leading a most holy life, so that he said: "Great are the temptations of hell at this moment, but Jesus Christ, by the merits of His Passion, destroys all their power." St. Francis directed that at the hour of his death the Passion should be read to him. In like manner, St. Charles Borromeo, seeing himself near death, had the representations of the instruments of the Passion brought to him, that in sight of these he might breathe out his blessed soul.

St. Paul writes that Jesus Christ chose to endure death, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who, through fear of death, were through their whole life subject to bondage. And he adds: *Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like*

unto his brethren that he might become a merciful high-priest before God ... For in that wherein he himself hath suffered and been tempted, he is able to succour them also that are tempted (Heb. ii. 17-18).

Christ chose to take on Him all the circumstances and passions of human nature (except ignorance, concupiscence, and sin); and wherefore? That He might be merciful, and by taking on Himself our miseries, He might be more compassionate to us, because misery is much better known by experience than by reflection; and thus He became more ready to help us when we are tempted during life, and especially at the hour of death. To this the saying of St. Augustine refers: "If you are disturbed at the time of death, do not think yourself a castaway, nor give yourself up to despair; for Christ Himself was thus disturbed at the prospect of His own death."

At the hour of our death hell will put forth all its strength to make us distrust the Divine mercy, by placing before our eyes all the sins of our life; but the thought of the death of Jesus Christ will give us courage to trust in His merits, and not to fear death. St. Thomas on St. Paul's words says: "Christ, by death, took away the fear of death, for when a man reflects that the Son of God chose to die, he does not fear death." To the Gentiles death was an object of the greatest terror, because they thought that with death every blessing ceased; but the death of Jesus Christ gives us a firm hope that, dying in the grace of God, we shall pass from death to eternal life. Of this hope St. Paul gives us a sure confidence, saying that the Eternal Father did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; *and how hath he not with him given us all things?* (Rom. viii. 32). For in giving us Jesus Christ He gives us pardon, final perseverance, His love, a good death, eternal life, and every blessing.

Wednesday--Seventeenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE HOLY WILL OF GOD

I. ITS EXCELLENCE

Life in his good will (Ps xxix. 6). Our entire salvation and perfection consists in loving God. *Have charity which is the bond of perfection*, says the Apostle, but the perfection of Charity consists

in conformity to the Divine Will.

I.

Our entire salvation and perfection consists in loving God. *He that loveth not abideth in death* (1 Jo. iii. 14). *Above all these things have Charity which is the bond of perfection* (Col. iii. 14). But the perfection of love consists in conformity to the Divine will; for, as St. Denis the Areopagite says, the principal effect of love is to unite the wills of those who love, so that they may have but one heart and one will. Hence our actions, our works of penance, our Communions and alms-deeds, please God only inasmuch as they are conformable to the Divine will; for, if they are not conformable to the will of God, they are not good works, but are defective, and deserving of chastisement. Our Saviour came down from Heaven principally to teach us by example to conform ourselves to the will of God. Behold what He said at His entrance into this world: *Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not: but a body thou hast fitted to me ... Then, said I: Behold, I come ... that I should do thy will, O God* (Heb. x. 5). O My Father, Thou hast refused the victims offered by men; Thou wishest that, by My death, I should sacrifice this Body which Thou hast given Me; behold Me ready to do Thy will. This Jesus frequently declared, saying that He came on earth only to do the will of His Father. *I came down from Heaven, not to do my will, but the will of him that sent me* (Jo. vi. 38). And by going to die through obedience to the will of His Father, Jesus wished to make known to us His great love for His Father. *That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father hath given me commandment, so do I. Arise; let us go hence* (Jo. xiv. 31). Wherefore He has said that He acknowledges for His disciples only those who fulfil the Divine will. *Whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in Heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother* (Matt. xii. 50). The accomplishment of the Divine will has been the only object and desire of the Saints in all their works. Blessed Henry Suso used to say: "I would rather be the vilest worm on earth in conformity to the will of God, than be a seraph by my own will." And St. Teresa: "All he who practises prayer should seek is to conform his will to the Divine will; and let him be assured that in this consists the highest perfection. He who practises it best will receive the greatest gifts from God,

and will make the greatest progress in spiritual life." The Blessed in Heaven love God perfectly, because they are in all things conformed to the Divine will. Hence Jesus Christ has taught us to do the will of God on earth as the Saints do it in Heaven. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.* He who does the will of God, will, like King David, become a man according to God's own heart. *I have found a man according to my own heart, who shall do all my wills* (Acts xiii. 22). And why? Because David was always prepared to do whatever God wished. *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready* (Ps. cvii. 2). He asked nothing else from the Lord than to teach him to do God's will.

I love Thee, O infinite Goodness, and through the love which I bear Thee, I offer myself entirely to Thee. Dispose of me and of all I possess as Thou pleasest: I resign myself entirely to Thy holy will. Preserve me from the misfortune of doing anything against Thy holy will, and then treat me as Thou mayest wish. Eternal Father, hear me for the love of Jesus Christ. My Jesus, hear me through the merits of Thy Passion. Most Holy Mary, assist me; obtain for me the grace to fulfill the Divine will, in the accomplishment of which my salvation entirely consists: obtain this grace for me, and I ask nothing more.

II.

Oh! how great is the value of an act of perfect resignation to the will of God. It is sufficient to make a Saint! While St. Paul was persecuting the Church, Jesus appeared to him, enlightened, and converted him. The Saint only offered himself to do the Divine will. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* (Acts ix. 6). And behold, Jesus Christ instantly declared him a vessel of election and Apostle of the Gentiles: *This man is to me a vessel of election to carry my name before the Gentiles* (Acts ix. 15). He who fasts, gives alms, or mortifies himself for God's sake, gives a part of himself to God; but the man who gives his will to God gives himself entirely to God. All that God asks of us is our heart -- that is, our will. *My son, give me thy heart.* In a word, the accomplishment of the Divine will must be the object of all our desires, of our devotions, meditations, Communions, etc. The object of all our prayers must be to obtain from God the grace to do His will. And for this purpose we must implore the intercession of our

holy advocates, and particularly of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that they may procure for us light and strength to conform ourselves to the will of God in all things, but particularly in embracing what is opposed to self-love. The Blessed John of Avila used to say: "A single *Blessed be God!* in adversity is better than six thousand acts of thanksgiving in prosperity."

Ah, my God, all the evils of my past life have arisen from a want of conformity to Thy will. O God of my soul, I detest and curse a thousand times the days and moments in which I have, in order to do my own will, contradicted Thy holy will. I now give my whole will to Thee. Accept it, O my Lord, and bind it so firmly to Thy love that it may never more be able to rebel against Thee.

Spiritual Reading

CONFORMITY TO THE HOLY WILL OF GOD

II. MAN'S SOLE HAPPINESS ON EARTH

He that reposes in the Divine will is like a man placed above the clouds: he sees the lightning, and hears the rolling of the thunder, and the raging of the tempest below, but he is not injured or disturbed. And how can he ever be disturbed when he always desires whatever happens? He that desires only what pleases God always obtains whatsoever he wishes, because all that happens to him, happens through the will of God. Salvian says that Christians who are resigned, if they be in a low condition of life, wish to be in that state; if they be poor they desire poverty; because they wish whatever God wills, and therefore they are always content. If cold, or heat, or rain, or wind come, he that is united to the will of God says: I wish for this cold, this heat, this rain, and this wind, because God wills them. If loss of property, persecution, sickness, or even death come upon him, he says: I wish for this loss, this persecution, this sickness; I even wish for death, when it comes, because God wills it. And how can a person who seeks to please God enjoy greater happiness than that which arises from cheerfully embracing the cross which God sends him, and from the conviction that, in embracing it, he pleases God in the highest degree? So great was the joy which St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to feel at the bare mention of *the will of God*, that she would fall into an ecstasy.

But how great the folly of those who resist the Divine will, and, instead of receiving tribulations with patience, get angry, and accuse God of treating them with injustice and cruelty! Perhaps they expect that in consequence of their opposition what God wills shall not happen. *Who resisteth his will?* (Rom. ix. 19). Miserable men! instead of lightening the cross which God sends them, they make it more heavy and painful. *Who hath resisted him and hath peace?* (Job ix. 4).

Let us be resigned to the Divine will, and we shall thus render our crosses light, and shall gain great treasures of merits for eternal life. In sending us tribulations, God intends to make us Saints. *This is the will of God, your sanctification* (1 Thess. iv. 3). He sends us crosses, not because He wishes evil to us, but because He desires our welfare, and because He knows that they are conducive to our salvation. *All things work together unto good* (Rom. viii. 28). Even the chastisements which come from the Lord are not for our destruction, but for our good and for the correction of our faults. *Let us believe that these scourges of the Lord ... have happened for our amendment, and not for our destruction* (Judith viii. 27). God loves us so tenderly that He not only desires but is solicitous about our welfare. *The Lord is careful for me*, says David (Ps. xxxix. 18).

Let us, then, always throw ourselves into the arms of God Who so ardently desires and so anxiously watches over our eternal salvation. *Casting all your care upon him; for he hath care of you* (1 Pet. v. 7). He who, during life, casts himself into the arms of God, will lead a happy life and die a holy death. He who dies resigned to the Divine will, dies a Saint; but they who shall not have been united to the Divine will during life, will not conform to it at death, and will not be saved. The accomplishment of the Divine will should be the sole object of all our thoughts during the remainder of our days. To this end we should direct all our devotions, our Meditations, Communions, Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and all our prayers. We should constantly beg of God to teach and help us to do His will. *Teach me to do thy will* (Ps. cxlii. 10). Let us, at the same time, offer ourselves to accept without reserve whatever God ordains, saying, with the Apostle: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* (Acts. ix. 6). Lord, tell me

what Thou dost wish me to do; I desire to do Thy will. And in all things, whether they be pleasing or painful, let us always have in our mouths that petition of the *Our Father - Thy will be done*. Let us frequently repeat it in the day with all the affection of our hearts. Happy we if we live and die saying: Thy will be done! -- *Fiat voluntas Tua!*

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

When the devil attempts to frighten us during life or at death by representing to us the sins of our youth, let us answer him with St. Bernard: "What is wanting to me of myself, I take to myself from the bowels of my Lord." St. Paul writes: *Who is he that shall condemn? Christ Jesus that died, yea, that is risen also again, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us* (Rom. viii. 34). These words of the Apostle are of great comfort to us sinners; it is God who justifies us sinners, and pardons us with His grace; and if God renders us guiltless, who can condemn us as guilty? Will Jesus Christ, Who died for us, and gave Himself for our sins, that He might redeem us from the present evil world?

He burdened Himself with our sins and gave Himself up to death to deliver us from this wicked world, and to bring us with Himself to His Kingdom, where as St. Paul goes on to say, He performs the office of our Advocate, and intercedes for us with the Father. St. Thomas explains this, saying that Jesus Christ intercedes for us in Heaven by presenting to His Father His Wounds which He endured for love of us.

II.

St. Gregory does not hesitate to assert (in opposition to what some say) that the Redeemer, as man, ever since His death, prays for the Church militant, that we may be faithful to Him: "Christ daily prays for His Church." And St. Gregory Nazianzen before has said: "He intercedes, that is, He prays for us by way of mediation." And St. Augustine, on the thirty-ninth Psalm, says that Jesus prays for us in Heaven, not that He may now obtain for us any fresh grace, for during His life He obtained all He could obtain; but He prays, inasmuch as He begs of the Father, through

His merits, the salvation already obtained and promised to us. And though to Christ all power is committed by the Father, yet, as Man, He only possesses this power as depending upon God. The Church, however, is not accustomed to ask Him to intercede for us, because she regards that which is most exalted in Him, that is, His Divinity; and therefore she prays to Him as God to grant what she asks.

Thursday--Seventeenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE MEEKNESS AND HUMILITY OF THE INFANT JESUS

Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart (Matt; xi. 29). Pride was the chief cause of the fall of our First Parents. Unwilling to submit to obedience and obey the commands of God, they brought ruin on themselves and on the whole human race. But to repair the universal ruin God in His mercy decreed that His only-begotten Son should humble Himself, take upon Him our flesh, and by the example of His life induce men to love humility and detest pride.

I.

Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart. Pride was the chief cause of the fall of our First Parents. Unwilling to submit to obedience and obey the commands of God they brought ruin on themselves and on the whole human race. But to repair the universal ruin God in His mercy decreed that His only-begotten Son should humble Himself, take upon Him our flesh, and by the example of His life induce men to love humility and detest pride. St. Bernard invites us to visit the Cave of Bethlehem, saying: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and there we shall find what to admire, what to love and what to imitate."

Yes, in the Cave we have what to admire, what to wonder at. A God in a stable! A God on straw! That same God Who sits on the highest throne of majesty in Heaven! *I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated* (Is. vi. 1), says the Prophet Isaias. And where do we find Him now? In a manger, unknown, abandoned, with none in attendance save a few poor shepherds and two animals. Again, we have here what to love. We find

One in Whom to place our affection, seeing here a God Who is infinite Good, and has chosen to abase Himself by appearing to men as a poor Infant, that thereby He might make Himself more endearing and pleasing in our eyes. But, as St. Bernard says: "the more lowly He appears to me the dearer He is to me." And we find in the Cave what to imitate. We find the Supreme Being, the King of Heaven, become an humble little Child, desirous from His very Birth to teach us by example what He was afterwards to tell us by word of mouth: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart!*

O my despised Jesus, Thou hast by Thy example done only too much to render reproaches and contempt sweet in the eyes of those who love Thee! But how is it, then, that instead of embracing them, as Thou hast done, when I receive some little contempt from men, I behave with so much pride, and take occasion from it to offend Thy infinite Majesty, sinner and proud that I am? Ah, Lord, I see why it is; I do not know how to bear an affront patiently, because I do not know how to love Thee. Did I love Thee truly, it would be sweet and pleasing to me. But since Thou dost promise pardon to him who repents, I repent with all my heart of all the excesses of my life -- a life so unlike Thine. But I desire to amend; and therefore I promise Thee to suffer with patience from this day forward all the contempt to which I shall be subject, for Thy love, O my Jesus, Who wast so much despised for the love of me. I understand that humiliations are precious mines from which Thou dost enrich souls with eternal treasures. I deserve far other humiliations and other reproaches for having despised Thy grace; I deserve to be trampled on by the devils. But Thy merits are my hope. I will change my life, and will no longer displease Thee; henceforth I will seek for nothing but Thy Divine pleasure. I have deserved many times to be sent to burn in hell-fire; Thou hast waited for me till now, and, as I hope, hast pardoned me; grant therefore that instead of burning in those terrible flames, I may be inflamed with the blessed fire of Thy holy love.

II.

Who does not know that God is the first and the highest in nobility, and the source whence all nobility proceeds? He is

infinite greatness. He is independent; for He has not received His greatness from any other, but has always possessed it in Himself. He is the Lord of all, Whom all creatures obey: *The winds and the sea obey* (Matt. viii. 27). Truly, therefore, does the Apostle say that to God alone belong honour and glory: *To the only God be honour and glory* (1 Tim. i. 17).

But the Eternal Word, to provide a remedy for man's disgrace, which was brought about by his own pride, having made Himself an example of poverty in order to detach man from worldly goods, desired to make Himself also an example of humility in order to free us from the vice of pride.

And in doing this the first and greatest example of humility the Son of God gave was to become a man, and clothe himself with our miseries: *In habit found as a man* (Phil. ii. 7). Cassian says that any one who puts on the dress of another hides himself under it; in like manner God hid His Divine Nature under the lowly dress of human flesh. And St. Bernard: "The Divine Majesty became little in order that It might be united to our earthly nature; and that God and clay, majesty and weakness, the most extreme abasement and the highest majesty, might be united in one Person." A God to unite Himself to dust! Greatness to misery! Sublime majesty to wretchedness! But that which must make us wonder still more is that not only did God choose to appear as a creature, but as a sinful creature, putting on sinful flesh: *God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh* (Rom. viii. 3).

O my Jesus, pardon me the pride of my past life and give me love in its place. I love Thee, my despised Saviour. I will no longer live without loving Thee. Help me, and let me not live any more ungrateful to Thee, as I have hitherto done. For the future I will love Thee only; I desire that my heart may belong to Thee alone. Ah, take possession of it and keep it forever, that I may be always Thine and Thou mayest be always mine; that I may love Thee; and Thou mayest love me. Yes, that is my hope, O my God, that I shall always love Thee, and that Thou wilt always love me. I believe in Thee, O infinite Goodness! I hope in Thee, O infinite Goodness, I love Thee, O infinite Goodness! I love Thee, and I will say it always: I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee; and because I love Thee I will do all I can to please

Thee. Dispose of me as Thou wilt. All I ask is that Thou wouldst give me grace to love Thee, and then do with me as Thou pleasest. Thy love is, and always shall be, my only treasure, my only desire, my only good, my only love. Mary, my hope, Mother of beautiful love, do thou help me in loving the God of love with all my heart and forever.

Spiritual Reading

"A SIGN WHICH SHALL BE CONTRADICTED"

The Son of God was not content to appear as a man, or even as a sinful man. He desired further to choose the most lowly and humble life among men; so that Isaias called Him the last, the most humble of men: *Despised and the most abject of men* (Is. liii. 3). Jeremias said: *He shall be filled with reproaches* (Lam. iii. 30). And David, that He should be: *The reproach of men, and the outcast of the people* (Ps. xxi. 7). And for this did Jesus Christ wish to be born in the most abject state that could be imagined. What ignominy for a man, even though he be poor, to be born in a stable! Who is there so poor as to be born in a stable? The poor are born in their huts, at least on beds of straw. Stables are fit only for beasts and worms; and the Son of God chose to be born on this earth like a worm: *I am a worm, and no man* (Ps. xxi. 7). Yes, says St. Augustine, in such humility did the King of the Universe choose to be born, in order to show us His majesty and power in His very humility, so that He might through His example make those men, who are born full of pride, love humility.

An Angel announced to the shepherds the birth of the Messiah; and the signs he gave them by which they might find Him and recognize Him were all signs of humility. When you shall find a child, said he, in a stable, wrapped up in rags, and lying in a manger on the straw, know that it is your Saviour: *And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger* (Luke ii. 12). In such a state is it that we find a God Who is coming to this earth to destroy pride.

The life Jesus Christ led in exile in Egypt was in conformity with His birth. During those years He lived as a stranger, unknown, and in poverty, in the midst of pagans. Who knew Him there? Who made any account of Him?

He returned to Judea, and continued to live the same sort of

a life. He lived for thirty years in a workshop, supposed by all to be the son of a common workman, doing the work of a serving-boy, poor, unnoticed, despised. In that Holy Family there were no servants. "Joseph and Mary," writes St. Peter Chrysologus, "have neither servant nor servant-maid: they themselves are at once master and servant." There was but one servant in that family, and He was the Son of God, Who wished to become the Son of Man, that is, of Mary, that He might be an humble Servant, and obey a man and a woman as their servant: *And he was subject to them* (Luke ii. 51).

After thirty years of hidden life, the time came that our Saviour was to appear in public to preach the heavenly doctrines He had come from Heaven to teach us; and therefore it was necessary that he should make Himself known as the true Son of God. But, O my God! how many were there that acknowledged and honoured Him as He deserved? Besides the few disciples who followed Him, all the rest, instead of honouring Him, despised Him as a vile man and an impostor. Ah, then was verified in the fullest manner the prophecy of Simeon: *This child is set ... for a sign which shall be contradicted* (Luke ii. 34). Jesus Christ was contradicted and despised by all: He was despised in His doctrine; for when He declared that He was the only-begotten Son of God, He was called a blasphemer, and as such was condemned to death. *He hath blasphemed! He is guilty of death* (Matt. xxvi. 65-66). His wisdom was despised, for He was esteemed a fool without sense: *He is mad: why hear you him?* (Jo. x. 20). His morals were reproached as being scandalous -- they called Him a glutton, a drunkard, and the friend of wicked people: *Behold a man that is a glutton, and a drinker of wine, a friend of publicans and sinners* (Luke vii. 34). He was accused of being a sorcerer, and of having commerce with devils: *By the prince of devils, he casteth out devils* (Matt. ix. 34). He was called a heretic, and one possessed by the devil: *Do we not say well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?* (Jo. viii. 48). A deceiver: *For that seducer said*, etc. (Matt. xxvii. 63). In fine, Jesus Christ was considered by all the people so wicked a man that there was no need of a tribunal to condemn Him to be crucified: *If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee* (Jo. xviii. 30).

At last the Saviour came to the end of His life and to His Passion; and, O God, what contempt and ill-treatment did He not then receive! He was betrayed and sold by one of His own disciples for thirty pieces of money, a less price than would be given for a beast. By another disciple He was denied. He was dragged through the streets of Jerusalem bound like a thief, abandoned by all, even by His few remaining disciples. He was treated shamefully as a slave, when He was scourged. He was struck on the face in public. He was treated as a fool, when Herod had a white garment put on Him, that He might be thought a foolish person without any sense: "He despised Him as ignorant," says St. Bonaventure, "because He did not answer a word; as foolish, because He did not defend Himself." He was treated as a mock king when they put into His hand a reed, instead of a sceptre, a tattered red garment upon His shoulders instead of the purple, and a wreath of thorns on His head for a crown. After thus deriding Him, they saluted Him: *Hail, King of the Jews!* and then they covered Him with spitting and blows: *and spitting upon him* (Matt. xxvii. 30); *and they gave him blows* (Jo. xix. 3).

Finally, Jesus Christ willed to die; but by what a death! By the most ignominious death, the death of the Cross: *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross* (Phil. ii. 8). Any one who suffered the death of the Cross at that time was considered the vilest and most wicked of criminals: *Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree* (Gal. iii. 13). Therefore, the names of those who were crucified were always held as cursed and infamous; so that the Apostle wrote: *Christ is made a curse for us* (Gal. iii. 13). St. Athanasius, commenting on this passage, says: "He is called a curse, because He bore the curse for us." Jesus took upon Himself this curse that He might save us from eternal malediction. But where, Lord, exclaims St. Thomas of Villanova, where is Thy beauty, where is Thy majesty in the midst of so much ignominy? And he answers: "Ask not; God has gone out of Himself." And the Saint's meaning was this: that we should not seek for glory and majesty in Jesus Christ, since He had come to give us an example of humility, and manifest the love that He bears towards men; and that this love had made

Him, as it were, go out of Himself.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

Let us return to speak for a little on the confidence we should have in Jesus Christ that He will grant us salvation. St. Augustine encourages us, saying that this Lord, Who has delivered us from death by shedding all His Blood, desires not that we should perish; and that if our sins separate us from God, and make us deserving of being rejected, our Saviour, on the other hand, cannot reject the price of the Blood He shed for us. Let us, then, boldly follow the counsel of St. Paul who says: *Let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us; looking on Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame* (Heb. xii. 1). Let us run with patience the race before us, because it profits little to begin if we do not struggle on to the end; while patience in enduring labour will obtain for us the victory, and the crown that is promised to him who conquers.

This patience will be the shield which will defend us from the swords of our foes; but how shall we obtain it? "By looking," says the Apostle, "to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of Faith," Who, says St. Augustine, despised all earthly goods that He might show that they are to be despised; Who endured all earthly evils which He taught us have to be endured, that in these we might neither seek the joys of the world, nor fear its persecution. Then with His glorious Resurrection Jesus Christ animated us not to fear death; because, if we are faithful to Him even until death, we shall obtain eternal life, be free from all evil, and enjoy every good. This is signified by the Apostle's words: *Jesus, the author and finisher of Faith*; for Jesus Christ is the Author of the Faith, in teaching us what to believe, and giving us grace to believe it; and so also He is the Finisher of Faith, by promising we shall one day enjoy that blessed life in which He teaches us to believe. And that we may be sure of the love this Saviour bears to us, and of the will He has that we should be saved, St. Paul adds: *Who having joy set before him endured the cross*; on which words St. John Chrysostom remarks that Jesus might have saved us by leading a life of joy upon earth; but that to make us more certain

of the love He bore us, He chose a life of pain, and a death of shame, dying as a malefactor upon the Cross.

II.

O souls that love the Crucified, let us give ourselves to love this loving Redeemer, so worthy of love, and let us love Him to the utmost of our power. Let us also suffer for Him, because He has been willing to suffer for love of us; and let us not cease to ask Him continually to grant us the gift of His holy love. Happy are we if we attain to a great love for Jesus Christ! The Venerable Father Vincent Carafa, an eminent servant of God, in a letter to some studious and devout young men, wrote as follows: "To reform ourselves and our whole life, we must give all our study to the exercise of Divine love. The love of God alone, when it enters a heart, and obtains possession of it, purifies it from all inordinate love, and makes it at once obedient and pure." St. Augustine says a pure heart is a heart emptied of every desire; and St. Bernard says that he who loves, loves, and desires nothing more; meaning that he who loves God desires nothing but to love Him, and banishes from his heart everything that is not God. And thus it is that, from being empty the heart becomes full, that is, full of God, Who with Himself brings every good thing; and then earthly pleasures, finding no place in such a heart, have no power over it. What power can earthly pleasures have over us if we enjoy Divine consolations? What power is there in ambition for vain honours, and the desire of earthly riches, if we have the honour of being loved by God, and begin to possess a share in the riches of Paradise? To measure, therefore, the advance we have made in the ways of God, let us observe what advance we have made in loving Him; whether we often during the day make acts of love towards God; often speak of the love of God; whether we take pains to inflame in others God's love; whether we perform our devotions solely to please God; whether we suffer with full resignation all adversities, infirmities, pains, poverty, slights, and persecutions in order to please God. The Saints say that love is as necessary for the life of a soul that truly loves God as breathing is for the life of the body, since the soul's very life both in time and eternity consists in the love of our sovereign Good, which is God.

Friday--Seventeenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS."

It is of Faith that Jesus Christ the true Son of God, for the love of men, humbled Himself so as to be born in a stable, and to lead a despised life, and in the end, to die by the hands of executioners on an infamous gibbet. Now, after all God has done and suffered for the love of man, will man refuse to humble himself for the love of God?

I.

It is of Faith that Jesus Christ the true Son of God, for the love of men, humbled Himself so as to be born in a stable, and to lead a despised life, and in the end, to die by the hands of executioners on an infamous gibbet. "O grace! O power of love!" exclaims St. Bernard, "didst Thou, O Most High, become the lowest of all!" O power of Divine love! The Greatest of all has made Himself the lowest of all! "Who did this?" asks the Saint. "It was love, regardless of dignity. Love triumphs over God." Love does not consider dignity when there is question of winning for itself the person it loves. God, who can never be conquered by any one, has been conquered by love; for it was love that compelled Him to make Himself man, and to sacrifice Himself for the love of man in an ocean of sorrows and contempt. "He emptied Himself," concludes St. Bernard, "that thou mayest know that it was through love that the Highest made Himself equal to thee." The Divine Word, Who is Majesty itself, humbled Himself so far as to annihilate Himself, that mankind might know how much God loved men.

St. Bernard goes on to say, the more our God abased Himself, so much the more did He show forth His goodness and love: "The lower He showed Himself to be in His humanity, the greater did He declare Himself in goodness."

Now, after a God has done and suffered so much for the love of man, will man have a repugnance to humble himself for the love of God? *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus* (Phil. ii. 5). He who is not humble, and who does not seek to

imitate the humility of Jesus Christ, is not worthy of the name of Christian; for Jesus Christ, as St. Augustine says, came into the world in an humble way to put down pride. The pride of man was the disease which drew from Heaven this Divine Physician, loaded Him with ignominies, and caused Him to die on the Cross. Let the proud man be ashamed then at least when he sees that a God so humbled Himself in order to cure him of pride: "Because of this very vice of pride, God came in humility. This disease drew Him down from Heaven, humbled Him even to the form of a servant, overwhelmed with calumnies, nailed Him upon the Cross. Blush, then, O man, to be proud, for whom God has become humble." And St. Peter Damian writes: "To raise us He lowered Himself." God chose to abase Himself that He might raise us out of the mire of our sins, and place us in the company of the Angels in Heaven: *Lifting up the poor out of the dunghill, that he may place him with princes, the princes of his people* (Ps. cxii. 7). His abasement in our exaltation! Oh, the greatness of Divine love! exclaims St. Augustine. For the sake of man a God takes upon Himself contempt, that He may share His honour with man. He makes Himself familiar with grief and pain, that man may have salvation: He even suffers death, to obtain life for man. "O wondrous condescension! He comes to receive contempt that He may confer honours; He comes to be satiated with grief that He may give salvation; He comes to undergo death, that He may bestow life."

By choosing for Himself so humble a birth, so lowly a life, and so ignominious a death, Jesus Christ ennobled and took away all bitterness from contempt and opprobrium. This is why the Saints were always so fond and even desirous of being despised. They seemed not to be able to desire or seek anything in this world but to be despised and trodden underfoot for the love of Jesus Christ. When the Divine Word came upon this earth, that Prophecy of Isaias was truly fulfilled: *In the dens where dragons dwelt before, shall rise up the verdure of the reed and the bulrush* (Is. xxxv. 7) -- that where the demons, the spirits of pride, dwelt, there, at the sight of the humility of Jesus Christ, should arise the spirit of humility. The reed signifies humility, says St. Ugo, commenting on this passage; the humble man is empty in his

own eyes; the humble are not full of themselves, as the proud are, but empty of self, considering what is only the truth: that all they have is the gift of God.

From this we may well understand that an humble soul is as dear to God as the proud heart is odious in His eyes. But is it possible, says St. Bernard, for people to be proud after seeing the life of Jesus Christ? "Where the Divine Majesty annihilates itself a worm swells with pride!" Is it possible that a mere worm, loaded with sins, should be proud, when the God of infinite majesty and purity humbles himself so much to teach us to be humble!

Proud people are not acceptable with God. St. Augustine warns us: "Lift yourself up and God departs from you; humble yourself and God comes to you." The Lord flies from the proud, but, on the contrary, He cannot despise a heart that humbles itself, even though it should be a sinful one: *A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise* (Ps. 1. 19). God has promised to hear all who pray to Him: *Ask, and it shall be given you ... For every one that asketh receiveth* (Matt. vii. 7). But He has declared that He will not listen to the proud, as St. James tells us: *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble* (James iv. 6). He resists the prayers of the proud, and does not listen to them; but He cannot deny any grace to the humble, whatever they ask. In fact, St. Teresa says that the greatest graces she ever received were those which were granted her when she humbled herself most in the presence of God. The prayer of the humble penetrates into Heaven by its own efficacy, without needing any one to present it; and it does not depart without obtaining from God what it desires: *The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds ... and he will not depart till the Most High behold* (Ecclus. xxxv. 21).

Spiritual Reading

"ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD."

As soon as the soul shall have entered into the bliss of God, there will be nothing to afflict her more: *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow, shall be any more: for the former things are passed away. And he who sat on the throne said: Behold I make all things new* (Apoc. xxi. 4, 5). In Heaven there is no more sickness, nor poverty, nor trouble: there are no more successions of day and night,

nor of cold or heat. There is a perpetual day, always calm; a continual spring, ever teeming with delights. There are no more persecutions or jealousies: in that kingdom of love all love each other tenderly, and each rejoices in the happiness of the other as if it were his own. There are no more fears, because the soul confirmed in grace can no more sin and lose her God: *Behold, I make all things new*. Everything is new, and every thing consoles and satisfies: *There is every thing that can please*. The sight shall be satisfied in gazing at that *city of perfect beauty* (Lam. ii. 15). What delight would it be to behold a city, the streets of which were paved with crystal; the palaces of silver, with ceilings of gold, and all adorned with festoons of flowers! Oh, how much more beautiful will be the city of Paradise! What will it be to behold those citizens of Heaven all clad in royal robes! There, as St. Augustine says, all are kings: "As many citizens, so many kings." What to see Mary, who will appear more beautiful than the whole of Paradise! What to see the Divine Lamb, Jesus the Spouse! St. Teresa had once but a passing glimpse of the hand of Jesus Christ; and so great was its beauty that she remained, as it were, entranced. The sense of smelling shall be gratified by the odours of Paradise; the hearing with heavenly harmonies. St. Francis once heard from an Angel a single stroke of his viola, and he thought to die of pleasure. What will it be to hear all the Saints and Angels singing in choir the glories of God! *They shall praise thee for ever and ever* (Ps. lxxxiii. 5). What to hear Mary praising God! The voice of Mary in Heaven, says St. Francis de Sale's, shall be like that of a nightingale in the grove, which surpasses the song of every other bird. In a word, there will be found every delight that can possibly be desired.

But these delights which we have as yet considered are but amongst the least of Paradise. The Good which constitutes Heaven is the Sovereign Good, God Himself: "All that we look for is contained in one word, God," says St. Augustine. The reward which the Lord promises us is not only the beauties, the harmonies, and the other joys of that blessed city; the principal reward is God Himself, that is to see and love God face to face: *I am thy reward exceeding great* (Gen. xv. 1). St. Augustine says that if God were to show His face to the damned, "hell would straight-

way be changed into a lovely Paradise." And he adds that if a soul which had departed this life were allowed to choose between seeing God and enduring the pains of hell or of not seeing Him and to be delivered from hell, "it would choose rather to see the Lord and to suffer the pains of hell."

In this life we cannot comprehend the joy of seeing and loving God face to face; but we may form some idea of it from knowing, in the first place, that Divine love is so sweet that even in this life it has lifted from earth, not only the souls, but even the bodies of the Saints. St. Philip Neri was once lifted up into the air, together with the bench which he had grasped. St. Peter of Alcantara was also raised from the earth clinging to a tree, which was torn up by the roots. Moreover, we know that the holy Martyrs, through the sweetness of Divine love, rejoiced in the midst of their very torments. St. Vincent, while he was tortured, spoke in such a way, says St. Augustine, "that it seemed as if one Vincent suffered and another spoke." St. Lawrence, whilst on the gridiron, mocked at the tyrant and said: "Turn me, and eat." Yes, says St. Augustine, because Lawrence, inflamed with this fire of Divine love, did not feel the burning. Besides, what sweetness does a sinner experience, even in this world, in weeping over his sins! Whence St. Bernard says: "If it be so sweet to weep for Thee, what will it be to rejoice because of Thee!" What sweetness, too, does a soul feel to whom the goodness of God and the mercies bestowed on her by Jesus Christ, and the love He has borne and still bears her, are disclosed by a ray of light in the time of prayer! The soul then feels as if she were dissolved, and fainting away through love. And yet on this earth we do not see God as He really is, we see Him but obscurely: *We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face* (1 Cor. xiii. 12). At present we have, as it were, a bandage before the eyes: God is hidden under the veil of Faith, and does not disclose Himself to us. What will it be when the veil is taken away from our eyes and we behold God face to face! Then we shall see how beautiful is God, how great, how just, how perfect, how amiable, how loving!

Evening Meditation

CONFIDENCE IN JESUS CHRIST AND LOVE OF HIM

Let us be persuaded we shall never attain to a great love for

God, except through Jesus Christ, and unless we have a special devotion to His Passion, by which He procured Divine grace for us. The Apostle writes: *Through him we have access ...to the Father* (Eph. ii. 18). The way to grace would be closed to us sinners were it not for Jesus Christ. He opens the gate to us; He introduces us to the Father, and by the merits of His Passion obtains for us from the Father pardon for our sins, and all the graces we receive from God. Miserable we should be if we did not possess Jesus Christ. And who can ever sufficiently praise and thank the love and goodness this merciful Redeemer has shown to us poor sinners, in being willing to die to deliver us from eternal death? Scarcely, says the Apostle, will any die for a just man, but for a good man perhaps some would dare to die; but when we were sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. v. 7-10).

Wherefore the Apostle teaches us that if we are resolved at all costs to seek the love of Jesus Christ we ought to expect from Him every help and favour; and he thus reasons: For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. He thus warns those who love Jesus Christ that they do injustice to the love which this our merciful Saviour bears us, if they fear He will deny them any of the graces necessary for salvation and sanctification. And that our sins may not cause us to fail in trusting Him, St. Paul goes on to say: *For not as the offence so also the gift. For if by the offence of one many died; much more the grace of God and the gift, by the grace of one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many* (Rom. v. 15). He here gives us to understand that the gift of grace obtained by the Redeemer through His Passion brings us blessings far greater than the loss we sustained by the sin of Adam; for the merits of Christ have a greater power to cause us to be loved by God than the sin of Adam had to make Him hate us. "We obtained," says St. Leo, "greater things by the unspeakable grace of Christ than we lost by the malice of the devil."

II.

Let us, then, conclude, O devout souls -- let us love Jesus Christ! Let us love this Redeemer Who is so worthy of being loved, and has so loved us that it seems as if He could have done no more to gain our love. It is enough for us to know that, for

love of us, He has been willing to die, consumed by grief upon a Cross; and, not satisfied with this, has left us Himself in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, where He gives us for food the very same Body He sacrificed for us, and gives us to drink the very same Blood He poured forth for us in His Passion. Most ungrateful shall we be to Him, then, not only if we offend Him, but if we love Him little, and do not consecrate to Him our entire love.

O my Jesus, may I be all consumed with love for Thee, as Thou wast all consumed for me! And since Thou hast so much loved me, and bound me to love Thee, help me now not to be ungrateful to Thee. Most ungrateful should I be if I loved anything apart from Thee. Thou hast loved me without reserve; without reserve I also wish to love Thee. I leave all, I renounce all, to give myself wholly to Thee, and to have in my heart no love but Thine. In pity, accept my love, without taking account of the offences that I have committed against Thee in the past. Behold, I am one of those sheep for whom Thou hast shed Thy Blood; we therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood. Forget, O my dear Saviour, the many offences I have committed against Thee. Chastise me as Thou wilt; deliver me only from the punishment of not being able to love Thee, and then do with me whatever Thou wilt. Deprive me of everything, O my Jesus, but deprive me not of Thyself, my only Good. Teach me to know what Thou wilt have from me, that, by Thy grace, I may fulfil all Thy will. Make me forget everything that I may remember Thee alone, and all the pains Thou hast suffered for me. Grant that I may think of nothing but of pleasing Thee, and loving Thee. Look upon me with that love with which Thou didst look upon me on Calvary, when dying for me upon the Cross, and hear me. In Thee I place all my hopes, O my Jesus, my God, and my all.

O holy Virgin Mary, my Mother and my Hope, recommend me to thy Son, and obtain that I may be faithful to His love till the hour of my death. Amen.

Saturday--Seventeenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"THE NAME OF MARY A TOWER OF STRENGTH"

The invocation of the Sacred Names of Jesus and Mary, says Thomas a Kempis, is a short prayer, as sweet to the mind and as powerful to protect those who use it as it is easy to remember. Let us therefore take advantage of the beautiful advice given by St. Bernard: "In dangers, in perplexities, in doubtful cases, think of Mary, call on Mary; let her not leave thy lips; let her not depart from thy heart!"

I.

The Blessed Henry Suso, speaking of the sweetness of Mary's name, says that when he named Mary he felt himself so excited to confidence and inflamed with such love and joy, that between the tears and joy with which he pronounced the beloved name, he desired that his heart might leave his breast; for he declared that this most sweet name was like a honeycomb dissolving in the inmost recess of the soul; and then he would exclaim: "O most sweet name! O Mary, what must thou thyself be, since thy name alone is thus amiable and gracious!"

The enamoured St. Bernard, raising his heart to his good Mother, exclaims with tenderness: "O great! O pious! O thou who art worthy of all praise! O most holy Virgin Mary! Thy name is so sweet and amiable that it cannot be pronounced without inflaming those who do so with love for thee and for God. Thy name only need occur to the mind of thy lovers to move them to love thee more and to console them." "Thou canst not be named without inflaming; thou canst not be thought of by those who love thee without filling their minds with joy." "And if riches comfort the poor, because they relieve them in their distress," says Richard of St. Laurence, "oh, how much more does thy name, O Mary, comfort us than any earthly riches! It comforts us in all the hardships of this life." "Thy name, O Mary, is far better than riches, because it can better relieve poverty."

In fine, "thy name, O Mother of God, is filled with Divine graces and blessings," as St. Methodius says. So much so, that St. Bonaventure declares that "thy name, O Mary, cannot be

pronounced without bringing some grace to him who does so devoutly." The Blessed Raymond Jordano says that "however hardened and diffident a heart may be, the name of this most Blessed Virgin has such efficacy, that if it is only pronounced, that heart will be wonderfully softened." I shall, however, give his own words: "The power of thy most holy name, O ever-blessed Virgin Mary, is such that it softens the hardness of the human heart in a wonderful manner." He tells us that it is Mary who leads sinners to the hope of pardon and grace. By thee does the sinner recover the hope of forgiveness and of grace."

Thy most sweet name, O Mary, according to St. Ambrose, "is a precious ointment, which breathes forth the odour of Divine grace." The Saint then prays to the Divine Mother, saying; "Let this ointment of salvation enter the inmost recesses of our souls." That is, grant, O Lady, that we may often remember to name thee with love and confidence; for this practice either tells of the possession of Divine grace, or else is a pledge that we shall soon recover it. "And truly it is so, O Mary; for the remembrance of thy name comforts the afflicted, recalls to the way of salvation those who have erred, and encourages sinners, that they may not abandon themselves to despair." (Ludolph of Saxony).

II.

Father Pelbart says that "as Jesus Christ by His five Wounds gave a remedy for the evils of the world, so also does Mary, by her most holy name, which is composed of five letters, daily bring pardon to sinners."

For this reason is the holy name of Mary likened in the Sacred Canticles to oil: *Thy name is as oil poured out* (Cant. i. 2). On these words Blessed Alan says that her glorious name is compared to oil poured out, because oil heals the sick, sends out a sweet odour, and nourishes flames. Thus also does the name of Mary heal sinners, rejoice hearts, and inflame them with Divine love. Hence Richard of St. Laurence encourages sinners to have recourse to this great name because it alone will suffice to cure them of all their evils; and there is no disorder, however malignant, that does not immediately yield to the power of the name of Mary.

On the other hand Thomas a Kempis affirms that the devils

fear the Queen of Heaven to such a degree that only on hearing her great name pronounced they fly from him who does so as from a burning fire. The Blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Bridget that there is not on earth a sinner, however devoid he may be of the love of God, from whom the devil is not obliged immediately to fly, if he invokes her holy name with a determination to repent. On another occasion she repeated the same thing to the Saint, saying that "all the devils venerate and fear this name to such a degree that on hearing it they immediately loosen the claws with which they hold the soul captive." Our Blessed Lady also told St. Bridget that in the same way as the rebel angels fly from sinners who invoke the name of Mary, so also do the good Angels approach nearer to just souls who pronounce her name with devotion.

St. Germanus declares that as breathing is a sign of life, so also is the frequent pronunciation of the name of Mary a sign either of the life of Divine grace, or that it will soon return; for this powerful name has it in the virtue of obtaining help and life for him who invokes it devoutly. Addressing the Blessed Virgin, he says: "As breathing is a sign of life in the body, so is the frequent repetition of thy most holy name, O Virgin, by thy servants, not only a sign of life and of strength, but also it procures and nourishes both."

Spiritual Reading

CONFRATERNITIES OF OUR BLESSED LADY

The Sovereign Pontiffs have approved and highly commended Confraternities and also enriched them with many Indulgences. St. Francis de Sales, with great earnestness, exhorts all seculars to join them. What pains, moreover did not St. Charles Borromeo take to establish and multiply these Confraternities. In his Synods, he particularly recommends confessors to engage their penitents to join them. And with good reason; for these Sodalities, especially those of our Blessed Lady, are so many Noe's arks, in which poor seculars find a refuge from the deluge of temptations and sins which inundates the world. We, from the experience of our Missions, well know the utility of these Confraternities. As a rule, a man who does not attend the meetings of a Confraternity commits more sins than twenty men who do

attend them. A Confraternity can well be called *a tower of David; a thousand bucklers hang upon it - all the armour of valiant men* (Cant. iv. 4). The reason that Confraternities do so much good is that in them the members acquire many weapons of defence against hell, and put in practice the requisite means of preservation in Divine grace, which are seldom made use of by seculars who are not members of these Confraternities.

1. In the first place, one means of salvation is, to meditate on the eternal truths: *Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin* (Ecclus. vii. 40). How many are lost because they neglect to do this! *With desolation is all the land made desolate; because there is none that considereth in his heart* (Jer. xii. 11). But those who frequent the meetings of their Confraternities are led to think of these truths by the many meditations, lectures, and sermons they there hear: *My sheep hear my voice* (Jo. x. 27).

2. To save one's soul prayer is necessary: *Ask, and you shall receive* (Jo. xvi. 24); this the members of the Confraternities do constantly. God also hears their prayers the more readily; for He has Himself said that He grants graces more willingly to prayers offered up in common: *If two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father* (Matt. xviii. 19); on which St. Ambrose says that "many who are weak, when united become strong; and it is impossible that the prayers of so many should not be heard."

3. In Confraternities the Sacraments are most likely to be frequented, both on account of the rules and the example given by the other members. And thus perseverance in grace is more easily obtained, the sacred Council of Trent having declared that Holy Communion is "an antidote whereby we may be freed from daily faults, and be preserved from mortal sins."

4. Besides the frequentation of the Sacraments in these Confraternities, many acts of mortification, humility, and charity towards the sick brethren and the poor, are performed. Well would it be if this holy custom of assisting the sick-poor of the place were introduced into all Confraternities.

5. We have already said how profitable it is for our salvation to serve the Mother of God; and what else do the members do in the Confraternity but serve her? How much is she not praised

there! How many prayers are not there offered to her! From the very beginning, the members are consecrated to her service; they choose her in an especial manner for their sovereign Lady and Mother; they are inscribed in the Register of Mary's children; hence, as they are her servants and children in an especial manner, in an especial manner are they treated by her, and she protects them in life and in death. So that a member of a Confraternity of Mary can say, *Now all good things came to me together with her* (Wis. vii. 11).

Each member should therefore pay attention to two things: First of all, the object that he should have in view should be no other than to serve God and his Mother Mary and save his soul; secondly, not to allow worldly affairs to prevent his attendance at the meeting on the appointed days; for he has there to attend to the most important business that he has in the world, which is his eternal salvation. He should also endeavour to draw as many others as he can to join the Confraternity, and especially to bring back those members who have left it.

Oh, with what terrible chastisements has our Lord punished those who have abandoned the Confraternity of our Blessed Lady! There was a brother who did so in Naples; and when he was exhorted to return, he answered: "I will do so when my legs are broken and my head is cut off." He prophesied; for, a short time afterwards, some enemies of his broke his legs and cut off his head.

On the other hand, the members who persevere have both their temporal and spiritual wants provided for by Mary. *All her domestics are clothed with double garments* (Prov. xxxi. 21). Father Auriemma relates how many special graces Mary grants to members of the Confraternity, both in life and in death, but more particularly in death. Father Crasset gives an account of a young man, who, in the year 1586, was dying. He fell asleep; but afterwards waking he said to his confessor: O Father, I have been in great danger of damnation, but our Blessed Lady rescued me. The devils presented my sins before our Lord's tribunal, and they were already preparing to drag me to hell; but the Blessed Virgin came and said to them: "Whither are you taking this young man? What business have you with a servant of mine,

who has served me so long in my Confraternity? The devils fled and thus was I delivered from their hands." The same author also relates that another brother had also, at the point of death, a great battle with hell; but at length, having conquered, filled with joy, he exclaimed: "Oh, what a blessing it is to serve the Holy Mother in her Confraternity!" and thus filled with consolation he expired. He then adds that in Naples, when the Duke of Popoli was dying, he said to his son: "Son, know that the little good that I have done in this life I attribute to my Confraternity. Hence I have no greater treasure to leave thee than the Confraternity of Mary. I now value more having been one of its members, than being Duke of Popoli."

Evening Meditation

"THOU SHALT BE CROWNED."

I.

Your sorrow shall be turned into joy (Jo. xvi. 20).

Let us during life animate ourselves by the hope of Heaven, to bear patiently the afflictions of this life, and to offer them to God in return for the sufferings Jesus Christ endured for the love of us. All these afflictions, sorrows, persecutions and tears, will one day have an end and will, if we save our souls, become to us sources of happiness and joy in the Kingdom of bliss. This is the ground of courage and hope which the Saviour holds out to us. *Your sorrow shall be turned into joy* (Jo. xvi. 20). The most enlightened of the Saints knew not how to give us an idea of the happiness God has prepared for His faithful servants. David could only break forth in joy, exclaiming: *How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts* (Ps. lxxxiii. 2). But, my beloved St. Paul, do you at least, who had the happiness of being rapt up into Heaven, declare to us some of the things you have seen. No, exclaims the Apostle, for what I have seen is impossible to describe. The delights of Heaven *are secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter* (2 Cor. xii. 4). They are so great that they only who enjoy them are able to comprehend them. All that I can say, says the Apostle, is: *It is written, 'That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him'* (1 Cor. ii. 9).

At present it is impossible for us to comprehend the happiness of Heaven, because we have no idea but of earthly enjoyments. Were a horse capable of reasoning he would, if he expected a rich feast from his master, imagine it to consist in excellent hay and oats; for these are the only species of food of which he has any idea. It is thus we form our notions of the happiness of Heaven. It is beautiful in the summer to behold at night the glory of the starry heavens; delightful to pass through a garden full of fruits and flowers, flowing fountains, and the singing of birds. In such a scene one is tempted to exclaim: Oh! what a Paradise! What a Paradise! But far different are the delights of Heaven. To form some imperfect idea of them, reflect that in Heaven is an All-Powerful God Who has pledged Himself to make the soul that loves Him happy. Do you wish, says St. Bernard, to know what is in Heaven? "There is nothing there that gives displeasure; there is everything that delights."

O Jesus, my sweet Saviour, do not abandon me! My soul is immortal: I must then either love Thee or hate Thee for all eternity. Ah! it is my wish to love Thee for eternity, and I wish to love Thee without reserve here, that I may love Thee without reserve hereafter. Dispose of me as Thou pleasest; chastise me as Thou wishest; do not deprive me of Thy love, and then do with me what Thou wilt. My Jesus, Thy merits are my hope. O Mary, I place great confidence in thy intercession. Thou didst deliver me from hell when I was in sin; now that I wish to give myself to God, obtain for me the grace to save my soul, and to become a Saint.

II.

O God, what will be the sentiments of the soul on its entrance into that happy Kingdom? Let us represent to our minds a young virgin, who, after consecrating herself to the love of Jesus Christ, dies and quits this world. The soul is presented for Judgment: the Judge embraces her, and pronounces the sentence of her salvation. Her Angel-Guardian meets and congratulates her; she thanks him for his assistance, and the Angel then says: "Rejoice, O happy soul! Thy salvation is now secure; come and behold the face of thy Lord." Behold, the soul now passes beyond

the clouds, the spheres, the stars, and enters into Heaven. O God! what will be the feelings of that bride of Christ on first setting foot in this happy country, and beholding for the first time this city of delights! The Angels and the Saints will come to meet her, and will receive her with a joyous welcome. What shall be her consolation in rejoining there her relatives or friends who have been already admitted into Heaven, and in meeting her holy advocates!

The soul will wish to bend her knees to venerate these Saints, but they will say: *See thou do it not, for we are thy fellow-servants*. She will thence be carried to kiss the feet of Mary, the Queen of Heaven. What tenderness will not the soul experience in first beholding the Divine Mother who gave her so much assistance in the work of her salvation; for then the soul will see all the graces she obtained through the intercession of Mary, who will embrace her with love and tenderness. The Queen of Heaven will then conduct the soul to Jesus Who will receive her as His spouse, and say: *Come from Libanus, my spouse ... thou shalt be crowned* (Cant. iv. 8). My spouse, rejoice: there is now an end to tears, to sufferings and to fears; receive the eternal crown I have purchased for thee by My Blood. Jesus Himself will then present her to receive the benediction of His Divine Father Who will embrace and bless her, saying: *Enter thou into the joy of thy lord* (Matt. xxv. 21), and will bestow upon her the same happiness He Himself enjoys.

Behold, O my God, at Thy feet an ungrateful sinner, whom thou hast created for Heaven, but who has so often, for the sake of a wretched pleasure, renounced Thee to Thy face, and has consented to be condemned to hell. But I hope Thou hast already pardoned me all the injuries I have done Thee, for which I am always sorry and will be sorry as long as I live. Of these injuries I desire to receive from Thee new pardon. But, O God, although my sins have been already forgiven, it will still be always true that I have dared to afflict Thee, my Redeemer, Who hast given Thy life to bring me to Thy Kingdom. But may Thy mercy be forever praised and blessed, my Jesus, for having borne me with so much patience, and for having bestowed upon me multiplied graces instead of chastising me as I deserved. I

see, my dear Saviour, that Thou ardently desirest my salvation, and that Thou wishest to bring me to Thy Kingdom that I may love Thee for ever; but it is Thy wish that I should first love Thee here on earth. Yes; I wish to love Thee. Though there were no Heaven, I would wish to love Thee while I live, with my whole soul and with all my strength. It is enough for me to know that Thou, my God, desirest to be loved by me. My Jesus assist me by Thy grace.

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

(September 29)

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

I.

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

In the Mass for the Dead, the Church prays: "*Let the standard-bearer, St. Michael, bring them into the holy light.*" The learned explain this prayer, and say that St. Michael has the honourable office of presenting to Jesus Christ the Judge, all the souls that depart out in this world in the grace of God.

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

II.

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading

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

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

We should take care to honour and invoke this great minis-

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

Father Nieremberg relates that the servant of a great lord, after having, during many years, led a wicked life, was at the point of death. The devil placing inwardly before his mind all his sins, strongly tempted him to despair, and succeeded in making him say that he did not wish to make his Confession, nor to receive any other Sacrament, because he was damned. But as this unfortunate sinner in the midst of his disorders had never ceased to keep up some sentiment of devotion towards St. Michael, and to recommend himself to him, the good Archangel appeared to him at the moment of death and revealed to him that he had prayed for him, adding that the Lord, through his intercession, had granted him three hours more to live in order that he might confess and receive the Sacraments, so as to be able to die in the grace of God. Thereupon the dying man with tears in his eyes, thanked his heavenly benefactor for having obtained for him so great a favour. He then called his brother and begged him to go at once and bring him a confessor. His brother set out at once and directed his steps towards a Dominican convent that was not far away. On the road he met two of these Religious, who told him that they had been called by an unknown person to hear the Confession of the sick man, and that they were going to his house for this purpose. It is presumed that the holy Archangel himself gave them this information and requested them to seek out the dying man. When they arrived the sick man made his Confession and received the Sacraments with lively sentiments of compunction; and after the lapse of the three hours, the man died, giving every hope that he had saved his soul.

Evening Meditation

ST. MICHAEL BATTLES FOR US AGAINST THE INFERNAL DRAGON.

I.

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

II.

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

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

The Deacon Pantaleon pronounces the same eulogy: "The Archangel leads them forth to the road of penance, and procures

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

Monday--Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

TO PLEASE GOD WE MUST ABANDON SIN.

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

I.

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

It is said that the pain is not removed before the thorn has

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

II.

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

If we wish to please the Lord, we must remove the cause of His anger, which is sin. The man sick of the palsy besought Jesus Christ to restore the health of his body; but, before granting his request, our Lord first restored his soul's health by giving him sorrow for his sins, and then saying to him: *Be of good heart, son; thy sins are forgiven thee* (Matt. ix. 2). St. Thomas says that the Redeemer first removed the cause of his infirmity -- namely, his sins, and then freed him from the infirmity itself. "He asked for the health of the body, and the Lord gave him the health of the soul; because, like a good physician, He wished to remove the cause of the disease." Sin is the root of every evil, and hence the Lord, after having healed him, warned him against sin in these words: *Sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee* (John v. 14). Ecclesiasticus had said the same: *My son, in thy sickness ... turn away from sin ... and then give place to the physician* (Ecclus. xxxviii. 9-11). You must first apply to the physician of the soul in order

that he may free you from your sins, and then to the physician of the body that he may cure you of your disease.

Spiritual Reading

"BE NOT DECEIVED, GOD IS NOT MOCKED."

Oh, surely *God is not mocked!* (Gal. vi. 7). I never commanded you, God says, to perform those devotions and acts of penance: *For I spoke not to your fathers ... concerning the matter of burnt offering and sacrifices, but this thing I commanded them, saying: Hearken to my voice, and I will be your God* (Jer. vii. 22-23). What I wish of you, says God, is that you hear My voice and change your life, and make good Confessions with real sorrow, for you must know yourselves, that your other Confessions, followed by so many relapses, have been worth nothing. I wish that you should do violence to yourselves in breaking with that danger, with that company. I wish that you should endeavour to restore that property, to make good to your neighbour such a loss. *Hearken to my voice, and I will be your God.* I will then be to you the God of mercy, such as you would have Me to be. Cardinal Hugo, in his commentary upon these words of our Lord, in the Gospel according to St. Matthew (Matt. xi. 15): *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*, says: "Some have ears, but not ears to hear." How many attend sermons and receive admonitions from the confessor, in which they are told all that they must do in order to please God; but they leave the church only to live worse than before. How can God be appeased by such? or how can such be delivered from Divine chastisements? *Offer up the sacrifice of justice, and trust in the Lord* (Ps. iv. 6) -- says David. Honour God not in appearance, but by your deeds. It is that which is meant by "the sacrifice of justice"; honour God by bemoaning your sins, by the frequentation of the Sacraments, by a change of life and then hope in the Lord. But to hope while you continue the state of sin, is not hope -- it is rashness, it is a snare of the enemy, and renders you more odious in the sight of God, and more deserving of punishment.

You see that the Lord is angry, that He already has His hand lifted to strike with the scourge which threatens us. How do you think to escape? *Who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of penance* (Matt. iii. 7, 8). Thus spoke St. John the Baptist, preaching to the Jews of his day. You

must do penance, but penance deserving of pardon. It must be true and resolute. Your anger must be changed into meekness, by forgiveness of those who offend you; your intemperance must become abstinence, by observing the fasts of the Church, and by abstaining from the immoderate use of intoxicating drink which changes man into a beast. Therefore you must avoid the public house. Chastity must reign and all impurity be cast out. Resist evil thoughts; use no bad words, and flee from bad companions and dangerous conversation. *Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of penance*, and the bringing forth of such fruit implies also that you attend to the service of God, and endeavour to serve Him more than you have offended Him; *For, as you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity ... so now yield your members to love justice* (Rom. vi. 19). Thus did St. Mary Magdalen live after her conversion, and St. Augustine, St. Mary of Egypt, St. Margaret of Cortona who by their works of penance and sanctification rendered themselves more dear to God than others who had sinned less. St. Gregory says: "For the most part, a fervent life after sin is the more pleasing to God than a life which, though innocent, is tepid." And thus does the Saint explain the following passage of the Gospel: *There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance* (Luke, xv. 7). This is understood of the sinner who, after having risen from sin, sets about serving God with greater fervour than others who have long been just.

This is truly to bring forth fruit worthy of penance. To content one's self with hearing sermons and going to devotions in the church, without abandoning sin, or avoiding the occasion of it, is rather a mockery of God, and calculated to provoke His greater wrath. *And, think not*, as St. John the Baptist warned sinners, *think not to say within yourselves: We have Abraham for our father* (Matt. iii. 9). It will not do to say, we have the Mother of God to assist us, we have our Patron Saints to deliver us; because if we do not abandon our sins the Saints cannot help us. The Saints are the friends of God; hence they not only have no inclination, but they would even be ashamed to succour the obstinate. Let us tremble, because the Lord has already pronounced the sentence: *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit,*

shall be cut down and cast into the fire (Matt. vii. 19). How many years have you been in the world? Tell me what fruit of good works have you hitherto borne, what glory have you rendered to God by your life? Sin, outrage, contempt, such are the fruit you have borne, such the glory you have rendered to God! God now in His mercy gives you time for penance, in order that you may bewail the injuries you have done Him, and love Him the remainder of your days. What have you resolved to do? Resolve at once to give yourself to God. What do you expect but that unless you turn at once to God, you shall be cut down and cast into the fire of hell?

Let those, then, tremble who have not yet resolved to change their lives. But, on the other hand, be joyful if you mean to turn in good earnest to God. *Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord* (Ps. civ. 3), because God is all tenderness and love for those that seek Him. *The Lord is good ... to the soul that seeketh him* (Lam. iii. 25). Neither does the Lord know how to reject a humble heart that is sorry for its offences. *A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise* (Ps. 1. 19). Let us be joyful, then, if we are determined to change our lives; and if, on seeing ourselves guilty of many sins before the Lord, we stand in fear of the Divine Judgments, let us have recourse to the Mother of Mercy, the most Holy Mary, who defends and screens from the Divine vengeance all those who take refuge under her mantle.

Evening Meditation

ST. MICHAEL GIVES TO EACH A GUARDIAN ANGEL.

I.

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

St. Bruno de Segni adds that St. Michael having been raised by the Lord to the dignity of Chief of all the Angels, it is his duty to give to each soul on earth a Guardian Angel; and he invites us to consider how much we are indebted to him for this. As St. Michael is the light and the guide of all the Angels, who are all inferior to him, it is he who directs our Guardian Angels by

teaching them the best manner of guiding us and of protecting us against our enemies. When, therefore, we see a person who is drawn into ruin by his vices, or who persecutes us, we shall do well to pray to St. Michael to advise the Angel Guardian to whom this person is intrusted by pointing out to him the best manner of enlightening him in order that he may correct himself or that he may cease to persecute us.

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

II.

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

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

Tuesday--Eighteenth Week after Pentecost **Morning Meditation**

OBSTINACY IN SIN ESPECIALLY BRINGS PUNISHMENT.

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

I.

The cause of all our chastisements is sin; and still more

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

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

II.

We continue to irritate God, and then wonder that God continues to chastise us. "We wonder why we are so unhappy, we who are so impure," says Salvian. Do we think that God is appeased by the mere circumstance of our appearing at church without repenting of our sins, without restoring the property or character of our neighbour, without avoiding those occasions of sin which keep us at a distance from God? Ah, let us not mock the Lord! *And now do not mock, lest your bonds be tied strait.* (Is.

xxviii. 22). Do not mock God, says the Prophet, lest those bonds which are binding you for hell be tied more tightly. Cornelius a Lapide, in commenting on the above passage of Isaias, says that when the fox is caught in the snare, its efforts to disentangle itself only serve to entangle it the more. "So also will it happen to sinners who while mocking at God's threats and punishments, become more and more involved in them." Let us be done with sin. Let us cease to irritate God. *For I have heard of the Lord the God of Hosts, continues the Prophet, a consumption, and a cutting short upon all the earth.* (Is. ib.)

Hear what the Lord says to you: *Who required these things at your hands?* (Is. i. 12). Who asked for your perpetual exercises and your visits of devotion to the church? I will have nothing from you unless you abandon sin: *Offer sacrifice no more in vain* (Ib. 13). Of what use are your devotions if you do not amend your lives? *My soul hateth ... your solemnities* (Ib. 14). Know, says the Lord, that your homage and external devotions are hateful to my soul, if you think by these to avert chastisement without removing your offences: *With burnt offerings thou wilt not be delighted; a sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit* (Ps. 1. 18, 19). Neither devotions, nor alms, nor penitential works are accepted by God from a soul in the state of sin, and without repentance. God accepts the acts of him alone who is sorry for sin, and resolved upon a change of life.

Spiritual Reading

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

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

Such is the language of God when He speaks of punishment and vengeance. He says He is constrained by His Justice to punish His enemies. But mark the word: *Heu! Alas!* -- an exclamation by which God would give us to understand how grieved He is when He has to punish creatures whom He so dearly loved as to give His life for love of them. "Heu! Alas!" says Cornelius a Lapide, is uttered by one who is lamenting and not rejoicing; God signifies by this word that He grieves, and is unwilling to

punish sinners. This God, Who is the Father of Mercies, and so much loves us, is not One to punish and afflict, but to pardon and console. *For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of affliction* (Jer. xxix. 11). But since such is God's merciful spirit, why does He punish us? or appear as if He meant to punish us? Because He wishes to show us mercy; for this anger which He now displays is all mercy and patience.

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

The threats of men ordinarily proceed from pride or impotence. If they have it in their power to take vengeance, they make no threats lest they should thereby give their enemies an opportunity of escape. It is only when they have not the power to wreak their vengeance that they betake themselves to threats, in order to gratify their passion, by at least causing alarm to their enemies. Not so the threats of which God makes use. His threats do not arise from inability to chastise, because He can be avenged when He wills; but He bears with us in order to see us penitent, and thus saved from punishment. *Thou hast mercy upon all, because thou canst do all things, and overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance* (Wis. xi. 24). Neither does God threaten from hatred, in order to torture us with fear; God threatens from love, in order that we may return to Him, and thereby escape chastisement: He threatens, because He does not wish to see us lost: He threatens, because He loves our souls. *But thou sparest all because they are thine, O Lord, who lovest souls* (Ibid. 27). He threatens; but notwithstanding, bears with us and delays inflicting the punishment, because He wishes to see us converted and not lost. He dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance (2 Pet. iii. 9). Thus the threats of God are all acts of tenderness, and the loving calls of His goodness, by which He means to save us from the punishment we deserve.

Yet forty days, exclaimed Jonas, *and Nineve shall be destroyed* (Jonas, iii. 4). Wretched Ninevites, he cries, the day of chastise-

ment is come; I announce it to you on the part of God: Know that within forty days Nineve shall be destroyed! But how comes it that Nineve was not destroyed? *God saw their works, that they were turned from their evil ways and God had mercy* (Ibid. 10). Jonas was afflicted at this, and making lamentation before the Lord, said to Him: *I beseech thee, O Lord, is not this what I said when I was in my own country? Therefore, I went before thee into Tharsis, for I knew that thou art a gracious and merciful God, patient and of much compassion, and easy to forgive evil* (Jonas, iv. 2). He then left Nineve, and sitting down outside the city, was screened from the rays of the burning sun by an ivy which God caused to overshadow his head. But the Lord withered the ivy. Whereat Jonas was so much afflicted that he wished for death. God then said to him: *Thou art grieved for the ivy for which thou hast not laboured, nor made it to grow; ... and shall not I spare Nineve?* (Ibid. 10, 11). Thou grieveest for the ivy which thou hast not created, and shall not I pardon the men who are the creation of My hands?

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

Evening Meditation

ST. MICHAEL ASSISTS US AT DEATH AND IN PURGATORY.

I.

St. Michael is specially charged by the Lord to assist us at the hour of death. Every one knows that then the assaults of the devil become more terrible, whilst our strength diminishes and our minds are weighed down by great anguish. Three causes chiefly torment those who are at the point of death: first, the remembrance of sins committed; secondly, the fear of eternal damnation; and thirdly, the attacks of hell. This is the reason why the Church wishes us to pray to St. Michael that he may protect us in the great conflict that we must sustain at the hour of death against the devil. She prays: "Holy Michael Archangel, defend us in battle, that we may not perish in the dreadful Judgment." And in the recommendation of a soul departed, she wishes that those present should pray to the holy Archangel that he may take it under his protection: "May St. Michael the Archangel receive him." Moreover, we read in the Office these words as having been said by the Lord himself: "Michael Archangel, I have appointed thee prince over the ingathering of souls." It is, therefore, to St. Michael that God has confided the care of those souls that pass from this life to eternity.

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

II.

St. Michael is also charged with the care of consoling the

Souls in Purgatory. In his Office it is said that God confides to him all the souls that are saved, in order that he may conduct them to Paradise: "To whom God has confided the souls of the saints that he may lead them into the Paradise of joy." And in the Mass of the Dead the Church prays to the holy Archangel: "Let the standard-bearer, St. Michael, bring them into the blessed light." Also, full of a tender solicitude for these holy souls that have been intrusted and recommended to him, he does not fail to assist and to succour them by procuring for them many alleviations of the pains they suffer in Purgatory. And as for those persons who have a devotion to this heavenly prince, I said that even in this life he consoles them in all their tribulations; how much more should we not believe that he is anxious to help them and console them in Purgatory, where their sufferings are much greater than all the sufferings of this life!

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

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

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

Wednesday--Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE FEAST OF THE GUARDIAN ANGELS

(October 2)

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

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

I.

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

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

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

We ought to honour our good Angels by *Devotion* to them, because of the respect they deserve, and the love they bear us. No love of father, brother, or friend can equal the love our good Angels have for each one of us. Our worldly friends often love us from motives of interest, and on this account very easily forget us when we are in adversity, and much more when we offend them. Our Angel Guardians love us solely from motives of charity, and hence when we are in difficulties, they assist us more particularly, and will not cease to help us after we have rebelled against God. Then will they endeavour to enlighten us, in order that we may soon return to God by repentance.

O how much I should thank thee, my holy Guardian Angel, for the lights thou hast bestowed upon me! O that I had always

obeyed thee! Continue to enlighten me; rebuke me when I fail, and do not forsake me even unto the last moment of my life.

II.

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

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

Spiritual Reading

"BECAUSE THEY ARE HUMBLLED I WILL NOT DESTROY THEM."

The Lord said to Jeremias: *Speak to all the cities of Juda; if so be they will hearken and be converted every one from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil that I think to do unto them* (Jer. xxvi. 2, 3).

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

In order to amend, we must fear punishment, otherwise we shall never be brought to change our lives. True it is, God protects him who hopes in His mercy. *He is the protector of all who trust in Him* (Ps. xvii. 31). But he who hopes in the mercy of the Lord always fears His justice. *They that fear the Lord have hoped in the Lord: He is their helper and their protector* (Ps. cxiii. 11). The

Lord often speaks of the rigour of His judgment, and of hell, and of the great number who go thither. *Be not afraid of them who kill the body ... fear ye him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell* (Luke xii. 4, 5). *Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat* (Matt. vii. 13). And why does God so often speak thus? In order that fear may keep us from vice, and from following our passions, and from occasions of sin; and that thus we may reasonably hope for salvation which is only for the innocent, and for the penitent who hope and fear.

Oh, what strength has not the fear of hell to hold us back from sin! To that end has God created hell. He created us, and redeemed us by His death, that we might be happy with Him. He has imposed upon us the obligation of hoping for eternal life, and on that account encourages us, by saying that all those who hope in Him shall be saved. *For none of them that wait on thee shall be confounded* (Ps. xxiv. 3). But it is His wish, too, and command that we should be in fear of eternal damnation. Some heretics hold, that all who are not in sin should consider themselves as justified and predestined; but these have with reason been condemned by the Council of Trent, because such a presumption is as perilous to salvation as fear is profitable. *And let him be your dread, and he shall be a sanctification to you* (Is. viii. 13, 14). The holy fear of God makes man holy. Wherefore David begged of God the gift of fear, in order that fear might destroy in him the inclinations of the flesh. *Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear* (Ps. cxviii. 120).

We should, then, fear on account of our sins, but this fear ought not to deject us: it should rather excite us to confidence in the Divine Mercy, as was the case with the Prophet himself. *For thy name's sake, O Lord, thou wilt pardon my sin; for it is great* (Ps. xxiv. 11). How is this? Pardon me because my sin is great? Yes, because the Divine Mercy is most conspicuous where there is the greatest misery; and he who has been the greatest sinner is he who glorifies most the Divine Mercy, by hoping in God, Who promises to save all those who hope in Him. *He will save them, because they have hoped in him* (Ps. xxxvi. 40). For this reason Ecclesiasticus says: *The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy and gladness and length of days* (Ecclus. i. 12). Thus

this very fear leads to the acquisition of a firm hope in God, which makes the soul happy: *He that feareth the Lord shall tremble at nothing, and shall not be afraid, for he is his hope. The soul of him that feareth the Lord is blessed* (Ecclus. xxxiv. 16, 17). Yes, blessed, because fear drives sin away from man. *The fear of the Lord driveth out sin* (Ecclus. i. 27), and at the same time infuses a great desire of observing the commandments: *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord: he shall delight exceedingly in his commandments* (Ps. cxi. 1).

We must, then, persuade ourselves that God is not inclined by nature to punish. Because by His nature He is infinite goodness, says St. Leo, and has no other desire than to bless us, and to see us happy. When He punishes, He is obliged to do so in order to satisfy His justice, not to gratify His inclination. Isaias says that punishment is a work strange to the Heart of God. *The Lord shall be angry ... that he may do his work, his strange work; ... his work is strange to him* (Is. xxviii. 21). And therefore does the Lord say, that He sometimes almost feigns the intention of punishing us. And why does He do so? He does so for our reformation, and consequently to exempt us from the chastisement we deserve. God wishes to love us, but we force Him to condemn us. He calls Himself the Father of mercies, not of vengeance. Whence it comes that His tenderness all springs from Himself, and His severity from us.

Evening Meditation

LOVE OF SOLITUDE

I.

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

build themselves each a little cell at a distance from one another.

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

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

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

II.

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

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

him, for he is lifted above himself, and above all created things; in God he finds every good, and all his contentment.

Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly, and be at rest? (Ps. liv. 7). David desired to have the wings of a dove, that he might leave this earth, and not touch it even with his feet, and thus give rest to his soul. But while we are in this life, it is not given to us to leave this earth. We must, however, take care to love retirement, so far as it is practicable, conversing alone with God; and thus gaining strength to avoid those defects that arise from our being obliged to have intercourse with the world; as David said, at the very time he was ruling his kingdom: *Lo, I have gone far off flying away, and abode in the wilderness* (Ps. liv. 8).

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

Thursday--Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"CEASE TO DO PERVERSELY: LEARN TO DO WELL."

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

I.

Who has ever been able to comprehend the greatness of the Divine Mercies? David says that God, even while yet angry, feels compassion for us: *Thou hast been angry, and hast mercy on us* (Ps. lix. 3). "O merciful wrath, thou art enkindled but to succour, thou threatenest but to pardon!" exclaims the Abbot Beroncosius. God shows Himself to us armed with a scourge, but He does so in order that we may become penitent and contrite for the of-

fences we are committing against Him: *Thou hast given a warning to them that fear thee: that they may flee before the bow: that thy beloved may be delivered* (Ps. lix. 6). He appears with the bow already bent, upon the point of speeding the arrow, but He waits, because He wishes that our fear may bring about amendment, and that thus we may escape chastisement. *That thy beloved may be delivered. Give us help from trouble* (Ps. lix. 13). This was the prayer of David; and thus ought we to pray. Grant, O Lord, that our afflictions may open our eyes, so that we depart from sin. The Lord is angry. Our sins increase, says St. John Chrysostom, and the scourges of God increase likewise. God is wroth: but with all His anger He says: *Turn ye to me, and I will turn to you* (Zach. i. 3). Sinners, saith the Lord, you have turned your backs upon Me, and therefore you have constrained Me to deprive you of My grace. Do not oblige me to drive you forever from My face, and punish you in hell without hope of pardon. Have done with sin! Abandon sin and be converted to Me, and I promise to pardon you all your offences, and once more to embrace you as My children.

II.

Turn ye to me ... and I will turn to you. Why do you wish to perish? Oh, how tenderly the Lord speaks. *And why will you die, O house of Israel* (Ezech. xviii. 31). Why will you fling yourselves into the burning furnace of hell? *Return ye and live* (Ib. 32). Return to Me, I await you with open arms, ready to receive and pardon you. Doubt not this, O sinner. *Cease to do perversely. Learn to do well ... And then come and accuse me, saith the Lord: if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow* (Is. i. 16, 17). Take courage; change your life; come to Me, and if I do not pardon you, *accuse Me*. Accuse Me of lying and bad faith. But, no, I shall not be unfaithful: your soul now so black will by My grace become as white as snow. I will not punish you if you reform, says the Lord, because I am God, not man. *I will not execute the fierceness of my wrath, ... because I am God, and not man* (Osee, xi. 9). Men never forget an injury, but when God sees a sinner repentant, He forgets all his offences. *I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done* (Ezech. xviii. 22) Let us then at once return to God, but let it be at once. We have offended Him too much already, let us not tempt Him any further. Behold, He calls us, and is ready to

pardon us if we repent of our evil deeds, and promise to change our lives.

Spiritual Reading

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

After the Lord had commanded our First Parents not to eat of the forbidden fruit, unhappy Eve approached the tree and was addressed by the Serpent, who said to her: Why has God forbidden you to eat of this delightful fruit? *Why hath God commanded you that you should not eat?* Eve replies: *God hath commanded us that we should not eat, and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die* (Gen. iii. 3). Behold the weakness of Eve! The Lord had absolutely threatened them with death, and she now begins to look upon it as doubtful: *Lest perhaps we die*. If I eat of it, I might perhaps die. But the devil, seeing that Eve was still somewhat in fear of the Divine threat, proceeded to encourage her, saying: *No, you shall not die the death* (Ibid. 4), and thus he deceived her, and caused her to prevaricate, and she ate the apple. Thus, even now, does the enemy continue to deceive many poor sinners. God threatens: Sinners, do penance, because if not, you will damn yourselves, as so many others have done. *Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish* (Luke xiii. 5). The devil says to them: No, you shall not perish. Fear nothing: sin on; continue to enjoy yourselves; God is merciful; He will pardon you by and by, and you will be saved. "God," says St. Procopius, "inspires us with fear, the devil robs us of it." God desires by His threats to inspire fear only in order that men may give up sin, and thus be saved. The devil wishes to destroy that fear, in order that they may persevere in sin, and so be lost. Innumerable the wretches who believe the devil rather than God, and are thus miserably damned. At present the Lord displays His anger and threatens us with chastisement. Who knows how many there may be in this place who have no thought of changing their lives, and live in the hope that God will be appeased; who will not believe in the Divine threats until chastisement has come upon them. If we do not amend, chastisement will come; if we do not put an end to our crimes, God will put an end to them.

When Lot was warned by the Lord that He was about to de-

stroy Sodom, Lot at once informed his sons-in-law: *Arise! get you out of this place, because the Lord will destroy this city* (Gen. xix. 14). But they would not believe him: *And he seemed to them to speak as it were in jest*. They imagined that God wished to sport with their fears, by terrifying them with such a threat. But the punishment overtook them, and they remained to be the sport of the flames in the burning city. God warns us that chastisement will come. Let us put an end to sin, or shall we wait for God to do it? Hear what St. Paul says to you: *See, then, the goodness and severity of God – towards them, indeed, that are fallen, the severity; but towards thee, the goodness of God, if thou abide in goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off* (Rom. xi. 22). Consider, says the Apostle, the justice which the Lord has exercised towards so many whom He has punished, and condemned to hell; *towards them, indeed, that are fallen, the severity*. Consider the mercy with which He has treated you; *but towards thee, the goodness of God*. You must abandon sin; if you change your ways, avoid the occasions of sin, frequent the Sacraments, and continue to lead a Christian life, the Lord will remit your punishment, *if you abide in goodness*; if not, *thou also shalt be cut off*. God has already borne with you too long, He can bear with you no longer. God is merciful, but He is also just; He deals mercifully with those who fear Him; He cannot act thus towards the obstinate.

Such a person laments when he sees himself punished, and asks: Why has God deprived me of my health? Why has He taken from me this child? What do you say? *It is your sins have withholden good things from you* (Jer. v. 25). It was not the wish of God to deprive you of any blessing, of any gain, of your son, or your father or mother: it was the wish of God to make you happy in all things, but your sins have not allowed Him. In the book of Job we read these words: *Is it a great matter that God should comfort thee? but thy wicked words hinder this* (Job, xv. 11). The Lord would fain console you, but your sins have prevented Him. It is not God, but accursed sin, that renders us miserable and unhappy. *Sin maketh nations miserable* (Prov. xiv. 84). We are wrong, says Salvian, in complaining of God when He deals severely with us. Oh! how cruelly do we deal with Him, repaying with ingratitude the favours He has bestowed upon us!

Sinners imagine that sin procures them happiness; but on the very contrary it is sin which makes them miserable, and afflicted in every respect. *Because thou didst not serve the Lord thy God, saith the Lord, with joy and gladness of heart ... thou shalt serve thy enemy, whom the Lord will send upon thee, in hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, and in want of all things ... till he consume thee* (Deut. xx-viii. 47, 48). David says that the sinner himself by his crimes digs the pit into which he falls. *He is fallen into the hole he made* (Ps. vii. 16). Recall the prodigal Son. In order to live without restraint, and feast as he pleased, he left his father; but then very soon he is reduced: to tend swine; reduced to such a degree of misery, that *he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him* (Luke, xv. 16).

Evening Meditation

SOLITUDE OF THE HEART

I.

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

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

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

God, and thou shalt find Him."

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

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

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

II.

Oh how easily he finds God who detaches himself from creatures in order to find Him! *The Lord is good ... to the soul that seeketh*

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

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

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

Friday--Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

(First Friday of October)

Morning Meditation

THE HEART OF JESUS LONGING FOR OUR LOVE

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

I.

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

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

My dearest Redeemer, I will say to Thee with St. Augustine, Thou dost command me to love Thee, and dost threaten

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

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

II.

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading

GOD SENDS AFFLICTIONS FOR OUR GOOD.

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

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

become of us, those sinners will say, as they enter into themselves, if we do not turn from our evil courses? God will not be appeased, and will with justice continue to punish us: come, let us retrace our steps, for He will cure us; and if He afflicts us now, He will upon our return think of consoling us with His mercy.

In the day of my trouble I sought God ... and I was not deceived (Ps. lxxvi. 3), because He raised me up. For this reason does the Prophet thank the Lord that He hath humbled him after his sin; because he was thus taught to observe the Divine laws: *It is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thy justifications* (Ps. cxviii. 71). Tribulation is for the sinner at once a punishment and a grace, says St. Augustine. It is a punishment inasmuch as it has been drawn upon him by his sins; but it is a grace, and an important grace, inasmuch as it may ward off eternal destruction from him, and is an assurance that God means to deal mercifully with him if he look into himself, and receive with thankfulness that tribulation which has opened his eyes to his miserable condition, and invites him to return to God. Let us, then, be converted and we shall escape from our several chastisements: "Why should he who accepts chastisement as a grace be afraid?" says St. Augustine. He who turns to God, smarting from the scourge, has no longer anything to fear, because God scourges only in order that we may return to Him; and this end once obtained, the Lord will scourge us no more.

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

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

Evening Meditation

THE LOVE OF JESUS IN SUFFERING FOR US

I.

Since the coming of Jesus Christ, it is no longer a time of fear, but a time of love, as the Prophet foretold: *Thy time is a time of lovers* (Ezech. xvi. 8), because God has gone so far as to die for us: *Christ hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us* (Eph. v. 2). Under the Old Law, before the Word was made flesh, man might, so to speak, have doubted whether God loved him with a tender love; but after having seen Him suffer a bloody and ignominious death on a cross of infamy, we can no longer possibly doubt that He loves us with the utmost tenderness. And who will ever arrive at comprehending the excess of the mercy and the love of the Son of God in being willing to pay the penalty of our sins? And yet this is of faith: *Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows ... He was wounded for our iniquities: He was bruised for our sins* (Is. liii. 4, 5). All this was the work of the great love which God bears us: *He hath loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood* (Apoc. i. 5). In order to wash us from the defilements of our sins, He was willing to empty His veins of all His Blood, to make of it for us a bath of salvation. O infinite mercy! O infinite love of a God!

Ah, my Redeemer, too truly hast Thou obliged me to love Thee; too truly should I be ungrateful to Thee, if I did not love

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

II.

That which ought most inflame our love for Jesus Christ is not so much the death, the sorrows, and the ignominies which He suffered for us, as the end which He had in view in suffering for us so many and so great pains; and that was to show us His love and to win our hearts: *In this have we known the charity of God, because he hath laid down his life for us* (1 Jo., iii. 16). For it was not absolutely necessary in order to save us that Jesus should suffer so much and die for us; it were enough that He should pour forth but one drop of Blood, should shed but one tear for our salvation; this drop of Blood, this tear shed by a Man-God, were sufficient to save a thousand worlds: but He willed to pour out all His Blood, He willed to lose His life in a sea of sorrows and contempt, to make us understand the great love He has for us, and to oblige us to love Him. *The charity of Christ presseth us*, says St. Paul (2 Cor. v. 15). He does not say that the Passion or the death, but the LOVE of Jesus Christ constrains us to love Him.

And what were we that Thou, O Lord, wert willing at so great a price to purchase our love? *Christ died for all, that they also who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them* (Ibid. 15). Hast Thou, then, my Jesus, died for us, that we might live wholly for Thee alone, and for Thy love? But, my poor Lord, permit me so to call Thee, Thou art so full of love that Thou hast suffered so much in order to be loved by men, and, after all, what is the number of those who love Thee? I see men intent on loving -- some their riches, some honours, some pleasures, some their relatives, some their friends, some, in fine,

the very animals; but of those who truly love Thee, Who alone art worthy of love, oh, how few such do I see! O God, how few indeed they are! Among these few, nevertheless, I too desire to be, who at one time, just like the rest, offended Thee by loving filth; now, however, I love Thee above every other good. O my Jesus, the pain Thou hast suffered for me urges and obliges me to love Thee; but that which binds me to Thee the more and enkindles my love is hearing of the love which Thou hast shown in suffering so much in order that Thou mightest be loved by me. O my Lord, most worthy of love, through love Thou hast given Thyself wholly to me; I, through love, give myself wholly to Thee. Thou for love of me didst die; I for love of Thee am willing to die when and as it shall please Thee. Accept of my love, and help me by Thy grace to do so worthily.

Saturday--Eighteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

MOST HOLY MARY THE MEDIATRIX OF SINNERS

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

I.

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

What have you to fear, says St. Bernard, when you can have recourse to so great a Mediator? He is all powerful with His

eternal Father. He has satisfied Divine justice for you, and has nailed your sins to the Cross, having taken them away from your soul. But if, notwithstanding all this, you fear to approach Jesus Christ on account of His Divine majesty, God has given you an advocate with Jesus Himself, and that advocate is Mary, His own Mother.

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

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

II.

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

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

Spiritual Reading

THE HOLY ROSARY

In the Thirteenth Century St. Dominic was greatly afflicted at the deplorable state of the Christian world. Vices and heresies filled Germany and France, and had penetrated into Italy and Rome itself. Desiring to oppose a barrier to such a flood of

errors and sins, he had recourse to the august Mother of God, who approved of his zealous intentions, and revealed to him as a remedy for so great an evil the devotion of the Rosary. The Saint at once began to preach this devotion, and he did so with so much fruit that large numbers of people, even entire cities, were thoroughly reformed. Conversions were so astonishing and so universal, that, as the History of the Dominicans attests, when the people heard of the members of any family leading bad lives, they usually said that they either did not recite the Rosary or they recited it badly.

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

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

The elevation of the mind required in the recitation of the Rosary should be a pious meditation on the Joyous, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries; hence, while we are reciting with the voice the "Our Fathers" and the "Hail Marys" which compose the Rosary, we should consider the Mystery that belongs to each decade.

It is true that a vocal prayer, like the Rosary, may be meritorious without the application of the mind to the consideration of the designated Mysteries; it is sufficient that one reflects either on the Presence of God, His Omnipotence, His Mercy, or some of His other perfections; on the temporal or eternal chastisements which one merits, or on other subjects that refer to God; but if one recites the Rosary with such thoughts, and does not consider

its Mysteries, he does not gain the Indulgences granted by the Sovereign Pontiff, as Benedict XIII has expressly declared.

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

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

There are some that deceive themselves still more. They are those who imagine that in carrying with them the Rosary they will be fortified with a formidable arm against the devil, and thus promise themselves a good death. They rely on antiquated examples of sinners, who, after a life full of crimes, because they recited and carried with them the Rosary, obtained through the intercession of Mary the grace of dying repentant. But these examples, if true, are miraculous; and I do not think that you love your soul so little that you wish to save it only by a miracle. What is certain is that one often sees sinners die without the Sacraments and without any sign of contrition, although they had carried about with them the Rosary and recited it as you do. Should not these examples, which are so frequent, fill us with terror? And as to the miraculous examples, which are very rare, do they take from you all fear of dying a bad death, and give you the assurance that you will die well? If I must say to you what I

think, I should say: As for those Christians that live without the fear of God, and that rest their hope of salvation on the Rosary, which they recite through habit and without the least devotion, I very much fear that at their death the devil may frighten them with this very Rosary, by representing to them the little devotion they had in the manner of reciting it, and the life they led -- a life altogether contrary to the Mysteries that they should have honoured and to the end for which the Rosary was established by the Blessed Virgin.

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

Evening Meditation

THE MOST FAITHFUL MEDIATRIX

I.

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

Wherefore the Church wishes that we should call this Divine Mother our hope. The impious Luther could not endure that the Church should teach us to call Mary our hope. He said that our hope ought to rest only in God -- not in the creature; and that God curses him who places his confidence in creatures:

Cursed be the man that trusteth in man. (Jer. xvii. 5). True, but that is understood of those who trust in creatures, in contempt of God, or independently of Him. But we hope in Mary, as our Mediatrix with the Lord. In the same manner as Jesus is our Mediator of right with His Eternal Father, because by the merits of His Passion He obtains pardon for penitent sinners, so Mary is Mediatrix by Divine favour with her Son, and is such a Mediatrix that her Son grants her every request; nay, that He wishes that every grace should pass through her hands. "The Lord," says St. Bernard, "has placed in Mary the plenitude of all good; so that if aught of hope or grace or salvation is in us, we know that we derive it from Mary." The Lord has confided to Mary the treasure of mercies which He wishes to have dealt out to us, and therefore wishes that we should acknowledge every grace as coming through her. Whence the Saint calls her his chief confidence, and the principal ground of his hope. For which reason he exhorts us to look for grace always through the intercession of Mary. And for the same reason the Church, despite Luther, calls Mary our hope -- *Spes nostra salve*.

II.

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

tween God and us, to pour out His graces continually upon us." Hence, also, she is called the City of refuge, as she is made to call herself by St. John Damascene. "I am the city of all those that have recourse to me." In the ancient law there were five Cities of Sanctuary; to which, if any one fled, he was secure of not being pursued by justice, no matter what his crime. At present we have not so many Cities of Sanctuary -- we have only Mary, to whom if any one shall have fled he may rest secure of not being pursued by the Divine justice. In the cities of the Old Law every delinquent was in danger, nor could all his crimes escape unpunished; but Mary is a city of refuge which receives every criminal. There is no one so cast off by God," said this Blessed Mother to St. Bridget, "who, if he have recourse to me, shall not return to God, and receive pardon."

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

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

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

I.

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

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

This love for the Faith gave her the fortitude, when but seven years of age, to set out from her father's house with her

little brother, to go amongst the Moors, in order that she might sacrifice her life for the Faith. Later on in life, such was her conviction of the truth of our Faith, that she felt as if she could convince all the Lutherans and bring them to an acknowledgment of their errors.

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

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

My most loving Jesus, Who, although thou didst foresee my ingratitude, hast never ceased to bestow upon me an abundance of graces, above all, the grace of the Faith -- ah, of Thy mercy enkindle such a flame within my heart, that my daily life may be always conformable to my Faith. O Divine, true and only Lover of my soul, when will the day at length arrive on which I shall begin to love Thee with my whole heart? Oh, would to God that today were this day of happiness for me, the day on which I have, in the present Novena, begun to honour Thy dear spouse and my tender advocate, Teresa! Ah! my Redeemer, by the merits of Thy Blood; by the merits of Mary, Thy most holy Mother and by those of Thy beloved Teresa, grant me, I pray Thee, so burning a love for Thee as may make me continually deplore the sins I have committed, and may urge me, henceforth, to study nothing but Thy good pleasure, in order that I may please Thee only, as Thou dost deserve. Amen.

II.

From the wonderful gift of Faith which the Saint possessed arose the great love she bore towards the Most Holy Sacrament, which is preeminently the *Mystery of Faith*. She used to say that God has conferred upon us a greater grace in giving us the Holy Eucharist than in becoming man; and so, one of the

principal virtues the Saint possessed was her special affection towards Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, as she herself revealed after her death. When the Saint heard someone say he wished he lived at the time Jesus was upon earth, she would smile and say: "And what more do we want, having Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament? Surely, if it was enough, while He was upon earth, to touch His raiment, in order to be healed of infirmities, what will He not do for us now when He is within us in Holy Communion?" "Oh, how sweet it is," she wrote, "to see the Shepherd become a Lamb. He is a Shepherd, because He gives food. He is a Lamb, because He is Himself the food. He is a Shepherd, because He nourishes. He is a Lamb, because He is the nourishment. When, therefore, we pray to Him for our daily bread, we are asking that He, the Shepherd, may be our food and sustenance."

The Divine Lover responded to the love with which this cherished spouse of His desired Him, and with which she disposed herself to receive Him under the sacramental species. As darkness disappears before the sun, so at the moment of Communion the obscurities and troubles of the Saint used to vanish. It then seemed to her that her soul lost all its affections and all its desires, being perfectly united with God and absorbed in Him. Although she was usually pale in consequence of her penances and infirmities, her biographer says, that no sooner had she communicated than her countenance became shining as crystal, ruddy, extremely beautiful, and with such an air of majesty about it, that it was easy to recognize what a Divine Guest she had received into her heart. At those times her virginal body seemed ready to quit the earth, raising itself in the air in the presence of the Sisters.

O Seraphic Saint, who by thy purity and ardent love, were upon earth the delight of thy God -- thou whom He loved so much as one day to tell thee that as Magdalen was His beloved one when He was on earth, so thou wert in the same degree His beloved one now that He is in Heaven -- oh thou dear Saint, whom He treated with such tenderness whether He admonished thee as a Father, or conversed with thee as a Spouse communicating Himself to thee so frequently in Holy Communion and

with such abundant outpourings of grace-O Teresa, plead with thy God for me who, alas! am not the object of His delights but the cause of His sufferings by my evil life. Pray to Jesus to pardon me and to give me a new heart, a heart pure and full of Divine love like unto thine own. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

TERESA'S LOVE FOR JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST

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

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

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

With regard, therefore, to this greatest of all gifts that Jesus has bequeathed to us in the Sacrament of the Altar, in leaving Himself, whole and entire, to be our Food, our Companion and

our Shepherd, let us practise the excellent instruction that the holy mother once revealed from Heaven to a certain soul: "The inhabitants of Heaven and those of earth should be one and the same in purity and in love: we, in a state of joy; you, in that of suffering. And, what we do in Heaven with the Divine Essence, you ought to do on earth with the Most Holy Sacrament. You will mention this to all my children." Treating of the love and tender devotion that are due to Jesus in the Holy Sacrament, she has again left us in her works the following directions: "Let us act so as not to be at a distance from our Shepherd, nor lose sight of him, because the sheep that keep near their shepherd are always more caressed and better taken care of than others, and because he is always giving them some morsels of his own food. If it happens that the shepherd sleeps, the faithful sheep keeps close beside him, until he awakes, or it will arouse him, and then he lavishes upon it his caresses anew."

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

Evening Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD*

I. EXCELLENCE OF THIS VIRTUE

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

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

II.

The greatest glory, then, that we can give to God is the fulfilment of His holy will in everything. This is what our Redeemer, Whose purpose in coming upon earth was the establishment of the glory of God, principally came to teach by His example. See how Jesus addresses His Eternal Father: *Sacrifice and oblation, thou wouldst not; but a body thou hast fitted to me ... then said I: Behold, I come - that I should do thy will, O God* (Heb. x. 5). Thou hast refused to accept the victims which mankind have offered Thee. It is Thy will that I should sacrifice to Thee the body which Thou hast given Me; lo, I am ready to perform Thy will! And hence it is that Jesus so often declares He had come upon earth not to fulfil His own, but His Father's will only: *I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me* (Jo. vi. 38). And on this account Jesus wished that the world might know the love He bore His Father, from the obedience to His will which He manifested in sacrificing Himself upon the Cross for the salvation of mankind; just as He said Himself in the Garden when going forth to meet His enemies who had come to take Him and lead Him away to death: *That the world may know that I love the*

Father; and as the Father hath given me commandment, so do I; Arise, let ye go hence! (Jo. xiv. 31). And for this reason, too, He said He would recognize as His very own brother him who acted according to the Divine will: *Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, he is my brother* (Matt. xii. 50).

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

Monday--Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE GIFT OF HOPE WITH WHICH ST. TERESA WAS ENDOWED

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

I.

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

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

Ever bearing in mind that God is faithful, as the Apostle says, and that He cannot fall short of His word, she drew from this reflection the great courage that fortified her in every storm. "Oh, my Lord," she used to exclaim, "who shall sufficiently declare how faithful Thou art to Thy friends? May everything fail

me provided Thou dost not abandon me; me, who have found by experience how great is the gain of those who trust only in Thee."

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

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

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

II.

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

with much greater reason now when He knew my love for Him, would He hear me, and finally that I ought not to doubt His word."

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

The Saint has written for our instruction: "Oh! how small is the confidence that we repose in Thee, O Lord God! And yet what greater riches, what more beautiful treasures couldst Thou have handed over to us? Thou hast given us three-and-thirty years of Thy Son's hard toil, and then His most painful death. Knowing beforehand how ungrateful we would be, Thou hast even confided to us the priceless treasure of that same Son in the Most Holy Sacrament, that there might be nothing in Thee of which we might not, through Him, gain possession, O merciful Father! O ye souls of the Blessed, who have so well known how, at this price, to purchase to yourselves so precious and so permanent an inheritance, declare to us how it was that you made use of so infinite a good? Succour us now that you are standing so near its source, and draw water thence for us who are here dying of thirst."

Spiritual Reading

"THE LORD IS CAREFUL FOR ME."

When the holy mother was at Toledo, a priest told her that the accomplishment of the Reform was a hopeless undertaking;

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

Learn, O devout soul, how God listens to the prayer that is offered with confidence. Ask, then, with confidence and you shall receive whatever you desire. Heaven and earth may fail you, but the Word of God Who has said: *Everyone that asketh, receiveth* (Matt. vii. 8), cannot fail. He that asks, obtains, even when he does not at all deserve to obtain what he asks, as St. Thomas says. On the other hand, he who does not ask, does not obtain. Behold then, on what our victory, in time of temptation, depends: *Praising I will call upon the Lord and I shall be saved from my enemies* (Ps. xvii. 4). Let us have recourse to God and we shall be conquerors. Behold, on what all our good depends: *Ask, and you shall receive* (Jo. xvi. 24). Let us ask, and it will be given us. Our Saint used to say: "For gaining Divine graces, prayer is the only gate: shut this, and I know not how God shall bestow them. Let us observe that our Father and God not only takes care of us, but that He is ever full of anxiety for our good, as He gives us to understand in the Holy Scriptures." Let us pray, then, with confidence; let us pray to God in the Name of Jesus Christ, His Son, Who has made us this promise: *If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you* (Jo. xvi. 23). God always takes care of us. *The Lord is careful for me* (Ps. xxxix. 18). And the Prophet says

it is easier for a mother to forget her child than for God to forget us. It will be enough to show God our miseries and say to Him with the leper in the Gospel: *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean* (Matt. viii. 2); or with the Sister of Lazarus: *He whom thou lovest is sick* (Jo. xi. 3); but *we ought always to pray and not to faint* (Luke xviii. 1). The day we leave off prayer, we shall fall.

Evening Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

II. EXCELLENCE OF THE VIRTUE

I.

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

While we are in this world, we should learn from the Blessed in Heaven the way we have to love God. The pure and perfect love which the Blessed in Heaven entertain for God lies in their own perfect union with the Divine will. Should the Seraphim understand it to be His will that they must employ themselves for all eternity in gathering into a heap the sands of the seashore, or in plucking up the grass from the fields, they would willingly do it with all possible pleasure. Nay, more: if God were to give them to understand that they should go to burn in the flames of hell,

they would immediately precipitate themselves into that abyss, in order to accomplish the Divine will. And it is for this that Jesus Christ taught us to pray -- namely, that we perform the Divine will on earth as the Saints perform it in Heaven: *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven* (Matt. vi. 10). The Lord calls David a man after His own heart, because David accomplished all His desires: *I have found a man according to my own heart, who shall do all my wills* (Acts xiii. 22). David was ever prepared to embrace the Divine will, as he frequently declared: *My heart is ready, O God; my heart is ready* (Ps. lvi. 8, and cvii. 1). And, on the other hand, the only prayer which he made to the Lord was that He would teach him to do His Will: *Teach me to do thy will* (Ps. cxlii. 10).

II.

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

If then we would give full satisfaction to the heart of God, we must in everything bring our own will into conformity with His; and not only into *conformity* but into *uniformity*, too, as regards all that God ordains. Conformity signifies the conjoining of our

own will to the will of God; but uniformity signifies, moreover, our making of the Divine will and our own will one will only, so that we desire nothing but what God desires, and His sole will becomes ours. This is the sum and substance of that perfection to which we ought to be ever aspiring. This must be the aim of all our works, and of all our desires, meditations and prayers. For this we must invoke the assistance of our Patron saints and of our Guardian Angels, and, above all, of our Divine Mother Mary, who was the most perfect of all the Saints, for the reason that she ever embraced most perfectly the Divine will.

Tuesday--Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

ST. TERESA'S GREAT LOVE FOR GOD

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

I.

The heart of this seraph was so on fire with the love of God, that all her thoughts and all her sighs were nothing but love, and had reference only to the good pleasure of God. Her confessor used to say that when speaking to her, he seemed to have before him a seraph of love. The sacred flame of the love of God burned within her soul ever since the moment when, only seven years of age, she had the courage to leave her native country, her father and mother, in order to go amongst the infidels, that she might sacrifice her life for Jesus Christ, as it is stated in the Bull of her canonization.

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

because she was all his: "Now I am all thine, and thou art all Mine" (Bull of Canon).

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

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

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

She writes: "Behold what I am always saying, and, as it seems to me, with all my heart: O Lord, I do not think of myself, I wish for nothing but for Thee alone!"

II.

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

So ardently did she desire to advance, as far as she possibly could, in the love of God, that she expresses herself elsewhere in the following terms "If I were to have my choice of undergoing all the sufferings of the world even to the end of time, and of obtaining afterwards a small additional degree of glory, or

without afflictions of any kind, to settle down in a degree of glory less exalted, I would willingly prefer to bear all the sufferings for the smallest possible additional knowledge of the greatness of God; because I see that they who know God best love Him most." On seeing that she loved God so much, and that she was so much beloved by Him, she wrote in holy transport: "Oh! what a beautiful exchange it is to give our love to God, and to receive from Him His own."

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

It was by this that she merited to be united to Jesus Christ, Who, on presenting her with a nail, declared her to be His spouse of love and of the cross. The Lord, stretching His right hand towards her, as we read in the appendix to her Life, proceeded to say to her: "Behold this nail: it is a token that henceforth you shall be my spouse; you have not merited this until now. For the future you shall not look upon My honour merely as that of your Creator, of your King, and of your God, but since you are now My true spouse, My honour is yours, and your honour is Mine."

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

In conclusion, her whole employment consisted in whatever could procure glory for God; but her great love for Him caused her to regard all that she did as nothing. "O Lord!" she said, "I fear that I am not serving Thee; I cannot discover anything that

can be sufficient to pay Thee the smallest part of what I owe Thee." The only thing that contented her in this life, and the prayer that she continually offered up to God, was this: "Ah, my Lord, enable us all to become worthy of loving Thee; since live we must, let us live for Thee, ever leaving our own selfish interests out of sight. What greater gain can we have than that which consists in being pleasing in Thy sight. O my Joy, my God, what can I do to please Thee?"

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

Spiritual Reading

"MERIT CONSISTS IN SUFFERING AND IN LOVING."

The whole life of Teresa was one continual exercise of the love of God, and a constant study of what might best please her Beloved. Her very life was terminated through the violence of her love, consumed as indeed her heart was in a furnace of Divine Charity. But we are to remember what our Lord said one day to our Saint, in order to give her to understand that true love of God in this life does not consist in any sensible sweetnesses, but in the accomplishment of the will of God, and in the undergoing of sufferings with calmness: "Thinkest thou, My daughter," He said to her, "that such gratifications constitute merit? No; merit consists in doing, in suffering, and in loving. Consider My life, altogether filled up, as it was, with sufferings: when thou lookest at My Mother holding Me in her arms, do not suppose that she enjoys this satisfaction without suffering the cruel torment that St. Simeon had predicted to her, when he said to her: 'A sword shall pierce thine own soul'; My Father having from that time enlightened her in order that she might understand all

that I was to suffer."

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

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

Evening Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

III. CONFORMITY IN ALL THINGS

I.

The important thing is to embrace the will of God in all things which befall us, not only when they are favourable, but when they are *contrary to our desires*. When things go on well even sinners find no difficulty in being conformed to the Divine will; but the Saints are in conformity even under circumstances which run counter, and are mortifying, to self-love. It is herein that the perfection of our love for God is shown. The Blessed Father John of Avila used to say: "A single *Blessed be God!* when things go wrong, is of more value than a thousand acts of thanksgiving when things are to our liking."

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

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

II.

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

us!"

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

Wednesday--Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE GREAT PERFECTION ATTAINED BY ST. TERESA

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

I.

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

Teresa, whom we may compare to an eagle of heaven, and to whom the desire of fulfilling the perfect will of God gave wings wherewith to fly rapidly forward to perfection, has left us on record the following words: "Let us entertain great thoughts, for from them proceeds our good." And she says elsewhere: "We must not limit our desires, but we must hope that in relying on God we shall be able, through the efforts we make, gradually to reach the heights that many of the Saints by His grace have reached." She used to say that the Divine Majesty loves generous souls, provided only that they put no trust in themselves; and she testified, speaking from experience, that she had never known a fainthearted soul to make as much progress even in several years as generous souls make within the space of a few days: "For," said she, "the Lord is as pleased with desires as with their effects."

Oh! how great, in truth, was her desire of pleasing her Lord! She does not shrink from the avowal, that, full of imperfections as she was, her desires were, nevertheless, great and perfect. She writes: "The desire of serving God comes to me attended with transports I am unable to express. It seems to me that no suffering, not even death, or Martyrdom itself, would be difficult for me to endure." Indeed, there was nothing, however difficult, she did not undertake and carry to a successful termination, when

once she knew that it was pleasing to God. And she testified this of herself: "There is nothing, however painful, that I am not ready to bear as soon as it comes." Thus the saint, having learned by her own experience, used to say: "I am astonished at what can be done by encouraging oneself to undertake great things, though we may not have the strength for them at once. The soul takes a flight upwards and ascends very high." And here she adds a lesson of much importance -- namely, that there is no humility in not wishing to become a saint. Humility is necessary, she says; but we must understand that the devil strives to make us think it is pride to have great desires, and a wish to imitate the Saints.

II.

In order to acquire perfection, it is not enough merely to *desire* it; we must also have the firm *resolution* of attaining it; for the desire without the resolution will be of no avail. This is what happens to such a number of souls who are always desiring, and perpetually multiplying their desires, but never come to a determination of setting themselves to the work in good earnest, and so remain ever in their tepidity, without making any progress. Our Saint writes: "I would rather have a short prayer producing great results, than a prayer lasting several years, during which the soul never resolves on performing anything of any real value for God."

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

resolute souls, seeing that every plot he contrives for their hurt turns to their profit."

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

Spiritual Reading

RESOLUTION TO GIVE ONESELF WHOLLY TO GOD

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

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

A great servant of God, Father Hyppolito Durazzo, of the Society of Jesus, used with good reason to say, as we read in his Life, that men of the world never think that they have enough of the good things of this world, and are always endeavouring to possess more; but with respect to the next they say: "The smallest corner of Paradise will do." Whereas, on the contrary, he who

truly loves God and not the world, will be contented with the least corner of the earth; but for the good things of Heaven he will always to be striving more and more without ever resting. This good Father used also to say that "to become a saint one needs nothing but what is to be obtained through the sole desire of pleasing God."

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

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

of every description, and for all eternity, if such be Thy good pleasure. Harken to me my Lord, for the love of Jesus Christ, and for the love of St. Teresa.

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

Evening Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

IV. HAPPINESS THAT COMES FROM PERFECT CONFORMITY

I.

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

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

II.

Souls that are truly resigned, says Salvian, if they are in a

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

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

Thursday--Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE HUMILITY OF ST. TERESA

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

I.

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

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

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

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

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

to keep myself from falling into despair."

II.

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

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading

ALL WISH TO BE "HUMBLE," BUT FEW TO BE "HUM-BLED."

The humility of St. Teresa was not the sort that some possess, who, although entertaining, in some instances, a lowly opinion of themselves, and expressing it also before others, yet cannot bear that others should publish their defects and subject them to contempt. No. The Saint, like all souls that are really humble, regarded herself, and wished to be regarded and treated by others as a vile creature. She even went so far as to say that there was no music more pleasing to her ears than the reproaches addressed to her in regard to her defects. She was frequently the object of contempt and of opprobrious treatment; and on such occasions her soul, truly humble as it was, took greater delight in seeing herself despised than if she had been praised and honoured. How often, in establishing those monasteries, whereby she procured so much glory to God, how often were insults heaped upon her as a hypocrite, a liar, a proud woman, and one filled with illusions! And this, too, as it once happened, from the pulpit, and in her own presence. The Pope's Nuncio, in a fit of anger, went so far as to enjoin upon her to retire into a monastery, and not to go out of it any more, telling her that she was a restless and vagabond woman. She shut herself up, as she was bidden, without making any defence, satisfied in having met with contempt and confusion.

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

While the Saint was arranging about the foundation at Burgos, she was one day passing along a narrow footpath, on which there happened to be a certain woman. She asked her per-

mission to pass by; but this woman, seeing her clad in raiment that bespoke the greatest poverty, said to her, "Go along, you hypocrite"; and then, with a rough push, caused her to fall into the muddy channel. The Saint's companions wished to rebuke the woman, but she took her part, saying: "My daughters, hold your peace. Do you not perceive that this woman has acted very rightly?" On another occasion she was in a church, and certain persons wishing to pass by, she did not take heed to rise sufficiently soon from the place where she was kneeling, whereupon they kicked against her, and so made her move to another part of the church. Another woman who had lost one of her shoes, fancying that Teresa had stolen it from her, had the impudence to strike her on the face with the other shoe. All this the Saint tranquilly received, better contented with these insults than a man of the world would be at receiving the greatest honours. The tribunal of the Rota has even attested that the greater the offences she received from others, the more they drew her love upon themselves. So much so, indeed, was this the case that it was a common saying that, in order to be loved by Teresa, it was necessary to treat her in a humiliating and injurious manner.

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

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

1. To avoid every occupation and every conversation that can in any way have to do with self-love, unless some notable utility oblige us to enter upon it. The Saint enjoins, nevertheless, that we should never put ourselves forward, excepting under obedience, or from motives of charity.

2. Never to manifest our interior devotion, unless through some great necessity; and never to affect outwardly a devotion that is not in the heart.

3. To rejoice on beholding ourselves the object of complaints, of insults and of mockeries, without seeking to justify ourselves, unless this be necessary for some greater good; "and when we are reproved," says the Saint, "let us receive the reproof with interior as well as exterior humility, offering up a prayer to God for him by whom we are reprimanded."

4. To ask unceasingly of God what St. John of the Cross prayed for -- to be despised for His love.

5. Finally, not to expect that the senses and the inferior part of the soul should find satisfaction in this; but to act according to reason, contenting ourselves with pleasing God; and for this it is especially useful to exercise ourselves during prayer in preparing ourselves for contempt of every description; and to pray earnestly to Jesus and Mary to grant us the fulfilment of our good resolutions on the occasions that may present themselves.

Evening Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

V. HAPPINESS THAT COMES FROM PERFECT CONFORMITY

I.

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

The Saints, through their conformity to the Divine will, enjoyed in this world a paradise in anticipation. St. Dorotheus

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

II.

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

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

Friday--Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

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

Ever since the time Jesus lovingly declared Teresa to be His Spouse, she remained so wrapt up in her Beloved that she could think of nothing but of pleasing Him. *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love* (Cant. v. 8).

I.

Ever since the time Jesus lovingly declared Teresa to be His Spouse, she remained so wrapt up in her Beloved, that she could think of nothing but of pleasing Him. Perceiving herself to be so highly favoured by her Divine Lover, and at the same time so destitute of the means of corresponding to so many graces, she cried out in the tenderness of her soul, with the spouse in the Canticles: *Stay me up with flowers; compass me about with fruits, for I*

languish with love (Cant. ii. 5). She animated herself then, sometimes by the desire of suffering that she might please God the more, and at other times by ardently longing for death that she might love Him more perfectly: such were her flowers. But besides this, she made it her study to fortify her languishing heart with the fruits of love, such as good works, penances, humiliations, and, more particularly, the labours she undertook in the great work of the reform of her Order. She founded thirty-two convents, although she was poor, destitute of all human aid, and opposed even by the great ones of this world, as the Church commemorates in the Lessons for her Office.

All this, however, was too small to satisfy her fervent desires of pleasing her heavenly Spouse, and she protested to her Beloved that she could not endure to see herself so much enriched by the gifts she received, and so niggardly in the return she made. Consequently, enveloped as she was in the holy flames of Divine love, and altogether detached from herself, she was frequently all on fire and languishing in the tenderness of her soul. Oh! what a beautiful sight for the blessed spirits that assisted her was this generous spouse of the Crucified, who in her languishings cried out: *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love* (Cant. v. 8). The effect of this holy languishing, as explained by the Doctors of the Church, is that the soul forgets itself and all its concerns, so as to have no love for anything but for its Beloved, and to have no thoughts but how to please Him. Such is the love of a spouse, as is observed by St. Bernard in the following words, in which he represents a soul raised to this happiness, as thus speaking: "The servant fears; the son honours; the mercenary hopes; and I, because I am a spouse, I love to love, I love to be beloved, and I love love itself." Precisely such was our seraphic Saint: languishing in her happiness; forgetting everything that had not a reference to Divine love; loving and being beloved, she made God's pleasure her only study; the only recompense that she desired was to add to her love for Him.

II.

As the hunter, to obtain possession of his prey, endeavours to make sure of it by inflicting upon it numerous wounds, so does

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

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

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

But, O my God, who is there that would not accept this pain, if that can be called pain which is occasioned by this

delicious fire of love, the very fire of love which constitutes the happiness of the Saints in Heaven, and which will fill them with joy for all eternity! To prepare the heart, however, for the reception of this fire and of these wounds, it is necessary to resolve, once for all, to banish far away everything that is not God, and generously to say farewell to all creatures, addressing them thus:

World, honours, riches, creatures, what would you have of me? I utterly renounce you! I take my leave of you! Farewell! My God has set me on fire with love; He has wounded me; by His love He has, at last, gained my whole heart; He has made me know He will not be content unless He has entire possession of it. Depart, then, far from me, ye creatures. You cannot satisfy me, and I no longer desire such gratification as you bestow. Go and content him that seeks you, for I no longer wish for you. I wish for God alone! With God I rest content. God alone! Yes, God alone is enough for me. Too long, alas, have I loved Creatures. The time I have still to spend upon earth, whatever its duration may be, I wish to employ wholly and solely in loving that God, Who was first to love me, and Who deserves and demands of me all my love.

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

Spiritual Reading

"DETACH YOUR HEART FROM ALL THINGS; SEEK GOD AND YOU WILL FIND HIM."

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

There are many souls given to prayer, in whom Divine love

finds little, if any, place, because they go to prayer with a heart filled with earthly affections. For this reason it is that St. Ignatius of Loyola says that a soul that is detached will profit more in a quarter of an hour's prayer than a soul that is not detached will in several hours. No sooner has the bird escaped from the net, than it flies away; so, in like manner, no sooner is the soul set free from earthly affections, than it flies quickly to God. The masters of the spiritual life teach that defects do not prevent us from advancing to perfection, provided the soul endeavours to rise with humility and peace, as soon as it has fallen; but the smallest attachment, were it only a fine thread, does prevent us.

The Roman Senate, as St. Augustine relates, sanctioned the payment of Divine honours to thirty thousand deities, that is, to all that were recognized as such in the world; but it refused to decree Divine worship to the God of the Christians, Whom it styled a jealous God, since He desired to be adored exclusively. And the Roman Senate had good reason for what they thus alleged; not because God is proud, but because He is the true God. The thief is satisfied if he obtains a share, but the owner is not satisfied without the whole. God desires then, to be the sole possessor of our heart; and, therefore, He enjoins upon each of us this command: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart* (Matt. xxii. 37). "Let us act in such a way," said St. Teresa to a certain Superior, "as to detach souls from everything created, in order that they may become the spouses of a King, Who is so jealous that He would have them forget everything, and even themselves." Let us, then, set to work to detach our heart from riches by the love of holy poverty; from pleasures, by mortification; from honours, by humility; from relatives, by detachment; and, lastly, from self-will by obedience to superiors; frequently offering up to God that excellent prayer: *Create a clean heart in me, O God!* (Ps. 50. 12). Give me, O God, a heart that is empty and detached, that it may be filled with Thy holy love.

Evening Meditation

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

I.

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

O infinite God, how couldst Thou condescend to exercise towards us so wondrous a compassion! Who shall ever be able to understand an excess so great, that in order to ransom the slave, Thou wast willing to give us Thine only Son? Ah, my kindest Lord, since Thou hast given me the best that Thou hast, it is but just that I should give Thee the best I can. Thou desirest my love: I desire nothing else, but only Thy love. Behold this miserable heart of mine; I consecrate it wholly to Thy love. Depart from my heart, all ye creatures; give place to my God, Who deserves and desires to possess it wholly, and without companions. I love Thee, O God of love; I love Thee above everything; and I desire to love Thee alone, my Creator, my Treasure, my All.

II.

God has given us His Son, and why? For love! Yes, for love alone! For fear of men Pilate gave Jesus up to the Jews: *He deliv-*

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

But not only was it out of pure love that God gave us His Son, He also gave Him to us with an immense love. This is precisely what Jesus wished to signify when He said: *God so loved the world* (Jo. iii. 16). The word "so," says St. John Chrysostom, signifies the greatness of the love wherewith God made us this great gift: "The word 'so' signifies the vehemence of the love." And what greater love could One Who was God have been able to give us than was shown by His condemning to death His innocent Son in order to save us miserable sinners? *Who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all* (Rom. viii. 32). Had the Eternal Father been capable of suffering pain, what pain would He not have then experienced, when He saw Himself compelled by His justice to condemn that Son, Whom He loved with the same love wherewith He loved Himself, to die by so cruel a death in the midst of so many ignominies? *And the Lord willed to bruise him in infirmity* (Is. liii. 10). He willed to make Him die consumed by torments and sufferings.

Imagine, then, to yourself that you behold the Eternal Father, with Jesus dead in His arms, and saying to us: This, O men, is My beloved Son, in Whom I have found all My delights: *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased* (Matt. iii. 17). Behold how I have willed to see Him ill-treated on account of your iniquities: *For the wickedness of my people have I struck him* (Is. liii. 8).

Behold how I have condemned Him to die upon this Cross, afflicted, and abandoned even by Myself, Who love Him so much. This have I done in order that you may love Me.

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

Saturday--Nineteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

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

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

I.

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

Our Saint well knew that she had received all her graces, and above all, the gift of love, which made her beautiful soul so rich, through the hands of this most sweet Mother. And so, in order to testify her thankfulness to her most holy Mother, she thought she could never do enough for her love and honour. From her early childhood, while still an inmate of her parental

home, she would go in quest of secluded spots to honour Mary by saying the Rosary and other pious prayers. On the death of her mother, she hastened to offer herself to her heavenly Queen with confidence and love to be her daughter, and protesting that from that moment she should be her only and her dearest Mother. In truth, in all her tribulations and in all her needs, the Saint ever had recourse to Mary, as to her most loving Mother. It was with the special object of seeing her honoured everywhere that she undertook the work of reforming the Carmelite Order, whose glory it is to fight under the banner and the especial protection of the Queen of Heaven.

Mary, on her part, who cannot do otherwise than love those that love her, or rather in the words of St. Ignatius the Martyr, "is always more loving towards them than they towards her, not wishing to be outdone by her children in this combat of love," this august Queen well knew how to return and to exceed the love that her dearest daughter bore towards her, by obtaining for her a great abundance of graces. On the day on which she condescended to come down so lovingly from Heaven, and with her own hands to decorate our Saint with a precious mystical necklace, she made her clearly understand how much satisfaction she felt at seeing her become, through her mediation, the most cherished spouse her Jesus had. It appears still more evident from the circumstances attending her death, how greatly she was loved by this affectionate Mother, for Mary then appeared standing beside her beloved daughter, to fortify her for her departure, and to receive into her arms her blessed soul.

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

Mary is my advocate with Jesus mayest thou, O Teresa, be my advocate with Mary.

II.

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

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

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

Spiritual Reading

THE PROTECTION OF HOLY MARY AND ST. JOSEPH

St. Francis de Sales used to say that next after the merits of Jesus Christ, the protection of the Blessed Virgin is so powerful and so beneficial to the soul that he looked upon it as the firmest support we can have with God. Father Suarez asserts that ac-

according to the received opinion of the Church, the protection of Mary is profitable and necessary, because God has determined to bestow all graces through her. Let us, then, love Mary, and ever have recourse to her protection if we wish to save and sanctify our souls. Let us with St. Bernard address her as the "whole foundation of our hope"; with St. Bonaventure, as "the salvation of him who calls upon her"; with St. Germanus, as "the life of Christians"; with St. Augustine, as "the only refuge of sinners"; and let us crown all by saluting her with the whole Church militant as "our life, our sweetness and our hope."

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

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

services, who did not visibly grow more and more in virtue ... I only ask, for the love of God, that he who does not believe me will make the trial for himself -- when he will see by experience the great advantages that will come to him from commending himself to this glorious Patriarch, and being devout to him. He who cannot find anyone to teach him how to pray, let him take this glorious Saint for his Master" (Life, ch. vi). Let us go, then, to our Saint herself the great Teresa, and ask her to obtain for us devotion to most holy Mary and St. Joseph.

Evening Meditation

"O GRACIOUS ADVOCATE"

MARY AN ADVOCATE WHO IS ABLE TO SAVE ALL
I.

So great is the authority that mothers possess over their sons, that even if they are monarchs, and have absolute dominion over every person in their kingdom, yet never can mothers become the subjects of their sons. It is true that Jesus now in Heaven sits at the right hand of the Father, that is, as St. Thomas explains it, even as Man, on account of the hypostatic union with the Person of the Divine Word. He has supreme dominion over all, and also over Mary; it will nevertheless be always true that for a time, when He was living in this world, He was pleased to humble Himself and to be subject to Mary, as we are told by St. Luke: *And he was subject to them.* (Luke, ii. 51). And still more, says St. Ambrose, Jesus Christ having deigned to make Mary His Mother, inasmuch as He was her Son, He was truly obliged to obey her. And for this reason, says Richard of St. Laurence, while "of other Saints we say that they are with God; but of Mary alone can it be said that she was so far favoured as to be not only herself submissive to the will of God, but even that God was subject to her will." And whereas of all other virgins, remarks the same author, we must say that *they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth* (Apoc. xiv. 4), of the Blessed Virgin Mary we can say that the Lamb follows her, having become subject to her.

And here we say, that although Mary, now in Heaven, can no longer command her Son, nevertheless her prayers are always the prayers of a Mother, and consequently most powerful to obtain whatever she asks. "Mary," says St. Bonaventure, "has this

great privilege, that with her Son she above all the Saints is most powerful to obtain whatever she wills." And why? Precisely for this reason -- they are the prayers of His Mother.

II.

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

"At the command of Mary, all obey, even God." St. Bernardine fears not to utter this sentence; meaning, indeed, to say that God grants the prayers of Mary as if they were commands. And hence St. Anselm addressing Mary says: "Our Lord, O most holy Virgin, has exalted thee to such a degree that by His favour all things that are possible to Him should be possible to thee." "For thy protection is omnipotent, O Mary," says Cosmas of Jerusalem. "Yes, Mary is omnipotent," repeats Richard of St. Laurence; "for the queen by every law enjoys the same privileges as the king. And as," he adds, "the power of the son and that of the mother is the same, a mother is made omnipotent by an omnipotent Son." "And thus," says St. Antoninus, "God has placed the whole Church, not only under the patronage, but even under the dominion of Mary."

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

ST. TERESA'S DESIRE FOR DEATH

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

I.

If the worldly-minded have a fear of losing their goods, fleeting and miserable as they are, much greater is the fear the Saints have of losing God, Who is a Good infinite and eternal, and Who promises to bestow Himself in Heaven as a recompense upon him who has loved Him on earth, admitting him to the enjoyment of His beauty and of His own happiness. Hence as their whole fear during life has been simply the fear of sinning, and thus losing the friendship of that Lord Whom they have loved so well, so their whole desire has been to die in the grace of God, and by death to gain the assurance of loving and possessing Him forever.

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

But how are we to express the grief and the extreme anguish that our Saint experienced through her desire for death, more especially after the time when the Lord called her to His perfect love? She protests, in her Life, written in obedience to her confessor, that the desire that she had of dying, in order to see God, was so great, that it did not even afford her the leisure to think of her sins. This humble spouse of Jesus crucified spoke in this manner because she was continually bewailing those imperfec-

tions in her love of her Spouse into which she had formerly fallen -- imperfections she pronounced to be monstrous and deserving of hell, but in reality, as her biographers declare, her failings never amounted to a mortal sin.

The Saint, in thinking, moreover, of the danger she was in, as long as life should last, of offending God and losing Him, used to say that a single day, and even a single hour, seemed to her too long to have to live. Hence she would exclaim: "Alas! Lord, as long as we remain in this miserable life, life eternal is ever in jeopardy. O life! enemy of my welfare, who will be able to bring thee to an end? I endure thee, because God endures thee. I preserve thee, because thou dost appertain to Him; may I never prove treacherous or ungrateful. Oh! when will that day of benediction arrive on which I shall behold thee, O life, swallowed up in the boundless ocean of the sovereign truth, when thou wilt no longer possess the liberty to sin?"

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

II.

To our Saint's fear of the possibility of offending God in this life was joined the great desire that this loving soul entertained of seeing face to face the only object of her love, that she might thus gain the power of loving Him more perfectly, and of altogether uniting herself to Him. For this reason she could not endure to see herself at such a distance from the country of the Blessed; with abundance of tears, she would thus utter her complaint before her Spouse: "Alas! alas! Lord, this banishment is long indeed! What shall a soul confined in this prison do? Oh! Jesus, the life of man is long indeed! It is short, when considered as a means of gaining the life that is the true one; but it is long for that soul that desires to behold herself in the presence of her God." At other times, blending with her loving pains her distrust in her own merits and her hope in God, she would occupy herself in the composition of the following beautiful harmony of ejaculations so pleasing to her Beloved: "O life!" she would

say, "O life! how canst thou keep thyself apart from thy Life? O death! O death! I know not who can fear thee, because in thee is life! Yet who shall not fear thee after having spent a part of this life without the love of his God? O my soul! serve thy God, and hope that in His mercy He will heal thy miseries."

But in order to understand the extent of the burning desire our Saint had for death, it is necessary that we should have a knowledge of the pain she experienced in continuing in life. She related to her confessor that this was such that it seemed already to destroy and bring her life to an end. Under its influence, too, she would even fall into an ecstasy. To give vent to her affections, she drew up on this subject those burning words of which that celebrated hymn of hers is composed, which thus begins:

"I live, from myself am far away: And hope to reach a life so high, That I'm for ever dying because I do not die!"

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

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

O my holy advocate, Teresa, I rejoice with thee that thou hast reached the haven, the termination of thy sighs! Now Thou dost no longer believe, thou beholdest the beauty of God! Thou no longer hopest, thou art possessed of the Sovereign Good! Thou art now rejoicing in the clear vision of that God Whom thou hast so long desired and loved! Thy love is now satiated!

There is nothing for thy loving heart to long for more! O my Saint, have compassion on me who am still in the midst of the storm. Pray for me that I may obtain salvation and go to join thee in loving that God Whom thou so greatly desirest to see loved.

Spiritual Reading

"PARADISE! PARADISE!"

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

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

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

If our weakness terrifies us, let us fortify our hope by the

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

The holy Mother Teresa used to say:

"Let your desire be to see God; your fear, to lose Him; your joy, whatever can bring you to Him."

Burning with the desire of seeing God, the Saint composed her famous "Canticle," "I die because I cannot die!" and on this text she wrote many beautiful stanzas, of which the following are two:

Ah, Lord, my Light, and living Breath! Take me, Oh, take me from this death, And burst the bars that sever me From my true Life above: Think how I die, Thy face to see, And cannot live away from Thee, O my eternal Love! And ever, ever weep and sigh, Dying because I cannot die.

I weary of this endless strife; I weary of this dying life-- This living death -- this heavy chain; This torment of delay, In which her sins my soul detain; Ah, when shall it be mine? Ah, when, With my last breath to say-- "No more I weep -- no more I sigh! I'm dying of desire to die."

HYMN IN HONOUR OF ST. TERESA

Ye angels most inflamed With fires of heavenly love, Bright Seraphim, descend From your high thrones above; To this most chosen soul Your loving succor bring -- To her, the spouse beloved Of Christ your God and King.

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

.....

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

No angels come to aid; Come Thou, Who in this breast Hast kindled flames so dear, Come Thou, and give her rest; Sick is her

soul with love, And wounded is her heart; Thou didst inflict the wound, Then, Jesus, cure its smart.

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

Evening Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

VI. GOD WISHES ONLY OUR GOOD.

I.

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

In short, what does God will but our good? Whom can we ever find to love us more than He? It is His will, not merely that no one should perish, but that all should save and sanctify their souls: *Not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance* (2 Peter iii. 9). *This is the will of God, your sanctification* (1 Thess. iv. 3). It is in our good that God has placed His own glory, being, as St. Leo says, of His own nature, goodness infinite. And as it is of the nature of goodness to desire to spread itself abroad, God has a supreme desire to make the souls of men partakers of His own bliss and glory. And if, in this life, He sends us tribulations, they are all for our own good: *All things work together unto*

good (Rom. viii. 28). Even chastisements, as was observed by the holy Judith, do not come to us from God for our destruction, but in order to secure our amendment and salvation: *Let us believe that they have happened for our amendment, and not for our destruction* (Judith, viii. 27).

II.

In order to save us from evils that are eternal, the Lord throws the shield of His good will around us: *O Lord, thou hast crowned us as with a shield of thy good will* (Ps. v. 13). He not only desires, but is eager for our salvation: *The Lord is careful for me* (Ps. xxxix. 18). -- For what is there that God will ever refuse us, says St. Paul, after having given us His own Son? *He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also with him given us all things?* (Rom. viii. 32). This, then, is the confidence in which we ought to abandon ourselves to the Divine dispensations, all of which have our good for their object. Let us therefore repeat, whatever circumstances may happen to befall us: *In peace, in the self-same, I will sleep and I will rest; for thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope* (Ps. iv. 10). Let us also place ourselves entirely in God's hands, for He will certainly take care of us: *Casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you* (1 Peter v. 7). Then, let our thoughts be fixed on God, and on the fulfilment of His will, that He may think of us and of our good. "Daughter," said the Lord to St. Catharine of Sienna, "do thou think of Me, and I will ever think of thee." Let us frequently repeat with the sacred spouse, *My Beloved to me, and I to him* (Cant. ii. 16). The thoughts of my Beloved are for my welfare; I will think of nothing but of pleasing Him, and bringing myself into perfect conformity with His holy will. The holy Abbot Nilus used to say that we ought never to pray to God to make our will succeed, but to accomplish His will in us. And whenever things befall us that are not according to our wishes, let us accept them all, as from God's hands, not merely with patience, but with joy, as did the Apostles when they *went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus* (Acts, v. 41).

Monday--Twentieth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

ST. TERESA'S PRECIOUS DEATH

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

I.

The holy Mother Teresa, on leaving Burgos, was desirous of going to her dear convent of Avila, that she might rest awhile in that her first and favourite abode, where she began her reform; but her heavenly Spouse summoned her to another home, and to eternal repose. The Lord wished to have her in the land of the Blessed; therefore He permitted that, as she was on her way, her Provincial should send her an order to repair to the convent of Alba. There God was awaiting her, to deliver her from the prison of this life, and to conduct her to the everlasting nuptials.

Come, O my Saint! Come! your Spouse deems that your labours have now been sufficient; and His Heart is touched with compassion by your sighs. Come to the repose that you desire; come to the haven after having encountered the storm. Come to begin that new life of love which you will enter by a death of love, which the Lord is preparing for you in this favoured spot.

The Saint obeyed, and reached Alba on St. Matthew's Day, at six o'clock in the evening, in the year 1582. Her daughters welcomed her with great reverence and great affection, perhaps not without some presentiment that they should lose her before long. They received her benediction and kissed her hand, whilst the Saint was tenderly and affectionately speaking with them.

When she arrived she was fatigued from her journey, and unwell from an attack of fever; so that she retired immediately to her bed at the entreaty of her children with these words: "Oh! may God assist me, my dear daughters, as I feel quite overpowered! It is now more than twenty years since I retired to rest at so early an hour. Blessed be the Lord that my sickness has fallen

upon me while I am amongst you."

During the eight subsequent days her illness continued, but she never allowed it to prevent her from rising to receive her Jesus in Holy Communion, Who was to her the only Life of her life.

But, on St. Michael's day, still suffering from the sickness that was to bring her to her grave, she took to her bed in the infirmary, never more to leave it. There she remained for a day and a night in an ecstasy of prayer, and having learned then through a revelation, the hour and the moment of her decease, she told the Venerable Sister Ann of St. Bartholomew, her beloved companion in all her travels, that the hour of her departure had come. Three days before her death, when Father Anthony of Jesus had come to hear her confession, he told her to pray to God to preserve her life for the good of the Reform; but the Saint replied that there was no longer any need to think of this, because her death was a certainty, and her presence upon earth was no longer necessary. The doctors ordered her to be bled, and to this she willingly submitted, not out of any desire for recovery, but from the fervent wish she had to suffer, and to close her life in the midst of sufferings, as she had ever desired, for the love of her dearest Spouse, Whose will it had been to expire amidst so many torments on the Cross.

On the eve of the Feast of St. Francis, she asked for the Most Holy Viaticum, and whilst they were bringing It, all her Religious being assembled in her chamber, she burst into tears, and clasping her hands together, said to them: "My daughters and my mothers, pardon me for the bad example I have set you, and do not imitate me who am the greatest sinner in the world, and who have observed my Rule less than all others. For the love of God, my children, I pray you to observe that Rule perfectly, and to be obedient to your Superiors." She who had been so great a lover of obedience, recommended nothing but this virtue when at the point of death, knowing, as she did, that the perfection of Religious depends on the perfection of their obedience.

II.

The Holy Viaticum having been brought, she had the courage, at the coming of her Spouse, to raise herself into a

sitting posture, although her feebleness was such that she could scarcely stir. The ardour with which her love inspired her was so great that she appeared ready to throw herself from her bed to go to meet the only Beloved of her soul, and receive Him. Her countenance became so inflamed and radiant that they could not gaze upon her. She clasped her hands together, burning, like the phoenix, with the liveliest ardour the nearer she approached the end of her life, and the more she lovingly conversed with her Spouse, so that she drew tears from all present. Amongst other things, she said: "O my Lord and my Spouse, the hour so earnestly longed for has at last arrived! It is time now that we should see each other, O Lord! The day has dawned at last when I am to leave my place of exile to go to share with Thee in that joy which I have so ardently desired."

What gave her most consolation in that hour, and chiefly called forth her thankfulness towards God, was the fact of her being a child of the Holy Church. She could not refrain from saying over and over again: *After all, O Lord, I am a daughter of the Church*. She also frequently repeated the versicle of David: *A contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise* (Ps. 1. 19). On the following day, after receiving Extreme Unction, she held the Crucifix tight in her embrace, and remained fourteen hours in an ecstasy, with a countenance shining like fire, and immovable, beginning from that time to experience a foretaste of the great glory God had prepared for her in Heaven, where her Spouse was summoning her in these words: *Arise, make haste, my love ... and come* (Cant. ii. 10). Then it was that, before the Saint expired, Sister Ann, her companion, saw her Spouse, Jesus, and a multitude of angels, come and take up their position at the foot of her bed, awaiting the moment when they should conduct her to Heaven. Beside Teresa's bed was her sweet Mother Mary and St. Joseph, her beloved Father. Lastly, she saw a multitude of persons, clothed in white and all shining with light, entering with great joy into the cell of the dying Saint. It is supposed that these were the Ten Thousand Martyrs* who had promised her that they would accompany her to Paradise. They drew near at the moment when Teresa, her beautiful life being consumed in a furnace of love, expired sweetly through the force of that love.

Her blessed soul issued forth from its prison and flew away like a dove to its Beloved in Paradise. Indeed, at the very moment they saw her soul, as a white dove, flying to Heaven. At the same time she appeared in glory to Sister Catharine of Jesus, and told her that her life had been terminated through the vehemence of her love, and that she had gone to rejoice in God. Her virgin body forthwith exhaled a delightful fragrance, which diffused itself throughout the whole convent.

*Of whom mention is made in the Martyrology on June 22.
-- ED.

Behold what a blessed reward the labours of the Saints receive at the hour of death! While sinners experience at death sadness, confusion, remorse, despair -- the foretaste of their damnation -- the Saints, on the contrary, are filled with confidence, peace, light and joy -- a foretaste of Paradise. Come, ye senseless ones, come and see in this poor cell of Teresa, how contentedly those die, and leave this earth, who have already abandoned the world to give themselves wholly to God.

Oh, devout soul, fail not to keep your eyes on the closing scenes that will take place at the hour of your own death. Do now what you will wish to have done, but will not have the power to do then, and you will become a saint, and your death will be a happy one.

Behold, then, O Teresa, thy sighs are heard, thy desires are fulfilled, thy love satisfied! Thou art now released from banishment and hast reached thy place of rest. Thou art now rejoicing with that Good Who was the object of thy love, loving that God Whom thou didst sigh after. But amidst thy splendours, do not be unmindful of us, wretched as we are. Have compassion on us who go on our way weeping as travellers in this valley of tears, and ever in danger of losing God. For pity sake, address thy Jesus in our behalf that He may pardon the many sins we have committed. Pray to Him to deliver us from every attachment to the things of this world which would hinder us from going to join thee in loving God in Paradise.

Spiritual Reading

LITTLE CHAPLET IN HONOUR OF ST. TERESA (*To be recited every day during the Novena.*)

I.

O most amiable Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the great gift of Faith and of devotion to the Holy Sacrament, which Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy faithful spouse, to grant us the gift of a lively Faith and of a fervent devotion towards the most Holy Sacrament of the altar where Thou, O infinite Majesty, hast obliged Thyself to abide with us even to the end of the world, and wherein Thou dost so lovingly give Thy whole self to us.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love Teresa's beauteous heart, Of her sweet love upon my soul Let fall a flaming dart.

II.

O most merciful Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the great gift of Hope which Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy holy spouse, to give us a great confidence in Thy goodness, by reason of Thy Precious Blood, that Thou hast shed to its last drop for our salvation.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love Teresa's beauteous heart, Of her sweet love upon my soul Let fall a flaming dart.

III.

O most loving Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the great gift of Love which Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy most loving spouse, to give us the great, the crowning gift of Thy perfect Charity.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love Teresa's beauteous heart, Of her sweet love upon my soul Let fall a flaming dart.

IV.

O most sweet Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the gift of great desire and resolution which Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa, that she might love Thee perfectly. We pray

Thee, by Thy merits and by those of Thy most generous spouse, to give us a true desire and a true resolution of pleasing Thee to the utmost of our power.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love Teresa's beauteous heart, Of her sweet love upon my soul Let fall a flaming dart.

V.

O most kind Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the great gift of humility that Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy most humble spouse, to grant us the grace of a true humility, which may make us ever find our joy in humiliations, and prefer contempt to every honour.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love Teresa's beauteous heart, Of her sweet love upon my soul Let fall a flaming dart.

VI.

O most bountiful Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the gift of devotion towards Thy sweet Mother, Mary, and her holy spouse, Joseph, which Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy most dear spouse, to give us the grace of a special and tender devotion towards Thy most holy Mother, Mary, and towards Thy beloved foster-father, Joseph.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love Teresa's beauteous heart, Of her sweet love upon my soul Let fall a flaming dart.

VII.

O most loving Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the wonderful gift of the wound in the heart that Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy seraphic spouse, to grant us also a like wound of love, that, henceforth, we may love Thee, and give our mind to the love of nothing but Thee.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love Teresa's beauteous heart, Of her sweet love upon my soul Let fall a flaming dart.

VIII.

O most beloved Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the eminent gift of the desire for death which Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy most constant spouse, to grant us the grace of desiring death, in order to go and possess Thee eternally in the country of the Blessed.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love Teresa's beauteous heart, Of her sweet love upon my soul Let fall a flaming dart.

IX.

Lastly, O dearest Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee for the gift of the precious death which Thou didst grant to Thy beloved Teresa, giving her to die a sweet death of love. We pray Thee, by Thy merits, and by those of Thy most affectionate spouse, to grant us a good death; and that if we do not die of love, we may, at least, die burning with love for Thee, that so dying, we may be able to go and love Thee for evermore with a perfect love in Heaven.

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, etc.

O Jesus, Who didst pierce with love Teresa's beauteous heart, Of her sweet love upon my soul Let fall a flaming dart.

Evening Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

VII. GOD WISHES ONLY OUR GOOD.

I.

What greater satisfaction can a soul enjoy than in knowing that by suffering with a good will whatever it may have to suffer, it gives to God the greatest pleasure it can give Him? The masters of the spiritual life teach that, though the desire which certain souls have of suffering to give God pleasure is acceptable to Him, He is yet more pleased with the conformity of those who wish for neither joy nor pain, but, in perfect resignation to His holy will, have no other desire than to fulfill whatever the will of God may be.

If, then, O devout soul, you would please God, and live a life of contentment, unite yourself always and in everything to the Divine will. Consider that all the sins you have committed, when

leading a life of disorder and unhappiness, have come to pass in consequence of having separated yourself from the will of God. Unite yourself from this day forward, with His good pleasure; and always say, in everything that may befall you: *Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in thy sight* (Matt. xi. 26). So may it be, O Lord, as it is pleasing unto Thee. Whenever you are troubled on account of some adversity, consider that it has come from God; and therefore say at once: "God wills it so" -- and remain in peace. *I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth, because thou hast done it* (Ps. xxxviii. 10). To this end you must direct all your thoughts and prayers to God, in Meditations, in Communions, in Visits to the Most Holy Sacrament, that He would make you accomplish His will. Strive to make continually an offering of yourself, saying: O my God, behold, here I am; do what Thou wilt with me, and with all that I have. This was St. Teresa's continual exercise; fifty times a day at least did the Saint offer herself to the Lord, that He might dispose of her according to His pleasure.

II.

Oh, happy will you be if you act ever thus! You will certainly become a saint; your life will be peaceful, and your death most happy. When any one is passing to the other life, our hopes of his salvation depend on whether he has died resigned or not. If, after having during life welcomed all things as coming from God, you in like manner embrace death also in order to accomplish the Divine will, you will certainly secure your salvation and die the death of a saint. Let us, then, abandon ourselves in everything to the good pleasure of that Lord Who, being most wise, knows what is best for us; and being most loving, since He has sacrificed His life through love of us, wills also that which is most for our good. Let us be thoroughly assured and convinced that God works for our good incomparably beyond all we can do or desire for ourselves.

Tuesday--Twentieth Week after Pentecost **Morning Meditation**

FEAST OF ST. TERESA (OCTOBER 15)

What makes the holy Mother, Teresa, an object of our admiration is the steadfastness of soul with which she strove to accom-

plish whatever she knew was acceptable to God. She taught her children that "Divine love is to be acquired by a determination to work and suffer for God."

I.

Let us consider the burning love which this seraphic Saint entertained for God.

To her it seemed impossible that there could be in the world a single person who did not love God; and she would say; "My God, art not Thou exceedingly lovable on account of Thine infinite perfections, and of the infinite love Thou bearest towards us? How, then, can there be any one that does not love Thee?" Most humble though she was, yet in speaking of love she did not shrink from saying: "I am all imperfection, excepting in desires and in love." The Saint has left us on record the following excellent instruction: "Detach your heart from everything: seek God and you will find Him." On the other hand, she used to say, that it is easy for those who love God to detach themselves from the earth: "Ah! my God, we only need to love Thee truly, for Thee to make everything easy to us." Again, she writes: "Since live we must, let us live for Thee, so that our selfish interests may at last disappear. What greater advantage can any one gain than that which is to be found in pleasing Thee! O my delight and my God, what shall I do in order to please Thee?" She even went so far as to say that she would not be made sorry at seeing others in Heaven more happy than herself; but that she could not make up her mind to see any one love God more than she should love Him.

What makes this Saint an object of our admiration, is the steadfastness of soul with which she strove to accomplish everything she knew to be acceptable to God. She used to say: "There is nothing, however painful, that I am not prepared courageously to undertake, if it were set before me to do." Hence she gave it as her instruction, that "Divine love is to be acquired by a determination to act and to suffer for God." "For," said she in another place, "the devil has no fear of irresolute souls." To please God, she even went so far, as is well known, as to make a vow of performing whatever was the most perfect. And since sufferings endured for God are the strongest proofs of love, she desired to

live for nothing but to suffer. Therefore she wrote: "It seems to me that there is no reason to live, except it be to suffer; and this it is for which I most fervently pray to God. To Him I say with my whole heart: Lord, either to suffer or to die! I ask of Thee for this, and nothing more." Her love became so ardent, that Jesus Christ one day appeared to her and said: "Teresa, you are all Mine, and I am all yours."

II.

So dear did Teresa become to her Spouse Jesus, that He sent one of the Seraphim to wound her heart with a dart of fire. At length she died as she had lived, all inflamed with love. When the end of her life was drawing near, all her sighs were for death, that she might go to unite herself to her God: "O death!" she said, "I know not who can dread thee, for in thee is life. Serve thy God, O my soul, and hope that He will bring thee a remedy for thy pains." For this reason she composed the affectionate Canticle of love that opens with the following words:

"I live, but from myself am far away: And hope to reach a life so high, That I'm forever dying because I cannot die."

When the Holy Viaticum was brought to her, she exclaimed: "O my Saviour, the longed-for moment is at last come! Now begins the time when we shall see each other face to face." Then she died of love, as she herself revealed after her death.

O my seraphic Saint, thou art now rejoicing in thy God, Whom thou didst love so much during thy lifetime, when in constant danger of losing Him. Obtain for us, by thy prayers, the grace that we may go to love our God in Paradise with thee for evermore. Amen.

ACT OF CONSECRATION TO ST. TERESA

O seraphic virgin, well-beloved spouse of the Divine Word, St. Teresa of Jesus I, (N.N.) though very unworthy to be thy servant, yet encouraged by thy great goodness and by the desire I have to serve thee, in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity, of my Guardian Angel, and of the whole heavenly court, choose thee today, after Mary, for my mother, my mistress, and my special patroness, and I take the firm resolution always to serve thee, and to do all I possibly can that others may serve thee. Therefore, O my seraphic Saint, I supplicate thee, by the Blood

thy Divine Spouse shed for me, to receive me among the number of thy devoted servants. Assist me in my necessities, and obtain for me the grace to imitate thy virtues by walking in the true road of Christian perfection. Aid me particularly in prayer, and ask God to give me this glorious gift that thou didst receive in so eminent a degree, in order that, contemplating and loving the sovereign Good, I may avoid, in my thoughts, words, and deeds, all that might offend, or be even in the least displeasing to thee and to my God. Accept this little offering as a mark of my engagement to thy service, and assist me during my life, and above all at the hour of my death. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

THE TEACHING OF ST. TERESA ON THE LOVE OF GOD AND OUR NEIGHBOUR

I. We must love God perfectly; that is,

We must love Him above all things, so as to be willing to die rather than commit the least wilful sin. St. Teresa says: "May God deliver you from deliberately committing even the most trivial sin!" "For," she adds, "the devil, by means of the smallest things, opens a way through which greater things may enter." Again, she has this admonition: "True devotion consists in not offending God and in being resolved to do nothing but what is good and holy."

We must love God with our whole heart, ever desiring to arrive at a higher degree of perfection in order to please Him. St. Teresa observes: "God will not suffer any good desire to go unrewarded even in this life." And she also says that our Lord, ordinarily, does not confer many signal favours, "except upon those who have greatly desired to love Him." But to desires we must add actions, by overcoming with fortitude human respect, our own repugnances, and all worldly interests.

We must love God continually, and on all occasions; and for this end we must direct and offer all to Him, even our indifferent actions, such as our eating, diversions, walking, working, every breath we breathe, uniting all with the actions of Jesus Christ and of the Blessed Virgin when on earth. Moreover we must cheerfully suffer all adverse and painful things, conforming ourselves and uniting ourselves to the will of God in whatever He is

pleased to do in us and for us. Upon this St. Teresa has left the following excellent sentiments: "And what more can we wish to gain than the testimony of doing what is pleasing to God?" And she explains what this testimony is: "Whilst we live, our gain does not consist in endeavouring to enjoy God, but in doing His will. Great is the fruit of this giving of our will to God, for it induces God to unite Himself to our lowliness. True union is the union of our will with the will of God."

To promote this and keep alive the flame of Divine love, we must make frequent acts of love during the course of the day, but particularly when we approach holy Communion and during the time of Meditation, saying to God: My most beloved and only Treasure, my God, my All, I love Thee with my whole heart. I give my whole self to Thee without reserve, and I consecrate to Thee all my thoughts, desires, and affections. I desire, I sigh, I seek for nothing but Thee alone, my only life. To please Thee is my only delight. Do in me and with me whatever Thou pleasest. My God and only good, grant me but to love Thee, and I ask for nothing more.

II. In order to maintain the union of the soul with God, we must exercise charity towards our neighbour.

As regards the *interior*, it consists in wishing the neighbour the same good that we wish ourselves; in not wishing him the evil we do not wish ourselves; in rejoicing in his good, and regretting the evil which befalls him, although we may naturally experience some repugnance in so doing.

As regards the *exterior*:

1. We must not murmur against the neighbour, deride or laugh at him, but speak always well of him, and defend, or at least excuse his intention.

2. We must console him under afflictions.

3. We must succour him in his necessities of soul and body, particularly in sickness.

4. We must condescend to the neighbour, as Saint Teresa expresses it, in all that is not sin.

5. We must not give our neighbour bad counsel or bad example.

6. We must occasionally reprove him, but mildly and season-

ably, but not when we are agitated with passion.

We must above all endeavour to render good for evil, at least to speak well of those who injure us, treat them with meekness, and recommend them to God, turning away our thoughts from the annoyances, harshness, and provocations which we consider we have received from them.

As a conclusion to this short practice we must note, amongst others, the following maxims on perfection which St. Teresa has left us in various parts of her works:

"All our efforts produce little result, if we do not get rid of self-confidence, so as to place our confidence wholly in God.

"Because we do not interiorly give all our affection to God, so neither does God give us all the treasures of His love.

"May God deliver us from ostentatious devotion.

"I have often found that there is nothing more efficacious than holy water for driving away the devils.

"All that we can do is but nothing compared with a single drop of the Blood which the Saviour shed for us.

"If we do not put an obstacle, God will not hesitate to grant us the assistance necessary in order to become saints.

"God does not leave without reward a single glance towards Heaven accompanied by the remembrance of Him.

"The Lord wishes for nothing from us but a resolute will, in order to go on to accomplish all that remains to be done on His part.

"God never sends a pain which He does not afterwards repay by some favour.

"If the soul does not keep itself apart from the pleasures of the world, it will soon become careless in the way of the Lord.

"Do not mention your temptations to imperfect souls, for you will do an injury both to them and to yourself. Communicate them only to the perfect.

"Let your desire be to see God; your fear be to lose God; your joy be whatever can conduct you to God."

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Teresa, now and forever. Amen.

Evening Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

VIII. SPECIAL PRACTICES OF THIS VIRTUE

I.

Let us come to the practice of this virtue of conformity to God's will, and consider in what we have to bring ourselves into conformity with the will of God.

In the first place, we must have this conformity as regards those things that come to us from without, such as great heat, great cold, rain, scarcity, pestilence, and the like. We must take care not to say: What intolerable heat! What terrible cold! What a misfortune! How unlucky! What wretched weather! or other words expressive of disagreement with the will of God. We ought to will everything to be as it is, since God it is Who wills it so. St. Francis Borgia, on going one night to a house of the Society when the snow was falling, knocked at the door several times; but, the Fathers being asleep, the door was not opened. They made great lamentations in the morning for having kept him so long waiting in the open air, but the Saint said that during the time he had been greatly consoled by the thought that it was God Who was casting the snowflakes down upon him.

In the second place, we must have this conformity as regards things that happen to us from within, as in the sufferings consequent on hunger, thirst, poverty, desolation, or disgrace. In all things, let us ever say: "Lord, Thine it is to make and to unmake; I am content, I will only what Thou dost will." And thus, too, we ought, as F. Rodriguez says, to reply to those imaginary cases which the devil occasionally suggests to the mind, in order at least to dishearten us. If such a person were to say so-and-so to you, or if he were to do so-and-so to you, what would you say? What would you do? Let your answer always be: "I would say and do that which God wills." And by this means we shall keep ourselves free from all fault and be at peace.

In the third place, if we have any natural defect either of mind or body -- a bad memory, slowness of apprehension, mean abilities, a crippled limb, or weak health -- let us not, therefore, make lamentation. What were our deserts, and what obligation was God under to bestow upon us a mind more richly endowed, or a body more perfectly framed? Could He not have created us mere brute animals? or have left us in our own nothingness? Who is there that ever receives a gift and tries to make bargains

about it? Let us, then, return God thanks for what, through a pure act of His goodness, He has bestowed upon us; and let us rest content with the manner in which He has treated us. Who can tell whether, if we had had better abilities, more robust health, or greater personal attractions, we should not have possessed them to our destruction? How many there are whose ruin has been occasioned by their talents and learning, of which they have grown proud, and in consequence of which they have looked upon others with contempt -- a danger which is easily incurred by those who excel others in learning and ability! How many others there are whose personal beauty or bodily strength have furnished the occasions of plunging them into innumerable acts of wickedness! And, on the contrary, how many there are who, in consequence of their poverty, infirmity, or ugliness, have sanctified themselves and been saved, who, had they been rich, strong, or handsome, might have been damned! And thus let us rest content ourselves with that which God has given us: *But one thing is necessary* (Luke x. 42). Beauty is not necessary, nor health, nor keenness of intellect; that which alone is necessary is the salvation of our soul.

Wednesday--Twentieth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

EVIL DOERS SHALL BE CUT OFF.

When the tower of Siloe fell and killed eighteen persons, the Lord said to those who were present: *Think you that they also were debtors above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem? No, I say to you: but except you do penance you shall all likewise perish.*

I.

Oh, how just God is when the time of vengeance arrives! He causes the sinner to be ensnared and strangled in the net his own hands have woven. *The Lord shall be known when he executeth judgments; the sinner hath been caught in the works of his own hands* (Ps. ix. 17). Baronius relates how Herodias died, who caused St. John the Baptist to be beheaded. As she was crossing frozen water one day the ice broke under her, and she remained with her head above the ice. In her violent struggling for life, the head was severed from the body, and thus she died.

Let us tremble when we see others punished, knowing as we do, that we ourselves have deserved the same punishments. When the Tower of Siloe fell and killed eighteen persons, the Lord said to those who were present: *Think you that they also were debtors above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem?* Do you think that these poor creatures alone were in debt to God's justice on account of their sins? *No, I say to you: but except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish* (Luke, xiii. 4-5). O, how many unfortunate men damn themselves by false hope in the Divine mercy? Yes, God is merciful, and therefore assists and protects those who hope in His mercy: *He is the protector of all that trust in him* (Ps. xvii. 31). But He assists and protects those only who hope in Him, with the intention of changing their lives, not those whose hope is accompanied by a perverse intention of continuing in sin. The hope of the latter is not acceptable to God; He abominates and punishes it: *Their hope, the abomination of the soul* (Job. xi. 20). Poor sinners, their greatest misery is, that they are on their way to hell, and do not know their state. They jest, and they laugh, and they despise the threats of God, as if God had assured them that He would not punish them. "Whence," exclaims St. Bernard, "this accursed security?" *Unde haec securitas maledicta?* Accursed security which brings you to hell! *I will come to them that are at rest, and dwell securely* (Ezech. xxxviii. 11). The Lord is patient, but when the hour of chastisement arrives, then will He justly condemn to hell those wretches who continue in sin, and live in peace, as if there were no hell at all for them.

Let there be no more sin. Let us be converted if we wish to escape the scourge which hangs over us! If we do not cease from sin, God will be obliged to punish us: *For evil-doers shall be cut off* (Ps. xxxvi. 9). The obstinate are not only finally shut out from Paradise, but hurried off the earth, lest their example should draw others into destruction. *Now the axe is laid to the root of the trees* (Luke, iii. 9). It is said that the axe is laid, not to the branches, but to the root, so that it will be irreparably exterminated. When the branches are lopped, the tree continues still to live; but when the tree is torn up from the root, it then dies, and is cast into the fire. *The axe is laid to the root.* We should tremble lest God make us die in our sins, for if we so die we shall be cast into

the fire of hell, where our ruin shall be eternal.

II.

But, you will say: I have committed many sins during the past, and the Lord has borne with me. I may, therefore, hope that He will deal mercifully with me in the future. Do not speak so. *Say not: I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me for the Most High is a patient rewarder* (Ecclus. v. 4). God bears with you now, but He will not always bear with you. *Now, therefore, stand up, that I may plead in judgment against you ... concerning all the kindness of the Lord* (1 Kings, xii. 7), said Samuel to the Hebrews. Oh how terribly does not the abuse of the Divine mercies assist in procuring the damnation of the ungrateful! *Gather them together as sheep for a sacrifice, and prepare them for the day of slaughter* (Jer. xii. 3). In the end those who will not be converted shall be victims of Divine justice, and the Lord will condemn them to eternal death, *when the day of slaughter*, the day of His vengeance shall have arrived. We have reason always to be in dread, as long as we are not resolved to abandon sin, lest that day should be already at hand. *God is not mocked; for what things a man shall sow, these also shall he reap* (Gal. vi. 7-8). Sinners mock God by confessing at Easter, or two or three times a year, and then returning to the vomit, and yet hoping after all that to obtain salvation. "He is a mocker, not a penitent," says St. Isidore, "who continues to do that for which he says he is penitent"; but, *God is not mocked!* They hope for salvation!

What do they dare to expect? *What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap*. What things do men sow? Blasphemy, revenge, theft, impurity: what then do they hope for? He who sows in sin can hope to reap nothing but chastisements and hell. *For he that soweth in his flesh, continues the same Apostle, of the flesh also shall reap corruption* (Ib.)

Spiritual Reading

"ONLY PRETENDING NOT TO SEE"

St. John Chrysostom says there are some who are only pretending not to see. They see the chastisements for sin, but pretend not to see them. There are others, says St. Ambrose, who fear not, because chastisements have not overtaken themselves. To all these it will happen, as it did to mankind, at the time of

the Deluge. The Patriarch Noe foretold and announced to them the punishments God had prepared for their sins; but the sinners would not believe him, and notwithstanding that the Ark was being built before their eyes, they did not change their lives, but went on sinning until the punishment was upon them, until they were drowned in the Deluge. *And they knew not until the flood came and took them all away* (Matt. xxiv. 39). The same happened to the great Babylon, in the Apocalypse, who said: *I sit a queen, ... and sorrow I shall not see* (Apoc. xviii. 7). She persevered in her impurity in the hope of not being punished, but the chastisement at length came as had been predicted. *Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning, and famine, and she shall be burnt with the fire* (Ib. 8).

Who knows whether this is not the last call which God may give you? Our Lord says that a certain owner of a vineyard, finding a fig-tree for the third year without fruit, said: *Behold, for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none. Cut it down, therefore, why cumbereth it the ground?* (Luke xiii. 7). Then the dresser of the vine replied: *Lord, let it alone this year also ... and if happily it bear fruit - but if not, then, after that, thou shalt cut it down* (Luke, xiii. 7-9). Let us enter into ourselves. For years has God been visiting our souls, and has found no other fruit than thorns and thistles, that is to say, sins. Hear how the Divine justice exclaims: *Cut it down, therefore, why cumbereth it the ground?* but Mercy pleads, *Let it alone this year also*. Let us give it one trial more; let us see whether it will not be converted at this other call. But tremble lest mercy may not have granted to justice that if you do not now amend, your life should be cut off, and your soul condemned to hell. Tremble and take measures that the mouth of the pit close not over you. Such was the prayer of David: *Let not the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me* (Ps. lxxviii. 16). This is what sin does. It causes the mouth of the pit, that is, the state of damnation into which the sinner has fallen, to close over him by degrees. As long as that pit is not entirely closed, there is some hope of escape; but if it be once shut, what further hope remains? By the closing of the pit, I mean the sinner's being shut out from every glimmer of grace, and he stops at nothing. Thus is accomplished what the wise man has

said: *The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth* (Prov. xviii. 3). He despises the laws of God, admonitions, sermons, excommunications, threats -- he despises hell itself! Such a man can be saved, but his salvation is morally impossible. Perhaps you have yourself come to despise the chastisements of God? If it be so, what should you do? Should you despair? No; you know what you have to do. Have recourse to the Mother of God. Although you should be in despair, and abandoned by God, remember that Mary is the hope of the despairing, and the succour of the most abandoned. St. Bernard says the same thing: "Let him who despairs hope in thee!" But if God wishes that I should be lost, what hope can there be for me? But God says: No, my son, I do not wish to see you lost: *I desire not the death of the wicked* (Ezech. xxxiii. 11). And what then do you desire, O Lord? I wish the sinner to be converted, and recover the life of My grace -- *that the wicked turn from his way and live* (Ibid.). Fling yourself then at once at the feet of Jesus Christ; behold Him with His arms open to embrace you!

Evening Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

IX. SPECIAL PRACTICES OF THIS VIRTUE

I.

We must be particularly conformed to God's will, and resigned under pressure of corporal infirmities; and we must embrace them willingly, both in the manner, and at the time, God wills. Nevertheless, we must employ the usual remedies, for this also is what the Lord wills; but if they do us no good, let us unite ourselves to the will of God, and this will do us much more good than health. O Lord, let us then say, I have no wish either to recover or to remain sick: I will only what Thou dost will. Certainly virtue is greater, if, in times of sickness, we do not complain of our sufferings; but when these press hard upon us, it is not a fault to make them known to our friends, or even to pray to God to liberate us from them. I am speaking now of sufferings that are really severe; for there are many who, with very great fault in every trifling pain or weariness, would have the whole world come to compassionate them, and shed tears of pity for them. Even Jesus Christ, on seeing the near approach of

His most bitter Passion, manifested to His disciples what He suffered: *My soul is sorrowful even unto death* (Matt. xxvi. 38), and He prayed the Eternal Father to liberate Him from it: *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me* (Ibid. 39). But Jesus Himself has taught us what we ought to do after praying in like manner -- namely straightway to resign ourselves to the Divine will, adding, as He did: *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

II.

How foolish those are who say that they wish for health in order to render greater service to God, by the observance of the rules, by serving the community, by going to church, by receiving Holy Communion, by doing penance, by study, by employing themselves in the saving of souls, or by hearing Confessions, and by preaching! But, I wish you would tell me why it is that you desire to do these things. You will say it is to please God. And why go out of your way in order to do this; certain, as you are, that what pleases God is not that you keep the rules, receive Communion, do acts of penance, study, or preach sermons, but that you suffer with patience the infirmity or the pains which He sees fit to send you? Unite your own sufferings, then, to those of Jesus Christ. But, you may answer: I am troubled that, in consequence of being such an invalid, I am useless and burdensome to everybody. But as you resign yourself to the will of God, so you ought to believe that your Superiors, too, resign themselves, seeing, as they do, that it is not through any laziness of yours, but through the will of God, that this burden is upon the house. Ah, these desires and regrets do not spring from our love of God, but from our love of self, which is hunting after excuses for departing from the will of God! Is it our wish to give pleasure to God? Let us say, then, whenever we are ill: *Fiat voluntas Tua*. Thy will be done. And let us be ever repeating it, even for the hundredth or thousandth time; and by this alone we shall give more pleasure to God than by all the mortifications and devotions we might perform. There is no better way of serving God than by cheerfully embracing His will. The Blessed Father Avila wrote thus to a priest who was an invalid: "My friend, do not stop to think of all you might do if you were well, but be content to remain unwell as long as God shall please. If your object be to do the

will of God, how can it be of more consequence for you to be well than ill?" And certainly this was wisely said; for God is not glorified so much by our works as by our resignation and conformity to His holy will. And therefore St. Francis de Sales used to say that we serve God more by *suffering* than by *working*.

Thursday--Twentieth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

GOD IS MERCIFUL TILL FORCED TO CHASTISE.

Thou hast been favourable to the nation, O Lord, thou hast been favourable to the nation; art thou glorified? (Is. xxvi. 15).

Yes, O Lord, Thou hast dealt mercifully with Thy people, and what hast Thou received in return? Have thy people abandoned sin and changed their lives? No; they have gone from bad to worse! But let us remember, God must hate sin because He is holy: He must chastise it because He is just.

I.

We must persuade ourselves that God cannot do otherwise than hate sin; He is holiness itself, and therefore cannot but hate that monster, his enemy, whose malice is altogether opposed to the perfection of God. And if God hate sin, He must necessarily hate the sinner who makes league with sin. *But to God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike* (Wis. xiv. 9). O God, with what grief and with what reason dost Thou not complain of those who despise Thee, to take part with Thy enemy! *Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have brought up children, and exalted them; but they have despised me* (Is. i. 2). Hear, O ye heavens, He says, and give ear, O earth, and witness the ingratitude with which I am treated by men! I have brought them up, and exalted them as My children, and they have repaid Me with contempt and outrage. *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel hath not known me.* (Ibid. 3). But how is this? "Services are remembered even by beasts," says Seneca. The very brutes are grateful to their benefactors. See how that dog serves and obeys, and is faithful to his master, who feeds him; even the wild beasts, the tiger and the lion are grateful to those who feed them. And God, Who till now has provided us with everything; Who has given us food and raiment; Who kept

us in existence up to the moment we were offending Him -- how have we treated Him?

II.

Do we think we can live on as we have been living? Do we perhaps think that there is no punishment, no hell for us? But hearken and know that as the Lord cannot but hate sin, because He is holy, so He cannot but chastise it when the sinner is obstinate, because He is just.

When God does chastise, it is not to please Himself, but because we force Him to it. The Wise Man says that God did not create hell, through a desire of condemning man thereto, and that He does not rejoice in their damnation, because He does not wish to see His creatures perish: *For God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living; for he created all things that they might be* (Wis. i. 13). No gardener plants a tree in order to cut it down and burn it. It is not God's desire to see us miserable and in torments, and therefore, says St. John Chrysostom, He waits so long before He takes vengeance on the sinner. He waits for our conversion, that He may then be able to use His mercy in our regard. *Therefore the Lord waiteth, that he may have mercy on you* (Is. xxx. 18). Our God, says the same St. John Chrysostom, is in haste to save, and slow to condemn. When there is question of pardon, no sooner has the sinner repented than he is forgiven by God. Scarcely had David said: *Peccavi, Domino!* when he was informed by the Prophet that his pardon was already granted: *The Lord also hath taken away thy sin* (2 Kings, xii. 13). Yes, because "we do not desire pardon as eagerly as God desires to pardon us," says the same holy Doctor. On the other hand, when there is question of punishment, He waits, He admonishes, He sends us warning of it beforehand: *For the Lord God doth nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the Prophets* (Amos, iii. 7).

Spiritual Reading

THE DESIRE OF PERFECTION

An ardent desire of perfection is the first means we should adopt if we wish to acquire sanctity and to belong wholly to God. To hit a bird in flight, the sportsman must take aim in advance of his prey, so, too, a Christian, to make progress in virtue,

should aspire to the highest degree of holiness which it is in his power to attain. *Who will give me wings like a dove*, says David, *and I will fly and be at rest?* (Ps. liv. 7). Who will give me the wings of the dove to fly to my God, and, divested of all earthly affections, to repose in the bosom of the Divinity? Holy desires are the blessed wings with which the Saints, bursting every worldly tie, flew to the mountain of perfection, where they found that peace which the world cannot give.

But how do fervent desires make the soul fly to God? "They," says St. Laurence Justinian, "supply strength, and render pains light." On the one hand, good desires give strength and courage, and on the other they diminish the labour and fatigue there is in ascending the mountain of God. Whosoever, through diffidence of attaining sanctity, does not ardently desire to become a saint, will never arrive at perfection. A man who is desirous of obtaining a valuable treasure which he knows is to be found at the top of a lofty mountain, but who, through fear of fatigue and difficulty, has no desire of ascending, will never, of course, advance a single step towards the wished-for object, but will remain below in careless indifference and inactivity.

He that does not desire, and does not strenuously endeavour, always to advance in holiness, will go backward in the path of virtue, and be exposed to great danger of eternal misery. *The path of the just*, says Solomon, *as the shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day. The way of the wicked is darksome: they know not where they fall* (Prov. iv. 18). As light increases constantly from sunrise to full day, so the path of the Saints always advances; but the way of sinners becomes continually more dark and gloomy, till they know not where they go, and at length walk over a precipice. "Not to advance," says St. Augustine, "is to go back." St. Gregory beautifully explains this maxim of the spiritual life by comparing a Christian who seeks to remain stationary in the path of virtue to a man who is in a boat on a rapid river, and striving to keep the boat always in the same position. If the boat be not continually propelled against the current, it will be carried away in an opposite direction, and consequently, without continual exertion, its position cannot be maintained. Since the fall of Adam man is naturally inclined to evil from his birth.

For the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth (Gen. viii. 21). If he do not push forward, if he do not endeavour, by incessant efforts, to increase in sanctity, the very current of his passions will carry him back. "Since you do not wish to proceed," says St. Bernard, addressing a tepid soul, "you must recede." "By no means," she replied; "I wish to live, and to remain in my present state. I will not consent to be worse; and I do not wish to be better." "Then," rejoins the Saint, "you wish to do the impossible." Because, in the way of God, a Christian must either go forward and advance in virtue, or go backward into vice.

In seeking eternal salvation, we must, according to St. Paul, never rest, but run continually in the way of perfection, that we may win the prize, and secure an incorruptible crown. *So run that you may obtain* (1 Cor. ix. 24). If we fail, the fault will be ours; for God wills that all should be holy and perfect. *This is the will of God – your sanctification* (1 Thess. iv. 3). He even commands us to be perfect and holy. *Be you therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect* (Matt. v. 48). *Be holy because I am holy* (Lev. xi. 44). He promises and gives abundant strength, as the holy Council of Trent teaches, for the observance of all His commands, to those who ask it from Him. "God does not command impossibilities; but by His precepts he admonishes you to do what you can, and to ask what you cannot do; and He assists you, that you may be able to do it." God does not command impossibilities; but by His precepts He admonishes us to do what we can by the aid of His ordinary grace; and when greater helps are necessary, He exhorts us to ask for them by humble prayer. He will infallibly answer our petitions, and enable us to observe all, even the most difficult, of His commandments. Take courage, then, and adopt the advice of the Venerable Father Torres to one of his penitents: "Let us, my child, put on the wings of strong desires, that quitting the earth, we may fly to our Spouse and our Beloved, Who expects us in the blessed kingdom of eternity."

St. Augustine teaches that the life of a Christian is made up of holy desires. He, then, that cherishes not in his heart the desire of sanctity, may be a Christian, but he will not be a good one.

Evening Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

X. SPECIAL PRACTICES OF THIS VIRTUE

I.

It will often happen we shall find ourselves without doctor or medicine; or, again, our medical attendant may not clearly understand our complaint; and here, too, we must be in a state of conformity to the Divine will, which ordains it to be so for our good. It is related of one who had a devotion to St. Thomas of Canterbury, that, being unwell, he went to the tomb of the Saint to obtain his recovery. He returned home in good health; but then he said within himself: But if the sickness would have been a greater help towards my salvation, what benefit shall I gain from the health I now have? With this thought in his mind, he went back to the tomb, and prayed the Saint to ask for him of God that which was the more expedient for his eternal salvation; and after doing this, he relapsed into the sickness, and bore it with perfect contentment, holding it for certain that God ordained it to be so for his good. There is a similar anecdote related by Surius, of a certain blind man who received his sight through the intercession of the Bishop St. Vedast; but afterwards prayed that, if his sight was not expedient for his soul, he might return to his former state of blindness; and after this prayer he continued blind as before. In times of sickness, then, it is best to abandon ourselves to the will of God, that He may dispose of us as pleases Him. But if we wish for good health let us ask for it with resignation at least, and on the condition that health of the body be for the health of the soul; otherwise a prayer to this effect will be faulty, and rejected, because the Lord does not listen to such prayers when not accompanied by resignation.

II.

I call the time of sickness the touchstone by which souls are tried, for then is ascertained a man's real virtue. If he does not lose his tranquillity, makes no complaints, and is not over-anxious, but obeys his medical adviser and his superiors, preserving throughout the same peacefulness of mind, in perfect resignation to the Divine will, it is a sign that he possesses great virtue. But what, then must one say of the sick person who laments and says

that he receives but little assistance from others; that his sufferings are intolerable; he can find no remedy to do him good; that his medical man is ignorant; at times complaining even to God that His hand presses too heavily upon him? St. Bonaventure relates of St. Francis, that when the Saint was suffering pains of an extraordinary severity, one of his Religious, who was somewhat artless, said to him: "My Father, pray to God to treat you with a little more gentleness; for it seems that He lays His hand upon you too heavily." St. Francis, on hearing this, cried aloud, and said to him in reply: "Listen; if I did not know that you spoke from your simplicity, I would never see your face again -- daring, as you have done, to find fault with the judgments of God." And after saying this, extremely enfeebled and emaciated through his sickness though he was, he threw himself from his bed upon the floor and kissing it, said: "Lord, I thank Thee for all the sufferings Thou sendest me. I pray Thee to send me more, if it so please Thee. It is my delight for Thee to afflict me, and not to spare me in the least, because the fulfilment of Thy will is the greatest consolation I can receive in this life."

Friday--Twentieth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE SWEAT OF BLOOD AND AGONY OF JESUS

There is no means that can more surely kindle Divine love in us than to consider the Passion of Jesus Christ. St. Bonaventure says that the Wounds of Jesus, because they are the Wounds of love, are darts which pierce the hardest hearts, and flames which set on fire the coldest souls. "O wounds, wounding stony hearts and inflaming frozen minds!"

I.

Our loving Redeemer, as the hour of His death was approaching, retired into the Garden of Gethsemani, where of His own will He made a beginning of His most bitter Passion, by giving free way to fear and weariness and sorrow: *He began to fear, and to be heavy - to grow sorrowful, and to be sad* (Mark xiv. 33; Matt. xxvi. 37). He began, then, to feel a great fear and weariness of death, and of the pains which must accompany it. At that moment there were represented to His mind most vividly

the scourges, the thorns, the nails, the cross, which, not one after the other, but every one together, came to afflict Him; and specially there stood before Him the desolate death He must endure, abandoned by every comfort, human and Divine; so that, terrified by the sight of the horrid vision of such torments and ignominies, He besought His Eternal Father to be freed from them: *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me* (Matt. xxvi. 39). But how is this? Was it not this same Jesus Who had so much desired to suffer and die for men, saying: *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!* (Luke xii. 50). How then, does He fear these pains and this death? It was with good-will indeed He was going to die for us: but to the end that we might not suppose that through any virtue of His Divinity He could die without pain, He made this prayer to His Father that we might fully know that He not only died for love of us, but that the death He was to die did terrify Him greatly.

II.

To torment our afflicted Saviour there was added a great sorrowfulness -- so great that, as He said, it was enough to cause death: *My soul is sorrowful even unto death* (Matt. xxvi. 38). But, Lord, to deliver Thyself from the death men are preparing for Thee is in Thy own hands, if it so please Thee; why, then, afflict Thyself? Ah, it was not so much the torments of His Passion as our sins which afflicted the Heart of our loving Saviour. He had come on earth to take away our sins; but seeing that, in spite of His Passion, there would be committed such iniquities in the world -- this was the pang which before dying reduced Him to death, and made Him sweat living blood in such abundance that the ground all round about was bathed therewith: *And His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground* (Luke xxii. 44). Yes, Jesus then saw before Him all the sins men were going to commit after His death, all the hatred, the impurities, thefts, blasphemies, sacrileges, and each sin, with its own malice, came like a cruel wild beast to rend His Heart. So that He seemed to say: Is this, then, O men, the recompense you make to my love? Ah, if I could see you grateful to Me, with what gladness should I now go to die; but to see, after so many sufferings of mine, so

many sins; after so great love, so much ingratitude -- this it is which causes Me to sweat blood.

Were they, then, my sins, my beloved Jesus, which in that hour so greatly afflicted Thee? If, therefore, I had sinned less, Thou wouldst have suffered less. The more pleasure I have taken in sinning, so much the more sorrow did I cause Thee. How is it that I do not die of grief in thinking that I have repaid Thy love by increasing Thy pain and sorrow? Have I, then, afflicted that Heart which has so much loved me? With creatures I have been grateful enough; with Thee only have I been ungrateful. My Jesus, pardon me; I repent with all my heart.

Seeing Himself burdened with our sins, Jesus *fell upon his face* (Matt. xxvi. 39), as if ashamed to lift up His eyes to Heaven, and lying in the agony of death He prayed a long time: *Being in an agony he prayed the longer* (Luke, xxii. 43).

Ah, my Lord, Thou didst pray then to the Eternal Father to pardon me, offering Thyself to die in satisfaction for my sins. O my soul, how is it that thou dost not surrender thyself to such great love? Believing this, how canst thou love aught else than Jesus? Come! cast thyself at the feet of thy Saviour in His agony, and say to Him: My dear Redeemer, how is it that Thou couldst love one who had so offended Thee? How couldst Thou suffer death for me, seeing my ingratitude? Make me, I pray Thee, partaker of this sorrow which Thou didst feel in the Garden. Now I abhor all my sins, and unite this abhorrence to that which Thou hadst for them. O love of my Jesus, Thou art my love! Lord, I love Thee, and for love of Thee I offer myself to suffer any pain, any kind of death. Ah, by the merits of the agony which Thou didst suffer in the Garden, give me holy perseverance! Mary, my hope, pray to Jesus for me.

Spiritual Reading

THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING PERFECTION

The first means is Mental Prayer, and particularly Meditation on the claims God has on our love, and on His love for us, especially in the great work of our Redemption. To redeem us, God even sacrificed His life in a sea of sorrows and contempt; and to obtain our love, He has gone so far as to make Himself our food. To inflame the soul with the fire of Divine love, these

truths must be frequently meditated upon. *In my meditation*, says David, *a fire shall flame out* (Ps. xxxviii. 4). When I contemplate the goodness of my God, the flames of charity fill my whole heart. St. Aloysius used to say, that to attain eminent sanctity a high degree of mental prayer is necessary.

We should frequently renew our resolution of advancing in Divine love. In this renewal we shall be greatly assisted by considering each day, that it is only now you begin to walk in the path of virtue. This was the practice of holy David: *And I said: Now have I begun* (Ps. lxxvi. 11). And this was the dying advice of St. Anthony to his monks: "My dear children, consider that each day is the day you begin to serve God."

We should search out continually and scrupulously the defects of the soul. "Brethren," says St. Augustine, examine yourselves with rigour; be always dissatisfied with what you are, if you desire to become what you are not yet. To arrive at that perfection which you have not attained, you must never be satisfied with the virtue you possess; "for," continues the Saint, "where you say you are pleased with yourself, there you remain." Wherever you are content with the degree of sanctity to which you have arrived, there you will stop, and, taking complacency in yourself, you will lose the desire of further perfection. Hence the holy Doctor adds, what should terrify every tepid soul, who, content with her present state, has but little desire of spiritual advancement: "But if you say: It is enough, you are lost!" If you say you have already attained sufficient perfection, you are lost; for not to advance in the way of God is to go back. And, as Saint Bernard says, "not to wish to go forward, is certainly to fail." Hence St. John Chrysostom exhorts us to think continually on the virtues we do not possess, and never to reflect on the little good we have done; for the thought of our good works "generates indolence and inspires arrogance," and serves only to engender sloth in the way of the Lord, and to swell the heart with vain-glory, which exposes the soul to the danger of losing the virtues she has acquired. "He who runs," continues the Saint, "does not count the distance he has gone, but the distance he has still to go." He that aspires after perfection does not stop to calculate the proficiency he has made, but directs all his attention to the

virtue he has still to acquire. Fervent Christians, *as they that dig for a treasure* (Job, iii. 21), advance in virtue as they approach the end of life. Saint Gregory says in his commentary on this passage of Job, that the man who digs for a treasure, the deeper he has dug the more he exerts himself in the hope of finding it; so the soul that seeks after holiness multiplies its efforts to attain it in proportion to the advance it has made.

The fourth means is that which St. Bernard employed to excite his fervour. "He had," says Surius, "this always in his heart, and frequently in his mouth: *Bernarde, ad quid venisti?*" -- Bernard, to what purpose hast thou come hither? Those especially who have consecrated themselves to God should continually ask themselves the same question: Have I not left the world and all its riches and pleasures, to live in the cloister, and to become a saint, and what progress do I make? Do I advance in sanctity? Am I not, by my tepidity, exposing myself to the danger of eternal perdition? It will be useful to introduce, in this place, the example of the Venerable Sister Hyacinth Mariscotti, who at first led a very tepid life, in the convent of St. Bernardine in Viterbo. She confessed to Father Bianchetti, a Franciscan, who came to the convent as extraordinary confessor. That holy man thus addressed her: "Are you a nun? Are you not aware that Paradise is not for vain and proud Religious?" "Then," she replied, "have I left the world to cast myself into hell?" "Yes," rejoined the Father, "that is the place which is destined for Religious who live like seculars." Reflecting on these words of the holy man, Sister Hyacinth was struck with remorse; and, bewailing her past life, she made her Confession with tearful eyes, and began from that moment to walk resolutely in the way of perfection. Oh how salutary is the thought of having abandoned the world to become a saint! It awakens the tepid soul, and encourages us all to advance continually in holiness, and to surmount every obstacle to our ascent up to the mountain of God.

Evening Meditation

THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST IS OUR CONSOLATION.

I.

Who can ever give us as much consolation in this valley of tears as Jesus crucified? What can sweeten the prickings of

remorse, arising from the remembrance of our past sins, better than the consideration that Jesus Christ has voluntarily suffered death in order to atone for our sins? *He*, says the Apostle, *gave himself for our sins* (Gal. i. 4).

In all the persecutions, calumnies, insults, loss of property and honour, which may come to us in this life, who is better able to give us strength to bear them with patience and resignation than Jesus Christ, Who was despised, calumniated, and poor; Who died on a Cross, naked, and abandoned by all?

What more consoling in infirmities than the sight of Jesus crucified? In our sickness we find ourselves on a comfortable bed; but when Jesus was sick on the Cross on which He died, He had no other bed than a hard tree, to which He was fastened by three nails; no other pillow on which to rest His head than the Crown of Thorns, which continued to torment Him till He expired.

In our sickness we have around our bed, friends and relatives to sympathize with us and to entertain us. Jesus died in the midst of enemies, who insulted and mocked Him as a malefactor and seducer, even when He was in the very agony of death. Certainly, there is nothing so well calculated as the life of Jesus crucified to console a sick man in his sufferings, particularly if he finds himself abandoned by others. To unite, in his infirmity, his own pains to the pains of Jesus Christ is the greatest comfort that a poor sick man can enjoy.

II.

In the anguish caused at death by the assaults of hell, the sight of past sins, and the account to be rendered in a short time at the Divine tribunal, the only consolation a dying Christian, combating with death, can have consists in embracing the Crucifix, saying: "My Jesus and my Redeemer, Thou art my love and my hope."

In a word, all the graces, lights, inspirations, holy desires, devout affections, sorrow for sin, good resolutions, Divine love, hope of Paradise, that God bestows upon us, are fruits and gifts which come to us through the Passion of Jesus Christ.

Ah, my Jesus, if Thou, my Saviour, hadst not died for me, what hope could I, who have so often turned my back upon

Thee and so often deserved hell, entertain of going to behold Thy beautiful countenance in the land of bliss, among so many innocent Virgins, among so many holy Martyrs, among the Apostles and Seraphs? It is Thy Passion, then, that gives me hope, in spite of my sins, that I too shall one day reach the society of the Saints and of Thy holy Mother, to sing Thy mercies, and to thank and love Thee forever in Paradise. Such, O Jesus, is my hope. *The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever* (Ps. lxxxviii. 2). Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Saturday--Twentieth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

MOST HOLY MARY, ADVOCATE OF SINNERS

So far is the Blessed Virgin Mary from disdaining to assist sinners, she ever takes pride in her office as Advocate of Sinners. "Next to the dignity of Mother of God," she herself once said, "there is nothing I value so much as my office of Advocate of sinners."

I.

So far is the Blessed Virgin Mary from disdaining to assist sinners, she ever takes pride in her office as Advocate of Sinners. "Next to the dignity of Mother of God," she herself once said, "there is nothing I value so much as my office of Advocate of sinners."

It was for this end that Mary was chosen from eternity to be God's Mother that those whose sins should exclude them from participation in the merits of her Son might be made partakers of them by her intercession. This was the principal office for the fulfilment of which God created Mary, and placed her in this world: *Feed thy kids* (Cant. i. 7). By kids He means sinners, and those kids are given to Mary's care, in order that they who on the Day of Judgment should by their sins have deserved to stand upon the left, may by her intercession stand upon the right. "Feed thy kids," says William of Paris, "whom thou shalt convert into sheep, that they who should have been placed to the left may through thy intercession take their stand upon the right."

St. Bridget one day heard Jesus Christ saying to His Mother: "Thou givest assistance to every one endeavouring to ascend

to God." Mary assists every one who does himself violence to abandon his evil life and turn to God, or who at least prays to her that he may receive strength to do so; if he have not that desire, the Divine Mother herself cannot assist him. Mary then assists only those sinners who honour her by some special devotion, and who, if they yet remain in disgrace with God, have recourse to her that she may obtain pardon for them, and work their deliverance from their present unfortunate condition. The sinner who acts thus from his heart is secure, because Mary, as we have said before, has been created that she might have charge of sinners, and lead them to God. The Lord revealed this to St. Catherine of Sienna: "She is chosen by me as a most delicious food, so as to attract and capture men, especially sinners." And the Blessed Mother herself said to St. Bridget, that as the magnet attracts iron, so she draws the hard hearts of men to herself and to God. But we must always bear in mind that these hearts, notwithstanding their hardness, must desire liberation from their unhappy state.

II.

"How can he fear he shall be cast away," asks the Abbot Adam, "to whom Mary offers herself for a Mother and an Advocate?" He inquires again, "Could it be possible that you, the Mother of Mercy, should not intercede with the Redeemer for the soul He has redeemed?" He answers: "Ah, thou must intercede, because God, Who has placed His Son as Mediator between man and Heaven, has placed thee Mediatrix between His Son and guilty man."

Then, O sinner, says St. Bernard, give thanks to God Who has provided you with such a Mediatrix. Thank your God, Who, in order to manifest His mercy towards you, has given you not only His Son for a Mediator in His own right, but that you may have more confidence, has given you Mary as a Mediatrix with that Son. Therefore, it is that St. Augustine calls her the only hope of sinners. And St. Bonaventure: "If by reason of your iniquities you see the Lord in anger, and fear to approach Him, have recourse to the hope of sinners, who is Mary." She will not reject you because you are too wretched, for "it is her office to assist the wretched." Hence, when we have recourse to Mary, let us say to

her with St. Thomas of Villanova: "Come, therefore, thou our advocate, and fulfil thy office." Since thou art Mother of God, and advocate of the wretched, assist me who am so wretched; if thou dost not assist me I shall be lost! Let us address her in the words of St. Bernard: "Remember, O most pious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful; O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions; but in thy clemency hear and answer me. Amen."

Spiritual Reading

I. MORTIFICATION OF THE EYES

Almost all our rebellious passions spring from unguarded looks; for, generally speaking, it is by the sight that all inordinate affections and desires are excited. Hence, holy Job said: *I made a covenant with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin* (Job, xxxi, 1). -- Why did he say that he would not so much *as think upon a virgin*? Should he not have said that he made a covenant with his eyes not to *look* upon a virgin? No; he very properly said that he would not *think* upon a virgin; because thoughts are so connected with looks, that the former cannot be separated from the latter, and therefore, to escape the molestation of evil imaginations, he resolved never to fix his eyes on a woman.

St. Augustine says: "The thought follows the look: delight comes after the thought; and consent after delight." From the look proceeds the thought; from the thought the desire. If Eve had not looked at the forbidden apple, she should not have fallen; but because *she saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat* (Gen. iii. 6). The devil tempts us to *look* first, then to *desire*, and afterwards to *consent*.

St. Jerome says that Satan requires "only a beginning on our part." If we begin, he will complete our destruction. A deliberate glance at a person of a different sex often enkindles an infernal spark, which consumes the soul. "Through the eyes," says St. Bernard, "the deadly arrows of love enter." The first dart that wounds and frequently robs chaste souls of life finds admission

through the eyes. By them David, the beloved of God, fell. By them was Solomon, once the inspired of the Holy Ghost, drawn into the greatest abominations. Oh! how many are lost by indulging their sight!

The eyes must be carefully guarded by all who expect not to be obliged to join in the lamentation of Jeremias: *My eye hath wasted my soul* (Lam. iii. 51). By the introduction of sinful affections, my eyes have destroyed my soul. Hence St. Gregory says, that "the eyes, because they draw us to sin, must be cast down." If not restrained, they will become instruments of hell, to force the soul to sin almost against its will. "He that looks at a dangerous object," continues the Saint, "begins to will what he wills not." It was this the inspired writer intended to express when he said of Holofernes, that the beauty of Judith *made his soul her captive* (Judith xvi. 11).

Seneca says that "blindness is a part of innocence." And Tertullian relates that a certain pagan philosopher, to free himself from impurity, plucked out his eyes. Such an act would be unlawful in us: but he that desires to preserve chastity must avoid the sight of objects that are apt to excite unchaste thoughts. *Gaze not about*, says the Holy Ghost, *upon another's beauty; ... hereby lust is enkindled as a fire* (Ecclus. ix. 8, 9) Gaze not upon another's beauty; for from looks arise evil imaginations, by which an impure fire is kindled. Hence St. Francis de Sales used to say, that "they who wish to exclude an enemy from the city must keep the gates locked."

Hence, to avoid the sight of dangerous objects, the Saints were accustomed to keep their eyes almost continually fixed on the earth, and to abstain even from looking at innocent objects. After being a novice for a year, St. Bernard could not tell whether his cell was vaulted. In consequence of never raising his eyes from the ground, he never knew that there were but three windows to the church of the monastery, in which he spent his novitiate. He once, without perceiving a lake, walked along its banks for nearly an entire day; and hearing his companions speak about it, he asked when they had seen it. St. Peter of Alcantara kept his eyes constantly cast down, so that he did not know the brothers with whom he conversed. It was by the voice, and

not by the countenance, that he recognised them.

Evening Meditation

"O GRACIOUS ADVOCATE."

I.

Since the Mother should have the same power as the Son, rightly has Jesus, Who is Omnipotent, made Mary also Omnipotent; though, of course, it is always true that where the Son is Omnipotent by nature, the Mother is only so by grace. But that she is so, is evident from the fact, that whatever the Mother asks for, the Son never denies her; and this was revealed to St. Bridget, who one day heard Jesus speaking to Mary, and thus address her: "Ask of Me what thou wilt, for no petition of thine can be void." As if He had said, "My Mother, thou knowest how much I love thee; therefore, ask all thou wilt of Me; for it is not possible that I should refuse thee anything." And the reason our Lord gave for this was beautiful: "Because thou never didst deny Me anything on earth, I will deny thee nothing in Heaven." My Mother, when thou wast in the world, thou never didst refuse to do anything for the love of Me; and now that I am in Heaven, it is right that I should deny thee nothing thou askest. Holy Mary, then, is called omnipotent in the sense in which it can be understood of a creature who is incapable of a Divine attribute. She is omnipotent, because by her prayers she obtains whatever she wills.

With good reason, then, O great advocate, does St. Bernard say: "Thou willest, and all things are done." And St. Anselm "Whatever thou, O Virgin, willest can never be otherwise than accomplished." Thou willest, and all is done. If thou art pleased to raise a sinner from the lowest abyss of misery to the highest degree of sanctity, thou canst do it. Blessed Albert the Great, on this subject, makes Mary say: "I have to be asked that I may will; for if I will a thing, it is necessarily done."

II.

St. Peter Damian, reflecting on the great power of Mary, and begging her to take compassion on us, addresses her, saying: "O let thy nature move thee, let thy power move thee; for the more thou art powerful, the greater should thy mercy be." O Mary, our own beloved advocate, since thou hast so compassion-

ate a heart that thou canst not even see the wretched without being moved to pity, and since, at the same time, thou hast so great power with God, that thou canst save all whom thou dost protect -- disdain not to undertake the cause of us poor miserable creatures who place all our hope in thee. If our prayers cannot move thee, at least let thine own benign heart do so; or, at least, let thy power do so, since God has enriched thee with so great power, in order that the richer thou art in power to help us, the more merciful thou mayest be in the will to assist us. St. Bernard reassures us on this point; for he says that Mary is as immensely rich in mercy as she is in power; and that, as her charity is most powerful, so also it is most clement and compassionate, and its effects continually prove it to be so. He thus expresses himself: "The most powerful and merciful charity of the Mother of God abounds in tender compassion and in effectual succour; it is equally rich in both."

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

GOD WILL PUNISH SINNERS "IN THE FULNESS OF THEIR SINS."

When God, at length, sees that we will not respond to benefits, nor threats, nor admonitions, nor amend our lives, He is forced by our own very selves to punish us. God will then chastise us because we ourselves force Him to chastise us.

I.

When God, at length, sees that we will not respond to benefits, nor threats, nor admonitions, nor amend our lives, He is forced by our own very selves to chastise us, but while punishing us, He will place before our eyes the great mercies He has extended to us: *Thou thoughtest unjustly that I shall be like to thee; but I will reprove thee, and set before thy face* (Ps. xlix. 20). He will then say to the sinner: Think you, O sinner, that I had forgotten, as you had done, the outrages you put upon Me, and the graces I dispensed to you? St. Augustine says that God does not hate but loves us, and that He only hates our sins. He is not wroth with men, says St. Jerome, but with their sins. The Saint says, that by His nature God is inclined to benefit us, and that it

is we ourselves who oblige Him to chastise us, and assume the appearance of severity, which He has not of Himself. St. Jerome, reflecting on those words which Jesus Christ on the day of the General Judgment will address to the reprobate: *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matt. xxv. 41), inquires, who has prepared this fire for sinners? God, perhaps? No, because God never created souls for hell, as the impious Luther taught: this fire was kindled for sinners by their own sins. He who sows in sin, shall reap chastisement. *He that soweth iniquity shall reap evils* (Prov. xxii. 8). When the soul commits sin, it voluntarily obliges itself to pay the penalty thereof, and thus condemns itself to the pains of hell. *For you have said; we have entered into a league with death, and we have made a covenant with hell* (Is. xxviii. 15). Hence, St. Ambrose well says, that God has not condemned any one, but that each one is the author of his own punishment. And the Holy Ghost says, that the sinner shall be consumed by the hatred which he bears himself: *with the rod of his anger he shall be consumed* (Prov. xxii. 8). He, says Salvian, who offends God has no more cruel enemy than himself, since he himself has caused the torments which he suffers. God, he continues, does not wish to see us in affliction, but it is we who draw down sufferings upon ourselves, and by our sins enkindle the flames in which we are to burn. God punishes us, because we oblige Him to punish us.

II.

You will say the mercies of the Lord are great: no matter how manifold my sins, I have in view a change of life by and by, and God will have mercy upon me. God does not wish you to speak thus. *Say not the mercy of the Lord is great, he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins* (Ecclus. v. 6). The reason is this, *for mercy and wrath quickly come from him* (Ibid. 7). Yes, it is true, God has patience, God waits for some sinners; I say some, for there are some whom God does not wait for at all: how many has He not sent to hell immediately after the first transgression? Others He does wait for, but He will not always wait for them; He spares them for a certain time and then punishes. *The Lord patiently expecteth, that when the day of judgment shall come, he may punish them in the fulness of their sins* (2 Mach. vi. 14). Mark well, *when the day*

of judgment shall come: when the day of vengeance shall arrive, *in the fulness of their sins*. When the measure of sins which God has determined to pardon is filled up, He will punish. Then the Lord will have no mercy, and will chastise to the full.

The city of Jericho did not fall during the first circuit made by the Ark, it did not fall at the fifth, or at the sixth, but it fell at last at the seventh. And thus it will happen with thee, says St. Augustine, "at the seventh circuit made by the Ark the city of vanity will fall." God has pardoned you your first sin, your tenth, your seventieth, perhaps your thousandth; He has often called you, He now calls you again; tremble lest this should be the last circuit of the ark, that is, the last call, after which, if you do not change your life, it will be over with you. *For the earth*, says the Apostle, *that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it ... and which bringeth forth thorns and briars is reprobate, and very near unto a curse, whose end is to be burned* (Heb. vi. 7). That soul, he says, which has often received the waters of Divine light and grace, and instead of bearing fruit produces nought but the thorns of sin, is nigh unto a curse, and its end will be to burn eternally in hell fire. In a word, when the time comes, God punishes.

Spiritual Reading

II. MORTIFICATION OF THE EYES

The Saints were particularly cautious not to look at persons of a different sex. St. Hugh, bishop, when compelled to speak with women, never looked at them in the face. St. Clare would never fix her eyes on the face of a man. She was greatly afflicted because, when raising her eyes at the elevation to see the consecrated Host, she once involuntarily saw the countenance of the priest. St. Aloysius never looked his own mother in the face. It is related of St. Arsenius, that a noble lady went to visit him in the desert, to beg of him to recommend her to God. When the Saint perceived that his visitor was a woman, he turned away from her. She then said to him: "Arsenius, since you will neither see nor hear me, at least remember me in your prayers." "No," replied the Saint, "but I will beg of God to make me forget you, and never more think of you."

From these examples may be seen the folly and temerity of those who, though they have not the sanctity of a St. Clare,

still gaze around upon every object that presents itself, even on persons of a different sex. And notwithstanding their unguarded looks, they expect to be free from temptations and from the danger of sin. For having once looked deliberately at a woman, the Abbot Pastor was tormented for forty years by temptations against chastity. St. Gregory states that the temptation, to conquer which St. Benedict rolled himself in thorns, arose from one incautious glance at a woman. St. Jerome, though living in a cave at Bethlehem, in continual prayer and macerations of the flesh, was terribly molested by the remembrance of ladies whom he had long before seen in Rome. Why should not similar molestations be the lot of those who wilfully and without reserve fix their eyes on persons of a different sex?

"It is not," says St. Francis de Sales, "the seeing of objects so much as the fixing of our eyes upon them that proves most pernicious." "If," says St. Augustine, our eyes should by chance fall upon others, let us take care never to fix them upon any one." Father Manareo, when taking leave of St. Ignatius for a distant place, looked steadfastly in his face: for this look he was corrected by the Saint. From the conduct of St. Ignatius on this occasion, we learn that it is not becoming in those who aspire to sanctity, to fix their eyes on the countenance of a person even of the same sex, particularly if the person is young. But I do not see how looks at young persons of a different sex can be excused from the guilt of a venial fault, or even from mortal sin, when there is proximate danger of criminal consent. "It is not lawful," says St. Gregory, "to behold what it is not lawful to covet." The evil thought that proceeds from looks, though it should be rejected, never fails to leave a stain upon the soul. Brother Roger, a Franciscan of singular purity, being once asked why he was so reserved in his intercourse with women, replied, that when men avoid the occasions of sin, God preserves them; but when they expose themselves to danger, they are justly abandoned by the Lord, and easily fall into some grievous transgressions.

Evening Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

XI. SPECIAL PRACTICES OF THIS VIRTUE.

I.

We may at times have to suffer the loss of persons who, in either a temporal or spiritual point of view, happen to be of service to us. This is a matter in regard to which devout people are often very faulty, through their want of resignation to the Divine dispensations. Our sanctification must come, not from spiritual directors, but from God. It is, indeed, His will that we should avail ourselves of directors as spiritual guides, when He gives them to us; but when He takes them away, He wills that we should rest content, and increase our confidence in His goodness, saying at such times: Lord, it is Thou Who hast given me this assistance; now Thou hast taken it from me; may Thy will be ever done; but I pray Thee now to supply my wants Thyself, and to teach me what I ought to do to serve Thee. And in the same way ought we to receive all other crosses from the hands of God. but so many troubles, you say, are chastisements. But, I ask in reply, are not the chastisements God sends us in this life acts of kindness and benefits? If we have offended Him, we have to satisfy Divine justice in some way or other, either in this life or in the next. Therefore we ought all of us to say with St. Augustine, "Here burn, here cut, here do not spare; that so Thou mayest spare in eternity"; and again, with holy Job: *And that this may be my comfort, that, afflicting me with sorrow, he spare not* (Job vi. 10). It should, too, be a consolation to one who has deserved hell to see that God is punishing him in this world; because this will give him good hopes that it may be God's will to deliver him from punishment eternal. Let us, then, say when suffering the chastisements of God what was said by Heli the high priest: *It is the Lord; let him do what is good in his sight* (1 Kings, iii. 18).

II.

We must be conformed to God's will in times of spiritual desolation. When a soul begins to lead a spiritual life, the Lord is accustomed to heap consolations on it in order to wean it from the pleasures of the world; but afterwards, when He sees it more settled in spiritual ways, He holds His hand, in order to try its

love, and to see whether it serves and loves Him unrecompensed and deprived of spiritual joys. "While we are living here below," St. Teresa writes, "our gain does not consist in any increase of enjoyment of God, but in the performance of His will." And in another passage: "The love of God does not consist in tenderness, but in serving Him with constancy and humility." And again, elsewhere: "By means of drynesses and temptations the Lord tries the fidelity of those who love Him." Let the soul then thank the Lord when He caresses it with sweetness; but not torment itself by acts of impatience, when it finds itself left in desolation. This is a point which should be well attended to; for some foolish persons, finding themselves in a state of aridity, think that God has abandoned them; or, that the spiritual life was not for them; and so they leave off prayer, and lose all they have gained. There is no time better for exercising resignation to the will of God than the time of dryness. I am not saying that you will not suffer pain at seeing yourself bereft of the sensible presence of God, for it is impossible for a soul not to feel such pain as this. Neither can we refrain from lamentation, when our Redeemer Himself upon His Cross complained: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* (Matt. xxvii. 46). But, in its sufferings, it should ever resign itself perfectly to the will of its Lord. This spiritual desolation and abandonment is what all the Saints have suffered. "What hardness of heart," said St. Bernard, "do I not experience! I no longer find any delight in reading, no longer any pleasure in meditation or in prayer."

Monday--Twenty-first Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"BEHOLD YOUR HOUSE SHALL BE LEFT TO YOU DESOLATE."

When the Lord wishes to punish He is able to do so. *The daughter of Sion shall be left ... as a city that is laid waste.* How many cities have been destroyed and levelled to the ground because of the sins of the inhabitants whom God could not bear with any longer! How often, says God, have I called you and you would not listen? You have been deaf to My call. *Behold your house shall be left to you desolate.*

I.

When the Lord wishes to punish He is able to do so. *The daughter of Sion shall be left ... as a city that is laid waste* (Is. i. 8). How many cities have been destroyed and levelled with the ground because of the sins of the inhabitants whom God could no longer bear with. One day as Jesus Christ beheld the city of Jerusalem, He thought of the ruin her crimes were to draw down upon her, and full of compassion for her miseries, He began to weep: *Seeing the city he wept over it, saying ... They shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation* (Luke xix. 41, 44). Unfortunate city, there shall not be left in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not been willing to know the grace which I gave thee in visiting thee with so many benefits, and bestowing upon thee so many tokens of My love. Thou hast ungratefully despised Me, and driven Me away. *Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered thy children ... and thou wouldst not, behold your house shall be left to you desolate* (Luke xiii. 34, 35). Who knows whether God does not at this moment look upon your soul and weep? Perhaps He sees that you will not turn to account this visit which He now pays you, this grace which He gives you to change your life. How often, says the Lord, have I wished to draw you to Me by the lights I have given you? How often have I called you and you would not hear Me? You have been deaf to Me and fled from Me. *Behold your house shall be left to you desolate.* Behold I am already on the point of abandoning you, and if I abandon you, your ruin will be inevitable and irreparable.

We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed; let us forsake her (Jer. li. 9). The physician when he sees that the patient will not adopt his remedies, which he himself carries to him with so much kindness, and which the patient flings away -- what does he do at length? He turns his back upon him and abandons him. But by how many remedies, by how many inspirations, by how many calls, has not God endeavoured to avert damnation from you? What more can He do? If you lose your soul, can you complain of God Who has called you in so many different ways? *Because I called and you refused . . . and have neglected my reprehensions, I will also laugh in your destruction and will mock when that shall come*

to you which you feared (Prov. i. 24). You, says God, have laughed at My words, My threats, and My chastisements, your last chastisement shall come, and then I will laugh at your destruction. *The rod was turned into a serpent* (Exod. iv. 3). St. Bruno says the rod of correction is turned into a serpent when sinners will not amend. The eternal will succeed the temporal punishment.

II.

Oh how well does God know how to chastise! *By what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented* (Wisd. xi. 17). The Jews put Jesus Christ to death for fear the Romans should seize on their possessions. *If we let him alone, said they, all will believe in him, and the Romans will come, and take away our place and nation* (John xi. 48). But the very sin of putting Jesus Christ to death was the cause of their being shortly after despoiled of everything by the Romans. "They feared they should lose temporal possessions," says St. Augustine, "and thought not of eternal life, and so lost both." In trying to save their possessions, they lost their souls; the punishment came, and they lost both. Thus it falls out with many; they give their souls for the things of earth; but God often condemns them to beggary in this world, and reprobation in the next.

Are we to despair, then? No, God does not wish us to despair. *Let us go with confidence to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid* (Heb. iv. 16). Let us at once go to the throne of grace that we may receive the pardon of our sins, and the remission of the punishment which threatens. *By seasonable aid* the Apostle means to convey that the aid which God may be willing to lend us today He may deny tomorrow. Let us go at once, then, to the throne of grace.

But what is the *throne of grace*? Jesus Christ is the throne of grace. *And he is the propitiation for our sins* (1 John ii. 2). Jesus it is Who by the merits of His Blood can obtain pardon for us, but we must go to Him immediately. During His preaching in Judea, Jesus cured the sick, and dispensed other favours as He went along. Whoever was on the spot to ask a favour obtained it; but whoever was negligent, and allowed Jesus to pass, remained as he was. It was this caused St. Augustine to say: "I fear Jesus passing by"; by which he meant to express that when the Lord

offers us His grace, we must immediately correspond, otherwise He will pass on and leave us without it. *Today, if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts* (Ps. xciv. 8). Today God calls; give yourself to God today; if you wait for tomorrow, intending to give yourself to Him then, perhaps He will have ceased to call; He will have passed by, and you will remain forsaken.

Mary, the Queen and Mother of Mercy, is also a throne of grace. She is called *the mother of holy hope* (Ecclus. xxiv. 24). But we must take notice that *holy hope* is the hope of the sinner who repents of his evil ways, and determines upon a change of life; but if any one pursues an evil course in the hope that Mary will succour and save him, such a hope is false, such a hope is wicked and rash. Let us, then, repent of our sins and resolve to amend, and then have recourse to Mary with a confidence that she will assist and save us.

Spiritual Reading

III. MORTIFICATION OF THE EYES

The indulgence of the eyes, if not the cause of any other evil, will at least destroy recollection at prayer. The images and impressions caused by the objects seen before, or by the wandering of the eyes, during prayer, will occasion a thousand distractions, and banish all recollection from the soul. It is certain that without recollection we can pay but little attention to the practice of humility, patience, mortification, or of the other virtues. Hence it is our duty to abstain from all looks of curiosity which distract our mind from holy thoughts. Let the eyes be directed only to objects which raise the soul to God. St. Bernard used to say, that to fix the eyes upon the earth contributes to keep the heart in Heaven. "Where," says St. Gregory, "Christ is, there modesty is found." Wherever Jesus Christ dwells by love, there modesty is practised. However, I do not mean to say that the eyes should never be raised or never fixed on any object. No, but they ought to be directed only to what inspires devotion, to sacred images, and to the beauty of creation, which elevate the soul to the contemplation of the divinity. Except in looking at such objects, we should in general keep the eyes cast down, and particularly in places where they may fall upon dangerous objects. In conversing with people, we should not roll the eyes about to look at

them, and much less to look at them a second time.

To practise modesty of the eyes is the duty of religious souls, not only because it is necessary for their own improvement in virtue, but also because it is necessary for the edification of others. God only knows the human heart: man sees only the exterior actions, and by them he is edified or scandalised. *A man*, says the Holy Ghost, *is known by his look* (Ecclus. xix. 26). By the countenance the interior is known. Hence, like St. John the Baptist, a Christian should be a *burning and shining light* (John v. 35). He ought to be a torch burning with charity, and shining resplendent by his modesty, to all who behold him. *We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men* (1 Cor. iv. 9). And again: *Let your modesty be known to all men: the Lord is nigh* (Phil. iv. 5). Oh! what devotion does a modest religious person inspire, what edification does he give, by keeping his eyes always cast down! St. Francis of Assisi once said to his companion, that he was going out to preach. After walking to the town, with his eyes fixed on the ground, he returned to the convent. His companion asked him when he would preach the sermon. We have, replied the Saint, by the modesty of our looks, given an excellent instruction to all who saw us. It is related of St. Aloysius, that when he walked through Rome the students would stand in the streets to observe and admire his great modesty.

St. Ambrose says, that to men of the world the modesty of the Saints is a powerful exhortation to amendment of life. "The look of a just man is an admonition to many." The Saint adds: "How beautiful to do good to others by the very sight of you." It is related of St. Bernardine of Sienna, that even when a secular, his presence was sufficient to restrain the licentiousness of his young companions, who, as soon as they saw him were accustomed to give one another notice that he was coming. On his arrival they became silent or changed the subject of their conversation. It is also related of St. Gregory of Nyssa, and of St. Ephrem, that their very appearance inspired piety, and that the sanctity and modesty of their exterior edified and improved all that beheld them. When Innocent II visited St. Bernard at Clairvaux, such was the exterior modesty of the Saint and of his monks, that the Pope and his cardinals were moved to tears of

devotion. Surius relates a very extraordinary fact of St. Lucian, a monk and Martyr. By his modesty he induced so many pagans to embrace the Faith, that the Emperor Maximian, fearing that he should be converted to Christianity by the appearance of the Saint, would not allow the holy man to be brought within his view, but spoke to him from behind a screen.

That our Redeemer was the first Who taught, by His example, modesty of the eyes, may, as a learned author remarks, be inferred from the holy Evangelists who say that on some occasion He raised His eyes. *And he, lifting up his eyes on his disciples* (Luke vi. 20). *When Jesus therefore had lifted up his eyes* (John vi. 5). From these passages we may conclude that the Redeemer ordinarily kept His eyes cast down. Hence the Apostle, praising the modesty of the Saviour, says: *I beseech you, by the mildness and modesty of Christ* (2 Cor. x. 1).

I shall conclude this subject with what St. Basil said to his monks: If, my children, we desire to raise the soul towards Heaven, let us direct the eyes towards the earth. From the moment we awake in the morning, let us pray continually in the words of holy David: *Turn away my eyes, that they may not behold vanity* (Ps. cxviii. 37).

Evening Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

XII. SPECIAL PRACTICES OF THIS VIRTUE

I.

The lives of the Saints have been ordinarily full of dryness and not of sensible consolations. These are favours the Lord does not bestow, excepting on rare occasions, and to perhaps the weaker sort of spirits, in order to prevent their coming to a standstill in their spiritual course. The joys He proposes to us as reward, He prepares in Paradise. This world is the place for meriting, where we merit by suffering; Heaven is the place for recompense and enjoyment. Wherefore, what the Saints have desired and sought for in this world has been, not a sensible fervour with rejoicing, but a spiritual fervour with suffering. The Blessed John of Avila used to say, "Oh, how much better is it to be in dryness and temptation by the will of God, than in contemplation without it!"

But, you will say: If I could only know that this desolation came from God, I should be content; but what afflicts and disquiets me so is the fear that it may have come by my own fault, and as a punishment for my tepidity. Well, then, put away your tepidity and employ greater diligence. But will you, because you are under a cloud -- will you therefore disquiet yourself and leave off prayer, and thus double the evil of which you complain? Let it be, as you say, that the dryness has come upon you as a chastisement. Then accept it as a chastisement on one who so much deserves to be chastised, and unite yourself to the Divine will. Do you not say that you deserve hell? And why, then, are you complaining? Is it because you deserve that God should give you consolations? Ah, go and be content with the manner in which God is dealing with you; persevere in prayer, and in the way on which you have entered; and henceforth let it be your fear that your complaints may arise rather from your little humility and your want of conformity to the will of God. When a soul applies itself to prayer, it can derive no greater benefit from it than the union of itself with the Divine will. Therefore, make an act of resignation, and say: Lord, I accept this pain from Thy hands, and I accept it for as long as may please Thee. If it be Thy will that I should be thus afflicted for all eternity, I am content. And in this way your prayer, painful though it may be, will be a greater help to you than any spiritual consolations however sweet.

We must ever bear in mind that dryness is not always a punishment, but is occasionally ordained by God for our greater good, and in order to keep us humble. That St. Paul might not grow proud of the gifts he had received, the Lord permitted him even to be tormented by temptations to impurity: *Lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me* (2 Cor. xii. 7). No great thanks to him who prays in times of sweetness. *There is a friend, a companion at table, and he will not abide in the day of distress* (Ecclus. vi. 10). You would not esteem him a true friend of yours who was with you at table; but he is the true friend who assists you in time of trouble, and without advantage to any interests of his own. When God sends darkness and desolations, it is then that He tries who are His true friends. Palladius suffered great

weariness in prayer; and when he went to tell St. Macarius, the latter said to him "When the thought suggests itself to leave off prayer, let this be your reply: I am content, for the love of Jesus Christ, to remain here as guardian of the walls of this cell." This, then, is your answer, whenever you feel tempted to leave off prayer, because it appears to you no better than a mere waste of time: "I am here in order to give pleasure to God." St. Francis de Sales used to say that if in time of prayer we did no more than drive away distractions and temptations, our prayer would, nevertheless, be well made. Nay, Tauler says that on him who perseveres in prayer in a state of aridity, God will bestow greater graces than if he had prayed much with great sensible devotion. F. Rodriguez tells us of a certain person who said that during forty years of prayer he had never experienced any consolation; but that on the days he prayed he found himself strong in virtue; whereas, on the contrary, whatever day he omitted prayer he experienced such a weakness as made him unfit for anything good. It has been observed by St. Bonaventure, and by Gerson, that many serve God better when deprived of that sensible devotion they long for, than when they possess it, because they thus live in a state of greater diligence and humility; whereas had they spiritual consolations they might perhaps become proud and more tepid, thinking that they had already gained the object of their desires. And what is said with regard to aridity must also be said regarding temptations. We should try to avoid temptations, but if God wills or permits us to be tempted against the Faith, against purity, or against any other virtue, we should not complain, but resign ourselves in this also to the Divine will. To St. Paul who prayed to be released from his temptation, the Lord made answer: *My grace is sufficient for thee* (2 Cor. xii. 9). And so, if we see that God does not listen to us, and release us from some troublesome temptation, let us likewise say: Lord, do and permit that which pleaseth Thee; Thy grace is sufficient for me; only grant me Thy assistance, that I may never lose it. It is not temptations, but the consenting to temptations, that causes us to lose Divine grace. Temptations, when we overcome them, keep us more humble, gain for us greater merits, force us to have recourse to God more frequently; and thus keep us further from offending

Him, and unite us more closely to His holy love.

Tuesday--Twenty-first Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"WE ARE CHASTISED BY THE LORD THAT WE MAY NOT BE CONDEMNED WITH THIS WORLD."

God is as clement and kind when He chastises as when He bestows favours. His chastisements are the effects of His love. They are most certainly punishments, but punishments which ward off eternal penalties, and bring us to eternal happiness. *We are chastised by the Lord that we may not be condemned with this world.*

I.

We have not been created for this earth: We have been created for the blessed kingdom of Paradise. For this reason it is, says St. Augustine, that God mingles so much bitterness with the delights of the world in order that we may not forget Him and eternal life. If, living as we do amid so many thorns in this life, we are strongly attached to it, and long so little for Paradise, how little should we not value Paradise if God were not to embitter continually the pleasures of this earth?

If we have offended God, we must needs be punished for it either in this world or in the next. St. Ambrose says that God is merciful as well when He punishes as when He does not punish. The chastisements of God are the effect of His love; they are, to be sure, punishments, but only temporal punishments which ward off from us eternal punishment, and bring us to everlasting happiness. But *whilst we are judged, we are chastised by the Lord, that we be not condemned with this world* (1 Cor. xi. 32). And Judith reminded the Hebrews of the same truth when they were under the scourge of the Lord: *Let us believe that these scourges of the Lord, with which like servants we are chastised have happened for our amendment, and not for our destruction* (Judith viii. 27). Sara, the wife of Tobias, says the same: *But this every one is sure of that worshippeth thee ... if his life be under correction, it shall be allowed to come to thy mercy, for thou art not delighted in our being lost* (Tob. iii. 21, 22). Lord, she said, Thou chastisest us here in order that Thou mayest spare us in the other life, for Thou dost not desire our destruction.

II.

God Himself tells us that those whom He loves in this life He chastises, in order that they may be converted: *Such as I love I rebuke and chastise* (Apoc. iii. 19). Where God loves, says St. Basil of Seleucia, severity is usually the pledge of His graces. Unhappy are the sinners who, living in the state of sin, prosper in this life: it is a sign that God reserves them for everlasting punishment. *The sinner hath provoked the Lord; according to the multitude of his wrath, he will not seek him* (Ps. ix. 25). St. Augustine says, speaking of the passage quoted, behold the most grievous chastisement! When God does not appear to take notice of the sinner, and leaves him unpunished, it is a sign that He is very wroth. I call you, says God to him whom He chastises, and will you be deaf to my voice? Son, be converted, otherwise you shall confirm My anger, since I shall cease to regard your salvation, and allow you to live on in your sins without punishment, but only that I may punish you in the life to come. *And my indignation shall rest in thee; and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will cease and be angry no more* (Ezech. xvi. 42). The Apostle warns you not to be deaf to the voice of God, for that on the Day of Judgment your obstinacy will be rewarded with a dreadful chastisement, and that chastisement eternal. *But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works* (Rom. ii. 5, 6).

Spiritual Reading

HOLY HUMILITY

I. THE ADVANTAGES OF HUMILITY

Humility has been regarded by the Saints as the basis and guardian of all virtues. Although in point of excellence the virtue of humility does not hold the highest rank, still, according to St. Thomas, because it is the foundation of all virtues it has obtained the first place among them. Hence, as in the structure of an edifice, the foundation takes precedence of the walls, and even of the golden ornaments, so, to expel pride, which God resists, humility must, in the edification of the spiritual man, precede all other virtues. "Humility," says the angelic Doctor, "holds the first place, inasmuch as it expels pride, which God resists."

Hence, St. Gregory asserts that "he who gathers virtues without humility is like the man who carries chaff against the wind." His virtues shall be scattered.

There was in the desert a certain hermit who had a high character for sanctity. At the hour of death he sent for the abbot, and asked from him the Viaticum. During the administration of the Holy Sacrament a public robber ran to the cell; but seized with compunction for his sins, he esteemed himself unworthy to enter, or to be present at so sacred a ceremony, and in the humility of his soul exclaimed: "Oh that I were what you are!" Thy dying monk heard the words, and, swelled with pride, said: "Happy, indeed, should you be were you as holy as I am." After these words he expired: the robber immediately ran off from the place for the purpose of going to Confession, but on his way he fell over a precipice and was killed. At the death of the hermit his companion burst into tears; but at the fate of the robber he exulted with joy. Being asked why he wept over the death of the former and rejoiced at the melancholy end of the latter, he replied: Because the robber was saved by contrition for his past sins, but my companion is damned in punishment of his pride. Do not imagine that the hermit yielded to pride only at the hour of death: from his last words it is clear that pride had long before taken root in his heart; by its baneful influence he was brought to a miserable eternity. "Unless," says St. Augustine, "humility shall have preceded, shall be continued, and shall have followed, pride will wrest the whole from our hands." Yes, the rapacious grasp of pride will tear from us every good work which is not preceded, accompanied, and followed by humility.

This sublime virtue was but little known, but little loved, and greatly abhorred on earth, where pride, the cause of the ruin of Adam and of his posterity, enjoyed universal sway. Therefore, the Son of God came down from Heaven to teach it to men by His example as well as by His preaching. To instruct them in humility he came upon earth in the likeness of flesh and in the form of a servant. *He emptied himself*, says the Apostle, *taking the form of a servant* (Phil. ii. 7). He wished to be treated as the most contemptible of men. *Despised*, says the Prophet Isaias, *and the most abject of men* (Is. liii. 3). Behold Him in Bethlehem, born in

a stable and laid in a manger; in Nazareth, poor, unknown, and employed in the humble occupation of assisting a poor artisan. Look at Him in Jerusalem, scourged as a slave, buffeted as the vilest of men, crowned with thorns as a mock king, and in the end suffering as a malefactor the ignominious death of the Cross. And with all His humiliations before your eyes, hearken to His advice: *I have given you an example, that as I have done so you do also.* (Jo. xiii. 15). My children, I have embraced so much ignominy that you may not refuse abjection. Speaking of the humiliations of the Son of God, St. Augustine says: "If this medicine cure not your pride, I know not what will heal it." Hence in one of his epistles to Dioscorus he tells his friends that it is principally by his humility a man is made the disciple of Jesus, and that the soul is prepared for a union with God. "The first," says the Saint, "is humility; the second, humility; the third, humility; and as often as you would ask I should answer, humility."

Evening Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

XIII. SPECIAL PRACTICES OF THIS VIRTUE

I.

We must above all be conformed to the will of God in regard to our death, as to the time and manner of it. St. Gertrude one day, when climbing a hill, slipped and fell into a ravine. Her companions asked her afterwards whether she would not have been afraid to die without the Sacraments? The Saint answered that it was her great desire to die fortified by the Sacraments, but she considered that the will of God was better, because the best dispositions one can have when dying would be one's submission to all that God should will; consequently, she desired whatever death the Lord would be pleased to allot to her. It is related by St. Gregory, in his *Dialogues*, that the Vandals having condemned to death a certain priest named Santolo, they granted him the choice of the kind of death he would prefer; but the holy man refused to make a selection, saying: "I am in the hands of God, and will suffer the death He permits you to make me suffer; nor do I wish for any other." This act was so pleasing to God that, when these barbarous men had resolved on having his head cut off, He held back the executioner's arm; whereupon they acknowledged

the great miracle, and spared his life. As to the manner, then, we should esteem that death the best for us which God may have determined to be ours. Save us, Lord (let us ever say, when thinking of our death); and then let us die in whatever manner seemeth good unto Thee.

Then, again, we ought to unite our will to God's will as to the time of our death. What is this world but a prison in which we have to suffer, and every moment run the risk of losing God? It was this that caused David to exclaim: *Bring my soul out of prison* (Ps. cxli. 8). It was this fear that made St. Teresa sigh for death. On hearing the clock strike, she felt the utmost consolation in the thought that an hour of her life had passed, an hour in which she was in danger of losing God.

II.

Blessed John of Avila used to say that everyone, even those with imperfect dispositions, should desire death, because of the danger in which we live of losing the Divine grace. What is more precious, or more to be desired than a good death whereby we are secure of never losing the grace of our God? But, you say, "I have as yet done nothing. I have gained nothing for my soul." But if it be the will of God that your life should terminate now, what good would you be able to do if you were to remain alive contrary to His will? And who knows whether, in that case, you would die such a death as you can have hope of dying now? Who knows whether, through a change of will, you might not fall into other sins, and lose your soul? And even were there nothing else, you could not live without committing at least venial sins. Hence, St. Bernard exclaims: "Why, oh, why do we wish to live, when the longer we live, the more we sin? And it is certain that one of our venial sins displeases God more than all our good works can please Him.

I say, moreover, that he who has but little desire for Paradise shows that he has but little love for God. One who loves desires the presence of the object loved; but we cannot see God without leaving this world; and therefore it is that all the Saints have sighed for death, in order to go and see the Lord Whom they loved. Thus did Augustine sigh, "Oh, may I die, that I may see Thee!" Thus, too, St. Paul: *Having a desire to be dissolved, and to be*

with Christ (Phil. i. 23). Thus, again, David: *When shall I come and appear before the face of God?* (Ps. xli. 3). And thus, speak all those souls that have been enamoured of God. It is related that one day, as a gentleman was out hunting in a forest, he heard a man singing sweetly. On going in that direction, he found a poor leper in a state of semi-putrefaction. He asked him if it was he who was singing? "Yes, sir," answered the poor leper, "it was I who was singing." "And how can you sing amid sufferings like these, which are taking your life away?" The leper answered, "There is nothing between my Lord God and myself but this wall of clay, which is my body, and when this obstruction is removed, I shall go to enjoy my God. Seeing, as I do, that it is falling to pieces every day, I therefore rejoice and sing."

Wednesday--Twenty-first Week after Pentecost **Morning Meditation**

"THE ENEMIES OF THE LORD SHALL VANISH LIKE SMOKE."

Holy Job enquires why the wicked are allowed to live, and why are they advanced and strengthened in prosperity? And why instead of dying in poverty and tribulation they continue to enjoy health and honours and riches? The holy man himself gives the answer: *They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell.*

I.

St. Jerome says that there cannot be a greater punishment for a sinner than that he should not be punished in this life. And St. Isidore of Pelusium says that sinners who are punished in this life do not deserve pity, but those only who die without having been punished. It is not so bad, continues the Saint, to be simply sick as to have no one to cure you. St. Augustine says, in another part, that when God does not chastise the sinner in this world, He chastises him most severely; whence he concludes that there is no greater misfortune than impunity for a sinner. After England had rebelled against the Church, God did not visit her with temporal scourges: her riches have been increasing from that time; but her chastisement is all the greater on that account, as she is left to perish in her sin. The absence of punishment

is the greatest punishment, says the same holy Doctor. Not to receive chastisement for sin in this life is a great punishment, but prosperity in sin is a still greater punishment.

Why then, Job inquires, do the wicked live, are they advanced and strengthened with riches? How comes it, O Lord, that sinners, instead of being taken out of this life in poverty and tribulation, enjoy health, and honours, and riches? The holy man answers: *They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell* (Job xxi. 7, 13). Wretched men! they enjoy their riches for a few days, and when the hour of chastisement comes, when they least expect it, they are condemned to burn forever in that place of torments. Jeremias makes the same inquiry: *Why doth the way of the wicked prosper?* and then adds, *Gather them together as sheep for a sacrifice* (Jer. xii. 1-3). Animals destined for sacrifice are kept from all labour, and fattened for slaughter. Thus does God act towards the obstinate: He abandons them, and suffers them to fatten on the pleasures of this life in order to sacrifice them in the other to His eternal justice; for these, says Minutius Felix, are fed like victims for the slaughter.

II.

Poor wretched sinners, says David, shall not be punished in this life, but they shall enjoy their fleeting pleasures. By and by their dream shall cease: *Neither shall they be scourged like other men; ... they have suddenly ceased to be; as the dream of them that awake, O Lord, so in thy city thou shalt bring their image to nothing* (Ps. lxxii. 5, 18, 20). How painful is not the case of a poor sick man, who dreams that he has grown rich and great, and upon awaking finds himself a miserable and sick creature still? *And the enemies of the Lord shall ... vanish like smoke* (Ps. xxxvi. 20). The happiness of sinners is as suddenly dissipated as is smoke by a breath of air. "Smoke," observes St. Gregory, "vanishes in its ascent." And the same is the case with sinners: *I have seen the wicked highly exalted, ... and I passed by, and lo! he was not* (Ps. xxxvi. 35). These unhappy men are exalted the higher, that their fall may be the greater. The Lord allows the sinner to be exalted for his greater punishment, in order that his fall may be the more grievous, as is said by David. *When they were lifted up thou hast cast them down* (Ps. lxxii. 18). If the sick man, says St. John Chrysostom, suffer hun-

ger or thirst by order of his physician, it is a sign that the physician has hope of him; but if the doctor allow him to eat what he pleases, and drink as much as he likes, what are we to conclude from that? It is plain that the physician has given him over. And thus, says St. Gregory, it is a manifest sign that God abandons the sinner to perdition, when He never thwarts his evil purposes: and in the Book of Proverbs we read that *the prosperity of fools shall destroy them* (Prov. i. 32). As lightning precedes thunder, says St. Bernard, so is prosperity the forerunner of damnation for the sinner.

Spiritual Reading

HOLY HUMILITY

II. ITS ADVANTAGES

The proud are objects of hatred and abomination before God. *Every proud man*, says the Holy Ghost, *is an abomination to the Lord* (Prov. xvi. 5). Yes; for the proud man is a robber, and is blind; he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. He is a robber, because he appropriates to himself what belongs to God. *What hast thou that thou hast not received?* (1 Cor. iv. 7). Would it not be the extreme of folly in a brute animal, were it gifted with reason, to glory in the gilded trappings of which it knows it may be stripped at the beck of its master? The proud man is blind, as we learn from the Apocalypse of St. John. *Thou sayest: I am rich ... and knowest not that thou art wretched and blind* (Apoc. iii. 17). And what has man of his own but nothingness and sin? Even the little good he does, when examined with rigour, will appear full of imperfection. "All our justice," says St. Bernard, "if rigorously judged, will be found to be injustice." Lastly, the proud man is a liar, and the truth is not in him. For all his advantages, whether of nature -- such as health, talent, beauty, and the like; or of grace -- such as good desires, a docile heart, and an enlightened mind, are all the gifts of God. *By the grace of God*, says St. Paul, *I am what I am* (1 Cor. xv. 10). The same Apostle tells us that of ourselves we are not capable of even a good thought. *Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves as of ourselves* (2 Cor. iii. 5).

To preserve His servants from pride, the Lord sometimes permits them to be afflicted with the shameful solicitations of the flesh; to their repeated prayers to be delivered from the sugges-

tions of Satan and of their own corruption He appears deaf, and leaves them to combat with the temptation. It was thus God treated St. Paul; and, says the Saint, *lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given to me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me. For which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me, and he said to me, my grace is sufficient for thee* (2 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9). "To keep him humble," says St. Jerome, "the Almighty refused to deliver the Apostle from the molestation of the flesh by which he was tormented." Moreover, to teach them humility, the Lord sometimes permits the elect to fall into sin. Thus David acknowledges that he sinned because he had not been humble. *Before I was humbled, I offended* (Ps. cxviii. 67).

"God," says St. Augustine, "sits on high; you humble yourself, and He descends to you; you exalt yourself, and He flies from you." The royal Prophet says that *the Lord looketh on the low, and the high he knoweth afar off* (Ps. cxxxvii. 6). He regards the humble with the affectionate eye, but the proud He beholds only at a distance. As we cannot recognize a person whom we see afar off, so the Lord appears to tell the proud, in the words of the Psalmist, that He knows them not.

The proud are hateful before God; He cannot bear them. As soon as the Angels yielded to pride, He banished them from Paradise and sent them into hell, far distant from His presence. The words of God must be fulfilled: *Whosoever, says the Lord, shall exalt himself, shall be humbled* (Matt. xxiii. 12). St. Peter Damian relates that a certain proud man had resolved to assert his right to an estate by single combat; before the time appointed for the duel he went to Mass, and hearing in the church the above-mentioned words of the Gospel: *Whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be humbled*, he exclaimed: This cannot be true: for had I humbled myself I should have lost my property and my character. But when he came to the combat, his sacrilegious tongue was cut across by the sword of his antagonist, and he instantly fell dead.

God, says St. James, *resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble* (James iv. 6). The Lord has promised to hear the prayers of all. *Every one that asketh, receiveth* (Luke xi. 10). The proud God hears not; according to the Apostle, He resists their petitions. But to the humble He is liberal beyond measure: *He giveth grace to the*

humble. To them God opens His hands, and grants whatsoever they ask or desire. *Humble thyself to God*, says the Holy Ghost, *and wait for his hands* (Ecclus. xiii. 9). Humble your soul before the Lord, and expect from His hands whatever you seek.

"Give me, O Lord," exclaims St. Augustine, "the treasure of humility." Humility is a treasure, because upon the humble the Lord pours every blessing in abundance. A heart full of self cannot be replenished with the gifts of God. To receive the Divine favours, the soul must be first emptied by the knowledge of her own nothingness. *Thou sendest forth*, says David, *springs in the vales: between the midst of the hills the waters shall pass* (Ps. viii. 10). God makes the waters of His graces abound in the valleys, that is, in humble souls, but not on the mountains, the emblems of the proud and the haughty. In the midst of these, His graces pass, but remain not on them. *Because*, says Mary, *he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid ... He that is mighty hath done great things to me* (Luke i. 48, 49). The Lord, looking upon my humility, and my sense of nothingness, hath bestowed great favours on me.

Evening Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

XIV. SPECIAL PRACTICES OF THIS VIRTUE

I.

We must bring our will into conformity to the Divine Will even as regards our degree of grace and of glory. Highly as we ought to esteem the glory of God, we ought to esteem His will yet more. It would be good to desire to love God more than the very Seraphim, but it would not be right to desire to ascend to a higher degree of love than what the Lord has determined for us. Blessed John of Avila says: "I do not think there ever was a Saint who succeeded in becoming as holy as he had wished to be. But that never disturbed a Saint, because Saints wish to become holy only to please God, and not for their own satisfaction. Therefore, they were satisfied with that degree of holiness to which God's grace raised them, even though it was not as high as what they aimed at. They believed that there was more true love in being content with what God gave than in wishing for more."

All this means, as Father Rodriguez explains it, that we should be diligent in trying to reach the highest perfection possi-

ble so as not to turn our own lukewarmness and laziness into an excuse, as those do who say that God must make them a present of holiness if He wants them to be holy, since they themselves can do little or nothing. Nevertheless, when we fail in our efforts we must not lose our peace of mind, nor our conformity to God's will, nor our courage. God's will permits our fall. What we have to do is to rise at once, to humble ourselves by repentance, and with greater earnest than ever in prayer pursue the way of perfection.

It would, moreover, be but too evident a fault to desire to possess gifts of supernatural prayer -- such, especially, as ecstasies, visions, and revelations; whereas, on the contrary, spiritual writers say that those souls on whom God bestows such graces ought to pray to Him to deprive them of them, in order that they may love Him by the way of pure Faith, which is the safest way of all. There are many who have attained perfection without these supernatural favours. Chief amongst the virtues that raise the soul to highest sanctity stands conformity to the will of God. If God does not choose to raise us to a high degree of perfection and of glory, let us conform ourselves in all respects to His holy will, praying that He would at least save us through His mercy. And if we act in this manner, the reward will not be small which, of His goodness, our good Lord will give us, for above everything He loves those souls that are resigned.

II.

In short, we ought to regard whatever comes to us as proceeding from God's hand, and everything we do we should direct to this one end, the fulfilment of God's will, and to do it simply because God wills it to be done. And in order to proceed with greater security in this, we must follow the guidance of our superiors as regards what is external, and of our directors with regard to what is internal, that so we may, through them, understand what God desires of us, having great faith in those words of Jesus Christ: *He that heareth you heareth me* (Luke x. 16). And, above all, let it be our study to serve God in the way it is His will that we should serve Him. I say this, that we may not deceive ourselves as many do who say: "Oh, if I were in a desert; if I could enter into a monastery; if I could go somewhere, and not

have to remain in this house, away from these relatives or these companions of mine -- I would sanctify myself; I would do so much penance; I would say so many prayers." He says: "I would do this; I would do that"; but in the meantime, as he bears with a bad will the cross God sends him, and does not walk in the way God wills, he not only does not sanctify himself, but goes from bad to worse. These desires are mere temptations of the devil, for they are not in accordance with the will of God; we must, therefore, drive them away, and brace ourselves up to the service of God in that one way which He has set before us. By doing His will, we shall certainly sanctify ourselves in any state wherein God places us. Let us, then, ever will only that which God wills, so that He may take and press us to His Heart; and, for this end, let us make ourselves familiar with some of those passages of Scripture that invite us to unite ourselves ever more and more to the Divine will: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* (Acts ix. 6). My God, tell me what Thou desirest of me; for I desire to do it all. *I am thine: save thou me* (Ps. cxviii. 94). O my Lord, I am no longer mine own, but Thine; do with me whatsoever Thou pleasest. And at such times especially as any very grievous calamity befalls us -- as in the case of the death of parents, the loss of property, and such like -- *Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in thy sight* (Matt. xi. 26). Yes, my God and my Father, let it be even so; for so it hath pleased Thee. And, above all, let us love that prayer which Jesus Christ has taught us: *Fiat voluntas tua sicut in coelo et in terra! - Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven!* The Lord told St. Catharine of Genoa that whenever she said the *Our Father*, she was to pay particular attention to these words, and pray that His holy will might be fulfilled by her with the same perfection with which it is fulfilled by the Saints in Heaven. Let us, too, act in this manner, and we shall certainly become saints ourselves.

May the Divine will, and the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, be ever loved and praised. Amen.

O WILL OF GOD! O WILL DIVINE!

'Tis Thy good pleasure, not my own, In Thee, my God, I love alone; And nothing I desire of Thee But what Thy goodness wills for me. O will of God! O will Divine! All, all our love be ever thine.

In love no rival canst Thou bear, But Thou art full of tenderest care; And fire and sweetness all Divine To hearts which once are wholly Thine. O will of God! O will Divine! All, all our love be ever thine.

In Thee all pure affections live, To love Thou dost perfection give; While ever burning with desires The loving soul to Thee aspires. O will of God! O will Divine! All, all our love be ever thine.

Thou makest crosses soft and light And death itself seem sweet and bright. No cross nor fear that soul dismays Whose will to Thee united stays. O will of God! O will Divine! All, all our love be ever thine.

To all the glorious choirs of Heaven Their very bliss by Thee is given; And Heaven itself deprived of Thee Would be a land of misery. O will of God! O will Divine! All, all our love be ever thine.

Yea, to the lost who burn in hell, If in their souls Thy love could dwell, The very flames and torments there Would seem but sweet and light to bear. O will of God! O will Divine! All, all our love be ever thine.

Oh! that one day my life may end In closest bonds to Thee enchained For thus to die is not to die, But live, and live eternally. O will of God! O will Divine! All, all our love be ever thine.

To Thee I consecrate and give My heart and being while I live; Jesus, Thy Heart alone shall be My Love for all eternity. O will of God! O will Divine! All, all our love be ever thine.

Alike in pleasure and in pain To please Thee is my joy and gain; That, O my Love, which pleases Thee Shall ever more seem best to me. May heaven and earth with love fulfil, My God, Thy ever-blessed will!

Thursday--Twenty-first Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"THOSE WHOM I LOVE I REBUKE AND CHASTISE."

The greatest punishment God can inflict on a sinner is to let him sleep on in his sins, buried in the sleep of death. *I will make them drunk that they may ... sleep an everlasting sleep and awake no more, saith the Lord.* On the contrary, it is a sign of mercy for the

sinner when God chastises him here below. When the surgeon uses the knife it is not to kill but to cure.

I.

The greatest punishment God can inflict on a sinner is to let him sleep on in his sins -- buried in that sleep of death. *I will make them drunk, that they may ... sleep an everlasting sleep and awake no more, saith the Lord* (Jer. li. 39). After murdering his brother, Cain was afraid that he should be killed by everyone he met. *Every one therefore that findeth me shall kill me* (Gen. iv. 14). But the Lord assured him that he should live, and that no one should kill him; and this very assurance of a long life, according to St. Ambrose, was Cain's greatest punishment. The Saint says, that God treats the obstinate sinner mercifully, when He gives him an early death, because He thus saves him from as many hells as he should have committed sins during a longer life. Let sinners then live on according to the desires of their hearts, let them enjoy their pleasures in peace; there will at length come a time when they shall be caught as fish upon the hook. *As fishes are taken with the hook ... so men are taken in the evil time* (Eccles. ix. 12). Whence St. Augustine says: "Do not rejoice like the fish who is delighted with the bait, for the fisherman has not yet pulled the hook." If you were to see a condemned man making merry at a banquet with the halter round his neck, and every moment awaiting the order for execution, would you envy or pity him? Neither should you envy the sinner who is happy in his vices. That wretched sinner is already on the hook, he is already in the infernal net; when the time of chastisement shall have arrived, then the wretch will know and deplore his damnation, but all to no purpose.

II.

It is a sign of God's mercy when He chastises the sinner here below. It is a sign that God has still merciful views upon him, and that He wishes to substitute a temporal for an eternal punishment in his regard. God, says St. John Chrysostom, when He punishes us on this earth, does not do so out of hatred, but that He may draw us to himself. He chastises for a little while, that He may have you with Himself for eternity. When the physician uses the knife, he does so to cure, says St. Augustine. And God does the same in our regard. God seems to be cruel; but do not

fear, for He is a Father Who is never cruel, and does not wish to destroy us. But, does not God say the same Himself? *Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise. Be zealous therefore, and do penance* (Apoc. iii. 19). Son, says God, I love you, and therefore I chastise you. See how good I am to you and endeavour you to act in like manner towards Me. Do penance for your sins, if you wish that I should spare you the chastisement which you deserve: at least, accept with patience and turn to advantage the tribulation I send you. In this cross which now afflicts you hear you My voice calling upon you to turn to Me; to fly from hell, which is close upon you. *Behold! I stand at the gate and knock* (Ib. 20). I am knocking at the door of your heart; open then to Me, and know that when the sinner who has driven Me from his heart opens the door again to me, I will enter, and stay with him forever. *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* (Ib. 20). I shall remain united to him forever on this earth; and if he remain faithful, I shall set him beside Me on the throne of My eternal kingdom. *To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me in my throne* (Ib. 21).

Spiritual Reading

HOLY HUMILITY

III. ADVANTAGES OF HUMILITY

St. Teresa relates of herself, that the greatest graces she received from God were infused into her soul when she humbled herself most before the Lord in prayer. *The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds, and he will not depart till the Most High behold* (Ecclus. xxxv. 21). The humble obtain from God whatever they ask: they need not be afraid of being confounded, or of being left without consolation. *Let not*, says David, *the humble be turned away with confusion* (Ps. lxxiii. 21). Hence, St. Joseph Calasanctius used to say: "If you wish to be a saint, be humble; if you wish to be a very great saint, be most humble." To St. Francis Borgia, while a secular, a holy man once said: "If you desire to be a saint, never let a day pass without thinking on your miseries." Hence the Saint spent every day, the first two hours of prayer in the study of his own nothingness, and in sentiments of self-contempt.

St. Gregory says "that pride is the most evident mark of the

reprobate; but humility is, on the contrary, the most evident mark of the elect." Seeing the world covered with the toils of the devil, St. Anthony, with a sigh, exclaimed: "Who can escape so many snares!" "Anthony," replied a voice, "it is only humility that passes through them with security: the humble man is not in danger of being ensnared." In a word, unless we are like infants, not in years but in humility, we shall never attain salvation. *Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. xviii. 3). In the life of St. Palemon it is related that a certain monk who walked on burning coals said to his companions: Which of you can tread on red-hot fire without being burnt. The Saint reproved him for his vanity, but the unhappy man did not amend. Puffed up with pride, he afterwards fell into sin, and died without repentance.

To the humble who are despised and persecuted on earth is promised the glory of God's kingdom. *Blessed are ye when they shall revile and persecute you ... for your reward is very great in heaven* (Matt. v. 11-12). The humble shall be happy in this life as well as in the next. *Learn of me*, says Jesus, *because I am meek and humble of heart; and you shall find rest to your souls* (Matt. xi. 29). The proud never enjoy peace, because they never receive the respect or attention which a vain opinion of their own greatness makes them regard as their due. When loaded with honours, they are not content; either because they see others still more exalted, or, because they desire some unattainable dignity, the absence of which is to them a source of torture, not to be removed by the gratification arising from all the honours they enjoy. Great, indeed, was the glory of Aman, in the court of Assuerus, where he sat at the monarch's table. But, because Mardochai would not salute him, he was unhappy. *And whereas I have all these things, I think I have nothing so long as I see Mardochai, the Jew, sitting before the king's gate* (Esth. v. 13). Being the result of constraint and of human respect, the honour shown to the great does not give true joy. "True glory," says St. Jerome, "like a shadow, follows virtue: it flies from all who grasp at it, and seeks after those who despise it."

The humble man is always content, because whatever respect is paid to him he deems to be above his merits, and

whatever contempt may be offered him he regards as far short of what is due to his sins. In all humility he exclaims with holy Job: *I have sinned, and indeed I have offended, and I have not received what I have deserved* (Job xxxiii. 27). Previous to a long journey which he was obliged to make, St. Francis Borgia was advised to dispatch a courier, who would secure accommodation for his master at the hotels where he intended to stop. "I never," replied the saint, "fail to send my courier before me. But do you know who he is? My courier is the thought of hell, which my sins have merited; this thought makes every lodging appear to me a palace in comparison of the dungeon to which I deserve to be condemned."

Evening Meditation

INTERIOR TRIALS

I.

All the anxiety of scrupulous souls arises from a fear lest in what they do, they should be acting, not with a mere scruple but with a real doubt, and therefore be committing sin. But the chief thing they are to remember is this: that he who acts in obedience to a learned and pious confessor, acts not only with no doubt, but with the greatest security that can be had upon earth, a security that rests on the Divine words of Jesus Christ, that he who obeys His ministers is as though he obeyed God Himself: *He that heareth you heareth me* (Luke x. 16). Hence St. Bernard says: "Whatever man, in the place of God enjoins, provided it be not certainly displeasing to God, is absolutely to be received as though enjoined by God.

As to the personal direction of conscience, it is certain the confessor is the lawful superior, as St. Francis de Sales, with all spiritual instructors, declares: while Father Pinamonti, in his *Spiritual Director*, says: "It is well to make the scrupulous perceive, that submitting their will to the ministers of the Lord gives them the greatest security in all that is not manifestly sin." Let them read the Lives of the Saints, and they will find that they knew no safer road than obedience. The Saints plainly relied more on the voice of their confessor than on the immediate voice of God, and yet the scrupulous would lean more on their own judgment than on the Gospel, which assures them: *He that heareth you, heareth me.*

II.

The Blessed Henry Suso used to say that God demands no account from us of things done under obedience. St. Philip Neri says the same: "Let such as desire to advance in the way of God submit themselves to a learned confessor, and obey him in God's stead. Let him who thus acts be assured that he will not have to render an account of his actions to God." He says, moreover, that one should have all faith in one's confessor, on the ground that God would not permit him to err; and that there is nothing that more surely cuts asunder the snares of the devil than to do the will of another in what is good, nor anything more full of danger than to be guiding ourselves according to what seems best to us. This is confirmed by St. John of the Cross, who speaks in the Name of the Lord: "When thou art unfaithful to confessors, thou art so unto Me, Who have said: *He that despiseth you, despiseth me.*" And again: "Not to rest satisfied with what the confessor says is pride and failure in faith."

Friday--Twenty-first Week after Pentecost

(COMMEMORATION OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER, OCTOBER 23rd.)

Morning Meditation

THE GREAT OBLIGATIONS WE ARE UNDER TO LOVE THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER

Forget not the kindness of thy Surety for he hath given his life for thee. By this Surety we understand Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, Who, seeing that we were unable to satisfy Divine Justice, offered Himself to die for us. *He was offered because it was his own will.* He offered to make satisfaction for us, and actually paid our debts in His Blood, and by giving up His life. *He hath given his life for thee.*

I.

Forget not the kindness of thy Surety for he hath given his life for thee (Ecclus. xxix. 19). By this Surety we understand Jesus Christ, Who, seeing that we were unable to atone to the Divine justice, offered Himself *because it was his own will* (Is. liii. 7). He offered to make satisfaction for us, and actually paid our debts by His Blood and by His Death. *He hath given his life for thee.*

To repair the insults which we offered to the Divine majesty, the sacrifice of the life of all men was not sufficient; God alone could atone for an injury done to God; and this Jesus Christ has accomplished. *By so much*, says St. Paul, *is Jesus made a surety of a better testament* (Heb. vii. 22). By making satisfaction on behalf of man, our Redeemer, man's surety, says the Apostle, obtained by His merits a new compact -- that if man should observe the law, God would grant him grace and eternal life. This is precisely what Jesus Christ Himself expressed in the institution of the Eucharist when He said, *This chalice is the new testament in my blood* (1 Cor. xi. 25.) By these words Jesus meant, that the chalice of His Blood was the instrument or written security by which was established the new covenant between God and Jesus Christ, that to men who were faithful to Him should be given the gift of grace and of eternal life.

Hence, by suffering the penalties due to us, the Redeemer, through the love which He bore us, made on our behalf a rigorous atonement to the Divine Justice. *Surely*, says the Prophet, *he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows* (Is. liii. 4). And all this was the fruit of His love. *Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us* (Eph. v. 2). St. Bernard says that to pardon us, Jesus Christ did not pardon Himself. "To redeem a slave He spared not Himself." O miserable Jews, why do you still wait for the Messiah promised by the Prophets? He has already come: you have murdered Him; but, in spite of your guilt, your Redeemer is ready to pardon you; for He has come to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel: *The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost* (Matt. xviii. 11).

II.

St. Paul has written that, to deliver us from the malediction due to our sins, Jesus Christ has charged Himself with all the maledictions we merited; and therefore He wished to suffer the death of the accursed, that is, the death of the Cross: *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree* (Gal. iii. 13).

What a source of glory would it not be to a poor peasant captured by pirates, and reduced to slavery, to be ransomed by his sovereign at the cost of a kingdom! But how much greater

glory do we derive from having been redeemed by Jesus Christ at the cost of His own Blood, a single drop of which is worth more than a thousand worlds! *You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled* (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). Hence, St. Paul tells us that we commit an act of injustice against our Saviour if we dispose of ourselves according to our own, and not according to His will, or if we indulge our inclinations ourselves, or, what is worse, if we indulge our inclinations so as to offend our God. For we belong not to ourselves, but to Jesus Christ Who has purchased us with a great price. *Know you not that ... you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price* (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

Ah, my Redeemer, if I had shed all my blood for Thee, and even given for Thee a thousand lives, what compensation would it be for the love of Thee, Who hast given Thy Blood and Thy life for me? Give me strength, O my Jesus, to be entirely Thine during the remainder of my life.

Spiritual Reading

HOLY HUMILITY

IV. HUMILITY OF THE INTELLECT OR JUDGMENT

Let us examine now what we must do in order to attain humility.

There are two kinds of humility: humility of the intellect, and humility of the will or of the heart. Here we shall speak of the former, without which the latter cannot be acquired.

Humility of the intellect consists in thinking lowly of ourselves; in esteeming ourselves to be vile and miserable creatures, such as we really are. "Humility," says St. Bernard, "is a virtue which, by the knowledge of himself makes a man contemptible in his own estimation." Humility is truth, as St. Teresa has well said, and therefore the Lord greatly loves the humble, because they love the truth. It is too true that we are nothing; that we are ignorant, blind, and unable to do any good. Of our own we have nothing but sin, which renders us worse than nothing; and of ourselves we can do nothing but evil. Whatever good we have or perform belongs to God and comes from His hands. This truth the humble man keeps continually before his eyes; he therefore calls his own only the evil he has done, and deems himself

worthy of all sorts of contempt, and cannot bear to hear others attribute to him what he does not deserve. On the contrary, he delights in seeing himself despised and treated according to his deserts; and thus he renders his soul most pleasing to God. "A Christian," says St. Gregory, "becomes all the more estimable in the eyes of God in proportion as he is despicable in his own." Hence, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say, that the two foundations of Religious perfection are the love of God and the contempt of self. "Because," says the Saint, "he who will have humbled himself most upon earth shall see God most clearly in Heaven."

It is necessary, then, to pray continually in the words of St. Augustine: "May I know myself: may I know Thee, O my God, that thus I may love Thee and despise myself." Make me, O Lord, understand what I am and what Thou art. Thou art the source of every good: I am misery itself. Of myself I have nothing, I know nothing. I can do nothing but evil. It is only the humble that truly honour God. *He*, says the Holy Ghost, *is honoured by the humble* (Ecclus. iii. 21). Yes, it is only the humble that can give glory to the Lord, for they alone acknowledge Him to be the supreme and only Good. If, then, you desire to honour God, keep continually in view all your miseries; confess in the sincerity of your soul, that of yourself you are only nothingness and sinfulness, and that whatsoever you possess belongs to God. And, convinced of your own wretchedness, consider yourself deserving only of contempt and punishment; and offer yourself to accept all the chastisements with which God may visit you.

As a sequence of these principles we give here the following rules:

Be careful never to boast of anything. Far different from yours was the conduct of the Saints. It is my continual practice to exhort all to read, for their spiritual reading, the Lives of the Saints. The great labours and exertions of the Saints for God's glory will humble our pride, and make us ashamed of the little we do or have done for God. But how is it possible that we should glory in anything, when we know that all the virtues we may possess are the gifts of God? "Who," says St. Bernard, "could abstain from laughing, if the clouds boasted of having begotten

rain?" Whoever glories in any good action deserves to be treated with similar derision. Blessed John of Avila relates that a certain rich nobleman who had married a peasant, to prevent her from being puffed up with pride at seeing herself attended by servants and dressed in rich apparel, caused the miserable garment which she wore before her marriage to be preserved as a reminder. You should imitate his example. When you perceive that you have performed a good work or acquired any virtue, look back to your former state, remember what you were, and conclude that all the good you possess is but an alms from the Almighty. "Whosoever," says St. Augustine, "reckons up to Thee, O Lord, his own merits, what else does he reckon up but Thy gifts?" Whenever St. Teresa performed a good work, or saw an act of virtue performed by others, she immediately burst forth into the praises of God, referring the whole to Him as to its Author. Hence the Saint justly observes, that it is not incompatible with humility to acknowledge the special graces that God has given more abundantly to us than to others. Such an acknowledgment, continues the Saint, is not pride; on the contrary, by making us feel that we are more unworthy, and at the same time more favoured, than others, it assists our humility and stimulates our gratitude. The Saint adds that a Christian who does not reflect with gratitude on the sublime graces he has received, will never resolve to do great things for God. But in contemplating the gifts God has bestowed upon us we must always distinguish between what belongs to God and what belongs to us. St. Paul scrupled not to assert that for the glory of the Lord Jesus he had done more than all the other Apostles. *I have, he says, laboured more abundantly than all they* (1 Cor. xv. 10). But he immediately confessed that his labours were not his own works, but the fruit of Divine grace, by which he was assisted: *Yet not I, but the grace of God with me* (1 Cor. v. 10).

Evening Meditation

"A MAN OF SORROWS AND ACQUAINTED WITH INFIRMITIES"

I.

The Prophet Isaías called our Redeemer *a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmities* (Is. liii. 3). Contemplating the sorrows of Jesus Christ, Salvian exclaimed, "O Love, I know not whether to

call Thee sweet or severe: Thou dost appear to be both." O Love of my Jesus, I know not what to call Thee. Thou hast indeed been sweet towards us in loving us after so much ingratitude; but to Thyself Thou hast been cruel to excess, in choosing a life so full of pains, and in suffering a death so full of bitterness, in order to atone for our sins.

St. Thomas, the Angelic Doctor, writes that to save us from hell, Jesus Christ assumed the most extreme pain and the most extreme ignominy. To satisfy the Divine justice, it would be enough for Him to have suffered any pain; but no, He wishes to submit to the most galling insults and to the sharpest pains, in order to make us comprehend the malice of our sins, and the love with which His Heart was inflamed for us.

The God-man assumed the most extreme pain; hence, as we read in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, He said: *A body thou hast fitted to me* (Heb. x. 5). The body which God gave to Jesus Christ was made on purpose for suffering, and therefore His flesh was most sensitive and delicate. *Sensitive*, or capable of feeling pain most acutely: *delicate*, or so tender that every stroke which it received left a wound; in a word, His sacred body was made on purpose for suffering.

Besides, all the sorrows that Jesus Christ suffered till He expired on the Cross were always present to His mind from the first moment of His Incarnation. He saw them all, and cheerfully embraced them, in order to accomplish the will of His Father, Who wished that He should be offered in sacrifice for our salvation. *Then, said I, Behold, I come: in the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will, O God* (Heb. x. 7). This, according to the Apostle, was the oblation which obtained for us Divine grace. *In the which will, we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ once.* (Heb. x. 10).

II.

But what, O my Redeemer, induces Thee to sacrifice Thy life amid so many sorrows for our salvation? St. Paul answers: to this He was led by the love He bore us: *Christ hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us* (Eph. v. 2). *He hath delivered himself*: love has induced Him to give His body to the scourges, His head to the thorns, His face to the spittle and buffets, His hands and feet

to the nails, and His life to death.

Let him who wishes to see a man of sorrows look at Jesus Christ. Behold Him hanging on three nails; behold the entire weight of His body sustained by the wounds in His hands and feet; each member suffers its proper torment without any mitigation of pain. The three hours during which Jesus remained on the Cross are justly called the Three Hours of the Saviour's Agony; for during these three hours He suffered a continual agony and sorrow, which gradually brought Him to death, and in the end took away His life; this Man of Sorrows died of pure pain.

And what Christian, O my Jesus, can believe that Thou hast died for him on the Cross, and not love Thee? And how have I been able to live so many years in such forgetfulness of Thee, as to offend so often and so grievously a God Who has loved me so intensely? Oh that I had died before I had ever offended Thee! O Love of my soul, O my Redeemer! Oh that I could die for Thee, Who hast died for me! I love Thee, O my Jesus, and I wish to love nothing but Thee.

Saturday--Twenty-first Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"MARY'S ONLY THOUGHT, TO SUCCOUR THE MISERABLE"

From the hour Mary came into the world her only thought, after the glory of God, was to succour the miserable. And in order to succour the miserable she enjoys the privilege of obtaining whatever she asks. She has only to speak and her Son immediately grants her her request.

I.

From the hour Mary came into the world her only thought, after the glory of God, was to succour the miserable. And in order to succour the miserable she enjoys the privilege of obtaining whatever she asks. This we know from what occurred at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee. When the wine failed, the most Blessed Virgin, being moved to compassion at the sight of the affliction and shame of the bride and bridegroom, asked her Son to relieve them by a miracle, telling Him that *they had no wine*. Jesus answered: *Woman, what is that to thee and me? My hour*

is not yet come (John ii. 4). Although our Lord seemed to refuse His Mother the favour she asked, yet, as if the favour had already been granted, Mary desired those in attendance to fill the jars with water, for they would be immediately satisfied. And so it was. To content His mother, Jesus changed the water into the best wine. But how was this? As the time for working miracles was that of the public life of our Lord, how could it be that, contrary to the Divine decrees, this miracle was worked? No, in this there was nothing contrary to the decrees of God; for though, generally speaking, the time for miracles was not come, yet from all eternity God had determined by another decree that nothing that she asked should ever be refused to the Divine Mother. And, therefore, Mary, who well knew her privilege, although her Son seemed to have refused her the favour, yet told them to fill the jars with water, as if her request had already been granted. That is the sense in which St. John Chrysostom understood it; for, explaining these words of our Lord, *Woman, what is it to thee and me?* he says, that "though Jesus answered thus, yet in honour of His Mother He obeyed her wish." This is confirmed by St. Thomas, who says that by the words, *My hour is not yet come*, Jesus Christ intended to show, that had the request come from any other, He would not then have complied with it; but because it was addressed to Him by His Mother, He could not refuse it. St. Cyril and St. Jerome, quoted by Barrada, say the same thing. Also Gandavensis, on the foregoing passage of St. John, says, that "to honour His Mother, our Lord anticipated the time for working miracles."

II.

It is certain that no creature can obtain so many mercies for us as this tender advocate, who is thus honoured by God, not only as His beloved handmaid, but also as His true Mother. And this William of Paris says addressing her: "No creature can obtain so many and so great favours as thou obtainest for poor sinners; and thus without doubt God honours thee not only as a handmaid, but as His most true Mother." Mary has only to speak, and her Son executes all. Our Lord conversing with the spouse in the sacred Canticles -- that is Mary -- says, *Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the friends hearken; make me hear thy voice*

(Cant. viii. 13). The Saints are *the friends*, and they, when they seek favours for their clients, wait for their Queen to ask and obtain; for, as we said "no grace is granted otherwise than at the prayer of Mary." And how does Mary obtain favours? She has only to let her voice be heard -- *make me hear thy voice*. She has only to speak, and her Son immediately grants her prayer. Listen to the Abbot William explaining, in this sense, the above-mentioned text. In it he introduces the Son addressing Mary: "Thou who dwellest in the heavenly gardens, intercede with confidence for whomsoever thou wilt; for it is not possible that I should so far forget that I am thy Son as to deny anything to thee, My Mother. Only let thy voice be heard, for to be heard by Thy Son is to be obeyed." The Abbot Godfrey says, "that although Mary obtains favours by asking, yet she asks with a certain maternal authority, and therefore we should feel confident that she obtains all she desires and asks for us."

I will address thee, O great Mother of God, in the words of St. Bernard: "Speak, O Lady, for thy Son heareth thee, and whatever thou askest thou wilt obtain." Speak, speak, then, O Mary, our advocate, in favour of us poor miserable creatures. Remember that it was also for our good that thou didst receive so great power and so high a dignity. A God was pleased to become thy debtor by taking humanity of thee, in order that thou mightest dispense at will the riches of Divine mercy to sinners.

Obtain for us true conversion; obtain for us the love of God, perseverance, Heaven. We ask thee for much; but what is it? perhaps thou canst not obtain all? It is perhaps too much for the love God bears thee? Ah, no! for thou hast only to open thy lips and ask thy Divine Son; He will deny thee nothing. Pray, then, pray O Mary, for us; pray: thou wilt certainly obtain all: and we shall with the same certainty obtain the kingdom of Heaven.

Spiritual Reading

"WHAT GOD CAN DO BY HIS POWER, HIS MOTHER CAN DO BY HER PRAYERS."

Valerius Maximus relates that when Coriolanus was besieging Rome, the prayers of his friends and all the citizens were insufficient to make him desist; but as soon as he beheld his mother Veturia imploring him, he could no longer refuse, and

immediately raised the siege. But the prayers of Mary with Jesus are as much more powerful than those of Veturia, as the love and gratitude of this Son for his most dear Mother are greater. Father Justin Micoviensis says that "a single sigh of the most Blessed Mary can do more than the united suffrages of all the Saints." And this was acknowledged by the devil to St. Dominic, who, as it is related by Father Paciucchelli, obliged him to speak by the mouth of a possessed person; and he said that "a single sigh from Mary was worth more before God than the united suffrages of all the Saints."

Saint Antoninus says that "the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, being the prayers of a Mother, have in them something of a command; so that it is impossible that she should not obtain what she asks." St. Germanus, encouraging sinners to recommend themselves to this advocate, thus addresses her: "As thou hast, O Mary, the authority of a Mother with God, thou obtainest pardon for the most enormous sinners; since that Lord in all things acknowledges thee as His true and spotless Mother, He cannot do otherwise than grant what thou askest." And so it was that St. Bridget heard the Saints in Heaven addressing our Blessed Lady: "O most blessed Queen, what is there that thou canst not do? Thou hast only to will, and it is accomplished." And this corresponds with that celebrated saying, "That which God can do by His power, thou canst do by prayer, O sacred Virgin." "To be thus jealous of the honour paid His Mother," says St. Augustine, "would indeed ill become that Lord Who declares that He came into the world, not to break, but to observe the law: now this law commands us to honour our parents." St. George, Archbishop of Nicomedia, says that Jesus Christ, even as it were to satisfy an obligation under which He placed Himself towards His Mother, when she consented to give Him His human nature, grants all she asks: "the Son, as if paying a debt, grants all thy petitions." And on this the holy Martyr, St. Methodius, exclaims: "Rejoice, rejoice, O Mary, for thou hast that Son thy debtor, Who gives to all and receives from none. We are all God's debtors for all that we possess, for all is His gift; but God has been pleased to become thy Debtor in taking flesh from thee and becoming Man."

Therefore, Saint Augustine says that, "Mary, having merited

to give flesh to the Divine Word, and thus supply the price of our Redemption, that we might be delivered from eternal death, she is more powerful than all others to help us to gain eternal life." St. Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, in the time of St. Jerome, left in writing the following words: "The prayers of His Mother are a pleasure to the Son, because He desires to grant all that is granted on her account, and thus recompense her for the favour she did Him in giving Him His body." St. John Damascene, addressing the Blessed Virgin, says: "Thou, O Mary, being Mother of the most high God, canst save all by thy prayers, which are increased in value by thy maternal authority."

Let us conclude with St. Bonaventure, who, considering the great benefit conferred on us by our Lord in giving us Mary for our advocate, thus addresses her: "O truly immense and admirable goodness of our God, Who has been pleased to grant thee, O sovereign Mother, to us miserable sinners for our advocate, in order that thou, by thy powerful intercession, mayest obtain all that thou pleasest for us." "O wonderful mercy of our God," continues the same Saint, "Who in order that we might not flee away on account of the sentence that might be pronounced against us, has given us His own Mother and the patroness of graces to be our advocate."

Evening Meditation

*MARY, OUR ADVOCATE, DEFENDS THE CAUSE OF
EVEN THE MOST MISERABLE.*

I.

Mary is so tender an advocate that she does not refuse to defend the cause of even the most miserable. So many are the reasons we have for loving this our most loving Queen, that if Mary was praised throughout the world; if in every sermon Mary alone was spoken of; if all men gave their lives for Mary; still all would be little in comparison with the homage and gratitude we owe her in return for the tender love she bears to men, and even to the most miserable sinners who preserve the slightest spark of devotion for her.

Blessed Raymond Jordano, who, out of humility, called himself Idiota, used to say that "Mary knows not how to do otherwise than love those who love her; and that even she does not

disdain to serve those who serve her; and in favour of such a one, should he be a sinner, she uses all her power in order to obtain his forgiveness from her Blessed Son." And he adds that "her benignity and mercy are so great, that no one, however enormous his sins may be, should fear to cast himself at her feet; for she never can reject any one who has recourse to her." Mary, as our most loving advocate, herself offers the prayers of her servants to God, and especially those which are placed in her hands; for as the Son intercedes for us with the Father, so does she intercede with the Son, and does not cease to make interest with both for the great affair of our salvation, and to obtain for us the graces we ask.

With good reason, then, does Denis the Carthusian call the Blessed Virgin the special refuge of the lost, the life of the miserable, the advocate of all sinners who have recourse to her.

O great Mother of my Lord, I see full well that my ingratitude towards God and thee, and this too for so many years, has merited for me that thou shouldst justly abandon me, and no longer have a care of me, for an ungrateful soul is no longer worthy of favours. But I, O Lady, have a high idea of thy great goodness; I believe it to be far greater than my ingratitude. Continue, then, O Refuge of sinners, and cease not to help a miserable sinner who confides in thee. O Mother of mercy, deign to extend a helping hand to a poor fallen wretch who asks thee for pity. O Mary, either defend me thyself, or tell me to whom I can have recourse, and who is better able to defend me than thou, and where I can find with God a more clement and powerful advocate than thou, who art His Mother. Thou, in becoming the Mother of our Saviour, wast thereby made the fitting instrument to save sinners, and wast given me for my salvation. O Mary, save him who has recourse to thee.

II.

Should there be, by any chance, a sinner who, though not doubting Mary's power, might doubt the compassion of Mary, fearing perhaps that she might be unwilling to help him on account of the greatness of his sins, let him take courage from the words of St. Bonaventure. "The great, the special privilege of Mary is, that she is all-powerful with her Son." "But," adds the

Saint, "to what purpose would Mary have so great power if she cared not for us?" "No," he concludes, "let us not doubt, but be certain, and let us always thank our Lord and His Divine Mother for it, that in proportion as her power with God exceeds that of all the Saints, so is she in the same proportion our most loving advocate, and the one who is the most solicitous for our welfare."

"And who, O Mother of Mercy," exclaims St. Germanus, in the joy of his heart, "who, after thy Jesus, is as tenderly solicitous for our welfare as thou art?" "Who defends us in the temptations with which we are afflicted as thou defendest us? Who, like thee, undertakes to protect sinners, fighting, as it were, in their behalf?" "Therefore," he adds, "thy patronage, O Mary, is more powerful and loving than anything of which we can ever form an idea."

"For," says the Blessed Raymond Jordan, "whilst all the other Saints can do more for their own clients than for others, the Divine Mother, as Queen of all, is the advocate of all, and has a care for the salvation of all."

Mary takes care of all, even of sinners; indeed she glories in being called in a special manner their advocate, as she herself declared to the Venerable Sister Mary Villani, saying: "After the title of Mother of God, I rejoice most in that of advocate of sinners."

O my Lady, I am a sinner and I do not deserve thy love, but it is thine own desire to save sinners that makes me hope that thou lovest me. And if thou lovest me, how can I be lost? O my own beloved Mother, if by thee I save my soul, as I hope to do, I shall no longer be ungrateful, I shall make up for my past ingratitude, and for the love which thou hast shown me, by my everlasting praises, and all the affections of my soul. Happy in Heaven, where thou reignest, and wilt reign forever, I shall always sing thy mercies, and kiss for eternity those loving hands which have delivered me from hell, when I deserved it by my sins. O Mary, my liberator, my hope, my Queen, my advocate, my own sweet Mother, I love thee. I desire thy glory and to love thee forever. Amen, amen. Thus do I hope.

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"THOU ART JUST, O LORD, AND THY JUDGMENT IS RIGHT."

By our sins long ago committed, and often since, we have deserved hell. And do we understand what *hell* means? One moment in hell is more dreadful than a hundred years of most frightful torments. And yet we complain if God sends us sufferings. O Lord, Thou art just! Give us grace to suffer with patience.

I.

Are we to look upon God as a tyrant who takes pleasure in our suffering? He does take pleasure in punishing us, but exactly the same pleasure a father takes in correcting his son: He does not take pleasure in the pain which He inflicts, but in the amendment it will work. *My son, reject not the correction of the Lord; and do not faint when thou art chastised by him, for whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth, and as a father in the son, he pleaseth himself* (Prov. iii. 11). He chastises you because He loves you; it is not that He wishes to see you afflicted, but converted; and if He takes pleasure in your suffering, He does so inasmuch as it is a means of conversion -- just as a father who chastises his son derives pleasure, not from the affliction of his son, but from the amendment which he hopes to see in him, and which will prevent him from working his own ruin. Chastisement makes us return to God, says St. John Chrysostom; and it is to this end God inflicts it, in order that we may not stay away from Him.

Why then do you complain of God when in tribulation? You ought to thank Him prostrate on the earth. If a man condemned to die were to have his sentence changed by the prince from death into one hour's imprisonment, and if he were to complain of that one hour, would his complaint be just? Would he not rather deserve that the prince should reverse the last sentence, and condemn him a second time to death? You have long and often deserved hell by your sins. And do you know all that the word *hell* means? Know that it is more dreadful to suffer for one moment in hell than to suffer for a hundred years the

most frightful torments which the Martyrs suffered on earth; and in this hell you should have had to suffer not for a moment, but during all eternity. And yet you complain if God send you some tribulation, some infirmity, some loss! Thank God, and say: Lord, this chastisement is trifling compared with my sins. I should have been in hell burning, deserted by all, and in despair; I thank Thee for having called me to Thyself by this tribulation which Thou hast sent me. God, says Oleaster, often calls sinners to repentance by temporal chastisements. By earthly chastisements the Lord shows us the immense punishment our sins deserve; and therefore afflicts us on this earth, that we may be converted and escape eternal flames.

II.

Wretched, then, should we poor sinners be if left unpunished; but still more wretched is the sinner who, admonished by affliction, does not amend. It is not a grievous thing to be afflicted by God on this earth after one has sinned; but it is very grievous not to be converted by the affliction sent, and to be like those of whom David speaks, who, although visited by Divine chastisement, still sleep on in their sins. *At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, they have all slumbered* (Ps. lxxv. 7). As if the sound of the scourges and the thunders of God, instead of rousing them from their lethargy, served only to make them sleep more soundly. *I struck you, yet you returned not to me* (Amos iv. 9). I have scourged you, says God, in order that you might return to Me; but ye, ungrateful that you are, have been deaf to My calls. Unhappy the sinner who acts like him of whom the Lord says, *He shall send lightnings against him; ... his heart shall be as hard as a stone, and as firm as a smith's anvil* (Job xli. 14, 15). God visits him with chastisement, and he, instead of being softened and returning to the Lord by penance, shall be *as firm as a smith's anvil*; he shall grow more hardened under the blows of God, as the anvil grows harder under the hammer, like the impious Achaz, of whom the Scripture says: *In the time of his distress he increased contempt against the Lord* (2 Par. xxviii. 22). Unhappy man, instead of humbling himself, he all the more despised God. He deserves all chastisement who, being afflicted by the Lord for his conversion, continues to provoke the Lord to greater wrath. What can I do, O sinner, to bring

about your conversion? The Lord will say: I have called you by sermons and inspirations, and you have despised them; I have called you by favours, and you have grown more insolent; I have called you by scourges, and you continue to offend Me. *For what shall I strike you any more, you that increase transgression ... and the daughter of Sion shall be left ... as a city that is laid waste* (Is. i. 5-8). Do you not wish to hearken even to My chastisements? Do you wish that I should abandon you?

Let us no longer abuse the mercy which God uses towards us. Let us not be like the nettle, which stings him who strikes it. God afflicts us, because He loves us, and wishes to see us reformed. When we feel the chastisement, we should remember our sins, and say with the brethren of Joseph: *We deserve to suffer these things, because we have sinned against our brother* (Gen. xlii. 21). Lord, Thou punishest us justly, because we have offended Thee, our Father and God. *Thou art just, O God, and thy judgment is right* (Ps. cxviii. 137). *Everything thou hast done to us, thou hast done in true judgment* (Dan. iii. 31). Lord, Thou art just, and dost with justice punish us; we accept this tribulation which Thou sendest us; give us strength to suffer it with patience.

Spiritual Reading

HOLY HUMILITY

V. HUMILITY OF THE INTELLECT OR JUDGMENT

Since without the Divine aid you can do nothing, be careful never to confide in your own strength; but after the example of St. Philip Neri, endeavour to live in continual and utter distrust of yourself. Like St. Peter, who protested that not even death would induce him to deny his Master, the proud man trusts in his own courage, and therefore yields to temptation. Because he confided in himself, the Apostle had no sooner entered the house of the high-priest than he denied Jesus Christ. Be careful never to place confidence in your own resolutions or in your present good dispositions; but put your whole trust in God, saying with St. Paul: *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me* (Phil. iv. 13). If you cast away all self-confidence, and place all your hopes in the Lord, you may then expect to do great things for God. *They that hope in the Lord*, says the Prophet Isaias, *shall renew their strength* (Is. xl. 31). Yes, the humble, who trust in the Lord, shall

renew their strength; distrusting themselves, they shall lay aside their own weakness and put on the strength of God. Hence, St. Joseph Calasanctius used to say, that "whoever desires to be the instrument of God in great undertakings, should seek to be the lowest of all." Strive to imitate the conduct of St. Catharine of Sienna, who, when tempted to vainglory, would make an act of humility, and when tempted to despair, would make an act of confidence in God. Enraged at her conduct, the devil began one day to curse her and the person who taught her this mode of resisting his temptations; and added, that he "knew not how to attack her." When, therefore, Satan tells you that you are in no danger of falling, tremble; and reflect that, should God abandon you for a moment, you are lost. When he tempts you to despair, exclaim in the loving words of David: *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped: let me never be confounded* (Ps. xxx. 2). In Thee, O Lord, I have placed all my hopes; I trust that I shall not be confounded, deprived of Thy grace, and made the slave of hell.

Should you be so unfortunate as to commit a fault, take care not to give way to diffidence, but humble your soul; repent, and with a stronger sense of your own weakness, throw yourself into the arms of the Lord. To be angry with ourselves after having committed a fault, is not an act of humility, but of pride, which makes us wonder how we could have fallen into such a fault. Yes, it is pride and a delusion of the devil, who seeks to draw us away from the path of perfection, to cast us into despair of advancing in virtue, and thus precipitate us into more grievous sins. After a fault we should redouble our confidence in God, and thus take occasion from our infidelity to place still greater hopes in His mercy. *To them that love God*, says St. Paul, *all things work together unto good* (Rom. viii. 28). "Yes," adds the Gloss, "even sins." The Lord once said to St. Gertrude: "When a person's hands are stained he washes them, and they become cleaner than before they were soiled." So the soul that commits a fault, being purified by repentance, is made more pleasing in the eyes of God than she was before her transgression. To teach them to distrust themselves, and to confide only in Him, God sometimes permits His servants, and particularly those who are not well grounded in humility, to fall into some sin. If, then, you commit a fault,

endeavour to repair it immediately by an act of love and of sorrow; resolve to amend, and redouble your confidence in God; say with St. Catharine of Genoa: "Lord, this is the fruit of my garden. If Thou dost not protect me I shall be guilty of still more grievous offences; but I purpose to avoid this fault for the future, and with the aid of Thy grace, I hope to keep this resolution." Should you ever relapse, act always in the same manner, and never abandon the resolution of becoming a saint.

Should you ever see another commit some grievous sin, take care not to indulge in pride, nor to be surprised at his fall; but pity his misfortune, and trembling for yourself, say with holy David: *Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell* (Ps. xciii. 17). If the Almighty had not been my Protector, I should at this moment be buried in hell. Beware of even taking vain complacency in being exempt from faults you perceive in others, or else, in chastisement of your pride the Lord will permit you to fall into the sins they have committed. Cassian relates that a certain young monk, being for a long time molested by a violent temptation to impurity, sought advice and consolation from an aged Father. Instead of receiving encouragement and comfort, he was loaded with reproaches. "What!" said the old man, "is it possible that a monk should be subject to such abominable thoughts?" In punishment of his pride the Almighty permitted the Father to be assailed by the spirit of impurity to such a degree that he ran about like a madman. Hearing of his miserable condition, the Abbot Apollo told him that God had permitted this temptation to punish his conduct towards the young monk, and also to teach him compassion for others in similar circumstances. The Apostle tells us that in correcting sinners we should not treat them with contempt, lest God should permit us to be assailed by the temptation to which they yielded, and perhaps to fall into the very sin which we were surprised to see them commit. We should, before we reprove others, consider that we are as miserable and as liable to sin as our fallen brethren. *Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault ... instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted* (Gal. vi. 1). The same Cassian relates that a certain Abbot called Machete confessed that he himself had miserably fallen into

three faults, of which he had rashly judged his brethren to be guilty.

Evening Meditation

INTERIOR TRIALS

We are to have this certain confidence that in obeying our Spiritual Father, we are sure of not sinning. "The sovereign remedy for the scrupulous," says St. Bernard, "is a blind obedience to their confessor." John Gerson relates, that the same Saint told one of his disciples, who was scrupulous, to go and celebrate, and take his word for it. He went, and was cured of his scruples. "But a person may answer," says Gerson, "Would to God I had a St. Bernard for my director! Mine is one of indifferent wisdom." And he answers, "Thou dost err, whoever thou art that so speakest; for thou hast not given thyself into the hands of the man because he is well read, etc., but because he is placed over thee; wherefore obey him not as man, but as God." Hence St. Teresa has well said: "Let the soul accept the confessor with a determination to think no more of personal excuses, but to trust in the words of the Lord: *He that heareth you heareth me.*

Hence St. Francis de Sales, speaking of direction from a Spiritual Father in order to walk securely in the way of God, says: "This is the very counsel of all counsels." "Search as much as you will," says the saintly Father John of Avila, "you will in no way discover the will of God so surely as by the path of that humble obedience which is so much recommended and practised by the devout of former times." Thus, too, Father Alvarez said: "Even if the Spiritual Father should err, the obedient soul is secure from error, because it rests on the judgment of him whom God has given it as a superior." And Father Nieremberg writes to the same effect: "Let the soul obey the confessor; and then, although the thing itself were faulty, he does not sin who does it with the intention of obeying him who holds the place of God in his regard, persuading himself, as is, indeed, the case, that he is bound to obey him," who is the interpreter of the Divine will.

II.

St. Francis of Sales gives three maxims which bring great consolation to scrupulous souls.

1. An obedient soul has never been lost; 2. We ought to rest

satisfied with knowing from our Spiritual Father that we are going on well, without seeking a personal knowledge of it; 3. The best thing is to walk on blindly through all the darkness and perplexity of this life, under the Providence of God. And therefore all the Doctors of Morals conclude, in general, with St. Antoninus, Navarro, Silvester, etc., that obedience to the confessor is the safest rule for walking securely in the ways of God. F. Tirillo, and F. La Croix say that this is the common doctrine of the holy Fathers and masters of the spiritual life.

The scrupulous should know that not only are they safe in obeying, but that they are bound to obey their director, and to despise the scruple, acting with all freedom in the midst of their doubts. This is the teaching of Natalis Alexander: That scruples ought to be despised when one has the judgment of a prudent, pious, and learned director; and that one ought to act against them. "He who acts against scruples does not sin," says Father Wigandt, "nay, sometimes it is a precept to do so, especially when backed by the judgment of the confessor." So do these authors speak, although they belong to the rigid school; so, too, theologians in general; and the reason is, that if the scrupulous man goes on in his scruples, he is in danger of placing grievous impediments in the way of satisfying his obligations, or, at least, of making spiritual progress; and, moreover, of even losing his mind, losing his health, and destroying his soul by despair or by relaxation. Hence St. Antoninus agrees with Gerson in thus reproving the scrupulous soul who, through a vain fear, is not obedient in overcoming his scruples: "Beware lest, from overmuch desire to walk securely, thou fall and destroy thyself."

Monday--Twenty-second Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"WHO WILL HAVE ALL MEN TO BE SAVED"

God wishes that we should all be saved, as the Apostle assures us when he says God *will have all men to be saved* (1 Tim. ii. 4). And although He sees so many sinners who deserve hell, He does not wish any of them to be lost but that they be restored to grace by penance and saved. *Not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance* (2 Peter iii. 9).

I.

He who has a good heart cannot but feel compassion for the afflicted, and wish to see all men happy. But who has a heart as good as the Lord's? He by His nature is infinite goodness, and hence it is that God by His nature has an extreme desire to deliver us from every evil, and render us happy in all things, nay, even to be partakers of His own happiness.

God wishes that we should all be saved, as the Apostle assures us: *God ... who will have all men to be saved* (1 Tim. ii. 4). And although He sees so many sinners who deserve hell, He does not wish that any of them should be lost, but that they should be restored to grace by penance, and be saved. *Not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance* (2 Peter iii. 9). But before delivering us from the punishment we have deserved, and dispensing His graces, God wishes to be besought in prayer. "By prayer," says St. Laurence Justinian, "the wrath of God is suspended, His vengeance is delayed, and pardon finally procured." Oh how great are the promises which God makes to him who prays! *Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee* (Ps. xlix. 15). *Cry to me, and I will hear thee* (Jer. xxxiii. 3). *You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you* (Jo. xv. 7). Theodoret says that Prayer though being but one, can do all things. And let us bear in mind that when we pray and ask things conducive to salvation not even our sins can prevent our receiving the graces which we beg -- *For every one that asketh receiveth* (Matt. vii. 8). Jesus Christ here says that whoever asks, be he just or sinner, shall receive. Wherefore did David say: *For thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee* (Ps. lxxxv. 5). Hence, in order to excite us to prayer, the Apostle St. James tells us: *But if any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not* (James i. 5).

II.

He giveth to all men abundantly. When a man asks a favour of another whom he may have formerly injured, the latter usually reproaches him with the injury that has been done him; but not so God -- *He upbraideth not.* When we beg of Him some grace for the good of our souls, He never reproaches us with the offences we have committed; but He hears us, and consoles

us as though we had always served Him faithfully. *Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name*, said our Lord one day to His disciples, and today He says the same thing to us: *Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full* (Jo. xvi. 24). As if He were to say: Do you complain of Me? You have only yourselves to blame, for you have not asked graces of Me, and therefore you have not received them. Ask of Me, henceforward, what you please, and it shall be granted you, and if you have not merit sufficient to obtain it, ask it of My Father in My Name, that is, through My merits, and whatever it be, I promise that you shall obtain it. *Amen, amen, I say to you; if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you* (Jo. xvi. 23). The princes of the earth, says St. John Chrysostom, give audience only to a few, and that seldom; but access can always be had to God by every one, at all times, and with the assurance of a favourable hearing.

Rely, then, upon these great promises, so often repeated by Our Lord in the Scriptures; and let us ever remember to beg of Him those graces which are necessary for salvation -- namely, the pardon of our sins, perseverance in grace, His holy love, resignation to His Divine will, a happy death, and Paradise. By prayer we shall attain all; without prayer we shall have nothing. What the holy Fathers and Theologians commonly say -- namely, that prayer is necessary for adults, as a means of salvation, comes to this, that it is impossible for any one to be saved without prayer.

Let us pray, then, and pray with great confidence in that Divine promise by which, says St. Augustine, God has made Himself our Debtor. He has promised; He cannot be wanting in His promise. Let us seek and hope, and we must be saved. *No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded* (Ecclus. ii. 11). There never has been and never will be found any one to hope in the Lord and be lost. *He is the Protector of all who trust in him* (Ps. xvii. 31).

Spiritual Reading

HOLY HUMILITY

VI. HUMILITY OF THE INTELLECT OR JUDGMENT

Consider yourself the greatest sinner on this earth. They

who are truly humble, because they are most perfectly enlightened by God, possess the most perfect knowledge, not only of the Divine perfections, but also, of their own miseries and sins. Hence, notwithstanding their extraordinary sanctity, the Saints, not in the language of exaggeration, but in the sincerity of their souls, called themselves the greatest sinners in the world. Thus St. Francis of Assisi called himself the worst of sinners; St. Thomas of Villanova was kept in a state of continual fear and trembling by the thought of the account he was one day to render to God, for his life, though full of virtue, appeared to him very wicked. St. Gertrude considered it a miracle that the earth did not open under her feet and swallow her up alive, in punishment of her sins. St. Paul, the first hermit, was in the habit of exclaiming: "Woe to me, a sinner, who am unworthy to bear the name of a monk." In the writings of Blessed John of Avila we read of a person of great sanctity who besought the Lord to make known to her the state of her soul. Her prayer was heard; and so deformed and abominable was the appearance of her soul, though stained only with the guilt of venial sins, that, struck with horror, she cried out: "For mercy's sake, O Lord, take away from before my eyes the representation of this monster!"

Beware, then, of ever preferring yourself to any one. To esteem yourself better than others, is abundantly sufficient to make you worse than all. "Others," says Tritemius, "you have despised; you have, therefore, become worse than others." Again, to entertain a high opinion of your own deserts, is enough to deprive you of all merit. Humility consists principally in a sincere conviction that we deserve only reproach and chastisement. If, by preferring yourself to others, you have abused the gifts and graces God has conferred upon you, they will only serve for your greater condemnation at the hour of Judgment. But it is not enough to abstain from preferring yourself to any one: it is, moreover, necessary to consider yourself the last and worst of all. First, because in yourself you see with certainty so many sins; but the sins of others you know not, and their secret virtues, which are hidden from your eyes, may render them very dear in the sight of God. You ought to consider also, that by the aid of the lights and graces you have received from God, you should at this mo-

ment be a saint. Ah! had they been given to an infidel, he would perhaps have become a seraph, and you are still so miserable and full of defects. The consideration of your ingratitude ought to be sufficient to make you always regard yourself as a fit object of the scorn of all: for, as St. Thomas teaches, the malice of sin increases in proportion to the ingratitude of the sinner. Hence, one of your sins may be more grievous in the sight of God than a hundred sins of another less favoured than you have been.

But you know that you have already committed many sins; that your life has been one continued series of voluntary faults; and that whatever good you may have done is so full of imperfection and of self-love, that it is more deserving of punishment than of remuneration.

All these considerations ought to inspire you with the sentiments of humility which St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi inculcated on her spiritual children, with a continual sense of your unworthiness to kiss the ground on which others walk. You ought to consider that, had you received all imaginable insults, and were cast into hell, under the feet of all the damned, all this would be but little in comparison with what you deserve. And, therefore, from the deep abyss of your own miseries you should continually cry out, with holy David: *Incline unto my aid, O God; O Lord, make haste to help me* (Ps. lxi. 1). Lord, hasten to my assistance, otherwise I am lost, and shall offend Thee more than ever, and more than all sinners. But this prayer must be repeated continually -- almost every moment. You must cry out: "Assist me, O Lord! Lord have mercy on me!" At the very moment you cease to invoke the Divine aid you may become the most wicked monster in creation. Shun, as death itself, even the most trifling act or thought of pride. I conclude with that great saying of St. Bernard: "In the soul no humiliation, however great, is to be feared; but the least elation is to be regarded with horror." Yes; for the smallest degree of arrogance may lead us into every evil.

Evening Meditation

INTERIOR TRIALS

I.

Father Wigandt says that the scrupulous soul should obey the Confessor in all cases where the command is not plainly a

sin, and this is the general and undoubted decision among the Doctors of the spiritual life. St. Ignatius Loyola says: "There must be obedience in all things in which no sin is perceived -- that is, in which there is no manifest sin." Blessed Humbert, General of the Friar Preachers says: "Unless the command be plainly evil, it is to be received as though enjoined by God." Blessed Denis the Carthusian says: "In things doubtful as to whether or not they are against the Divine precept, one must stand by the precept of the superior; because, although it should be against the precept of God, yet, in virtue of obedience, the person under direction sins not." St. Bonaventure teaches the same.

"The scrupulous are to act against their scruples," says Gerson, "and plant their feet firmly in resisting. We cannot set scruples at rest better than by despising them; and, as a general rule, not without the advice of another, and especially our Superior. Otherwise, either ill-regulated fear or over-presumption will be our ruin." The remedy St. Philip Neri gave the scrupulous was, to make them despise their scruples. It is told in his Life that, besides the general remedy of committing one's self altogether and for everything to the judgment of the confessor, the Saint gave another: his penitents should despise their scruples. Hence he forbade such persons to confess often; and when, in Confession, they entered upon their scruples, he used to send them to Communion without hearing them.

II.

In conclusion, then, scrupulous persons should take obedience to heart and look upon their fears as vain, and so act with freedom. It is not required that in each particular act he should expressly determine that the thing is a scruple and that he ought to obey the confessor in despising it, for it is enough if he just act against it in virtue of a judgment made beforehand, since the same judgment resides in his conscience habitually or virtually though dim and confused. Hence if the scrupulous person be unable, in the midst of darkness, to lay aside the scruple at once, or even call to mind the obedience laid upon him, he should act, and though in acting there be even a positive fear of sinning, that will be no sin ... Gerson says that a person sins by acting in a

state of practical doubt, when the doubt proceeds from a *formed conscience*. This *formed conscience* exists when, after examining the circumstances, he deliberately judges and decides what he is obliged to do, and what he is forbidden; and to act against such a conscience is a sin. But when the mind is doubtful and wavering, and yet would not do anything displeasing to God -- this, says Gerson, is not a true state of doubt, but a vain fear, which should as much as possible be cast away and despised. So that when the scrupulous person has the habitual will not to offend God, it is to be taken for granted that while he acts in uncertainty he does not sin, since there is no true doubt, though he may consider it such, for it is only a vain fear. For the commission of mortal sin there is certainly required a full perception on the part of the reason, and complete deliberate consent on the part of the will to will something which grievously offends God. This doctrine is not to be doubted, and is the common teaching of all theologians, even the most rigid.

Let scrupulous souls, then, carry their cross with resignation, and not worry themselves in the midst of the great distresses of conscience which God may send or permit. It is all for their profit, to the end that they may be humble, and more on their guard against such occasions as are undoubtedly serious dangers, and also, that they may commend themselves oftener to God and put more complete trust in the Divine Goodness. Meanwhile, let them have recourse to the most holy Virgin Mary, who is called, and is in truth, the Mother of Mercy, and comforter of the afflicted. Let them, indeed, fear to offend God, wherever they discern what will really offend Him; but if only they are steadfast in resolving rather to die a thousand times than lose the grace of God, then their only fear need be lest they fall in obedience to their directors. As long as they blindly obey, they may assure themselves of not being abandoned by that Lord Who will have all men to be saved, and Who, loving good-will as He does, never suffers a really obedient soul to perish.

No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded (Ecclus. ii. 11).

Casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you (1 Peter v. 7).

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? (Ps. xxvi. 1).

In peace in the self same I will sleep and I will rest; for thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope (Ps. iv. 9, 10).

In thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded (Ps. xxx. 2).

Tuesday--Twenty-second Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"YOU RECEIVE NOT BECAUSE YOU ASK AMISS."

Many there are who ask graces from God but do not obtain them. And why is this? St. James answers and says they receive not because they do not ask as they should. *You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss* (iv. 3). How can God hear the sinner who prays to Him to be freed from affliction, when he will not abandon sin which is the cause of all his miseries? We cannot expect to be heard unless our prayer be accompanied by a firm purpose to amend.

I.

God desires to deliver us from every evil, and to share His blessings with us, but He wishes us to ask Him in prayer, and so to pray that we may deserve to be heard. How can God listen to the prayer of the sinner who prays to Him that he may be freed from his afflictions, whilst he is unwilling to abandon sin, which is the cause of his afflictions? When the impious Jeroboam stretched out his hand against the Prophet, who reproached him with his wretchedness, the Lord caused his hand to wither up, so that he could not draw it back. *And his hand which he stretched forth against him withered, and he was not able to draw it back again to him* (3 Kings xiii. 4). Then the king turned to the man of God, and besought him to beg of the Lord to restore his hand. Theodoret says with regard to this circumstance: "Fool that he was to have asked the Prophet's prayers for the restoration of his hand, and not pardon of his sins." Thus do many act; they beg of God to deliver them from their afflictions; they beg of the servants of God to avert by their prayers the threatened chastisements, but they do not seek to obtain the grace of abandoning their sins and changing their lives. And how can such persons hope to be

freed from chastisement when they will not remove its cause? It is accursed sin that arms the hand of the Lord with thunders to chastise and afflict us. "Punishment is the fine that is to be paid for sin," says Tertullian. The afflictions we suffer are a fine which must be paid by him whom sin has subjected to the penalty. St. Basil in like manner says that sin is a note of hand which we give against ourselves. Since we sin, we voluntarily go into debt to God's justice. It is not God, then, who makes us miserable; it is sin. *Sin maketh nations miserable* (Prov. xiv. 34). Sin it is which obliges God to create chastisements: *Famine, and affliction, and scourges, all these things are created for the wicked* (Ecclus. xl. 9).

Jeremias, addressing the sword of the Lord, says: *O thou sword of the Lord, how long will thou not be quiet? Go into thy scabbard, rest and be still* (Jer. xlvii. 6). But then, he goes on to say: *How shall it be quiet when the Lord hath given it a charge against Ascalon?* How can the sword of the Lord ever be at rest if sinners do not choose to abandon their sins, notwithstanding that the Lord has given a charge to his sword to execute vengeance as long as sinners shall continue to deserve it? But some will say, we make Novenas, we fast, we give alms, we pray to God: why are we not heard? To them the Lord replies, *When they fast, I will not hear their prayers, and if they offer holocausts and victims, I will not receive them; for I will consume them by the sword, and by famine, and by the pestilence* (Jer. xiv. 12). The Lord exclaims: How can I hear the prayers of those who beg to be freed from their afflictions, and not from their sins, because they do not wish to reform? What care I for their fasts, and their sacrifices, and their alms, when they will not change their lives? *I will consume them by the sword*. With all their prayers and devotions, and penitential exercises, I shall be obliged by My justice to punish them.

II.

We must not then trust to prayers and other devotions if they are not accompanied by a resolution to amend. You pray, you smite your breast, and call for mercy; but that is not enough. The impious Antiochus prayed, but the Scriptures tell us his prayers failed to obtain mercy from God. *Then this wicked man prayed to the Lord, of whom he was not to obtain mercy* (2 Mach. ix. 13). The unhappy man, finding himself devoured by worms, and

near his end, prayed for life, but without having sorrow for his sins.

What hope can we have in our Saints if we do not purpose to amend? Some say we have our Patron or some other Saint who will defend us; we have our Mother Mary to procure our deliverance. *Who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance. And think not to say within yourselves: We have Abraham for our father* (Matt. iii. 7, 8, 9). How can we think to escape punishment if we do not abandon sin? How can the Saints think of assisting us if we persist in exasperating the Lord? St. John Chrysostom asks of what use was Jeremias to the Jews? The Jews had Jeremias to pray for them, but, notwithstanding all the prayers of that holy Prophet, they were chastised, because they did not want to give up their sins. Beyond doubt, says the holy Doctor, the prayers of the Saints contribute much to obtain Divine mercy for us, but when? -- when we do penance. They are useful, but only when we do ourselves violence to abandon sin, to fly occasions, and return to God's favour.

The emperor Phocas, in order to defend himself from his enemies, raised walls and multiplied fortifications, but he heard a voice saying to him from Heaven: "You build walls, but when the enemy is within, the city is easily taken." We must then expel this enemy, which is sin, from our souls, otherwise God cannot exempt us from chastisement, because He is just, and cannot leave sin unpunished. Another time the citizens of Antioch prayed to Mary to avert from them a scourge which was on them; and whilst they were praying, St. Bertoldus heard the Divine Mother's voice from Heaven, saying: "Abandon your sins, and I will be propitious to you."

Let us, then, beg of the Lord to use mercy towards us, but let us pray as David prayed: *Lord, incline unto my aid* (Ps. lxi. 2). God wishes to aid us, but He wishes that we should aid ourselves, by doing all that depends upon us. "He who desires to be assisted," says Hilaretus, "must do all he can to assist himself." God wishes to save us, but we must not imagine that God will do all without our doing anything. St. Augustine says: "He who created you without your help, will not save you without your help."

Spiritual Reading

HOLY HUMILITY

VII. HUMILITY OF THE HEART OR WILL

Humility of the intellect consists, as we have seen, in esteeming oneself worthy of reproach and scorn; while humility of the will is a desire to be despised by others and taking pleasure in contempt. This is the more meritorious because an act of the will is more pleasing to God than an act of the intellect.

Speaking of humility of the will, St. Bernard says: "The first degree is, not to wish for power; the second, to wish to be in a state of subjection to authority; the third is, in subjection to bear injuries with equanimity." Such is the humility of the will or heart which Jesus Christ wished to teach us by His own example. *Learn of me*, said the Redeemer, *because I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt. xi. 29). Many have humility on their tongue, but not in their heart. "They, indeed," says St. Gregory, "confess with their lips that they are most wicked and most deserving of all sorts of chastisement; but they believe not what they say. For, when rebuked, they give way to disquietude, and deny that they are guilty of the fault for which they are corrected." To this class belonged a certain monk, who, as Cassian relates, used to say that he was a great sinner, and unworthy to breathe the breath of life. But when the Abbot Serapion corrected him for violating the Rule by idle visits to the cells of the other monks, he became greatly troubled. Seeing him disturbed, the abbot said: "Why, my son, are you so much disquieted? Hitherto you have called yourself a great sinner, and now you cannot bear from me a charitable admonition." Some there are who confess that their sins merit a thousand hells, and yet they cannot bear a word of admonition. Such people possess, indeed, humility in words, but know not the humility recommended by Jesus Christ, which is the humility of the heart.

There is, says the Holy Ghost, *one that humbleth himself wickedly, and his interior is full of deceit* (Ecclus. xix. 23). There are some who humble themselves, not from desire of being rebuked and despised, but through a motive of being esteemed humble and of being praised for their humility. But, according to St. Bernard, to seek praise for voluntary humiliations is not humility, but

the destruction of humility, for it changes humility itself into an object of pride. Speculative humility, says St. Vincent de Paul, presents a very beautiful aspect; but practical humility, because it is nothing else than the love of abjection and contempt, is an object of horror to flesh and blood. Hence St. John Climacus observes that the proof of true humility consists, not in confessing our sinfulness, but in rejoicing in the contempt due to sinners. "Self-disparagement," says the Saint, "is good, but to confirm the dispraise which others cast upon us, and not to resent it, but to delight in it, is still better." "When," says St. Gregory, "the humble man calls himself a sinner, he will not contradict others who say the same of him." No; when reproved for his faults he reasserts his own sinfulness. In a word, as St. Bernard says, "the truly humble man wishes, indeed, to be held in little estimation, but desires not to be praised for his humility." Instead of seeking to be esteemed for his humility he wishes to be regarded as a man deserving of contempt and full of imperfections; and because he deems himself worthy only of abjection, he delights in the humiliations which are heaped upon him. Hence, as St. Bernard teaches, "he converts humiliation into humility"; so that all the humiliations he receives only serve to render him more humble. St. Joseph Calasanctius used to say that "he who loves God seeks not to be reputed a saint, but to attain sanctity."

If you wish, then, to acquire humility of heart, you must, in the first place, shun all self-praise. *Let another praise thee*, says the Wise Man, *and not thy own mouth* (Prov. xxvii. 2). Self-praise never fails to earn the contempt, but seldom wins the respect of others. Remember that if you indulge in empty boasting, others will say and think of you what you yourself would say and think of a boaster. In speaking of your own concerns, seek always to humble and never to exalt yourself. Self-dispraise can do you no injury; but the smallest portion of unmerited self-commendation may be productive of great evil. "To extol yourself slightly above your deserts is," says St. Bernard, "a great evil." He who in passing through a door bends his head, is free from all danger of injury; but he who carries it too high may get a severe blow. Be careful, then, to speak of yourself humbly rather than boastingly, and to disclose your faults rather than your virtues. The

best rule is, never to speak well or ill of yourself, but to regard yourself as unworthy to be even named in conversation. It frequently happens that in saying what tends to our own confusion we indulge a secret and refined pride. For the confusion arising from the voluntary manifestation of our defects excites within us a desire of obtaining the praise or reputation of being humble. This rule is not to be observed in the tribunal of penance: on the contrary, it will be always useful to make known to the Confessor your defects, your evil inclinations; and, generally speaking, even the evil thoughts that pass through your mind. It is also very profitable to manifest, on some occasions, certain circumstances that redound to your shame. On such occasions be careful not to abstain from humbling your own pride.

Should it ever happen that you are compelled to listen to your own praise, endeavour to humble yourself, at least interiorly, by casting an eye at the reasons for self-contempt that have been already detailed. To the proud, says St. Gregory, praise, however undeserved, is delicious; but to the humble, even well-merited commendation is a source of grief and of affliction. *And being exalted*, says the Royal Prophet, *I have been humbled and troubled* (Ps. lxxxvii. 16). Like holy David, the humble man, says St. Gregory, is troubled at hearing his own praises. He sees that he has no claim to the virtues or to the good qualities ascribed to him; and he fears that by taking self-complacency in his good works he may lose whatever merit he has acquired before God, and that the Judge may say to him: *Thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime* (Luke xvi. 25). Whoever takes pleasure in listening to his own praise has already received his reward: he has no claim to any other remuneration. *As gold* says the Wise Man, *is tried in the furnace, so a man is tried by the mouth of him that praiseth* (Prov. xxvii. 21). Yes, a man's spirit is tried by praise: when the commendation of his virtues excites sentiments, not of pleasure nor of pride, but of shame and confusion, then, indeed, his humility appears. St. Francis Borgia and St. Aloysius were greatly afflicted whenever they heard themselves extolled. When you are praised or treated with respect, humble your soul and tremble lest the honour you receive should be to you an occasion of sin and of perdition. Consider that the esteem of men may prove your

greatest misfortune; by fomenting pride it may contaminate your heart, and thus be the cause of your damnation.

Keep always before your eyes the great saying of St. Francis of Assisi: *What I am before God, that I am, and no more*. Are you so foolish as to think that the esteem of men will render you more pleasing in the sight of God? When you are gratified and elated by the praises bestowed upon you, and are by them induced to think yourself better than others, you may be assured that, while men extol your virtues, God will cut you off. Be persuaded, then, that the praises of others will never make you more holy in the sight of God. St. Augustine says that as the reproach or slander of an enemy cannot deprive a man of the merit of his virtues, so the applause of a friend or admirer will not make him better than he really is. "A bad conscience," says the Saint, "is not healed by the praise of a flatterer, nor a good one wounded by the contumely of the reviler." Whenever, then, you hear your own praises, say in your heart, with St. Augustine: "I know myself better than they do; and God knows me better than I do myself." They, indeed, praise me, but I who see the state of my own soul better than they do, know that these praises are unmerited; God knows it still better than I do; He sees that I deserve neither honour nor respect, but all the contempt of earth and hell.

Evening Meditation

INTERIOR TRIALS

God is all goodness to those who seek Him. *The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him* (Lam. iii. 25). No one has ever put his trust in God, and had to remain abandoned by Him: *None had hoped in the Lord, and been confounded* (Ecclus. ii. 11). God lets Himself be found even by those who seek Him not. *I was found by them that did not seek me* (Rom. x. 20). With how much greater ease will He not allow Himself to be found by one who does seek Him! Let no one say that God has abandoned him; the Lord abandons none but the very obstinate who desire to live in sin; neither does He altogether abandon even these, but is ever going after them up to the time of their death, giving them graces for their succour, that so He may not see them lost.

When a soul is desirous to love Him, God cannot but love it, as He has Himself declared: *I love them that love me* (Prov. viii.

17). And whenever He hides Himself from these loving souls, He does so for their advantage only, that He may see them yet more desirous of finding His grace, and more closely united with Himself. When St. Catharine of Genoa was suffering aridity to such a degree that it seemed to her as if God had abandoned her, and that nothing remained to her as a ground for hope, it was then that she would say: "How happy I am in this state, deplorable even though it be! May my heart be broken to pieces, provided that my Love be glorified! O my dearest Love, if from this unhappy state of mine is produced but a single atom of glory for Thee, I pray that Thou wouldst leave me thus for all eternity!" And saying this, she would burst into a flood of tears in the midst of her desolation.

II.

You should know that souls that love the Crucified enter, in time of desolation, into a closer union with God in the interior of their heart. Nothing occasions so diligent a search for God as does desolation; neither is there anything that attracts God to the heart so much as desolation, since the acts of conformity to the Divine will which are made in desolation are more pure and perfect than others; and hence, the greater the desolation, the greater is the humility, the purer the resignation, the grander the confidence, the more fervent the prayers, and consequently the more abundant are the Divine graces and assistance.

Above all else attend to the exercise of Divine love. When God makes our heart His abode, His love itself despoils it of every irregular affection; nevertheless, let it be your endeavour to make frequent repetitions of acts of Divine love, saying: My God, I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee; and I hope to die with these words on my lips: *My God, I love Thee!* The Saints tell us that souls ought to make acts of love as often as they breathe.

In time of prayer, make an unreserved offering of yourself to God many times over. Say to Him in all sincerity: My Jesus, I give myself to Thee without reserve. I wish to be all Thine own, all Thine own; and if I know not how to give myself as I ought, do Thou, my Jesus, take me, and make me all Thine own. St. Teresa made an entire offering of herself to God fifty times every day. This is a practice which even you can follow. Therefore,

make a continual offering to Him of your will, in these words of St. Paul: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* (Acts ix. 6). This one act was enough to transform St. Paul from a persecutor of the Church into a vessel of election. For this purpose, too, pray to God frequently in the words of David: *Teach me to do thy will* (Ps. cxlii. 10). To this end should be directed all the prayers that you offer to God and to the Mother of God, to your Guardian Angel, and to all your Patron Saints, that they may obtain for you the grace perfectly to do the will of God; in short, let this one expression: *Fiat voluntas Tua!* serve you as a remedy for all your evils, and as a means of attaining all that is good.

Wednesday--Twenty-second Week after Pentecost **Morning Meditation**

THE HAPPINESS THAT COMES FROM CONFORMITY TO GOD'S WILL

He who is conformed in everything to the Divine will, enjoys perpetual peace even in this life. *Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad* (Prov. xii. 21). At the mere word -- *the Will of God* -- St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to feel so much delight she would fall into an ecstasy of love.

I.

He who is conformed in everything to the Divine will, enjoys perpetual peace even in this world. *Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad* (Prov. xii. 21). Yes, for a man cannot enjoy greater happiness than that which arises from the accomplishment of all his wishes. He who wills only what God wills, sees always his own will done; for whatever happens to him happens by the will of God. If such a soul, says Salvian, be humbled, it desires humiliations; if it be poor, it delights in poverty, wishing whatever happens, and thus it leads a happy life. Let cold, heat, wind, or rain come, and he that is united with the will of God, says: I wish for this cold, this heat, this wind, and this rain, because God wills them. If loss of property, persecution, or sickness befall, he says: I wish to be poor, to be persecuted, to be sick, because such is the will of God. He who reposes in the Divine will, and is resigned to whatever the Lord does, is like a man who stands above the clouds, and there, calm and secure, beholds the

tempest raging below. This is the peace which, according to the Apostle, *surpasseth all understanding* (Phil. iv. 7), which exceeds all the delights of the world; a perpetual peace, subject to no vicissitudes. *A holy man continueth in wisdom as the sun, but a fool is changed as the moon* (Ecclus. xxvii. 12). Fools -- that is, sinners -- are changed like the moon, which increases today, grows less tomorrow. Today they laugh, tomorrow they weep; today all joy and meekness, tomorrow, all sadness and disturbed; in a word, they change with every wind. But the just man is like the sun, always the same, and uniformly tranquil whatever happens; for his peace rests on conformity to the Divine will. *And on earth peace to men of good will* (Luke ii. 14). At the mere words the *Will of God*, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to feel such delight she would fall into an ecstasy of love. When the will is united with the will of God, crosses may produce some pain in the inferior part, but in the superior part peace will always reign. *Your joy no man shall take from you* (Job xvi. 22). But how great the folly of those who oppose the will of God! What God wishes will certainly happen; *for who resisteth his will?* (Rom. ix. 19). They, therefore, must bear the cross, but without fruit and without peace. *Who hath resisted him, and hath had peace?* (Job ix. 4).

And what else but our welfare does God will? *This is the will of your God, your sanctification* (1 Thess. iv. 3). He wishes to see us saints, that we may be at peace in this life, and happy in the next. Let us remember that the crosses which come to us from God *work together unto good* (Rom. viii. 28). Even chastisements are inflicted on us in this life, not for our destruction, but that we may amend, and gain eternal beatitude. *Let us believe that these scourges of the Lord ... have happened for our amendment, and not for our destruction* (Judith viii. 27). God loves us so ardently, that He not only desires, but is solicitous for, the salvation of each of us. *The Lord is careful for me* (Ps. xxxix. 18). And what will He deny us after having given us His Son? *He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also with him given us all things* (Rom. viii. 32).

O Jesus, my Redeemer, Thou hast sacrificed Thy life on the Cross in order to become the cause of my salvation; have mercy on me, then, and save me; do not permit a soul Thou hast re-

deemed with so many pains, and so much love, to hate Thee for eternity in hell. Thou canst do nothing more to oblige me to love Thee. This Thou gavest me to understand, when, before expiring on Calvary, Thou didst utter these loving words: *It is consummated*. But how have I repaid Thy love? In the past, I can truly say I have done all I could to displease Thee, and to oblige Thee to hate me. I thank Thee for having borne with me so patiently, and for now giving me time to repair my ingratitude, and to love Thee before I die. Yes, I wish to love Thee, and I wish to love Thee ardently, my Saviour, my God, my Love, and my All!

II.

Let us, then, abandon ourselves for good into the hands of that God Who is solicitous for our welfare as long as we remain in this world. *Casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you* (1 Peter v. 7). Think of Me, said our Lord to St. Catharine of Sienna, and I will always think of you. Let us often say with the spouse in the Canticles: *My beloved to me, and I to him* (Cant. ii. 16). My Beloved thinks of my welfare, and I will think only of pleasing Him, and of uniting myself to His holy will. We ought, says the holy Abbot Nilus, to pray, not that God would do what we wish, but that we may do what He wishes.

He who always acts in this manner will lead a happy life, and die a happy death. He who dies with entire resignation to the Divine will, has a moral certainty of his salvation. But he who is not united with the Divine will during life, will not be united with it at death, and will not be saved. We should endeavour to make ourselves familiar with some sayings of the Scripture, by which we may always keep ourselves united with the will of God. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* (Acts ix. 6). Lord, tell me what Thou wishest me to do; I am ready and willing to do it. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke i. 38). Behold! My soul is Thy servant; command, and Thou shalt be obeyed. *I am thine; save me* (Ps. cxviii. 94). Save me, O Lord, and then do what Thou plearest with me; save Thine own, O Lord, I am no longer mine. When any serious cross or adversity happens to us, let us say: *Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight* (Matt. xi. 26). My God, this has pleased Thee; let it be done. Above all, let the third petition of the Lord's prayer be dear to us: *Thy will be done*

on earth as it is in heaven. Let us repeat it several times and with fervour. Happy we, if we live and die saying: *Thy will be done! Thy will be done!*

O my God, I give Thee my whole will, my entire liberty and all that I possess. From this hour I sacrifice my life to Thee, accepting the death Thou wilt send me, along with all the pains and circumstances that will accompany it. From this moment I unite this sacrifice of mine to the great sacrifice of Thy life, which Thou, my Jesus didst offer for me on the Cross. I wish to die in order to do Thy will. Ah! through the merits of Thy Passion, give me grace to be in life, resigned to the arrangements of Thy Providence. And when death comes, grant that I may embrace, with an entire conformity Thy holy will. I wish to die, O my Jesus, in order to please Thee. I wish to die saying: *Thy will be done.* Mary, my Mother, it was thus thou didst die; ah! obtain for me the grace that I too may die in this manner.

Live, Jesus, our Love, and Mary, our hope!

Spiritual Reading

HOLY HUMILITY

VIII. HUMILITY OF THE HEART OR WILL

As you ought carefully to abstain from all complacency in the praises that you receive from others, so you must abstain with still greater caution from seeking any office of rank or dignity. "You must," as St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi says, "avoid with all possible care every exercise that is apt to attract attention, for it is in such exercises that pride delights."

"All worldly honours," says St. Hilary, "are the affairs of the devil." Worldly honours are the means by which Satan gains many souls for hell. And, if the ambition for honours occasions great ruin in a worldling, it is productive of far greater havoc in one who is consecrated to God. Addressing her own Community, St. Teresa said: "Should a Judas be ever found among you, expel her at once, as a source of infection; and deprive for ever of all hope of success in her projects the nun who attempts to seek superiority over others. I would rather see this monastery burnt to the ground than ever see ambition enter into it." Similar were the sentiments of St. Jane Frances de Chantal. "I would," says the Saint, "sooner see my monastery buried in the sea, than

ambition or the desire of office enter it."

Listen to the wise remarks of Peter de Blois on this subject. In one of his letters he describes the pestiferous effects of ambition, and its frightful ravages in the souls of Christians. Ambition, he says, though full of uncharitableness, puts on the garb of charity. Charity suffers all things for the attainment of eternal goods: ambition, too, endures every hardship, but only for the acquisition of the miserable honours of this world. Charity is kind, but particularly to the poor and the abject; ambition, too, abounds in benevolence, but only to the rich and powerful, who can gratify its cravings. Charity bears all things to please God; ambition submits to every wrong, but only through the vain motive of obtaining honours or office. O God! to what annoyance, inconvenience, fatigues, fears, expenses, and even reproaches and insults, must the ambitious submit, for the attainment of the dignity to which they aspire! Finally, charity believes and hopes for all that regards the glory of eternity; but ambition believes and hopes only for what regards the empty honours of this life.

But, in the end, what is the fruit of all the labours of the ambitious? They only attain dignity which contents not the heart, and which renders them, in the eyes of the others, objects of contempt rather than of respect. "By the sole desire of it," says St. Teresa, "your glory is lost: the greater the dignity obtained, the more disgraceful it is to the person who has procured it. For the more he has laboured for its attainment, the more he has shown himself unworthy of it." St. Jane Frances de Chantal said that "they who esteem themselves most deserving of office are the most unworthy of it: because they want humility, which is the best disposition for the fulfilment of an office." God grant that the dignity which the ambitious procure may not be the cause of their eternal ruin. Father Vincent Carafa, of the Society of Jesus, having once visited a dying friend, to whom an office of great emolument, but at the same time of great danger, had been given, was requested by the sick man to obtain from God the restoration of his health. No, my friend, replied the Father, I shall not abuse my affection for you: desirous of your salvation, God calls you to another life while you are in a state of grace. I know not whether, if restored to health, you would save your soul

in the office which has been offered to you. The sick man peacefully accepted death, and expired with sentiments of joy and resignation. "It is scarcely possible," says St. Bonaventure, "that he who delights in honours should not be in great danger."

St. Francis Xavier used to say that to desire respect and honour or to take complacency in them, is unworthy of a Christian, who should have always before his eyes the ignominies of Jesus Christ. How much more unsuited must such foolish ambition be to those who are consecrated to Christ? St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say that "the honour of such persons consists in being the lowest of all, and in having a horror of being preferred to any." "Let your ambition be to be the most humble and the most dear to Jesus Christ," says St. Thomas of Villanova. And St. Bonaventure says that if you desire to be a saint, you must endeavour to lead a life of obscurity and contempt. "Love," says the Saint, "to be unknown and despised," so that no attention whatever may be shown to you.

Envy not those who surpass you in talent and learning, or who are more highly esteemed than you are. Envy those only who are your superiors in charity and humility. Humiliation is preferable to all the applause and honour the world can bestow. The most useful of all sciences is that which teaches you to humble and despise yourself, and to delight in being treated with contempt. God has not given you great abilities, because they might lead you to destruction. Be content, then, with the little talent that you have received: let the want of talent be to you an occasion of practising humility, which is the safest, and indeed the only way to save your soul and to become a saint. If others surpass you in ability, take care to outstrip all in the practice of humility. *But in humility*, says St. Paul, *let each esteem others better than themselves* (Phil. ii. 3). They who are invested with authority over others are exposed to great danger of being puffed up with pride, of losing the Divine light, and of thus becoming like senseless beasts that seek only the miserable goods of the earth, and never think of the glory of eternity. *Man*, says the Psalmist, *when he was in honour did not understand: he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them* (Ps. xlviii. 13).

Evening Meditation

INTERIOR TRIALS

I.

When you experience more aridity than usual, occupy yourself in the delight of the infinite joy that God enjoys. He is the object of our love, and the most perfect act of love even the Saints in Heaven can perform is to rejoice in the beatitude of God immeasurably more than in their own.

Meditate constantly on the Passion of Jesus Christ. Jesus suffering out of His love for us is the object which most forcibly attracts our hearts. If, while meditating on the Mysteries of the Passion, the Lord grants you any feeling of tenderness, receive it with thankfulness; but whenever you do not experience this, you must know that you will always derive from the practice great comfort for your soul. Frequently go more especially to the Garden of Gethsemani, after the example of St. Teresa, who used to say that she found Jesus there alone; and on considering Him when in affliction so great that He falls into an agony, sweats blood, and declares His sorrow to be such as to be enough to cause Him to die, you will readily find comfort in any afflictions of your own, seeing that He endures it all out of love for you. And at the sight of Jesus preparing Himself to die for you, do you likewise prepare yourself to die for Him. And when you experience in your distress more affliction than usual, then say what St. Thomas the Apostle said to the other disciples: *Let us also go, that we may die with him* (Jo. xi. 16). Let us die with Jesus. Go likewise to Calvary, where you will find Him expiring on the Cross, consumed by suffering; and seeing Him in that condition, it will be impossible for you not to be ready willingly to suffer pain of every kind for a God Who is dying of sufferings undergone through His love for you. St. Paul protested that He neither knew nor wished to know anything in this life save Jesus crucified: *For I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified* (1 Cor. ii. 2). Let him who would preserve devotion within his soul, says St. Bonaventure, ever keep the eyes of his heart fixed upon Christ dying upon the Cross. And thus, in all your fears, look at Jesus crucified, and take courage, and brace yourself up to suffer through love for Him.

O Lord, take not Thyself from me, and then take from me all besides, as may seem good in Thy sight. My Love, draw me after Thee, and then it matters not though Thou take from me the consolation of being conscious of it; but let it be forcibly that Thou drawest me out of the mire of my sins. Help Thy servants whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood. I wish to be all Thine own, cost what it may; I wish to love Thee with all my strength; but what can I do myself? Thy Blood is my hope. O Mary, Mother of God, my refuge, neglect not to pray for me in all my tribulations. First of all in the Blood of Jesus Christ, and then in thy prayers, do I trust for my eternal salvation. In thee, O Lady, have I hoped, I shall not be confounded forever. Obtain for me the grace ever to love my God in this life and in eternity, and I ask for nothing more.

II.

And when in your state of desolation why are you disposed to entertain the suspicion that God is angry? You ought not to grieve, but rather to be consoled, seeing that God is dealing with you as He deals with the souls of those of His servants who are most dear to Him. And how has He not dealt with His own Son, of Whom it is written in Holy Scripture: *The Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity* (Is. liii. 10). It was His will to see Him consumed and crushed under sufferings and torments.

If you fear that God may abandon you on account of your ingratitude, do that which was done by the two disciples, who, as they were going to Emmaus, were accompanied by Jesus in the guise of a pilgrim. When they were near the place, and Jesus *made as though he would go farther* (Luke xxiv.), they constrained Him saying: *Stay with us because it is towards evening* (Ib.). And then He was pleased to enter into the house, and to remain with them. And thus, when it seems to you as if it were the Lord's will to leave you, constrain Him to remain with you, saying to him: My Jesus, stay with me, remain with me; I wish that Thou wouldst not leave me. If Thou dost leave me, to whom shall I have to go for consolation and salvation? *Lord, to whom shall we go?* (Jo. vi. 69). And so pray to Jesus lovingly and tenderly; and do not fear but that, to a certainty, He will not leave you. Then say with the Apostle: *Neither death, nor life ... nor any other creature,*

shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. viii. 38). Say to Him: My Saviour, show Thyself as much displeased with me as Thou wilt; but know that not the fear of death, nor a desire for life, nor any other of this world's creatures, shall ever have power to separate me from love of Thee. Or, again, say what was said by St. Francis de Sales, when a young man and in a state of aridity, in answer to the devil, who suggested to him that he was destined to go to hell: "And since I shall not be able to love my God in eternity, I wish to love Him at least in this life as far as it lies in my power." And so he recovered his cheerfulness. *O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt* (Matt. xiv. 31). God is infinite Goodness, and, therefore, he who serves God and is sad does not honour Him but rather dishonours Him. How can you doubt of Jesus pardoning you, says St. Bernard, when He has in fact affixed your sins to the Cross whereon He died for you with the very nails which pierced His own hands and feet.

Ah, my crucified Jesus, Thou dost already know that, out of love for Thee, I have left all; but after that Thou hast caused me to leave my all, I find that Thou Thyself hast left me too. But what am I saying, O my Love? Have pity upon me; it is not I who speak; it is my weakness that makes me speak thus. For myself, I deserve every kind of suffering for such great sins as mine have been. Thou hast left me, as I have deserved, and hast withdrawn from me that loving assistance of Thine where-with Thou hast so often consoled me; notwithstanding however disconsolate and abandoned I may be, I protest that it is my will ever to love Thee and to bless Thee. Provided that Thou dost not deprive me of the grace of being able to love Thee, deal with me as Thou pleasest. I will say to Thee, in the words of a beloved servant of Thine:

"I love Thee, though I seem An enemy in Thy sight: Repel me as Thou wilt, I will ever follow Thee."

Thursday--Twenty-second Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"MY MEAT IS TO DO THE WILL OF HIM THAT SENT ME."

In this mortal life, *meat* is that which preserves our life. Our Divine Lord said it was His *meat* to do the will of His Father. *Life in his will* (Ps. xxix. 6). Our life depends upon our doing the Divine will; he that does it not, is dead.

I.

My meat is to do the will of him that sent me (Jo. iv. 34). In this mortal life, *meat* is that which preserves our life. Our Divine Lord said it was His *meat* to do the will of His Father. *Life in his will* (Ps. xxix. 6). Our life depends upon our doing the Divine will; he that does it not, is dead.

The Wise Man says: *They that are faithful in love shall rest in him* (Wis. iii. 9). They who have little love for God will desire that God should agree with them; that He should conform to their pleasure and do whatever they desire. But they who truly love God unite their wills to His will and are satisfied with everything that God does with them. With everything that comes, with every adversity, sickness, dishonour, weariness, loss of property and friends, they have ever on their lips and in their hearts these words: *Thy will be done!*

God desires only that which is best for us, that is our sanctification. Let us take care, therefore, to unite our will ever to the will of God and thus we shall be able to convince and calm our minds, recollecting that everything that God does is the best thing that can befall us. Whoever neglects this will never find true peace. All the perfection that can be attained in this world, which is a place of purification, and consequently a place of pains and troubles, consists in suffering patiently those things that are opposed to our self-love; and, in order to suffer with patience, there is no more efficacious means than a willingness to suffer, in order to do the will of God. *Submit thyself, then, to him, and be at peace* (Job. xxii. 21). He that agrees with the Divine will in everything is always at peace, and nothing that happens to him can make him unhappy. *Whatsoever shall befall the just man,*

it shall not make him sad (Pro. xii. 21). But why is the just man never unhappy under any circumstances? Because he knows well that whatever happens in the world, happens through the will of God.

II.

The Divine will, so to say, draws out all the thorns and bitterness of the tribulations that come upon us in this world. The hymn which speaks of the Divine will thus sings: "Thou changest crosses into joys: Thou makest even death seem sweet; he that can unite himself to Thee knows neither cross nor fear. Oh, how worthy art Thou of love, O will of God!"

Hear the excellent counsel of St. Peter, in order to find a perfect peace in the midst of the toils of this present life: *Casting all your care upon Him; for he hath care for you* (1 Peter, v. 7). And if it is God Who thus gives thought for our good, why should we weary ourselves with so many anxieties, as if our happiness depended on our own cares, and not rather abandon ourselves into the hands of God, upon Whom all depends? *Cast thy care upon the Lord*, says David, *and he shall sustain thee* (Ps. liv. 23). Let us strive to obey God in everything He commands and advises, and then let us leave to Him the care of our salvation, and He will take care to give us all the means that are necessary, in order that we may be saved: *Thy life shall be saved, because thou hast had confidence in me* (Jer. xxxix. 18). Whosoever places his whole confidence in God is sure of eternal salvation.

In a word, whoever does the will of God enters into Paradise; and he that does it not, shall not be saved. Some people trust their eternal salvation to certain devotions, or to certain outward works of piety, and yet bow not to God's will. But Jesus Christ says: *Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. vii. 21).

Thus, if we desire to be saved, and to acquire a perfect union with God, let us take care to be ever offering up the prayer of David: *Teach me, O Lord, to do thy will* (Ps. cxlii. 10). And for this purpose, let us strip ourselves of our own will, and give it wholly to God, without reserve. When we give to God our property in alms, our food in fastings, our blood in scourgings, we give him

our possessions; but when we give Him our will, we give Him our whole selves; wherefore he that gives to God his entire will is able to say: Lord, having given Thee all my will, I have nothing more to give Thee. The sacrifice of our own will is the most acceptable sacrifice we can make to God; and God pours forth His graces abundantly upon him who makes it.

Spiritual Reading

HOLY HUMILITY

IX. PATIENCE UNDER CORRECTION

To preserve humility you must not allow yourself to be disquieted by reproof or correction. He who, when rebuked, yields to disquietude, shows that he has not yet acquired humility, and therefore should beg of God that holy virtue, which is so necessary for salvation. Father Rodriguez says that some resemble the hedgehog: when touched they become all thorns, and instantly break out into words of impatience, of reproach, and even of murmuring. "We have known many," says St. Gregory, "who, when no one accuses them, confess themselves sinners; but when they have been corrected for a fault, they endeavour with all their might to defend themselves, and to remove the imputation of guilt." Such ought to attend to the words of the Holy Ghost: *He that hateth to be reprov'd, walketh in the trace of a sinner* (Ecclus. xxi. 7). Whoever is disturbed by correction, walks not in the way of the just, but in the path of sinners -- the road to hell.

St. Bernard says: Some are displeased with the physician who cures them by reproof, and are not angry with the man who wounds them by flattery. Terrible is the threat of the wise man against all who spurn correction: *Because they have hated instruction ... and despised all my reproof, the prosperity of fools shall destroy them* (Prov. i. 29). The prosperity of fools consists in their privation, in their contempt of advice, and therefore they are miserably lost.

St. John Chrysostom says that the just man when discovered in a fault weeps for his fall. The sinner, too, says the Saint, if detected in a criminal act, weeps -- not for his transgression, but because his guilt is discovered; and instead of repenting, he seeks to defend his conduct, and pours out his indignation on the friend who corrects him. Have you indulged in anger against

those from whose charity you have received correction? And if you have, are you disposed to repeat such conduct? Give thanks, says St. Bernard, to him who has rebuked you: be not sad when he shall have shown you the way of salvation. Is it not most unjust to be displeased with him who points out to you the way to eternal life? You know that you are full of miseries and defects. The only remedy for them is to humble your soul when you perceive them, or when others make them known to you. "Humility," says St. Augustine, "is our perfection." Since our manner of practising the virtues of the Gospel is so full of imperfections, let us at least be perfect in humbling ourselves, and in rejoicing under the confusion occasioned by the reproofs we receive for the faults we have committed. It may be here observed, that to our pride undeserved reproach is more tolerable than well-merited censure, because the latter is more painful to self-love. When justly reprov'd, be careful to offer to God, in atonement for your transgression, the shame and confusion you experience. Make use of that confusion as a means of repairing your fault; crush the scorpion on the wound it has inflicted, and be assured that the mercy of the Lord in granting you pardon will be proportioned to your humility in receiving correction.

When corrected for a fault, be careful never to defend or excuse yourself, and thus you will practise an act of humility highly pleasing to God. St. Teresa says that such an act is more profitable than to be present at ten sermons. Should you, then, ever receive an unmerited reprimand, abstain for the sake of holy humility, from the vindication of your conduct, unless, to prevent scandal, such vindication be necessary. To a Religious who requested her director -- Father Anthony Torres -- to vindicate her with a certain person who had charged her with a fault, the Father replied: "I am astonished at your request. I pity your weakness. I suppose that the occupations in which you were engaged for the last few days must have soon obliterated from your mind the remembrance of the doleful narrative which you so lately heard of the sorrows of your Spouse, Who had been called a seducer. It is impossible that you can have remembered the calumnies and the blasphemies that were uttered against Him, and at the same time request me to vindicate your charac-

ter. Filled with sentiments of shame and confusion, and prostrate before the Crucifix, implore of your crucified Spouse the pardon of your infidelity. Resolve neither on this, nor on any other occasion, to justify or excuse your conduct, but always acknowledge, however galling such acknowledgment may be, that you have erred. For your sake the Saviour died on the Cross, saturated with opprobrium; and it is by humiliation that you are to obtain the possession of your Spouse."

Evening Meditation

THE MEANS TO ACQUIRE THE PERFECT LOVE OF GOD

I.

To acquire the perfect love of God we must adopt the means of becoming saints.

The first means is, to detach the heart from all creatures, and to banish from the soul every affection which is not for God. The first question which the Ancient Fathers of the Desert used to put to every one who sought admission into their society was: "Do you bring an empty heart, that the Holy Ghost may be able to fill it?" If the world be not expelled from the heart, God cannot enter it. St. Teresa said: "Detach the heart from creatures; seek God, and you shall find Him." St. Augustine writes, that the Romans worshipped thirty thousand gods; but among these gods the Roman Senate refused to admit Jesus Christ. Because, said they, He is a proud God, Who requires that He alone should be adored. This they had reason to say, for our God wishes to have entire possession of our souls. He is, as St. Jerome says, a jealous God. And therefore He will have no rival in the affections of our heart. Hence the spouse in the Canticles is called an enclosed garden. *My sister, my spouse is a garden enclosed* (Cant. iv. 12). The soul, then, that wishes to belong entirely to God must be closed to all love which is not for God.

Hence the Divine Spouse is said to be wounded by one of the eyes of His spouse. *Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes* (Cant. iv. 9). One of her eyes signifies, that in all her thoughts and actions the only end of the spouse is to please God, while, in their devout exercises, worldlings propose to themselves different objects -- sometimes their own interest, sometimes to please their friends,

and sometimes to please themselves. But the Saints seek only to please God, to Whom they turn, and say: *What have I in heaven? and besides thee, what do I desire upon earth? ... Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever* (Ps. lxxii. 25). We should do the same if we wished to be saints. If, says St. John Chrysostom, we do a thing to please God, why should we seek any other reward? Or what greater reward can a creature wish for than to please its Creator? Hence, in all we desire or do, we should seek nothing but God. A certain solitary, named Zeno, walking through the desert, absorbed in meditation, met the Emperor Macedonius going to hunt. The Emperor asked him what he was doing. In answer, the solitary said: You go in quest of game; I seek God alone. St. Francis de Sales used to say, that the pure love of God consumes all that is not God.

II.

Moreover, to love God with our whole heart, it is necessary to love Him without reserve. Hence we must love Him with a love of *preference*. We must prefer Him before every other good, and must be resolved to lose a thousand lives, rather than forfeit His friendship. We must say with St. Paul: *Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God* (Rom. viii. 38). We must also love Him with a love of *benevolence*, desiring to see Him loved by all; and therefore, if we love God, we should seek as much as possible to kindle in others the fire of His love, or, at least, should pray for the conversion of all who do not love Him. We must love Him with a love *sorrowful*, that regrets every offence offered to Him more than any evil we could suffer. We must love Him with a love of *conformity to the Divine will*. The principal office of love is to unite the wills of the lovers, and to make the soul say: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* (Acts ix. 6). Lord, tell me what Thou dost wish from me; I desire to do it. I have no wish of my own: I will only what Thou willest. Hence, we ought frequently to offer ourselves to God, without reserve, that He may do with us, and with all we have, whatever pleases Him. We must love God with a love of *patience*. This is that strong love by which true lovers are known. *Love is strong as death* (Cant. viii. 6). "There is nothing so difficult,"

says St. Augustine, "that the fire of love will not conquer it." For, adds the Saint, in doing what we do for the love of God, labour is not felt, or, if it be felt, the very labour is loved. St. Vincent de Paul used to say that love is measured by the desire of the soul to suffer and be humbled, in order to please God.

Let God be pleased, though it should cost us the loss of all things even our life. To gain all, it is necessary to leave all. *All for All*, said Thomas a Kempis. The reason we do not become saints, as St. Teresa says, is because, as we do not give God all our affections, so He does not give us His perfect love. We must, then, say with the spouse in the Canticles: *My Beloved to me, and I to him* (Cant. ii. 16). My Beloved has given Himself entirely to me: it is but just that I give myself without reserve to Him. St. John Chrysostom says, that when a soul gives herself entirely to God, she no longer frets about ignominies or sufferings; she loses the desire of all things; and not finding repose in any creature, she is always in search of her Beloved; her sole concern is to find her Beloved.

Friday--Twenty-second Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

JESUS "DESPISED AND THE MOST ABJECT OF MEN"

We have seen him ... despised and the most abject of men (Is. liii. 2, 3). This great prodigy was once seen upon earth -- the Son of God, the Lord of all Creation, the King of Heaven, despised as the most abject of men! Ah, how few there are, even among Christians, who reflect on the sorrows and ignominies which this Saviour endured for our sakes!

I.

We have seen him, says the Prophet Isaias, *despised and the most abject of men*. This great prodigy was once seen upon the earth -- the Son of God, the King of Heaven, the Lord of all Creation, despised as the most abject of men! St. Anselm says that Jesus Christ wished to be humbled and despised in such a manner that it would be impossible for Him to endure greater humiliations or contempt. He was treated as a person of mean condition. *Is not this* said the Jews, *the carpenter's son?* (Matt. xiii. 55). He was despised on account of His country: *Can anything of good come*

from Nazareth? (Jo. i. 46). He was called a madman: *He is mad; why hear you him?* (Jo. x. 20). He was considered a glutton and a friend of wine: *Behold a man that is a glutton and a drinker of wine* (Luke vii. 34). He was called a sorcerer: *By the prince of devils he casteth out devils* (Matt. ix. 34). And also a heretic: *Do we not say well that thou art a Samaritan?* (Jo. viii. 48).

But during His Passion He suffered still greater insults. He was treated as a blasphemer: when He declared that He was the Son of God, Caiphas said to the other priests: *Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy: what think you? But they answering, said: He is guilty of death* (Matt. xxvi. 65, 66). As soon as Jesus was declared guilty of blasphemy, some began to spit in His face, and others to buffet Him. Then, indeed, was fulfilled the prediction of Isaïas: *I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them; I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spit upon me* (Is. 1. 6). Jesus was treated too as a false prophet: *Prophecy unto us, O Christ; who is he that struck Thee* (Matt. xxvi. 68). The injury done Him by His own disciple Peter, who denied Him three times, and swore he had never known Him, added to the pain our Saviour suffered from the ignominies of that night.

Let us, O devout souls, go to our afflicted Lord, in that prison in which He is abandoned by all, and accompanied only by His enemies, who contend with each other in insulting and maltreating Him. Let us thank Him for all He suffers for us with so much patience: and let us console Him by acts of sorrow for the insults we have ourselves offered to Him; for we too have treated Him with contempt, and by our sins have denied Him, and declared that we knew Him not.

Ah, my amiable Redeemer, I would wish to die of grief at the thought of having given so much pain to Thy Heart, which has loved me so ardently. Ah, forget the great offences I have offered Thee, and look at me with that loving look which Thou didst cast on Peter after he denied Thee, and which made him bewail his sins unceasingly till death. O great Son of God, O infinite Love, Who dost suffer for the very men that hate and maltreat Thee! Thou art adored by the Angels, O infinite majesty! Thou wouldst confer too great an honour on men in permitting them

to kiss Thy feet! And yet, O God, Thou didst allow Thyself on that night to be made an object of mockery to so vile a rabble! My despised Jesus, make me suffer contempt for Thy sake. How can I refuse insults, when I see that Thou, my God, hast borne so many for the love of me? Ah, my crucified Jesus, make me know Thee and love Thee.

II.

Alas, how shameful is the cold contempt with which men treat the Passion of Jesus Christ! How few are there, even among Christians, who reflect on the sorrows and ignominies which this Redeemer has endured for our sake. We barely remember in a passing way the Passion of Jesus Christ, during the last days of Holy Week, when the Church renews the remembrance of His death by its mournful chant, by the nakedness of its altars, the darkness of its temples, and by the silence of its bells. But, during the rest of the year, we think as little of the Passion of the Redeemer as if it were a fable, or as if He had died for others and not for us! O God, how great must be the torture of the damned in hell when they see all a God suffered for their salvation, and that they voluntarily brought themselves to perdition!

My Jesus, do not permit me to be among the number of the miserable damned. No; I will never cease to think of the love Thou hast shown me in bearing so many torments and ignominies for me. Help me to love Thee, and always to remember the love Thou hast borne me.

Spiritual Reading

HOLY HUMILITY

X. PATIENCE IN BEARING CONTEMPT

If you wish to acquire perfect humility, accept in peace all the contempt and bad treatment you may receive. These are easily borne by all who truly believe that in punishment of their sins they merit nothing but scoffs and insults. Humiliation is the touchstone of sanctity. St. John Chrysostom says that to receive an affront with meekness is the most certain proof of virtue. In his History of Japan, Father Crasset relates that during the last persecution, in consequence of having received an insult without resenting it, a certain Augustinian missionary, though disguised, was instantly taken for a Christian, and cast into prison, by the

idolaters, who asserted that no one but a Christian could practise such virtue.

Some, says St. Francis of Assisi, imagine that sanctity consists in the recital of many prayers or in the performance of works of penance; but, not understanding the great merit of patience under insult, they cannot bear an injurious word. You will acquire more merit by meekly receiving an affront than by fasting ten days on bread and water. It will sometimes happen that a privilege that is refused to you will be conceded to others; that what you say will be treated with contempt, while the words of others are heard with respectful attention; that while the actions of others are the theme of general praise, and they are appointed to positions of honour, you are passed over unnoticed. If you accept in peace all these humiliations, and if you recommend to God those from whom you receive the least respect, then indeed, as St. Dorotheus says, it will be manifest that you are truly humble. To them you are particularly indebted, since by their reproaches they cure your pride -- the most malignant of all diseases that lead to spiritual death. Because they deem themselves worthy of all honours, the proud convert their humiliations into an occasion of pride. But because the humble consider themselves deserving only of opprobrium, their humiliations serve to increase their humility. "That man," says St. Bernard, "is truly humble, who converts humiliation into humility."

Voluntary humiliations, for example, to serve the sick, and such like, are very profitable; but to embrace with cheerfulness, for the love of Jesus Christ, the humiliations that come from others, such as reproofs, accusations, insults, and derision, is still more meritorious. *Gold and silver*, says the Holy Ghost, *are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation* (Ecclus. ii. 5). As gold is tried in the fire, so a man's perfection is proved by humiliations. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say that "untried virtue is not virtue." He who does not suffer contempt with a tranquil mind shall never attain the spirit of perfection. *My spikenard sent forth the odour thereof* (Cant. i. 11).

The spikenard is an odoriferous plant, whose scent is drawn forth only by friction or bruising. Oh! what an odour of sweetness does that humble soul exhale who embraces in peace all

manner of contempt, and delights in seeing herself maltreated and despised. A monk by the name of Zachary, being asked the best means of attaining humility, took his cowl, put it under his feet, and trampling on it, said: "He who takes pleasure in being treated like this cowl is truly humble."

There are some who imagine that they are humble because they feel a strong conviction of their own miseries and a deep sorrow for their past sins. But they will not submit to humiliations, and cannot endure the slightest want of respect or esteem. They acknowledge that they are worthy of all sorts of ignominy, but cannot bear with the least mark of inattention. On the contrary, they seek continually to be treated with respect and honour. *There is*, says the Holy Ghost, *one that humbleth himself wickedly, and his interior is full of deceit* (Ecclus. xix. 23). There are some who practise external humility, by confessing that they are the worst of sinners, but in their hearts they seek after honours and the esteem of men. I hope you do not belong to that class of Christians.

Be persuaded of the truth of what Father Alvarez used to say, that the time of humiliation is the time for putting off our many miseries and for acquiring great merits. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say that crosses and ignominies are the greatest favours that God is accustomed to bestow upon His own. Hence she fervently exhorted Religious to place all their happiness in being treated with contempt. But, above all, it is necessary to keep before your eyes what the Redeemer has said, that happy is he who is hated and rejected by men. *Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of Man's sake* (Luke vi. 22). The Apostle St. Peter adds: *If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed: for that which is of the honour, glory, and power of God, and that which is his Spirit, resteth upon you* (1 Pet. iv. 14). When you are insulted for the sake of Jesus Christ, then shall you be happy; for then shall true honour, true power, and the Spirit of God rest upon you.

Evening Meditation

THE DESOLATE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

I.

The life of our loving Redeemer was full of desolation, and bereft of every comfort. It was a great ocean of bitterness, without one drop of sweetness or consolation: *For great as the sea is thy destruction* (Lam. ii. 13). This was revealed by our Lord to St. Margaret of Cortona, when He told her that in His whole life He never experienced sensible consolation.

The sadness which He felt in the Garden of Gethsemani was so great that it was sufficient to take away His life. *My soul*, He said, *is sorrowful even unto death* (Matt. xxvi. 38). This sadness afflicted Him not only in the Garden, but it always filled His soul with desolation, from the first moment of His Conception: for all the pains and ignominies He was to suffer until death were always present to Him.

But the extreme affliction He suffered during His whole life arose not so much from the knowledge of all the sufferings He was to endure during life, and especially at death, as from the sight of all the sins men would commit after His death. He came to abolish sin, and to save souls from hell by His death; but, after all His cruel sufferings, He saw all the sins men would commit; and the sight of each sin, being clearly before His mind while He lived here below, was to Him, as St. Bernardine of Sienna writes, a source of immense affliction. This was the sorrow which was always before His eyes, and kept Him always in desolation: *My sorrow is continually before me* (Ps. xxxvii. 18). St. Thomas teaches that the sight of the sins of men, and of the multitude of souls that would bring themselves to perdition, excited in Jesus Christ a sorrow which surpassed the sorrow of all penitents, even of those who died of pure grief. The holy Martyrs suffered great torments, they bore tortures from iron hooks, and nails, and red-hot plates: but God always sweetened their pains by interior consolations. But no Martyrdom has been more painful than that of Jesus Christ, for His pain and sadness were pure, unmitigated pain and sorrow, without the smallest comfort. "The greatness of Christ's suffering," says the Angelic Doctor, "is estimated from the pureness of His pain and sadness."

II.

Such was the life of our Redeemer, and such was His death, all full of desolation. Dying on the Cross bereft of all comfort, He sought some one to console Him, but found none. *I looked for one ... that would comfort me, and I found none* (Ps. lxxviii. 21). He found only scoffers and blasphemers, who said: *If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. He saved others, himself he cannot save* (Matt. xxvii. 40, 42). Hence, our afflicted Lord, finding Himself abandoned by all, turned to His Eternal Father; but seeing that His Father too had abandoned Him, He cried out with a loud voice, and sweetly complained of His Father's abandonment, saying: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* (Ibid. 46).

Thus our Saviour terminated His life, dying, as David had foretold, immersed in a tempest of ignominies and sorrows: *I am come into the depth of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me* (Ps. lxxviii. 3).

When we are in desolation, let us console ourselves by meditation on the desolate death of Jesus Christ: let us offer Him our own desolation in union with that which He, the innocent God, suffered on Calvary for the love of us.

Ah, my Jesus, who will not love Thee when he sees Thee die in such desolation, consumed by sorrows, in order to pay our debts? Behold, I am one of the executioners, who have, by sin, so grievously afflicted Thee during Thy whole life. But since Thou dost invite me to repentance, grant that I may feel at least a part of that sorrow which Thou didst feel during Thy Passion, for my sins. How can I, who have, by my sins, so much afflicted Thee during Thy life, seek after pleasures? No, I will not ask for pleasures and delights; I ask of Thee tears and sorrow: make me, during the remainder of my life, to weep continually for my offences against Thee. I embrace Thy feet, O my crucified and desolate Jesus, and embracing them, I wish to die. O afflicted Mary, pray to Jesus for me.

Saturday--Twenty-second Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"TURN, THEN, THINE EYES OF MERCY TOWARDS US."

I. MARY IS ALL EYES TO PITY AND SUCCOUR US
IN OUR NECESSITIES.

St. Epiphanius calls the Divine Mother "many-eyed," indicating thereby her watchfulness in assisting us poor creatures in this valley of tears. *The eyes of the Lord are on the just* (Ps. xxxiii. 16). "But the eyes of the Lady are on just and sinners," says Richard of St. Laurence. "For," he adds, "the eyes of Mary are the eyes of a mother on her child to save it from falling, and if perchance it falls, to raise it up."

I.

Jesus Christ one day allowed St. Bridget to hear Him thus addressing His Mother: "My Mother, ask Me what thou wilt!" And so is her Divine Son addressing Mary in Heaven, taking pleasure in gratifying His beloved Mother in all that she asks. But what does Mary ask? St. Bridget heard her reply: "I ask mercy for sinners." As if she had said: "My Son, Thou hast made me the Mother of mercy, the refuge of sinners, the advocate of the miserable; and now Thou tellest me to ask what I desire; what can I ask except mercy for sinners?"

"And so, O Mary, thou art so full of mercy," says St. Bonaventure; "so attentive in relieving the wretched, that it seems that thou hast no other desire, no other anxiety." And as amongst the miserable, sinners are the most miserable of all, Venerable Bede declares "that Mary is always praying to her Son for them."

"Even whilst living in this world," says St. Jerome, "the heart of Mary was so filled with tenderness and compassion for men, that no one ever suffered so much for his own pains as Mary suffered for the pains of others." This compassion for others in affliction she well showed at the marriage-feast of Cana, when, the wine failing, without being asked, remarks St. Bernardine of Sienna, she charged herself with the office of a tender comfortress: and moved to compassion at the sight of the embarrassment of the bride and bridegroom, she interposed with her Son,

and obtained the miraculous change of water into wine.

II.

St. Peter Damian, thus speaks to holy Mary: "Perhaps O holy Virgin, now that thou art raised on high to the dignity of Queen of Heaven, thou forgettest us poor creatures?" "Ah, far be such a thought from our minds," he adds; "for it would little become the great compassion that reigns in the heart of Mary ever to forget such misery as ours." The proverb, that "honours change our manners," does not apply to Mary. With worldlings it is otherwise; for they, when once raised to high dignity, become proud, and forget their former poor friends, but it is not so with Mary, who rejoices in her own exaltation, because she is thus better able to help the miserable.

On this subject St. Bonaventure applies to the Blessed Virgin the words addressed to Ruth: *Blessed art thou of the Lord, my daughter, and thy latter kindness has surpassed the former*, meaning to say that, "if the compassion of Mary was great towards the miserable when living in this world, it is much greater now that she reigns in Heaven." He then gives the reason for this, saying that "the Divine Mother shows, by the innumerable graces she obtains for us, her greater mercy; for now she is better acquainted with our miseries." Hence he adds that "as the splendour of the sun surpasses that of the moon, so does the compassion of Mary, now that she is in Heaven, surpass the compassion she had for us when in the world." In conclusion, he asks, "who is there living in this world who does not enjoy the light of the sun? And on whom does not the mercy of Mary shine?"

Spiritual Reading

"TURN, THEN, THINE EYES OF MERCY TOWARDS US."

OUR LADY'S MERCY FILLS THE WHOLE EARTH.

In the Sacred Canticles Mary is called *bright as the sun* (Cant. vi. 9), "and no one is excluded from the warmth of this sun," says St. Bonaventure, according to the words of the Psalmist. This was also revealed to St. Bridget, by St. Agnes, who told her that "our Queen, now that she is united to her Son in Heaven, cannot forget her innate goodness; and therefore she shows her compassion to all, even to the most impious sinners; so much so, that, as celestial and terrestrial bodies are illumined by the sun, so there

is no one in the world, who, if he asks, does not, through the tenderness of Mary, partake of the Divine mercy."

A great sinner, in the kingdom of Valencia, who, having become desperate, and, in order not to fall into the hands of justice, had determined on becoming a Mahometan, was on the point of embarking for the purpose, when, by chance, he passed before a church, in which Father Jerome Lopez was preaching on the mercy of God. On hearing the sermon he was converted, and made his confession to the Father, who asked him whether he had ever practised any devotion, on account of which God had shown him so great mercy. He replied, that his only devotion was a prayer to the Blessed Virgin, in which he daily begged her not to abandon him. In a hospital the same Father found a sinner, who had not been to confession for fifty-five years; and the only devotion he practised was, that when he saw an Image of Mary he saluted her, and begged that she would not allow him to die in mortal sin. He then told him, that on an occasion, when fighting with an enemy, his sword was broken; and, turning to our Blessed Lady, he cried out: "O I shall be killed and lost for eternity; Mother of sinners, help me." Scarcely had he said the words when he found himself transported to a place of safety. After making a general confession he died, full of confidence.

St. Bernard says that "Mary has made herself all to all, and opens her merciful heart to all, that all may receive of her fulness; the slave redemption, the sick health, those in affliction comfort, the sinner pardon, and God glory; that thus there may be no one who can hide himself from her warmth." "Who can there be in the world," exclaims St. Bonaventure, "who refuses to love this most amiable Queen? She is more beautiful than the sun, and sweeter than honey. She is a treasure of goodness, amiable and courteous to all." "I salute thee, then," continues the enraptured Saint, "O my Lady and Mother, nay, even my heart, my soul! Forgive me, O Mary, if I say that I love thee; for if I am not worthy to love thee, at least thou art all-worthy to be loved by me."

It was revealed to St. Gertrude, that when these words are addressed with devotion to the most Blessed Virgin: "Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us!" Mary

cannot do otherwise than yield to the demand of whomsoever thus invokes her. "Ah, truly, O great Lady," says St. Bernard, "does the immensity of thy mercy fill the whole earth." "And therefore," says St. Bonaventure, "this loving Mother has so earnest a desire to do good to all, that not only is she offended by those who positively outrage her (as some are wicked enough to do), but she is offended by the conduct of those who do not ask her for favours or graces." So that St. Idelbert addresses her, saying: "Thou, O Lady, teachest us to hope for far greater graces than we deserve, since thou never ceasest to dispense graces far, far beyond our merits."

The Prophet Isaias foretold that, together with the great work of the Redemption of the human race a throne of Divine mercy was to be prepared for us poor creatures: *And a throne shall be prepared in mercy* (Is. xvi. 5). What is this throne? St. Bonaventure answers: "Mary is this throne, at which all -- just and sinners -- find the consolations of mercy." He then adds: "For as we have a most merciful Lord, so also we have a most merciful Lady. Our Lord is plenteous in mercy to all who call upon Him, and our Lady is plenteous in mercy to all who call upon her." As our Lord is full of mercy, so also is our Lady; and as the Son knows not how to refuse mercy to those who call upon Him, neither does the Mother. Wherefore the Abbot Gueric thus addresses the Mother, in the name of Jesus Christ: "My Mother, in thee will I establish the seat of My government; through thee will I pronounce judgments, hear prayers, and grant the graces asked of Me. Thou hast given Me My human nature, and I will give thee My Divine nature, that is omnipotence, by which thou mayest be able to help to save all whomsoever thou pleasest."

One day, when St. Gertrude was addressing the words: "Turn thine eyes of mercy towards us," to the Divine Mother, she saw the Blessed Virgin pointing to the eyes of her Son, Whom she held in her arms, and then said: "These are the most compassionate eyes that I can turn for their salvation towards all who call upon me."

A sinner was once weeping before an Image of Mary, imploring her to obtain pardon for him from God, when he perceived that the Blessed Virgin turned towards the Child that she

held in her arms, and said, "My Son, shall these tears be lost?" And he understood that Jesus Christ had already pardoned him.

How, then, is it possible that any one can perish who recommends himself to this good Mother, since her Son, as God, has promised her that for her love He will show as much mercy as she pleases to all who recommend themselves to her? This our Lord revealed to St. Gertrude, allowing her to hear Him make the promise to His Mother in the following words: "In My omnipotence, O revered Mother, I have granted thee the reconciliation of all sinners who devoutly invoke the aid of thy compassion, in whatever way it may please thee."

On this assurance the Abbot Adam Persenius, considering the great power of Mary with God, and, at the same time, her great compassion for us, full of confidence, says: "O Mother of mercy, thy tender compassion is as great as thy power, and thou art as compassionate in forgiving as thou art powerful in obtaining." "And when," he asks, "did the case ever occur in which thou, who art the Mother of mercy, didst not show compassion? O, when was it that thou, who art the Mother of omnipotence, couldst not aid? Ah, yes, with the same facility with which thou seest our misfortunes thou obtainest for us whatever thou willest."

"O satiate thyself, great Queen," says the Abbot Gueric, "with the glory of thy Son, and out of compassion, though not for any merit of ours, be pleased to send us, thy servants and children here below, the crumbs that fall from thy table." Should the sight of our sins ever discourage us, let us address the Mother of mercy in the words of William of Paris: "O Lady, do not set up my sins against me, for I oppose thy compassion to them. Let it never be said that my sins could contend in judgment against thy mercy, which is far more powerful to obtain me pardon than my sins are to bring about my condemnation."

Evening Meditation

AFTER THIS OUR EXILE SHOW UNTO US THE BLESSED FRUIT OF THY WOMB, JESUS!

MARY, OUR SALVATION

SHE DELIVERS HER CLIENTS FROM HELL.

I.

It is impossible for a client of Mary, who is faithful in honouring and recommending himself to her, to be lost. To some this proposition may appear, at first sight, exaggerated; but any one to whom this might seem to be the case I would beg to suspend his judgment, and, first of all, read what I have to say.

When we say that it is impossible for a client of Mary to be lost, we must not be understood as speaking of those who would take advantage of this devotion that they might sin more freely. And therefore, those who disapprove of the great praises bestowed on the clemency of this most Blessed Virgin, because it causes the wicked to take advantage of it to sin with greater freedom, do so without foundation, for such presumptuous people deserve chastisement, and not mercy, for their rash confidence. It is, therefore, to be understood of those clients who, with a sincere desire to amend, are faithful in honouring and recommending themselves to the Mother of God. It is, I say, morally impossible that such as these should be lost.

St. Anselm says, "it is impossible for one who is not devout to Mary, and consequently not protected by her, to be saved; so is it impossible for one who recommends himself to her, and consequently is beloved by her, to be lost." St. Antoninus repeats the same thing and almost in the same words: "As it is impossible for those from whom Mary turns her eyes of mercy to be saved, so also are those towards whom she turns these eyes, and for whom she prays, necessarily saved and glorified." Consequently the clients of Mary will necessarily be saved.

Let us note particularly what these Saints say, and let those tremble who make but little account of their devotion to this Divine Mother, or from carelessness give it up. They say that the salvation of those who are not protected by Mary is impossible. Many others declare the same thing; such as Blessed Albert, who says, that "all those who are not thy servants, O Mary, will

perish." And St. Bonaventure: "He who neglects the service of the blessed Virgin will die in his sins." Again: "He who does not invoke thee, O Lady, will never get to Heaven." And, on the 99th Psalm the Saint even says, "not only those from whom Mary turns her face will not save their souls, but there will be no hope of their salvation." Before him, St. Ignatius the Martyr said, "it is impossible for any sinner to be saved without the help and favour of the most Blessed Virgin; because those who are not saved by the justice of God are with infinite mercy saved by the intercession of Mary." Some doubt as to whether this passage is truly of St. Ignatius; but, at all events, as Father Crasset remarks, it was adopted by St. John Chrysostom. And in the same sense does the Church apply to Mary the words of Proverbs: *All that hate me, love death* (Prov. viii. 36), that is, all who do not love me, love eternal death. For, as Richard of St. Laurence says on the words of the same book: *She is like the merchant's ship* (Prov. xxxi. 14), "all those who are out of this ship will be lost in the sea of the world." Even the heretical Ecolampadius looked upon little devotion to the Mother of God as a certain mark of reprobation: and therefore he said: "Far be it from me ever to turn from Mary."

II.

In the words applied to her by the Church, Mary says: *He that hearkeneth to me shall not be confounded* (Ecclus. xxiv. 30); that is to say, he that listeneth to what I say shall not be lost. On which St. Bonaventure says: "O Lady, he who honours thee will be far from damnation." And this will still be the case, St. Hilary observes, even should the person during the past time have greatly offended God. "However great a sinner he may have been," says the Saint, "if he shows himself devout to Mary, he will never perish."

For this reason the devil does his utmost against sinners in order that, after they have lost the grace of God, they may also lose devotion to Mary. When Sara saw Isaac in company with Ismael, who was teaching him evil habits, she desired that Abraham would drive away both Ismael and his mother Agar: *Cast out this bond-woman and her son* (Gen. xxi. 10). She was not satisfied with the son being turned out of the house, but insisted on the mother going also, thinking that otherwise the son,

coming to visit his mother, would continue to frequent the house. The devil, also, is not satisfied with a soul turning out Jesus Christ, unless it also turns out His Mother: *Cast out this bond-woman and her son*. Otherwise he fears that the Mother will again, by her intercession, bring back her Son. "And his fears are well grounded," says the learned Paciucchelli; "for he who is faithful in serving the Mother of God will soon receive God Himself by means of Mary."

Let us thank our Lord if we see that He has given us affection for the Queen of Heaven, and confidence in her, "for," says St. John Damascene, "God grants this favour only to those whom He is determined to save." The following are the beautiful words of the Saint, and with which he rekindles his own and our hope: "O Mother of God, if I place my confidence in thee, I shall be saved. If I am under thy protection, I have nothing to fear, for the fact of being thy client is the possession of a certainty of salvation, and which God grants only to those whom He intends to save." Therefore, Erasmus salutes the Blessed Virgin in these words: "O terror of hell! O hope of Christians, confidence in thee is a pledge of salvation!"

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

PATIENCE IN SICKNESS

Patience in the time of sickness is the touchstone by which the spirit of a Christian is proved to be pure gold, or only alloy. Some are patient, devout, cheerful as long as they enjoy good health, but when visited by some illness they commit a thousand faults. The gold is found to be only base metal.

I.

We must practise patience in the time of sickness. This is the touchstone by which the spirit of a Christian is proved to be pure gold or only alloy. Some are patient, devout, cheerful as long as they enjoy health, but when visited by some illness they commit a thousand defects: they appear to be inconsolable; they are impatient with all, even with the person who attends them through charity; they complain of every pain or inconvenience they suffer; they complain of everybody and everything, saying that they

are treated with neglect and inattention. The gold is found to be base metal. But such a person may say: I suffer so much, and can I not even complain, or tell what I endure? You are not forbidden to make known your pains when they are severe, but when they are trifling, it is a weakness to complain of them to all, and to seek sympathy and compassion from every one who visits you. And should the remedies prescribed not remove your pains, you should not yield to impatience under them, but resign yourself in peace to the will of God.

Another may say: Where has charity gone? See how I am forgotten and abandoned on my bed of sickness! I pity you; not on account of your bodily infirmities, but on account of your want of patience under them, which makes you doubly sick -- in body and soul. You are forgotten? But you have forgotten Jesus Christ Who died abandoned for your sake on the Cross. And what profit do you derive from complaining? Complain of yourself because you have but little love for Jesus Christ, and therefore have so little patience. St. Joseph Calasanctius used to say: "If the sick had patience there would be no more complaints." Salvian writes that there are many persons who, had they good health, could not be Saints. With regard to saintly women, we know from their published Lives that they were almost all continually afflicted with various infirmities. For forty years St. Teresa was not free from pain for a single day.

II.

Some one will say: I do not refuse to accept sickness, but I regret that on account of my infirmities I am not able to go to Communion, or to make mental prayer, and that I am a burden to all. Allow me to answer all these excuses one by one. Tell me, why do you wish to go to the church in order to communicate? Is it not to please God? Well, but if it be God's will and pleasure that you are not to go to the church to communicate, but that you are to remain in bed to suffer, why should you be troubled? Blessed John of Avila wrote to a priest labouring under sickness: "Friend, do not stop to examine what you would do if you had health, but be content to remain sick as long as it shall please God. If you seek the will of God, it matters not whether you are in sickness or in health." St. Francis de Sales has even said that

"we serve God better by sufferings than by works." You say that in sickness you cannot make Mental Prayer, and why can you not? I grant that you cannot apply the mind to reflection, but why can you not look at the Crucifix, and offer to your crucified Saviour the pains you suffer? And what prayer can be better than to suffer, and to resign yourself to the Divine will, uniting your sufferings to those of Jesus Christ, and presenting them to God in union with the sufferings of His Son? You say that in sickness you are useless, and a burden. But as you conform yourself to the Divine will, so you ought to suppose that others also conform to it, when they see that you are a burden, not through your own fault, but by the will of God. Ah! such desires and complaints spring, not from the love of God, but from self-love; for we would want to serve the Lord not in the manner that pleases Him, but in the way that is agreeable to ourselves!

Spiritual Reading

HOLY HUMILITY

XII. PATIENCE IN BEARING CONTEMPT

The Saints have not been made Saints by applause and honours, but by injuries and insults. St. Ignatius Martyr, a saintly Bishop who won universal esteem and veneration, was sent to Rome as a criminal, and on his way, experienced from the soldiers who conducted him nothing but the most barbarous insolence. In the midst of his suffering and humiliations he joyfully exclaimed: "I now begin to be a disciple of Christ." I now begin to be a true disciple of my Jesus, Who endured so many ignominies for my sake. St. Francis Borgia, when travelling, slept one night in the same room with his companion, Father Bustamente, who, in consequence of a severe attack of asthma, coughed much, casting spittle unconsciously on the Saint, and frequently on his face. In the morning Father Bustamente perceived what he had done, and was greatly afflicted at having given so much cause of pain to the Saint. Father, said St. Francis, be not disturbed; for there was no part of this room so fit for the reception of spittle as my face.

Standing once before the Crucifix, Blessed Mary of the Incarnation said to her sisters in Religion: "Is it possible, dear sisters, that we refuse to embrace contempt when we see Jesus

Christ reviled and scoffed at." A certain holy Religious having been insulted, went before the Blessed Sacrament, and said: Lord, I am very poor; I have nothing to present to Thee: but I offer Thee the injury that I have just received. Oh! how lovingly does Jesus Christ embrace all who embrace contempt for His sake! He soon consoles and enriches them with His graces. Father Anthony Torres was once unjustly charged with disseminating false doctrines, and in punishment of his supposed transgression was for many years deprived of faculties to hear Confessions. But in a letter to a certain friend he says: "Be assured that during the whole time I was calumniated the spiritual consolations that the Lord gave me surpassed any I ever received from Him."

To suffer contempt with a serene countenance not only merits a great reward, but also serves to draw others to God. "He," says St. John Chrysostom, "who is meek is useful to himself and to others." For nothing is more edifying to a neighbour than the meekness of a man who receives injuries with a tranquil countenance. Father Maffei relates that a Jesuit Father, while preaching in Japan, having been spat upon by an insolent bystander, removed the spittle with his handkerchief, and continued his sermon as if nothing had happened. One of his auditors exclaimed, that a doctrine that teaches such humility must be true and Divine, and was instantly converted to the Faith.* Thus, also, St. Francis de Sales converted innumerable heretics by his meekness in bearing the insults he received from them.

*We have a shining example of the same forbearance recorded of one of the Canonized Children of St. Alphonsus' own Congregation, St. Clement Mary Hofbauer. Clement entered the Redemptorist Congregation in Rome, 1784. St. Alphonsus, then in extreme old age, sent him encouragement and his blessing. Father Clement became afterwards the Apostle of Warsaw and Vienna, and the renowned Propagator of the Redemptorist Congregations North of the Alps. The story is recorded that while the Saint was one day begging for his poor in Warsaw, he requested an alms of a man sitting at an inn. The man sprang up, and after heaping abuse on Father Clement, spat in his face. The priest wiped away the spittle and said: "That was for myself:

give me now, please, something for the orphans." The man was astonished at the gentleness of the Saint, as well he might, and gave him generous alms for the poor. He afterwards went to Confession to Father Clement and changed his life. -- EDITOR.

Let us be persuaded that to be persecuted in this life is the highest glory of the Saints. *And*, says the Apostle, *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* (2 Tim. iii. 12). The Redeemer says, *If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you* (Jo. xv. 20).

Some will say: I attend to my own business; I give offence to no one: why should I be persecuted? But all the Saints have been persecuted; Jesus Christ, the Head of the Saints, has been persecuted: and will you not submit to persecution? But what greater favour, says St. Teresa, can God bestow upon us than to send us the same treatment He wished His beloved Son to suffer on earth? "Believe me," says Father Torres, in a letter to one of his penitents, "that one of the greatest graces that God can confer upon you is to make you worthy to be calumniated by all, without being esteemed by any." When, then, you see yourself disregarded and despised, rejoice, and thank Jesus Christ, Who wishes you to be treated in the same manner in which He Himself was treated in this life. And to prepare your soul to accept humiliations when they occur, represent to yourself in the time of Meditation all the contempt, contradictions, and persecutions which may happen to you, and offer yourself, with a strong desire and resolution to suffer them all for the sake of Jesus Christ, and thus you will be better prepared to accept them.

You must not only accept humiliations in peace, but must also be glad and exult under them. The Venerable Louis da Ponte could not at first conceive how a soul could delight in contempt; but when he became more perfect he experienced joy in abjection. By our own strength we certainly cannot rejoice in humiliations, but by the aid of Jesus Christ we can imitate the Apostles, who *went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus* (Acts v. 41). There are some, as St. Joseph Calas Sanctius says, who suffer reproach, but not with joy. To teach the perfect spirit of humility to St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, St. Ignatius came down from

heaven and assured her that true humility consists in taking pleasure in whatever inspires self-contempt.

Worldlings do not delight as much in honours as the Saints do in contempt. Brother Juniper, of the Order of St. Francis, received insults as he would the most costly gems. When derided by his companions, St. John Francis Regis was not only pleased with their ridicule, but even encouraged it. Thus from the Lives of the Saints it would appear that sufferings and humiliations were the sole objects of their wishes. With a Cross on His shoulder and a Crown of thorns on His Head the Redeemer once appeared to St. John of the Cross and said: "John, ask of Me what thou wilt." "Lord," replied the Saint, "I desire to suffer and to be despised for Thy sake." Lord, seeing Thee oppressed with sorrow and saturated with opprobrium for the love of me, what can I ask from Thee but pains and ignominies? The Lord once assured St. Angela of Foligno that the surest means by which a soul can ascertain whether its lights are from God is to examine if they have inspired and left behind a strong desire of being despised for His sake. Jesus wishes that under injuries and persecutions we not only be not disquieted, but that we even rejoice and exult in expectation of the great glory that He has prepared for us in Heaven as the reward of our sufferings. *Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you ... be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven* (Matt. v. 11, 12).

To those who are about to enter Religion it is my custom to recommend, above all things, the practice of obedience, and of patience under contempt. I have been anxious to treat the latter at full length, because I am convinced that, without bearing contempt, it is impossible for anyone to advance in perfection; and because I hold as certain that the Religious who cheerfully embraces humiliations will become a saint. "He that is humble of heart," says St. Paulinus, "is the Heart of Christ." *Humilis corde Cor Christi est*. He who is humble of heart or who delights in contempt is transformed into the Heart of Jesus Christ. Be assured, then, that if you are to be a saint you must suffer humiliations and contempt. Though all your companions were saints, you will, notwithstanding, by the ordination of God, meet with frequent contradictions; you will be frequently put below others,

held in little esteem, and will have to submit to accusations and reproofs. To render you like Himself, Jesus Christ will easily find the means of making you an object of contempt. Hence, I entreat you to practise, every day, the beautiful advice of Father Torres to his penitents: "Say, every day, a *Pater* and *Ave* in honour of the life and ignominy of Jesus, and offer yourself to suffer, not only in peace, but even with joy, for the love of Him, all the contradictions and reproaches which He will send you, begging always His assistance to be faithful to Him in bearing patiently all injuries and humiliations."

Evening Meditation

PATIENCE IN SICKNESS

I.

If you really wish to please God, and at the same time give good example to others, embrace with peace all the infirmities God sends you. Oh, how great is the edification he gives, who in spite of all his pains and even the danger of death with which he may be threatened, preserves a serene countenance, abstains from all complaining, who thanks all for their attention, whether it be much or little, and accepts in the spirit of obedience the remedies applied, however bitter or painful they may be! St. Lidwina, as Surius relates, lay for thirty-eight years on a board, abandoned, covered with sores, and tortured by pains. She never complained of anything, but peaceably embraced all her sufferings. Blessed Humiliana of Florence, a Franciscan nun, being afflicted with several painful and violent diseases, used to raise her hand to Heaven, and say: "Mayest Thou be blessed, my Love! Mayest Thou be blessed!" St. Clare was likewise continually sick for twenty-eight years, and the smallest complaint never escaped her lips. St. Theodore, abbot, had a painful ulcer during his whole life, and he would say that the Lord sent it in order to give him occasion to thank God unceasingly, as he was accustomed to do. When we suffer any pain, let us cast a glance at so many holy Martyrs, whose flesh was torn in pieces with iron hooks, or burnt with red-hot plates, and let us at the sight of their torments take courage to offer to God the pain by which we are afflicted.

Patience under the severity of the Seasons accompanies patience in infirmities. When cold or heat is intense, some are dis-

turbed and complain, particularly if they have not the clothes or other comforts that they wish for. Be careful not to imitate their example; but bless these creatures as ministers of the Divine will, and say with Daniel: O ye fire and heat, bless the Lord ... O ye cold and heat, bless the Lord (Dan. iii. 66, 67).

II.

In the time of sickness, we should above all accept death should it come, and the death that God wills. What is this life but a continual tempest, in which we are always in danger of being lost? St. Aloysius, though he died in the flower of youth, embraced death with joy, saying: "Now I find myself, as I hope, in the grace of God: I know not what might happen to me hereafter. I therefore gladly quit this earth, if it now please God to call me." But you will say: St. Aloysius was a Saint, and I am a sinner. But listen to the answer of Blessed John of Avila: Every one who finds himself even moderately well disposed should desire death, in order to escape the danger of losing the grace of God, to which he is always exposed as long as he lives on this earth. What more desirable than, by a good death, to be secure of being no longer able to lose God! But, you reply, hitherto I have gained nothing for my soul: I would wish to live in order to do something before I die. But if God does not call you now to the other life, how do you know that for the future you will not be worse than you were hitherto? And that you will not fall into other sins and be lost?

And if we had no other motive, we ought to embrace death with peace when it comes, because it delivers us from the commission of new sins. In this life no one is exempt from all sins -- at least from all venial sins. Hence, St. Bernard says: "Why do we desire life, in which the longer we live the more we sin?" Why do we desire to live, since we know that the greater the number of our days, the more shall our sins be multiplied? Moreover, if we love God, we should sigh to see and to love Him face to face in Heaven. But, unless death opens the gate to us, we cannot enter into that happy country. Hence the enamoured St. Augustine exclaimed: "Oh Lord, may I die, that I may see Thee."

Monday--Twenty-third Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

PATIENCE AMIDST LOSSES AND PERSECUTION

They who possess God, though they should be in want of everything else, possess all things. They can say: *My God and my All!* Hence the Saints possess all things, though they have nothing. *As having nothing*, says St. Paul, *and possessing all things* (2 Cor. vi. 10).

I.

It is necessary to practise patience when we have to suffer the inconveniences of poverty, and the want of temporal goods. "What," says St. Augustine "can be sufficient for him for whom God is not sufficient?" They who possess God, though they should want everything else, possess all things. Hence they can say, "My God and my All!" Hence, the Apostle says, that though the Saints have nothing, they possess all things: *As having nothing, and possessing all things*. When, then, you want medicines in sickness, when you are in need of food, or fire in the winter, or clothes, say: My God, Thou alone art sufficient for me! and thus console yourself.

Accept with patience the loss of property, relatives and friends. Some one loses a book and she disturbs the whole house, and cannot keep herself in peace. Another is inconsolable at the death of a relative. She gives up Mental Prayer; she abstains from Communion, she is impatient with everybody; she shuts herself away; will not take food, and sends away those who come to console her. To such I would say: Is this the true love that you bear to God? Then, it is not true that God is everything to you, since it is now manifest, that because you have lost a creature, you no longer enjoy peace, and appear almost to care no more about God. Tell me what advantage do you derive from thus abandoning yourself to melancholy? Do you imagine that you please the person who has died? No; you displease God, and also the dead. How much more pleasing would it be to her, if, conforming yourself to the Divine will, you endeavoured to abstain from weeping and groaning, and sought to unite yourself more closely to God, and to pray for the soul if it be in Purgatory. To shed an occasional tear at the death of a relative is a pardonable weakness of nature; but immoderate grief proceeds from weakness of spirit and want of the love of God. Holy people also hear

of the death of persons most dear to them; but reflecting that God has willed their death, they instantly resign themselves, and go in peace to pray for them. They then make more frequent Meditations and Communions, and unite themselves more to God, hoping to go one day to enjoy Him in Heaven, along with their departed friends.

II.

It is necessary to practise patience in the midst of accusations and persecutions. You will say: But I have not failed in anything -- why should I receive such an insult? This is not the will of God. But do you not know the answer that Jesus Christ gave to St. Peter, Martyr, who complained of being unjustly imprisoned, saying: O Lord, what evil have I done that I should suffer this mortification? Jesus answered from the Cross: And what evil have I done that I should be nailed to this Cross? If, then, your Redeemer has voluntarily embraced death for the love of you, it is not too much for you to embrace this mortification for the love of Him. It is true that God does not will the sin of the person who insults or persecutes you; but He certainly wishes that you bear this contradiction for His sake, and also for your own welfare. Although, says St. Augustine, we have not committed the fault that is imputed to us, we have been guilty of other sins that deserve the chastisement we now receive.

The Saints have been persecuted in this world. St. Basil was accused of heresy before St. Damasus, Pope. St. Cyril of Jerusalem was condemned as a heretic by forty bishops, and was deprived of his See. St. Athanasius was charged with the crime of sorcery, and St. John Chrysostom with sins against chastity. St. Romuald, at the age of more than a hundred years, was accused of an enormous sin, for which some said that he deserved to be burned alive. St. Francis de Sales was charged with impurity, and remained for three years under the imputation till his innocence was discovered. Of St. Lidwina it is related that one day a woman entered her chamber, and began to insult her in the most atrocious manner; and because the Saint preserved her usual tranquillity, the tigress becoming more furious began to spit in her face, and seeing the Saint still undisturbed, she screamed like a madwoman.

There is no remedy; *for*, says the Apostle, *all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* (1 Tim. iii. 12). All who wish to follow Jesus Christ will be persecuted. If, says St. Augustine, you are unwilling to suffer any persecution, tremble lest you have not as yet begun to serve Jesus Christ. Who more innocent and holy than our Saviour? And still He was persecuted by men until He died on a Cross, covered with wounds, and overwhelmed with shame. Hence, to animate us to bear persecutions with peace, the Apostle exhorts us to keep always before our mind Jesus Christ crucified. *Think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself* (Heb. xii. 3). Let us rest assured that when we suffer persecution in peace, God will take up our defence; and should He ever permit us to remain in dishonour here, He will reward our patience with greater honours hereafter.

Spiritual Reading

PATIENCE IN THE MIDST OF SPIRITUAL DESOLATION

Desolation of spirit is the most sensible and the sharpest pain a soul that loves God can experience on this earth. To a soul assisted by Divine consolations, all insults, sorrows, losses and persecutions are not only not an affliction, but rather a source of consolation, because they give her occasion to offer these pains to her Lord, and by such offerings to unite herself more closely to her Beloved. The severest pain of a loving soul consists in seeing herself without devotion, without fervour, without desires, and in finding nothing but disgust and tediousness in Meditation and Communion. But, according to St. Teresa, God has the best proof of their love, when without relish and even with anguish and pain, they persevere patiently in their accustomed exercises. By aridity and temptations, says the Saint, God tries His lovers. St. Angela of Foligno, finding herself in a state of aridity, complained to God as if He had abandoned her. No, daughter, answered our Lord, I now love you more than before, and I bring you nearer to Myself.

Some there are who, finding themselves in desolation, imagine that God has abandoned them, or that they are not fit for the way of perfection; thus they leave the road upon which they had entered, begin to give liberty to the senses, and thus

lose all they have gained. Do not allow yourself to be deceived by the enemy: when you feel aridity, be constant, and omit none of your ordinary exercises of devotion. Humble yourself, and say that you deserve to be treated in this manner in punishment of your sins. Above all, resign yourself to the Divine will, and trust more than ever in God; for this is the time for rendering yourself dear to Jesus Christ. Do you imagine that the Saints were always in the enjoyment of consolations and celestial tenderness? Know that the Saints spent the greater part of their life in desolation and darkness. And to speak the truth, which I have learned by experience, I have but little confidence in the soul that abounds in spiritual sweetness without having first passed through the ordeal of internal sufferings; because it not unfrequently happens that such souls go on well as long as the Divine consolations continue, but when tried by aridity they give up all, and abandon themselves to a life of tepidity.

But some one may say: I do not refuse this cross if it be the will of God; but what afflicts me is that this abandonment may be the chastisement of my infidelities. But I answer: Let it be a chastisement, if you like; to you in a special manner I say, that if you have failed by attachment to any creature, God, Who is a jealous Lover, justly withdraws Himself. Let it then be a chastisement; is it not a just one? Is it not the will of God that you accept it? Accept it, then, in peace, and remove the cause of your desolation, take away affections to creatures, take away dissipation of spirit arising from excessive indulgence of the eyes, the tongue, and the ears: give yourself again entirely to God, and He will restore your former fervour. But seek not to be consoled by the tenderness of former days, but rather ask strength to be faithful to God. Be persuaded that He sends desolation only for our greater profit, and to prove our love. He said to St. Gertrude that He tenderly loves the souls that serve Him at their own expense, that is, in aridity and without sensible sweetness.

Love is not proved so much in following Jesus when He caresses you, as in seeking after Him when He flies from you. But, says St. Bernard, fear not, fear not if the Spouse hides His face for a little; know that He does all for your good; He withdraws for your security, lest, finding yourself greatly caressed,

you begin to despise others by esteeming yourself better than them; and He withdraws also that you may desire Him with greater ardour, and seek after Him with greater solicitude. You must in the meantime persevere in your pious exercises, though you should suffer in them the agonies of death: far more painful was the agony your Lord suffered in the Garden of Gethsemani when He was praying for you, and preparing to go to die for you. *Being in an agony he prayed the longer* (Luke xxii. 43). Be constant, then, in seeking after Jesus; He will not delay long to come and console you. And should He not come to bestow consolations and tenderness, be content with receiving from Him courage and strength to love Him without the recompense of present delights. God is better pleased with a strong rather than with a tender love.

Evening Meditation

"CALL UPON ME IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE."

I.

Let us consider some few practical counsels which will help us to be patient under every trial.

In general, as St. Thomas says, to foresee and reflect upon the trials that may come is a help to bear them with fortitude. Jesus Christ said to His disciples: *In the world you shall have distress: but have confidence, I have overcome the world* (Jo. xvi. 33). My children, know that in the world you shall be afflicted and despised; but have confidence in Me Who have conquered the world. The reason is, that by reflecting beforehand on tribulation, and embracing it with patience we form to ourselves an idea of it, not as an evil, but as a conducive to eternal life. Thus, premeditation takes from us the fear of the evil that the tribulation excites. This has been the practice of the Saints: they embraced their crosses long before they came; and thus they found themselves prepared to bear them in peace whenever they came upon them, no matter how suddenly. Accustom yourself, then, in Mental Prayer to embrace the tribulations which are likely to be your lot.

And when you imagine it to be impossible for you to bear such a tribulation (should it happen), pray to the Lord to give you His aid to submit to it in case it occurs, and have confidence in Him, saying: *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me* (Phil.

iv. 13). And when you do this, doubt not that your prayers will in that case obtain the strength you do not possess. And how have the holy Martyrs obtained courage to bear so many torments, and deaths the most painful, except by prayer and by recommending themselves to God? When you find yourself under the cross have recourse instantly to prayer. *Is any of you sad*, says St. James, *let him pray* (James v. 13). Is any of you afflicted with any tribulation or passion, let him pray, and not cease to pray until he finds the peace of his soul restored. *Call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me* (Ps. xlix. 15). When you are in tribulation invoke My aid, says the Lord, and I will rescue you from difficulties, and you will give glory to Me. When a soul in trouble recommends itself to God, He delivers it from the evil which afflicts it, or gives it grace to bear it with patience, and thus it glorifies the Lord. St. Ignatius of Loyola used to say that the greatest evil that could befall him in this world would be the destruction of the Society; but he hoped that, even should such a calamity happen, his peace of mind would be restored by a quarter of an hour's Mental Prayer.

II.

In the time of trial endeavour to communicate more frequently. The early Christians in the time of persecution prepared themselves for Martyrdom by frequent Communion.

Be careful to ask advice from your director, or from some other spiritual person; for a word of comfort gives great help to bear the cross with patience. But beware of explaining your trials to imperfect souls, for they will only add to your troubles and confusion, particularly if you have received an injury, or if you actually suffer persecution.

But above all, I say again, have recourse to prayer; have recourse to Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, and beg of Him to make you in all things conformable to His holy will. He promises to comfort all who are in tribulation when they have recourse to Him. *Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you* (Matt. xi. 28).

My God, I offer to Thee the pains of Jesus, Thy Son, in satisfaction for my sins. He is the Lamb Whom Thou didst one day behold sacrificed for Thy glory, and for our salvation on the Al-

tar of the Cross. For the love of this Victim, so dear to Thee, pardon me all the offences, whether grievous or venial, which I have offered to Thee: I am sorry for them all with my whole heart, because by them I have offended Thy infinite goodness. Thou, O my God, dost call me to Thy love: behold I leave all things, and I come to Thee, my Treasure and my Life. For the love of Thee, I renounce all the goods and honours and pleasures of the world. I love Thee, O my Sovereign Good, above every other good. Ah, my Jesus, do not permit me to resist any longer, and to be ungrateful to the tender affection Thou hast shown me. Ah! make known to me always more and more the greatness of Thy goodness, that I may be enamoured of Thee Who art infinitely amiable. Thou hast shown Thyself enamoured of my soul, and shall I be able to love anything but Thee? No, my Redeemer: for Thee only do I wish to live; Thee only do I wish to love.

O Mary, my Mother, assist me, and obtain for me grace to be faithful to this my promise.

Tuesday--Twenty-third Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

PATIENCE IN THE TIME OF TEMPTATION

Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation (Ecclus. ii. 1). The Lord usually permits souls the most dear to Him to be most severely tormented by temptation. But they put all their trust in God and they conquer. He who places you in the combat will not abandon you or let you fall.

I.

The Lord usually permits souls that are most dear to Him to be most severely tormented by temptations. While he lived in the solitude of Palestine, in prayer and penitential works, St. Jerome was greatly afflicted with temptations. He himself described them: "I was alone, and my heart was full of bitterness; my dried and withered members were covered with a sack. My skin became as black as that of a Moor; the hard ground was my bed, which served rather to give pain than rest; my food was very scanty: and still my heart was inflamed against my will with bad desires. I had no other refuge than to have recourse to Jesus, and

to implore His aid."

The Lord permits us to be tempted for our greater good. First, that we may be more humble. Ecclesiasticus says: *What doth he know that hath not been tried?* (Ecclus. xxxiv. 9). In truth, no one is better acquainted with his own weakness than the man that is tempted. St. Augustine remarks, that St. Peter, before he had been tempted, presumed on his own strength, boasting that he would have constancy to embrace death rather than deny Jesus Christ; but when tempted he miserably denied his Master, and then he became aware of his weakness. Hence, having favoured St. Paul with celestial revelations, our Lord, in order to preserve him from vainglory, allowed him to be molested with an importunate temptation against chastity, which is of all temptations the most humiliating to man. *And, says the Saint, lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me* (2 Cor. xii. 7).

II.

God allows temptation to try us in order to make us grow rich in merit. Many are disturbed by scruples, on account of the bad thoughts that molest them. But there is no reason to be disturbed; for it is certain that it is the consent to evil, but not the evil thought itself, that is a sin. Temptations, however violent they may be, leave no stain on the soul when they happen without any fault of ours, and when we drive them away. St. Catharine of Sienna and Blessed Angela of Foligno were strongly tempted against chastity, but the temptations increased rather than diminished their purity. Every time the soul conquers a temptation she gains a degree of grace, for which she will afterwards be rewarded with a degree of glory in Heaven. Hence we shall receive as many crowns as we resist temptations. "As often," says St. Bernard, "as we conquer, we are crowned." And our Lord said to St. Matilda: "He who is tempted, places as many gems on My head as he overcomes temptations."

God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with the temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it (1 Cor x. 13). St. Jerome says, that for a ship too long a calm is more dangerous than a tempest. So the tempest of temptation prevents a man from rotting in sloth,

and makes him unite himself more closely to God, by turning to Him to ask His graces, by renewing good purposes, by making good acts of humility, of confidence, and of resignation. In the Lives of the Ancient Fathers we read that to a certain young man who was constantly and severely assailed by carnal temptations, his spiritual Father seeing him in great affliction, said: Son, do you wish me to pray to God to deliver you from so many temptations, which do not allow you to live an hour in peace? The young man answered, No, my Father; for though I am greatly molested by these temptations, I derive great advantage from them, for with the Divine aid I thus make continual acts of virtue. I now pray more than I did before, I fast more frequently, I watch more, I endeavour to practise greater mortification of my rebellious flesh. It is better for you to pray to God that He may assist me by His grace to bear these temptations with patience, and thus to advance in perfection. Such temptations, then, we should not, indeed, desire; but we should accept them with resignation, believing that God permits them for our greater good. The Apostle, when molested by similar temptations, several times implored the Lord to deliver him from them. *For which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me. And he said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity* (2 Cor. xii. 8, 9). You will say: But St. Paul was a Saint. And St. Augustine answers: By what means, think you, did the Saints resist temptations? Was it by their own strength, or by the power of God? The Saints trusted in God, and thus they conquered. Hence the holy Doctor adds: Do you also abandon yourself into the hands of God, and fear not. He who placed you in the combat will not abandon you or let you fall.

Spiritual Reading

PATIENCE UNDER TEMPTATION *MEANS OF CONQUERING*

With what arms are we to fight temptations in order to conquer?

The first and principal, and I may say the only, and absolutely necessary means for conquering temptations, is to have recourse to God by prayer. Speaking of the necessity of humility, in order to be true disciples of Jesus Christ, St. Augustine says:

"If you ask what holds the first place in the discipline of Christ, I will answer -- Humility. What is the second? Humility. What is the third? Humility. And as often as you ask, so often shall I give the same answer." Now, were you to ask what are the means of overcoming temptations, I would answer: The first means is prayer: the second is prayer; the third is prayer; and should you ask me a thousand times, I would always say: Prayer.

This means is particularly necessary for conquering temptations against purity; these, as the Wise Man says, are overcome only by recommending ourselves to God. *And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it ... I went to the Lord and besought him* (Wisd. viii. 21). Hence, St. Jerome has written, "As soon as lust assails us, let us instantly say: "Lord, assist me; do not permit me to offend you." Thus the Abbot Isaias exhorted his disciples always to repeat in such temptations: *Incline unto my aid, O God!* (Ps. lxxix. 1) -- and he would add, that this is a secure defence. He was right, for God cannot violate His promises to hear all who pray to Him: *Cry to me, and I will hear thee* (Jer. xxxiii. 3). *Call upon me ... I will deliver thee* (Ps. xlix. 15). *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find* (Matt. vii. 7). *For every one that asketh, receiveth* (Luke xi. 10). *You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you* (Jo. xv. 7). We are told that St. Pachomius related to his disciples that he once heard the devils discoursing together; one of them said: My monk, when I tempt him, listens to me; he does not turn to God, and therefore I make him fall frequently. Another complained that he could do nothing with his monk, because he instantly asked help from God, and thus was always victorious. Hence, my brothers, concluded the holy Abbot, resist temptations by always invoking the Name of Jesus. But this must be done immediately, without listening to or arguing with the temptation. Another monk, as we find in the Lives of the Fathers, complained to an aged Father of being continually tempted to impurity; the good old man prayed for him, and learned by revelation that the monk did not turn away instantly from the temptation, but used to stop to look at it. The Father corrected him for this fault, and the monk was not molested afterwards as much as before. "While the enemy is small," says St. Jerome, "kill him." A lion when small is easily killed,

but not when he has grown big. Unchaste temptations must be instantly shaken off, as we shake from the hand a spark that flies from the fire. The best means of conquering them is, as I have said, to turn away from them, without listening to them. Were a queen tempted by a negro slave, what would she do? Would she not indignantly turn away without giving an answer? Be careful to act in this manner if the devil should molest you; turn away without answering him, and invoke the Names of Jesus and Mary; and if you do this, you will be always sure of not falling into sin. St. Francis de Sales says: "The instant you feel any temptation, imitate children, who, when they see a wolf, run into the arms of their father or mother, or at least cry out to them for assistance. Do you in like manner run with filial confidence to Jesus and Mary."

In temptations it is also very useful to make the Sign of the Cross. St. Augustine says: "All the machinations of the devil are reduced to nothing by the power of the Cross." By giving His life on the Cross, Jesus destroyed the powers of hell; and therefore at the Sign of that sacred symbol all the temptations of the devil vanish. St. Athanasius relates of St. Anthony, that when the devils assailed him he instantly armed himself with the Sign of the Cross, and, thus armed, would say to them: Of what use is it to labour to injure me when I am rendered secure by this Sign, and by the confidence I have in my Lord? St. Gregory Nazianzen relates what is still more wonderful, that Julian the apostate, knowing the virtue of the Sign of the Cross, used, when terrified by the devils, to make that holy Sign, and the devils would be put to flight.

The second means of conquering temptations is to humble yourself, and to distrust your own strength. To make us humble, the Lord often permits us to be assaulted with temptations, and even frequently with temptations the most shameful. Hence, when we see ourselves thus molested, let us humble ourselves and say: I deserve to be thus tormented for the offences I have hitherto offered to God. In the Lives of the Fathers, it is related that a virgin and anchoress called Sara was cruelly persecuted in the desert by the spirit of impurity. She never asked God to deliver her from the temptation, but humbled herself, and con-

stantly implored strength. The more violently the devil tempted her, the more she laboured to humble herself, and to supplicate the Divine aid. Finally, the enemy, not being able to make her fall into sins of impurity, endeavoured to tempt her to vainglory. So he said with a loud voice: Sara, you have conquered! You have conquered! The humble servant of God answered: No, wicked spirit, I have not conquered you, but Jesus my God has conquered you.

Thus let us humble ourselves, and at the same time let us have recourse with confidence to God Who protects all that hope in Him. *He is the protection of all that trust in him* (Ps. xvii. 31). He Himself has promised to deliver all those that hope in Him. *Because he hoped in me, I will deliver him* (Ps. xc. 14). When then, we find ourselves tortured by temptations, and the fear of losing God, let us say with great courage: *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped: let me never be confounded* (Ps. xxx. 1). In thee, O Lord, have I placed my hopes: do not permit me ever to be confounded, or to incur Thy enmity. With great courage, I say, for according to St. Teresa, when the devils see themselves despised, they are powerless. And when the enemy represents the great difficulty of doing what is necessary to become saints, let us say, with diffidence in ourselves, but with confidence in God: *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me* (Phil. iv. 13). I can do nothing of myself, but I can do all things with the aid of my Lord.

The third means of overcoming temptations is to make them known to your spiritual Father. Thieves, when discovered, take flight. Hence, St. Philip Neri used to say that a temptation disclosed is half conquered. St. Antoninus relates that Brother Ruffinus, the companion of St. Francis, was assailed by a strong temptation to despair, and to believe that all he did was useless. The poor brother concealed the temptation from his Superior, St. Francis; it became more violent, and one day the devil appeared to him in the form of Jesus crucified, and said to him: Know that you and Francis, and all your followers, are damned. Hence, Ruffinus regarded himself as lost. This was revealed to St. Francis, who sent for him, but Ruffinus refused to come; at length he went to the Saint and disclosed the temptation. The Saint ordered him to despise it. The devil returned, but seeing

himself treated with contempt, he fled. And afterwards Jesus crucified appeared to him, and assured him he was in the state of grace.

The fourth means, which is a very important one, of relieving one's self from temptations is to avoid what occasions them. St. Basil says that God assists the man who is engaged in the contest against his own will; but he who voluntarily goes himself into the fight, does not deserve compassion, and is therefore abandoned by God. And, before him, Ecclesiasticus said: *He that loveth danger, shall perish in it* (Ecclus. iii. 27). He that loves danger, and goes in search of it, shall perish in it: nor is it of any use to hope for aid from God; to trust in God, and to expose one's self voluntarily to the occasion of sin, is not a holy but a rash confidence, which merits chastisement.

Evening Meditation

PATIENCE UNDER TEMPTATION

MEANS OF CONQUERING

I.

There are some temptations which we should conquer by contrary acts. For example, temptations to take revenge must be overcome by seeking to do good to those who have offended us; temptations to vanity by humbling ourselves; to envy by rejoicing at the good of others; similar temptations must be conquered in the same manner. But it is better to resist other temptations, such as those against Faith, or against chastity, or to blasphemy, by despising them, and by making good acts directly opposed to the temptations, such as acts of confidence, of contrition, of charity. St. John Climacus relates that a certain monk was greatly tormented with blasphemous temptations. The miserable man was all in confusion: he went to a good Father, and told him all the execrable blasphemies that passed through his mind. Have confidence, said the Father, I take on myself all these sins; do not think of them any more. The monk followed the advice, and his peace of mind was restored. But with regard to temptations against chastity, it is not advisable for timorous souls to contend directly with the bad thought, saying and repeating: I will not do it; I will not consent. For by endeavouring to make these contrary acts, the image of the bad objects presented to the mind

becomes more vivid, and thus the struggle is longer and more severe. It is better to renew, in general, the purpose of dying a thousand times rather than offend God, and turn at once to God for help, making acts of hope and love, as has been already said, and frequently invoking the most holy Names of Jesus and Mary.

II.

The most dangerous temptations are those that come under the appearance of good, so that a soul, without perceiving it, may find that she has fallen over some precipice. This may easily happen to spiritual persons in particular. "A good man," says St. Bernard, "is never deceived except by the similitude of good." The devil deceives souls that have a good intention only by the appearance of good. St. Bonaventure relates that there was a brother so attached to silence that he would not speak even in Confession, but wished to explain his sins by signs. The Minister-General, in presence of St. Francis, bestowed great praise on the brother for his exact observance of silence. But the Saint said; My Father, you deceive yourself; command him to confess his sins twice a week. The Minister imposed the precept, but the brother refused to obey, and became so obstinate on this point, that on account of his disobedience he in the end abandoned the Religious state.

To overcome temptations there are many excellent means, but the first, and the one that is absolutely necessary, is to have recourse to God by prayer that He may give us light and strength to conquer. Without the Divine aid, it is impossible to overcome temptations; and if we ask it we shall certainly be victorious.

Praising, I will call upon the Lord; and I shall be saved from my enemies (Ps. xvii. 4).

Ah, my God, I will no longer resist the love Thou dost entertain for me. This love made Thee bear with me so patiently when I offended Thee. Ah, my Jesus, through Thy merits do not permit me ever more to offend Thee. O make me cease to be ungrateful to Thee, or let me cease to live. I see that Thou dost wish me to be saved, and I wish to be saved, that I may go to sing Thy mercies for eternity in Heaven. Lord, do not abandon me. I know that Thou wilt never abandon me if I do not first abandon Thee, but past experience makes me afraid of my

weakness. Ah! through the painful death that Thou didst one day suffer for me on the Cross, give me strength in my temptations, and especially the grace to have immediate recourse to Thee. I love Thee, O Infinite Goodness, and I hope to love Thee always. Ah! bind me with the sweet chains of Thy love, that my soul may never more be separated from Thee.

O Mary, thou art called the Mother of Perseverance; this great gift is dispensed through thee; thee I ask to obtain it for me; through thy intercession I certainly hope for it.

Wednesday--Twenty-third Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

ST. JOSEPH'S LOVE FOR MARY AND JESUS

Joseph regarded Mary as the beloved of God chosen to be the Mother of His only-begotten Son. And as God gave St. Joseph the place of father to Jesus, He must have certainly infused into the heart of Joseph the love of a father, and of a father to so amiable a Son, a Son Who was also God.

I.

And (Jesus) went down with them, and came to Nazareth and was subject to them (Luke ii. 51).

Consider the love Joseph bore to his holy spouse. Of all the women that ever lived Mary was the most beautiful. She was more humble, more meek, more pure, more obedient, more inflamed with the love of God, than all the Angels and men that have been or shall be created. Hence she merited all the affections of Joseph, who was so great a lover of virtue. Add to all this, the tenderness with which he saw himself loved by Mary, who certainly loved her own spouse above all creatures. Besides, Joseph regarded her as the beloved of God, chosen to be the Mother of His only begotten Son. Consider how great must have been the affection which, for all these reasons, the just and grateful heart of Joseph entertained for so amiable a spouse as Mary.

Oh! how many tears must Mary and Joseph have shed in speaking of Jesus' Passion and Death, which they had already learned from the Sacred Scriptures! What tenderness must they have felt in saying and thinking that their Beloved was, according to Isaias, to be a Man a sorrows and reproaches; that His

enemies would so disfigure Him that His lovely countenance could be no longer recognized; that by their scourges they would lacerate and bruise His flesh to such a degree, that He would appear as a leper all covered with ulcers and wounds; that their beloved Treasure would suffer all with patience, without ever opening His mouth to complain of His torments; that He would be led like a lamb to the slaughter; and that, finally He would die by dint of torments, hanging on an infamous gibbet between two thieves.

II.

Consider, also, the love Joseph bore Jesus. Having given our Saint the place of father to Jesus, God must certainly have infused into the heart of Joseph the love of a father, and of a father to so amiable a Son, a Son Who was also God. Hence the love of Joseph was not purely human, like the love of other fathers, but a superhuman love; for he found in the same person one who behaved like his son, and yet was his very God. Joseph knew from the Angel, by an infallible Divine revelation, that the Child by Whom he was always accompanied was the Divine Word, Who had become Man for the love of men, and especially for the love of him. He knew that he himself had been chosen from among all men to be the guardian of the life of the Divine Infant, and that the Infant wished to be called his Son. Consider what a flame of holy love must have been kindled in the heart of Joseph by meditating on all these things, and in seeing his Lord performing for him the little offices of a boy, at one time opening and closing the door; at another helping him to saw or to plane; and at another, gathering fragments of wood, or sweeping the house; and finally, in seeing that He obeyed all his commands, and even did nothing without his direction.

What affections must he have felt in carrying Jesus in his arms, caressing Him, and in receiving the caress of that sweet Infant! In hearing from Him the words of eternal life, which, like so many loving darts, wounded his heart! And particularly in witnessing the holy examples of all virtues which the Divine Child gave him. Long familiarity with persons who love one another cools their affection: for the longer men converse together, the more perfectly they learn one another's defects. This was not

the case with Joseph: the more he conversed with Jesus, the better he became acquainted with His sanctity. Consider, then, how great was Joseph's love for Jesus, since, according to the authors, he enjoyed His society for the space of twenty-five years.

Spiritual Reading

"HE WAS SUBJECT TO THEM."

As long as St. Joseph lived Jesus Christ respected him as a father, and until his death always obeyed him as such: *He was subject to them*. So that during all those years the constant occupation of the Saviour was to obey St. Joseph. During the whole of that time it was Joseph's office to command, as the head of the family; and the office of Jesus was, as a subject, to obey St. Joseph, who had been given to Him by God in place of a father. Hence, on the one hand, Jesus performed no action, did not even take a step, tasted no food, took no repose, but by the will of St. Joseph; and on the other, was all attention in listening to and executing all St. Joseph imposed upon Him. Our Blessed Lady said to St. Bridget: "My Son was so obedient, that when Joseph said, 'Do this or that,' He immediately did it." Hence John Gerson writes: "He often prepared the food and drink, washed the vessels, brought water from the fountain, and swept the house."

St. Bernard, speaking of St. Joseph, says: "He was a faithful and prudent servant, whom our Lord made the solace of His Mother, the nourisher of His humanity, and, in fine, the one most faithful cooperator in the great Council on earth." Therefore St. Joseph was not only destined as a helper and comforter to the Mother of God, who had so many tribulations on earth; not only was he the supporter of Jesus Christ, but he was also destined to cooperate, in a way, in the Redemption of the world, for this was the work of the great Council of the Three Divine Persons. God having also given him to His Son in the place of a father, He at the same time charged him to feed and defend this Son from the snares of His enemies: *Take the child* (Matt. ii. 13), as if he had addressed him in the words of the Psalmist: *To thee is the poor man left* (Ps. x. 14). Joseph, I have sent My Son on earth; and I have sent Him poor and humble, without the splendour of riches or apparent nobility; hence, in the world He

will be despised and called the Son of a carpenter: *Is not this the carpenter's Son* (Matt. xiii. 55), according to thy humble trade; for I have willed that thou shouldst be poor, because I have destined thee to hold the place of a father over My Son Who is poor. He has not come to reign in the world, but to suffer and die for the salvation of men. On earth, then thou wilt hold My place of father over Him, and be His guardian: *To thee is the poor man left*. I abandon Him into thy hands. He will be persecuted, and thou wilt share in His sufferings; guard Him with care, and be thou faithful to Me. "Therefore," says St. John Damascene, "God gave St. Joseph the love, the care and the authority of a father over Jesus: He gave him the affection of a father, that he might guard Him with great love; the solicitude of a father, that he might watch over Him with care; and the authority of a father, that he might feel sure that he would be obeyed in all that he arranged as to the Person of this Son."

Having, then, made Joseph, as St. Bernard says, a cooperator in the work of Redemption, God willed that he should be present at the birth of Jesus, that he might be a faithful witness of the glory the Angels gave to God on this occasion; and also of what had been revealed to the shepherds, who, when they came to visit the Saviour, related all to Mary and Joseph. Again, that he might be a witness of the coming of the kings, who, guided by a star, had come from afar to adore the Holy Child, as they themselves said: *for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to adore him* (Matt. ii. 2). God also willed that Joseph together with Mary, should offer Him the newborn Babe, as they did: *they carried him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord* (Luke ii. 22), and there offered Him to death for the salvation of the world, according to those Scriptures in which the Passion of Jesus Christ had already been foretold, and which were well known to Mary and Joseph.

God, then, seeing that through jealousy and fear of losing his kingdom, Herod wished to gain possession of the Divine Child to take His life, sent an Angel to St. Joseph, to direct him, in His Name, to take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt: *Arise, and take the Child and his Mother, and fly into Egypt; and be there until I shall tell thee: for it will come to pass that Herod will seek*

the Child to destroy him (Matt. ii. 13). Behold, Joseph, faithful and obedient to the voice of God, arose in the night (the very same night on which he received notice from the Angel, as interpreters explain it), took the Child and His Mother, and journeyed towards Egypt. Joseph, without loss of time, gathered together as many instruments of his trade as he could carry, which were required for the support of the Holy Family in Egypt. Mary, on the other hand, took the Child in her arms, and the poor linen for the use of her Son; and they set out alone, without a servant, as poor pilgrims on a journey which was so long and full of dangers, having to pass through so many desert places before they could reach Egypt, a country in which they had no relatives or friends, and where they would only find rude and unknown people. When they arrived there, St. Joseph, as St. Bernard says, laboured night and day to support his Holy Spouse and the Divine Child. Having afterwards returned from Egypt, according to the new command of the Angel: *Arise, and take the Child and his Mother, and go into the land of Israel* (Ibid.) -- Joseph at once left Egypt, and returned into Judea. But he was again told by the Angel not to remain in Judea, for fear of Archelaus, who reigned there in the place of Herod his father, who was dead. He went therefore to dwell in Nazareth in Galilee, and remained there in the company of his beloved Jesus, living in poverty on the small profits of his humble trade, until the time of his death.

During this time it was, that, having gone with Mary and Jesus, Who was then about twelve years of age, to visit the Temple, he came a day's journey towards home and met Mary, with whom he believed Jesus to be travelling, but found that Jesus had not returned. During three days Joseph constantly wept, for he was separated from Jesus, the love of his heart; but that which caused him the greatest affliction was the fear that Jesus had left him on account of some displeasure he might have caused Him, and that, therefore, God no longer considered him worthy to have charge of so great a treasure. He was, however, afterwards consoled when he heard from Jesus Himself that He had remained in the Temple for affairs which concerned the glory of God. From that time he attended on Jesus until his death, when it was his happy lot to expire in the arms of Jesus and Mary,

who attended upon him in that last moment: hence St. Francis de Sales says, that "it is certain that, like the Blessed Virgin his spouse, he died of love."

Evening Meditation

THE HONOUR DUE TO ST. JOSEPH

I.

We should, indeed, honour St. Joseph since the Son of God Himself was graciously pleased to honour him, by calling him His father. "Christ," says Origen, "gave to Joseph the honour due to a parent." He is also thus spoken of in the Gospel: *and his father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning him* (Luke ii. 33). The Divine Mother also spoke of him under this name. *Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing* (Ibid. 48). Since, then, the King of Kings was pleased to raise Joseph to so high a dignity, it is right and a duty on our part, to endeavour to honour him as much as we can. He indeed should be greatly honoured by men, whom the King of Kings has been pleased thus to exalt. "What Angel or Saint," says St. Basil, "ever merited to be called the father of the Son of God? Joseph alone was thus called." Hence we can well apply to St. Joseph the words of St. Paul, *being made so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they* (Heb. i. 4). St. Joseph was more honoured by God, in this name of father, than all the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Pontiffs; for all these have the name of servants, Joseph alone that of father.

II.

He made him master of his house (Ps. civ. 21). Consider St. Joseph as father and lord of the little Family of Nazareth, little in point of numbers, but great on account of the two illustrious Personages who composed it -- the Mother of God and the only-begotten Son of God made Man! Joseph commanded in that house, and the Son of God obeyed: *He was subject to them*. "This subjection," says Gerson, "whilst it shows the humility of Jesus Christ, also shows the greatness of the dignity of St. Joseph." "And to what greater dignity, to what higher degree of exaltation," continues the same writer, "can a person be raised, than to that of commanding Him Who commands all kings?"

Josue excited the admiration of the whole world when he

commanded the sun to stop in its course, that he might have time to conquer his enemies; and it obeyed. *The Lord obeying the voice of a man* (Jos. x. 14). But what comparison can there be between Josue, whom the sun, an inanimate creature, obeyed, and Joseph, who was obeyed by Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

Thursday--Twenty-third Week after Pentecost

"A MERCIFUL HIGH-PRIEST"

The infinite Mercy of God induced Him to descend from Heaven to earth to free us from eternal death. But in order that He might not only save us, but be able to feel compassion for our miseries He willed to become man capable of suffering and similar to other men. *For we have not a High-Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities ... wherefore, it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful ... High-Priest* (Heb. iv. 15; ii. 17).

I.

What a tender compassion Jesus Christ has for poor sinners! This makes Him say, He is that Shepherd who goes after the lost sheep, and on finding it, arranges a banquet, saying: *Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost. And he lays it upon his shoulders rejoicing* (Luke xv. 5-6); and thus He carefully keeps possession of it in His fond embrace for fear He should lose it again. His tender compassion caused Him, too, to say that He is that loving Father Who, whenever the prodigal son returns to His feet, does not thrust him away, but embraces and kisses him, and as it were faints away for the consolation and joy He feels in beholding his repentance: *And running to him, he fell upon his neck and kissed him* (Luke xv. 20). He says: *I stand at the gate and knock* (Apoc. iii. 20). Although driven away from the soul by sin, He does not abandon her, but places Himself at the door of her heart and pleads and knocks to gain readmittance. He said to His disciples, who with an indiscreet zeal would have called down vengeance on those who repulsed them: *You know not of what spirit you are* (Luke ix. 55). You see that I have so much compassion on sinners, and do you desire vengeance on them? You are not of My spirit. Finally, this compassion made Jesus say: *Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you* (Matt. xi. 28). Come to me, all you that are afflicted and weary

with the burden of your sins, and I will give you rest.

Oh no, let us not be afraid of Jesus Christ; but let us be afraid of our own obstinacy, if after offending Him we will not listen to His voice, inviting us to be reconciled. If we persist in our obstinacy, Jesus Christ will be constrained to condemn us; but if we repent of the evil we have done, what fear need we have of Jesus Christ? Who has to pronounce sentence on us? Think, says St. Paul, that the self-same Redeemer has to sentence thee Who died just that He might not condemn thee; that self-same One Who, that He might pardon thee, hath given Himself no pardon: "In order to redeem the servant," says St. Bernard, "He hath not spared Himself."

O Redeemer of my soul, my soul is now enamoured of Thee, and loves Thee. Thou hast loved me above measure, so that, overcome by Thy love, I may no longer resist its winning appeals, but surrender myself, and fix all my love on Thee. I love Thee, then, O infinite Goodness! I love Thee, O most lovable God! Do Thou never cease to enkindle more and more in my heart the flames and fiery darts of love. For Thy own glory cause Thyself to be greatly loved by one who so greatly offended Thee. Mary, my Mother, thou art the hope, the refuge of sinners; assist a sinner who desires to prove faithful to his God; help me to love Him, and to love Him exceedingly.

II.

O sinner, go to the stable of Bethlehem, and thank the Infant Jesus, all shivering with cold in that cave for thy sake, moaning and weeping for thee on a bundle of straw. Give thanks to this thy Redeemer, Who has come down from Heaven to call thee to Himself and to save thee. If thou art desirous of pardon, He is awaiting thee in the Manger to pardon thee. Go quickly, then, and obtain thy pardon; and afterwards do not forget the excessive love Jesus Christ has borne thee: *Forget not the kindness of thy surety* (Ecclus. xxix. 19). Forget not that high favour He has done thee by making Himself Surety for thy debts to God, in taking on Himself the chastisement deserved by thee; do not forget it, and love Him for it. And know further, that shouldst thou love Him, thy past sins will not stand in the way of thy receiving from God those specially great and choice graces which He is wont

to bestow on His most beloved souls: *All things work together unto good* (Rom. viii. 28). Yes, even the remembrance of the sins he has committed contributes to the advantage of the sinner who bewails and destests them, because this very thing will make him more humble and more pleasing to God, when he sees how God has welcomed him into the loving arms of His mercy: *There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance more than upon ninety-nine just* (Luke xv. 7).

But of what sinner is it to be understood that he gives more joy to Heaven than a whole multitude of just ones? It is to be understood of the sinner who, out of gratitude to the Divine goodness, devotes himself wholly and fervently to the love of God, after the example of a St. Paul, a St. Mary Magdalen, a St. Mary of Egypt, a St. Augustine, and a St. Margaret of Cortona. To this last Saint in particular, who had formerly spent several years in sin, God revealed the place prepared for her in Heaven, amongst the Seraphim; and even during her life He showed her many signal favours, insomuch that, beholding herself so favoured, she one day said to God: "O Lord, how is it that Thou lavishest so many graces on me? Hast Thou, then, forgotten the sins I committed against Thee?" And God thus answered her: "And do you not know that when a soul repents of its faults I no longer remember all the outrages it has been guilty of towards Me?" This same God had long ago announced by His Prophet Ezechiel: *If the wicked do penance ... I will not remember all his iniquities* (Ezech. xviii. 21).

Our sins, then, do not prevent us from becoming saints; God offers us every assistance if we only desire it and ask it. It only remains for us to give ourselves entirely to God, and to devote to His love at least the remainder of our days. Come, then, let us bestir ourselves; what are we doing? If we fail, we fail because of ourselves, not because of God. May we never be so unfortunate as to turn all these mercies and loving calls of God into subjects of remorse and despair upon our death-bed, at that last moment when no more time is left to do anything, when the night sets in and *no man can work* (Jo. ix. 4).

O my Redeemer and my God, and who am I that Thou shouldst have loved me, and still continuest to love me, so much?

What hast Thou ever received from me that has obliged Thee to love me so much? What except slights and provocations, which were a reason for Thee to abandon me, and to banish me forever from Thy face? Pardon me, O my beloved Infant, for I am sorry with my whole heart for every displeasure I have given Thee. But know that I shall not be content with a simple pardon; I desire also the grace to love Thee ardently; I wish to make compensation by my love as much as possible for the past ingratitude which I have shown Thee.

Spiritual Reading

"IN SILENCE AND IN HOPE SHALL YOUR STRENGTH BE."

There are three means of acquiring the habit of continual prayer -- namely, silence, solitude and the presence of God. These were the means that the Angel suggested to St. Arsenius when he said: "If you wish to be saved, fly into solitude, observe silence, and repose in God by always keeping yourself in His presence." We shall speak of each of these means.

I. SILENCE

In the first place, silence is a great means of acquiring the spirit of prayer, and of disposing the soul to converse continually with God. We rarely find a spiritual soul that speaks much. All men of prayer are lovers of silence. It is called the guardian of innocence, the shield against temptations, and the fountain of prayer. For by silence devotion is preserved, and in silence good thoughts spring up in the soul. St. Bernard says: "Silence and the absence of noise in a certain manner force the soul to think of God and of things eternal." Hence, the Saints fled to the mountains, to caves, and to deserts, in order to find silence, and escape the tumults of the world for, as was said to Elias: *The Lord is not in the earthquake* (3 Kings, xix. 11). Theodosius the monk observed silence for thirty-five years. St. John the Silent, who gave up his bishopric and became a monk, observed silence for forty-seven years before his death; and all the Saints, even they who were not solitaries, have been lovers of silence.

Oh, how great are the blessings silence brings the soul! It saves us from a multitude of sins by destroying the root of disputes, detractions, resentments, and curiosity; and besides this,

it helps us to acquire many virtues. How well does he practise humility who when others speak, listens with modesty and in silence! How well does he practise mortification by not yielding to his inclinations or desire to tell a certain anecdote, or to use a witty expression suggested by the conversation! It is an excellent practice of meekness to remain silent when unjustly censured or offended. Hence the holy Prophet said: *In silence and in hope shall your strength be* (Is. xxx. 15). Your strength shall be in silence and in hope; by silence we shun the occasions of sin, and by hope we obtain the Divine aid to lead a holy life.

But, on the other hand, immense evils flow from speaking much. As devotion is preserved by silence, so is it lost by a multitude of words. However recollected the soul may have been in prayer, if it afterwards indulge in long discourses it will find the mind as distracted and dissipated as if it had not made Meditation. When the mouth of the burning furnace is opened the heat soon evaporates. St. Dorotheus says: Beware of much speaking, for it banishes from the soul holy thoughts and recollection with God." Speaking of those Religious who cannot abstain from inquiring after worldly news, St. Joseph Calasanctius says: "The curious Religious shows that he has forgotten himself." It is certain that he who speaks too much with men converses but little with God, for the Lord says: *I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart* (Osee ii. 14). If, then, the soul wishes that God speak to it, it must seek solitude; but this solitude will never be found by those who do not love silence. "If," said the Venerable Margaret of the Cross, "we remain silent, we shall find solitude." And how will the Lord ever condescend to speak to him, who, by seeking after the conversation of creatures, shows that conversation with God is not sufficient to make him happy?

Besides, the Holy Ghost tells us that in speaking much we shall not fail to commit some fault. *In the multitude of words there shall not want sin* (Prov. x. 19). While they speak and prolong conversation without necessity, certain persons think that they are not guilty of any defect; but if they carefully examine themselves they will find some fault against modesty, of detraction, of curiosity, or at least some superfluous words. *But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account*

for it in the day of judgment (Matt. xii. 36).

I have used the words some fault; but when we speak much we shall find that we have committed a thousand faults. St. James has called the tongue a universal evil: *The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity* (James iii. 6). For, as a learned author remarks, the greater number of sins arises from speaking, or from listening to others. *A man full of tongue shall not be established in the earth* (Ps. cxxxix. 12).

Evening Meditation

THE PATIENCE OF GOD IN WAITING FOR SINNERS TO RETURN TO HIM

I.

Let us consider the Patience of God in waiting for sinners to return. That great Servant of God, Sancia Carillo, a penitent of Blessed John of Avila, used to say that the consideration of God's patience with sinners made her wish to build a church, and entitle it "The Patience of God." Ah, who could ever bear with what God has borne with from you? If the offences which you have committed against God had been offered to your best friends, they surely would have sought revenge. When you insulted the Lord He was able to chastise you; you repeated the insult, and He did not punish your guilt, but preserved your life, and provided you with sustenance. He, as it were, pretended not to see the injuries you offered to Him, that you might enter into yourself, and cease to offend. *Thou overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance* (Wis. xi. 24). But how, O Lord, does it happen, that Thou canst not behold a single sin, and yet Thou dost bear in silence with so many? *Thy eyes are too pure to behold evil, and thou canst not look on iniquity. Why lookest thou upon them that do unjust things, and holdest thy peace?* (Habac. i. 13).

All creatures -- the earth, fire, air, water -- because they all obey God, would, by a natural instinct, wish to punish the sinner, and to avenge the injuries he does to the Creator; but God, through His mercy, restrains them. *For the creature serving thee the Creator is made fierce against the unjust* (Wis. xvi. 24). But, O Lord, Thou waitest for the wicked that they may enter into themselves; and dost Thou not see that they abuse Thy mercy to offer new insults to Thy majesty? *Thou hast been favourable to the nation,*

O Lord, thou hast been favourable to the nation: art thou glorified? (Is. xxvi. 15). Thou hast waited so long for sinners; Thou hast abstained from inflicting punishment; but what glory hast Thou reaped from Thy forbearance? They have become more wicked. Why so much patience with such ungrateful souls? Why dost Thou continue to wait for their repentance? Why dost Thou not chastise their wickedness? The same Prophet answers: *The Lord waiteth that he may have mercy on you* (Is. xxx. 18). God waits for sinners that they may one day repent, and that after their repentance He may pardon and save them. *As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live* (Ezech. xxxiii. 11).

II.

St. Augustine goes so far as to say that the Lord, if He were not God, would be unjust on account of His excessive patience towards sinners. By waiting for those who abuse His patience to multiply their sins, God appears to do an injustice to the Divine honour. We sin, continues the Saint, we cling to sin, we glory in sin, and yet Thou art not angry! We provoke Thee to anger -- Thou dost invite us to mercy! God and ourselves appear to be, as it were, engaged in a contest, in which we labour to provoke Him to chastise us, and He labours to bring us to repentance.

Lord, exclaimed holy Job, what is man, that Thou dost entertain so great an esteem for him? Why dost Thou love him so tenderly? *What is a man that thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?* (Job. vii. 17). Ah, sinners, says St. Teresa, remember that He who now calls and seeks after you, is that God Who will one day be your Judge. If you are lost, the great mercies which He now shows you, will be the greatest torment you shall suffer in hell.

Friday--Twenty-third Week after Pentecost **Morning Meditation**

THE FAITHFUL HEART OF JESUS

(FOR FIRST FRIDAY OF NOVEMBER.)

The faithfulness of the Heart of Jesus gives us confidence to hope for all things, although we deserve nothing. God is faithful, says St. Paul. Oh, how faithful is the beautiful Heart of Jesus

towards those He calls to His love!

I.

Oh, how faithful is the beautiful Heart of Jesus towards those He calls to His love: *He is faithful who hath called you, who also will perform* (1 Thess. v. 24). The faithfulness of God gives us confidence to hope all things, although we deserve nothing. If we have driven God from our heart, let us open the door to Him, and He will immediately enter, according to the promise He has made: *If any man open to me the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him* (Apoc. iii. 20). If we wish for graces, let us ask for them of God, in the Name of Jesus Christ, and He has promised us that we shall obtain them: *If you shall ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you* (Jo. xvi. 23). If we are tempted, let us trust in His merits, and He will not permit our enemies to strive with us beyond our strength: *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able* (1 Cor. x. 13). Oh, how much better is it to have to do with God than with men! How often do men promise and then fail, either because they tell lies in making their promises, or because, after having made the promise, they change their minds: *God is not as man*, says the Holy Spirit, *that he should lie; or as the son of man, that he should be changed* (Numb. xxiii. 19).

I know my ingratitude, O my Jesus, and I abhor it. I know that Thou art infinite Goodness, Who deservest an infinite love, especially from me, whom Thou hast so much loved, even after all the offences I have committed against Thee. Unhappy me if I should damn myself; the graces Thou hast vouchsafed to me, and the proofs of the singular affection which Thou hast shown me, would be, O God, the hell of hells to me. Ah, no, my Love, have pity on me; suffer me not to forsake Thee again, and then by damning myself, as I should deserve, continue to repay in hell with injuries and hatred the love that Thou hast borne me. O loving and faithful Heart of Jesus, inflame, I beseech Thee, my miserable heart, so that it may burn with love for Thee, as Thine does for me. My Jesus, it seems to me that now I love Thee, but I love Thee too little. Make me love Thee exceedingly, and keep me faithful to Thee until death. I ask of Thee this grace, together with that of always praying to Thee for it. Grant that I may die

rather than ever betray Thee again. O Mary, my Mother, help me to be faithful to thy Son.

II.

God cannot be unfaithful to His promises, because, being Truth itself, He cannot lie; nor can He change His mind, because all that He wills is just and right. He has promised to receive all that come to Him, to help those who call upon Him, to love those who love Him; and shall He, then, not do it? *Hath he said, then, and will he not do?* Oh, that we were as faithful with God as He is with us! Oh, how often have we, in times past, promised Him to be His, to serve Him and to love Him, and then have betrayed Him, and, renouncing His service, have sold ourselves as slaves to the devil! Oh, let us beseech Him to give us strength to be faithful to Him for the future! Oh, how blessed shall we be if we are faithful to Jesus Christ in the few things that He commands us to do; He will, indeed, be faithful in remunerating us with infinitely great rewards; and He will declare to us what He has promised to His faithful servants: *Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord* (Matt. xxv. 21).

Oh, that I had been as faithful towards Thee, my dearest Redeemer, as Thou hast been faithful to me. Whenever I have opened my heart to Thee, Thou hast entered in, to forgive me and to receive me into Thy favour; whenever I have called Thee, Thou hast hastened to my assistance. Thou hast been faithful with me, but I have been exceedingly unfaithful towards Thee. I have promised Thee my love, and then have many times refused it to Thee; as if Thou, my God, Who hast created and redeemed me, wert less worthy of being loved than Thy creatures and those miserable pleasures for which I have forsaken Thee. Forgive me, O my Jesus.

Spiritual Reading

"MAKE A BALANCE FOR THY WORDS."

Whenever you have to speak, be careful, in conformity with the advice of the Holy Ghost to *make a balance for thy words* (Ecclus, xxviii. 29), and examine what you ought to say. Make a balance for your words that you may weigh them before you

give expression to them. Hence St. Bernard says that "before your words come to the tongue, let them pass twice under the file of examination," that you may suppress what you should not utter. The same was said by St. Francis de Sales in other words -- namely, that to speak without sin every one should keep a lock on his lips, that in opening his mouth to speak he may reflect well on what he wishes to say.

Before speaking you should consider--

1. Whether what you intend to say can injure charity, modesty, or the exact observance of God's law.
2. Examine the motive that impels you to speak; for it sometimes happens that what a persons says is good, but the intention is bad.

3. Be careful to speak with *simplicity*, avoiding all affectation; with *humility*, abstaining from all words of pride or vainglory; with *sweetness*, never uttering a word that savours of impatience, or that tends to the discredit of a neighbour; with *moderation*, by not being the first to give your opinion on any question that may be proposed, particularly if you are younger than the others; with *modesty*, by not interrupting another while he is speaking; and also by abstaining from every word that savours of the world, from all improper gestures, and immoderate laughter, and by speaking in a low tone of voice. When it is the proper time for unbending the mind, speak when the others are silent, but endeavour as often as you can to speak on something that has reference to God. "Let us speak of the Lord Jesus," says St. Ambrose, "let us always speak of Him." He who has an ardent love for another, appears unable to speak of anything but of him. They who speak little of Jesus Christ, show that they have but little love for Jesus Christ. At the conversations of the servants of God, says St. Teresa, Jesus Christ is always present. Of this, Father Gisolfo, of the Congregation of the "Pious Workers," relates a memorable example, in the Life of the Venerable Father Anthony de Collelis, He says that Father Constantine Rossi, the Master of novices, saw one day two of his young disciples, Anthony Torres, and Philip Orilla, conversing together, and with them a young man of most beautiful aspect. The Master of novices was surprised that two novices, whom he regarded as

most exemplary, should speak to a stranger without permission: he therefore asked who was the young man whom he had seen conversing with them. They said there was no one conversing with them. But he afterwards learned that they were speaking of Jesus Christ, and understood that the person he saw in their company was our Divine Saviour.

Let us always remember that time is given to us not to be spent unprofitably in idle conversation, but to be employed for God, and in acquiring merit for eternity. St. Bernardine of Siena used to say that a moment of time is of as much value as God, because in each moment we can gain His friendship, or greater degrees of grace.

Evening Meditation

THE IGNOMINIES JESUS SUFFERED IN HIS PASSION

I.

The greatest ignominies Jesus had to suffer were those of His Passion. In the first place He then had to see Himself abandoned by His beloved disciples. One of them betrayed Him, another denied Him, and when He was captured in the Garden, all fled and abandoned Him: *Then his disciples leaving him, all fled away* (Mark, xiv. 50). Afterwards the Jews presented Him to Pilate as a malefactor who deserved to be crucified. *If, said they, he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee* (Jo. xviii. 30). Herod treated him as a fool: *Herod, says St. Luke, with his army, set him at nought and mocked him, putting on him a white garment* (Luke xxiii. 11).

Barabbas, a robber and murderer, was preferred before Him. When Pilate gave the Jews the choice of rescuing Jesus Christ or Barabbas from death, they exclaimed, *Not this man, but Barabbas* (Jo. xviii. 40). He was chastised with the lash, a punishment inflicted only on slaves: *Then, therefore, says St. John, Pilate took Jesus and scourged him* (Jo. xix. 1). He was treated as a mock king; for after having through mockery crowned Him with thorns, they saluted Him as king and spat in His face: *They mocked him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews. And spitting upon him, they took the reed, and struck his head* (Matt. xxvii. 29, 30). He was afterwards, as Isaias had foretold, condemned to die between two malefactors: *He was reputed with the wicked* (Is. liii. 12).

II.

Finally, Jesus died on a Cross. That is the most opprobrious death which was then inflicted on malefactors, for the man whom the Jews condemned to the death of the cross was, as we read in Deuteronomy, said to be an object of malediction to God and man. Hence St. Paul has said, *Being made a curse for us, for it is written: Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree* (Gal. iii. 13). Our Redeemer, says the same Apostle, renouncing the life of splendour and happiness which He might have enjoyed on earth, chose for Himself a life of tribulations, and a death accompanied with so much shame: *Who, having joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame* (Heb. xii. 2).

Thus in Jesus Christ was fulfilled the prediction of Jeremias, that He should live and die saturated with opprobrium. *He shall give his cheek to him that striketh him, he shall be filled with reproaches* (Lam. iii. 30). Hence, St. Bernard exclaims: O grandeur! O abasement! Behold the Lord, Who is exalted above all, become now the most contemptible of all! And all this proceeded from the love which Jesus Christ bore to us.

O my Jesus, save me; do not permit me, after being redeemed by Thee with so much pain and so much love, to lose my soul and go to hell, there to hate and curse the very love Thou hast borne me. This hell I have indeed so often deserved; for, though Thou couldst do nothing more than Thou hast done to oblige me to love Thee, I have done everything in my power to compel Thee to chastise me. But since, in Thy goodness, Thou hast waited for me, and even still dost continue to ask me to love Thee, I wish to love Thee: I wish henceforth to love Thee with my whole heart and without reserve. Give me strength to carry out this wish, O Mary, Mother of God, assist me by thy prayers.

Saturday--Twenty-third Week after Pentecost **Morning Meditation**

MARY SUCCOURS HER CLIENTS IN PURGATORY

Fortunate, indeed, are the clients of this most compassionate Mother, for not only does she succour them in this world, but even in Purgatory she succours and comforts them. She herself

once spoke these words to St. Bridget: "I am the Mother of all the souls in Purgatory, for all the pains they have deserved for their sins are, every hour as long as they are detained there, mitigated in some way by my intercession."

I.

Fortunate, indeed, are the clients of the most compassionate Mother, for not only does she succour them in this world, but even in Purgatory she succours and comforts them. As in that prison the Poor Souls are in the greatest need of assistance, since in their torments they cannot help themselves, our Mother of Mercy does proportionately more to relieve them. St. Bernadine of Sienna says, that "in that prison, where souls who are spouses of Jesus Christ are detained, Mary has a certain dominion and plenitude of power, not only to relieve them, but even to deliver them from their pains."

And, first, with respect to the relief she gives. The same Saint, in applying those words of Ecclesiasticus, *I have walked in the waves of the sea* (Ecclus. xxiv. 8), says she does so "by visiting and relieving the necessities and torments of her clients, who are her children." He then says that "the pains of Purgatory are called waves, because they are transitory, unlike the pains of hell, which never end; and they are called waves of the sea, because they are so bitter. The clients of Mary, thus suffering, are often visited and relieved by her." "See, therefore," says Novarinus, "of what consequence it is to be the servant of this good Lady, for her servants she never forgets when they are suffering in those flames; for though Mary relieves all suffering souls in Purgatory, yet she always obtains far greater indulgence and relief for her own clients."

The Divine Mother once addressed these words to St. Bridget: "I am the Mother of all Souls in Purgatory; for all the pains they have deserved for their sins are every hour, as long as they remain there, in some way mitigated by my prayers." The compassionate Mother even condescends to go herself occasionally into that holy prison, to visit and comfort her suffering children. St. Bonaventure, applying to Mary the words of Ecclesiasticus: *I have penetrated into the bottom of the deep* (Ecclus. xxiv. 8), says, "the deep, that is, Purgatory, to relieve by my presence the Holy

Souls detained there." "O, how courteous and benign is the most Blessed Virgin," says St. Vincent Ferrer, "to those who suffer in Purgatory! Through her they constantly receive comfort and refreshment."

II.

What other consolation have they in their sufferings than Mary, and the relief they receive from this Mother of Mercy? St. Bridget once heard Jesus say to His holy Mother: "Thou art My Mother, the Mother of Mercy, and the consolation of Souls in Purgatory." The Blessed Virgin, herself told the Saint, that "as a poor sick person, bedridden, suffering, and abandoned, is relieved by words of encouragement and consolation, so are the Souls in Purgatory consoled and relieved by only hearing her name." The mere name of Mary, that name of hope and salvation, and which is frequently invoked by her beloved children in their prison, is a great source of comfort to them; "for," says Novarinus, "that loving Mother no sooner hears them call upon her than she offers her prayers to God, and these prayers, as a heavenly dew, immediately refresh them in their burning pains."

Mary not only consoles and relieves her clients in Purgatory, but she delivers them by her prayers. Gerson says, that "on the day of her Assumption into Heaven Purgatory was entirely emptied." Novarinus confirms this, saying, that "it is maintained by many grave authors, that when Mary was going to Heaven, she asked as a favour from her Son to take all the Souls then in Purgatory with her." "And from that time forward," says Gerson, "Mary had the privilege of delivering her servants." St. Bernardine of Sienna also positively asserts that "the Blessed Virgin has the power of delivering souls from Purgatory, but particularly those of her clients, by her prayers, and by applying her merits for them." Novarinus says, that "by the merits of Mary, not only are the pains of those souls lessened, but the time of their sufferings is shortened through her intercession." She has only to ask, and all is done.

O Queen of Heaven and earth, O Mother of the Lord of the world, O Mary, of all creatures the greatest, the most exalted, and the most amiable, it is true that there are many in this world who neither know thee nor love thee; but in Heaven there

are many millions of Angels and blessed Spirits, who love and praise thee continually. Even in this world, how many happy souls are there not who burn with thy love, and live enamoured of thy goodness! O, that I also could love thee, O Lady worthy of all love! O that I could always remember to serve thee, to praise thee, to honour thee, and bring all to love thee! Thou hast attracted the love of God, Whom, by thy beauty, thou hast, so to say, drawn from the bosom of His Eternal Father to become Man, and be thy Son. And shall I, a poor worm of the earth, not be enamoured of thee? No, my most sweet Mother, I also will love thee much, and will do all that I can to make others love thee also.

Spiritual Reading

"LET US SEEK FOR GRACE AND LET US SEEK IT THROUGH MARY."

To be convinced of the desire Our Blessed Mother has to be of service to all, we need only consider the Mystery of the Visitation, or the visit made by Mary to St. Elizabeth. The journey from Nazareth, where the most Blessed Virgin lived, to the city of Hebron, which St. Luke calls a city of Judea, and in which according to Baronius and other authors, St. Elizabeth resided, was at least sixty-nine miles. Notwithstanding the arduousness of the undertaking, the Blessed Virgin, tender and delicate as she then was, and unaccustomed to such fatigue, did not delay her departure. And what was it that impelled her? It was that great charity with which her most tender heart was ever filled that forced her, so to say, to go, and at once begin her great office of dispenser of graces. Precisely thus does St. Ambrose speak of her journey: "She did not go in incredulity of the prophecy, but glad to do what she had undertaken; it was joy that hastened her steps, in the fulfilment of a religious office." The Saint means by these words, that Mary did not undertake the journey to inquire into the truth of what the Angel had pronounced to her of the pregnancy of St. Elizabeth, but exulting in the greatness of her desire to be of service to that family, she hastened for the joy she felt in doing good to others, and wholly intent on that work of charity: *Rising, she went with haste*. Here, let it be observed, the Evangelist, in speaking of Mary's departure for the house of

Elizabeth, says, that *she went with haste*; but when he speaks of her return, he no longer says anything of haste, but simply that *Mary abode with her about three months; and she returned to her own house* (Luke i. 56). What other object, then, asks St. Bonaventure, could the Mother of God have had in view, when she hastened to visit the house of St. John the Baptist, if it was not the desire to render service to that family? "What caused her to hasten in the performance of that act of charity but the charity which burnt in her heart?"

This charity of Mary towards men certainly did not cease when she went to Heaven; nay more, it greatly increased there, for there she better knows our wants, and has still greater compassion for our miseries. Bernardine de Eustis writes that "Mary desires more earnestly to do us good and grant us graces than we desire to receive them." So much so, that St. Bonaventure says that she considers herself offended by those who do not ask her for graces: "Not only those, O Lady, offend thee who outrage thee, but thou art also offended by those who neglect to ask thy favours." For Mary's desire to enrich all with graces is, so to say, a part of her nature, and she superabundantly enriches her servants, as Blessed Raymond Jordano affirms: "Mary is God's treasurer, and the treasurer of His graces, and she plentifully endows her servants with choice gifts."

Hence the same author says, that "he who finds Mary finds every good." And he adds, that every one can find her, even the most miserable sinner in the world; for she is so benign that she rejects none who have recourse to her: "Her benignity is such, that no one need fear to approach her. And her mercy is so great, that no one meets with a repulse." Thomas a Kempis makes her say: "I invite all to have recourse to me; I expect all, I desire all, and I never despise any sinner, however unworthy he may be, who comes to seek my aid." Richard of St. Laurence says, that whoever goes to ask graces from Mary "finds her always prepared to help"; that is, she is always ready, and inclined to help us, and to obtain for us every grace for eternal salvation by her powerful prayers.

I say, by her powerful prayers; for another reflection, which should increase our confidence, is, that we know and are cer-

tain that she obtains from God all that she asks for her clients. Observe especially, says St. Bonaventure, in regard to the visit of Mary to St. Elizabeth, the great power of her words. According to the Evangelist, at the sound of her voice the grace of the Holy Ghost was conferred on St. Elizabeth, as well as on her son St. John the Baptist: *And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost* (Luke i. 41). St. Bonaventure says: "See how great is the power of the words of our Lady; for no sooner has she pronounced them, than the Holy Ghost is given."

Theophilus of Alexandria says, that Jesus is greatly pleased when Mary intercedes with Him for us; for all the graces which He is, so to say, forced to grant through her prayers, He considers as granted not so much to us as to herself. And remark the words, "forced by the prayers of His Mother." Yes, for as St. Germanus attests, Jesus cannot do otherwise than graciously accede to all that Mary asks; wishing, as it were, in this to obey her as His true Mother. Hence the Saint says, that "the prayers of this Mother have a certain maternal authority with Jesus Christ; so that she obtains the grace of pardon even for those who have been guilty of grievous crimes, and commend themselves to her"; and then he concludes: "for it is not possible that thou shouldst not be graciously heard; for God always acts towards thee as His true and spotless Mother." This is fully confirmed, as St. John Chrysostom observes, by what took place at the marriage-feast of Cana, when Mary asked her Son for wine when it had failed: *They have no wine*. Jesus answered: *Woman, what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come* (Jo. ii. 3, 4). But though the time for miracles was not yet come, as St. Chrysostom and Theophylact explain it, yet, says St. Chrysostom, "the Saviour, notwithstanding His answer, and to obey His Mother, worked the miracle she asked for," and converted the water into wine.

Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, says the Apostle exhorting us, *that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid* (Heb. iv. 16). "The throne of grace is the Blessed Virgin Mary," says Blessed Albert the Great. If, then, we wish for graces, let us go to the throne of grace, which is Mary; and let us go with the certain hope of being heard; for we have Mary's

intercession, and she obtains from her Son whatever she asks. "Let us seek for grace," I repeat with St. Bernard, "and let us seek it through Mary," trusting to what the Blessed Virgin Mother herself said to St. Mechtilde, that God the Holy Ghost, filling her with all His sweetness, has rendered her so dear to God, that whoever seeks graces through her intercession is certain to obtain them.

If we credit that celebrated saying of St. Anselm, that "salvation is occasionally more easily obtained by calling on the name of Mary than by invoking that of Jesus," we shall sometimes obtain graces sooner by having recourse to Mary than by having directly recourse to our Saviour Jesus Himself; not that He is not the Source and Lord of all graces, but because, when we have recourse to the Mother, and she prays for us, her prayers have greater efficacy than ours, as being those of a Mother. Let us, then, never leave the feet of this treasurer of graces; but ever address her in the words of St. John Damascene: "O Blessed Mother of God, open to us the gate of Mercy; for thou art the salvation of the human race." O Mother of God, open to us the door of thy compassion, by always praying for us, for thy prayers are the salvation of all men. When we have recourse to Mary, it would be advisable to entreat her to ask and obtain us the graces she knows to be the most expedient for our salvation. This is precisely what the Dominican Brother Reginald did, as is related in the Chronicles of the Order. This servant of Mary was ill, and he asked her to obtain him the recovery of his health. His sovereign Lady appeared to him, accompanied by St. Cecily and St. Catharine, and said with the greatest sweetness: "My son, what dost thou desire of me?" The Religious was confused at so gracious an offer on the part of Mary, and knew not what to answer. Then one of the saints gave him this advice: Reginald, I will tell thee what to do; ask for nothing, but place thyself entirely in her hands, for Mary will know how to grant thee a greater grace than thou canst possibly ask. The sick man followed this advice, and the Divine Mother obtained the restoration of his health.

But if we also desire the happiness of receiving the visits of this Queen of Heaven, we should often visit her by going before her image, or praying to her in churches dedicated to her

honour.

Evening Meditation

"WITH ME ARE RICHES."

I.

We should have recourse to the Divine Mother with the greatest confidence. Why did Jesus Christ deposit in the hands of His Mother all the riches of Mercy that He intends for us, unless it was that Mary might therewith enrich all her clients who love and honour her and have recourse to her with confidence. *With me are riches ... that I may enrich them that love me* (Prov. viii. 18, 21). Thus the Blessed Virgin herself assures us that it is so, in this passage which the Holy Church applies to her on so many of her Festivals. Therefore, for no other purpose than to serve us, says the Abbot Adam, are those riches of eternal life kept by Mary, in whose breast our Lord has deposited the treasury of the miserable, and that the poor being supplied from it may become rich: "The riches of salvation are in custody of the Blessed Virgin for our use. Christ has made Mary's womb the treasury of the poor; thence the poor are enriched." And St. Bernard says, "that she is a full aqueduct, that others may receive of her plenitude." Mary was therefore given to the world that her graces might continually descend from Heaven upon men.

Hence the same holy Father goes on to ask: "But why did St. Gabriel, having found the Divine Mother already full of grace, according to his salutation, *Hail, full of grace!* afterwards say, that the Holy Ghost would come upon her to fill her still more with grace? If she was already full of grace, what more could the coming of the Divine Spirit effect?" The Saint answers: "Mary was already full of grace; but the Holy Ghost filled her to overflowing, for our good, that from her superabundance we miserable creatures might be provided." For this same reason Mary was called the moon of which it is said, "She is full for herself and others."

He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord (Prov. viii. 35). Blessed is he who finds me by having recourse to me, says our Mother Mary. He will find life, and will find it easily; for as it is easy to find and draw as much water as we please from a great fountain, so it is easy to find graces and

eternal salvation by having recourse to Mary. A holy soul once said: We have only to seek graces from our Blessed Lady to receive them." St. Bernard also says, that "it was because the Blessed Virgin was not yet born that in ancient times the great abundance of grace which we now see flow on the world was wanting; for Mary, this desirable channel, did not then exist." But now that we have this Mother of Mercy, what graces are there that we need fear we shall not obtain when we cast ourselves at her feet? "I am the city of refuge" (thus St. John Damascene makes her speak) "for all those who will have recourse to me. Come, then, to me my children; for from me you will obtain graces, and these in greater abundance than you can possibly imagine."

II.

What the Venerable Sister Mary Villani saw in vision has been experienced by many. This servant of God beheld the Divine Mother as a great fountain, to which many went, and from it they carried off the waters of grace in great abundance. But what then happened? Those who had sound vessels preserved the graces they received; but those who brought broken vessels, that is to say, those whose souls were burdened with sin, received graces, but did not long preserve them. It is, however, certain that men, even those who are ungrateful sinners and the most miserable, daily obtain innumerable graces from Mary. St. Augustine, addressing the Blessed Virgin, says: "Through thee do the miserable obtain mercy, the ungrateful grace, sinners pardon, the weak strength, the worldly heavenly things, mortals eternal life, and pilgrims their country."

Let us then, O devout clients of Mary, rouse ourselves to greater and greater confidence each time that we have recourse to her for graces. That we may do so, let us always remember two great prerogatives of this good Mother; her great desire to do us good, and the power she has with her Son to obtain whatever she asks.

Immaculate and Blessed Virgin, since thou art the universal dispenser of all Divine graces, thou art the hope of all, and my hope. I will ever thank my Lord for having granted me the grace to know thee, and for having shown me the means by which I may obtain graces and be saved. Thou art this means, O

great Mother of God, for I now understand that it is principally through the merits of Jesus Christ, and then through thy intercession, that my soul must be saved. Ah! my Queen, thou didst hasten so quickly to visit, and by that means didst sanctify the dwelling of St. Elizabeth; deign, then, to visit, and visit quickly, the poor house of my soul. Ah! hasten, then, for thou well knowest, and far better than I do, how poor it is, and with how many maladies it is afflicted, with disordered affections, evil habits, and sins committed, all of which are pestiferous diseases, which would lead it to eternal death. Thou canst enrich it, O treasurer of God; and thou canst heal all its infirmities. Pray for me, O Mary, and commend me to thy Son. Amen.

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"COME YE BLESSED OF MY FATHER."

Come ye blessed of my Father! (Matt. xxv. 34). Such will be the glorious sentence which in the day of triumph God will pronounce in favour of those who have loved Him. O faithful souls, who love God, be not troubled if you are despised and humiliated in this world. *Your sorrow shall be turned into joy!*

I.

Come ye blessed of my Father! (Matt. xxv. 34). Such will be the glorious sentence which in the day of triumph God will pronounce in favour of those who have loved Him. St. Francis of Assisi having had it revealed to him that he was one of the predestinate, almost died of the consolation which such a revelation afforded him. What, then, will be the joy of the elect when they hear Jesus Christ inviting them: Come, ye blessed children, come and possess the inheritance of your Divine Father! Come and reign with Him forever in Heaven!

How often, O God, have I, through my own fault, forfeited Thy blessed kingdom! But, O Jesus, Thy precious merits encourage me to hope that I shall regain it. My dear Redeemer, I trust in Thee and love Thee.

Oh, how will the Blessed congratulate one another when they behold themselves placed upon thrones and united in the enjoyment of God for all eternity, without the least fear of ever

being again separated from Him! What joy and glory will be theirs to enter on that day crowned into Heaven, singing together songs of gladness and the sweet praises of God! Happy souls, that are destined to such a blessed lot!

O God of my soul, bind me to Thee with the sweet bonds of Thy holy love, so that I may enter into Thy kingdom and praise and love Thee forever. *The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever* (Ps. lxxxviii. 2).

II.

Let us arouse our slumbering Faith! It is certain that we shall one day be judged, and that we shall receive sentence either of eternal life or of eternal death. If we be not secure of obtaining the sentence of life, let us endeavour now to make it certain. Let us fly from all those occasions which may expose us to the loss of our souls; and unite ourselves to Jesus Christ by frequently approaching the Sacraments, by pious meditations, by spiritual reading and continual prayer. The practice or neglect of these means will be the sign of our salvation or of our perdition.

My beloved Jesus, and my Judge, I hope through Thy Precious Blood that Thou wilt on that day bless me. Do Thou bless me now, and pardon me all the offences I have committed against Thee. Grant me to hear the same consoling words that Thou didst address to Magdalen: *Thy sins are forgiven thee* (Luke vii. 48). I am sorry with my whole heart for having offended Thee; pardon me, and at the same time give me grace always to love Thee. I love Thee, my sovereign Good; I love Thee more than myself, my Treasure, my Love, my All. *Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever* (Ps. lxxii. 26). O my God! Thee alone do I desire. Holy Mary, by thy powerful intercession thou canst procure my salvation, and thou desirest to do so. In thee do I confide.

Spiritual Reading

LOVE OF SOLITUDE

Whosoever loves God, loves solitude. There the Lord communicates Himself more familiarly to souls, because there He finds them less entangled in worldly affairs, and more detached from earthly affections. Hence, St. Jerome exclaimed: "O solitude, in which God speaks and converses familiarly with His

servants." O blessed solitude, in which God speaks and converses with His beloved ones with great love and confidence! *The Lord is not in the earthquake* (3 Kings, xix. 11). But where is He found? *I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart* (Osee ii. 14). He is found in solitude and there He speaks to the heart in words that inflame it with holy love, as the sacred spouse attests: *My soul melted when my Beloved spoke* (Cant. v. 6). St. Eucherius relates that a certain man, desirous of becoming a saint, asked a servant of God where he should find God. The servant of God conducted him to a solitary place, and said: "Behold where God is found!" By these words he meant to say that God is found not amid the tumults of the world, but in solitude.

Virtue is easily preserved in solitude; and, on the other hand, it is easily lost by intercourse with the world, where God is but little known, and therefore His love, and the treasures He gives to those who leave all things for His sake, are but little esteemed. St. Bernard says that he learned more among the trees of the forest than from books and masters. Hence the Saints, in order to live in solitude and far from tumult, have so ardently loved the caves, the mountains, and the woods. *The land that was desolate and impassable shall be glad, and the wilderness shall rejoice, and shall flourish like the lily; it shall bud forth and blossom ... They shall see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of our God* (Is. XXXV. 1, 2). The wilderness shall be a perennial fountain of joy and gladness to the soul that seeks it; it shall flourish like the lily in whiteness and innocence of life, and shall produce fruits of every virtue. These happy souls shall in the end be raised on high to see the glory and infinite beauty of the Lord. It is certain that to keep the heart united with God we must preserve in the soul the thought of God, and of the immense reward He prepares for those who love Him. But when we hold intercourse with the world, it presents to us earthly things that obliterate spiritual impressions and pious sentiments.

Worldlings shun solitude, and with good reason; for in solitude they feel more acutely the remorse of conscience, and therefore they go in search of the conversations and bustle of the world, that the noise of these occupations may stifle the stings of remorse. It is true that man loves society; but what society is

preferable to the society of God? Ah! to withdraw from creatures and to converse in solitude with our Creator brings neither bitterness nor tediousness. Of this the Wise Man assures us: *For her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness* (Wisd. viii. 16). The Venerable Father Vincent Carafa, General of the Society of Jesus, said that he desired nothing in this world, and that were he to desire anything he would wish only for a little grotto, a morsel of bread, and a spiritual book, in order to live there always in solitude.

It is not true that a life of solitude is a life of melancholy: it is a foretaste and beginning of the life of the Saints in bliss, who are filled with an immense joy in the sole occupation of loving and praising their God. St. Jerome tells us that flying from Rome he went to shut himself up in the Cave of Bethlehem, in order to enjoy solitude. Hence he afterwards wrote: "To me solitude is a paradise." The Saints in solitude appear to be alone, but they are not alone. St. Bernard said: "I am never less alone than when I am alone"; for I am then in the company of my Lord, Who gives me more content than I could derive from the conversation of all creatures. They appear to be in sadness, but they are not sad. The world, seeing them far away from earthly amusements, regards them as miserable and disconsolate; but they are not so; they, as the Apostle attests, enjoy an immense and continual peace. *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing* (2 Cor. vi. 10). The Prophet Isaias attested the same when he said: *The Lord therefore will comfort Sion, and will comfort all the ruins thereof; and he will make her desert as a place of pleasure, and her wilderness as the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of praise* (Is. li. 3). The Lord well knows how to console the solitary soul, and will give a thousandfold compensation for all the temporal pleasures which it has forfeited: He will render its solitude the garden of His delights. There joy and gladness shall be always found, and nothing will be heard but the voice of thanksgiving and praise of the Divine goodness. Cardinal Petrucci describes the happiness of a solitary heart in the following words: "It appears to be sad, and it is filled with celestial joy. Though it treads on the earth, its dwelling is in Heaven. It asks nothing for itself, because in its bosom it contains an immense treasure. It

appears to be agitated and overwhelmed by the tempest, and it is always in a secure harbour."

In order to find this happy solitude, it is not necessary to hide yourself in a cave or in a desert. David found it, even in the midst of the great concerns of a kingdom, and therefore he said: *Lo, I have gone far off, flying away; and I abode in the wilderness* (Ps. liv. 8). St. Philip Neri desired to retire into a desert, but God gave him to understand that he should not leave Rome, but that he should live there as in a desert.

Hitherto we have spoken of the solitude of the body; we must now say something on the solitude of the heart, which is more necessary than the solitude of the body. "Of what use," says St. Gregory, "is the solitude of the body without the solitude of the heart?" That is, of what use is it to live in the desert if the heart is attached to the world? A soul detached and free from earthly affections, says St. Peter Chrysologus, finds solitude even in the public streets and highways. On the other hand, of what use is it to observe silence if affections to creatures are entertained in the heart, and by their noise render the soul unable to listen to the Divine inspirations? I here repeat the words of our Lord to St. Teresa: "Oh, how gladly would I speak to many souls, but the world makes such a noise in their hearts that My voice cannot be heard. Oh that they would retire a little from the world!"

Let us then understand what is meant by solitude of the heart. It consists in expelling from the soul every affection that is not for God, by seeking nothing in all our actions but to please His Divine eyes. It consists in saying with David: *What have I in heaven? and besides thee, what do I desire upon earth? ... Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever* (Ps. lxxii. 25, 26). Except Thee, O my God, what is there on earth or in Heaven that can content me? Thou alone art the Lord of my heart, and Thou shalt always be my only Treasure. In fine, solitude of the heart implies that you can say with sincerity: My God, I wish for Thee alone, and for nothing else.

Someone complains that he does not find God; but listen to what St. Teresa says: "Detach the heart from all things -- seek God, and then you will find Him." God can neither be sought nor found if He is not first known; but what can a soul attached

to creatures know of God and His Divine beauty? The light of the sun cannot enter a crystal vessel filled with earth; and in a heart occupied with attachment to pleasures and wealth and honours, the Divine light cannot shine. Hence the Lord says: *Be still, and see that I am God* (Ps. xlv. 11). The soul, then, that wishes to see God must remove the world from her heart, and keep it shut against all earthly affections. This is precisely what Jesus Christ gave us to understand under the figure of a closed chamber, when He said: *But when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret* (Matt. vi. 6). That is, the soul, in order to unite itself with God in prayer, must retire into its heart, which, according to St. Augustine, is the chamber of which our Lord speaks, and shut the door against all earthly affections.

This is also the meaning of the words of Jeremias: *He shall sit solitary, and hold his peace; because he hath taken it up upon himself* (Lam. iii. 28). The solitary soul, that is, the soul that is free from all attachments, and in which earthly affections are silent, will unite itself with God in Mental Prayer by holy desires, by oblations of itself, and by acts of love: and then it will find itself raised above all created objects, so that it will smile at the worldling who sets so high a value on the goods of this earth, and submits to so many toils in order to secure enjoyment of them, while it regards them as trifles, and utterly unworthy of the love of a heart created to love God, the infinite Good.

Evening Meditation

CHRIST, THE KING OF LOVE

(FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING. LAST SUNDAY OF OCTOBER.)

I.

Through fear of losing his kingdom the wicked Herod sought the life of the Divine Child. St. Fulgentius contemplating little Jesus flying into Egypt, tenderly exclaims: "Why art thou troubled, O Herod? The King Who is just now born comes not to overthrow other kings by force of arms, but to subjugate them by dying for them." As though he had said: The King of Heaven is not come to conquer us by war, but by love; He is not come to put us to death, but to rescue us from death by dying for us.

Hence it is that Jesus may indeed be styled the King of Love.

Oh that I had always loved Thee, O Jesus, my sovereign King, and that I had never offended Thee! Thou didst spend thirty-three years in pain and labour to save me, and I have wilfully renounced Thee, my sovereign Good, for the sake of momentary pleasures! Father of mercy, forgive me, and embrace me with the kiss of peace.

Ungrateful Jews! why did you refuse to acknowledge for your King One so lovely and so loving towards you? Why did you exclaim: *We have no king but Caesar?* (Jo. xix. 15). Caesar did not love you, nor desire to die for you; while your true King Jesus descended from Heaven upon the earth to die for the love of you.

O sweet Saviour Christ, if others will not receive Thee as their King, I will have no other King but Thee: "Jesus, Thou art my King." I know that Thou alone lovest me; Thou alone hast redeemed me with Thy Blood; where then shall I find one who has loved me as Thou hast loved me? I am grieved for having hitherto rejected Thee as my King by rebelling against Thee! Pardon me, O Jesus, my King! for Thou hast died to purchase pardon for me.

II.

To this end Christ died and rose again; that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living (Rom. xiv. 9).

My beloved King, dearest Jesus, since Thou camest upon earth to gain our hearts to Thyself, if hitherto I have resisted Thy loving calls, I will now no longer resist them. Do not disdain to accept me; I now give myself to Thee, I give Thee my whole self. Take, O my King, possession of my whole will, and of my whole self. Make me loyal to Thee; and grant that I may rather die than betray Thee any more, O my King, my Love, my only Good. O Queen, and Mother of my King, O Mary, obtain for me that I may be faithful to what I this day promise to thy Divine Son.

O KING OF HEAVEN

O King of Heaven, from starry throne descending, Thou takest refuge in this wretched cave; O God of bliss! I see Thee cold and trembling! What pain it cost Thee fallen man to save!

Thou, of a thousand worlds the great Creator, Dost now

the pain of cold and want endure; Thy poverty but makes Thee more endearing, For well I know 'tis love has made Thee poor.

I see Thee leave Thy Heavenly Father's bosom, But whither has Thy love transported Thee? Upon a little straw I see Thee lying; Why suffer thus? 'Tis all for love of me.

But if it is Thy will for me to suffer, And by these sufferings my heart to move, Wherefore, my Jesus, do I see Thee weeping? 'Tis not for pain Thou weapest, but for love.

Thou weapest thus to see me so ungrateful; My sins have pierced Thee to the very core; I once despised Thy love, but now I love Thee, I love but Thee; then, Jesus, weep no more.

Thou sleepest, Lord, but Thy Heart ever watches, No slumber can a heart so loving take; But tell me, darling Babe, of what Thou thinkest, "I think," He says, "of dying for thy sake."

Is it for me that Thou dost think of dying! What, then, O Jesus! can I love but Thee? Mary, my hope! If I but love Him little-- Be not indignant -- love Him thou for me.

Monday--Twenty-fourth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN THE TEMPLE

(NOVEMBER 21ST.)

Mary offered herself to God promptly and entirely, for she well understood the voice of God calling her to devote herself as a perpetual victim in His honour. *Arise! Make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one and come!* (Cant. ii. 10). Let us this day present ourselves to Mary without delay and without reserve, and let us entreat her who was the delight of her God to offer us to her Divine Son, Jesus Christ.

I.

Let us consider how prompt Mary was in offering herself to God. In her infancy, having scarcely attained the age of three years, knowing that her parents had made a vow to consecrate her to God, she was the first to request them to accomplish their promise by assuring them that the time had already come. She also it was who obtained from God the strength for her parents to fulfil such a promise; for certainly very great was the violence

that the holy parents had to do to themselves to deprive themselves so soon of a daughter whom they had so much desired to have, and who from the tenderest age had charmed them so much by her amiability.

Behold now Joachim and Anne generously sacrificing to the Lord that which was dearest to their hearts, setting out from Nazareth, accompanied by few relatives, indeed, but by choirs of Angels. They had to carry their well-beloved little daughter by turns, on account of the length of journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem.

Having reached Jerusalem they brought their cherished little daughter to the Temple. The holy child immediately ascended to the first step, and turning to her parents, on her knees kissed their hands and asked them to bless her and to recommend her to God. After having received the blessing, and being strengthened by the love with which she was going to serve her God, Who had deigned to call her to His house, she ascended all the steps of the Temple, and did so with so much haste and zeal that she turned back no more, not even to look on her parents who remained there deeply afflicted, and at the same time filled with wonder at the sight of so much strength and courage in so young a child.

Ah! holy child, it is thou who art the happy daughter of the prince of the earth praised by Holy Scripture: *How beautiful are thy steps, O prince's daughter* (Cant. vii. 1). Indeed, very dear and very pleasing in the eyes of thy Lord and thy God have been the generous steps that thou didst take in the tenderest years of thy life, leaving thy parents, thy house, and thy relatives to go to consecrate thyself entirely to God's honour and service. Go thou, O Sovereign Lady, will I say with St. Germanus, go with joy into the house of God, to prepare thyself for the coming of the Holy Spirit, Who is to come to make thee the Mother of God Himself. O happy Virgin, who didst begin so soon to serve God, and who didst always serve Him so faithfully, cast a look on me, returning to Him with such tardiness after so many years lost in the love of creatures, and obtain for me the grace to give God at least the remainder of my life, be it long or short. I know that I have very many times deserved to die in sin; I know that it is thou

who didst obtain for me the time to do penance -- a grace that has not been granted to so many others. Ah, my most amiable Queen, may my life, so unlike to thine, excite in thee not the disgust that it deserves, but rather thy compassion. Since thou hast already done so much for me, finish the work of my salvation; do not abandon me till thou seest me safe at thy feet in Paradise.

II.

Let us consider that which was the most beautiful part in Mary's offering was that she consecrated herself not only at an early age, but also entirely and without the least reserve.

Already from the first moment of her existence in the womb of her mother, when by a singular privilege she received the use of reason, with the great light with which at the same time the Lord enriched it, she gave herself up entirely to God. Yet her holy soul was waiting with great longing for the day in which she might consecrate herself to God more effectively and thoroughly by becoming detached from all earthly things, even from every innocent affection for her parents, who loved her so tenderly. Hence we may understand the consolation she felt when at her entrance into the holy Temple, by a new act of the most ardent love, she devoted herself entirely to the glory of the Divine Majesty.

Let us consider that this wonderful child, as soon as she found herself in the Temple, first presented herself to her mistress, and on her knees humbly besought her to teach her all that she had to do. Afterwards she saluted her companions and begged them to condescend to admit her into their society.

After these acts of reverence and humility, the youthful Mary turned all her thoughts towards God. She prostrated, and kissed the floor for joy of being in the house of the Lord. She adored His infinite Majesty, and thanked Him for the great favour she was receiving from Him -- namely, that He had so sweetly arranged for her to come to live for a time in His house. Then it was that she offered herself entirely to God, without the least reserve, by consecrating to Him all her faculties and all her senses, her whole mind and her whole heart, her whole soul and her whole body. For at this time, in order to please God the more, she made the vow of virginity, a new vow, unusual at that

time, and regarded by the Jews rather as a disgrace. But if Mary was the first to make such a vow, she was not the only one to do so; for, as David had foretold, *After her shall virgins be brought to the King* (Ps. xliv. 15). Oh, how many very pure virgins have followed the example of Mary their Queen!

Again, Mary offered herself thus entirely without limitation of time; for by this offering of herself she had the intention of devoting herself to the service of God in the Temple during her whole life, if such should be the good pleasure of the Lord, and never to depart from this holy place. Behold me now before Thee, O Lord, this holy child must have said; I come into Thy house only to be Thy servant; accept the desire I have of rendering Thee all the honour I can render, and receive me into Thy service by giving me grace to be faithful to Thee. The Blessed Virgin revealed to St. Elizabeth, a Benedictine nun, that when she was placed in the Temple she resolved in her heart to think of nothing but of God alone.

O Virgin full of sweetness, when will the day come for me, on which, detached from all earthly affections, I shall give myself entirely to God, Who during so many years has been waiting for me and calling me to His love? My most holy Mother, today at last, animated by thy example, I give myself with thee to God entirely and without reserve; I give Him my soul, my body, my will; but I desire that thou first unite this offering of mine to that which in thy infancy thou didst make in the Temple: and then that thou present it to the Lord with thy own hand. Still, this is not enough; obtain for me, besides, grace to be faithful to God as thou hast been thyself, in order that I may never take back what I give Him today.

Spiritual Reading

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN THE TEMPLE

St. Anselm speaks of the life of the Blessed Virgin in the Temple, and says that "Mary was docile, spoke little, was always composed, did not laugh," and that her mind was never disturbed. She also persevered in prayer, in the study of the Sacred Scriptures, in fastings, and all virtuous works.

St. Jerome and St. Bonaventure enter more into detail. They say that Mary thus regulated her life: In the morning until the

third hour she remained in prayer; from the third hour until the ninth she employed herself with work; and from the ninth hour she again prayed until the Angel brought her food, as he was wont to do. She was always the first in watchings, the most exact in the observance of the Divine law, the most profoundly humble, and the most perfect in every virtue. No one ever saw her angry: her every word carried such sweetness with it that it was a witness to all that God was with her.

We read in St. Bonaventure's *Life of Christ*, that the Divine Mother herself revealed to St. Elizabeth of Hungary that "when her father and mother left her in the Temple she determined to have God alone for her Father, and often thought how she could please Him best." Moreover, as we learn from the Revelations of St. Bridget, "she determined to consecrate her virginity to God, to possess nothing in the world, and to give God her entire will." Besides this, she told St. Elizabeth that of all the Commandments to be observed she especially kept this one before her eyes: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*; and that at midnight she went before the Altar of the Temple to beg that God would grant her the grace to observe them all, and that she might live to see the birth of the Mother of the Redeemer, entreating God at the same time to preserve her eyes to behold her, her tongue to praise her, her hands and feet to serve her, and her knees to adore her Divine Son in her womb. St. Elizabeth, on hearing this, said: "But, Lady, wast thou not full of grace and virtue?" Mary replied: "Know that I considered myself most vile and unworthy of Divine grace, and therefore thus earnestly prayed for grace and virtue." And finally, that we might be convinced of the absolute necessity under which we all are of asking the graces that we require from God, she added: "Dost thou think that I possessed grace and virtue without effort? Know that I obtained no grace from God without great effort, constant prayer, ardent desire, and many tears and mortifications."

But above all we should consider the Revelation made to St. Bridget of the virtues and practices of the Blessed Virgin in her childhood, in the following words: "From her childhood Mary was full of the Holy Ghost, and as she advanced in age she advanced also in grace. Thenceforward she determined to

love God with her whole heart, so that she might never offend Him, either by her words or actions; and therefore she despised all earthly goods. She gave all she could to the poor. In her food she was so temperate, that she took only as much as was barely necessary to sustain the life of her body. Afterwards, on discovering in the Sacred Scriptures that God was to be born of a Virgin, that He might redeem the world, her soul was to such a degree inflamed with divine love, that she could desire and think of nothing but God; and finding pleasure in Him alone, she avoided all company, even that of her parents, lest their presence might deprive her of His remembrance. She desired, with the greatest ardour, to live until the time of the coming of the Messias, that she might be the servant of that happy Virgin, who merited to be His Mother." Thus far the Revelations of St. Bridget.

Ah, yes, for the love of this exalted child the Redeemer did indeed hasten His coming into the world; for whilst she, in her humility, looked upon herself as unworthy to be the servant of the Divine Mother, she was herself chosen to be this Mother; and by the sweet odour of her virtues and her powerful prayers she drew the Divine Son into her virginal womb. For this reason Mary was called a turtle-dove by her Divine Spouse: *The voice of the turtle is heard in our land* (Cant. ii. 12). Not only because as a turtle-dove she always loved solitude, living in this world as in a desert, but also because, like a turtle-dove, which always sighs for its companions, Mary always sighed in the temple, compassionating the miseries of the lost world, and seeking from God the redemption of all. O, with how much greater feeling and fervour than the Prophets did she repeat their prayers and sighs, that God would send the promised Redeemer! *Send forth, O Lord, the Lamb, the ruler of the earth* (Is. xvi. 1). *Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just* (Ib. xlv. 8). *O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, and wouldst come down* (Ib. lxiv. 1).

Evening Meditation

THE PROGRESS OF THE HOLY CHILD MARY IN VIR-
TUE

I.

Let us consider how holy and pleasing to God was the life of

Mary in the Temple. She progressed without intermission in the perfection of every virtue, *as the morning rising* (Cant. vi. 9). Who can describe how from day to day all her virtues appeared more beautiful -- especially her modesty, silence, mortification, humility, sweetness? St. Anselm says she was accustomed to speak little, was affable, charitable towards every one, and most obliging. In fact, as was revealed to St. Bridget, the virtues she practised most in the Temple were humility, charity, and obedience.

She did not walk, she flew, in the way of the Lord. St. Jerome says that her blessed soul was the abode of every virtue. She spent a certain time as it is related, in doing some work that had been assigned to her. But the greatest part of the day and of the night she consecrated to prayer and to close communion with God in solitude; for this was the most cherished and most desired occupation of her heart that was burning with love; it was her sweetest delight. Oh, how well did Mary in the Temple know how to treat with God of the great work of the Redemption of the world! Seeing clearly the miserable condition of the world, in which so many souls were lost, in which so few knew the true God, and among this number so few who loved Him -- ah! how much better than Patriarchs and Prophets did she pray: Come, O Lord, do not delay! Show us Thy mercy, and send us the Lamb that is to rule the world. Ye heavens, let your rain descend and send down the Just, that the earth may bring forth the Saviour.

II.

It was a delight to the Lord to behold this tender Virgin always ascending towards the highest perfection, like a pillar of smoke, rich in the sweet odour of all virtues, as the Holy Ghost Himself clearly describes her in the sacred Canticles: *Who is she that goeth up by the desert as a pillar of smoke, of aromatical spices, of myrrh and frankincense, and of all the powers of the perfumer?* (Cant. iii. 6). "This child," says St. Sophronius, "was truly God's garden of delights; for He found in her every kind of flower, and all the sweet odours of virtues." Hence St. John Chrysostom affirms, that God chose Mary for His Mother in this world, because He did not find on earth a Virgin more holy and more perfect than she was, nor any dwelling more worthy than her most sacred

womb. St. Bernard also says, "that there was not on earth a more worthy place than the temple of the Virgin's womb." This also agrees with the assertion of St. Antoninus, that the Blessed Virgin, to be chosen for, and destined to the dignity of Mother of God, was necessarily so great and consummate in perfection as to surpass all other creatures: "The last grace of perfection is that which prepared her for the Conception of the Son of God."

As, then, the holy child Mary presented and offered herself to God in the Temple with promptitude and without reserve, so let us also present ourselves this day to Mary without delay and without reserve; and let us entreat her to offer us to God, Who will not reject us when He sees us presented by the hand of that blessed creature, who was the living Temple of the Holy Ghost, the delight of her Lord, and the chosen Mother of the Eternal Word. Let us also have unbounded confidence in this high and gracious Lady, who rewards with the greatest love the homage she receives from her clients.

O thou most holy Child, mistress of virtue and of love, since it was through thy love that the Eternal Word was drawn from the Bosom of His Father to thy own, be ever blessed and ever thanked! How many beautiful lessons dost thou give by thy example, if we are only attentive in considering the life that thou didst lead in the Temple! Ah, sweet Queen, have compassion on me; thou knowest the bad use I have made of my past life; thou knowest the severe account I am to render to Jesus Christ, thy Son and my Judge. O kindest teacher, since thou hast been so good to me in helping me when I little thought of imploring thy aid and thy counsel, I do not fear that thou wilt abandon me now that I wish to obey thee, and that I ask thy assistance. Do not banish me from thy school in which thou trainest so many souls to sanctity. Teach me what I should do to belong entirely to God, and thus to repair the time I have lost. Should I fail in my duty, O my Sovereign Lady, be so kind as to correct me and chastise me as thou mayest think fit. The chastisements coming from thy sweet hand, to make me a saint, will always be very dear to me. For pity's sake, O Mary, do not abandon me till thou seest me become thy perfect disciple in love towards my God: for I know that it is only in order to love Him that the time I have

yet to live has been granted to me. My Sovereign Lady, I ask this favour of thee, and it is from thee that I hope to receive it. Amen.

Tuesday--Twenty-fourth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE PRESENCE OF GOD PRESERVES FROM SIN

The Practice of the presence of God is justly called the foundation of the spiritual life. The spiritual life consists of three things: the avoidance of evil, the practice of virtue, and union with God. The practice of the presence of God preserves the soul from sin, leads it to virtue and unites it to God in holy love.

I.

The Practice of the presence of God preserves the soul from sin. Indeed, there is no more efficacious means of subduing the passions, of resisting temptations, and consequently of avoiding sin, than the remembrance of God's presence. The angelic Doctor says: "If we thought that God was looking at us, and saw all, we would never, or scarcely ever, commit a sin." And St. Jerome has written that the remembrance of God's presence closes the door against all sins. "The remembrance of God," says the holy Doctor, "shuts out all sins." And if men will not dare in their presence to transgress the commands of princes, parents, or superiors, how could they ever violate the laws of God if they thought that He was looking at them? St. Ambrose relates that a page of Alexander the Great, who held in his hand a lighted torch whilst Alexander was offering sacrifice in the temple, suffered his hand to be burnt sooner than be guilty of irreverence by allowing the torch to fall. The Saint adds, that if reverence to his sovereign could conquer nature in a boy, how much more will the thought of the Divine presence make a faithful soul overcome every temptation, and suffer every pain rather than insult the Lord before His face!

All the sins of men flow from their losing sight of the Divine presence. "Every evil," says St. Teresa, "happens to us because we do not reflect that God is present, but imagine that He is afar off." And David said the same: *God is not before his eyes; his ways are filthy at all times* (Ps. x. 26). Sinners forget that God sees them, and therefore they offend Him at all times. The Abbot Diocles

went so far as to say that "he who puts away the remembrance of the presence of God becomes either a beast or a devil." And justly; for he shall be instantly assailed by carnal or diabolical desires which he will not have strength to resist.

II.

On the other hand, by the very thought that God was looking upon them, the Saints bravely repelled all the assaults of their enemies. This thought gave courage to holy Susanna to resist the temptations of the Elders, and even to despise their threats against her life. Hence she courageously said to them: *It is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it than to sin in the sight of the Lord* (Dan. xiii. 23). It is better to fall into your hands and to die without sin than to offend God before His face. This thought also converted a wicked woman who dared to tempt St. Ephrem; the Saint told her that if she wished to sin she must meet him in the middle of the city. But, said she, how is it possible to commit sin before so many persons? And how, replied the Saint, is it possible to sin in the presence of God Who sees us in every place? At these words she burst into tears, and falling prostrate on the ground asked pardon of the Saint, and besought him to point out to her the way of salvation. St. Ephrem placed her in a monastery, where she led a holy life, weeping over her sins till death. The same happened to the Abbot Paphnutius and a sinner called Thais. She tempted him one day, saying that there was no one to see them but God. The Saint with a stern voice said to her: "Then you believe that God sees you, and will you commit sin?" Thais was thunderstruck, and filled with horror for her sinful life: she gathered together all her riches, clothes, and jewels which she had earned by her infamous practices, burned them in the public square, and retired into a monastery, where she fasted on bread and water every day for three successive years, always repeating this prayer: "O Thou Who hast made me, have mercy on me!" After these three years she happily ended her life by a holy death. It was afterwards revealed to Paul, a disciple of St. Anthony, that this happy penitent was placed among the Saints on an exalted throne of glory.

Behold the efficacy of the remembrance of the Divine presence to make us avoid sins. Let us then always pray to the

Lord, saying with Job: *Set me beside thee, and let any man's hand fight against me* (Job. xvii. 3). My God, place me in Thy Presence: that is, remind me in every place that Thou seest me, and then let all my enemies assail me: I shall always defeat them. Hence St. Chrysostom concludes: "If we keep ourselves always in the presence of God, the thought that He sees all our thoughts, that He hears all our words, and observes all our actions will preserve us from thinking any evil, from speaking any evil and from doing any evil."

Spiritual Reading

THE PRESENCE OF GOD LEADS THE SOUL TO VIRTUE AND UNITES IT TO GOD IN HOLY LOVE'

What valour does not the soldier show when fighting Under the eyes of his Sovereign! The sole thought that his prince by whom he shall be punished or rewarded is present, inspires him with great courage and strength. Hence, if men only reflected that God was looking at all their actions, they would do all things well, with a pure intention, without seeking to please any one but God, and without any regard to human respect. St. Basil says that were a person to find himself in the presence of a king and a peasant, his sole concern would be to please the king without any regard to the wishes of the peasant. Thus he that walks in the Divine presence is regardless of the pleasure of creatures, and seeks only to please God, Who sees him always.

Finally, as to the third effect of the Divine presence, that is, to unite the soul to God, it is an infallible rule that love is always increased by the presence of the object loved. This happens even among men, although the more they converse together, the more their defects are discovered. How much more shall the love of a soul for God increase if it keep Him before its eyes! For the more it converses with Him, the better it comprehends His beauty and amiableness. The morning and the evening Meditation are not sufficient to keep the soul united with God. St. John Chrysostom says, that even water, if removed from the fire, soon returns to its natural temperature; and therefore after prayer it is necessary to preserve fervour by the presence of God, and by renewing our affections.

St. Bernard says of himself, that in the beginning of his con-

version, when he found himself disturbed, or his fervour cooling, peace and the ardour of Divine love were instantly restored by the remembrance of a deceased or absent Saint. Now, how much greater the effect which must be produced on a soul that loves God, by remembering that He is present, and that He is asking her love! David said that by the remembrance of his God he was filled with joy and consolation. *I remembered God, and was delighted* (Ps. lxxvi. 4). However great the affliction and desolation of a soul may be, if it loves God it will be consoled and freed from its affliction by remembering its beloved Lord. Hence, souls enamoured of God live always with a tranquil heart and in continual peace; because, like the sunflower that always turns its face to the sun, they in all events and in all their actions seek always to live and act in the presence of God. "A true lover," says St. Teresa, "always remembers her Beloved."

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

I.

The exercise of the presence of God consists partly in the operation of the intellect and partly in the operation of the will. The intellect represents God as present, and the will unites the soul to God by acts of adoration, of love, of humility and the like. In regard to the intellect, the presence of God may be practised in various ways.

We can imagine that Our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, is present; that He is in our company, and that He sees us in whatsoever place we may be. We can at one time represent Him in one Mystery, and again in another: for example, now an Infant lying in the Manger of Bethlehem, and again a Pilgrim flying into Egypt; now a Boy working in the shop of Nazareth, and again suffering as a criminal in His Passion in Jerusalem, scourged, or crowned with thorns, or nailed to a Cross. St. Teresa praises this method of practising the presence of God. But it is necessary to remark, that though this method is good, it is not the best, nor is it always profitable. Hence, should you wish to practise it, you must do it sweetly, only when you find it useful, and without labouring to represent in the mind the peculiar features of our Saviour, His countenance, His stature, or colour. It is enough to represent

Him in a general manner, and as beholding all we do.

The second method, which is more secure and more excellent, is founded on the truth of Faith, and consists in beholding with eyes of Faith God present with us in every place, in considering that He encompasses us, that He sees and observes whatever we do. We indeed do not see Him with the eyes of the flesh. Nor do we see the air, yet we know for certain that it surrounds us on every side, that we live in it; for without it we could neither breathe nor live. We do not see God, but our holy Faith teaches that He is always present with us. *Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?* (Jer. xxiii. 24). And as a sponge in the midst of the ocean is encompassed and saturated with water, so, says the Apostle, *in God we live and move and are* (Acts xvii. 28). And our God, says St. Augustine, observes every action, every word, every thought of each, as if He forgot all His other creatures, and had to attend only to us. Hence, observing all we do, and say, and think, He marks and registers all, in order to demand an account on the day of Judgment, and to give us then the reward or the chastisement we have deserved.

This second way of practising the Divine presence does not fatigue the mind; for the exercise of it we need only enliven our Faith with an affectionate act of the will, saying: *My God, I believe firmly that Thou art here present.* To this act we can easily add the acts of love, or of resignation, or of purity of intention, and the like.

II.

The third way of preserving the remembrance of God's presence is to recognize Him in His creatures, which have from Him their being, and their power of serving us. God is in the water to wash us, in the fire to warm us, in the sun to give us light, in food to nourish us, in clothes to cover us, and in like manner in all other things that He has created for our use. When we see a beautiful object, a beautiful garden, or a beautiful flower, let us think that there we behold a ray of the infinite beauty of God, Who has given existence to that object. If we converse with a man of sanctity and learning, let us consider that it is God Who imparts to him a small portion of His own holiness and wisdom. Thus, also, when we hear sweet sounds, when we feel a fra-

grant odour, or taste delicious meat or drink, let us remember that God is the Being Who by His presence imparts to us these delights, that by them we may be induced to aspire to the eternal delights of Paradise.

Let us accustom ourselves to behold in every object God, Who presents Himself to us in every creature; and let us offer Him acts of thanksgiving and of love, remembering that from eternity He has thought of creating so many beautiful creatures to bring us to His love. St. Augustine says: Learn to love your Creator in creatures; and fix not your affection on what God has made, lest you should become attached to creatures and lose Him by Whom you, too, have been created. This was the practice of the Saint. At the sight of creatures he was accustomed to raise his heart to God; hence he exclaimed with love: Heaven and earth and all things tell me to love Thee. When he beheld the Heavens, the stars, the fields, the mountains, he seemed to hear them say: Augustine, love God, for He has created us for no other end than that you might love Him.

Thus, likewise, St. Teresa, when she beheld the plains, the sea, the rivers, or other beautiful creatures, felt as if they reproached her with ingratitude to God. Thus also St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, holding in her hand a flower or an apple, and looking at it, became enraptured with Divine love, saying within herself: Then my God has thought from eternity of creating this fruit for my sake, and to give me a proof of the love He bears me! It is also related of St. Simon Salo, that when walking through the fields he saw flowers or herbs, he would strike them with his staff, saying: "Be silent! Be silent! You reproach me with not loving that God Who has made you so beautiful for my sake, that I might be induced to love Him: I hear you! Cease! Reprove me no longer; be silent!"

Wednesday--Twenty-fourth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The most perfect way of living in the Divine Presence is to consider God present within us. We need not ascend to Heaven to find God. We shall find Him within ourselves. *Know ye not that*

you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

St. Teresa writes: For myself, I confess I never knew what it was to pray with satisfaction till our Lord taught me this way, and I have always found great advantages from this custom of recollection and entering within myself."

I.

The most perfect way of living in the Divine presence is to consider God present within us. We need not ascend to Heaven to find God. We shall find Him within ourselves. *Know ye not that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

St. Teresa writes: For myself I confess I never knew what it was to pray with satisfaction till our Lord taught me this way, and I have always found great advantages from this custom of recollection and entering within myself." We must know of course that God is present in us, in a manner different from that in which He is present in other creatures; in us God is present as in His own temple and His own house. *Know you not*, says the Apostle, *that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* (1 Cor. iii. 16). Hence our Saviour says, that into a soul that loves God, He comes with the Father and Holy Ghost, not to remain there for a short time, but to dwell in it forever, and there to establish an everlasting habitation. *If any one love me ... my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him* (Jo. xiv. 23).

The kings of the earth, though they have their great palaces, have, notwithstanding, their particular apartments in which they generally live. God is in all places; His presence fills Heaven and earth; but He dwells in a particular manner in our souls, and there, as He Himself tells us by the mouth of the Apostle, He delights to remain as in so many gardens of pleasure. *I will dwell in them, and walk among them, and I will be their God* (2 Cor. vi. 16). There He wishes us to love Him and to pray to Him: for He remains in us full of love and mercy, to hear our supplications, to receive our affections, to enlighten us, to govern us, to bestow on us His gifts, and to assist us in all that can contribute to our eternal salvation.

II.

Let us often endeavour to enliven our Faith in the great truth

that God is present in our souls, and let us annihilate ourselves at the sight of the great majesty that condescends to dwell within us; and let us also be careful to make acts at one time of confidence, at another of oblation, and again of love of His infinite goodness; now thanking Him for His favours, at another time rejoicing in His glory; and again asking counsel in our doubts; consoling ourselves always in the possession of this Sovereign Good within us, certain that no created power can deprive us of Him, and that He will never depart from us unless we first voluntarily banish Him.

This was the little cell that St. Catharine of Sienna built within her heart, in which she lived always retired, always engaged in loving colloquies with God; thus she defended herself against the persecution of her parents, who had forbidden her to retire any more to her own room for the purpose of praying. And in this little cell the Saint made greater progress than she did by retiring to her room; for she would have to leave her chamber several times a day, while this interior cell she never left, but remained in it always recollected with God. Hence St. Teresa, speaking of the Divine presence in our interior, said: "I believe that they who are able to lock themselves up in this little heaven in their souls, where He Who created them is always present, walk in an excellent path, because they make great progress in a short time."

Spiritual Reading

APPLICATION OF THE WILL TO THE HOLY EXERCISE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

We have spoken of the operation of the intellect; we will now say a few words on the application of the will to the holy exercise of the Divine Presence. And it is necessary to understand that to remain always before God, with the mind continually fixed on Him, is the happy lot of the Blessed; but in the present state it is morally impossible to keep up the thought of the presence of God without interruption. Hence we should endeavour to practise it to the best of our ability, not with a solicitous inquietude and indiscreet effort of the mind, but with sweetness and tranquillity.

There are three means of facilitating the application of the

will to this exercise.

1. The first method consists in frequently raising the heart to God, by short but fervent ejaculations, or loving affections towards God present with us. These may be practised in all places and at all times, in walking, at work, at meals, and at recreation. These affections may be acts of election, of desire, of resignation, of oblation, of love, of renunciation, of thanksgiving, of petition, of humility, of confidence, and the like. In whatever occupation you find yourself, you can very easily turn to God from time to time and say to Him:

My God, I wish for Thee alone, and nothing else. I desire nothing but to be all Thine. Dispose as Thou pleassest of me, and of all that I possess. I give myself entirely to Thee. Thy will alone be done! I renounce all things for the love of Thee. I thank Thee for the great graces Thou hast bestowed upon me. Give me Thy holy love. But for Thy mercy, O Lord, I should be at this moment in hell. I delight in Thy felicity. I would that all men loved Thee! Never permit me to be separated from Thee. In Thee I place all my hopes. When shall I see Thee and love Thee face to face? Let all that I do and suffer be done and suffered for Thee. Thy holy will be always done!

The ancient Fathers set great value on all these short prayers, by which we can practise the presence of God more easily than by long prayers. And St. John Chrysostom used to say, that he that makes use of these short prayers or acts shuts the door against the devil, and prevents him from coming to molest him with bad thoughts. At certain special times it is necessary more particularly to enliven our Faith in the Divine presence. First, in the morning when we awake, by saying: My God, I believe that Thou art here present, and that Thou wilt be present with me in every place to which I shall go this day; watch over me, then, in all places, and do not permit me to offend Thee before Thy Divine eyes. Secondly, at the beginning of all our prayers, whether mental or vocal. The Venerable Cardinal Caracciolo, bishop of Aversa, used to say, that he who makes Mental Prayer with distractions, shows that he has been negligent in making the Act of Faith in the presence of God. Thirdly, on occasion of any temptation against patience or chastity; for

example, if you are seized with any sharp pain, or receive any grievous insult, or if any scandalous object be presented to you, instantly arm yourself with the Divine presence, and excite your courage by remembering that God is looking at you. It was thus that David prepared himself to resist temptations. *My eyes are ever towards the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare* (Ps. xxiv. 15). I will keep my eyes on my God, and He will deliver me from the snares of my enemies. You must do the same when you have occasion to perform any very difficult act of virtue. You should imitate the valourous Judith, who, after having unsheathed the sword, turned to God before she gave the stroke, and said: Strengthen me, O Lord God, in this hour (Judith, xiii. 9).

2. The second method of preserving the presence of God by acts of the will is to renew always in distracting employments the intention of performing them all with the intention of pleasing God. And therefore, in the beginning of every action or occupation, whether you apply yourself to work, go to table, or to recreation, or to repose, say: Lord, in this work I do not intend my own pleasure, but only the accomplishment of Thy will. In the course of the action endeavour to renew your intention, saying: My God, may all be for Thy glory! By these acts the presence of God is preserved without fatiguing the mind; for the very desire of pleasing God is a loving remembrance of His presence. It is also useful to fix certain times, or particular signs, in order to remember the Divine presence; as when the clock strikes, when you look at the Crucifix, when you enter or leave your room. Some are accustomed to keep in their room some particular sign, to remind them of the presence of God.

3. The third method is, when you find yourself very much distracted during the day, and the mind oppressed with business, to retire at least for a little in order to recollect yourself with God. Were you on any day to feel bodily weakness, arising from excess of labour and long fasting, would you not take some refreshment in order to be able to proceed with the work? How much more careful should you be to treat the soul in a similar manner, when it begins to fail in courage, and to grow cold in Divine love, in consequence of being a long time without food; that is, without prayer and recollection with God? I again

repeat what Father Balthasar Alvarez used to say, that a soul out of prayer is like a fish out of water; the soul is, as it were, in a violent state. Hence, after being a long time engaged in business and distracting occupations, a Christian should retire, if I may say so, to take breath in solitude, recollecting himself there with God, by affections and petitions. The life of bliss in Heaven consists in seeing and loving God, and therefore I infer that the felicity of a soul on this earth consists also in loving and seeing God, not openly as in Paradise, but with the eyes of Faith, by which it beholds Him always present with it; and thus acquires great reverence, confidence, and love towards its beloved Lord. He that lives in this manner begins, even in this valley of tears, to live like the Saints in Heaven who always see God's face, and therefore cannot cease to love Him. Thus he that lives in the Divine presence will despise all earthly things, knowing that before God, such things are misery and smoke; and will begin in this life to possess that Sovereign Good Who contents the heart more than all other goods.

Evening Meditation

PRAYER

ITS NECESSITY AND ITS EFFICACY

I.

We must all be persuaded that we cannot perform any good action without the actual graces of God. But the Lord declares that these graces He gives only to those who ask them of Him: *Ask and it shall be given you* (Matt. vii. 7). He, then, says St. Teresa, who does not ask, will not receive.

For adults, prayer is necessary, as a matter of strict precept. *We ought*, says Jesus Christ, *always to pray* (Luke xviii. 1). *Pray that you enter not into temptation* (Mark xiv. 38). *Ask, and you shall receive* (Jo. xvi. 24). The words, *we ought, pray, ask*, according to St. Thomas, and the generality of Theologians, imply a strict precept that binds under pain of grievous sin. "Every man," says the angelic Doctor, "is bound to pray, because he is bound to procure spiritual goods, which cannot be obtained unless they are asked." A person is obliged to pray, particularly in three cases: when he finds himself in the state of sin; when he is in danger of death; when he is assailed by any violent temptation.

Prayer is necessary, not only as a matter of strict precept, but, according to St. Basil, St. Augustine, and others, it is also necessary as a means of salvation, without which it is absolutely impossible for us to preserve ourselves in the grace of God, and to be saved. "It is simply impossible," says St. John Chrysostom, "without the aid of prayer, to lead a virtuous life."

The angelic Doctor teaches that "after Baptism continual prayer is necessary for a man, in order to enter Heaven." Because, adds the Saint, though sins are cancelled by Baptism, we still have temptations to conquer, which we shall not have strength to overcome without prayer. Hence he says in another place: "After a person is justified by grace, he requires to ask of God the gift of perseverance, that he may be preserved from evil to the end of life."

To understand the reason of this doctrine, it is necessary to know, first, that without special aid from God we cannot continue for a long time in His grace without falling into mortal sin. For we have so many enemies that continually combat against us, and we are at the same time so weak, that if God does not assist us with special helps, or if He gives us only the common graces given to all, we shall not have strength to resist. This is even a Dogma of Faith defined by the Council of Trent in the following words: "If any one shall say that a person who has been justified can, without special aid from God, persevere in the justice which he has received, or cannot persevere with such aid, let him be anathema." It is necessary to know also, that this special aid to persevere in grace is given, at least ordinarily speaking, only to those who ask it. "It is evident," says St. Augustine, "that God gives, even to those who do not pray, some gifts, such as the beginning of Faith; and that He prepares other graces, such as perseverance to the end, only for those who ask them,"

From all that has been said we must conclude that prayer is strictly necessary for the attainment of salvation. All the reprobate have been damned in consequence of their neglect of prayer; had they prayed they would not have been lost; and the Saints have become Saints by prayer; had they neglected prayer they would not have become Saints, and could not have been saved. We must be persuaded, as St. John Chrysostom says that

to neglect prayer, and to lose the life of the soul or the grace of God, are one and the same thing. Lord assist me, and hasten to my aid, for if Thou delay Thy assistance, I shall fall, and lose Thy grace. If we pray, then, we shall be certainly saved; if we neglect to pray, we shall be certainly lost.

II.

Consider the efficacy of holy Prayer. "Prayer, though, one can do all things," says Theodoret. He who prays obtains whatsoever he wishes. And in this it appears to me that God displays the immense love He bears us, and His ardent desire to promote our welfare. What greater love can a person show to a friend than to say to him; Friend, ask what you wish from me, and I will grant your petition. This God says to each of us: *Ask, and it shall be given you* (Luke xi. 9). He makes no exception: *You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you* (Jo. xv. 7). He tells us to ask whatsoever we desire, and promises that our prayer shall be heard. St. John Climacus asserts that prayer is so powerful before God, that it, as it were, constrains Him to give us all the graces we ask. Devout prayer does violence to God. We are, as David says, poor mendicants: *But I am a beggar and poor* (Ps. xxxix. 18). But to be rich depends on ourselves: let us ask graces of God, and they will be given us: let us ask them frequently, and they will be poured out upon us abundantly. David blessed the Lord in a special manner for His goodness in always uniting His mercy to our prayers. *Blessed be God who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from Me* (Ps. lxxv. 20). St. Augustine explains this passage in these words: "When you see that your prayer has not been turned away, be assured that the mercy of God is not turned away from you." When you see that you pray, be certain that the Divine mercy will not fail to assist you. And St. John Chrysostom says that when we pray, the Lord hears us before the conclusion of our prayer. For this we have even God's own promise: *As they are yet speaking I will hear* (Is. lxxv. 24).

Thursday--Twenty-fourth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD."

It will be the very Paradise of the Blessed to rejoice in the joy of the Lord. Thus he who in this life rejoices in the blessedness that God enjoys, and will enjoy for all eternity, can say that even here below on earth, he enters into the joy of the Lord and begins to share in the bliss of Paradise.

I.

Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord! (Matt. xxv. 21). When the soul enters the Kingdom of the Blessed, and the barrier which hinders its sight is taken away, it will see openly and without a veil the infinite beauty of God; and this will be the joy of the Blessed.

Every object that the soul will then see in God Himself will overwhelm it with delight. It will see the rectitude of His judgments, the harmony of His regulations for every soul, all ordained to His Divine glory, and the soul's own good.

The soul will especially perceive, in respect to itself, the boundless love God has entertained towards it in becoming Man, and sacrificing His life upon the Cross through love of it. Then will it know what an excess of goodness is comprehended in the Mystery of the Cross; in the sight of a God become a servant, and dying condemned upon an infamous tree; and in the Mystery of the Eucharist, God beneath the species of bread, and made the food of His creatures!

In particular the soul will perceive all the graces and favours shown to it, which, until then, had been hidden from it. It will see all the mercies God bestowed on it, in waiting for it, and pardoning its ingratitude. It will see the many calls, and lights, and aids that had been granted to it in abundance. It will see that those tribulations, those infirmities, those losses of property or of kindred, which it counted punishments, were not really punishments, but loving arrangements of God for drawing it to His perfect love.

In a word, all these things will make the soul know the infinite goodness of its God, and the boundless love He deserves.

Wherefore, as soon as it has reached Heaven, it will have no other desire but to behold Him in His blessedness and content; and, at the same time, comprehending that the happiness of God is supreme, infinite, and eternal, it will experience a joy that is not infinite only because a creature is not capable of anything that is infinite. It will enjoy, nevertheless, a pleasure extreme and full, which inundates it with delight, and with that kind of delight that belongs to God Himself; and thus will be fulfilled in it the words: *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

II.

The Blessed are blessed not so much through the delight which they experience in themselves as in the joy with which God rejoices; for the Blessed love God so immeasurably more than themselves that the blessedness of God delights them immeasurably more than their own blessedness, through the love which they bear Him. Their love of God makes them forget themselves, and all their delight is to please their Beloved.

And this is that holy and loving inebriation which causes the Blessed to lose the memory of themselves, to give themselves wholly to praise and love the dear object of all their love, which is God. *They shall be inebriated with the fulness of thy house* (Ps. xxxv. 9). Happy from their first entrance into Heaven, they continue, as it were, lost, and, so to say, swallowed up in love, in that boundless ocean of the goodness of God.

Wherefore every blessed soul will lose all its desires, and will have no other desire but to love God, and to be loved by Him; and knowing that it is sure of ever loving Him, and of being ever loved by Him, this very thing will be its blessedness, filling it with joy, and making it throughout eternity so satisfied with delights that it will desire nothing more.

In a word, the Paradise of the Blessed will be to rejoice in the joy of God. And thus, he who in this life rejoices in the blessedness that God enjoys, and will enjoy through eternity, can say that even in this life he enters into the joy of God, and begins to enjoy Paradise.

Yet, O my sweet Saviour, and my soul's Love, in this vale of tears I still see myself surrounded by enemies, who would separate me from Thee. O my beloved Lord, suffer me not to

perish; make me love Thee for ever in this life and in the next, and then do with me what Thou wilt. O Queen of Paradise, if thou prayest for me, assuredly I shall be with thee eternally, to be in thy company, and to praise thee in Paradise.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER: THE CONDITIONS

HUMILITY-CONFIDENCE-PERSEVERANCE

1. We must pray with *humility*. St. James says: *God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble* (Jas. iv. 6). God rejects the prayers of the proud, and does not listen to them; their pride is a wall that hinders the Lord from hearing their petitions. But, on the other hand, Ecclesiasticus says that *the prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds ... and he will not depart till the Most High behold* (Ecclus. xxxv. 21). The prayer of a soul that esteems itself unworthy of being heard penetrates the Heavens, and is presented at the throne of God; and it departs not till God beholds and hears the petition. When, therefore, we ask Divine graces, we must first cast a glance at our own unworthiness, particularly at the frequent infidelities into which, because we trusted too much in our own strength, we have fallen, after so many resolutions and promises. And, full of diffidence in ourselves, we should pray and implore of the Divine mercy the aid of which we stand in need.

2. It is necessary to pray with *confidence*. Ecclesiasticus says that no one ever trusted in the Lord and was confounded or not heard. *No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded* (Ecclus. ii. 11). We should, as St. James says, pray without wavering, and with a secure confidence of being heard. *Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering* (James, i. 6). The Apostle adds: *For he that wavereth, is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore, let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord* (Ibid. 6, 7). He says that the man who prays with a want of confidence, being tossed like a wave of the sea, encouraged by one thought and disheartened by another, shall receive nothing from the Lord. We must, then, trust in the Divine mercy, and believe that if we pray we shall certainly receive the graces we ask. Our prayer will be certainly heard, and, as our Saviour assures us, the objects of our petitions will surely be granted. *All*

things whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive: and they shall come unto you (Mark xi. 24).

But, you will say, I am a sinner, I deserve chastisement, and not favours; and therefore I am afraid, because I am not worthy to be heard. But St. Thomas answers that the efficacy of prayer to obtain the Divine graces depends not on our merits, but on the mercy of God. Hence Jesus Christ has said: *Ask and it shall be given you ... for every one that asketh receiveth* (Luke xi. 9). Every one, whether he be a just man or a sinner. But to remove every apprehension, our loving Redeemer has said: *Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you* (Jo. xvi. 23). As if He would say: Sinners, you have no claim to be heard by My Father; but ask His grace in My Name, that is, through My merits, and I promise that He will give whatsoever you ask. How consoling the words of St. James: *If any want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not* (Jas. i. 5), that is, when we ask God for His gifts, He does not reject our petition, and upbraid us with the insults we have offered to Him, but appears then to forget all our ingratitude; He accepts our homage and hears our prayer.

3. It is finally necessary to pray with *perseverance*. St. Hilary says that to obtain Divine grace depends on our continuance in prayer. The Lord wishes to hear some the first time, others the second, and others the third time. Hence, since we know not how often we are to present our supplications in order to be heard, we must always continue to ask the graces of which we stand in need, and particularly the gift of final perseverance, which, as the Council of Trent teaches, we cannot merit. But St. Augustine says that it may be merited in a certain manner by prayer; that is, by praying for it it is infallibly obtained. But to obtain this gift and to be saved, it is necessary, as St. Thomas observes, for every one to ask it continually of God. The Apostle says: *Pray without ceasing* (1 Thess. v. 17). It is not enough, says Cardinal Bellarmine, to ask the gift of perseverance once, or a few times. In order to obtain it every day, we must ask it every day. On the day we neglect to pray for it, we may fall into sin and be lost.

St. Gregory teaches that God wishes to give us perseverance,

but in order to give it, He wishes to be importuned, and as it were forced by our prayers. "God," says the holy Doctor, "wishes to be asked, He wishes to be forced; He wishes, in a certain manner, to be overcome by importunity." This appears from the repeated exhortations of our Lord: *Ask and it shall be given; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you* (Luke xi. 9). *Ask, seek, knock*: this is necessary especially to obtain strength to conquer violent temptations; we must pray and multiply prayers until we are freed from the temptations. Let us continually repeat: My Jesus, mercy; Lord assist me; do not permit me to be separated from Thee.

It is also necessary to ask always the spirit of prayer, or the grace to pray continually -- that great gift that God had promised to the family of David. *And I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and of prayers* (Zach. xii. 10). Mark the words, *of grace, and of prayers*; which mean, that prayer is always united to the grace we desire. He who perseveres in prayer will always be certain to escape the snares of his enemies. *A net is spread in vain before the eyes of them that have wings* (Prov. i. 17). In vain, says the Wise Man, is the net cast before the eyes of the bird; for it instantly flies away and escapes the snare. Thus, they that pray escape all temptations; for by prayer they instantly fly to God, and He delivers them.

And here let us remember that there never can be any excuse for a sinner, who says that he fell because he had not strength to resist; for the Council of Trent has declared that "God does not command impossibilities, but by His precepts He admonishes you to do what you can, and to ask what you cannot do, and He assists you that you may be able to do it."

The Lord then hears the prayers of all, because He has promised to hear them; but it is necessary to know that this promise does not extend to temporal favours -- such as bodily health, the acquisition of wealth, or the attainment of a post of honour, and the like. For God frequently, and justly, refuses these gifts, because He knows that they would be injurious to the soul. "The physician," says St. Augustine, "knows better than the patient what is useful for him." If these temporal favours be the object of prayer, they should be asked with resignation, and on

condition that they will be conducive to our eternal salvation; if we ask them without this resignation, the Lord will not listen to our prayers. But in praying for spiritual blessings, we must pray not conditionally, but absolutely, and with a firm confidence of obtaining them. Behold how our Saviour encourages us to ask such graces: *If you, then, He says, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good spirit to them that ask him* (Luke xi. 13).

O God, how often are the prayers of certain persons offered for temporal graces only! The time of prayer, says St. Teresa, is not a time for treating with God on matters of little importance. Let us ask for virtues, for Divine light in order to fulfil the Divine Will. Let us ask for meekness, for patience under crosses, for perseverance, and for Divine love, which, as St. Francis de Sales says, contains all other good gifts. Let us ask the grace to pray always, and to recommend ourselves continually to God. "If," says St. Augustine, "Thou dost not hear these prayers of Thy servants, what wilt Thou hear?" Ah! the Lord desires ardently to enrich us with His gifts, because He is Infinite Goodness! So great is His desire that, as St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi says, when we ask His graces, He, in a certain manner, considers Himself under an obligation to us, and thanks us, because we then give Him an opportunity of satisfying His desire of promoting our welfare. If He does not bestow His graces upon us, the fault is ours; it is because we do not ask them of Him. He, then, that remains in his poverty, is undeserving of compassion: he is poor because he does not wish to ask of God the graces that are necessary for him. Hence, St. Teresa used to say, that she would have wished to ascend a mountain, from which she could be heard by all men, and from which she would continually exclaim: *O men, pray! pray! pray!*

I will not dilate more on this subject, because, as I have said in the beginning, I have written at length on it in several places, and particularly in the little book on Prayer, which is now in the hands of many, and therefore I will not weary those who have read it, by repeating the same things.

But I would wish to do nothing else than write, and speak always on this great means of prayer: for I see that the Scrip-

tures, the Old as well as the New Testament, exhort us so often to pray, to ask, and cry out, if we wish for the Divine graces. *Cry to me and I will hear thee* (Jer. xxxiii. 3). *Call on me ... and I will deliver thee* (Ps. xlix. 15). *Ask and it shall be given you* (Matt. vii. 7). *All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive; and they shall come unto you* (Mark xi. 24). *You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you* (Jo. xv. 7). *If you shall ask me anything in my name, that I will do* (Jo. xiv. 14).

There are a thousand similar passages. The holy Fathers of the Church, also, are continually exhorting us to pray. And to speak the truth, I complain of preachers, of confessors, and of spiritual writers, for I see that neither preachers, confessors, nor spiritual writers speak as much as they ought of the *Great Means of Salvation* -- Prayer. Hence I have written at length on this subject in so many of my little works; and when I preach, I do nothing else but say: Pray! Pray, if you wish to be saved and to become saints.

Our Lord wishes us to *ask*, to *seek*, to *knock* -- to pray and pray again and never cease to pray, that God may keep His hand over us, and never permit us to be separated from Him by sin. Let us not forget to recommend ourselves to the Divine Mother. "Let us ask for grace and let us ask it through Mary" (St. Bernard).

Evening Meditation

"THE PRINCE OF PEACE"

I.

St. Thomas of Villanova gives us excellent encouragement, saying: "What art thou afraid of, O sinner? ... How shall He reject thee if thou desirest to retain Him Who came down from Heaven to seek thee?" Let not the sinner, then, be afraid, provided he will be no more a sinner, but will love Jesus Christ; let him not be dismayed, but have full trust; if he abhor and hate sin, and seek God, let him not be sad, but full of joy: *Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord* (Ps. civ. 3). The Lord has sworn to forget all injuries done to Him, if the sinner is sorry for them: *If the wicked do penance ... I will not remember all his iniquities* (Ezech. xviii. 21). And that we might have every motive for confidence, our Saviour became an Infant: "Who is afraid to approach a

Child?" asks the same St. Thomas of Villanova.

"Children do not inspire terror or aversion, but attachment and love," says St. Peter Chrysologus. It seems that children know not how to be angry; and if perchance at odd times they should be irritated, they are easily soothed; one has only to give them a fruit, a flower, or bestow on them a caress, or utter a kind word to them, and they have already forgiven and forgotten every offence.

A tear of repentance, one act of heart-felt contrition, is enough to appease the Infant Jesus. "You know the tempers of children," St. Thomas of Villanova goes on to say, "a single tear pacifies them, the offence is forgotten. Approach, then, to Him, while He is a little One, while He would seem to have forgotten His majesty." He has put off His Divine majesty, and appears as a Child to inspire us with more courage to approach His feet.

"He is born as an Infant," says St. Bonaventure, "that neither His justice nor His power might intimidate you." In order to relieve us from every feeling of distrust, which the idea of His power and of His justice might cause in us, He comes before us as a little Babe, full of sweetness and mercy. "O God!" says Gerson, "Thou hast hidden Thy wisdom under a Child's years, that it might not accuse us." O God of mercy, lest Thy Divine wisdom might reproach us with our offences against Thee, Thou hast hidden it under an Infant's form. "Thy justice under humility, lest it should condemn." Thou hast concealed Thy justice under the most profound abasement, that it might not condemn us. "Thy power under weakness lest it should punish." Thou hast disguised Thy power in feebleness, that it might not visit us with chastisement.

II.

St. Bernard makes this reflection: "Adam, after his sin, on hearing the voice of God: Adam, *where art thou?* (Gen. iii. 9), was filled with dismay" -- *I heard thy voice, and was afraid* (Gen. iii. 10). But, continues the Saint, the Incarnate Word now made Man upon earth, has laid aside all semblance of terror: "Do not fear; He seeks thee, not to punish, but to save thee. Behold, He is a Child; the voice of a child will excite compassion rather than fear. The Virgin Mother wraps His delicate limbs in swad-

dling-clothes: and art thou still alarmed?" That God Who should punish thee is born an Infant, and has no voice to terrify thee, since the accents of a child, being sounds of weeping, move us rather to pity than to fear; thou canst not fear that Jesus Christ will stretch out His hands to chastise thee, since His Mother is occupied in swathing them in linen bands.

"Be of good cheer, then, O sinners," says St. Leo, "the Birthday of the Lord is the Birthday of peace and joy." *The Prince of peace* (Is. ix. 6), was He called by Isaias. Jesus Christ is a Prince, not of vengeance on sinners, but of mercy and of peace, constituting Himself the Mediator betwixt God and sinners. If our sins, says St. Augustine, are too much for us, God does not despise His own Blood. If we cannot ourselves make due atonement to the justice of God, at least the Eternal Father knows not how to disregard the Blood of Jesus Christ Who has made atonement for us.

We have offended God; already has sentence of everlasting death been passed upon us; Divine justice requires satisfaction, and rightly. What have we to do? Should we despair? God forbid! Let us offer up to God this Infant, Who is His own Son, and let us address Him with confidence: O Lord, if we cannot of ourselves render Thee satisfaction for our offences against Thee, behold this Child, Who weeps and moans, Who is benumbed with cold on His bed of straw in this cavern; He is here to make atonement for us, and He pleads for Thy mercy on us. Though we ourselves are undeserving of pardon, the tears and sufferings of this Thy guiltless Son merit it for us, and He entreats Thee to pardon us.

If we would have still another means to secure our forgiveness, let us obtain the intercession of this Divine Mother Mary in our behalf; she is all-powerful with her blessed Son to promote the interests of repentant sinners, as St. John Damascene assures us. Yes, for the prayers of Mary, adds St. Antoninus, have the force of commands with her Son, in consideration of the love He bears her: "The prayer of the Mother of God has the force of a command." Hence St. Peter Damien wrote that when Mary entreats Jesus Christ in favour of one who is dearest to her, "she appears in a certain sense to command as a mistress, not to ask

as a handmaid, for the Son honours her by denying her nothing." For this reason St. Germanus says Mary can obtain the pardon of the most abandoned sinners. "Thou, by the power of thy maternal authority, gainest for the most enormous sinners the most excellent grace of pardon."

Friday--Twenty-fourth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

JESUS CRUCIFIED!

Jesus Crucified! Oh, what a spectacle to the Angels in Heaven to behold a God Crucified! And we? What sentiments should we conceive when we behold the King of Heaven hanging on a gibbet, covered with wounds, agonising, dying of pure unmitigated pain! O death of Jesus! O love of Jesus, take possession of all my thoughts and affections!

I.

Jesus Crucified! Oh, what a spectacle to the Angels in Heaven to behold a God Crucified! And we? What sentiments should we not conceive when we behold the King of Heaven hanging on a gibbet, covered with wounds, agonizing and dying of pure, unmitigated pain!

O God, why does this Divine Saviour, this innocent and Saintly One, suffer such torments? Ah, He suffers them to expiate the sins of men. And who has ever seen such an example? The Lord suffering for His slaves! The Shepherd dying for His sheep! The Creator immolated and offered as a holocaust for His creatures!

Jesus on the Cross! Behold the Man of Sorrows foretold by Isaiah. Behold Him on that infamous tree, full of exterior and interior sorrows. In His body He is torn with scourges, thorns, and nails: blood flows from every wound, and each member suffers its own torment. In His soul He is afflicted with sadness and desolation; He is abandoned by all, even by His very Father. But what tormented Him most severely was the horrid sight of all the sins that the very men, redeemed by His blood, would commit after His death.

Ah, my Redeemer, among these ungrateful ones Thou didst see me, and all my sins. Then I too had a great part in all Thy

afflictions on the Cross, when Thou wast dying for me. Oh that I had died, and had never offended Thee!

II.

Oh, Jesus, my Hope, death terrifies me. I know I shall then have to render an account of all the insults I have offered to Thy love. But Thy death encourages me, and makes me hope for pardon. I am sorry with my whole heart for having offended Thee. If I have not hitherto loved Thee, I now wish to love Thee during the remaining days of my life, and I wish to do and suffer all things in order to please Thee. O my Redeemer, Who died on a Cross for me, assist me.

Lord, Thou hast said that when Thou wouldst be exalted on the Cross, Thou wouldst draw all hearts to Thee. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself* (Jo. xii. 32). By dying on the Cross for us, Thou hast already drawn to Thy love so many who, for Thy sake, have forsaken all things, their goods, their country, their relatives, and their life. Ah, draw also my poor heart, which, through Thy grace, now longs to love Thee. Permit me not to love mire, as I have hitherto done. O my Redeemer, would that I could see myself stripped of every worldly affection, so as to forget all things, to remember only Thee, and to love Thee alone! I hope for all things from Thy grace. Thou knowest my inability to do any good: through the love which made Thee submit to so cruel a death on Calvary for my sake, I pray Thee to assist me. O death of Jesus, O love of Jesus, take possession of all my thoughts and affections, and grant that, for the future, Thy pleasure, O Jesus, may be the sole object of all my thoughts and desires. O most amiable Lord, hear my prayer, through the merits of Thy death.

O thou, too, O Mary, who art the Mother of Mercy, hear me: pray to Jesus for me. Thy prayers can make me a saint. Such is my hope.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYERS TO JESUS

TO HEAR US BY THE MERITS OF EACH PARTICULAR PAIN HE SUFFERED IN HIS PASSION

O my Jesus, by that humiliation which Thou didst practise in washing the feet of Thy disciples, I pray Thee to bestow upon

me the grace of true humility, that I may humble myself to all, especially to such as treat me with contempt.

My Jesus, by that sorrow which Thou didst suffer in the garden, sufficient, as it was, to cause Thy death, I pray Thee to deliver me from the sorrow of hell, from living evermore at a distance from Thee, and without the power of ever loving Thee again.

My Jesus, by that horror which Thou hadst of my sins, which were then present to Thy sight, give me a true sorrow for all the offences I have committed against Thee.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst experience at seeing Thyself betrayed by Judas with a kiss, give me the grace to be ever faithful unto Thee, and nevermore to betray Thee, as I have done in time past.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst feel at seeing Thyself bound like a culprit to be taken before the judges, I pray Thee to bind me to Thyself by the sweet chains of holy love, that so I may nevermore see myself separated from Thee, my only Good.

My Jesus, by all those insults, buffetings, and spittings which Thou didst on that night suffer in the house of Caiphas, give me the strength to suffer in peace, for love of Thee, all the affronts I shall meet with from men.

My Jesus, by that ridicule which Thou didst receive from Herod in being treated as a fool, give me the grace to endure with patience all that men shall say of me, treating me as base, senseless, or wicked.

My Jesus, by that outrage which Thou didst receive from the Jews in seeing Thyself placed after Barabbas, give me the grace to suffer with patience the dishonour of seeing myself placed after others.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst suffer in Thy most holy Body when Thou wast so cruelly scourged, give me the grace to suffer with patience all the pains of my sickness, and especially those of my death.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst suffer in Thy most sacred head when it was pierced with the thorns, give me the grace never to consent to thoughts displeasing unto Thee.

My Jesus, by that act of Thine by which Thou didst accept of the death of the Cross, to which Pilate condemned Thee, give me the grace to accept of my death with resignation, together with all the other pains which shall accompany it.

My Jesus, by the pain which Thou didst suffer in carrying Thy Cross on Thy journey to Calvary, give me the grace to suffer with patience all my crosses in this life.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst suffer in having the nails driven through Thy hands and Thy feet, I pray Thee to nail my will to Thy feet, that so I may will nothing save that which Thou dost will.

My Jesus, by the affliction which Thou didst suffer in having gall given Thee to drink, give me the grace never to offend Thee by intemperance in eating and drinking.

My Jesus, by that pain which Thou didst experience in taking leave of Thy holy Mother upon the Cross, deliver me from an inordinate love for my relatives, or for any other creature, that so my heart may be wholly and always Thine.

My Jesus, by that desolation which Thou didst suffer in Thy death in seeing Thyself abandoned by Thy Eternal Father, give me the grace to suffer all my desolations with patience, without ever losing confidence in Thy goodness.

My Jesus, by those Three Hours of affliction and agony Thou didst suffer upon the Cross, give me the grace to suffer with resignation, for love of Thee, the pains of my agony at the hour of death.

My Jesus, by that great sorrow which Thou didst feel when expiring, and Thy most holy soul separated itself from Thy most sacred body, give me the grace to breathe forth my soul in the hour of my death, offering up my sorrow then to Thee, together with an act of perfect love, that so I may go to love Thee in Heaven, face to face, with all my strength, and for all eternity.

And thou, most holy Virgin, and my Mother Mary, by that sword which pierced thy heart when thou didst behold thy Son bow down His head and expire; do thou assist me in the hour of my death, that so I may go to praise thee and to thank thee in Paradise for all the graces thou hast obtained for me from God. Amen.

Evening Meditation

JESUS DEAD UPON THE CROSS

I.

O Christian, lift up your eyes, and behold your Jesus dead on the gibbet of the Cross. Look at His body full of wounds and streams of blood flowing. Faith teaches you that He is your Creator, your Saviour, your Life, your Deliverer; and that He, Whose love for you exceeds the love of all others, is the only Being that can make you happy.

Yes, my Jesus, I believe it; Thou hast loved me from eternity, without any merit of mine; and even with the foreknowledge of my constant ingratitude, Thou hast, through Thine own goodness, given me existence. Thou art my Saviour, Who, by Thy death, hast delivered me from hell, which I have so often deserved. Thou art my Life, by the grace Thou hast given me, without which I should have remained dead in hell. Thou art my Father, and a loving Father, Who hast pardoned me with so much mercy the many insults I have offered Thee. Thou art my Treasure, enriching me with so many lights and favours, instead of chastising me as I deserved. Thou art my Hope, for I can hope for no good from any one but from Thee. Thou art my true and only Lover; it is enough to say that Thou hast even died for me. In fine, Thou art my God, my sovereign Good, my All.

II.

O men! O men! let us love Jesus Christ! Let us love a God Who sacrificed Himself entirely for the love of us. He has sacrificed the honours which were due to Him on this earth; He has sacrificed all the riches and pleasures He could have enjoyed, and was content to lead an abject life in poverty and tribulations; and finally in order to atone by His sufferings for our sins, He has voluntarily sacrificed His blood and His life, dying in an ocean of sorrows and ignominies.

Son, exclaims the Redeemer from the Cross to each of us -- son, what more could I do than die for you, in order to gain your love? See if any one in this world has loved you more than I, your Lord and God, have loved you. Love Me, then, at least in return for the love which I have borne you.

Ah, my Jesus, how can I remember that my sins have made

Thee die through pain on an infamous gibbet, and not weep unceasingly for having thus despised Thy love? And how can I behold Thee hanging on this Cross for my sake, and not love Thee with all my power?

But, O Lord, how does it happen that Thou hast died for all, that no one might live any longer to himself, and that afterwards, instead of living only to love Thee and give Thee glory, I have lived only to afflict and dishonour Thee? *Christ died for all, that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again* (2 Cor. v. 15).

Ah, my crucified Lord, forget the insults I have offered Thee; I am sincerely sorry for them: draw me, by Thy grace, entirely to Thyself. I wish to live no longer to myself, but only to Thee, Who hast loved me so tenderly, and Who dost merit all my love. I give Thee myself and all that I possess, without reserve. I renounce all the honours and pleasures of this life, and I offer myself to suffer for Thy sake whatsoever Thou pleasest. I entreat Thee, Who dost give me this good will, to grant me strength to execute it. O Lamb of God, immolated on the Cross, O Victim of love, O enamoured God, would that I could die for Thee as Thou hast died for me!

O Mary, Mother of God, obtain for me the grace to sacrifice all the remaining hours of my life to the love of thy most amiable Son.

Saturday--Twenty-fourth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

MARY LEADS HER CLIENTS TO HEAVEN.

Oh, what an evident sign of predestination have the servants of Mary! St. Bonaventure says the gates of Heaven open to all who confide in Mary's protection. St. Ambrose prays: "Open to us, O Mary, the gate of Paradise, for thou hast its keys!" And Holy Church prays to Mary: "Gate of Heaven, pray for us!"

I.

Oh, what an evident sign of predestination have the servants of the Blessed Virgin! The holy Church, for the consolation of Mary's clients, puts the words of Ecclesiasticus on her lips: *In all these I sought rest, and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord*

(Ecclus. xxiv. 11). Cardinal Hugo explains these words, and says: "Blessed is he in whose house the most holy Virgin finds repose." Mary, out of the love she bears to all, endeavours to excite in all devotion towards herself; yet many either do not admit it into their souls, or do not preserve it. But blessed is he that receives and preserves it, *He shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord.*

Devotion towards the Blessed Virgin reigns in all who are the inheritance of our Lord; that is to say, in all who will praise God eternally in Heaven. Mary continues, speaking in the words of Ecclesiasticus: *He that made me rested in my tabernacle, and he said to me: Let thy dwelling be in Jacob, and thy inheritance in Israel, and take root in my elect* (Ib. 12, 13). My Creator has condescended to come and repose in my bosom, and His will is, that I should dwell in the hearts of all the elect, and that devotion and confidence in me should take root in all the predestined.

O, how many blessed souls are there now in Heaven who would never have been there had not Mary, by her powerful intercession, led them thither: *I made that in the heavens there should rise light that never faileth* (Ecclus. xxiv. 6). Cardinal Hugo, in his commentary on the above text of Ecclesiasticus speaks in the name of Mary: "I have caused as many lights to shine eternally in Heaven as I have clients"; and then he adds, "There are many Saints in Heaven through Mary's intercession, who would never have been there but through her."

II.

Saint Bonaventure says that "the gates of Heaven will open to all who confide in the protection of Mary." Hence St. Ephrem calls devotion to the Divine Mother "the unlocking of the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem." The devout Blossius also, addressing our Blessed Lady, says: "To thee, O Lady, are committed the keys and the treasures of the kingdom of Heaven." And therefore we ought constantly to pray to her, in the words of St. Ambrose: "Open to us, O Mary, the gates of Paradise, since thou hast its keys." Nay, more, the Church calls her: "the Gate of Heaven": *Janua coeli.*

For the same reason, again, is the great Mother called by the Church the Star of the Sea, "Hail, Star of the Sea!" "For," says the angelical St. Thomas, "as sailors are guided by a star to the

port, so are Christians guided to Heaven by Mary."

And finally, Mary is called by St. Fulgentius, "the heavenly ladder." "For," says the Saint, "by Mary God descended from Heaven into the world, that by her men might ascend from earth to Heaven." "And thou, O Lady," says St. Athanasius, "wast filled with grace, that thou mightest be the way of our salvation, and the means of ascent to the heavenly kingdom."

Spiritual Reading

"THEY THAT WORK BY ME SHALL NOT SIN."

St. Bernard calls the Blessed Virgin "the heavenly Chariot." St. John Geometra salutes her: "Hail! resplendent car!" signifying that she is the car in which her clients mount to Heaven. "Blessed are they who know thee, O Mother of God," says St. Bonaventure; "for the knowledge of thee is the high road to everlasting life, and the proclaiming of thy virtues is the way of eternal salvation."

In the Franciscan Chronicles it is related that Brother Leo once saw a red ladder, on the summit of which was Jesus Christ; and a white one, on the top of which was His most holy Mother; and he saw some who tried to ascend the red ladder, and they mounted a few steps and fell -- they tried again, and again fell. They were then advised to go and try the white ladder, and by that one they easily ascended, for our Blessed Lady stretched out her hand and helped them, and so they got safely to Heaven (*Wadding, Ann.* 1232, n. 28).

Denis the Carthusian asks: "Who is there that is saved? Who is there that reigns in Heaven?" And he answers: "They are certainly saved and reign in Heaven for whom this Queen of mercy intercedes." And this Mary herself confirms in the book of Proverbs: *By me kings reign* (Prov. viii. 15), through my intercession souls reign, first in this mortal life by ruling their passions, and so come to reign eternally in Heaven, where, says St. Augustine, "all are kings." "Mary, in fine," says Richard of St. Laurence, "is the Mistress of Heaven; for there she commands as she wills, and admits whom she wills." And applying to her the words of Ecclesiasticus: *And my power was in Jerusalem* (Ecclus. xxiv. 15), he makes her say: "I command what I will, and introduce whom I will." Our blessed Lady, being Mother of the Lord of Heaven, it

is reasonable that she should also be sovereign Lady of that kingdom, according to Rupert, who says that "by right she possesses the whole kingdom of her Son."

St. Antoninus tells us that "this Divine Mother has already, by her assistance and prayers, obtained Heaven for us, provided we put no obstacle in the way." Hence, says the Abbot Gueric, "he who serves Mary, and for whom she intercedes, is as certain of Heaven as if he was already there." St. John Damascene also says, that "to serve Mary and to be her courtier is the greatest honour we can possibly possess; for to serve the Queen of Heaven is already to reign there, and to live under her commands is more than to govern." On the other hand, he adds, that "those who do not serve Mary will not be saved; for those who are deprived of the help of this great Mother are also deprived of that of her Son and of the whole court of Heaven."

"May the infinite goodness of our Lord be ever praised," says St. Bernard, "for having been pleased to give us Mary as our advocate in Heaven, that she, being at the same time the Mother of our Judge and a Mother of Mercy, may be able, by her intercession, to conduct to a prosperous issue the great affair of our eternal salvation." St. James, a Doctor of the Greek Church, says that, "God destined Mary as a bridge of salvation, by using which we might with safety pass over the stormy sea of this world, and reach the happy haven of Paradise." Therefore St. Bonaventure exclaims: "Give ear, O ye nations, and all you who desire Heaven! Serve and honour Mary, and certainly you will find eternal life."

Nor should those even who have deserved hell be in the least doubtful as to obtaining Heaven, provided they are faithful in serving this Queen. "O how many sinners," says St. Germanus, "have found God and have been saved by thy means, O Mary!" Richard of St. Laurence remarks, that St. John in the Apocalypse says that Mary was crowned with stars: *And on her head a crown of twelve stars* (Apoc. xii. 1). In the sacred Canticles, she is said to be crowned with wild beasts, lions, and leopards: *Come from Libanus, my spouse, come from Libanus, come; thou shalt be crowned ... from the dens of the lions, from the mountains of the leopards* (Cant. iv. 8). How is this? He answers, that "these wild beasts are

sinner, who by the favour and intercession of Mary have become stars of Paradise, better adapted to the head of this Queen of mercy than all the material stars of heaven."

We read in the Life of the servant of God, Sister Seraphina of Capri, that once during the Novena of the Assumption of Mary she asked our Blessed Lady for the conversion of a thousand sinners, but afterwards thought that she had asked too much; and then the Blessed Virgin appeared to her, and corrected her for her ungrounded anxiety, saying: "Why dost thou fear? Is it that I am not sufficiently powerful to obtain from my Son the conversion of a thousand sinners? See, I have already obtained the favour." With these words, she took her in spirit to Heaven, and there showed her innumerable souls which had deserved hell, but had been saved through her intercession, and were already enjoying eternal happiness.

It is true that in this world no one can be certain of his salvation: *Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred*, says Ecclesiastes (Eccles. ix. 1). But St. Bonaventure, to the words of King David, *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle?* (Ps. xiv. 1), answers, "Sinners, let us follow Mary closely, and casting ourselves at her feet, let us not leave them until she has blessed us; for her blessing will ensure our salvation."

"It suffices, O Lady," says St. Anselm, "that thou willest it, and our salvation is certain." And St. Antoninus says that "souls protected by Mary, and on which she casts her eyes, are necessarily justified and saved."

"With reason, therefore," observes St. Ildephonsus, "did the most Holy Virgin predict that all generations would call her blessed; for all the elect obtain eternal salvation through the means of Mary." "And thou, O great Mother," says St. Methodius, "art the beginning, the continuation, and the end of our happiness"; -- the beginning, for Mary obtains us the pardon of our sins; the continuation, for she obtains for us perseverance in Divine grace; and the end, for she finally obtains us Heaven. "By thee, O Mary, was Heaven opened," says St. Bernard; "by thee was hell emptied; by thee was Paradise restored; and through thee, in fine, is eternal life given to so many miserable creatures who deserved eternal death."

But that which above all should encourage us to hope with confidence for Heaven, is the beautiful promise made by Mary herself to all who honour her, and especially to those who, by word and example, endeavour to make her known and honoured by others: *They that work by me shall not sin; they that explain me shall have life everlasting* (Ecclus. xxiv. 30). "O happy they who obtain the favour of Mary!" exclaims St. Bonaventure; "they will be recognised by the Blessed as their companions, and whoever bears the stamp of a servant of Mary is already enrolled in the Book of Life."

Evening Meditation

HOLY MARY IS OUR SALVATION.

I.

The servants of Mary are protected by her, and their names are written in the Book of Life. St. John Damascene says that God gives the grace of devotion to His Mother only to those whom He will save. This is also clearly expressed by our Lord in St. John: *He that shall overcome ... I will write upon him the Name of my God, and the name of the city of my God* (Apoc. iii. 12). And who but Mary is this *city of God*? observes St. Gregory on the words of David: *Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God* (Ps. lxxxvi. 3).

Correctly, then, can we here say with St. Paul: *Having this seal, the Lord knoweth who are his* (2 Tim. ii. 19). That is to say, whoever carries with him the mark of devotion to Mary is recognized by God as His own. Hence St. Bernard writes that devotion to the Mother of God is a most certain mark of eternal salvation. Blessed Alan, speaking of the "Hail Mary," also says, that "whoever often honours our Blessed Lady with this Angelical Salutation has a very great mark of predestination." He says the same thing of perseverance in the daily recital of the Rosary -- "that those who do so have a very great assurance of salvation." Father Nieremberg says that "the servants of the Mother of God are not only privileged and favoured in this world, but even in Heaven they are more particularly honoured." He then adds: "in Heaven they will be recognized as servants of its Queen, and as belonging to her court, by a distinguishing and richer garment," according to the words of the Proverbs: *All her domestics are clothed with double garments* (Prov. xxxi. 21).

Ah, my most beloved Mother, never allow a servant of thine to become the enemy of God Whom thou lovest so much! Alas, there was a time when I offended God. But then, O Lady, I loved thee but little! O my Mother, pray to Jesus for me. Nothing else is needed. Thou hast to save me. Thou art my hope. I will sing for ever: O Mary, thou hast to save me!

II.

St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi saw a vessel in the midst of the sea, and in it were all the clients of Mary, and this Blessed Mother herself steered it safely into the port. By this the Saint understood, that those who live under the protection of Mary are secure, in the midst of the dangers of this life, from the shipwreck of sin, and from eternal damnation; for she guides them safely into the haven of salvation. Let us then enter this blessed ship of the mantle of Mary, and there we can be certain of the Kingdom of Heaven; for the Church says: "O holy Mother of God, all those who will be partakers of eternal happiness dwell in thee, living under thy protection."

Most holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God, I (N.N.), although most unworthy to be thy servant, yet moved by thy wonderful compassion, and by my desire to serve thee, now choose thee, in presence of my Guardian Angel and of the whole celestial court, for my especial Lady, Advocate, and Mother: and I firmly purpose always to love and serve thee for the future, and to do all in my power to induce others to love and serve thee also. I beseech thee, O Mother of God, and my most compassionate and loving Mother, by the Blood which thy Son shed for me, to receive me into the number of thy servants, to be thy child and servant forever. Assist me in all my thoughts, words, and actions in every moment of my life, so that every step I take, and every breath I draw, may be directed to the greater glory of my God; and through thy most powerful intercession, may I never more offend my beloved Jesus, but may glorify Him and love Him in this life, and love thee, my most beloved and dear Mother, and thus love thee and enjoy thee in Heaven for all eternity. AMEN.

DEO GRATIAS ET MARIAE

DE PERPETUO SUCCURSU!

