

Blessed Justin Russolillo

Journey toward the Espousal Union

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PREAMBLE

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?
Who shall stand in his holy place?
The man with clean hands and pure heart,
Who desires not worthless things,
Who has not sworn so as to deceive his neighbor.
He shall receive blessings from the Lord
And reward from the God who saves him.
Such are the men, who seek him,
Seek the face of the God of Jacob.
(Ps. 24)

In the following pages Blessed Fr. Justin shows us how to climb the mountain of the Lord, the mountain of the Ascension, the mountain of the divine perfections. This volume is written for those souls who aim high in the journey toward the divine union in the relationship of the soul-spouse of the Trinity.

This volume, consisting of seven parts, is the translation of volume n. IX of Fr. Justin's Works published in Italian. Each part was originally published as a separate booklet under the Italian title of *Direttori - Guidelines*. All together this volume presents the synthesis of Fr. Justin's teachings and the specificity of his spirituality: the relationship of the soul spouse of the Trinity.

In everything and above everything we see life as the engagement of the soul with the divine lover, the one God in three persons. Throughout

*our short span of life on earth, we prepare ourselves to the perfect union of the mystical marriage in eternity*¹.

Life is a long journey that goes from God, our beginning, to God, our end or ultimate goal. When embarking on a journey the first and most important thing is to set the destination, where one wants to arrive, and then to choose the means that are most convenient, practical, safe and affordable. The goal is what moves us to act. *The ultimate goal is always unique. Our ultimate goal is the supernatural, so only this goal must move us to act*². In our life the ultimate goal is the first thing to be set and the last one to be fully achieved.

*Our ultimate goal is the Lord God, known, loved, possessed, glorified and enjoyed by us and communicated to our neighbors, in the highest degree, in the most perfect way, to the fullest extent possible for each one of us*³. The ultimate goal, the goal of all goals is common to all human beings. Each individual chooses how best to apply it to himself, and can express it in a personalized manner.

*Everyone can contemplate his own goal in the formula that he likes, in the light that more enchants him, provided it always leads him to understand better and practice the "Come to me", which is the formula of our goal, spoken by the heart of God to ours*⁴.

For Fr. Justin the goal of every vocation is divine union with the Blessed Trinity through the ascensional perfection of love for God and neighbor⁵. He further describes the ultimate goal thus: *I exist to-*

¹ See article 3 of this volume.

² VI, 393. All quotations from Blessed Fr. Justin are taken from *Opera Omnia - the Works*, published in Italian, reporting only the number of the volume in roman numbers and the page.

³ VIII, 267.

⁴ VIII, 244.

⁵ VIII, 35.

*tally, exclusively and perpetually for the glory of the adorable Trinity and as a revelation of him in order to be his delight. This principle is the light of life in the supernatural order*⁶.

Starting from the principle that we *were created solely and entirely for the glory of the Lord*, Fr. Justin teaches us to order ourselves totally to that end, and everything in us, acts and states, work and relationships, must be of glory for the Lord⁷.

*We must always have shining before us our personal, supernatural goal, so that it may attract and motivate us*⁸. The Lord has given us a goal that is attainable, and yet is never fully attained in this life, so that it may keep us in constant ascension. This goal must be presented and understood in the most attractive and fascinating manner, because *a goal that does not attract me, that does not move me is not my goal*⁹.

*God wants us to understand the goal and to keep envisioning it because by it we are moved to action. Only the idea of the goal drives us ab intrinseco - from within - and moves us to the use of the means as such: that is, as much as they are helpful toward the goal*¹⁰.

Since our most powerful force, our most motivating factor is love, it follows that: *Only the relationship of love brings us out of our principles and makes us reach our goal*¹¹. We come from the love of God as our principle, and we are ordained to the love of God as our goal. *Only the relationship of love explains to us our principle and reveals to us our*

⁶ V, 209

⁷ Cfr. V, 243.

⁸ XXII, 336.

⁹ X, 135.

¹⁰ XXVI, 88.

¹¹ V, 250.

goal¹². From the above quotations we can easily understand why Fr. Justin talks of and aims constantly to divine union with God Trinity. He cannot be satisfied with just any union! He tends and wants to lead all people to the spousal union, because this is the highest, the most intimate union, that we human beings can conceive and identify with!

The cause of our evil is a lack of complete vision of our goal. I'm in this world for my sanctification and that of all souls¹³.

In our process of sanctification *the cooperation of the soul always starts with the commitment to know more fully our goal, which is God, making use of all the creatures that manifest him as the effects [make known] the cause. We make use, in a special way, of our own self and of our heart to get to know God, because among all creatures we were made purposely in the image and likeness of God¹⁴.*

Fr. Justin starts his mystical journey with a profound meditation on the creating words of God: *Let us make man in our own image and likeness*. In the various stages and development of the human being he goes from perfection to perfection, from unlimited experiences to limitless experiences. Even though he accepts and often repeats that we are *limited and successive*, in the reality of his experience with God he continuously extends his *unlimited limitless*.

In article 30 of this volume, we find one of Fr. Justin's grandiose concepts of human life. In order to prevent materialistic and worldly misconceptions, he uses the word *soul instead of human being*. Since our words are inadequate to properly describe the spiritual reality he says: *To help ourselves with tangible comparison,*

¹² V, 250.

¹³ VI, 382.

¹⁴ IX, 53.

we say, that since in the material universe everything appears spherical in its volume, and circular in its motions, so in the spiritual world, we can imagine the soul as one of those fiery stars, launched and travelling in the skies.

The soul is like a star. A great starry world, all a flame of starry fire, and emanating splendor, fragrance and harmony; a world to which God did not set yet any boundaries, because he wants the soul ever more shining with splendor and colors, songs and harmony, fragrance and perfumes, flying within an ever larger orbit, at an ever more elevated height, and in an ever more marvelous spiral. It is as if she were destined to reach the unreachable God, to embrace the limitless God, and be the star of glory of the blessedness of God. Indeed only God is the principle, the center and the goal of the human soul.

From the starting high point of our creation we cannot but go from perfection to perfection from height to higher heights. Notwithstanding the beauty and the greatness of every stage of her¹⁵ life, the depth and joy of every relationship, the soul reaches her ultimate realization and bliss only when she becomes to all effects soul spouse of the Trinity, to which every soul is called.

With the creation of the woman, the Lord completed the creation of the visible world. He led man to the relationship of spouse and settled him in the state of the nuptial relationship; after that the Lord entered the Sabbath of his eternal rest.

Since then, every child that comes into this world, notwithstanding the charm and beauty of childhood, does not want to remain a child, but hastens to become an adolescent. Notwithstanding all the charm and beauty of adolescence, the teenager does not want to remain a teenager,

¹⁵ Even though in correct English the proper pronoun for *soul* is it, in this volume, following the Greek, Latin, most of the neo-Latin languages and the ecclesiastical language, we consider the soul feminine, and use the pronoun *her*.

but hastens to become a young adult. And then, notwithstanding all the charm and beauty of the springtime of his life, the young adult is not satisfied with the flowers of spring; he longs for the fruit and makes the transition into full virility.

The charm and beauty of every age, in the life of man, consists precisely in this progressive blooming of childhood into teenager, into youth, into adulthood, in the perfect virility. Likewise and simultaneously, a man is born as a son, but notwithstanding all the sweetness of the filial relationship, he does not want to be only a son, and he is not satisfied with the sole native family. He tends to develop other relationships, as friend, with an ever-growing number of people, and so he forms a larger family, and - at times it seems - a more sweet family of election. Notwithstanding all the sweetness of friendship, or better, because he is totally taken by the sweetness of friendship, he does not want to be only a friend, and he is no longer satisfied with the larger family of election, but he tends to the relationship of spouse with the person that seems to embody the ideal and the synthesis of all the goodness that humanity may offer. With this person, more friend than all other friends, he forms the family of his heart, where he can finally rest for all his life, in the sweet and strong exercise of the dominion of his conquering love¹⁶.

What happens in human life is a pallid image of what happens in our spiritual life. The various love relationships, like that of creature to the creator, of disciple to teacher, of soldier to commander, of subject to superior, employee to employer, and those of friendship, brotherhood and sonship find their fullest realization in the nuptial relationship.

In order to become ever more beautiful, attractive and pleasant to her divine spouse the soul keeps embellishing herself by decorating herself of the divine jewels of the virtues of charity,

¹⁶ Article 63 of this volume.

humility, chastity, obedience and poverty. When a soul is totally immersed in God's love and wants to please him ever more, every sacrifice becomes an act of love, every abnegation is nothing but a renewed choice and commitment of love to the divine spouse.

This explains why we have titled this book *Journey toward the Espousal Union*. Fr. Justin sees and presents the relationship of soul-spouse of the Trinity, or mystical marriage of the soul with God, not as a privilege of a few saints, but as a universal vocation, to which all souls are called.

As in everything else, Fr. Justin sees a progressivity or ascensional levels even in the espousal relationship.

May the reading and meditation of this book enable us to stay the course on the pathway to holiness and experience every day the Justinian *always more, always better, always forward, always upward*.

Palisades Park, N. J. - August 2, 2013.

Fr. Louis M. Caputo, S.D.V.

PART I

INTRODUCTION TO GUIDELINES
OF
SPOUSE OF THE TRINITY

INTRODUCTION TO

“Spouse of the Trinity”

Welcome

1.

Regardless of how you reach the firm determination of really consecrating yourself to the love of God, the angels and saints, your brothers joyfully welcome you.

Whether you reached this determination moved by the desire of glory, love or holiness, by the zeal for your salvation or that of your neighbor, whether you arrived at this conclusion because of a particular devotion to the Blessed Mother, to some saints or to a particular mystery of our Lord, or because prompted by dissatisfaction with people or with the world, it is important to keep in mind that you are welcome by angels and saints alike.

Know that the Blessed Mother has been waiting for you, that the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been longing to love you. The Blessed Trinity embraces both you and your determination with infinite, eternal, immutable, immense love.

So, open your heart to the minister of God, who is in charge of your spiritual well-being and much more to an ongoing conversation with the saints, the Blessed Mother, and God himself, both by talking and listening, by asking and receiving, by offering yourself to them and by welcoming them in you.

Foundations

2.

You must deepen your knowledge of faith in the main mystery of the unity and Trinity of God; likewise you should deepen your knowledge of the incarnation, passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, making sure to see everything in the light of that love which is God in himself and in his works.

This knowledge at the beginning will be rather generic; it will become much more detailed, as it becomes, for you, the theme of entire series of meditations.

You must, likewise, deepen your knowledge of man's ultimate goal, of the last things, and of mortal and venial sin as well as the basic idea of imperfections, all in the light of charity.

You will find great help in the use of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. You must also learn all the ways that can help you achieve a perfect conversion to God. You should, likewise, familiarize yourself with the main vocations contained in the Old and New Testament, in the history of the Church and the lives of the Saints. Naturally, you should focus your attention and interest on your particular vocation.

Pray always with serenity and ardor and nurture your confidence in God.

The Idea of Life

3.

Some see life as a battle to be fought and won; this is true, and it is such also for us.

Some see life as a work to be done in oneself and outside of oneself, and then is to be presented to the divine artist; this is true, and it is such also for us.

Others see life as a pilgrimage through the desert, toward the promised land of heaven; this is very true, and it is such also for us.

Still others consider life as a test and as expiation on a way of crosses leading to a complete sacrifice, in view of the delight of God and our own beatitude; this is true, and it is such also for us.

All this is life! In everything and above everything we see life as the engagement of the soul with the divine lover, the one God in three persons. Throughout our short span of life on earth, we prepare ourselves to the perfect union of the mystical marriage in eternity.

The marital relationship has been the relationship of God with mankind from the very beginning; this relationship became first clear with the Jewish people, and then clearer with the Church, and finally with each and every soul. God's plan for creation, redemption and sanctification of souls is divinely fulfilled in the nuptial relationship of the soul with God.

Growth

4.

You can reach perfect and stable divine union of love only in the state of glory. Divine union is granted to you, through grace, here on earth, only in an initial and progressive manner. It is extremely important that you progress in it, as long as you are alive, in every way possible.

The means that help you grow in divine union, are generously granted to you by the divine lover, who has clearly expressed the desire of his heart that wants you alive and progressive in the life of grace; he has done so by making the commandment of love the synthesis of all laws, the fulfillment of the whole law, the first and greatest commandment.

The encounter, the union of the soul with God can happen only if the two lovers walk on the same path. God is love in himself and in his operations, likewise, you must be love in yourself and in your operations.

With very frequent visits and gifts, the divine lover wants to lead you, his beloved, to the highest possible level of love in the present life. On your part, it is necessary that you, leaning on your beloved, keep advancing forward, according to his divine desire, toward the infinite love-God in order to be united with him as much as possible in the blessed eternity.

Behold the Handmaid of the Lord

5.

You, who have been called by the Lord to such a height of gifts, to such an intimacy of love, to such a sublimity of union, should always be aware of your nothingness and of the divinity of the Lord "living by the truth and in love" (Ep 4, 15). The psalmist reminds us that God never separates mercy and truth in his relationship with the soul.

Consequently you must stabilize and immerse yourself always more in understanding your condition of total, absolute, essential dependency and submission as servant to your Lord and God.

Regardless of the greatness or height to which the love of the

Lord God may raise you, you should always feel and say “behold the handmaid of the Lord” (Lc 1, 38), and “we are useless servants” (Lc 17, 10).

If you had the misfortune of offending God, you should always bear this in mind and tremble every day, and all your love should be a love of contrition. You should be open to and abandon yourself to an unlimited confidence and trust in the Lord, to every gift, every height, to every intimacy. “We have put our faith in the love God has for us” (1Jn 4,16).

Since God loves me, he must love me as God! And, what cannot be accomplished by the infinite, eternal, immense, immutable love of God? What may I not expect from it? Because of this I can never humble myself enough, I can never repent enough, I can never trust enough!

Forms of love

6.

Grace does not destroy, but only elevates and sanctifies our human nature. Human love burns in our hearts in so many different ways! You should know that in all these forms of love, you must love God, all the time and every time according to the grace of the moment. Only so you can fulfill the commandment to love him with your whole heart, i. e. with all the powers of your affection, and the Lord may really be everything for you, all for you.

As in one God there is the Trinity of persons, so in our love for God there is a triple relationship: love of a son toward the Father, love of a mother toward the Son, and love of a spouse toward the Holy Spirit. Since the relationship of spouse supposes the consummation and the term-end, we rather reserve this form of love to heaven; while on earth we replace the espousal relationship with that of the lover.

In these three forms of love (child, spouse and mother) are contained all the others, like friend, disciple etc. The adoring love of a servant should be like the foundation of every relationship of love. Each and every relationship of love may be directed and focused on the adorable person of the incarnate Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus allows all who do the will of the Father, to love him as a son, thus becoming one with the Father. Jesus grants this privilege of loving him like a father/mother (almost like to the Blessed Mother), in a special way to the priests, through the Eucharistic consecration.

The Levels of Charity

7.

Regardless of which flame of love burns in your heart, as his servant, you must know that all flames of love are not directed to console, but to sanctify and beatify you for your solid, true service of love. You must practice, perfect and progress in this service of love, which consists in the union of the human will with that of God, to the point of reaching a consummated fusion with him.

You should elevate yourself from one level of charity to the next higher one, starting with the disposition of doing everything, suffering everything, even death, in order to avoid offending the beloved grievously; to this follows the disposition of doing everything, suffering everything, even death, in order to avoid offending God even venially.

We practice the first and the second levels of charity in order to dispose ourselves to do anything, to suffer everything, even death, in order to do in everything what pleases God the most. All this is not done in order to avoid punishments, to accumulate merits or receive rewards, not even only for our perfection and glory. We do everything, first and foremost in order to please God.

The divine complacence is manifested to you, when you reach the third level of charity; it is manifested in proportion of your dispositions of generosity and fidelity. Once you reach the third level, you will no longer climb levels, but you will experience ascensions and assumptions in God.

Charity!

8.

O blessed grace, progressive participation of the divine nature! O life of love, sublime participation of divine life! O charity, gift of all gifts, virtue of all virtues! Blessed be the one who understands you, who embraces you, who abandons himself totally to you!

O holy virgins, spouses of the Lamb, obtain for us the gift of such a great good! O you, Apostle of love, beloved disciple of Jesus, O foster father of the incarnate Word and spouse of Mary, holy Seraphim, and especially you, holy Spirits Assisting at the Throne of God, eternal lights of love in the glory of God-love, and especially you, Mother of divine love: smile to us, who are thirsting for love and are confused by the height and depth of divine love, and yet fully aware of our nothingness and failures.

God-love, God the Father, all love for the Son, we beg you, grant us the gift of perfect love for the sake of your Son, in view of the fact that you have created us as a gift of love for him!

God-Son, all love for the Father, grant us, we beg you, the gift of perfect love for the sake of the Father, since you have redeemed us in exchange for his gift of love!

God-Holy Spirit, love and personal gift of the Father and of the Son, for their sake, we implore you, come to us, absorb us into your divine fire, baptize us with your fire, and make us like unto you!

Knowledge of the Loved One

9.

The knowledge of the beloved is nourishment of love; it grows in you through the proper and daily reception of the sacraments, the participation in the divine sacrifice, the practice of constant prayer and the act of love that becomes like the palpitation and the breath of your soul.

Throughout your entire life, you will study your beloved in himself and in his works of creation, redemption and sanctification of souls, God's masterpiece. You must know him in order to love and serve him always more, always better. Trust in the love of the beloved, who somehow will renew in you all his revelation through this loving study, because the Lord wants to be known and loved.

God is well aware that you cannot achieve this unless he grants it to you. On your part, in order to obtain this, you must forget all things and your own self, seeing everything in God and for God, unique and complete reality in everything, and considering less than nothing any learning that does not lead to the knowledge of God. Make sure that you do not waste a single instant of your time, a single atom of your intellect's power in what is not God. "Eternal life is this: to know you, Father, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn 17, 3).

The Route of Knowledge

10.

Every avenue of human and divine knowledge is open to the faithful servant. You should immerse yourself and advance in the

knowledge of God, to the extent of your ability. Be aware that with the key of charity in your hands you can overcome each and every difficulty. In the light of charity dispel every shadow, as, with open heart, you go longingly to your beloved.

Divine Scripture, God's love letter to you, the history of the Church, the lives of the saints, that are like so many other pages of Jesus' life, and the great book of nature are good sources for your meditations and contemplations.

You must attentively listen for the echo of the uncreated Word in every creature and at every moment in order to capture the message of love and the spark of divine love present in them. With the Blessed Mother you must keep in your heart and meditate on the direct words of God, contained in the Bible and in the hagiography. From the direct words of God you receive the light that enables you to penetrate the sacred mysteries of the heart of Jesus and of the Blessed Trinity. Through them you also perceive that tranquil and vehement fire that communicates to you the Spirit of God. Keep in mind and follow the example of Mary Magdalene, who had chosen the better part (Lc 10,42) and the words of the author of the Letter to the Hebrews: "The word of God is something alive and active" (Heb 4, 12), and so many other quotations from the Bible.

The Paths of Love

11.

If you want to love, you must offer yourself in such a way that you may be accepted. You, soul-spouse, should understand and heartily accept the divine rights of creation, redemption and sanctification. (Grace, as participation of divine nature, is a right more positive than what is found in natural life). After accepting these basic divine rights, you should add something of yours, the right

of self-donation, founded on the freedom given to you by God himself.

O holy paths of ever more generous and total conversions and consecrations! O holy cravings for ever new and higher offerings of yourself! Our path is: from resolutions to promises, from promises to vows.

You should consecrate yourself to ever more and better know, love and serve the Beloved in each and everyone of his gifts, revelations, mysteries, perfections and states. Rest assured that you will not only be accepted, but that you will also receive in exchange many other gifts of sanctifying action that lead to an ever greater and more intimate mutual possession.

May the Lord free you from the illusion of having nothing else to offer, and from the ignorance of not knowing how else to continue your progressive oblation of yourself, until death! These progressive consecrations should not be limited to internal acts, nor to your person, but must be extended to include your external life, house, relations and society, to the extent of your ability. Your consecrations must be directed not only to God; they are extended to his representatives, to his servants, to your neighbor and to your superiors, to God present in all.

12.

If you want to consecrate yourself to God, you must first say "no" to yourself and to the world. If you want to belong ever more to God, you must abnegate yourself ever more. Consecration and abnegation go hand in hand. In order to enjoy a life of union with God, you must detach yourself completely from everything and from your own self.

We are not hunters of emotions. We are not dilettantes of di-

vine love. Love and death! Love will make you esteem all the sufferings of the saints as nothing, when you compare them to their reward in heaven. All the austerities of the saints are not comparable to the martyrdom of love.

The only restraint to our progressive consecrations may be the obedience, that is, the very will of God manifested through his representatives. There is no restraint whatsoever, but only a constant impulse to an ever more complete internal detachment, to a holy hatred of self, to the mortification of the sense, to the point of reaching the total extinction of self-love, if it were possible.

Love of God, hatred of self and war to self-love must always advance simultaneously; otherwise self-love is capable of converging on itself both the love and the gifts of God. You, soul-spouse, must make yours all the austerities of the saints; they must be so impregnated with love, that rather than austerities they should appear and be acts of total and purifying love, since they aim at perfect love in everything.

13.

In order for you to consecrate yourself to the Lord in such a way that your oblation may be acceptable, you must be like him! "You shall be holy because I am holy" and also "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect", says the Lord. As a matter of fact, love either finds the two lovers alike, or renders them alike. He creates us in his own image and likeness, and through grace he continues to ever perfect his image in us. He united himself to our nature in order to unite us to his.

Nature is the principle of operation; our nature should be totally human not angelic, but human and divine as in the person of Jesus.

You should dedicate yourself to an ongoing study of the life of Jesus, not restricting it to the years of his earthly life, but extending it to the revelation, typology and prophesies of the Old Testament, to the history of the Church and to the Eucharist. You shall have no other model but Jesus!

Study the life of Jesus in its totality and in its details; see everything in the love of the sacred Heart and of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist you will find the synthesis of all wonders and perfections of Jesus, spread in the divine works and emanating from his divine nature, which is light and love. In the Eucharist you will find the means to reproduce them in yourself, thus you will reach the complete assimilation of your being with grace. You should prepare yourself, consent to, and live this passive assimilation. No longer you, but Jesus in you! The formation of Jesus in us is our sanctification.

14.

So that our assimilation unto God may take place happily and progressively, it is necessary that we do not conform ourselves to the world and do not live according to the spirit of the world. Nature and the world must conform to the divine exemplar, Jesus, not vice versa. We should always be on guard against illusory accommodations and compromises with the world, our enemy.

For Jesus' sake we will always be crucified for the world, and the world will be crucified for us! Keeping your mind open to every level of truth, and your heart to every level of charity, do not hesitate to disregard ideas and feelings that were good at a certain point in your life, in order to make room for more elevated ideas and feelings. "They will ascend from virtue to virtue, ambition for the greater gifts". Take courage and move forward.

In the process of divine imitation and assimilation, you can

never say: "I made it! There is nothing more for me to do". Every person, every event can be a lesson for you, a lesson adequate to your internal level of grace. Blessed is he who can receive these lessons and put them into practice! However, "Not every spirit must be trusted, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 Jn 4,1). All this means improvement, progress and gradual ascension.

15.

Consummated union is your fulfillment and triumph. This divine union must be the object of your constant longing. Start to work at it, now! You have the freedom and possibility to spend all your available time with Jesus in the Eucharist. Your daily schedule and your programming, everything should favor this need and this duty.

You, soul spouse, must cultivate the awareness of God's presence and his indwelling within you, starting from the most simple, and ascending to the most sublime forms, according to the grace of the moment. Eucharistic communion will dominate everything, since it is a true sun and a true spring, a complete cycle and an entire world for the servants of the Lord.

Stay every moment in communion with the will of God, with every word, action, suffering and prayer of Jesus. Make yours the attitude and disposition of the "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord" and the "Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do" (Mt 11, 26). Consciously and willingly surrender yourself to the will of God! The very fact of surrendering ourselves to the will of God is the beginning of our union with God, with the holy Family, with the perfections and complacency of the Blessed Trinity. O my God, and my all! According to the priestly prayer of Jesus, our union with God is modeled on the unreachable model of the hypostatic union and of the union of the three persons in God.

16.

Only God! The whole world expresses “the wonders of God and our needs of God”. Consequently everything should lead us to God and encourage us to love. Nothing can better express our gratitude than love. Nothing can express our reparation better than love. Nothing can be a more effective intercession than love. Regardless of which path you have taken to arrive at God, once you have reached him, there is no more worthy adoration than love.

The four goals of the sacrifice of Jesus are the golden strings that intertwined form our bond of love with God. Everything, everything goes through the pathways of love. You need, however, to fuse and simplify all these acts and ways of love into one feeling, state and act, so that intellect, will and memory will focus on God alone. In Jesus, this takes place in his immolation and it is condensed in the Eucharist. Only if the priest-love offers us, Jesus welcomes us on his altars.

You should understand the sublimity of the mystical death and of the real death as a transit into God, and, every day, from one communion to another, you should immerse yourself, ever deeper, into God. Your intellect must be immersed in the divine truth, your will in the divine goodness, your life into the divine life and your name in the very name of God. Your actions must be total cooperation with God, exclusively for the one who loves you, for the one who is your way and your ultimate goal. God alone! God your all!

Be Vigilant

17.

The evangelical divine imperatives impose upon us the obli-

gation to stay spiritually awake, to control our own selves and be recollected. The distractions, the impressions of the senses, the digression of the imagination without the control of the reason enlightened by faith, without the control of the will moved by love, make of us daydreamers with open eyes. The only difference between daydreaming and the regular night sleep and dreams consist in the fact that we are accountable for the first and not for the second. While we are daydreaming the enemy comes and sows his seeds in our soul; the tempter comes and we fall in its nets. Let us stay awake!

We must stay awake because we should not trust ourselves; we should always stay awake and alert to guard ourselves against temptation that always finds some allies within us. We should stay awake strengthening ourselves for the test that we cannot, and do not want to escape; we do not want to be exempted from this test, in order to give greater glory to God.

We want to stay awake because we love our Beloved, and we are looking forward to his daily visits, gifts, absolutions and communions, from mystery to mystery, until his final and decisive visit, when he will take us with him.

He loves to find us awake, alert, ready and waiting for him. He loves to amaze us with surprises of love. What would happen if we were not ready to open the doors for him promptly when he comes? What would happen if we were not alert to recognize him, when he comes incognito, as he so often likes to do?

18.

Let us stay awake in the presence of the Blessed Trinity, indwelling in us! As we diligently keep always lighted the vigil light by the Blessed Sacrament, so we should keep always ignited the seven lamps of our thoughts and affections, in the presence of the

divinity within our soul. May all our thoughts be as many Cherubim contemplating the Lord in us, and may all our affections be as many Seraphim providing their court of love in us. May all our senses be as many angels serving the Lord in us!

Spiritual life, both ascetical and mystical life, is the most intense and real life. It is the most laborious, the most productive, the most filled by the “spirit of ardor” of which speaks the prophet Isaiah.

God is act, the eternal, infinite, immense, immutable act, the most simple, the most pure and the most perfect act. The closer you get to God, the more active you become. The more you become part of God, the more active you become. The more you are united to God, the more active you become. You become active in the present moment, you are realized in the present moment.

The divine present! In God there is neither past nor future, but everything is present. Neither the past nor the future is divine. Only the present is divine. This staying awake is our realization in the present, in God. We make reparation for the past in the present; we prepare ourselves for the future in the present, uniting ourselves with God in the present.

Synthesis

19.

You, Lord our God, made a marvelous synthesis, because everything must be in your image and likeness.

20.

As you are one and triune, so you want the Trinity to shine in everything, and you love to reduce everything to unity.

21.

You wanted the synthesis of all the graces of creation, redemption and sanctification, and so you gave us the Virgin Mary.

22.

You wanted the synthesis of all the mysteries, of all the teachings and of all the acts of Jesus, the incarnate Word, and so you gave us the holy Mass, the Eucharist.

23.

You wanted the synthesis of all authority, of all teachings, of all the functions of Jesus Christ, and so you gave us the Pope.

24.

You wanted likewise the synthesis of all holy deeds, of all religious families, of all Christian schools of spirituality;

25.

You wanted the synthesis of all vocations, of all missions, of all functions, of all inspirations, of all directions, of all relationships;

26.

So you gave us the Society of Divine Vocations, as a mother and teacher of the chosen ones with a special vocation, to continue the work of the Holy Family, and to foster the growth of Jesus in them.

27.

You gave us divine union with the Church, with the Holy Family, with the adorable Trinity, and so we have the divine union of the soul-spouse of the Trinity.

Formulas

28.

Royal soul, imperial soul, spouse of the Trinity!
Priestly soul, pontifical soul, soul spouse of the Trinity!
Integral soul, universal soul, soul spouse of the Trinity!

29.

Concerning the glory, love and will of the Trinity:
All that I can do, I must do,
All that I must do, I want to do,
All that I want ... gets done.

PART II

GUIDELINES TOWARD THE ULTIMATE GOAL

TOWARD THE ULTIMATE GOAL

CHAPTER I

The Star of God

30.

To what shall we compare our human soul, while here on earth? Throughout the entire universe there is nothing so beautiful, so great and good that in comparison may outshine the human soul. All created things are immensely inferior to the human soul. To help ourselves with tangible comparison, we say, that since in the material universe everything appears spherical in its volume, and circular in its motions, so in the spiritual world, we can imagine the soul as one of those fiery stars, launched and travelling in the skies.

The soul is like a star. A great starry world, all a flame of starry fire, and emanating splendor, fragrance and harmony; a world to which God did not set yet any boundaries, because he wants the soul ever more shining with splendor and colors, songs and harmony, fragrance and perfumes, flying within an ever larger orbit, at an ever more elevated height, and in an ever more marvelous spiral. It is as if she were destined to reach the unreachable God, to embrace the limitless God, and be the star of glory of the blessedness of God. Indeed only God is the principle, the center and the goal of the human soul.

The Orbit of God's Star

31.

Only God is our principle, our center and our goal. Creating the soul and elevating it to the supernatural, with that imperative: "Grow", the Lord has set the soul on course toward God, in such a way, that when it seems that we have reached him, we see him ahead of us, elevating himself (and us) to ever new heights; and rather than getting discouraged, we are attracted to possess him at an ever higher level.

To better understand and reach God, you cannot find a better way and direction than turning to your principle; from this deeper vision you receive a greater charge of energy and impulse to higher elevations in the skyward journey, toward the ultimate goal. So we go always forward, always upward, in a circular, perennial progression to an ever-higher sphere, through an ever-larger orbit, until we reach heaven.

This attraction and relation with God is called charity, as it really is. Your attraction to, and your relation with God as your principle is called humility, as it really is. If you progress, and if you want to progress always more and always better, you will be going from charity to humility and from humility to charity. You go from humility to an ever-higher charity, and from charity to an ever-deeper humility. So you go from God to God: from God, your principle, to God your goal, and vice versa, but always in God and with God. In God and with his grace, you will participate more and more of his nature. With God, you will always better follow his Spirit, in this supernatural circulation of divine life. The faster and loftier are your spiritual progresses, the more hearts you will attract in God's sphere, the more souls you will transport in his orbit, the more you will transform the universe in his life.

The Sphere of God's Star

32.

We are not a simple line, in the living halo of God's glory. The Lord God is not only principle and end of one human soul. From all eternity he has wanted an innumerable quantity of creatures that he has created in time. All things, from the angels to the atoms, rotate around him, as in their own immense sphere. All gravitate around him, as the very center of all beings. Each and every creature is attracted to him according to its nature, in the universal harmony of his glory, by the universal force of attraction of his love.

The soul that wants to progress, in God and with God, is carried, in the current of grace, by the impetus of the Holy Spirit. The more the soul progresses, the more she encounters and keeps in touch with the creatures that gravitate around God as their center and move in the sphere of the immensity of God. Every creature has received from God the mission to enrich the soul that is progressing with ever-new beauty, sweetness and greatness. Every creature, at every encounter with a soul that is progressing, rather than detaining her, propels her in a new, progressive spiral movement toward God. Every encounter with creatures turns out to be an impulse toward the creator.

From every encounter and contact with creatures, especially with souls that are called to be more intimately united with God, the soul bounces back to her God improved and more radiant. Once the soul reaches God at this higher level, in this newly widened capacity of goodness, she receives such a new fullness and abundance of life, that she cannot contain it all in herself; so the soul, from God-center of her being, returns to the creatures, shares with them the effusion of the divine goodness of which she has been made treasurer and minister. So another progressive move-

ment, that takes the soul from the creatures to God, is generated; this is a new attraction and relationship of humility; then again from God to the creatures in a new attraction and relationship of charity.

The Three Virtues

33.

The liturgical cycle of the Catholic Church takes the soul from the incarnation to the ascension, i.e. from the descent of the Man-God on earth to his ascent into heaven. So the Church leads you, soul spouse, from annunciation to ever-higher ascensions, toward the fullness of Christ. All is accomplished through the work of the Holy Spirit, who forms Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and who through a perennial Pentecost sanctifies you and all souls.

The flow of our spiritual life, in its fervor and splendor, goes from God-principle to God-end, and vice versa. Considered in the supernatural world of our relation with the universe and with our neighbor, the flow of spiritual life goes from the center-God to the periphery-creature, and vice versa.

In this circulation of divine life, in the currents of grace and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, stand out charity, the queen of theological virtues, humility, the most important moral virtue, with their marvelous fertility of acts and variety of states. The human being (in this currents of life) does not have the time, the possibility, the duty and the right to stop and concentrate on himself, or to seek and reproduce himself. He keeps going, going and going always to higher heights, to his God, who is his all.

From among all creatures, the creature that the human being meets more often, and lives constantly in contact with, is his own

body, spirit and person. Likewise it is true that the human being cannot receive from any other creature, what he receives from his own self, the constant, distinct, powerful impulse to God through knowledge and love, in order to establish himself in the fervor of progress and in the progress of fervor. This abnegation of self, which is the end result of humility and charity, is called purity, in its broadest, beautiful and proper meaning, as act, state and function.

Function of the Three Virtues

34.

This abnegation of self, which we call purity, is not only the end-result of humility and charity; it is also a necessary prerequisite to the acts, states and function of charity and humility. Seeking or enjoying moral or sensitive satisfaction, indulging or focusing upon one's own self, whether in the form of vanity or of sensuality, first slows down, then diverts and terminates that flow of the soul from God-center to God-end and vice versa.

The movements toward God must be continuous and progressive, always in act and fervent. Satisfaction of self, indulging or focusing upon one's own self, with a flow that is constant, but totally out of order, is progressive but down-ward, is in act but destructive, is fervent but in a state of corruption; it will take you from yourself to the creatures, and from the creatures back to your own self. In this state of affair you find in yourself only misery and emptiness; to the creatures you cannot bring but misery and emptiness, since you alienate yourself from God, who is the only goodness in you; likewise everything without God, who is the only goodness in all beings, is considered misery and emptiness. Emptying yourself and others of God, you find in yourself and in others only darkness and emptiness, misery and tears.

Purity, charity and humility constitute the unity and trinity of virtues that are indispensable to you, if you want to have a good relationship with God and with your neighbor. Holy humility renders your life theocentric. Holy charity elevates your whole life in perfect theocracy. Purity, end-result and prerequisite of humility and charity, frees you from any external dependency and obstacle; it disposes, opens and thrusts you in the circulation of divine life, in the currents of grace, under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Circulation of life

35.

At the moment of our creation we are elevated to the supernatural state, so we find ourselves comfortable in our own life, and in our own environment, since we are participating of the divine nature. We find ourselves in an ocean and in a sky without bottom and without boundaries, through which, as rivers to the ocean and as currents in the air, circulate the currents of grace that come from God-our principle and lead to God-our end.

Divine nature exists only in the divine persons; consequently there can be no consortium (sharing) with the divine nature without union with the divine persons. The divine persons are infinite, eternal relations of love, and this requires an infinite, eternal circulation of life among the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This grace, consortium of divine nature and union with the divine persons immerses and carries the soul in the supernatural currents of divine life.

You, soul-spouse, in your nature, are totally elevated by grace; with you, are also elevated your faculties by the theological and cardinal virtues, by the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit

lives in you and enables and prepares you to practice those virtues, both naturally and supernaturally, i.e., according to the human way of acting, and according to a way, which is above the human way, according to the norms of the superior reason of the Spirit of God.

Whether you walk through the pathway of the commandments, or you fly on the wings of the evangelical counsels, the Spirit guides you always according to the dogmatic, moral, liturgical, canonical, ascetical and mystical laws of the Church, out of which there is no salvation. In the mystical body and soul of the holy, catholic Church, you find all the necessary graces, the sacred characters of the sacraments, the charismas, virtues, gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. Everyone of these graces is more fertile than the soil, brighter than the sun, larger than the sky, rivers of living pearls, whirlwind of living stars that carry the soul through the oceans and the skies without banks and without bottom, through the action and motion of the Holy Spirit to the union with God, in an ineffable way and level.

The Supreme Type

36.

In our ongoing journey from the center-God to the periphery-creatures we pass through a vast variety of other beings; the closer these beings are to the center-God, the more elevated they are. These beings are active and effective instruments of divine action in you; the more they are united to God, the more they participate of his goodness, the more they can and want to reveal and make him accessible to the souls that seek God in them.

The Holy Spirit uses these beings as a ship to transport the souls, through the currents of grace, from God-their principle to

God-their end and from their end to their principle. He takes us from God to the creatures and from them back to God by way of knowledge and love in the communication and effusion of divine goodness.

Near God we find the angels and saints, even closer we find the Seven Spirits Assisting at the Throne of the Trinity, and even closer St. Joseph and the Virgin Mary. More than close to God, in God himself we find the human nature of Christ, supreme synthesis of all communication of God to man, and of all elevations of man to God.

In Jesus, as God, we contemplate our ultimate goal in its splendor and in its primary aspect, which is the glory of God; likewise in Jesus as a man we contemplate our ultimate goal in its secondary aspect, that is, the happiness of man.

God's wisdom has given us our ultimate goal, in its primary and secondary aspect, as fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He has shown us the whole series of intermediary goals achieved by the angels and saints. St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother are so intimately united with the Holy Trinity in that supreme revelation and communication that is Jesus himself, that they are the most sublime models and the most powerful helpers for every soul that wants to achieve the ultimate goal. Mary and Joseph not only reveal to us but they make present in us the knowledge, love and service of Jesus, their life of intimacy, of assimilation and relation with Jesus in whom we achieve the supreme union with the Blessed Trinity.

The Two Throbs

37.

In your state of fervor in your spiritual life, in whatever di-

rection you might be moving and at whatever level of fervor you may be, you will always experience the love for God in all its forms of desire and joy, and the hatred for every sin in all its forms of fear and sorrow. Love launches you toward God; hatred for sin keeps you away from all evil. Love inflames in you the divine zeal for the achievement of what pleases God most. Hatred for sin inflames you with zeal for the destruction of whatever displeases God even minimally. Love attracts the souls that enjoys the complacency of God, and opens for them paradise forever. Hatred dispels sins and devils, confines them into the abyss and wants to shut down hell forever. Love is always awake and active, and looks for all occasions to please God; hatred is, likewise, always awake and active, trying to avoid every occasion of sin, from the nearest to the most remote, in order to make sure that God is not offended.

Love is always alert and active in enriching, beautifying and growing with all the perfections that can be assimilated in the spiritual world. Hatred is always awake and working at freeing, purifying and immunizing the soul against every evil that may affect us from the world. Love for God and hatred for sin work hand in hand, as one grows or diminishes, so does the other. One is infallibly indication and measure of the other.

Love for God and hatred for sin can neither exist, nor grow separately. Love and hatred divide the whole world of things, actions and relations in two camps sharply separated; they will never allow the soul to stand neutral in the middle. They render meritorious or blame-worthy whatever is wanted or done by the soul, even those things that per se are morally indifferent. Love and hatred are two flames of the internal fire, two notes of the internal song, two wings of the spiritual flight, two throbs of the human heart, two beams of the personal cross, two phases of the inner struggle, two arms of our daily work. They are the morning and the afternoon of the same pole toward which the soul in state

of progress is constantly carried in the circulation of divine life, by the currents of grace and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Every grace renews, reenergizes and elevates that double throb of love and holy hatred.

Divine Revealing Words

38.

Having received this divine grace and under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, we feel that we are being carried forward to the knowledge of God as principle, center and end of our being; a knowledge that is ever higher, more intimate and deeper, that is ever more convincing, more attractive, more transforming. Only such a progressive knowledge can generate in our will the holy impulse toward God and neighbor, all rapture of fervor, of humility and of charity in purity. With this divine rapture we reach the various stages of spiritual life, the various levels of possession and union with God, since it is the function of the ultimate goal to move us to do, to communicate goodness and merit to every act.

The more our vision of the ultimate goal is complete, and the more we focus on it, the more the impulse of our spiritual life will be constant, direct and rapid; the more our acts of spiritual life will be elevated, intense and meritorious, the more we will be well disposed, dilated and made worthy of greater infusions of graces, virtues and gifts.

Since God has made us in his own image and likeness, it is only fitting for us to elevate ourselves to the knowledge of his being, persons and exigencies; not a generic knowledge from all other creatures, or from the effects to the cause, but from our own self, because of all the visible creatures, we are the only ones made in his image and likeness.

We begin with the very words used to recount the story of creation, used also to reveal to us how we were elevated to the supernatural, that is, to the participation of divine nature, to the union with the divine persons. It pleased God to give us simultaneously nature and grace. In these divine words and in all others concerning man, we discover ever deeper revelations of God as our principle, center and end. God reveals himself in all his words; he does so in a most special way in the creating words through which he elevates, ordains, directs, sanctifies and glorifies man, his favorite creature. He created man in his own image and likeness and destined him to become an ever better and more perfect image and likeness of himself.

Not Division but Union

39.

In our spiritual life we must be careful not to separate what God has united, not to insubordinate what God has subordinated. Since Satan separated himself from God through the disorder of sin, he continuously instigates divisions and disorder in everything, starting with the ideas of man, because he is well aware that in confusion and division there is weakness, slavery and death. In order and in union there is strength, freedom and life.

The Lord wants that our intellect be always coordinated and united with the will. Likewise, the thought should be synchronized with the word, the theory with the practice, nature with grace, internal with the external, affection with effectiveness, truth with morality. Since we are limited and successive, we cannot understand and practice everything at the same time. Yet we are capable of gathering notions and making a synthesis of them. In the synthesis we are enabled to see and possess notions and ideas in a clearer and more effective way. Concerning our ulti-

mate goal, we do not divide the primary ultimate goal from the secondary ultimate goal, because even though the secondary is subordinate to the primary, it remains inseparably united to it.

Always More, Always Better

40.

May we always long for ever-greater enthusiasm, for ever more intense fervor, in each one of their various levels!

In our natural life and tendency - relatively to our needs of the moment - we always feel an attraction for more quantity-wise, and for better quality-wise. The soul feels and experiences the same attraction to more and better in spiritual matters. These attractions to more and better lead us to new achievements for the kingdom of God, in the on-going renewal of the old man till we become like Jesus; they keep us in a continuous ascension from virtue to virtue, till we reach the full possession of God.

Something that is exactly as it has been, it is not new. Something that leaves us exactly where we were is not ascension. Something that does not add anything to what we have or are, is not an achievement.

We must safeguard ourselves from extremely dangerous situations with extreme precautions. We must overcome extreme evils with extreme remedies. Due to the nature of our implacable adversaries and the steepness of the descent toward the abyss, it is so easy and so quick to precipitate in the abyss, without any possibility of stopping half way down, or with the possibility of a comfortable rest on a plain.

We ascend step by step, and if at every step we do not apply all

the power of God's grace to each of our efforts, instead of going a step forward, we end up sliding backward. In everything, everywhere and at all times, we must seek ever more and better to achieve our ultimate goal, that is, God's glory and our happiness. Jesus, Mary and Joseph are our model of perfection; in their mold we want to form our own self.

The progressive consortium of the divine nature, requires an ever increasing divine action; the progressive relationship with the divine persons requires an ever growing assimilation; the growth of God's kingdom, for which we are responsible, and the innumerable needs of the souls entrusted to us, require from us whatever is more and better at the time and at the level in which we are.

Humility can never reach the bottom of the nothingness of our ego, in which we keep falling. Charity can never reach the very depth of God, to whom it constantly elevates us. Purity always finds in us something of the world and of our own ego, from which it should separate us constantly. The Spirit of God that guides us to God, and to live in God, requires the most and the best we can offer in every situation, according to the times and conditions in which we live.

Only the ideal of the most perfect, that Jesus has pointed out to us in God the Father, infuses in us a perennial enthusiasm toward the highest possible ardor, at each level. Any lower ideal does not satisfy us, does not inspire us, does not befit us, and consequently it is not our goal.

Reality and Practicality

41.

In God everything is life, action and relation. Since our ulti-

mate goal is to be with God, in God, God himself, even in us everything must be reality of life, action and relation. As a matter of fact, that is the supreme reality of which we are capable, that we must reach, toward which we are now moving, and in which we will establish ourselves for all eternity. Since we have been created for this, the practicality in all things, which is experienced particularly by the souls in a state of fervor, is for us a special grace, and our criterion in all things.

From among all things and people, actions and relationships in the world, only practicality helps us to discern and disregard, as being false and vain, illusory and useless toward our goal, whatever projects shadows and obstacles between us and our goal, or misleads and moves us away from it. Only practicality helps us to discern and embrace, not only as true in themselves, but also as useful to us, those people and things, those actions and relations, to which the reality of our goal irradiates and communicates its morality and the dignity of the goal itself, and creates the golden chain of the intermediate goals.

Oh! How important and necessary indeed, it is that the supreme reality of life, act and relationship, which is our goal, be always present to the intellect in such a way as to conquer the intellect itself; always present to our will in order to dominate it completely; always present to our life with such a sweetness that it may be fused in its form.

We will make sure that our goal will always be present and shining in our mind. Our goal must be always a practical model of friendship; it must be the best expression of our supreme relationship. We commit ourselves to constantly propose our goal to our will, as a concrete, practical duty, that better corresponds to the reality of our life.

We would like to come up with a living formula capable of ex-

pressing the reality of our goal, as life, act and relationship; we would like to condense it in one word that might have the power to enthuse and rapture us, give us peace as the goal that it reminds us of, and that it reveals to us.

SUMMARY

42.

What is the star of God's glory?

My soul is the star of God's glory! A living personal star, a star that emanates light, perfume and melody; a star that is getting ever bigger, more beautiful and sweeter.

43.

What is the orbit and sphere of the soul?

I cover my orbit flying eternally from God my principle to God my end; I form my sphere with the on-going flight from my center-God to my periphery-the creatures; in a state of supernatural purity, humility and charity.

44.

How does this circulation take place?

This double circulation of life takes place within the action of grace, virtues and gifts, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Grace deifies my being; virtues and gifts deify my faculties; the inspirations place in motion nature and faculties, enabling them to perform supernatural acts.

45.

Where does this motion lead me?

This divine-human motion of this natural-supernatural life, in this work and action of the Spirit of God in cooperation with the human spirit, tends to form me as another Jesus Christ in the communion with the Church and with the Holy Family for the union with the Blessed Trinity.

46.

How does our cooperation begin?

Our cooperation starts with our commitment to know more completely our own goal, which is God. As the effect reveals its cause so all creatures reveal God. Since, from among all creatures, we are the only ones made in the image and likeness of God, nothing more than our own self and our heart can reveal the reality of God.

47.

What are the qualities of our human cooperation?

Our human cooperation must:

1. Consist in hating evil and in loving good;
2. Tend always to "more" in quantity and to "better" in quality;
3. Know and use all things only in their practicality, ordaining them toward the immediate goal to be achieved, and direct this immediate goal toward the ultimate goal, in which we may rest.

48.

What are the pitfalls to be avoided?

You must be careful, not to stop before the inconvenience, without considering the essence of the subject; not to be content with a part without reaching the whole. You must make sure not to be happy with the satisfaction of the intellect in theory, without

also conquering the satisfaction of the will in the practical reality of things; in other words, we cannot divide what God has joined together.

Examination of Conscience and Prayer

49.

Lord, show me my ultimate goal so that I may understand what is still missing to its total achievement. Lord, let me see the impending end of my life on earth, so that I may hasten to achieve what is missing to the full realization of the purpose of my life.

50.

I believe that you, my Lord, are my ultimate goal, just as you are my beginning and the center of my being. You are the principle, the center and the end of all creatures, of all souls, of every life. I do not possess the fullness of faith; grant it to me, Lord, so that it may be alive and operating in me.

51.

Even though I keep saying that I want to do everything for the greater glory of your love, often I discover that I say this only after having wondered through so many other motivations, after having done things for other purposes.

52.

My intention cannot be what has been formulated after having made my decisions, what I have recited after my actions. The goal of doing everything for your glory is not a short prayer. Doing so I become fatigued without any profit for my soul.

53.

This ultimate goal of mine is so sublime that it has taken you, Blessed Trinity, moved you out of your own self, in order to reverse yourself unto others. Oh! How my ultimate goal should take me out of my own self and carry me - out of my own self - into you!

54.

This ultimate goal is in itself such a sublime good, that you yourself, my Lord Jesus, have wanted to conquer it; you have worked and fought for it, and once you have achieved it, you have rested in it. Oh! How much more should I do to achieve it!

55.

I feel an attraction toward what is beautiful, great and sweet. I would be totally conquered by my ultimate goal, if only I could see it in all its greatness, beauty and sweetness; I would not be any more able to rest without first achieving its total possession.

56.

I beg you, Lord, grant me my ultimate goal in all its greatness, beauty and sweetness. Expand ever more my mind in order to understand it. Expand ever more my heart so that I may love it; expand ever more my life so that I may possess it. Show me my goal!

57.

You show me the whole universe, the entire humanity. You call me to live ever more my communion with the Church and the Holy Family, yet that is not my ultimate goal! O my God, lead me to the possession of my ultimate goal in your eternal Sabbath!

58.

O my Trinity, o my God and my all, your will be done, your love reign, your glory shine in me and in everyone, always more as in yourself, o Father, Son and Holy Spirit, o my God and my all!

Formulas

59.

The universe and the humanity is the sky of God's glory. The Catholic Church and the Holy Family is the holy of holies of God's glory.

60.

The microcosm of the universe shines before us as a star, living in our humanity with its nature, and in the divinity with God's grace; it shines and ascends to the heavens.

61.

You were born in the Catholic Church, you grow within the Holy Family and in their communion and you prepare yourself to the relationship of union with the Blessed Trinity, your orbit and your sphere.

CHAPTER II

Formation of the Spouse

62.

It is not good for man to be alone (Gn 2, 18) said the Lord about Adam, the first man, and about every individual human being represented by the first man. It was not good for Adam, because he could not fully enjoy the happiness in the terrestrial paradise, without another life, another person and another heart with whom could have shared his happiness.

It was not good because it was not adequate for the glory he had to render to God, because he was not a perfect image and likeness of God who is not alone but in three persons. It was not good, because alone he could not perpetuate on earth the family of those who worship and glorify our good Lord. It was not good, because God wanted to grant him the glory of cooperating with him in the work of creation through procreation.

Since Adam, from among all living beings that surrounded him, could not find a suitable partner, God said: *I shall make him a helper* (Gn. 2, 18). So the first woman was created. When she was presented to Adam, he exclaimed: *This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh! She is to be called woman, because she was taken from man. This is why a man leaves his mother and his father and becomes attached to his wife, and they become one flesh* (Gn 2, 23-24). Thus the first two human beings were created one for the other

and both for the glory of God. As spouses they had the object of their complacency in the other, and the common objective of growing. As spouses they found their union the sum of all other relationships and the full exercise of all their faculties.

As spouses they had no other desire from among all created goods; one gloried in the other; one rested in the other; and from then on both were, and enjoyed, one life in one operation, directed to the formation of other people, who would carry on their ministry of God's glory on earth.

Final Relationship

63.

With the creation of the woman, the Lord completed the creation of the visible world. He led man to the relationship of spouse and settled him in the state of the nuptial relationship; after that the Lord entered the Sabbath of his eternal rest.

Since then, every child that comes into this world, notwithstanding the charm and beauty of childhood, does not want to remain a child, but hastens to become an adolescent. Notwithstanding all the charm and beauty of adolescence, the teenager does not want to remain a teenager, but hastens to become a young adult. And then, notwithstanding all the charm and beauty of the springtime of his life, the young adult is not satisfied with the flowers of spring; he longs for the fruit and makes the transition into full virility.

The charm and beauty of every age, in the life of man, consists precisely in this progressive blooming of childhood into teenager, into youth, into adulthood, in the perfect virility. Likewise and simultaneously, a man is born as a son, but notwithstanding all the

sweetness of the filial relationship, he does not want to be only a son, and he is not satisfied with the sole native family. He tends to develop other relationships, as friend, with an ever-growing number of people, and so he forms a larger family, and - at times it seems - a more sweet family of election. Notwithstanding all the sweetness of friendship, or better, because he is totally taken by the sweetness of friendship, he does not want to be only a friend, and he is no longer satisfied with the larger family of election, but he tends to the relationship of spouse with the person that seems to embody the ideal and the synthesis of all the goodness that humanity may offer. With this person, more friend than all other friends, he forms the family of his heart, where he can finally rest for all his life, in the sweet and strong exercise of the dominion of his conquering love.

Soul Spouse

64.

In every situation, we may receive great light from the principle that: *Nature symbolizes grace, and that grace does not destroy nature but elevates it; and natural life gives us an idea of supernatural life.* If we remain healthy and full of fervor, even in our spiritual life we pass from spiritual childhood to adolescence, youth and full virility. The soul is not satisfied with only filial relationship but perfects this filial relationship with that of friendship and finally crowns it with the marital relationship.

Since we are made in the image and likeness of God, we are given license to think that God is not satisfied to possess the soul he loves infinitely with only any relationship. Since God, through grace, has elevated your soul from the simple relationship of subject and servant to the filial relationship, so he wants to elevate you ever more to himself in the relationship of friendship. If you

respond as God desires, he will then unite you to himself as a spouse.

We dare to think of God what he said of us: *It is not good for God to be alone. Let him have a suitable partner.* God, in himself, has never been alone, and he is always infinitely self sufficient, since in God there is always the unity of nature and the trinity of persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Outside of God there is no one like him. Outside of God, who is everything, there is nothing! As God is not alone in himself, so he does not want to remain alone outside of himself.

God does not want to be alone

65.

It is not right for God to be alone. Let him have a helper like himself. As ad intra (in himself), God is not alone, so ad extra (outside of himself) does not want to be alone. Oh! The poverty of our expressions! Oh! Insufficiency of our ideas! From nothingness God created innumerable worlds and populated them with so many beings.

All creatures were called to pass before the Lord as in a parade. At the sound of the divine word the stars spread their light, in their respective stations. Once they were called, they answered: *Here we are*, joyfully shining for him who had created them. Yet, in the skies was not shining the one that was going to be *the star of the heart of God*. From among all lifeless and living creatures, God could not find one that was like him. Then he said: *Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves* (Gn 1: 26). And man was created in the image and likeness of God.

As God has all created goodness in himself, so man is the syn-

thesis of all created goodness. As all other creatures were primarily created for man, so man was created primarily for God. As Eve was formed from the rib of Adam, so the soul was formed from the heart of the Spirit of God. How we love to see, listen and feel in the very words of the creation of the soul *inspiravit spiraculum vitae - breathed the breath of life* (Gn 2:7), almost as an echo or reflection of the eternal *spiration* of the Holy Spirit!

We consider the soul as the image and likeness of God in the third divine person, the substantial love of the Father and of the Son, because the soul is destined to be the love of the Trinity! As Eve, formed to be the helper of her suitable partner, was presented and given to Adam as his spouse, so the soul is presented and offered to God as his suitable helper and as his spouse in the supernatural order.

The work of creation was only completed with the creation of the woman and the nuptial state of man in his spousal relationship. The work of our sanctification, to be totally completed and rest in the eternal Sabbath of Paradise, must form the soul spouse of God and establish her in this divine union.

Infinite Bounty

66.

It was not good for God to remain alone; not even *ad extra*, since he is infinite bounty. Since this divine infinite bounty is essentially diffusive, it necessarily wants and needs a receiver. These infinite, divine effusions of the bounty, that is God himself, go eternally and adequately from one person of the Trinity to the other, in the divine unity. Because they are infinite effusions of the infinite bounty, they did not want to be contained - so to speak - *within the limitless boundaries of the unlimited Trinity*, they

poured themselves out in their infinite overabundance, outside of the divinity. It was as if the all had found in the *nothingness* the capacity of receiving him. It was as if *the all* had fallen in love with nothingness, as if the all were to marry the *nothingness*. Doing so he gave an existence to nothingness, an existence that by nature had to be limited and yet capable of receiving successively and indefinitely the effusions of the love of God.

As a consequence of the effusion of the *All*, the nothingness kept becoming an ever better and more alive image of the *All*... As the nothingness kept receiving and assimilating the *All*, the more and more it grew. In the natural state we have the divine bounty revealed in the creation of the soul, made in the image and likeness of God. In the supernatural state the divine bounty communicates itself in the elevation of the soul, made in the likeness of God.

Creation and elevation of the soul took place simultaneously, as a sign of the loving impetuosity of the effusions of the bounty of God in this creature of his, in his image and likeness. In this nothingness that has become a living and personal being through the omnipotence and wisdom of the divine bounty; in this nothingness that has become a living and personal being that is total, essential dependency from the *All*, that is God; in this nothingness that has been wanted and loved specifically for its passive capacity of receiving the effusions of love, we see the progressive formation of the spouse of the one and triune God, the soul in the divine attractions, toward the divine union.

For his glory

67.

It was not good for God to remain alone, not even *ad extra*.

Good for God is the glory of God. Glory of God is his own being made of infinite perfections, his own divine truth, thus only God is the glory of God! Only the Son is the glory of the Father, and only the Father is the glory of the Son! Only the Holy Spirit is the glory of the Father and of the Son, and only the Father and the Son are the glory of the Holy Spirit. Internal, essential glory *ad intra*! Even the external glory *ad extra* is good for God, not an essential, necessary good, but still good. This good would not have existed if God had remained alone. The creatures came into being as an external irradiation of the internal, divine glory. The soul became the masterpiece of all creation.

The soul had to be the glory of God in two possible ways. First, by manifesting in herself the divine perfections of the divine nature, as the effect that reveals the greatness of its first cause. The more the soul is united with God the more she reveals him as the first cause; grace united the soul to God with the most intimate union and became one with the divine nature, as the word becomes one with the thought and with the truth, that is the glory of the divine nature, the unity of God. Second, the soul must be the glory of God to render to him the praise that comes from the knowledge and love, as created echo of the uncreated Word of the Father and of the uncreated Spirit of the Father and of the Son. Since the soul would be able to know, praise and love him only proportionately to her intimate, personal relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, through grace the soul is espoused to the divine charity, which is all the glory of the divine persons, the Trinity of God.

For both forms of glory the soul had to be an image and likeness of God, capable of becoming ever more such, in order to be able to glorify him ever more, while remaining true that it will never be able to glorify him enough. So we have the spouse relationship that better reveals, not only the divine perfections for the highest possible likeness that it implies, but also - in an ever

higher and more ardent way - praises and sings the divine perfections, because it is the most sublime union of love.

Because he is love

68.

It was not good for God to be alone, not even **ad extra**, since he is love and he graciously reveals himself as if he needed the creatures to find the loved one and the lover, the object of his love and the one who would respond to his love! He is all love in his nature: His will is all love, and love is all his glory! He is all love in his persons, since each one of the three divine persons is but a relationship of love as contained in the very name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit! This divine Trinity reveals to us that only God is the love of God. Only the Son is all the love of the Father, and only the Father is all the love of the Son, and only the Holy Spirit is all the love of the Father and of the Son, as only the Father and the Son are all the love of the Holy Spirit! We see this in that eternal act of love that is the generation of the Word from the unique principle, the Father, by way of intellect and knowledge. We see it also in that eternal act of love that is the **spiration** of the Holy Spirit, from the unique principle Father and Son by way of will and love.

The same love lives in the eternal act of love that is the creation and elevation of the souls, in time, from the unique principle: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Out of love, they made the soul as their own living and personal image and likeness, and out of love they elevated, attracted and united the soul to themselves in a totally free relationship as image, likeness and halo of the necessary divine relationships.

As the Father is the only principle of the Son, and as Father and

Son are the only principle of the Holy Spirit, so, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit together are the unique principle of other beings, capable of revealing how only God is the love of God, since they are nothing but the image and likeness of God. At the same time the divine, necessary relationships of love are crowned with the only other possible and free relationship of love that is that of spouse of the soul-spouse.

Gift of God to God

69.

Wishing to go further, with every possible reverence and adoration, according to our way of understanding and of expression, we imagine the following procedure. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, on account of the infinite love that one person has for the other, or better, on account of the infinite love that one person is for the other, (as if it were not enough to give all one's own self to the other), want to give each other a gift that would be worthy of them, that would express what the giver himself is, and what the receiver esteems, appreciates and holds most dear. Outside of God there can be nothing better than the image of God.

Each divine person, besides the other divine persons, has nothing to esteem and love more than their image. It is as if the Father were saying: *I do not hold anything dear other than the Son, and outside of him, I only love his image.* Likewise, for the Son there is nothing that he loves more than the Father, and outside of the Father he only loves the image of the Father. Then, one divine person makes of this image and likeness a gift to the other. Since each divine person loves the other, each one holds dear the created soul, attracts and unites her to himself with such intimacy that can be pallidly expressed only with the name and idea of the nuptial union. So, for example, the Son of God, to manifest how

much he loves that image, makes it his own, his very person. The Father is very pleased with this and he wants it, the Holy Spirit is pleased with it, cooperates with it and he realizes it; thus the Son of God becomes man, body and soul like us! He becomes image and likeness of God, he who is the substantial, uncreated image of God, generated by the Father. Since the Son of God finds these divine images and likenesses desecrated, made ugly, sold out, he wants to re-conquer, re-consecrate and re-make them precious again, and finally espouses them to himself in his blood! All this is not any less work of the Father and of the Holy Spirit than it is of the Son. It is the Father who sends Jesus. The Holy Spirit forms him, directs him and finally offers him with a special, totally divine cooperation.

Sacrifice of God to God

70.

According to our own poor way of understanding and expressing, we see things this way: The divine persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, want to offer one another a sacrifice fitting the unique and true divinity, which is their divinity. Even in this, only God is worthy of God, as always, as in everything. God cannot be sacrificed to God in his unique nature, and so another nature that would be like a substitute for God was needed, so that it could be offered from God to God, and while remaining unchanged, could be offered by God in honor of God according to the nature and exigency of sacrifice. There is nothing more qualified to substitute for God than his very image and likeness. The soul was created and at the same time was offered to God, and was transformed in honor of God. The soul is not changed with death, because the very idea of death is infinitely away from God. The soul is changed with her elevation to a supernatural state.

Creation is like the offertory; the elevation to the supernatural is like the immolation. The relationship of spouse of God is the communion of this sacrifice that each divine person offers to the other. God himself becomes man in the second person. The Son, Jesus Christ wants to be in his and our human nature all offertory, immolation and communion, all a sacrifice. The destiny and the life, the act and state of the bridegroom and of the bride is, and must be, one; as one is the principle of their relation and union - love. Love is like the priest that offers, sacrifices and binds one to the other, the two terms of the nuptial relationship; *Amor sacerdos immolat - the love priest offers the sacrifice.*

This nuptial relationship with all its effects, with all its consummation - literally taken - is the most true and the most beautiful, the most complete and worthy idea of the sacrifice. Vice versa, the sacrifice in its highest cause and in its highest condition, which is love, gives us the most truthful, the most beautiful, the most complete and worthy idea of the soul-spouse.

Grace is the union

71.

According to our poor way of understanding and expressing ourselves things went this way and they are so. In creating his masterpiece of the universe, that is, the soul, eternally envisioned and present in the mind and in the love of the Lord God, as a ray of his bounty and glory, as his own image and likeness, as a gift and sacrifice worthy of him, as another him, the love of God was so pleased with her that immediately, he attracted and elevated her to himself. God embraced and kissed her forever, and in the most truthful way he espoused her to himself, united her to his own divine nature, sharing his very nature with her as a supernatural gift.

The first effusion of grace in the soul, through which the soul from subject and servant was immediately elevated to the condition and relationship of daughter and friend, was in reality also the first, radical and essential betrothal of the soul with the Lord. It was the dawn and the sunrise of that supernatural nuptial relationship that needs to be ever more enkindled in the light and warmth of love, until it becomes a perfect midday in the blue sky.

True love (and which love is more real than the infinite love?) never says *enough* until it reaches the ultimate, highest possible level of union, in the full possession and enjoyment of the loved one. The Lord is not satisfied, nor is satisfied the soul in any level of grace as long as there is the possibility to reach a higher level.

The spirit of love leads them to that union, possession and enjoyment expressed by the Sacred Heart *ut sint consummati in unum- so that they may really be one!* I wouldn't know what these words mean, if they do not mean the supreme relationship of the soul-spouse of God. To this soul the Lord entrusts such missions that find their proper reason only in the relationship of spouse. As a king to his sweet queen, the Lord entrusts to her the domain of the world and the governance of the family. The Lord grants and commands that this soul cooperate, through a spiritual motherhood, to the conversion and sanctification of souls, which is a true generation, education and condition of the children of God, Father of the souls, bridegroom of the Church.

The soul-spouse in the Scriptures

72.

In the natural world, both in the inferior creatures, that only carry a pallid idea of God, and in the superior creatures, made

in the image and likeness of God, everywhere there are signs of the unity and Trinity of God, as well as signs of infinite power and wisdom, and of the divine bounty. Likewise in the whole supernatural world, everywhere is revealed that God wants to be the spouse of the souls. Marital relationship is that of God with the chosen people in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, marital relationship is that of the Lord God, Jesus Christ with his Church, the kingdom of heaven. Because of this marital relationship every sin is labeled as adultery, in the flaming language of love of the Scripture of the God who reveals and calls himself a jealous God, proper of the jealousy of the divine spouse, because he is infinite love.

If what is said of humanity in general applies to each individual in particular, and if what is said of the people of God - Synagogue or Catholic Church - applies to every soul and especially to every elect, much more must be applied to every soul all that concerns every true relationship, whose objective cannot be the community but the person, as the filial relationship, as the marital relationship.

These relationships must be taken in a metaphoric sense when they refer to the community and in a real sense when they refer to the individual. This on account of that reality, that is the infinite love of God, and on account of that supernatural reality that is grace, union with the divine nature, in force of which we are not only called *children of God*, but we are such in reality; likewise we not only can be called *spouses of God*, we can really be one. Because of this, all creatures are for us, ambassadors of love, places of encounters with the Lord and marital bed for the union with God! That is why, in the gospel, life is presented as the nuptial banquet of the souls with the Son. The whole mission of the ministers of God consists in inviting the souls to this banquet, even compelling them to show up, and embellishing them with the nuptial dress.

The soul-spouse in the Saints

73.

Among the saints, to stay just to their external life, or better at the surface of their exterior life, it seems that we find many of them who directed and channeled, and then rested in other types of relationship with God. Some developed the relationship of most faithful servant, others that of most valiant soldier, still others that of the most zealous minister in the various ministries of the divine glory and of the divine kingdom. This is what appears.

If, however, we consider, as saints, those who have practiced heroically the Christian virtues, it follows that every saint has practiced heroically the virtue of love for God and neighbor since charity is the queen and soul of all other virtues. We understand as heroism, the highest possible level of every virtue; in the case of charity we understand the highest level of intensity of acts, the highest level of intimacy of state and consequently the highest relationship of love. All this is not the absolute maximum in everything, because the creature cannot reach the absolute maximum in everything, but the maximum of which every creature is capable, and, accordingly, the supernatural mission entrusted to the same creature. In these acts, state and relationship the soul and the Lord have met, have been united and pleased to rest in their mutual love.

As marital relationship in general, we understand the most possible intimate union with God that a soul can and must achieve according to her calling and grace. The Lord wants to find every soul in the highest and most intimate possible relationship with him, at least at the end of her life on earth, so that he may establish her forever in heaven in that state. This relationship and this most intimate union must necessarily be somewhat different for each soul, as every individual is distinct from any other in-

dividual both in nature and in grace, and in physical and moral physiognomy. This difference may consist in details that seem meaningless to others, yet they are most important for the individuals and for their creator, since these details constitute their identifying difference or uniqueness. Every soul living within the Church enjoys the supernatural dignity of being spouse of Christ, and through Jesus, spouse of the Trinity. This relationship may be (and should be so explicitly) the program and ideal of our whole life, vocation and mission.

RECAPITULATION

74.

Through which relationship does the Lord want to unite our soul to him?

Through his grace, the Lord wants to render the soul worthy of him, as his beautiful image and likeness, in order to make her his mystical spouse. Once the soul reaches the perfection of the mystical, marital relationship, the soul and the Spirit of God will rest in each other.

75.

Why does God in his unity want the soul as his spouse?

The Lord God, in his unity, wants the soul as his spouse only for the effusions of his bounty, for the splendor of his glory, for the complacency of his love, which never stops halfway.

76.

Why does God Trinity want the soul as his spouse?

Each person of God Trinity wants to make a gift and sacrifice to the other; to this end each person of the Trinity deems opportune

to make his own image and likeness, and unite her to himself in such a way that the two would be one.

77.

How does the idea of Sacrifice fit in with this mystical marriage?

Nothing can represent God better than the soul that is his own image and likeness; thus, creation becomes like the offertory; the elevation to the supernatural becomes the immolation, and the mystical marriage becomes the communion of this sacrifice. All this happens simultaneously and in virtue of the very love that is the one and triune God.

78.

What are the principles that enlighten us in these things?

We are guided and helped by the principles that nature is a symbol of grace, and that grace does not destroy but elevates nature; the nature gives us an idea of the supernatural.

79.

What are the sources from which we get these ideas?

The sacred Scripture of the Old and New Testament is like the message of divine love and the marriage bed of the mystical nuptials of God with his people and his Church, with the sacred humanity of Jesus, with Mary and with every chosen soul.

80.

Is there a progression in this marital relationship?

Until death the soul may always progress, elevate and perfect herself in this relationship with her God, because grace is the marriage of the soul with God and until death the soul can ever

more grow in divine grace that the Lord so lavishly and variously showers on the soul.

EXAMINATION AND PRAYER

81.

You have created us for yourself, Lord; I believe it! For your goodness, for your glory, for your love; and to make of us your gift and your sacrifice to yourself!

82.

Because of this you have made us in your own image and likeness; you have elevated us to the consortium with your nature, to the union with your persons, in the relationship and state of your spouse.

83.

I was restless. Now my intellect finds peace only in this special vision of my ultimate goal; my will - at last - finds peace only in this special relationship with you.

84.

Only from this point of view do I understand all the value of life, all that you are and have done for me, all that you expect from me and all that you want me to be for you.

85.

How unworthy of the soul destined to be spouse of the great King, is any other relationship and occupation, which is not or-

dained to this goal and which tries to find and enjoy elsewhere her satisfaction. I want to be only in you, o my divine love!

86.

Neither a town, nor a metropolis, nor a capital city can satisfy the soul to whom the Lord entrusts the whole world of souls, being a real queen and his true spouse!

87.

Form in me, O Lord, this great mind and heart, this great life and work in this great state of this great relationship with you, O my God-Trinity, O my All!

88.

Somehow all things in their own way announce Jesus, the Son of God; they announce Mary, the Mother of God, the Church and chosen soul, spouse of God. You, Lord, remain the only creator of all things and all people.

89.

You are the only interior teacher, the only sanctifier, the only glorifier, as you are the only God. For the infinite love that you are, for the infinite love that you deserve, make me worthy of your divine complacency.

90.

O my Trinity, O my God, and my All, may your will be done, your love reign, your glory shine in me and in everyone always more as in your own self, O my Father, Son and Holy Spirit. O my God and my All.

CHAPTER III

Parables of the Kingdom

91.

With the use of many parables, our Lord Jesus wants to give us a complete idea of the kingdom of God on earth, i.e., of his Church in its militant condition. First he gives us the idea of the beginning of this kingdom in the simile of the seed and of the difficulties this seed has to overcome, especially on account of the weeds. Later it becomes a big shrub, capable of offering shelter for the birds. Later it places the whole earth in divine ferment, as the yeast - even in a very small quantity - does for the whole mass of dough. Then he talks about the esteem that it deserves on account of its value, with the simile of the exceptionally precious pearl and of the hidden treasure in the field. Still, with the image of the net and the catch he describes the elimination that is done at the end of all those who are not worthy of the kingdom.

He declares who are the greatest in the kingdom of God and how they reach that level. He continues talking about the work that must be done in this kingdom, and how all, and at every hour, are being called to do this work. As to conclude and crown these parables he presents the parable of the royal marriage feast, to which so many are invited, and the other of the ten virgins, destined to welcome the bridegroom. If this sequence of ideas in the teaching of the divine master is not completely vain or casual, it follows that the souls who have received, nurtured and

developed the divine seed of the kingdom, those who have sold everything to buy this pearl and obtain the hidden treasure, and who purified themselves of every unholy element, and that very early went to work in the vineyard; they are the ones who are later chosen for the reception of the bridegroom and are the first invited guests. These souls can and must enter, live and work in the environment of the nuptial banquet. These souls are - at least - *the friends of the groom* of which John the Baptist and Jesus talk about, and among these souls there will also be something much better.

Nuptial Epiphany

92.

In the Church there is a day that stands out on account of three wonders: The star leads the wise men to the manger; God, the Father reveals his Son in the baptism at the Jordan; the Son changes water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. In a well-formulated synthesis, going above the time span, the liturgy sings: *Today the Church is united to her celestial bridegroom, since Christ has made her all beauty in the washing at the Jordan. The wise men participate to this royal, nuptial banquet bringing their precious gifts, and they enjoy the wine of the miracle.* These are the three epiphanies that complete each other.

The epiphany is the revelation of Jesus, made by the Holy Spirit, the angels and the stars. The epiphany is the revelation of Jesus made by the Father through his voice and through the dove. The Epiphany that Jesus makes of himself with his first miracles; as it is written: *This was the first of Jesus' signs; it was at Cana in Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him (Jn 2:11).* This is when our Lord left behind the hidden life and started his public life.

He had formed his family of friends, the college of his apostles. As his first public appearance, as his first official act, preceded by his mother, he participates in a wedding feast. Responding to the intercession of his mother he embellishes, fulfills and glorifies the wedding feast with his first miracle. How all this reveals to us the divine friend of humankind, in his intention of establishing the relationship of spouse! More clearly and more evocatively he speaks of himself as the bridegroom in the gospel with the parable of the prudent and foolish virgins, and even more in the parable of the king who celebrates the wedding of his Son. *Simile est regnum coelorum homini regi qui fecit nuptias filio suo - The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding* (Mt 22, 2).

Our Kingdom of Heaven

93.

The Gospel expression *Kingdom of heaven* usually refers to the holy militant Church on earth; with good reasons and with spiritual profit we may refer the expression *kingdom of heaven* to that part of Christianity in which we have been called to life, to faith and to holiness. So, kingdom of God within the Church is our diocese, even closer, our parish and our religious family. There are so many other spheres of this heaven, or better, the kingdom of heaven considered from our point of view and from our own side. What a sublime concept of our world and of our life within the Catholic Church! The Kingdom of heaven! The kingdom of heaven that was already ours by divine disposition and by divine inheritance, but lost on account of our sins and precluded by adversary powers, now must be conquered by violence. Once we conquer it by violence, we can possess it in peace and joy, as a great wedding banquet.

If the Church is the kingdom of heaven, the children of the

Church are the children and princes of the kingdom, who should not be surprised by their destination to form the personal glory and joy of the great King and of his Son. The children and princes of the kingdom have been created, not to serve but to reign, with the great King; not to serve but to please their Lord and their God; or, if you so wish, to serve yes, but in this sense and in these ways: Reigning with God and pleasing their Lord in the most intimate and most high relationship of love.

The Person of the Bride and Groom

94.

The kingdom of heaven then, i.e., the holy militant Church, and consequently our life and every soul, pilgrim in time and space, is the great feast and wedding banquet prepared by the great King for the marriage of his Son to which every soul is invited and compelled to attend. The bride and groom, for whom the celebration takes place and to whom the banquet is offered are the first invited guests. All the other invited guests with their presence do honor them. It is clear that the bridegroom is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. The great King is God the Father himself.

(When talking about the divine works *ad extra*, in Jesus we must always see and consider the other divine persons. Jesus is the immediate term of this relationship of spouse, but Jesus as mediator, and supreme revelation and communication of the divine Trinity). Who is that wonderful creature that is so favored by the Trinity, to be desired as his spouse?

There is no clear mention of the bride, on account of a sweet and great quality of the wisdom of the Word. In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins who are supposed to solemnly welcome

the bride and groom there is no mention of the chosen bride of the Son of God. Why? Maybe to adorn this name and this person with silence, which was very appropriately, called the pomp of holiness? No. Through that sweet and serious way of proceeding of the wisdom of the Word, and through that silence the Spirit of love wants to lead every soul to understand this one thing. This is so glorious and so delightful, but also so mysterious, that while it is addressed to every soul, only a few really understand it. May the Lord grant us the grace to be among those who understand it.

Jesus and Humility

95.

Some say (with a lot of truthfulness and justice!) that the wedding feast in question celebrates the marriage of the Son of God with human nature in the mystery of the incarnation that took place through the work of the Holy Spirit in the ever Virgin Mary, true mother of God. Of all the human happenings no one could give a less inadequate or more proper idea of the union of the divine nature with the human nature in the person of the incarnate Word than the marriage bond that unites two human individuals in one juridical personality - the family - and the two persons will be no longer two but one flesh. As the assumption of the human nature by the incarnate Word constitutes his marriage with humankind, so the sharing of the divine nature to the soul through grace constitutes the marriage of the soul with the divinity. A marriage is celebrated not between two natures in one person, but between two persons of the same nature, in order to form a unique principle of operation.

The Son of God takes human nature to celebrate his wedding with the creature, chosen to be his spouse. The creature in turn must assume the divine nature, participated to her through grace.

So we consider the incarnation also the immediate preparation of the bridegroom, and as the meritorious exemplar of the immediate preparation of the bride. In a certain sense, even if not completely correct, we can say that God has espoused human nature and, through it, all living persons while they are still in human nature and live according to the way of God.

Meanwhile we move forward to the discovery of that human person that God wants to espouse to himself in a stricter and more appropriate sense; even though we can hardly see it, this remains the highest spiritual reality.

Jesus and the Holy Church

96.

Some say (and with a lot of truth and justice) that the wedding feast in question celebrates the marriage of Jesus with the Holy Catholic Church, mostly because St. Paul points out the love of Jesus for his Church as the type of love that a man owes to his spouse, in the great sacrament of marriage. This same marriage has been elevated by Jesus to be the symbol of his love and his union with the Holy Catholic Church. Talking more accurately, Jesus is the divine head of the mystical body of humankind, of the Holy Catholic Church, which has followed him, and has been so intimately united to him to form his mystical body. Jesus breathes life into his mystical body, and communicates to it all his value, all his merits and all his work.

As head of humanity and of the Church, Jesus calls himself the bridegroom, as the husband is the moral, juridical head of the woman, his wife, who has followed him and has united herself to him forever. If we want to insist on the name and reality of spouse, we can see humanity in general and the Holy Catholic Church in

particular as the spouse of the Son of God, as being the genus and the species relative to the beings that live in the Church.

The bride cannot be a moral entity, the community, the abstraction, the species, but, as the groom, the Son of God is a specific, distinct and real person; likewise the other term of this relationship, the bride, must be a particular, distinct and real person. Therefore the Holy Catholic Church is the big family of the great King in which are found the nobility and richness needed by the soul chosen to be the spouse and queen of the Son of the great King.

The *Church* provides for us the best image of the human term of this great relationship that we envision.

Jesus and Mary, most holy

97.

Could we say with the same justice and truthfulness that the wedding in question celebrates the marriage of the Son of God with the soul of the immaculate Virgin Mary? The relationship totally proper of the Blessed Mother is the motherhood of the Son of God, in his human nature. Even though the motherly relationship is so ineffably beautiful and sweet, intimate and sublime, it should not be confused with the marital relationship. The soul of the Virgin Mary was totally elevated, fulfilled, absorbed in the relationship and function of mother of Jesus; any other relationship as servant and disciple, daughter and spouse with each and every one of her acts and states received meaning and value from the divine motherhood.

How we enjoy visualizing Mary at the side of the great King, at the side of God the Father, as queen and mother totally intent in preparing and solemnizing the wedding feast of her Son. We

would love to be able to see the divine bridegroom in the glory of that special diadem, with which his mother crowned him on the day of his betrothal, in exchange of the crown of twelve stars, with which he had first crowned his mother.

We would love to know the part and role of the queen and mother of the Son; this bride is destined to become queen and mother of a great multitude of souls, rather than of one family. We can admit that in the depth of a human heart searching a bride, there is like an instinct that guides us to choose and somehow, to some extent, produce the resemblance and virtues of his mother in the bride. Certainly the Son of God is so pleased with his mother that he wants to find her virtues in the soul chosen to be the joy of his life. Mary herself is naturally charged with the duty of forming such a soul, according to her own regal and motherly type, so that she may please Jesus.

The Man, son of God

98.

Fecit nuptias filio suo. - Gave a feast for his son's wedding (Mt 22:2). Listening to this talk about the wedding feast offered by God for his Son, and meditating on this expression, our thought goes to man. Man is indeed son of God by grace. The divine Shepherd who has created man and elevated him to the supernatural state, wants to lead him to the fullest development of the life of grace, as it is expressed and envisioned in the nuptial state and acts. In natural life, God has disposed that the creature, as animated body, may be united to another creature in the nuptial state and acts, for the purpose of procreating children, which are the greatest good in the natural order, both for the individual and for the species. In the life of the spirit, considering man as soul, in vain would he try to find among those like him, one with whom he could be united totally; one with whom he could blend himself in one form of life.

The Lord does not allow one soul to belong totally to another soul. There can never be a marriage between two souls. Not even the very intimate and sweet relationship of the soul with her guardian angel, who was assigned totally to her and forever, so much so that everyone can say *my angel* with much more truth than a woman can say *my man*. From the beginning of the world, and of time, what has been happening to the soul is what has been written that will happen to man after the resurrection of the body. *The children of this world take husbands and wives, but those who are judged worthy of a place in the other world and in the resurrection from the dead do not marry because they can no longer die, for they are the same as the angels, and being children of the resurrection they are children of God (Lk 20,34-36). At the resurrection men and women do not marry; no, they are like the angels in heaven (Mt 22, 30).* The marriage that the soul desires, longs for and is immensely capable of, cannot take place with another soul, with an angel, or any other creature. The soul can celebrate this marriage only with God, who wants to be absolutely our All, and that is why he became a man.

Jesus, Son of Man

99.

What keeps us from seeing in this man-king, the only man who has each and every right to be the supreme king, Jesus himself? Then, even more clearly, we can see the human soul, spouse of her God in that beloved Son whose wedding feast is celebrated by the man-king. As the God-man, in his role as Father, celebrates a feast and banquet of love for the sinner who repents, comes back home and becomes again his son, so this God-man in his role as king celebrates a greater feast and banquet of love for the faithful son who elevates himself to higher union with him. God elevates him from the supernatural filial relationship to the supernatural marital relationship.

It seems convenient and appropriate to see in this divine relationship the “hundredfold” that Jesus promises even in this life to the one who abandons wealth, father, mother and even wife and children for his sake! Jesus seems to refer to this marital relationship when he says: *Anyone who comes to me without hating father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, cannot be my disciple* (Lk 14, 26). Trailing the thought of the first Adam at the sight of his wife: *A man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife* (Gn 2:25), Jesus, the new Adam, does not demand less affection and lesser consequences from his elect.

From among all those who were following him, Jesus chose seventy-two disciples with a higher calling, and then with an even higher election chose the twelve apostles and constituted them as his family. He wants his disciples to share his joy: Surely the bridegroom’s attendants cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is still with them. Then, with still higher predilection he chose the three he loved the most and finally the beloved disciple whom he loved the most and united him to himself. *Qui supra pectus eius in caena recubuit - The one who had leaned back close to his chest at the supper* (Jn 21:20). This external, particular act of intimacy says something also about a special, internal state! The beloved disciple has obtained his *hundredfold* also in the present life. If for the sake of Jesus he has left nets, boat, father and mother, he has found the heart of every fatherhood and motherhood. If for the sake of Jesus he has renounced a marital relationship among the creatures, he has found it in his God. Oh! How blessed is he!

What is needed on both parties

100.

In general it can be said, and it is true, that every soul in grace may be considered as elected to the relationship of spouse of God

and sharer of this relationship with humankind and the Church. The simple state of grace, however, at any - even minimum - level, is not enough to constitute a soul-spouse in a stricter and proper sense.

Baptism is sufficient for a Christian to share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, however, in order for a man to be ordained to the ministerial priesthood and be constituted in the extraordinary status of Christian-priest, (that is so much higher than the ordinary status of the lay-Christian), a special vocation from God, and a special consecration from the Church is needed. Likewise the state of grace is enough for the soul to participate in the marital relationship of humankind and of the Church with Jesus Christ, but for a personal relationship of spouse, a special vocation is needed on the part of God and a special consecration on the part of the soul.

The bond of universal brotherhood in humanity and in the Church is enough to give the individuals the duty and the right to love our neighbor, called precisely brotherly love, but in order to have the duty and the right of a more intense love, as the love of a father or spouse toward the specific family members, a special, more intimate bond is needed. Likewise the common elevation to the supernatural state is enough to enable us to know and to love God as a father with filial love, but to know and love him as a spouse a greater elevation in grace is needed, a *special supernatural* or what could be called the *nuptial supernatural*.

Different levels in the supernatural

101.

In our unique human nature we have different states, constituted by different relationships, so it is also with grace, our super-

nature. Grace is essentially participation and imitation of divine nature. So, even in grace we have different states, constituted by different relationships that come to be image and likeness of the divine relationships, in the same divine nature. Based on the pattern of the divine relationships, in the supernatural order, we may distinguish the *filial supernatural* and the *marital supernatural*. It is impossible to have a fatherly relationship with God the Father, absolutely the first principle. Strictly speaking we are not granted to have the fatherly relationship with the souls, neither in the natural nor in the supernatural order.

It is written: *You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven* (Mt 23, 9). In the human nature assumed by the incarnate Word, there is a sovereign soul, a truly privileged person who is truly mother of God. Jesus, Son in the divinity and in humanity, graciously extends to his elect the motherly relationship of Mary and his filial love for Mary. This happens when he sees them cooperating with the Holy Spirit and with Mary, in giving him a new existence in the souls. Likewise, he extends the motherly relationship to his chosen ones, when he sees them as being really one with his Father. It is written: *Anyone who does the will of my Father, that person is my brother and sister and mother*. The true mother, however, is only one and that cannot be communicated to others.

It remains then the *filial supernatural* and the *nuptial supernatural*. The filial supernatural is necessary for eternal life and all are elevated to it by the divine bounty, but to be constituted and perfected in it, all must cooperate. The marital supernatural is absolutely free, as it depends completely on the free acceptance of the message of the divine love by the soul, not any less than by the election-vocation of the divine love.

Marital Supernatural

102.

It seems to us that with this expression *marital supernatural* we may call the state, acts and works of the highest union and of the purest love between the soul and the Lord. It is not useless to try to see in the soul and in its powers the image and likeness of God, both as unity of nature and as Trinity of persons, since God created the soul to be and to become ever more his image and likeness. We discover that the soul, in her indivisible unity of person, gives us the image of the unity of God's nature; and, in her life, is the image of the Father, eternal principle of life. With her thought she is image of the Word of God; with her love she is image of the Holy Spirit. We conclude that the soul in the marital relationship is espoused to the Holy Spirit with her love, to the Word with the thought, and to the Father with her life. In each person the human nature is espoused to the divine nature that the soul shares through grace in the likeness of Jesus. The difference is that Jesus, in the unique divine person of the Word, possesses the whole human nature and the whole divine nature, the soul has only a participation of the divine nature.

This participation may always grow, but it remains always only partial participation, since the soul can never possess the whole, which cannot be communicated *ad extra* of the divine persons. In this consummated height and intimacy of union we reach, or better, we are assumed into the highest supernatural state, since the relationship of spouse is the farthest thing from any force or exigency of the human nature. It is the most elevated participation of the divine nature and divine life. It is the level of indwelling of the Trinity in the soul that is more like the *Circumincession* of each of the divine persons in the other. It is the principle of the highest activity of cooperation of the soul to the redemption and sanctification of our neighbor.

RECAPITULATION

103.

What idea of life gives us the Gospel?

According to the Gospel our present life on the part of the great King is like a big celebration and wedding banquet, to which he invites us; many participate in it, but few are chosen.

104.

For what bridegroom and bride is this wedding feast offered?

The bridegroom is the Son of God in human nature, the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, but in him we see the whole Blessed Trinity, as we do in all the works of God ad extra.

105.

Who is the bride?

The bride in general terms is all mankind to whom God united himself in the incarnation of the Word. In a more specific way it is the Holy Catholic Church, founded by Jesus Christ and ennobled by his blood, so that she might be all holy and worthy to be united to her head.

106.

Who can be considered bride in a stricter sense?

In a stricter and more proper sense, true spouse of God is every soul in the state of grace, with which she accumulates in herself the perfection of humanity and of the Church, and consequently is also the term of this marital relationship with God.

107.

Is any level of grace enough for this relationship?

Any level of grace is sufficient to constitute us in the friendship of God; but in order to reach this relationship of spouse, which is the supreme friendship with God, one must reach the highest possible level of grace, which must be exercised to the utmost.

108.

What happens in this supreme level of grace?

What happens initially with the lowest level of grace, happens perfectly and in the most consummate manner in the highest level of grace, that is the marriage and the union of the soul with God in the supernatural, which may be called *marital supernatural*.

109.

What kinds of union can we distinguish in the divine union?

The person of the soul-spouse, receiving through grace participation in the divine nature, is disposed to the divine persons, living in that unique, divine nature and so, in her life is united to the Father, in her intellect to the Word, in her will to the Spirit; these, however, are not three unions but one divine union.

EXAMINATION AND PRAYER

110.

O my God and my All, split the darkness of all passions, illusions and temptations of the world, which try to keep me in idleness, in the cold of death, and grant that I may enter in the real life of your kingdom, of which you give us such a great, beautiful and sweet idea in the divine gospel.

111.

The illusions, passions and worldly appetites could not destroy

the great wedding banquet, which is your kingdom, yet they have altered its idea in the mind and in the heart, and have turned our attention to other celebrations, to other banquets, all false and illicit as of sterile hybridism.

112.

All these are false and illicit because our intellect was made and given to us only to unite itself to you, divine Word. Our will was made and given to us only to be united to you, Holy Spirit. Life was made and given to us only to unite us to you, God Father, in marriage of supreme union. The soul cannot have any other marriage!

113.

That explains why there is so much emptiness in our life; so much unhappiness in our hearts; so many shadows in our minds, so many errors in our behavior, so much sterility in our actions and such dryness in our prayers. I could not find my place in life, nor did I know myself in life, since I was not able to find you nor did I know you.

114.

We cannot find, nor know well one term of a relationship, without knowing the other. Nor can one term of the relationship live well or prosper without the other with whom it should be united. This is the situation of our soul, when on account of our faults, she does not find and does not know her spouse.

115.

While for you, my Lord, the human soul, *my soul*, is but the term of a totally free relationship on your part, yet you graciously

show an infinite desire for her. Send constantly your messengers to look for her, to invite her, to compel her to come, since everything is ready on your part for the union.

116.

While my soul has in you the necessary term of a relationship essentially necessary for her, she does not make great progress, because she does not want to understand, or gets excited about other objects or other goods. Finally, my soul has come, but nothing is ready or well prepared in her!

117.

Blessed be eternally the one who has found favor in your presence, Lord God, Spouse-God! Blessed be the one whom you have chosen, called and assumed to the highest levels of this relationship; you will make him dwell in your tent, lean on your chest and reign in your heart, O Spouse-God!

118.

Blessed be you eternally because your predilections are the result of your free elections, of our dispositions and preparations. It is up to me now to correspond to this divine grace and apply myself to respond in the most perfect way to this invitation, which I have received, to this banquet that is offered and prepared for me.

119.

O my God and my All! O my Father, Son and Holy Spirit! May your will be done, your love reign, your glory shine in me and in everyone, always more, as in yourself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. O my God and my All!

Amen! Alleluia!

PART III

ASCETICAL GUIDELINES
FOR HOLY HUMILITY

HOLY HUMILITY

CHAPTER I

Idea of humility

120.

Lord God, you reject the proud and grant your grace to the humble, grant us the virtue of true humility of which Jesus Christ offered himself as the true model, as the perfect exemplar to all his faithful. ... May the divine sacrifice that we offer you obtain for us the grace of true humility.

121.

Holy mother Church makes us pray thus, insisting in exalting and imploring not any humility, but the true humility that is Christian virtue and divine grace. It is only one! The humility of the saints and in a special way that of St. Joseph and of Mary, the humility of Jesus Christ!

122.

True humility in the knowledge that we must have of it, and in the teaching that we must communicate of it! True humility, in the reasons for which we practice it, and in the forms in which we must practice it! True in the internal sense in which we should receive it and in the external expression by which we manifest it. True in the spirit with which it animates us, and in the works that

bloom from it. True in the acts with which we practice it and in the states in which we persevere in it.

123.

Externally there is plenty of false humility; it abounds especially in the Christian and religious world. Since Jesus showed humility in its beauty, in its glory, in its fertility and in its power, every form and every level of human pride loves and tries to appear as if it were humility, thus transforming the best disposition in the worst form of corruption.

124.

There may also be a lot of false humility in the interior world, especially among those who commit themselves to a holy way of life, but do not have an adequate and solid religious formation. In many virtues, but especially in humility, the spirit of evil tries to substitute some spiritual illusions, calling them and making them appear as humility, while in reality they are only alterations either by excess or by default.

125.

True humility is that virtue which refrains the soul in the disorderly desire of self-excellence and inclines her to recognize and love the full truth of her being and actions, referring to God alone any praise for the good of which he is the only author. Humility counteracts and overcomes pride that is the disorderly desire of self-excellence, in a soul filled with self-grandeur.

126.

The desire and the study of spiritual excellence is just, beautiful and divine; it is placed in us from the Almighty, as a sign of our

origin from him, as an image of his Spirit in us, as a continuous impulse toward our ultimate goal that is God himself, and as an efficient help to reach our objective that is his glory. God is glorified by the heroic virtues, by his own grace elevated to the highest charismas.

Pride and humility

127.

Pride, in us, is the deviation of something that per se is correct. It is the corruption of something good. Pride leads us to search an undue excellence and to seek it out of proportions. Pride prompts us to attribute each and every merit to our own selves, and often, in form of vainglory, in order to show what is not there and to appear what one is not, with the hope of basking in a praise that is not due to us.

128.

The glory of God is our goal; nothing can separate us from it more than pride. This explains why pride is considered universal ruin. Nothing can bring us closer to God's glory than humility, which is universal salvation. Since the Lord cannot ordain all his works to any other goal but to his glory, it follows that his entire complacence and all his blessings are with the humble. The humble are always more elevated and immersed in the very glory that they render to God.

129.

Glory is manifested with praise; the proud seeks his own distinction, in the glory. Everyone seeks the satisfaction of praise from everybody. It is amazing to see how the praise of our own

selves, whether procured by us or simply accepted from others, nurtures our pride. To the contrary, the silence about us, the praise of our neighbor in God, and of God in our neighbor, nurtures holy humility.

130.

The silence about us, and the praise of others wounds pride much more than the explicitly negative talk about our own selves. Absolute silence about us becomes our greatest humiliation. Since pride is a deviation in the sense that makes us seek our own glory rather than the glory of God, it must be corrected by placing the correct intention and disposition, so as to render all praise to God, through others.

131.

In the Old Testament it was forbidden under penalty of death to make and to use for private and human usage the thymiana¹, which was destined exclusively for divine worship; at specific times, the priest enkindled this holy incense that continually formed and elevated to God a small cloud of glory; likewise, every soul must burn the incense of praise only to God, in her internal sanctuary of esteem, and in her external sanctuary of human conversation.

132.

Basic and universal practice of humility is never to desire or seek, never, in any way to procure, accept or enjoy any praise with internal reference to your own self; nor to praise any person without referring it to God. To God be praise and glory for every thing that is good, beautiful, great and holy; to us only the benefit

¹ A very special and most sacred incense, Cfr. Ex 30, 1.

of utilization and of joy, for the achievement of our goal which is the glory of God and our happiness.

133.

It is an illusion, and a quasi presumption, to think that you can arrive at the perfection of humility without willingly putting yourself on the pathway of humiliation, or lovingly accepting that others place you and lead you on that road. This is so common, that we have arrived at the conclusion that all our neighbors have received the mission to help us to become humble. There is not too much for us left to do in this mission of our neighbors; we cannot, however, dispense ourselves completely from humiliating ourselves.

The primacy of humility

134.

Faith, among the theological virtues, and humility, among the moral virtues, are the basis and fulfill the role of roots, in our spiritual life. Our spiritual life is directly proportioned to the practice of their acts, and to the level of their status.

135.

The grace of faith and the grace of humility, enlivened by charity, grant life and truthfulness to our works and to our worship in spirit and truth, thus enabling us to glorify God, who is alive and true. Only what is alive and true can please God.

136.

Between faith and humility, somehow, humility precedes the

first infusion of faith and its successive increase, as a necessary, immediate predisposition. Humility, however, in order to be elevated and nurtured in the supernatural needs the faith.

137.

The elevation and nourishment that humility receives from faith, is repaid and transfused by the same virtue of humility into a more perfect predisposition to new, higher and deeper operations of grace. This reveals and confirms the role of primacy of humility amongst all virtues.

138.

The primacy of humility is the primacy of the immediate predisposition that it induces the soul to receive every new and more elevated operation of grace, and to produce (as an instrument) every greater effect of grace in other souls. It is a primacy among dispositions.

139.

The only necessary disposition needed by the Creator in order to operate is the nothingness; the Redeemer and the Sanctifier both in the souls and in the works require the same disposition. This nothingness perceived, wanted and loved in faith and charity is holy, supernatural humility.

140.

If it is true that *hominis est praeparare animam*, - the main duty of the man is to prepare his soul - before God, primarily and supremely this is understood of the preceding and concomitant disposition of holy humility to any personal and social good.

Humiliations

141.

Humiliations are those special acts, states or situations, internal or external, in which, willing or unwillingly, we give to others or hold within our own selves signs and proofs of our nothingness, deficiencies or faults, on account of which, we can presumably expect lack of esteem and honor from others.

142.

From the examples of many a saint it appears that nothing has been more effective than a heroic humiliation to arrive at a lasting separation from the world, to victoriously free ourselves from the enemy and to open ourselves to the treasures of divine graces. Their biographies are filled with such stories.

143.

No one by himself alone should choose, submit himself to or practice heroic, external humiliations, without the advice and the permission of the superiors, who in granting such permission must keep in mind the good reputation of the subject, of his office, of his dignity and of the family in which he lives.

144.

In giving such permission the superior must first consider the subject. Usually humiliations produce a lot of good, but their good effect is not always directly proportioned to their greatness; sometimes the humiliations may depress and discourage rather than encourage and console; this happens when they are inopportune and exaggerated, since the soul is capable of exaggerating in the humiliations that she chooses of her own will.

145.

The humiliations that come to us directly from God or through our neighbors, (superiors, equals or inferiors), are more sanctifying because they were not chosen by us, but accepted, embraced and lived by us. The divine wisdom proportions them to the ability and strength of the soul.

146.

It is not prudent on the part of the superiors, on their own initiative, to purposely burden others with severe humiliations, unless deemed really necessary. The superiors should constantly inculcate esteem and practice of humiliations with sound teachings and their personal example.

147.

When we see humiliations raining down from heaven on any individual and on holy works and initiatives, we should always side with grace (as we must always do), not with nature. We must help our neighbor to esteem and treasure the humiliations and not to subtract or disperse them.

Sources and advantages of humility

148.

Sources and titles of holy humility in the truth of our being before God are: our nothingness, our limitations, our essential dependency, our faults and our ability to do evil, the sum of our responsibilities, the sum of the benefits we have received, the world and the bond of relationships that we are before the Lord.

149.

For each one of these points, we will try to establish and practice a certain number of acts of internal humility, as mental and vocal prayers, humility of mind and heart, and a certain number of acts of external humility as exercise of works, as a novitiate of humility.

150.

It is our duty and our need to try to envision and to formulate, to possess and practice the synthesis of all practices of humility of all the saints, studiously collected from their biographies, trying to imitate the humility of Joseph and of Mary, and making ours the humility of Jesus, our divine exemplar.

151.

With the exercise and the perfection of humility, the soul keeps obtaining and ever more increasing in the eyes of God that moral beauty that was disfigured by pride and yet necessary for the relationship of *sponsa Trinitatis - spouse of the Trinity*. Beauty is the splendor of truth and morally is the irradiation of humility that is the proper truth of the soul.

152.

With the exercise and the perfection of humility, you abandon yourself and remain in the hands of the Lord, as an adequate instrument of God's glory in the field of apostolate. Only in humility you can find the guaranty of a successful outcome in conquering souls to God; this is all the effect of the action of grace.

153.

With the exercise and the perfection of holy humility, are con-

nected all the most beautiful and consistent victories of all virtues, especially that of holy purity. On the other side, pride is always connected with and punished with miseries and the most humiliating falls. Impurity is pride of the body, consequence and corollary of the pride of the spirit.

154.

With the exercise and the perfection of holy humility, we assure the purity, intensity and elevation of holy charity and prepare ourselves to the supreme relationship of soul spouse of the Trinity, exactly as we find it connected in the highest level with the relationship of mother God in Mary, and of child of God in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER II

Nothingness

First exercise

155.

The first title of humility is our nothingness. The first internal exercise that humility obtains from this title is the obliviousness of the self. Since nothingness deserves nothing, it follows that we should avoid and reject as temptation (what actually really is) every useless thought and reflection on our person and action, in the internal world of our fantasies and sentiments.

156.

Consequently the first external exercise, which corresponds to the internal obliviousness, is the silence about your self, person, things and actions; not so much the vilification, but the most complete silence, not even a word, neither positive nor negative, about yourself, your things and your doings.

157.

Regarding God who is everything, humility leads us to the internal exercise of adoring admiration of every perfection, in every one of his works, and also in every image of him, intending the personal living image of God, that is every soul of our dear neighbor.

158.

To the internal admiration and adoration corresponds the external praise that we must continuously profuse to almighty God in each one of his perfections, works and images; always intending to adore and admire, in every soul, the personal and living image of God.

Second exercise

159.

Since our being is essentially nothingness, by ourselves and alone, we are also essentially nothingness and as a sum of zeroes, internally follows a certain composure of one's ego and a certain abnegation of the personality, in every personal affirmation.

160.

To the basic understanding of our nothingness corresponds externally a tendency and desire of hiding ourselves to the eyes of men, always and everywhere. We retain for ourselves and for others, as one of the most dangerous illusions, deeming it convenient to show off in some occasions, or accepting and appreciating that others praise us.

161.

We want to see everything from God's point of view. In everything we see the fullness of God, and find in God every sufficiency. God should be for us the unique true internal subject of every conversation and proposal. When we do something good, with holy dignity, whenever possible, we hide our own ego by using the third person of the verb rather than the first.

162.

When we hide ourselves from the eyes of people we are in the bright light of God, and we concur to God's greater glory, following the principle of the Baptist: *Illum oportet crescere me autem minui* - he must increase and I must decrease. Only then we will be able to continuously talk, extol and impregnate our conversations and the world with his Word.

Third exercise

163.

On account of the nothingness of our intellect, the nothingness of our will, the nothingness of our ability, the nothingness of each talent, the nothingness of everything that is ours, we do not count at all upon ourselves, nor upon any other creature, but we would rather cautiously cultivate an extended and prudent distrust of our own selves.

164.

We should abstain from dreams and ambitious undertakings, and from making impossible agendas, even concerning ministry; we should even more abstain from communicating them to others, keeping in mind that the verb of the Christian is "to do" not "to say" and that the kingdom of God demands more than novelty and projections.

165.

We place ourselves on the part of God, and internally worship and exalt, in our conversation, the divine plans that he has for every creature, which are always higher than any human ambition. The divine projects of the kingdom of heaven upon earth are always more and above every human plan of apostolate.

166.

We find plenty of possibilities for adoration and praise if we consider the project of God for every creature, for the present and the future; we elevate our self in hope, and dilate in charity for the supernatural esteem of our neighbor contemplated in the design of God.

Fourth exercise

167.

Another exercise of humility that derives from the knowledge and the sense of our nothingness is remaining internally and externally in a passive attitude, always and in everything expecting to be moved by God through some of the ways that reveal his will.

168.

We should cultivate internally the abnegation of every impulse to say, to do and to ask what we know to originate from human nature. We should not do nor suffer anything that is not direct expression of the will of the superiors, that is, of God, who alone has the right to any initiative in everything and for everything.

169.

Externally this is carried out through the practice of not starting or doing anything without the command, anything without permission, and especially nothing without advice of someone else. Since we are conscious of our nothingness, we are aware that we cannot act by ourselves, exactly as we could not establish our being on our own.

170.

Let us praise the Lord, because he graciously creates us and with the ongoing creation, that is, the conservation, he continues to be our first cause, in every moment and in every act. Let us praise the Lord for his divine intervention in every act of his creature. Let us praise the Lord for every manifestation of his will, and for his help in knowing and fulfilling his will.

Fifth Exercise

171.

Since we are nothingness in being and in operating, we have no right whatsoever. Internally we live with this sense of humility, based on the moral principle that we can renounce to every right, while we cannot subtract ourselves to any duty.

172.

Internally, we renounce, within ourselves and according to our ability, to any right that is not also a duty, thus we want to live in a status of abnegation of our personal rights. We accept as a gift of the goodness of God and of our neighbor, all that is done or given to us, for whatever reason and under whatever circumstance. We do not expect anything from anybody.

173.

As a logical consequence, we do not expect anything as due to us. For our sense of humility, we renounce to the desire of any expectation from others and aim at arriving to a point whereby we are really surprised for any act of kindness and bounty toward us, because it is not due to us; we will always be thankful for any act of kindness, as we are thankful for a big benefit.

174.

We are constantly praising the Lord for the goodness he shows upon the souls, and because in dealing with us he uses mercy rather than justice. Likewise he wants that all relationships with him and with our neighbor be impregnated with charity, that is, a superior form of justice.

Sixth exercise

175.

From the known and loved truth of our nothingness in being and in operating, follows a state of interior passivity before God, both in his own self and in his images, our neighbor. Thus, we should always be ready to receive everything from God and to do everything for our neighbor, because God always gives and our neighbor (and God in him) always wants.

176.

Internally and externally it follows the exclusion of our “no”, as a negation of receiving from God and of giving to our neighbor; this renders the soul as a sea of peace, of serenity, of sweetness toward which every soul is embarked, and all the rivers of God’s grace end their flow; all the hearts of our brothers want to rest in this sea.

177.

In our external and internal life it follows a status of universal servitude, fusion of prudence, charity, humility, laboriousness, in love, imitation and union of the status of humility of Jesus; this is the religious condition of the soul spouse of the Trinity, in perfect imitation of the Son of Man that came not to be served but to serve and to give is life for the salvation of all.

178.

All internal adoration and the external praise to God, infinite wisdom and power, to whose throne arrive all the supplications of mankind, so conflicting and desperate! God divinely harmonizes, takes into consideration and satisfies them all. God can never be benefited but benefices all; he reveals and implements his love always by giving and giving everything.

Seventh exercise

179.

In creating us God has taken us out of nothingness and so we do exist. We continue to carry a sign and a reason of our original nothingness in the fact that we have the capacity to receive always more and in our perennial need of God, who is our all.

180.

The internal act of humility by which we sense the need of God, the desire for God, not in this or that gift of God which could never fill the abysmal emptiness of the nothingness, but the need and desire of God, of every thing that God is, so that we may possess him in the most intimate way with which he pleases to give himself, and so the perennial expectation of divine union.

181.

We should live externally in a universal indifference toward all that is material. We should arrive at experiencing like nausea for everything that is worldly. To the contrary, we should always cultivate a very intense desire for every spiritual thing and a thirst for the greatest graces, the most effective means, the most useful works and the most alluring intermediary goals, in order to en-

counter God in the quickest possible way, to reach most certainly and possess most intimately God.

182.

Endless praises to our God because he has graciously created us and has fallen in love with our nothingness and has elevated us to the supernatural capacity and exigency of him, who is everything for us! Endless praises to our God because he has commanded us to love him and has invited us to the divine union and for having pre-warned, threatened and helped us in every way to achieve it.

CHAPTER III

Limitation

First exercise

183.

Our being, our life, our power and our actions are so limited in every part, that even if the divine bounty would want to effuse itself totally in us, could never give us its infinity, because we are not, and can never be, capable of receiving it. There are in us culpable and inculpable limitations: Both provide for us occasions and motifs of humility.

184.

Culpable limitations that confuse us, and that must intimately humiliate us, are the limitations that we place to the gift of God. The divine bounty is always willing and ready to favor us with ever more abundant and at an ever higher level its effusions, and we, on account of our little faith and our minimum of confidence, receive them in a scarce and reduced form.

185.

Culpable limitations that should confuse us and pain us even more are the limitations we place with our pride to the divine authority, to our correspondence to divine charity, to our imitation of divine holiness, saying with our actions "I will please you up to that point", I do not intend to arrive beyond that.

186.

Inculpable limitations are those placed by the Creator. The soul always willingly acknowledges her essential limitations, lovingly accepts her limits in everything and voluntarily consents to this relationship with the infinite that is her God. The soul gets closer and unites herself to God as much as she sees and feels herself as being nothing.

187.

In the limitation of her being and of her operations the soul is pleased to be a living and personal demonstration of the being and of the action of God, who alone was able to call into being and to make operative someone who was not.

188.

How many are our limitations in everything! Even our free will and operation, compared with the role of the divine action in the natural and supernatural order, it is so small as to seem the closest, the most like, the most confoundable with the nothingness. Just a point! A terrible point! A minuscule point, only a point!

189.

The soul is pleased with the awareness of the material, external boundaries of the body and with the consciousness of the spiritual, internal limits of her desires, which seem to be unlimited; because in the humiliation of her smallness she finds herself more comfortable to meditate the divine immensity as the negation of every limitation, and so she comes to a better idea of the divine being without faults and without limits.

Second Exercise

190.

God has made the soul so small in order that he might be her greatness, he wanted her so close to nothingness in order to be her all. The soul, aware of these visions of love, is pleased to limit ever more within her possibilities, all that is possible to further limit, that is, all the personal things, all her personal points of view, her own temporal things in order to be always smaller.

191.

The soul accepts and lovingly applies to herself the laws of the limitations of her understanding and of her extension that in the natural order are opposed to one another; so when she is very profound in one theory or very capable in some practical thing, she will humiliate herself considering the many other things in which she is not so capable; and when the soul is knowledgeable in many things or extends her expertise to many works, she will find a way to humiliate herself on account of her scarce competence in each one of them.

192.

Likewise the soul accepts and lovingly applies to herself the laws of proportion between the natural and supernatural order, of the material order with the spiritual order, in inverse proportion among them. The soul should behave in such a way as to always foster the spiritual and supernatural rather than the material and natural, always favor what is spiritual and supernatural over what is material and natural.

193.

The less we concede to the matter the more we possess of the

spirit; the less we second the nature the more we elevate ourselves in grace. The more we expand in the external world, the less we live internally with heaven. The more we attach ourselves to a creature, the lesser we unite ourselves with the Lord and vice versa.

194.

In the spiritual and supernatural order the extension and the comprehension are directly proportioned between them, so, by way of example, the more we immerse ourselves in the love of God, the more we come to extend the exercise of this love to all his attributes, to all his creatures, to all his gifts and so on.

195.

So also with all that concerns the external cult of God and the service of our neighbor, we must not restrict but rather dilate our limitations with the imitation of the divine munificence and magnificence in order to obtain more the fullness of God and of everything in God! As it is written: *Give, and the more you give the more you receive.*

196.

If you want to be truly humble, while loving the small, the little, the nothing in your own temporal order, you must then be great in what concerns others as a true effect and reflex of God in the emptiness of your own self, of the infinity of God, attracted and possessed in your own smallness: having nothing, and yet owning everything¹.

¹ " Cor 6, 10.

Third Exercise

197.

The fact and the sense of the limitation of every creature and of its destination to the infinity of God, generate in you a certain dissatisfaction with yourself, your talents, your work, your efforts, even if they were heroic, because nothing can be adequate to the merit of God that is infinite and to the need that you have of him!

198.

The sense, the acts and states on this intimate dissatisfaction should slowly be extended to every person, to every quality and work of man, to every creature, to the whole world, not with the spirit of malcontent and of grumbling that generates bad feelings in ourselves and in others, but by recognizing and valuing as limitedly good what in its goodness shows so many limitations.

199.

To every beauty and sweetness, to every flower and star of goodness, we should repeat in our own selves the words of the Gospel: *He [John the Baptist] was not the light; he was to bear witness to the light²*. So, all created greatness is not the true greatness but a sign to give us the idea of the true greatness that is God, so that from it we may elevate our thoughts and desires to him. More than every good, great and beautiful thing, my soul, with all her limitations, wants to give to everyone an idea of God, a stimulus toward God.

² Jn 1, 6.

200.

Abstain from any superlative, unconditional, supreme approval, admiration and praise, which in reality would always be exaggerated and unmerited, and, at least, partially false; this should be practiced in writing or in talking, in public and in private, concerning intellectual and affective matters, always.

201.

From every limitation or imperfection of created things we should elevate ourselves to the knowledge, desire, love and acquisition of uncreated treasures that we find only in God. If, at times, we pay any attention to created things, we do it only to get this impulse toward the heights; otherwise it is always better to abstain from paying any such attention.

202.

Resign yourself and be graciously satisfied of the fact that you cannot understand everything or do everything that you would like. Our great desires are great and good and they offer us the advantage of having ulterior reminders and images of the Lord God, who alone is the all knowing and the all-powerful. They also offer us the opportunity to humble ourselves in having to limit our cognition and our work to what we can with our feeble forces, and not to what we want with our vast thoughts.

203.

Resign yourself and be graciously satisfied of the fact that you cannot satisfy the needs, desires and prayers of all those who turn to you. The desire of wanting to satisfy everybody is beautiful and good. On one side this gives us the image and the remembrance of the infinite bounty of the Lord God, on the other side this pro-

vides for the opportunity to humble ourselves for our insufficiency and for the necessity of having to entrust ourselves and refer our neighbors to others.

Fourth Exercise

204.

For the many limitations and imperfection of our being and of our actions, without basking ourselves in it, we must learn how to humbly be content of our and others mediocrity, not as an ideal that we set for ourselves, but as the end result of our actions, which even when they appear excellent to others, are mediocre in themselves.

205.

In general, as our method, criterion and guide, before every action, we should inflame ourselves with hatred for mediocrity, and inspire ourselves with the most perfect, with the maximum in everything; we should propose to everyone and demand from our subjects the most and the best in everything and seriously try to arrive at it.

206.

After our actions, for what concerns ourselves, we will only look at the results in order to take note of the innumerable imperfections that rendered them unpleasant and valueless in the eyes of God. We will consider what we could but did not achieve, notwithstanding that we could have been able to do, want and ought to do, and yet failed to do.

207.

We should humble ourselves but not marvel of our failures,

without getting mad with ourselves and without expressing to others our unhappiness. In perfect peace we should accept the criticism and disappointment of others, absorbing them in our own serene discontent, in our internal observations.

208.

When it is question of others, we should not marvel, and much less get upset over their natural imperfections and inculpable limitations. In general we should be and appear happy about the good will of the neighbors, always explicitly helping the other understand that he is capable of doing more and better.

209.

When it is question of others, we should be able to be content with little, when this would not favor laziness or any other weakness. We should appreciate even in the little the gift of God and apply ourselves to discover in every error any fragment of truth, in every fault any residue of bounty, without ever despising any little particle of divine goodness intertwined in human limitations and alterations.

210.

In case of incomplete success or failures, you should not fall victim to wounded pride or self-love by blaming others. Let not your failures cause the giving up of your great desires or projects. Never get discouraged, always try again, start all over again, trusting that with God's help we can do always more, always better; this will actually happen to us and to our neighbor in proportion of our true humility.

Fifth exercise

211.

Our many limitations and our multiple imperfections in our being and actions wound in us that hidden pride, which tends to compare everything and everybody to us, making of us the moral measure of every judgment. If we follow our own selves as the unit of measure we end up by esteeming people and actions with a very faulty criterion because it is too subjective.

212.

Not at all! We cannot be the measuring line to anybody. We cannot be teachers to anyone! Whenever we may seem to give some lessons, most of the times we only pass on teachings of others. On this is based the evangelical counsel: *Do not judge nor condemn anybody* that is with your measuring line, which for others is false.

213.

Many others can practice the virtues that we practice, as well and in many different ways and at different levels. Many others may carry out any good works that we have undertaken, as well, in many different ways and at different levels. How could we ever presume to be the norm for others in our virtues and in our good deeds?

214.

How many more virtues and forms of practicing them are there, that we do not even think about! There are many other good deeds, and many of them much more necessary and better than the ones we do, that must be done in the Church and for the world. How can we ever presume that the divine Spirit can

shower upon all people only those graces, only those inspirations, only those works that he inspires to us?

215.

Even in the same religious family, among those who carry out the same ministries, sons and disciples (as we usually say) of the same holy founder, no one should ever try to impose upon all the impossible burden of shaping, rigorously fusing everyone and everything within the same shape of the founder, who certainly never thought of reducing the Gospel to the measure of his own limitations.

216.

All, but especially the Directors for the external, and the Spiritual Fathers for the internal, must continuously try to forget about their own self, in order to enter themselves, and help all others to enter into the divine designs and not theirs.

217.

Once we have guaranteed the observance of the essence of every religious observance, as within the Church we guarantee the integrity of faith and morals, the integrity of the hierarchy and the integrity of obedience, everything else that in each individual is inspiration from above, or comes from a nature that is elevated and can ever be more elevated by grace should be admitted, utilized and blessed, above any subjective limitation and narrow-mindedness.

Sixth exercise

218.

From our many limitations and our multiple imperfections in

our being and actions derives another very powerful exercise of humility that hits the pride of the heart and heals this sickness of true love; that is, the conviction, the sense that we can never be an idol for anyone, nor can we have such an idol for our own self.

219.

In the very need and willingness to be loved there is a seed of pride, and we have to eliminate it: That is the belief that we are worthy of esteem, by which should originate in others love for us. There is in us plenty of matter for humility and we must utilize it: that is the belief that we need the benevolence and the munificence of others, in order to improve in our life.

220.

In our need and willingness to love others, in the belief that we can make others happy, or that we can communicate to others great benefit there may be some elements of pride and we have to eliminate them. Likewise, in the need and willingness to love others there are elements of humility and we must utilize it by dedicating ourselves to the service of others, to the well being of others, only for the pure glory and love of God.

221.

It is impossible that others can be our *all* and constitute our sufficiency. Yes, we may fall in this illusion in moments of interior fever, which, overpowering the consciousness of our limitations and creating emptiness in our spirit, prompts us to lean on creatures and enslaves us to them, and this is repugnant to true humility.

222.

Likewise, it is impossible that we can be a *little all* for others

and that others may find in us their sufficiency. This must not happen not even with a very young disciple while we are his superiors, teachers and fathers. This would be a very insidious presumption capable of contaminating us with some kind of tyranny. This would totally frustrate our work as educators and as spiritual directors.

223.

When we feel that all our affection is centering on one person, and when we expect the affection of all others to center upon us, we should become aware of the fact that this is a serious fault of pride and ought to be fought. This should prompt us to practice this great exercise of humility. A profound friendship can never be cultivated with many, it is true, but to cultivate it only with one person is suspicious.

224.

Lived in this prospective, holy humility generates and safeguards holy purity. If we have a person *all* for our own self as an idol of our heart, and if we feel attraction to one person, the passage to romantic attachment to that person is near and sure. The way of sensible satisfactions goes always downward, never upward.

Seventh exercise

225.

The limitations of our nature are in us living limitations, so to speak, and they perceive their limitation as a stimulus to a perennial dilatation. Maybe in no other instinct of ours, is so alive the sign of our origin from the infinity of God, as in our desire for the ever more in quantity and the ever better in quality, which we all experience.

226.

Everyone has this feeling, which is generally satisfied first and only in the natural, sensible and exterior thing, to the detriment of spiritual, interior and supernatural things, in which they are satisfied with the less and the worst. Humility places us on the road to God and launches us toward God with the desire of the more and the better in the things of God.

227.

Holy humility enables us to feel and cultivate a healthy discontent of what we know, because it is never enough, and of what we do because it is always imperfect, and of all our self, because we are always far from our model: the Man-God. This discontent of our self should be always peaceful without ever marveling us for our ugliness, but at the same time, discontent that stimulates us, always to more and better in the things of the soul.

228.

Thanks to our limitations in the faculties of the soul we advert like a sacred torment of repugnance and hatred for every mediocrity, longing and love for every height of Christian virtues and works. Our limitations also enable us to cultivate this sacred torment of perfection with the knowledge of the heroisms and of the charismas of the saints and with the daily yearning for the best and the maximum.

229.

We should nurture our good desires with the best and the maximum in every virtue and in every good deed; we should nurture our studies with the best and the maximum in every discussion and teaching. Nurture likewise our friendship with people and

families, and everything, so that we may become men of great desires and men that live in the heights.

230.

We should never apply and concentrate ourselves on what is less than we are, that may be wholly contained in our limitations and that is unable to extend and dilate us, but on the contrary reverts us upon our own self and makes us even smaller. Get used to ascend to God in everything and everywhere, from every level of creation and be able to see the infinite God under every veil of created things.

331.

In conclusion, we should always tend to get out of our self, extending beyond our self to God. In order to achieve this we should greatly appreciate the grace of every humiliation and every physical or moral suffering, as the one that creates some opening in our being through which the soul comes out of her self. This dilates our being and enables our soul to extend out of her self to ever more know, love and possess God.

CHAPTER IV

Dependency

First exercise

232.

Holy humility helps us to recognize and embrace the dependency in which we live both in our being and in our actions. This dependency is such and so extended that the human being may be defined an essential dependency from the creator. Humility enables us to cultivate this sense of dependency as if it were the dominating foundation and motif of our theoretical and practical mentality.

233.

This dependency from the Creator is extended to the representatives of the Lord, from whom we depend, and to the law through which he exercises his rights upon us. This is carried out in the internal and external reverence to the Lord and to his representatives, and the internal and external obedience to their will in whatever way made known to us.

234.

This title of essential dependency and consequently our status of essential dependency is the main foundation of our dependency, without any sense of culpability on our part. Reverence

and obedience are the main acts of humility. Most of the acts of humility that do not suppose culpability may be synthesized and reduced to reverence and obedience.

235.

Humility is pleased to meditate, honor and imitate those examples of Jesus through which he appears subject and obedient to Joseph and Mary and to every religious and civil law of his time, since he humbled himself by becoming obedient even unto death and death on the cross. He has perpetuated his humility and obedience in the sacrifice of the Mass, in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

236.

In his Eucharistic banquet, Jesus has nurtured our supernatural life with his divine life. As we think of the love of Jesus in Holy Communion, so we must think of the humility of acts and status of Jesus on the cross and in the sacrament. Jesus' humility becomes our spiritual nourishment and the merits of his humility become our glorious treasures.

237.

In the Eucharist Jesus unites us to himself in a mystery of love, and this happens only in a mystery of humility; it follows on our part the need of corresponding to his love, and also to harmonize it with his humility. Of this humility of Jesus in the mystery of the cross and in that of the Eucharist in particular it is said to us: *Hoc sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Iesu - make your own the mind of Christ Jesus*¹.

¹ Eph 2, 5.

238.

If a preparation is necessary to the encounter with the Lord, this is certainly holy humility, since it has been said that if we do not prepare before presenting our self to the encounter with the Lord, we would be like the ones that are going to insult and provoke rather than to honor him. The pride of the creature is the worst provocation and insult of the creature to God; consequently the opposite of pride, i.e. humility becomes the best preparation.

239.

If every prayer is an elevation of the soul to God, much more the holy Mass and the divine communion are a higher elevation. The creature may have no better preparation than internal humility, because we have to expect from God every elevation to him, as a matter of fact, *quia Domini est assumptio nostra - from the Lord is our elevation*. The Lord elevates the soul that humbles herself: *He who humbles himself will be exalted*². Therefore we must make acts of humility and enter into a status of humility before presenting ourselves to the Lord.

240.

It is a rather common experience for those who truly apply themselves to spiritual things, to face occasions that require acts of patience and of humility before special prayers or liturgies. (Patience would not be a virtue without interior humility). The spirit of evil provokes many occasions of acts of pride through impatience, in order to impede spiritual elevations. The spirit of God gives us many opportunities for acts of humility through patience, in order to dispose us to receive spiritual elevations through grace.

² Lk 18, 14.

Second Exercise

241.

Being totally aware of our dependency from God, in order to exercise it throughout our all life toward God, day after day we offer it to him directly in our morning and evening prayers, as if we were responding to the divine call that awakens us in the morning, or calls us from time to eternity at night, with that image of death that is our sleeping, willing and ready to please him in everything.

242.

With the consciousness of our absolute dependency, and wanting to receive, cultivate and increase ever more holy humility, we commit ourselves to daily meditation and meditated spiritual readings. In order to exercise our dependency from the Lord, we ask to know ever more his will in everything so that we may adore it, unite our self to it and put it into action with all perfection of which we are capable. We want to learn from the saints, from their examples, how to live at the dependence of the Lord, in ever more perfect ways, until we reach real heroism.

243.

With the consciousness of our absolute dependency, and wanting to receive, cultivate and increase ever more holy humility, we go to the holy sacrifice carrying, as a victim to be sacrificed our pride (which, unfortunately, remains always alive and dangerous); we also bind our self always more tightly to the divine glory, love and will and to the divine laws expressed through commands, counsels, inspirations or desires. We want to tie our self to him with the nails of the cross, until we obtain the death of our pride and the full union of our will with the will of God.

244.

With the consciousness of our absolute dependency, and wanting to receive, cultivate and increase ever more holy humility, we go to receive holy communion with the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus, repeating and exercising the desire: *O humility of Jesus, come to my soul!* We truly want to be animated by his spirit of servant of all, ready to give our life for the service of our neighbor. We want to be servants of the Father without any opposition or repugnance to the divine will, so that we too may deserve the praise of the Father: *Behold my servant in whom my soul delights!*³

245.

With the consciousness of our absolute dependency, and wanting to receive, cultivate and increase ever more holy humility, we honor the mystery of the divine Trinity indwelling in us. We want and ask that the Holy Spirit be the one who directs our all life, who inspires every act, who animates every state, who forms us on the pattern of Jesus Christ for the glory of the Father. We want and ask the Holy Spirit to continuously maintain us under the control of God, continuously depending from his interior command with docility, generosity and obedience to the divine inspirations.

246.

With the consciousness of our absolute dependency, and wanting to receive, cultivate and increase ever more holy humility, we visit Jesus in the blessed sacrament, and we multiply, as much as possible, these visits, every time offering to him our homage of love in the homage of holy humility. We keep getting closer to him so that we may always more submit to him, depend from

³ Mt 12, 18.

him, and unite ourselves to him in his status of sacrament to the Trinity and sacrament to the souls, in his dependence from the priests, ministers of God's power.

247.

With the consciousness of our absolute dependency, and wanting to receive, cultivate and increase ever more holy humility, we commit ourselves to the practice of the examinations of conscience to give an account of our obedience and our servitude to God, both in our relationships with him and with our neighbor; we give an account of the use of the talents we have received, an account of our obedience to his inspirations of every moment, willingly submitting ourselves to the divine sanctions.

248.

With the consciousness of our absolute dependency, and wanting to receive, cultivate and increase ever more holy humility, we apply ourselves to the practice of spiritual direction. Thus, we give an external account to God's minister of the service we have rendered to God and to our neighbor, of the use of our talents in our ministries, and of every other duty of obedience to the inspirations. Lovingly we submit everything to the approval, vigilance and control of our spiritual director.

249.

With the consciousness of our absolute dependency, and wanting to receive, cultivate and increase ever more holy humility, we seek and accept, with loving condescendence in every private or communitarian action, the vigilance, control, scrutiny and sanctions of the legitimate authorities, as the yoke due to us, and healthy for our holy dependence. Under this blessed yoke we encounter and we become one with Jesus in a divine embrace.

Third exercise

250.

The dependence of humility and the humility of dependence is mostly exercised through obedience to the law and to the superiors, executors of the law. This must not be done because of pusillanimity of spirit, nor out of unpleasant, servile sentimentalism, which would be defective; nor for peaceful living together, or in order to be politically correct in society, this would be a reproachable prudence of flesh and blood. This must not be done out of necessity of our condition, nor for need of protection, because it would be too human and natural. We practice the dependence of humility and the humility of dependence only because the laws and the superiors represent the will of God, and this is the supernatural vision of humility and dependence.

251.

This type of humility leads us first to esteem, then to know and finally to observe the laws. Humility is not satisfied with the simple exterior discipline, as the person responsible only for the exterior would be inclined to do. True humility tends to elevate us to an ever greater perfection of the esteem, of the knowledge and reverence for the law and for the superiors, as representatives of God, to the point of really inflaming us with true, sacred love for the laws and the superiors.

252.

Humility never separates the laws from the superiors; if we were to consider a superior without considering the law, we would have a human, natural understanding, with the consequent danger of naturalism and sensualism in our loving relationship of dependence from them. If we were to consider the law without the superiors who represent, promulgate, promote, and demand its

observance, we would never (or very, very rarely and with much difficulty) find in ourselves the strength to observe it.

253.

No one should separate what God has joined. Holy humility elevates us to contemplate how every law becomes one with the eternal law, that is the very divine will, and consequently the divine nature and the very Trinity of persons in God, present in the unity of nature. Likewise we consider every law as incarnated, unified, personalized in the person of the superior; both the law and the superior are object of the same progressive esteem, knowledge, reverence, obedience and love.

254.

Our pride is less crashed by the esteem, reverence and observance of the law than by that toward the superiors. From among the superiors, pride is more inclined to tolerate our submission to the major superiors rather than to the minor superiors, and this not on account of the major authority that resides in them, but because the minor superiors are also the immediate superiors; pride would gladly get rid of all immediate superiors, while at the same time declaring its submission to the written law and to the major superiors, because the book and the superior who is not present, does not cause in us embarrassment, nor reverential fear, nor an immediate word of disapproval or reproach, in one word, does not humiliate us.

255.

If we really want to grow in humility we ought to try to find and have a superior for every law, even private law, freely self imposed, if there were none imposed by the same law. For example, we would not entrust our private commitments, resolutions,

and our inspirations, only to our conscience, to our examinations of conscience and to our prayers, but we will entrust them to a superior; ordinarily this would be the director, not only for his discernment and approval, but so that he may be their constant promulgator, exactor and private legislator, grounded on the divine will manifested in them.

256.

We need to thank God if we have an alive and heartfelt reverential fear, and we must cultivate it by never acting against it. In some rare and exceptional case it may cause us some suffering, it may even appear as an impediment to some personal initiative, but it is always healthy. Reverential fear is to humility what virginal decorum is to purity. Even if it may appear to render our confidence in the superiors less spontaneous, reverential fear will preserve us from naturalism and sensualism and will help us to be and remain in the supernatural.

257.

We should vigorously reject any false idea that the enemy may suggest against the law and the superiors; we should shake off every feeling of annoyance, every instinct of rebellion and any shadow of hatred that the enemy may originate against the law and the superiors. We should elevate ourselves to contemplate and enjoy the law and the superiors in the light of the infallible, evangelical words: *my yoke is easy and my burden light*⁴. Under this yoke we will encounter and become one with our God in a mystical marriage, we shall find easy every observance of the law and light every burden carried with the Lord, led by him with his hand in our hand.

⁴ Mt 11, 30.

258.

We will have a special devotion to psalm 118, which in its entirety is a passionate praise of divine law. We will meditate this psalm so that we can make of its verses the rosary of favorite ejaculatories and our spiritual proverbs most used for the edification of people. One day per month, or even more frequently, we will use this psalm for our Eucharistic thanksgiving, for our morning meditation, for our visits to the Blessed Sacrament or our spiritual reading in union with Jesus present in his law.

Fourth exercise

259.

In order to achieve the esteem and the love for the law, we will exercise and enjoy contemplating how everything is subject to a law. We will not find in the physical and moral, natural and supernatural world anything, any relation and any happening that is not subject to a law, which is not directed, intrinsically or extrinsically, by a law. This is true also, especially, in the world of our free will; we will see clearly the benefit, the grace and the glory of the divine law. We cannot subtract ourselves to the empire of the law of the life of the spirit in God without falling into the tyranny of the law of death and sin.

260.

We consider every law as a ray of divine wisdom, as a gift of divine bounty, as an exigency of the divine holiness, as a proof of the love of God for us and of our love for him. We consider every law as a step through which God comes down to us and we ascend to God; as a date for the encounter of God with the soul, as a title to eternal goods, as spiritual strength against temptations, as the secret, the door and key of perfection.

261.

A true, sacred love to the law in the person of the superiors is the highest level of perfection of our humility of dependence. Out of this love we experience a real attraction to the law in the superiors and to the superiors in the law. In this grace of humility our nature frees itself of the crust of pride and appears in the glory of the likeness with the divine nature specifically in the love and in the need of divine law, which is connatural to us and engraved in us, and thus renders us in the likeness of the divine will and of the divine persons. We are created by that will, governed by that law, ordained to those persons.

262.

All those who aspire to divine union with the divine persons, in the divine works and through the divine perfections, must understand that this union may be attained only in the grace and in the charity, whose essential act is the union of will. Divine union is attained in the gracious dependence from the superiors and in the perfect obedience to the laws. Outside of the laws and apart from the superiors there is no divine union. Consequently, the enemy of divine union unceasingly sows shadows between the subjects and the superiors, and impediments between the human will and the laws.

263.

We should apply ourselves to the knowledge of all the specific laws that concern or may concern us in some occasion. We will never excuse ourselves invoking ignorance of the law. We consider the ignorance of the law as a preliminary, implicit rebellion to the law. With our dependence we want to embrace every obligation of the law, we want to render to God every possible honor, we want to provide to ourselves and to our neighbors even the

smallest good. The dependence to the law helps us to achieve greater favors, contained in the observance of every law.

264.

Whenever the superior talks to the community or to the individuals, the humble subject is all intent in capturing the expression of his will and in making for himself an obligation to execute it. He will take as directly addressed to himself, to him alone, whatever is ordered or suggested to many or to all. Whenever the occasion presents itself, the individual should make known even in writing these divine manifestations of the divine will, for his private use, avoiding any scrupulosity and rigidity, which would be useless and dangerous to our dependence.

265.

From among all possible subjects, we prefer to study the sacred codes of all dogmatic, moral, liturgical, canonical and civil laws, both the general and particular laws of our status, and of our office; In this study we aim at possessing not only the letter but the spirit of the law, for a more perfect observance. Once we have abundantly overcome the ignorance of the law, we prudently apply ourselves to prevent the possible forgetfulness of the law by making the use of the book of the laws part of our daily duties.

266.

To perfect and to crown our dependence from the law and the superiors, we become perennial teachers of the law, perpetual tutors and reminders of the law, in its most humble ways, the most sweet, fraternal and prudent, which are also the most constant and effective ways. Our very presence, in addition to our example and our word, should be an encouragement to the knowledge and observance to the law, to the reverence and obedience to the superiors.

267.

The perfect knowledge and esteem of the law and the supernatural vision of the superiors help us and carry us to the perfect and supernatural obedience. The perfection of obedience concerns both the external execution of the will of the superiors and the internal union with the divine will in them. We want the external obedience to the law, with the spirit of the faithful servant, internal union of the will, with the spirit of the loving child. We consider and make our obedience not as imposition or forcing of our will, but as the connatural development and necessary course and the normal satisfaction of our natural and supernatural activity.

Fifth exercise

268.

In order to maintain this spirit of humility of dependence and cultivate this dependence of humility, we will extend our reverence and obedience to our neighbors, as to the personal images and likenesses of God, as indeed they are, and consequently as if they were our superiors in a large sense. As far as we can, we will procure to content and please everybody, not only for an effusion of goodness and for a work of charity, but for a sense of obligation to everyone and of dependence from everyone given to us by humility; this elevates and guarantees bounty and charity.

269.

With this spirit and acts of universal servitude, we will have rendered some of the due honor, with greater external imitation and internal union, to that status of servant, in which the divine incarnate Word has come to complete his work of glorification of the Father in the redemption of the souls. Thus he teaches us

that only through a way, life and work of humility every soul can glorify the Father and save the brothers. Thus the wisdom, Jesus Christ has revealed that he is the way. He is the only way for the glory of the Father and the salvation of the brethren; to the revelation of his humility is connected the revelation of the complacency of the Father.

270.

Going even deeper, we base this external and internal practice of universal servitude on the principle that in everything that is said or done to us, when not caused by our will, there is always a manifestation of the divine will. We should be always serenely used, and lovingly prepared to depend from the divine will, with the behavior of a faithful servant, and the spirit of a loving son.

271.

The humble person is the most capable to understand the direct, sweet and elevated invitation in the words of Jesus: *Anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*⁵. The humble person is most capable to make his the saying of St. Paul: *I became all things to all men in order to gain them to Jesus Christ*⁶. He is likewise the most apt to enter into the beatitude of the prophet Isaiah: *Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights; I have sent my Spirit upon him*⁷.

272.

In a very special way the humble person exercises this depen-

⁵ Mc 10, 43-45

⁶ I Cor 9, 20

⁷ Is. 42, 1

dence of humility by remaining very faithful to every commitment made, to every appointment given or accepted, to every promise made, unless there is the intervention of a superior force that compels him to a more necessary dependence. We experience and exercise this dependence mostly by satisfying any kind of debt that we have contracted or in which we find ourselves. We will never avoid the person or the requests of our creditor and keeping in mind his obligations, we will do our very best to satisfy our debt in the shortest time possible; we will do this not to avoid nuisances, but for the dependence and duty of justice.

273.

To maintain the spirit of humility of dependence and to cultivate with the practice this dependence of humility, we do not limit, nor are we satisfied with the observance of the law but we extend it to the general counsels revealed in the Gospel, and to the particular ones given to us by the superiors. We search for opportunities to practice the humility of dependence both in the most serious difficulties and in the daily happenings of our life. We also appreciate the opportunities given to us every day by those who are around us, without ever blaming them and without attributing to them the imperfections of others.

274.

The humble exercises the humility of dependence even with his own resolutions. Once he has received the inspiration and pondered the motivations, and then with full consciousness has made the resolution and offered as good determinations to the approval and blessing of the Lord in prayer and in holy communion, they become for the humble person something sacred, private laws, in which he does not see his human personal will, but the will of God; thus no one more than the perfect humble is firm and faithful to his good promises.

275.

The spirit of dependence of humility renders the soul totally flexible and maintains her completely docile to the motions of grace, to the interior magisterium of the divine Word, to the internal guidance of the Holy Spirit and of her angel, and practically to all the divine inspiration through which, moment by moment, the Lord reveals to the soul his complacency. The soul expects and prepares these inspirations with her humility, and treasures them for the sanctification of the present moment, and takes note of those destined to the sanctification of the immediate future writing in her personal book what she has to do, to make sure that she will really do it and will not forget.

276.

This spirit of holy dependence of humility establishes the soul in the status of perfect, internal abandon to the will of God. This abandon must not be understood as false peace, false rest, very false idleness and most false laziness. This abandon must consist in being always awake, active, ardent correspondence to the love of God, cooperation to the grace of God, fulfillment of God's will, without any resistance, opposition or impediment from our human will, as it is or should be, totally elevated and united to the divine will.

Sixth Exercise

277.

The soul tries to maintain and increase this status of dependence, as her safety, her peace, her magnet to attract graces, that is why she tries to remain in it, and suffers when elevated above her co-equals with any distinction of honor, of office or dignity above

others, upon whom must exercise some kind of authority. Generally the humble refuses any distinction of honor, unless forced to accept, and tries to subtract himself to any position of authority, unless forced by his dependence to higher authority.

278.

In accepting any expression of honor, holy humility leads us to receive it not for our own person but for our God as if we were the veil, the throne, the image of the divine majesty, to whom alone is burned any grain of incense. Since to God alone is due every honor and glory, the humble while subtracting himself to any praise, he makes sure that none of the honors due to God is neglected or refused to him in the person of his representative. Holy humility allows us to become defenders of all civil and ecclesiastical rights in any vindication of any legally due or simply habitual honors.

279.

In the exercise of any position of authority, holy humility keeps us very close to the divine will, of which we are unworthy representatives. Holy humility transforms every external act of authority over others, into an internal act of obedience to God, whom we serve in that capacity. This elevation of humility and of union of love with the divine will confers to every act of human authority a very high value, a supernatural merit, the efficacy of the edification; it dons also externally every act of authority of the grace of sweetness, and every person in authority of the grace of clemency.

280.

At any level of authority and in any position of influence, holy humility binds us and so we do not even think nor seek our personal advantage for our own usefulness or pleasure. In any posi-

tion of authority we will seek only and exclusively the service to render to the community and to the individuals, the wellbeing that we must procure, the delight that we offer, in the Lord, to our brothers, and the much loved work of apostolate and our role of maternity that we must offer. We believe that the authority, like the law, is totally ordained to the common good of the subjects not to the personal wellbeing of the superior.

281.

At any level and in any position of authority, in spirit of humility we will never dispense ourselves from the observance of any law, even when we have the faculty to dispense others, and theoretically would be able to dispense ourselves, since we fear the illusions of sensuality and of pride. Except only those cases in which a greater service to be rendered to the subjects implies the dispensation of the superior from some observance. Humility tends to transform the superior in the very personification of the law, in the spirit of Jesus who *came not to be served but to serve and give his life for the ransom of all*.

282.

In every level or position of authority, humility of dependence tends above all to make us attentive and diligent in keeping and perfecting our dependence from major superiors, to cultivate our filial relationship with them, to constantly improve perfect obedience to their will and to live in the most complete fidelity to their guidelines. Simultaneously holy humility helps us to avoid any tyrannical personal concentration and enables us to recognize and to place in the proper light the merits of the subject; it also enables us to discern their attitudes, appreciate their capabilities and to utilize their cooperation.

283.

In every level or position of authority, humility warns us about the danger of being without an immediate and present superior; whenever there is no immediate superior, humility compels us to find some volunteer ones, so that no humble superior will ever deprive himself of spiritual direction, of brotherly correction, of the counseling of wise people, as we could be tempted to do by our hidden pride, as if we were self sufficient, as if we could be also our own guide, strength and light, as if divine wisdom had not disposed every being in hierarchical dependence.

284.

In every level of authority, holy humility obliges us to respect and maintain with prudence and charity what has been done, established or initiated by our predecessor. At times it is necessary to sacrifice our spirit of initiative, or to perfect it in the environment of what already exists, only later introduce new things and new ways that are deemed necessary, always with previous approval of superior authorities. Becoming all things to everyone the superiors will primarily dedicate themselves to recognize, encourage and develop the talents of the subjects for their greater good and that of the community. Holy humility enables us to find in the very authority that we exercise the greatest sacrifice of our own personality.

285.

When the limitations of old age or of permanent and incurable sickness render us unable to carry out all our duties, and we can no longer be the living example and law for the subjects, holy humility compels us to, voluntarily, joyfully, and for the greater good of others, renounce to our office, without being forced to it by charity or by justice. Likewise whenever the Lord makes us

clearly understand that others could serve the common good better than us, if we stepped down, holy humility reminds us the *he must increase, I must decrease*.

Seventh Exercise

286.

The internal reveals itself in the external and has some influence upon it; likewise the external reveals the internal and has some influence on it too. Holy humility urges us to cure all our external so that it may inspire in us that sense of essential dependence that humility nurtures within us and may foster its growth through the exercise of external acts. Our external acts always suppose a principle of internal humility, as intention and disposition of the will from which they derive and through the exercise they increase our humility.

287.

The external acts may be considered as the body of humility to which must be infused the soul of humility; this soul develops its life of humility with the works of humility, through that body. It happens as when the Lord created the human body and breathed in it the spirit, and both constitute the man. From the very beginning, since physical and spiritual infancy, we should be formed in the habits of humility, even if they are mostly only external, so that in due time gradually we may receive and develop the internal virtue of humility.

288.

Holy humility, especially on account of our principle of absolute dependence, disposes us even externally to avoid any poise, gesture, tone of voice, comportment, word or look: any act that

may express superiority, disregard, authority, independence or rebellion. Many a times we surprise ourselves in similar external postures through which the old man shows up, in its ancient pride. May holy humility in every such a case counteract with the habit of the new man according to Jesus Christ.

289.

Holy humility, especially on account of our principle of absolute dependence, disposes us to the constant observance of every form of respect due to our co-equals, superiors and inferiors (even though humility does not consider anyone as inferior). Concerning any attention that may be due to us, holy humility closes both our eyes out of fear that the smoke of vainglory and the thunderbolt of pride may blind them. Concerning any attention due to others, holy humility opens completely both our eyes to make sure that we would not be lacking in any case, but rather may abound in most cases.

290.

Holy humility places us internally in a general, supernatural disposition of reverence toward everything, even those that are without a soul and not destined directly to divine worship or to the good of the souls; this happens on account of our intimate vision of faith through which we encounter the Lord in everything he has created, he conserves and disposes. Holy humility leads us to exercise this universal reverence in every relationship with every creature placed at our service, from the sky we contemplate to the soil we walk upon, from the air we breathe to the insect that vexes us. We want to nurture always and for everyone a devout and spiritual respect and consideration.

291.

Animated by this spirit of humility, we will humbly appreciate

all secondary, necessary or free causes that influence us by adequately acknowledging their effects; with the strength of holy humility we will make them ours, if they benefit our spiritual life, or we will react to them, if they should be of obstacle or impediment to our spiritual wellbeing. We humbly accept our status of passivity toward the first principle of all our acts, being always ready to accept the first motions of grace and to reject the insinuations of evil. We want to be always willing and ready to acknowledge and maintain our dependence from the absolute principle, and glorify it by subordinating everything to him as to our ultimate goal.

292.

If we nurture a holy reverence for all things, both animated and unanimated, we do so much more for our superiors in authority. Holy humility inclines us to honor and revere all that is honorable in them, for the sake of the Lord who has chosen them and given them to us as his representatives. We will render to them not only the homage of our obedience, but every legitimate satisfaction, not only in what is strictly due to them, and not even solely for being our superiors; we want to have for them, as our fellow human beings, an extraordinary and loving generosity in everything that is not contrary to the will of God.

293.

On account of our essential dependence, holy humility alerts us about the danger of disposing of ourselves without the counsel, the vigilance, the control and the will of all our institutional and voluntary superiors. In our present condition we are led to dispose of ourselves in our internal acts, like the affections of the heart, the worries for the future of our internal and external life, as if the future were depending totally from us. In both cases humility compels us to the heroism of abnegation of our ego in order to maintain us in the spirit of dependence from the Lord, always subordinating everything to his divine service.

Only the exercise of good opens the largest horizon to our will in the specialization in the acts and levels of virtues, holy humility compels us to take and use our holy freedom animating us to freely depend in everything, in those things in which we have the option of a choice leaving it to those we deem better than us. We want to behave in such a way with simplicity and freedom, without spirit of bondage and without exaggerations. In every case we should be well aware that we do not renounce or despise the divine gift of freedom, but we make, in this world, the best possible use of it, the use made of it in heaven to which holy humility is elevating us.

CHAPTER V

Blameworthiness

First exercise

295.

The truth of our nothingness, of our limitations and of our dependence keeps us humble, but our culpability fills us with internal and external confusion; this confusion is so alive that it pains us with internal and external remorse. If true humility under all other designations is always convenient and advantageous for the soul, humility on account of our culpability is as necessary as it is our penance; which is necessary of necessity of means and of precept. We cannot conceive true penance without true humility. Humility is the basis, the root, the guardian and the guaranty of penance.

296.

We need to deepen our knowledge of fault in general, and then apply it to our own faults in particular. We should be ingenious in keeping this awareness always present so that it may infuse in us the status and the acts of the true guilty, redeemed, penitent, exiled and of the eternally in danger. The awareness and consciousness of this knowledge and presence should be felt in such a way that it may always instill in us more hatred and sorrow, more abjection and repulsion, flight and fight of fault and may inflame our heart with zeal against sin. We want to keep in mind

this awareness and presence not only as historical, philosophical, natural and human remembrance of our faults but as a theological and supernatural vision of our sinfulness, in God according to Jesus.

297.

Humility is pleased with the true knowledge of fault as such, in the sense that it is seen as transgression of God's laws, rebellion to his dominion, withdrawal from his will, violation of the covenant of love, negation of the glory due to him; a sin is really like wanting God's death, his destruction, abasement and dethroning of him, a betrayal of his love, a stepping over his grace, an abuse of his gift, an expulsion of him from our soul. Committing a sin is like passing to the enemy, becoming a voluntary slave to the enemy, procuring passion and death to Jesus in his heart, rendering for oneself vain the redemption, rejecting his most precious blood, refusing to correspond to his love, refusal of glorifying his name. There is no true knowledge of what sin really is, if it is not seen in regard to God, in the light of faith. Sin is an infinite malice, and infinite evil.

298.

We find reason to humiliate ourselves; 1) in all the evil we have committed and in the evil we have caused others to commit; 2) in the good we ourselves did not do and did not let others do; 3) in having tried and maybe succeeded in giving the resemblance of good in the eyes of others, and in having wanted and found pretexts for justification before our own conscience to the evil we have done; 4) in having mixed so much evil with the good we were doing, in having wrapped the very good within a stratus of faults thus defacing it.

299.

All the sins that have been committed are reason for profound

humiliation. Maybe we had the misfortune of committing a mortal sin, only one. We touched, even if only once, the bottommost of the abyss, of ingratitude toward God, of the foolishness of renouncing to the divine goods, of the cruelty of the death of the Lord, of the infamy of offending God, of the crime of insubordination to God. Maybe we fell again after having asked and obtained forgiveness. Maybe we got used to living in that infamy and indignity, becoming totally sordid internally and externally. It will remain eternally true that we have offended so grievously the Lord God.

300.

The innumerable, deliberate venial sins that we could have avoided but did not, are cause for us to constantly humble ourselves. They rubbish every day and maybe every hour of our life. We have sown them in every place we lived in or simply passed by. We find some of them in every principal or secondary action of ours, in every relationship and affection, in every intention and disposition. Maybe we got to the point of loving them, of having attached ourselves to something to which we did not want to renounce, and so on account of them we have rendered vain the effects of so many sacramentals.

301.

We find reason to humble ourselves also in our innumerable, semi-deliberate venial sins. 1) We would need a special privilege of grace to avoid them all, and this proves the moral misery and the pitiful condition of our decayed nature. 2) We could avoid many of them with a more perfect tenor of life, a more elevated and intense fervor, but unfortunately we end up by lowering rather than elevating our level of life. Rarely we feel sorrow our annoyance of them, and even more rarely make reparation, in the flames of charity, for them, failing to make ours the holiness of the

virtues and the richness of the merits of Jesus, through the ways of holy union with him, our head.

302.

We find reason to humble ourselves in the continuous possibility of offending God and damming ourselves, not so much for the external occasions and temptations, but for our weakness, our inclination to evil in our unscrupulous will. Even not falling in the faults of which we are capable, we remain humiliated because in the very capability of sinning, there are - as in germ - all the possible infamies, indignities and abominations. As in our pride we would feel offended when someone would think us capable of stealing, blaspheming, dehumanizing etc. so in holy humility we remain mortified, knowing and seeing ourselves capable of every failure.

303.

Another reason for humiliating ourselves is our very presence in this world, which is a world of sin, and in our cohabitation with men, sinners as we are. Since we are all sinners, and if one were to say that he has no sin, he would be a liar, according to the Apostle of charity and truth. We would feel very much humiliated if we were to be locked with a horde of impure animals, in a cove of beasts, in a pack of monkeys, to live, even only externally, their life. So we experience humiliation and confusion for our cohabitation in the actual status and moral level of sinners, even though we pity them and love them as our brothers.

304.

Another reason for the soul to humble herself is found in the very fact of her intimate and permanent union with the body that she animates. The body is like a lifelong captivity, a sordid, very

tiny and dangerous prison in which the soul is held bound by many chains, which at times rusty, at times slimy, at times tied to a nail, and at times towed by a devilish prison guard; it is a very unfavorable battle ground, very inflammable occasion of sin. This vision and sense of humility about our body, should lead us to sanctify it ever more considering it as host for the sacrifice of life, instrument of many moral and Christian virtues.

305.

We have hardly survived adapting to such an abhorrent condition of crawling in the dust while we should have been flying high; of remaining in the shadow instead of enjoying the fullness of light. We have been throwing ashes on the flames of fervor rather than nurturing it. We did not search for the face of the Lord, when we were supposed to enjoy his intimacy. We have been adding debts upon debts rather than extinguishing the ones we had contracted. We have risked to postpone our full possession of God after our death through a lengthy purgatory while we should have started to pre-taste it in this life. We have continuously displeased God while we had so many opportunities to please him. We have been walking on the way of perdition, at the edge of the abyss, in continuous danger of sinning and getting closer to damnation, compromising ourselves with the enemy and living under his influence.

306.

Holy humility urges us to make frequent meditations on sin in general, and on our personal sins in particular. This meditation is a must on the days of spiritual retreat. It should be done whenever an examination of conscience is required, as daily devotional practice and as immediate preparation to confession. This should cause in us a perennial stimulus to think humbly of ourselves, to be cautious in preventing hostile influences and to make repara-

tion for our poor past. We should be always ready to approach the minister of God for sacramental absolutions, to appear before the tribunal of Jesus-Judge, to respond to every reminder of eternity, provided by sister-death.

Second Exercise

307.

Humility helps us to be always aware of our faults, not in order to discourage us, but so that we may trust more in the Lord, applying his merits and tending to an ever tender and intimate union with him, our head, in order to get new impulse on our journey and to make up for what we have lost. Our internal pride and the machinations of the enemy tend in so many ways to hide our faults, and if they do not succeed in this, they try to minimize, in our mind, our culpability. Humility enables us to use all the opportune ways to know the full extent of our faults and to keep them in mind.

308.

Self-knowledge, which contains a lot of wisdom, consists in fully knowing our faults and our temptations, to which we are more inclined, and our passions, which if not controlled, cause our failures. All the good that we are or have, that we do or can be, all the good that we may have or be capable of doing belongs to the Lord as its first cause. The knowledge of real and possible good creates more awareness of God in us than of us in God. The knowledge of our real and possible inclination to sin is knowledge of ourselves, holy humility commits us to this type of knowledge.

309.

Holy humility prevents us from falling into the unhealthy cu-

riosity of wanting to know what others may think of us. We cannot prevent, however unwilling we may be, from hearing what others say of us. The defect of judging everything and everybody is so widely spread! If on our own we try to find out what others say of us, and through what they say of us we would try to scrutinize what they think of us, we would certainly be moved by the spirit of pride. With this curiosity we would foment pride in us and would expand its stink in others. From this curiosity we could only receive useless embitterment of our wounded pride, or futile complacency of vainglory, of scenting smoke.

310.

Everyone is inclined and easy to judge us in the back. It is very difficult to genuinely know the various evaluations made of us, as person, as work, as ways of acting. Especially in this aspect, we can understand how true it is the saying: *omnis homo mendax* - every man is a deceiver. This serious difficulty of knowing the truth of others' evaluations of us is experienced and suffered in a special way by those who have authority over us. When others do not transcend in idolization about us, they do not have the guts to honestly manifest what may displease the superiors, with the more or less justified fear that their disappointment may become alienation from the truth and from those who assert the truth.

311.

The reason for our awareness of our culpability is our humiliation, penitence, and purification, in order to our union with the divine love, through the way of truth. We must absolutely fight back the instinctive impulse to defend or justify ourselves of any accuse of culpability before people and our own self. We must overcome this instinct of moral self-defense, to the point of being always ready to admit that our real and possible wickedness is always worst of what others or we may imagine. We should always

side with our accusers, because we do not want to miss any such revelation about ourselves. We should be interested in placing in full light our failures.

312.

On account of our determination to amend ourselves, in spirit of true humility, we should solicit, from those who really want what is good for us, their vigilance on our behavior and their brotherly correction concerning their negative observations. Our immediate superiors are not sufficient for this service, they cannot observe everything, nor can they occupy all their time looking solely after us. Humility compels us to find a faithful and authentic corrector, as the only real friend; likewise from all our friends we expect this fraternal admonition, as a form, an act and manifestation of love.

313.

After the light we receive about ourselves from divine inspirations, there is no effective light to reveal us to ourselves other than the judgments of others, especially when many share these. We do not consider as our revelators those who are manifestly prejudiced about us, and the mal-disposed against us. Holy humility enables us to be enriched, whenever we come to know what others say or think of us. Whenever we learn what others say or think of us, our first reaction is to presume that they are totally mistaken, but then thinking about it we may discover that those who have negative perception of us, are right, most of the times. Humility and truth meet; truth in their judgments, humility in our heart

314.

When a humble person hears of criticism, complaints, back-

biting and insults from any source, she will not fight back, will not try to justify herself, and will not set up like little processes to come to the bottom of things. Facing her detractors and having a chance to prove her innocence, even if directly attacked by any form of injury and having had the opportunity to react, the humble soul will not do it. She will not get irritated and she will not avoid such confusion, in order not to miss such a great opportunity of spiritual gain and to be catapulted to the heights of heroism by the very violence of humiliation.

315.

Often it may happen, especially to those who work in the fields of apostolate to be accused to their legitimate superiors, now on one account, now on another, it will happen that they may be presented in a negative light to them. The practice of never excusing ourselves, even though it often borders the heroism, remains the most common to those who want to cultivate the virtue of humility and remains the fundamental practice among the exercises of humility. Our silence, when we do not excuse ourselves, must be full of sweetness, because it must be as a sweet consent to the good they procure us, not always to what they say. Easily, pride may fill our silence with the arrogance that does not lower itself to an excuse, and with the disrespect for the adversary that remains wounded by our total disregard.

316.

True humility will not admit that the care for our good reputation, the good example for others, the esteem needed for the efficiency in our apostolate, the trust that we must enjoy on the part of our superiors and the need of our spiritual directors to know us thoroughly in order to direct us properly, may be good reasons to humbly justify ourselves, in all these cases of humiliation. In reality the duty of justifying ourselves is something very

rare and in very exceptional cases. Holy humility, really lived, is the best guarantee of our good name, of positive edification, of good esteem and trust.

317.

In our love for the truth, holy humility carries us further; it renders us accusers of ourselves. This is absolutely mandatory in sacramental absolution: humility is the only guarantor of the integrity of our accusation. Self-accusation is a free act; it is conditionally mandatory in our spiritual direction, and, at times even in our requests for counseling in our complicated cases. Even though the main purpose of confession and direction is not the practice of humility, it is evident that true penance, in confession and true prudence, in spiritual direction are, at the same time, cause and effect of the humility of our complete, sincere, clear and brief self revelations. The brevity is also a victory against pride, which would prefer many words, for its hidden satisfaction or compensation.

318.

Except in the cases of confession and spiritual direction, holy humility, when it is animated by charity and directed by prudence, prevents us from talking negatively about ourselves. Generally in this we are well served by our dear brothers, so we would have very little to add; on the other side, in the social environment, our talking negatively about ourselves, would generally provoke insincere praises, which nurture our vainglory. The reality is that pride is always more mortified and weakened by absolute silence about our person, than by any humiliating words, chosen and preferred by us, and which can easily be used by our pride for its benefit.

Third exercise

319.

The remorse for a fault is the beginning of reparation for the fault. In it we find:

1. The judgment of the conscience that clearly condemns us: "You did wrong".
2. The fear of God's punishment in this life and in the other: "You shall pay for it".
3. The warning of an angel: "You have offended God, your Lord and your Father".
4. The admonition of the mother: "You have mortally wounded Jesus Christ, the Man-God".
5. The boasting of Satan: "You begin to be mine and you will be mine".
6. The reproach of divine silence, of God in us, who seems to turn elsewhere his eyes: "God is God".
7. The answer of human spirit: "I have hurt myself, I have ruined myself".

All the above answers indicate loss of peace, internal perturbation.

320.

While pride would like to suppress any remorse, holy humility helps us to listen to remorse, talk with remorse and taste all its saving bitterness. Holy humility disposes us to answer to all internal voices, except the one of the enemy; it helps us to accept the loss of peace of conscience, as a pain due to sin, and to confess our faults to the minister of God, not only to get rid of the pang of sin, to rehabilitate us before God and our own self, to regain internal peace and serenity, but most of all to render satisfaction to the Lord and reconcile ourselves with him, because we do not want, we cannot, we ought not acquiescent to live in that bad spirit with

the Lord. So, holy humility enables us to realize all the purposes of the remorse of conscience, which is very healthy.

321.

At the first hint, at the very first indication of an approaching fault, holy humility prepares and urges us to resist to the temptation, to avoid the occasion. In every temptation there is a solicitation of the enemy to rebel against the dominion of God, to subtract ourselves from the possession of God. Holy humility offers and cultivates in us submission of obedience to God, and the need to be possessed by God and the sense of duty to complete fidelity to God. It leads us to the prudent and firm avoidance of every occasion of sin, because every occasion of sin, in the vision of humility, appears as the beginning of sin, as indeed it is. In this avoiding the occasions of sin there is the guarantee of victory over all temptations.

322.

Once the enemy has succeeded in getting close to us, he makes us feel all the attraction or the propensity to sin and to all the voices of seduction that say: "there is nothing wrong in it! Everybody does it!" Our justification is ready. Only holy humility reinforces the voice of the conscience that firmly and clearly asserts: "No! It is not permitted!". Only holy humility inclines the soul to respond: "No, it shall not be done!" Thus humility cuts any reasoning with the enemy. Holy humility compels us to close any possible entry to the influence of the enemy and to embrace ourselves to the Lord and wake him up, in case he were asleep at the stern.

323.

If after using the sacramentals, repeated acts of contrition and of perfect charity, we do not regain the sense of purity of con-

science, even though we are talking only of venial sins, holy humility infuses in us the conviction and the prayer: "On account of my sins I am not worthy to enjoy peace of conscience. Have mercy, my God, I trust in you". If after a good confession the sense of perfect reconciliation does not return, humility helps us to stay away from the torture of doubting about the integrity of our dispositions and acts and with renewed pain and sorrow, enables us to pray: "Let it be so, since I am not worthy to enjoy peace of conscience, I abandon myself to divine mercy".

324.

The painful surprise of not quickly and perfectly enjoying peace of conscience, after we have confessed, detested and cancelled our sin in the blood of the Savior, indicates presumption of pride on our part; it indicates how we have badly adjusted to a false forgetfulness of the committed sin, as if the most generous forgiveness of our sins on the part of the Lord should be repaid by us with a most profound forgetfulness of our sins. It remains eternally true that we have offended God. Humility nurtures itself of this truth and without further consideration about the circumstances of temptation, remembers the gravity of the sins committed saying: "My sin is always before me⁸" and for my humiliation I want it always before me.

325.

Note the difference of spirit. My sin is before me in its temporal elements, in its external consequences, in its human effects; I find all this repugnant, I wish it had never happened and thinking of it I get irritated on account of my impotence to destroy it and this perturbs, disheartens, discourages and entraps me in my own self.

⁸ Ps 50, 5.

This is the spirit of evil! It must be rejected! It is a form of pride! I must quickly get rid of it! My sin is before me as an offense to God, in its eternal effects, in its interior consequences, I am very sorry, it breaks my heart and prompts me to serious resolutions, it gives me an extraordinary will power to fight evil, in order to regain a superior good, and throws me peaceful and confident in the arms of my God, for a new intimacy with his heart. This is the spirit of good. I must follow it! It is a form of humility! It must be cultivated!

326.

In the peace of reconciliation, in order to stabilize and make it permanent, moved by the spirit of love with which we have been welcomed, forgiven and re-admitted to the intimacy with the Lord, we keep perpetuating, deepening and expanding the judgment of condemnation: I have sinned: It remains eternally true that I have sinned. A sin I should never have committed: It is such a grievous sin that compared to it every physical evil is a good. Sin is an evil worse than death, worse than hell, even worse than the devil himself, because from it comes every death. It constitutes the hell of hell. This is the first characteristic of the moral physiognomy of the humble.

327.

As always the angel accompanies us. (It seems that after the resurrection from sin, the angel stays closer to us reconciled with God in order to celebrate our return, also on account of the fragility of our spiritual recovery, and out of fear of a possible relapse). We continuously hear the admonition: "you have offended the Lord, who is your God and your Father". In the presence and union of the angel, who has never offended God, we extend, deepen and perpetuate our sorrow, which renders us dearer to our Lord. This sorrow expands, deepens and perpetuates the grace of forgive-

ness, the feast of our return. This is the second characteristic of the moral physiognomy of the humble.

328.

Often we go to the Blessed Virgin Mary (or better, Mary comes to us in her perpetual visitation, in order to fulfill her function as mother, her mission as co-redeemer and co-sanctifier) we can never consider her apart from her Son Jesus, we constantly hear her motherly admonition: "You have caused the death of Jesus who is your all"! We should get used to consider places and objects, people, members and whatever has been object, occasion and instrument of sin for us or for others, as witnesses of the torturer of Jesus, we hear their accusations, we do not contradict them, we confess our crime and try to transform everything in reparation and glorification of the Lord. This is another characteristic of the moral physiognomy of the humble.

329.

Thus we do not forget the sin, from which we have been absolved, that has been cancelled from our conscience, whose truth however cannot be cancelled for all eternity and whose pain we must pay. Holy humility in one way crucifies our inferior part with the sense of our guilt, as one condemned to death that expects any moment the execution of the sentence. On the other side it elevates us to union with the divine justice, which we want to expiate, even though we know that we cannot do adequately (pride presumes to expiate beyond any debt, thus trying to regain terrain with illusory generosity). We continue to invoke the divine justice for a continuous reduction and indulgence of the sum of our debts.

330.

In our prayers, visits, holy communions, intimacy with our

God, we are always aware of our abjection, our fault, the infinite malice of our sin that we had the misfortune of committing, even if only once! This remembrance and this sense renders more tender and more pathetic our relationship with the Lord, expands it and disposes us better to the effusion of grace. We want to hasten and extinguish any debt that is always an obstacle between creditor and debtor. We are always thankful for the opportunity of repaying our debts in this world or in the other, and to choose from among the various penalties. We want to satisfy all our debts soon and in this life, we choose and pray to obtain to do it in the flames and with the wounds of divine love; these are the supreme pains and the most worthy.

Chapter VI

Contrition

331.

Charity and humility work together in granting us a supernatural taste of the act of contrition and to make it a part of every devotional practice, in all our interior life; this harmoniously corresponds to the order of redemption in which we are and to the predominating motif of reparation, in the exercise of our holy religion. If we must make reparation, we should start making it for us. If reparation has an objective it is sin, and first of all, our sins. If reparation has a practical principle, it is the sorrow for our sins, first, and then those of others; from here comes the devotion of the acts of contrition.

332.

The humble is not satisfied with the act of contrition, only when it is indispensable, as in the preparation to confession, in the immediate disposition and absolution. We cannot conceive an examination of conscience, whether general or particular, whether at noon or in the evening, without the exercise of the act of contrition. The objective of our examinations of conscience is the eradication of sins; it is not sufficient to verify and know that they are there, we must immediately and firmly apply the weapon of sorrow. Also the preventive examinations of conscience are very effective. They precede the act of contrition for our moral miser-

ies, against which we want to strengthen our will at the beginning of the day and before the various series of actions.

333.

The humble is not satisfied of exercising the acts of contrition at the time of his confession or examinations of conscience. Whenever during the day we are warned by internal perturbation, or by remorse of conscience for any fault, we should make an act of contrition. By the minor or major promptness, easiness and sincerity with which we make it, we may measure the major or minor humility of the soul. At every remembrance of past sins, awakened by external circumstance of places, people or actions, we respond with an act of contrition. We should arrive at enjoying these acts of contrition as a special devotion, making like private rosaries of them in order to render our entire life, exercise of cult of love and religious sorrow.

334.

In multiplying his acts of contrition, the humble enjoys wisdom and takes advantage of the prudence of holy humility. Humility renders the humble happy to multiply the acts of contrition for his poor past, he would like to diminish and annul the possibility of sinning, in order to a holier future. Holy humility renders the humble happy to multiply the acts of contrition also for imperfections, preserves and almost immunizes him from falling into grievous faults. The humble is likewise happy to make acts of contrition for sins of others, both in his name and in the name of others, for whatever they may be imputable to him. This preserves and almost immunizes him from falling in personal faults.

335.

In the exercise of the acts of contrition we do not disdain those

motivations that are called imperfect, both related to more perfect motivations and animated by a lesser love, because directed to an inferior good or object, as it is man in relation to God. The humble does not neglect these imperfect motives, first, for respect toward God, who has proposed them (it would be better to say *less perfect* rather than *imperfect*), then because many times there may not be, or one may not feel capable of more perfect motivations; also for a certain fear of a hidden pride that would make us reject the less perfect only to provide for us the bitter experience that often *better* is enemy of *good*. Finally these less perfect motives give us the opportunity to ascend to the better, the more perfect, helping us with so many steps of less perfect good yes, but yet true good.

336.

The true humble is the one who, more than all others, is capable of perfect contrition and perfect charity. Holy humility leads us to think lowly of ourselves and to forget ourselves; it compels us to go out of ourselves in order to think only of God, to want only God and to please only God, and this only for his glory. The humble, in all acts of sorrow for sins, wants to arrive, and usually arrives to true and perfect contrition, to the point of acquiring an enviable, holy habitude. He gets used to hate fault as an offence to God, rather than something wrong done to himself; he thus verifies the mutual influence of cause and effect, which is the main harmony between perfect charity and perfect humility.

337.

The humble finds reasons for internal confusion and humiliation, in the very acts of contrition, considering and often sensing that they are not as intense as they should be. We want these acts to be intense, and we try our best to make them so, and we render them intense before the Lord at least with the explicit and effective desire. Even when our acts of contrition are intense to the

maximum, we find reasons for confusion and humiliation, since they can never be adequate to the offense made to God; because of this we continuously find refuge in the Sacred Heart and in the wounds of Jesus, uniting our contrition to the agony of Jesus in the garden and on the cross, and our few tears to the precious blood of Jesus, shed out of love and pain.

338.

With this spirit, the humble, while exercising his sorrow for sins for less perfect reasons, even in them he gets closer to perfection and generally succeeds in rendering them perfect, because considering any pain of sense, in this world or in hell, he regrets having induced the Sacred Heart to such an immense pain, of having to punish his beloved creature. If he considers the pain of damage, in this world or in hell, what pains him the most is lack of love and glory of love to a God who is so deserving of being glorified in love. So, the pain for the grievous ingratitude, that is sin, toward the giver of every good, is, beyond any doubt, perfect contrition. The humble gets into the habit of re-ascending to God through everything, and especially through God's gifts, received and used for God alone. In God we rest. Him alone we want and love, in his very self and in his gifts.

339.

This very frequent act of contrition becomes the best practical application of the biblical teaching: "Do not stop regretting and fearing for the sin already forgiven" that is, do not count on the forgiveness already received, in order to add sin upon sin. Rather of falling into the tormenting anxieties of imprudent, baseless, sickening doubt about our previous confessions, we should perfect our contrition. With this spirit, we also guarantee the effectiveness of our resolutions, that depends directly from the intensity and presence of our sorrow for sin, just as the fruit depends

from the tree. The lack of a continuous exercise of acts of contrition is what weakens and almost annuls the force, slows down and nearly suspends the influence of holy resolutions.

340.

The exercise of acts of contrition is highly recommended every time we start a devotional practice, a work of ministry, every time we enter a Church, at the very entrance, like the publican. How can we start a conversation with the Lord if there is something between him and us? How can we apply ourselves to the things of God, if our conscience is in turmoil? How can we present ourselves to the Lord if there is some ugliness in the interior habits of the soul? Even if everything is normal, how can we ever forget that we live in a world, in an environment of sin, and that we ourselves, even if only once and venially, have offended the divine majesty, to whom we come and from who we would want to be well received and pleased?

341.

Even the direct or indirect knowledge of present and past sins of others is cause for confusion and humiliation for the soul that wants to progress in humility. First, because we see in the sins of others our own capacity of committing similar or worst faults, we are led to compassion toward our neighbor, to make reparation for the offenses toward God, and to give thanks for those who have been preserved from such failures; secondly, in particular, for the offenses committed in our area or in our time. We justly fear that there may be in them part of our fault for omission of some part, form or level of apostolate through which we could have directly or indirectly impeded and preserved others from sinning.

342.

Even more this exercise of the acts of contrition is recommend-

ed, in preparation to the great favors, of which, sometimes we have a hint, an internal presentiment or invitation even external. These are the vigils of the feast days; this is the best way to live the mystical vigils and the liturgical vigils. There is no more effective way to attract the Lord of grace than humility, and amongst all the acts of humility the most necessary and most sensible is the sorrow for sins. The connection between contrition and great graces is so close, that every internal impulse to explicit acts of contrition for sins is always the beginning and promise of an imminent extraordinary divine favor.

Second exercise: Resolution

343.

Every good act of contrition must always imply a resolution to never sin again. It may be contained only implicitly. Humility requires that such a resolution be always explicit and ever more explicit. A form of hidden pride would like to just presume it; as if one were to say: "It is well understood, it is clear, no use to say it, because now I hate sin, I have repented, I am no longer capable of committing it". Humility has no room for such presumptions and will fight them whenever they would appear in us. The humble explicitly says, and repeats to himself, to the whole world and above all to God his determination never to offend him again, in any way. This firm resolution reveals, confirms and strengthens the good will not to sin any more.

344.

In the case of contrition, the principle that general things are of little value does not apply. It is absolutely necessary that the resolution be general, in the sense that is extended to effectively exclude every offense to God. Humility however is pleased to start

and complete this mandatory, general resolve, with the particular determination of avoiding specific faults that we have committed in the recent or remote past (in this particular resolve, in addition to the general motivations, we include also the motivations offered by the circumstances and consequences of our faulty acts, and all that constitutes concretely their particular malice). From these particular, personal faults we extend our contrition, with hatred, sorrow and resolve, to all other possible faults of which we are capable, and from these we return to the particular, personal concrete sins that we have committed focusing on them all hatred, sorrow and our resolve formed and exercised against sin in general.

345.

True resolve is the one in which all hatred to sin is concretized in avoiding the occasion of sin. Every fault is so closely connected with its occasion that we cannot hate one without hating the other, or run away from one without avoiding the other. Pride would like to convince others and us to believe that good will is sufficient to avoid faults, and that it is not necessary to stay away and avoid the occasions. Pride would like for us to see and admit this word. The word of pride! Humility makes us doubt of ourselves, especially after a fall. The experience of our weaknesses increases our distrust in our own strength and keeps us safe with the avoidance of the occasions; this is the only winning strategy!

346.

Many a times, the flight from occasions, especially if imposed by the superiors as a precaution or punishment, may generate suspicion or offer to our neighbor a pretext to think that we have fallen and have been punished. In these circumstances it is more repugnant to our pride to stay away and avoid the occasion of sin. Pride would like to convince us that the occasions are necessary,

and that it would be sufficient to take special precautions to render them remote and thus avoid any possible bad example to our neighbor. Holy humility will help us to see, that, in these cases, the best good example that we may give, as poor sinners that we are, is only the flight from the occasions, even if it should cost the loss of our good reputation. This loss, if it were ever to take place, will be well compensated by the good edification given by the person that stays away from sin.

347.

Humility makes us understand that the real good example of the flight from the occasions of sin, positively overcomes the possible bad example deriving from the suspicion of a possible fault of ours. Humility enables us to renounce, even in spirit of humiliation, to a reputation, to which, in our case, we have lost any right, on account of our sin. Humility makes us justly fear worst and more visible failures if, only for reasons of pride, we do not leave or avoid the painful occasion we have experienced. Humility, especially with this flight from the occasions when it infringes on our reputation, gives a mortal blow to our self-love and offers us in a true holocaust to the divine truth and holiness and brings us back to celebrate our first triumph over our pride and the insinuations of hell.

348.

Humility incites us to get to know all the precautions excogitated by the saints and that reason, faith and the experience of the saints have found to be the best guarantee from evil. Humility incites us to embrace them generously and practice them and use them constantly. Regardless of how much time has passed since our last fall, regardless of how impossible a relapse may appear, and regardless of how much our internal conditions may have changed, holy humility makes us fear the possibility of remain-

ing undefended, if we were to discontinue those precautions that we experienced effective in the past. Humility is reaffirmed and reaches some kind of heroism if we persevere in using those personal precautions against evil.

349.

Holy humility inspires us a healthy distrust of ourselves, and nurtures it with the awareness and experience of our ignorance, weakness and feebleness. This distrust does not limit itself only to the fear of relapse in the same sins, but extends to all possible faults, from those that appear as the lightest ones to those that are the most grievous and abominable. This distrust does not weaken us with discouragement, but enriches us with prudence and the holy fear in our frail human will, to the point that our distrust becomes our safest guarantee against any relapse. Blessed is the man who distrusts himself, and lives always in the fear of the Lord. *The man who hardens his hearts will fall in sin*¹.

350.

This holy distrust of ourselves is extended to all our life in time, it is based on our knowledge and experience of the perils that come from the world and its spirit of profanity, from the devil and his fine spirit of pride, from sensuality, vainglory or human spirit, with all the implications of self love; dangers continue to come from our fallen nature, from our environment impregnated with bad influences. Only holy humility detects the danger, gives us a timely alarm, preserves us from the contamination of the triple enemy, without its shield, its antidote and its preservative we will not remain immune from the contagion of evil. Blessed is the man who always distrusts of the world, of the devil and of the flesh.

¹Prov. 28, 14.

351.

Holy humility, in proportion of the distrust of our self and of the world, leads us to trust in the Lord, in his grace, in his merits, in his examples and in his words with infinite trust, with an unsurpassable intimacy of confidence. Without counting on our own experiences, forces, precautions and other defensive tools, we resolve and trust to live our entire life without committing any sin, trusting on divine grace. We know that we must be aware of and use all our initiatives and efforts as a necessary disposition and cooperation to grace, but our trust is in the Lord's grace.

352.

Holy humility makes us generous in the holy resolve of hatred to sin, as its object. Not only decisively stabilizes our will against mortal sin, but also against any deliberate venial sin, and also (as far as it is possible without a special privilege) applies it to avoid many, many semi-deliberate imperfections, through virtuous acts of reflection and prayer, through the habit of doing everything with internal and external perfection, starting with the smallest and the most common ones. True humility does not favor the feebleness that is afraid of heights and greatness, but compels us always to the maximum, and especially in the observance of the duties of the creature toward the creator and of the veneration for the rights of the creator over the creature.

353.

Humility spearheads us to the knowledge and the use of all the means and pious initiatives to strengthen our will and keep it in the observance of saintly resolves. Humility does not fear anything more than the weakness and inconsistency of our human will. Nothing is more apt to mortify us and to nurture our humility than this internal humiliation. Humility, however, moves us

to react and prevent this sickness of the will. It does not move us to spurn and put aside the most simple and natural tools, so to speak, like hygiene and exercises of the will. We will value above all and prefer supernatural tools, with which we honor and invite divine immutability.

354.

Amongst the external means apt to strengthen the will the most humble and the most effective is to place ourselves and to remain under the vigilance, the control of the will of another person. Not only of those persons that already have authority over us, but also of another person from whom totally voluntarily we will depend. So that we may get more benefit, this person is chosen by someone else who really is interested in our wellbeing and not in our pleasure. It is not a question of our spiritual director or a brotherly corrector but of a person and function that may combine something of both of them. He will be like a close-by educator of our will, often present.

355.

It is an instinct of pride to hide whatever may humiliate us, especially our faults. Humility is pleased to make light of the truth for us and for others on whatever may humiliate us, especially our faults. Our Lord Jesus has rendered the free and integral confession of our sins one of the necessary conditions for absolution, for divine forgiveness and reconciliation, for the complete cancellation of spiritual stains and for the full justification of the guilty, in the sacrament of Confession. Frequent confession is the very first exercise of humility about the accusation of our own sins.

356.

The divine institution of the sacrament of confession reveals to

us that the humiliation of confessing our moral failures is a condition for every reparation and redemption from evil. With this humiliation we reveal, strengthen and prove the sorrow for sin, the resolve not to fall again and the willingness to make reparation. It is the first satisfaction rendered to divine justice. Without it our sorrow is clearly in doubt, any repentance for sin, any resolve not to sin again, any willingness of reparation is null. Holy humility makes us accept with love such a condition in our decayed world, helps us to embrace this practice to the point of acquiring a holy habit and the ability of doing it as by supernatural instinct.

357.

Pride tends to occupy and impregnate all our conversations with stories, processes and condemnations of true, exaggerated or imaginary faults of others and constitutes us as their universal and illegal judges. Humility tends to occupy and impregnate our conversation with sincere, painful, reparatory acknowledgments and confessions of our faults. Pride tends to occupy and impregnate our conversations with endless confidences on our personal, physical and moral sufferings, in order to be pitied as victims and venerated as martyrs. Humility tends to occupy and impregnate them with confidences on our numerous, moral deficiencies in order to be known as we are and to be helped to become what we must be.

358.

There are many ministers of penance; we may find it confusing and mortifying the opening of our conscience to some, and easier or even pleasant to open up to others, for natural reasons. Without jeopardizing the integrity of our confession, considering the parity of the other advantages we may receive from the minister of confession, holy humility compels us to approach the confessor with whom we may experience greater confusion and humiliation.

359.

We have matter for confusion and humiliation before the Lord when we notice the presence, and some time the prevalence, of our pride in the very reparation we want to make for our sins. We sense that pride enters into the sorrow for our faults and renders us more sensible to human and natural motives of our wounded self-love, for the shame of the sins, for our responsibility before men, because we have compromised our good reputation and have lost esteem and trust. Having to make reparation, we want to do it before those persons, in the ways and circumstance of time and places, and in the measure that we find less humiliating. Humility fights and reacts to all this, and in this more than in any other case applies itself to *agere contra - act against*.

360.

We understand that the direct and main objective of confession is not the achievement and culture of humility, but the forgiveness and reparation of sins, through the blood of the Redeemer's grace, obtained with the act of the penitent and of the confessor. Since every sin to be absolved is essentially a form of pride, divine justice has instituted this sacrament in form of mandatory and free humiliation, under some aspects. The generosity or the reluctance with which we impose upon ourselves and embrace this humiliation has an influence upon the effects of the sacrament; if not on the grace of forgiveness, certainly on the reparation and preservation from sin.

361.

The humble of heart will exhibit even externally a posture of humility, certainly not as ostentation, but in order to conform the external to the internal dispositions. Especially while going, making and returning from the sacramental confession we will

exhibit a humble attitude. While confessing he will display the consciousness of being guilty, his willingness of truthful accuser and repairer for sin. Returning from confession he will manifest the calm and serene joy of the re-conquered peace, with gratitude and devotion to the minister of forgiveness. He will kneel before the priest as before his judge; he will bow his head to receive the sentence with full submission, with his hands joined in prayer to indicate that he will receive his exhortations with total reverence and obedience. He will accuse himself with words and accents of heartfelt pain.

362.

Holy humility triumphs especially in the accusations of sins. He does not need many words: The humble knows how to combine perfect integrity with the brevity of the accusation. Pride multiplies the words, especially when must talk against himself, because he knows how to hide, mitigate, justify his wrongdoing, and so find some satisfaction. The humble will say first what is most difficult to confess, and with reverence and politeness due to the sacrament he will manifest all his ignominies according to their species, number and significant circumstances, especially in what is necessary matter.

363.

As truly humble we will not limit our confession to strictly necessary matter. For the saintly desire of humiliating ourselves before the Lord and his minister, we will extend our confession to free matter, accusing it as we see it, i.e. as certain or as doubtful without exaggeration or anxiety. For our holy desire of making light on the labyrinth of our conscience, we will manifest the hidden causes of our faults, the genesis of our passions, because some time the true culpability lays more in their causes than in the faulty acts, that are the sad epilogue of the internal proceed-

ings of evil. All this is done always briefly, leally and humbly aiming at a full reparation and certain preservation from evil.

364.

True humility enables us to know, appreciate, desire and receive the great gift of spiritual direction. Only the humble wants to be directed; he is directed and favored by the Lord with a supernatural direction through the work of his minister. The humble will have no difficulty in finding a spiritual director, because he does not have illusion, nor presumption that exceptional wisdom or sanctity is required for the direction of his soul; the Lord blesses this conviction of the humble. While going, making and returning from spiritual direction we will exhibit even externally the attitude of a person who really needs advice and guidance from another that may provide for him the counsel and guidance that he cannot get by himself. He receives it as true gift from the Lord and is grateful to his minister as of the greatest benefit and of the supreme form of Christian friendship.

365.

In spiritual direction we exercise the immolation of self-love and the abnegation of the will by following the guidance received. If the world of our temptations, the turbid world of our temptations were revealed it would fill us with confusion; this implies that in the temptations there is part of our fault and our inclination to sin. If our intellectual deficiencies, moral miseries, personal illusions, frailty of heart, instability of character, secret ambitions were manifested, they would mortify us in proportion of our self-love. Humility inclines us to make known our most intimate and most revealing confidences of those things that we would like to keep in the dark, in silence, because certainly in them is hidden an enemy, and in them also is most mortally vulnerable our pride.

366.

The humble will never excuse himself, when accused. As a just, the humble will always be the first one to accuse himself. He lives always under the dependence of a superior, and he recognizes the right of the superior to know everything that he does externally. The humble, outside of the confession and spiritual direction, spontaneously accuses every external, defective act that may have happened, convinced that hiding such information, to the one who should fully know his subjects, would be not only pride but also injustice. He behaves the same way with the superior and with any person for every fault that they may have noticed in him, whenever someone has been displeased or hurt on account of his fault. The humble always considers himself a sinner with sincere and modest humility, without any shadow of bitterness or resentment, without sheltering in the easy justification of subjective absence of malice in his personal sins.

Fourth exercise: Penitence

367.

Holy humility prompts us to heartily accept the pain due to our sin, as satisfaction to divine justice. When we are prompted to implore the remission of sin and the indulgence of the pain, we should do it for the greater glory of the merit of Jesus Christ, of divine mercy, bounty and love. When we feel the urge to make complete reparation, even in this world, for all the pain due to us, and maybe also to others, we will do it for a greater imitation of Jesus Savior, in order to experience greater horror and hatred for sin, and generosity of abnegation of love, making sure to exclude in both cases any form of hidden pride under opposite forms of sensuality that fears suffering, or of pride that defies the pains.

368.

Holy humility prepares us to any infirmity in spirit of satisfaction for sin. Whenever we are sick, we embrace it lovingly, with its discomforts, its dangers and its annoyances for us. It enables us to pray that we may resign to what is even worse than our sickness, that is to be of discomfort, of danger, of annoyance to others, while we would have loved to be for everyone always a cause of joy, love and help. In our infirmities, humility renders us submissive to doctors, nurses, and regimes of cure without rebellion, to privations, incomprehension and abandonment without complaints. Humility enables us to accept any sickness without anxieties and irritability about coming out of it totally restored or dead; it will also refrain us from asking for a miracle, if it implies some kind of presumption.

369.

In spirit of penitence, holy humility disposes us to accept death, in union with all divine intentions and dispositions of the death of the saints, of St. Joseph, of the Blessed Mother and of our Savior Jesus. Humility prepares us to renew this act of acceptance of death at the end of every day, at the end of any series of activities, at any danger that we have encountered or may face, at any sudden shock. Humility also encourages us to meditate often on death, to visit cemeteries and funeral homes in order to familiarize with this supreme humiliation of human life, with this greatest pain for human fault.

370.

Holy humility entertains us with the consideration of our faults only to expiate, hate and make reparations for them. Humility is avid of sacramental absolutions and fosters a special devotion to the liturgical confessions of Compline and of the morning and

of every Mass. We learn and follow the example of the liturgy, so we pray often the Confiteor, in the occasions that seem more convenient, as entering the Church or at the beginning of solemn devotions; likewise we make generous use of priestly blessings, of the holy water and of all sacramentals. We use all these devotions in order to obtain all the blessed effects of each one of them, but especially for the purification of sin. Humility is a great means of spiritual purification and must be present in all acts of purification, because without humility they would be of little value.

371.

Holy humility uses our past sins to elevate us to the Lord. Likewise it uses the sum of our debts that, with our sins, we have contracted with the divine justice. The weight of our sins, can either immerge us in confusion without diffidence, or elevate us, as on a pedestal, with confidence without presumption. Humility does the same with all our other moral miseries, all due to original sin or to our personal sins. In all souls, these debts and miseries are a serious impediment to the union and intimacy with the Lord. In the humble, and only for the humble, they are effective means, foundation and nourishment for the exercise of humility that pleases the divine truth. If we are humble, we will be able to recognize, accept, pay and make reparation for all our debts and human miseries.

372.

Humility induces us to accept with gratitude the penance imposed by the minister of forgiveness, and makes us aware that it is always very much inadequate to pay for our immense debt, at times, it even provokes us to ask for a heavier penance, since we will be happier, knowing the great value added to it by the grace of the sacrament. In our sacramental penance we see and receive, from the same hand that absolves us, all other pains of life, with

the intention of embracing them all in spirit of humility and with contrite heart, in union with the intentions and dispositions of Jesus in his passion and death.

373.

With the spirit of penance for our sins, holy humility enables us to consider, accept and love, desire, procure and observe effective poverty with its privations and humiliations, according to our status and duties. Holy humility also places us in the sense and status of universal servitude, as it is convenient to real poor. Holy humility compels us to accept privations and humiliations only for ourselves; regarding others it makes us faithful and laborious servants of all, and makes us productive even in material goods, for their greater spiritual and temporal good.

374.

There are other penalties for our sins toward which, holy humility, compels us to have an aggressive attitude. While we recognize that we deserve such penalties, while we accept them with patience, holy humility leads us to react in order to overcome them, to intensify our purification so as to complete it and come out of the suffering and influence of those penalties that may comport the danger of other sins. Holy humility makes us feel unworthy to enjoy peace of conscience; it enables us even to accept the cross of involuntary anxiety, scruples and doubts without end. Humility fights any discouragement coming from this status of internal anxiety and fears staying too long with tempestuous and disquieted conscience, which is the effect of our fault and of Satan's presence. This would constitute an internal environment propitious to many, better, to all sins. With perfect obedience humility enables us to come out victors of the infirmity or test of doubts and scruples.

375.

Humility enables us to accept and suffer our ignorance as a pain of original and personal sins. We will never avoid appearing ignorant, but, when the occasion comes, we shall confess our ignorance on whatever subject, saving prudence and obedience, without pretending to know or not to remember what we do not know and never learned. We accept until death the condition of being perpetual disciples at the school of Jesus. We apply ourselves to study what we must learn and to deepen what we must know, even while remaining aware that we will never completely eliminate the shadows of ignorance, before the day of eternity.

376.

Holy humility reminds us that even our concupiscence is a pain of original sin and of all other personal sins. Holy humility compels us to fight every impulse to evil, every delight of sin, every weakening of modesty within us, all degeneration and slanting toward the matter, every languor and dangerous moroseness. Humility makes us feel with pain these influences of the senses, these attractions to dirt, these immersions into the matter, this tyranny of the flesh. To humble ourselves for these things equals to distance ourselves from them, it is a victory for the present moment, it is a weakening of them for the future, it is a liberation and elevation of the spirit.

377.

Even from temptation of any kind and proceeding from any source (from the devil, from men, from the flesh, from the world), holy humility provides us with occasions of confusion and humiliation. Humility reveals or reminds us of our capacity to sin, and of all the power that, with our faults, we have given to the enemy over us. They are the ruinous effect of the bewilderment that our

faults have caused in our moral order, they are the consequence and influence of our faults; they lead us to the next worst step in their species. To acknowledge our responsibility is already a step toward victory.

378.

Humility keeps reminding us that in every sin there is the damage of fault and the damage of pain. We are led to cancel the first with confession and the second with purgatory. In humility we accept all the pains of purgatory, whether the Lord grants us to do it in this life, with whatever may be effective for that purpose or whether he reserves it for us in the other life. The pains of Purgatory differ from the infernal ones only in their duration. Humility urges us to ask that we may do it in this life and in the flames of love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Let us renew, in every examination of conscience, this act of acceptance of the purgatory chosen for us and reserved for us by the justice of divine love.

PART IV

ASCETICAL GUIDELINES
FOR
HOLY CHARITY

HOLY CHARITY

CHAPTER I

Life and Value of every Virtue

379.

The first and greatest commandment is that of love; it contains the whole law. We must constantly make of it the first and maximum object of study, in order to acquire all the philosophy and theology of charity. We want to make of it our first and most important practice of our life, in order to complete all the apostolate of charity, in order to reach, through all levels of charity, to the consummated divine union.

380.

Divine charity is the life and value of all virtues. We want to saturate of charity all our actions and works. Since charity eminently contains all virtues, we want to concentrate, elevate and transform in it every virtuous act and work, so that all our life may be called more with the name of *charity* than with any other special name. Even in this, and especially in this, we want to imitate God, who "*Charitas est - is love*".

381.

Charity is a theological virtue, infused exclusively by the blessed

Trinity in our soul, through the Holy Spirit and for the merits of the most precious blood of Jesus, always inseparably with grace, proportionately to grace. The first exercise must be that of growing ever more in grace, as cause and effect of charity; first because grace, through the sacraments brings us charity, and secondly, because in turn charity increases in us grace, through its acts.

382.

From this derives our permanent and ever growing hunger and thirst to receive ever more holy sacramental absolutions, and even more never to miss (cost what it may) any opportunity to receive Eucharistic Communion, to participate to as many Masses as it is possible, to gain all the indulgences we can. We want to be continually paying the price of the most precious blood and always making multi-form and innumerable acts of charity.

383.

In every sacrament properly received we infallibly obtain an infusion and increase of grace "*ex opere operato - in force of the sacrament itself*". We also receive precious increase of grace at every holy deed; supreme for us are the great Sacrifice of the Mass, and the small sacrifice of the Offerings of the most precious blood, and every other virtuous act performed in state of grace and for motives and objectives of faith; from among all, more especially and more intently, the multiform and innumerable acts of holy love.

384.

The acts of love, if not made with the intensity and potentiality of the grace that we have accumulated in our soul, are not sufficient to make us grow in grace and love. They must be made with the greatest intensity, without shadows that may encumber our

intimacy with the Lord, without languishing of negligence, but truly perfect in everything, in their goal, in their object, circumstances and ways.

385.

The amount of personal and common debts that we have accumulated with the Lord may easily impede the intensity of our acts of love. Besides all other good reasons, the lover of the Lord must acquire all the possible indulgences, and all other necessary purifications with the intent to eliminate all obstacles, shadows, slowing-down or lukewarmness in the relationship of holy love with the Lord, not for egoistic and human motives, but for divine reasons.

CHAPTER II

Acts of Love

386.

All our apostolate, spiritual direction, and the ascetical practices are reduced to acts of love that grow through consecrations. To cooperate with grace we must eliminate all impediments that are dead or false love; on this we must exercise the abnegation of the heart required by divine jealousy of grace that want to direct and possess our heart; thus will be achieved the purification of love that cancels our debts.

386A

All our wisdom, practice, direction and apostolate will ultimately be reduced to acts of love, corresponding to the various relationships, states and levels of love. These acts of love, in turn, progressively operate in the soul the various conversions, consecrations, relationships of love. In the various levels of love, there is a need for variety required by prudence, in order to revitalize more its flames, and by the very nature of love, its relationships and its levels.

387.

Our cooperation to divine grace that infuses in us charity does not consist only in the removal of obstacles of debts, but also in the

removal of every other impediment and every other love. Since the value and merit of every virtue consists in the level of charity that animates them, and charity contains them all eminently, so to the contrary, the true evil of every fault consists in the level of false love that animates them. A flawed love contains eminently in itself every defect.

388.

Every false love, any vain love, any superfluous love, any dead love, any corrupted love is an impediment to divine charity. False love is the one cultivated toward a false good. Vain love is the one for a vain good. Superfluous love is the one for a true good, but loved beyond measure. It is dead love the one not animated by divine charity. Corrupted love, and consequently poisonous, is the one that divine charity previously had made us reject.

389.

On every false, vain, dead or corrupted love, we must exercise the abnegation of the heart, required by the divine jealousy of divine charity, which wants to be the sole to inspire, inflame, direct and regulate the human heart in each affection and relation. Divine charity wants to be for the human heart its only life, its only soul, its only all, as God is its unique love. Let us condemn as false, vain, dead or corrupted every love not inspired, directed and animated by divine charity.

390.

The abnegation of the heart, the purification of love, in which is contained the purification of every fault and the abnegation to every attachment, is the other form of human cooperation to the divine grace of divine charity. God's love will infuse it in the soul and from the soul will inflame the world, will glorify heaven and

will unite us to God, in proportion of its emptiness, freedom and immunity from any false, vain, superfluous or dead love.

391.

This removal of impediments forms the double cooperation to divine charity, in the negative part. The satisfaction of debts concerns more directly the Lord, with whom we have contracted them. The abnegation of love and the purification of the heart concern more our neighbor, the creatures and our own self that we have soiled. The positive cooperation does not consist only in the fruitful reception of the sacraments.

392.

The positive cooperation is also double: precisely concerning God consists in the reception of the sacraments and in every act of charity; concerning all creatures, our neighbor and ourselves, it consists in the loving study of divine amiability, perfections and exigencies of love, revealed through creation, seen in the creatures and made present to us, in us. Love depends always, both in natural and supernatural order, from knowledge and esteem.

CHAPTER III

Pilgrimage of Love

393.

After the means of the sacraments, of the act of charity, satisfaction of debts and purification of the heart comes the study of God, that we call pilgrimage of love, the first pilgrimage of love; through it the soul goes from one thing to another, from one book to another, from saints to saints, from mystery to mystery as a beggar of love. In everything and in everybody we, patiently and constantly, search the ray of amiability of God, the spark and the dart of divine love.

394.

The knowledge and relation with creatures, the study and the acquiring of any science, our own body, heart, mind, personality, freedom and grace have no other purpose but the divine love for the divine union. From the saints, from the angels, from the friends of God, from purgatory we beg for something more. They may give us their own love for God, through the communion of the saints, and we want to treasure it in our heart.

395.

Among the saints, some shine for special charismas of charity, and as pilgrims of love, we stop at their door to beg for more love.

We do not envy and we do not desire what is glorious, extraordinary, visible in their charismas, but desiring and imploring what is profound and elevated in their level of love, in their relationship with God, because we want to be a synthesis of all stages of love.

396.

To this end we tend to embrace all the practices of charity, starting with the less perfect and aiming at arriving to the most perfect; we begin with the sensible ones in order to arrive to the most heartfelt and spiritualized, going from the external to the internal, from the intellect to the will, with constancy and generosity, overcoming every internal and external temptation. The greatest commandment must face and have the greatest impediments and trials.

397.

May the Lord free us from insufficient esteem and use of the acts and states of sensible and felt love, toward our Lord Jesus Christ, from the scarce or lack of apostolate of them, as if they were something imperfect, dangerous, unworthy of the saints. We find them in paradise among the saints and even in the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary. They are a real exigency of the humanity of Jesus and ours; they are the connatural preparation to the highest and purest acts and states of love.

398.

The sensible act of love can and must be elevated to pure love, eliminating any intention and search, rest and delight of our sensible or spiritual pleasure. We want to intend, search, rest and enjoy only, in the delight and in the glory of Jesus, the man God, and through him of the Trinity. If he has given us a sensible heart, for Jesus and for himself he has given it to us, and he wants to be loved by real men.

They are the flowers of the soul in love; they are the flowers of love in the soul. In all truth, the fruits are more estimable, desirable and necessary than the flowers. If we do not have the flowers first, we will never have the fruits later. For charity sake, do not destroy the garlands of flowers of spring! You would never be able to harvest any fruit in the other seasons. The divine love says: *Sustain me with flowers!* And then it adds: *comfort me, nourish me with pomes.* Greet the fruits of love with the smiles of delight, as we welcome spring: *Blossom, flowers, like the lilies!*

CHAPTER IV

Manifestations of Love

400.

First exercise of sensible and heartfelt acts of love is the passionate glance, with which we fix our gaze on the Lord, in each of his print and vestige in the inferior creatures; in each of his image and likeness in the superior creatures, as to encounter each other in his infinite beauty and amiability, of which the lover has a particular cult. We are convinced that every glance of love from our part has been preceded by a look of the piercing eye of God.

401.

In the holy humility of Jesus we have a special devotion to his beautiful eyes that reveal his heart and his soul and for all the glances of love given to the souls, in the world and in heaven, in time and in eternity. We want to be with them in a continuous encounter and crossing of glimpses of love. We too want to pierce his heart with our pure and ardent glances of love, and in turn, we want to be wounded and inflamed by his divine glimpses.

402.

Second exercise of love is the word of love in its most lyric form of internal and external song, with which we do not cease to repeat and reaffirm in all ways and tunes, forms, occasions and means

our transport of love for Jesus and the Blessed Trinity in every revelation and mystery, in every act and state of Jesus, in himself, in the saints and angels, in Mary and in the Church, wrapping everything in love and penetrating everything with love.

403.

In a special way we express our cult to the direct, divine words: 1) searching them; 2) keeping them; 3) reading them over and over; 4) kissing them; 5) memorizing them; 6) writing them; 7) preaching them; 8) reciting them, 9) uniting ourselves to the Father, 10) to the Son, 11) to the Holy Spirit. We will use all those praises for the court of God's glory, all those imperatives for the triumph of the kingdom of God, all those expressions in order to assimilate them and to be assimilated to God.

404.

Every God loving person will never cease re-writing and commenting these *divine, direct words*; upon them he will do his daily meditation and preaching. He keeps repeating them to himself and teaching them to others, as scriptural rosaries; he tries memorizing them all and saying them, according to their content, in the person of the Father, in the person of the Son, or in the person of the Holy Spirit.

405.

The third exercise of love consists in orienting ourselves, even bodily, everywhere, night and day, toward the closest sacramental church, and trying to be as close as possible to the divine sacrament, God with us, when we are in church. We will try to remain with the Blessed Sacrament as long as possible, even if only to be bodily closer to him, as every sensitive love wants to do.

406.

We offer our heart as a tabernacle, ciborium, chalice to the Blessed Sacrament, wherever love calls us the most, like, for example, in some deserted, not well kept churches. We invite the angels, the saints, saint Joseph and Mary to occupy the four cavities of our heart, in some mystical way possible to them, in order to better honor with their comradeship the God with us, Jesus Eucharist, and for Jesus, with Jesus and in Jesus we honor God indwelling within us, the Blessed Trinity.

407.

We are well aware that he, the love God, in our heart, in our chest, as with his divinity he lives in the substance of the soul; he did not specify where he wanted to remain sacramentally, so that we, who love him, may figure it out; for this reason he shows his heart out of his chest, as if he were searching another heart to replace his, and he has made known to us what he did, in some intimacies, with some of his saints, the exchange of hearts.

408.

All this is, finally, ordained to reveal to us that he really holds us in his heart, carries us in his arms, nurtures us at his breast; he wants us to make our dwelling in his chest, to find our delight in his heart, with such a spiritual truth and fullness of divine union that overflows in sweetness of life, even in our inferior being, so that we may live of his humanity as we live of our various organs.

CHAPTER V

Gift of Love

409.

Fourth act of sensitive love is the gift. The gift is an external sign of the internal attraction, through that the lover starts his transition in the loved, to be fully united with him. This transition starts, partially, with the donation of what he possesses, of what he does; in the gift, the lover starts giving a part of himself, through what he possesses externally. The lover continues to give a bigger part of himself, through what he does internally, until he will be able to give all his being, in everything he does.

410.

The more we grow in love, the more generously we deprive ourselves of what we possess in order to donate it to Jesus, in his church, on his altars, to his ministers, to his poor to his works and for his kingdom. Whenever we possess something our first thought should be: how can this be utilized for the service of Jesus? How can we make of this an acceptable gift to Jesus? From a penny to a million, from one minute to one year, to a century, in every gift love includes itself with ever increasing fullness.

411

More than through its internal and external acts, love starts to offer gifts to Jesus through the exercises of Christian virtues;

these will be short at first, and then slowly they keep extending to the point of filling day and night, thus we can apply all our internal and external potential to the religious worship. Through the exercises of virtues we can sanctify that marvelous fecundity that we have and that we usually waste if the love of God does not possess us first and then turns us to reaching and possessing our God.

412.

Even profane love, in its vehemence, absorbs, after having excited it, all our marvelous activity of internal acts, but unfortunately, the loved one does capture what is internal, because he is outside and far away from the soul, even when he is close to the body. In our exercise and life of holy love, not even the smallest internal act, escapes to the delight and remuneration of our all-knowing and all-present God, to whom, even if it were for this alone, we should dedicate ourselves completely.

413.

We know that he takes the initiative in alluring us with as many acts of love as are the atoms in the created universe, as the instants that follow each other in the course of time. He attracts and fills us with the very infinite act of love that is himself in the three divine persons in whom and through whom he keeps us eternally present and loves us immensely. He continues to give us so many intimate, personal, sweet and cordial signs of love, that we alone experience, in the innermost of our soul.

414.

As we continue to grow in this attraction to God, or in the awareness of our loving attraction to God, we reach the fifth exercise of love: The visit through which we physically go to the

house, to the presence of the loved one, or to any other encounter, always alone and in solitude in order to more enjoy each other and be able to more concentrate one in the other with that totality and exclusivity that is proper to every intense passion of the heart.

415.

We multiply our visits to devout images, objects of devotion, and even more we look for solitude where to encounter our beloved and visit the various churches for the sake of being close to the tabernacle, where we enjoy the real presence of Jesus and of the Blessed Trinity in him; not because of any duty imposed by laws or rules, but for the need of the heart to see, to be close, to talk, to possess each other.

416.

The lover of divine union is recognized through these frequent moments of solitude, during the day, through these very frequent visits to the Sacrament of the altar. He longs for the hours of silence in order to be deeply immersed in God, this is the spirit and reason of religious silence, imposed at certain times and hours by the constitutions. This is a requirement of the love of God and of the soul; the same goes for the privilege of having the Blessed Sacrament in the house.

417.

The love God makes us understand that he wants to be visited in every country of the world; this is why the globe becomes a book of prayer. He wants to be visited in every person we encounter, in all the angels and especially in his angel, in all saints and especially in St. Joseph and in the blessed Mother, in our own soul in which is present the holy Trinity. Each divine person wants to

be visited in the other divine person, in whom is present through the divine circuminsession¹.

418.

Human lovers, when they cannot see each other in person, use letters to render each other this homage and delight of love. Even God's lover, notwithstanding the fact that he does not need the written letter because of the perennial presence of the loved one in whose immensity he lives, at times feels the impulse to use the written letter for his love-God, just as God sends his ever living, personal, new letter of Scripture. This writing to God may incentivize the fervor of charity.

419.

The Lord too visits the soul, at times all of a sudden, at times after pre-announcing his visit through signs, at times in solitude, at times in the midst of a multitude, applying, in a more intimate manner and with new effects of sanctification, the divine action of his word and of his presence to the soul to which he wants to donate this very desirable gift longed by the lover: the visit of God!

¹Circuminsession is a theological term that expresses the circulation of divine life among the three divine persone.

CHAPTER VI

Dialogue of Love

420.

As sixth exercise of love, we may consider: our conversing with the Lord in these epistolary or personal entertainments. They are talks of love and not of information, of instruction, of convenience and alike. In them we only seek directly and explicitly the manifestation of love, the nourishment for this flame, and the application of this spiritual force of love, to attract and transform everything and everybody in love.

421.

Indirectly, implicitly and even eminently in these talks of love we learn the science of God, we do the works of God and we enrich ourselves with the treasures of God. We, however, ought not, nor want, and at times we cannot even think of these effects, even though they are contained in the intention of God's glory and of our beatitude. We should be intent, directly and explicitly, on exercising love, and an ever-purer love.

422.

Everything must be part of these conversations; all that happens in our souls, everything that concerns us, even our temptations, confided to Jesus, become prayer. We should manifest to the

Lord our desires, needs, projects, duties, friendships, pains and everything. Even though the Lord knows all these things through his knowledge, he wants to hear them from us, as confidences of love.

423.

Even the Lord makes known and communicates to us, either through messages or directly, his things, proportionally to our intimacy, he reveals what is internal, to the point of sharing with us that he does not do anything without having first confided it to his loved ones. He does not hide anything to those he loves. There is no secret between those who are in love. We want to hear everything directly and personally from the one we love, even if we have heard it through other channels.

424.

These conversations are particularly favorable when we talk with the Lord of every thesis of study, of every chapter of the life of a saint, every sermon we have heard, transforming in love all the content of the intellect and memory. To our conversations the Lord responds imperceptibly, and at times even most passionately, giving us a thought after another almost without end, so that we may really enter into the celestial and eternal conversation, even while in this mortal life.

425.

We must reduce to an ever more attentive and fervent conversation our meditation, our examinations of conscience, and every other similar exercise. We should get so used to this intimate conversation, as to become able to continue it in every other material and intellectual conversation. We should be able to say within our soul to the one who dwells therein, or outside of our soul to the

immense God of the heart, everything, everything in confidences and songs of love, as it happens in God!

426.

This practice is required by the exigency of the zeal of love that becomes jealous if we talk to others without talking to them in him, or we talk of other things without talking of him in everything. This practice is also a necessity of the imitation of the most holy Trinity; it is a necessity of love, as the divine Trinity is in an eternal and infinite communication of love in the bosom of the Father, with the Word of the Father and in the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, and so it must be in my soul.

427.

To be close, to hug each other to the point of establishing immediate contact, is no longer sufficient to those who love intensely. Almost irresistibly they run one in the arms of the other, as to form one being of the two, almost as if one were to give all his spirit to the other in a breath of love; the all being is condensed in a prolonged kiss: Seventh exercise of intense love reserved to the loving God, the embrace and the kiss.

428.

The embrace and the kiss must be reserved to the loving and loved God; 1) because it is a supreme act of love due to the supreme love; 2) because it gives a sense of fullness to the heart, sense that is only convenient in the *all* that is God; 3) because it gives a sense of true rest to the spirit, sense that is proper to the ultimate goal that is God; 4) because they are a true flame of adoration, not due to the creature but to God alone; 5) because they mire to the outmost the zeal of love and they wound to jealousy every lover.

429.

These supreme acts of intense love should not be used easily not even with God, if inside does not really burst the vehemence of love that irresistibly compels us to them. As of the previous exercises of love, so of the last ones, and as with creatures so with God, stands true the principle that a love that is not intense, is no love, and if we express it, then it is a lie and a betrayal, unless the external signs increase the internal acts.

430.

At times, and in some people, the external acts of love may aid the rekindling of the internal fire and the re-awakening of a languishing or agonizing devotion; in such a case they may be utilized but always with due reverence, with full consciousness and with the express intention of nourishing our love for God and for people, as it is useful, to the same end, to reserve them for God alone.

431.

Embraces and kisses to the cross of Jesus, a big cross without the crucifix that everyone will have for this purpose. Embraces and kisses to the steps of the altar of the sacrifice, image of Jesus Christ! The same can be done with any sacred picture, extending this practice according to the personal devotion, but always in the secret of solitude, as required by love, in its most tender and intimate effusions.

432.

Reverently kiss in every flower the beauty of God. Kiss in the books the holy names, when we find them for the first time in a reading. Kiss every gift of divine providence. Kiss every object

that has been blessed. Kiss the hand of the priest thinking of Jesus and intending those kisses for Jesus Eucharist. Kiss the Baby Jesus, kiss the crucifix in each one of his wounds, in union with Mary, his mother.

433.

Spiritually kiss all the chains of the martyrs and instruments of martyrdoms, all the altars and ciboria, all the images and symbols of the creator and of the savior, all the words and gifts of the sanctifier of every soul, and remain with the soul in a perpetual embrace and kiss of the holy humanity of Jesus, the throne of the Trinity. The humanity of Jesus is, in exchange, the divine kiss and embrace to the soul.

434.

So that our acts may become ever more intense, ever more prolonged, ever more extensive even with our neighbor, and may become principles ever more elevated and fusing, as to form states and relationships of love for God and neighbor, corresponding to the many graces that the Lord continuously infuses and increases in the soul, we need to daily and wisely nurture this sacred fire of love.

435.

General principle: man must prepare, eliminating obstacle and organizing the matter to receive the infusion of supernatural life. He must also nurture it in order to conserve and increase it, if he does not want to see it languish and die, overwhelmed by opposing forces, by idleness and extinction of emotion. This is true of the grace of vocation, of devotion and of the fervor of love.

436.

We need to nurture holy charity for God and neighbor; we should nurture it with esteem, sentiment, internal and external acts, with the states and relationships and with consummated union. We intend all this in every form of hatred and flight from the opposite, in every love and in seeking what is favorable, in every pain and joy for any loss or acquisition, zeal and apostolate for the transmission.

437.

Esteem fosters holy charity with knowledge and religious instruction. Esteem and charity are inseparably connected, likewise are proportionately connected knowledge and love, and love with grace; this explains why Jesus says: *Eternal life is this, to know you, Father and the one you have sent*¹. In the words: *the one you have sent*, we intend first Jesus, and then the Holy Spirit, sent to us by the Father and the Son.

438.

The Vocationist wants to be a first class student, researcher, devourer of every beautiful, sacred book, listener and assimilators of every religious teacher, to make sure that he does not miss any ray of truth, to immerse himself in an ever brighter theological light. He will, thus, esteem ever more God in all divine perfections and operations, making experience, in himself and in others, of the truth that in every loving heart theology burns like a sacred fire.

439.

For reason of the contrary, without any regard for art and pro-

¹ Jn 17, 3.

fane science, he hates and destroys whatever, in the world of the press and human teaching, is opposed to, or simply not apt to a sound theological assimilation. When things are not clear or too complex he will accept the judgment of expert discerners of the sacred and the profane.

440.

For reasons of zeal of the diffusive bounty of love, which is the most diffusive, the religious of love dedicates himself to the most intense, elevated and continuous religious instruction to every class of people, all the time and in every place. He wants to be a perpetual catechist, perpetual preacher, perpetual writer, living image of Jesus, teacher, in order to elevate every soul to the highest esteem of divine things, out of love.

441.

The sentiment, the intimate and profound sense, fosters love with the remembrance and the presence of the loved. The remembrance renders present the loved; there is no greater enemy of love than the absence and obliviousness. Usually forgetfulness follows the absence. We live our relationship with God in this very big inconvenience of loving without the presence of the beloved, without a physical and sensible presence.

442.

The recollection of the beloved must be repeated, prolonged and reinvigorated so as to make up for his physical absence; for this reason it is recommended the use of holy pictures, the ever more numerous visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the exercise of prolonging the thoughts of God, that from time to time pop up in our mind; they are the messengers of love, the interior appeals of love. Above everything else we must cultivate every form of

God's presence and every level of oration that fosters in us the awareness of his presence.

443.

The exercise of God's presence is of the outmost importance, not only in order to avoid any sin, but also to sustain our love for God and neighbor. The feeling of the gift of God's presence in any way, shape or form, is most worthy to be desired, implored, and expected from the divine bounty and munificence. Every time we sense his presence, we should jealously guard it and peacefully enjoy it, without false abnegations.

444.

For reasons of the contrary, the soul that loves God must diligently avoid any distraction, every place, person, occupation, reading or conversation that may distract from his presence. We obtain this through the practice of internal recollection and external solitude: so we become apostles of the flight from the world, of Christian abnegation, of periodic spiritual retreats, of the observance of silence and every form of cloister.

445.

Internal and external acts foster the love for God and neighbor with a profound knowledge of our own self, as living image and likeness of God. Following this principle we conclude that what we wish that others do and what we most appreciate in them, is what God desires from us, appreciates in us; the same is true for the contrary, for what displeases God.

446.

After the profound knowledge of our heart, what stimulates most

our acts of love is an in-depth knowledge of the lives of the saints, the blessed, the *Venerables* and Servants of God, regardless of the title as long as they are Christian heroes, because all of them are what they are on account of love and in love, both in the love of God for them and in their love for God; this is the most fair way of looking at them, and most appropriate light to know them intimately.

447.

Reading the lives of the saints we get a greater knowledge of Jesus, who lives in them and whose lives are as many pages of Jesus' life. From this reading we also get to know all the variety of acts of love that the Holy Spirit inspired to them wishing to try them all, to practice or at least experiment them all so that we may say: *I love you with the heart of all, nobody loved you more than I, nobody will love you with my love!*

448.

If we were totally pure! Since everything is pure for the pure, we would be able to get some sparks of divine love even from the romance of human love. In reality nothing more than the news or reading of human love impedes or lessens divine love in us. So, the religious must engage in a war of extermination of all profane romanticism, and will mortify himself especially by renouncing to the pleasure of amusing readings, that are the most distractive, intense and dangerous.

449.

As the knowledge and esteem for our beloved God increases, as the sense of his presence and the sentiment of his love grows, and as we multiply with more frequency and variety the acts, it is enkindled in us, and we begin to experience the fascination and the rapture of the heart and of the spirit toward the beloved; it is

the beginning of a new way of living and operating that furthers the relationship of love.

450.

The goal of every love is always a relationship. The love of God tends always to a perfect and consummated union, which is the supreme relationship. This religion [= relationship] starts with this attraction and rapture of the soul, outside of herself and toward God, with a truly new way of being and acting, of feeling and expressing ourselves. The beginning of the relationship is already a state of love, but in transition.

451.

As an effect of this attraction of love through which we want to break open our boundaries to go out of our own self and unite ourselves with our Lord and God, we want to be one with God and lose ourselves in him, we feel the urge to consume ourselves in songs and in tears; both of them are supreme expression of the joys and pains of love, as such they are reserved only for God, as it is written: *Cantemus Domino, ploremus coram Domino - Let us sing to the Lord, let us cry in the presence of the Lord!*

452.

In community life we should use plenty of spiritual songs, as soon as we wake up, or as we enter the temple. In our private life everyone should be free to sing, whenever the heart desires it, as adoration of love, without making of it a matter of mortification, unless there is the evident intention of the satisfaction of our senses. In common and in private we offer the special tribute of the song.

453.

Whenever liturgically permitted in the celebration of the Mass,

with special collect, we ask for the gift of tears of compunction and contrition of love, of compassion and delight of love, of adoration or contemplation of love. We give them a free flow, without any effort to stimulate or to stop them, evidently when they are not shed for imperfect motivations or ways.

454.

We sing, looking and thinking of heaven; we cry, looking and thinking of the earth. We sing, looking and thinking of God; we cry, looking and thinking of men. We do both of them looking and thinking of the man Jesus, our love, seeing in his stigmata the sufferings of man, and in his resurrection, ascension and enthronization the glorification of God.

455.

With this singing and crying we enter in the idea and mentality of the Christian sacrifice, our supreme adoration, with which we offer ourselves to God. Since we want to glorify him as he deserves, and since we cannot do it within our limited abilities, we force and break open our boundaries, with a pain that resembles death; we come out of this effort more dilated and elevated to higher forms of life and to larger horizons, and in this new status we again offer and sacrifice ourselves.

456.

Our singing and crying reveal somehow this internal transformation of the soul that somehow dies, dies to something in order to live in some better way and to something better. Because of this we remove, in our thought, word, teaching and apostolate every note of desolations, of end, of negativity from the idea of sacrifice, because crying is a joy and singing is a feast.

457.

Crying is a joy of consolation. Singing is a feast of peace. Love either cries or sings: as long as it is love that goes out, that reaches the beloved, that does not yet fully attain and possess our love God in this exile. We do not have any idea or sense in this life of the love that rests in the beloved reached and possessed. Our true delight will be only when we will hear: *Intra in gaudium Domini tui – enter into the joy of your Lord.*

458.

Our liturgical spirit is a constant longing for the divine, for an Advent and Christmas that come and do not come; for Lent and Easter that come and don't come; for Pentecost toward a descent of the Spirit that comes and does not come; they come in a level and in a form to lift us in a flight toward a superior level and form, and so on with a perennial effort that animates our crying.

459.

In this holy love we tend always to God alone, in order to please him, unite ourselves to him and possess one another. The Spirit of love leads us to consecrate ourselves ever more integrally and ever more perfectly to the Lord. He places us on the pathway of consecrations, pathway of love, the way-Jesus Christ. So we make the best possible use of our human freedom, which only for this reason was given to us by the Lord.

460.

The soul is inclined to donate herself, for the profound, essential, mysterious need to live in others, with others and for others. (Living with others = the Father that generates the Son and is God with him). (Living for others = the Son is totally for the Fa-

ther and God with him). (Living in others = the Father and the Son living in the Holy Spirit, and vice versa the Holy Spirit living in the Father and in the Son). The soul is the image of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

461.

The soul is steered to donate herself in order to please the Lord ever more. Only God, and what is totally of God, can please God. As image and likeness of God, wanting to please God, the soul tends to become ever more totally of God, consecrating herself more and more to him. God accepts her consecration and makes her ever more like him, and thus an object of his delight in the Trinity, as both the soul and God wanted.

462.

The soul is steered to consecrate herself ever more to the Lord, in order to be more and more indefinitely united to her God. Only God can be perfectly united to God, and with God all that is of God, all that is image and likeness of God. In the proportion in which a soul is of God and image of God, she becomes united with him. The more the soul tends to divine union, the more participates and enters into the divine unity, and there she finds the union with her Blessed Trinity.

463.

The soul is steered to consecrate herself more and more to God in order to be more and more possessed and enjoyed by God; this means being the object of God's grace ever more intensely, ever more comprehensively and highly. Respecting the freedom of the human person, God makes this mostly dependent from the soul, in as much as he acts in her in proportion and for the effects intended by the soul in her consecration.

464.

The effect of the sacraments, even though it is produced *ex opere operato*, depends also from the conditions and dispositions of the receiver. Likewise the other effects of grace, especially those that are more uniting and more transforming depend from the consecrations of the loving soul. To this effect, the Spirit of love solicit the soul to place herself and to advance on this pathway of ever greater consecrations, that is the way-Jesus, and thus she receives in proportion of her donation.

465.

This way, the soul reaches also the secondary goal of love, the possession and enjoyment of the loved, the fruition of God (called, vision of God, because in the supreme faculties, those of the intellect, and with the supreme acts that are the intuitive visions, one possesses God). The Lord, who inspires the consecrations, accepts them, confirms them, and exchanges them, if we could use this word, since ultimately it is God who first gives himself to the soul that he loves.

466.

The way of love is the pathway of the consecrations on the part of the soul and on the part of God. Every consecration and relative commitments that the Lord inspires, is preceded and infallibly followed, on the part of God, by a new way of belonging to the soul, of working in the soul ever greater effects of grace. Everyone should willingly make his all the consecrations of the saints, and should want his life to be a synthesis of all consecrations.

467.

Such is and must be our life, synthesis of all consecration, first

successively, always progressively, simultaneously at the end. Every feast, every mystery and every liturgical season is a good occasion for consecrations, always concretizing our consecration in a specific commitment, always aiming at a particular level of virtue, grace and divine union to be achieved, to a new relationship to be started with the Lord.

468.

In the life of love the consecration marks the transition from the act of love to the status of love, from the knowledge of love to the relationship of love; as a matter of fact with the consecration we enter into a new relationship with God. Every relationship has its own consecration and every consecration has a corresponding relationship. To a more perfect consecration is connected a higher and more intimate relationship; likewise a more intimate and higher relationship entails a more perfect consecration.

469.

Our consecrations, with a variety corresponding to that of divine love in its works of creation, redemption, sanctification and glorification, should be as numerous as the Christian mysteries and feasts, of Jesus, of the Blessed Mother, of the angels and saints; as numerous as the possible relationships and levels of relationships possible between God and the soul; as many as the ordinary and extraordinary supernatural effects that grace wants to operate in the soul.

470.

Divine love wants to operate many effects of grace in the soul without her consciousness, preparation and cooperation; others, like those of the sacraments require the soul's consciousness and preparation; others necessitate consciousness, preparation and

cooperation on the part of the soul, understanding as cooperation some special disposition or previous oblation, because what follows is required by every grade and form of grace.

471.

This is the normal procedure. When the soul gets to know some spiritual good, greater than what she possesses, she should know that the Lord himself causes that knowledge so that she may desire it, so that she may open to it and may actually receive it, provided she truly asks for it with full consciousness, consent and will of all that such a good encompasses and requires, before and after its acceptance.

472.

As a form of respect for the soul, our Lord does not operate in her the superior effects of grace, unless she knows, desires, seeks and wants them first and efficaciously prepares and initiates them with some virtuous act, to which she commits herself, deeming it adequate to the grace that she seeks. Usually God inspires the soul and reassures her of his holy will; this is genesis and practice of consecration.

473.

Both in the natural and supernatural world, especially in love and in the relationship of love, it happens that: marriage and maternity necessitate the consent of the creature spouse and mother; otherwise they would be violence, tyranny and hell; This happens also in the supernatural mystical marriage, that is why it is said: *Si vis perfectus esse - if you wish to be perfect*; for the same reason the angel solicits, and the Spirit expects the *fiat - the consent* of Mary- for the Word to be incarnated in her.

474.

We need to understand the pathway of the consecrations and follow it with zeal and determination. We will open and explain this pathway to others; we will attract, accompany and encourage others to it, and make of it like an apostolate of consecrations. We want each and every soul, each and every category of people and all nations to be on this pathway, so that through it they may ascend to new relationships with God. Amen.

475.

We make ours both the apostolate of individual and social consecrations, emphasizing whatever from time to time we deem more appropriate according to God's plan, because one influences the other. Social consecrations would be of little value if they do not unite the individuals to God. Individual consecrations, on their part, must inculcate public, social worship.

476.

We should keep in mind that, once we have made a consecration we did not accomplish too much if we do not elevate and intensify our spiritual life in accordance with the new commitments we have taken with the Lord. These new commitments should serve us as a new stimulus and guidance to new spiritual progresses, both private and communitarian. Nothing is more contrary to love than pausing and stopping. Love and rest, like activity and idleness, never go together. Love claims "always more, always better".

477.

Love propels us always to a more marvelous interior newness, *in novitate spiritus ambulemus*² - let us walk in the newness of the Spirit;

² Rm 6, 4.

this newness is undoubtedly echoed and shines in the external life that is also in a continuous renewal. The spirit of the consecration and the apostolate of the consecrations abhor to consider them as a goal in which to rest and enjoy. They are only and always levers and wings to more vehement and impetuous ascensions.

478.

Because of this, love hates everything that is contrary to the spirit and apostolate of consecrations: every timidity of a person who fears new commitments with the Lord, new relationships with God, any acceptance of internal influxes contrary to grace, any slowing down or falling from the spiritual heights achieved, every withdrawal from the action that God has started in us, any level of tepidity.

479.

These blessed and holy consecrations mark the transition from the acts of love to higher, more intense and intimate statuses of love, which in turn lead to more elevated consecrations, and so on incessantly, both in the individual and social world, without limitations or ends, because our beloved and our love is infinite.

480.

These grades of love are constituted basically by relationships of love. In reality, only love creates true and stable relationships worthy of the soul; we mean, only love for others, because whenever self love tries to relate with others it does so only in view of its own advantage, so it cannot establish true and lasting relationships. Strictly speaking, only divine love forms supernatural relationships of our soul, on the pattern of the relationships of the Trinity in the divinity.

CHAPTER VII

Spouse of the Trinity

481.

The spirit of love, the Spirit of God gives to our acts of love a characteristic of universality, of eternity, immensity, and, to some extent, of infinity. Every act of love does not want to be transient, as every act of a creature; it wants to be permanent, as the act of God, who is pure Act of love. Our acts are an echo and imitation, created effects of God's acts.

482.

The glance of love, the word of love, the gift of love, the visit of love, the conversation of love, the kiss the embrace of love, when truly and intensely felt, want to be perpetual, and thus they initiate another act of love that is like their fusion, elevation, intensification to the sublime. Its first effect is the indwelling of God in the soul, and of the soul in God. This is the inspiration for every moment, for every act, to make sure that everything is an act of love.

483.

This is the nuptial relationship between the soul and God; this is the soul spouse of the Trinity, in all truth and supernatural reality. In the relationship we effectively find the nature and the very act of love, i.e., the going out of one's self and the transfusion into the other, in order to give to the loved the very being of the lover,

or at least to increase the wellbeing of the loved one, actualize his potential, make him happier with the possession and fruition of the other.

484.

Since this act of love is mutual and incessant, the two merge into one, and yet they remain distinct one in the other and become one. The one (fusion of two) continues to love, to go out of itself and give to others, who thus are the object of one love, and yet of two persons, working as one. All this is found only in the natural and supernatural nuptial relationship.

485.

This explains why the nuptial relationship is the supreme form of love, synthesis of all others; the heart of God and the heart of man tend always to this relationship, subordinating and ordaining everything to it, the relationships of creature, dependent, soldier, disciple, friend, son and every other possible relationship; everything for the spouse of God and such is humanity, the Church and, above all, every soul individually and personally.

486.

Let us keep always far from our fantasy and sentiment any form of sensible love that tends and rests in personal enjoyment. Love tends to the possession and fruition, but we understand this in passive and not active form. Tends and wants to be possessed and enjoyed by others. This is love, but tending to possess and enjoy another is the death of love, it is corruption and sepulcher of love; it is selfishness and dead love.

487.

Let us then always keep far from our fantasy and sentiment

any form of selfish and sensible love. Yet love, and especially divine love must be felt, otherwise it is dead or dying. It must be charity as much as it is infused by God, and must be love in as much as it is sensed by us, burning and working in us as a true flame of Holy Spirit, in the whole world.

488.

(The word and wisdom of God must be penetrating and cutting to the bones; the word or the discourse that does not cut could be word and discourse of man but not of God. It must be yeast the ferments the whole mass of human life and the mass of the all world; if it does not cause this great ferment, it is not science or preaching of divine gospel).

489.

Let us then keep far away from our fantasy and sentiment any form of selfishly sensible love, especially if it were sensual in nature, and even more if conjugal love, when we talk about the pure love of the souls, of the holy love of the man-God Jesus, of the divine love of the adorable Trinity, yet we continue to talk and live this supreme relationship of this most holy sacrament in the order of grace: the state and life of spouse of the Trinity.

CHAPTER VIII

Substantial Love

490.

Let us apply ourselves to the acts, exercises and apostolate of substantial love, calling with this name those that correspond better to the essence of charity, to its causes or to its effects. All the acts of love previously mentioned, have more of sentiment and fantasy, they are like the flowers that must bloom in order to produce their proper fruit. These acts of love require more participation of will and intellect and are less of nature and more of grace.

491.

The first acts of love (glance, word, visits, gifts, embraces, kisses etc.) somehow are more of nature than of grace, however they are necessary like the flower to the fruit. We want flowers that produce their fruit and yet remain with the fruit, not separately, but simultaneously on the same stem, bud and corolla rendering that fruit more beautiful.

492.

One can work and fight while continuing to sing. Without flowers, songs, tears, and embraces we cannot conceive a true and felt love of God, even of the hermit, of the missionary amongst the infidels, or the priest on the altar that he covers with kisses, while

using his maniple to dry his tears. Every Christian mystery floods us with tenderness of love, and such is the gift of piety.

493.

There is a double principle of these substantial acts of love *ab intrinseco and ab estrinsico* [from within and from without]. When love burns inside very intensely, the soul produces them spontaneously and without even becoming aware of them. When internal love is subtle, as hidden under ashes, the soul imposes them upon herself vehemently and constantly; thus the soul succeeds in enkindling ever more the internal fire and slowly starts to produce them spontaneously.

494.

We must arrive at a state of fervor that enables us to make these substantial acts of love as a need, an instinct, a breath, a connatural palpitation of the religious life of divine relationship. We cannot stay in idleness expecting, like a miracle of the Holy Spirit, this grade and state of fervor; we need to incite it with the application and exercise of the same acts of substantial love, mandated by the soul, even if they were to turn out very imperfect.

495.

We need to incessantly rouse the flame and with much inflammable material make it spread. Sacred science and the lives of the saints are the ferment that make love grow. In the answer - the punishment imposed by Jesus upon the foolish virgins with their lamps extinguished - we see the fault they committed. "I do not know you", because you did not apply yourselves to know me; this knowledge would have nurtured their love as the oil nurtures the soul; having no oil the flame is extinguished, and they have been left out.

496.

The soul finds herself out of the nuptial banquet, excluded from the relationship of spouse of the Trinity forever! No soul should ever renounce to this divine relationship. No soul should ever resign to remain out of the nuptial banquet. The whole Scripture talks of you, o soul, talks to you and the Trinity wants and expects you, even if you were the most dejected Muslim, the most obstinate Jew, the most disgusting infidel. Come!

497.

The substantial acts of love of this nuptial relationship are: 1) living with God; 2) imitation of God, 3) immolation to God; 4) union with God; 5) inspiration from God; 6) the apostolate for the maternity of the souls toward God; 7) the dominion of the sovereignty of God upon the world; 8) the fruition and the possessing of God's love in the soul, his spouse and queen. All with the individual divine persons of the Trinity in divine unity.

CHAPTER IX

Living with God

498.

Living together and cohabitation are the first external condition and effects of the nuptial of the soul with God. Everywhere and at all times they share the same house, the same table, the same place, as they are one life and one principle of other lives. In one way or another, the Lord makes sure that the soul becomes aware of his presence, and the soul remains, works and lives in the divine presence, trying not to lose nor interrupt this sense of his presence.

499.

When we get distracted from God's presence, in so many ways, we advert an interior calling. We should always respond, and once entered into his presence, we should try to extend the awareness of his presence as long as possible. Even when we are absorbed in God, in so many ways, we experience his interior calling! Let us always respond, and once we have gotten closer and tidier to him, we must try to intensify and elevate this sense of presence of his divine grace, without losing an iota of this great gift.

500.

The Blessed Trinity, living within the soul, surrounds, wraps and comprehends the whole soul, so that the soul may also live

in the Trinity. As the divine indwelling grows in proportion of the increases of habitual grace, so the enwrapping and penetrating sense of the divine presence gets deeper and more intense in proportion to our abnegation, concentration and generosity toward God.

501.

It would not be a living together or cohabitating if our being present one to the other and one in the other were limited to the time of our devotional practices or to other similar exercise. At most it would be a visit of friends, not a life of marriage. Night and day, in every action or suffering of the one or of the other, always one must be present to the other and in the other, that is why the interior life of the soul-spouse is different from all others.

CHAPTER X

Imitation

502.

The imitation of God according to Jesus is also condition and necessary consequence of the espousal relationship. Every friendship either finds or renders similar the lovers. The same is true to the maximum of the supreme friendship, the mystical marriage. God revealed this in the creation of Eve for Adam – *adiutorium simile sui - a helper like him* - and in making man for himself in his image and likeness.

503.

All divine grace is assimilation of the soul to God, through gradual participations of divine nature destined to a progressive union with the divine persons. Every correspondence to divine grace is imitation of the works and ways of God, thus actualizing the participation of the divine nature and perfections, received in the grace, in order to please the divine persons united to us in the same grace.

504.

When grace is at the maximum level in the soul, spontaneously we adopt in our actions the ways of the Lord and we are moved to all the works and things of the Lord, because God himself lives

freely and triumphantly in our soul. This is the most perfect imitation of God, because it proceeds from him as the supernatural animating principle of all our actions, without resistance on our part and with ever less limitations, thus we live almost divinely.

505.

Until we do not arrive at this sovereignty of grace, we must continue to deepen the exterior and interior life of Jesus, and all divine perfections: the divine works, the divine ways through all the acts and states of the incarnate Word, supreme revelation of the divinity. Likewise we must continue trying to reproduce and perpetuate them in our life, works, ways, acts and states, behaving as if we were in his place and he in ours, with the ordinary and common graces.

CHAPTER XI

Immolation

506.

Love, by its very nature, is a continuous attraction of one person to another. Since supernatural love finds in our decayed nature sluggishness, resistance and opposition, we get the impression of a perennial effort that we should not suffer with passive resignation, but we must generously want, assent and increase in our intellect, memory and will, in our fantasy, sentiment and action.

507.

Even if our nature were totally transformed by grace, love would still carry us with a more violent effort (because more free and triumphant in its active impetus to break our boundaries), so that we may give God more glory and delight, according to his divine merit. Love never ceases to expand and break open the boundaries of our acts and states, in order to give the Lord greater glory and delight.

508.

Only this progressive series of efforts, expansions, breakdowns and deaths, in continuous alternations with the most brilliant resurrections and ascension to ever higher acts and states, in higher

spheres and larger spaces, is the true immolation and Christian sacrifice. We must have a more correct idea of immolation and sacrifice, and we must propagate and sustain it, so that we may be in a perennial sacrifice, immolation, holocaust to the Trinity indwelling in us.

509.

At times we are turned off and scared by the false idea of sacrifice: all death, sadness, end. In reality sacrifice is all life, joy and commencement. Without "*amor sacerdos immolat – the priest-love that offers*" no suffering can be a sacrifice. God wants the sacrifice as an act and state of love, not as suffering, blood and death. If we understand sacrifice thus, in the light of God, it is a substantial act of perfect love and the soul-spouse will live of it every day and every hour.

CHAPTER XII

Union

510.

In this very effort, breakdown and death of love is the uniting act with God; it is never to be found in an egotistical act of the creature; never in a selfish sense of any effect (even if it were the most holy) of grace. Where starts the selfish act, there ends the uniting act with God. We ordinarily have a false idea of internal peace, of abandonment in God and of perfect quiet, and likewise of consolation and spiritual joy, as if we were expecting rest and cessation of interior activity.

511.

God is pure, infinite, eternal, immense, immutable act, and only through a direct act we can be like him and united to him. The selfish act is a sort of self-enclosing within one's limited self, so it is a quasi cessation of the act; it marks the lowering of the act from the superior sphere on infinite truth and reality to the inferior sphere of our knowledge and of our ego, so small and insignificant.

512.

These uniting acts, as all supernatural acts, are activated by the power of the love of God that raptures rather than elevates the

soul to want what God wants, to hate what he hates, to do every thing with the intentions of God, as if they were not two distinct acts but one act. Our acts are closely tied to perfectly adhere, to be penetrated, absorbed and transformed by the act of God.

513.

We must prolong as much as possible the high recollection of union of the human act with the divine, this ardent and serene embrace of the interior holy activity; this is the only requirement on our part when it happens. In addition to enjoying that precious moment, we must prepare it with desires, recollection, abnegation, segregation from everything and self-denial; all these get their value from the uniting acts of which they are appropriate preparation.

CHAPTER XIII

Inspiration

514.

The nuptial act consist in giving on the part of God and on the part of the soul in receiving and accepting the divine inspirations, that may be considered as many divine seed sowed in the furrows of human life and meant to produce abundance of supernatural flowers and fruits. These inspirations are meant to benefit not only us, but all mankind and the entire universe, which would be defrauded of the most important goods if the soul-spouse were not to understand, receive and correspond to them.

515.

We need to prepare ourselves with plenty of religious instruction in order to enrich ourselves with spiritual ideas. The Lord does not always inspire us by infusing new ideas in the very act of inspiration; at times he uses ideas already acquired through ordinary ways, which are also regulated by the providence and wisdom of the sanctifying love of God, who renders every creature as a nuptial gift, as a nuptial act offered to the soul-spouse of the Trinity.

516.

We ought to virginally close ourselves to every influence of the spirit of the world, of the spirit of hell and of human spirit, hating

and fleeing from any consent, as if it were an interior adultery, as it really is in the presence of divine love that wants to be and must be the sole animating Spirit, directing and fecundating the soul-spouse. He wants every soul and every intelligent being, created by him and for him, to be a soul-spouse.

517.

Every divine inspiration is word of God transmitted through the ministry of angels or directly infused by the Holy Spirit in the interior of the soul. As of every divine word, created sound of the uncreated Word, so of every inspiration we can say that it is like a sword that penetrates and cuts to the bones to separate the soul from everything and everybody in order to squeeze out every profane humor and to open her to God as a conquered city.

518.

Once we have received the divine inspiration - we mean accepted not only heard - it becomes ferment for the mass of human acts, social relations, of the entire life; until this ferment is not transformed into a flame that purifies and transforms everything into light that expands, enlightens and sets ablaze the whole world, it may have like a strong taste of acid for the un-mortified nature.

519.

These effects are essential to the authentic inspirations; without them the inspirations are suspicious. An interior divine word that does not cut, separate, purify and does not produce abnegation and recollection, that does not set us in evangelical ferment and does not become a flame that once enkindled, does not vehemently set ablaze the all world, is either an illusion of inspiration, or it comes from the enemy.

520.

Once we have made this segregation and eliminated the sacred from the profane, we are found worthy of the divine word or inspiration. The Holy Spirit leads us to concentrate totally on that word. The Holy Spirit compels us to accept and make ours the assimilating power of whatever that word implies. Thus, this divine word becomes like incarnate in us and we sense that *Filius natus est nobis - a son has been born to us.*

521.

Nothing is as necessary as: 1) to prepare the material for the divine inspirations with plenty of readings and listening to spiritual things; 2) to prepare our docility, fidelity and generosity to God, with abnegation and internal and external recollection. In these two elements we see spiritual maturity, proximate disposition to the state and acts of the supernatural nuptial.

522.

Divine inspirations at times come all of a sudden, and at times they are preceded by internal or external warnings or premonitions. Nothing is more necessary for us than to accept them with reverence and confidence, in spirit of adoration and conformity to the will of God, promptly overcoming any opposition and aversion that nature opposes to divine grace with a sense of timidity, idleness and false modesty.

523.

After having done this act of reverence, confidence and union nothing is more important than to turn to the Blessed Mother, through whom we receive every inspiration, in as much as she is the Mediatrix of all graces and entrust to her the inspiration,

as a seed to its furrow and then in union with Mary move *cum festinatione-fast* to the execution of the divine designs in the spirit of *fiat mihi - Let it be done unto me*, ect.

524.

After having executed the inspiration, in spirit of adoration and gratitude we register it in the book of the soul *ut sit ibi contra te in testimonium - so that it be there as a testimony against you*; This applies especially to the more important inspirations and that require a follow up more extended; We should read over and over this book of the soul, and make of it the main object of our spiritual direction and utilize it also in our apostolate.

CHAPTER XIV

Maternity

525.

By receiving, accepting, cultivating and, somehow, expanding the divine inspirations, the soul-spouse enters in the function and dignity of mother in the house of God and in the family of nations; in a certain sense, all the holy deeds conceived, executed and perfected by the soul-spouse with the divine inspirations are her children; in another sense her children are all the souls creatures and daughters of the bridegroom-God, her spouse.

526.

The universal maternity of the soul is the greatest proof of the supernatural nuptial relationship contracted between God and the soul. Wanting this maternity is proper and exclusive of the bride: *Da mihi liberos alioquin moriar*¹ - *Give me children otherwise I will die*. We must have this maternity and be aware of it, we cannot have it without sensing it, nor can we sense it without possessing it, without living it and without carrying out its functions that are other substantial acts of love.

527.

Even in the first stages of supernatural life we can and must

¹Gn 30, 1.

find this zeal for the salvation of the souls, since the primary goal of every creature is the glory of God, which mainly consists in the fact that God is known, loved and served by everyone. Charity, even in its initial stage, makes us beloved of God and compels us to procure what he wishes, specifically, the conversion of all people to the union with him.

528.

The zeal for the glory of God as the spouse of the soul, and the desire of pleasing him as the spouse of the soul, is distinct in the soul-spouse as a substantial act of the supernatural nuptial in its principle, in its way and in its object. It is distinct from ordinary and rather common zeal for the salvation of souls that can and must be present in every Christian, and that through the growth of charity becomes spiritual maternity.

529.

The apostolate of the soul-spouse derives from her over abundance of supernatural life that, in its fullness, cannot be contained and overflows in those who are capable of receiving it. This happens through the advent of the Spirit of the Lord in the soul. The Holy Spirit assimilates all that belongs to the soul and from her, as from his own cathedra acts on the souls that get close to her or that she befriends and then on all the world.

530.

The apostolate of the soul spouse is so sweet and firm that it can be called, as it really is, all maternal, especially toward the little in spiritual life, toward the sick and the wounded; with them the soul-spouse starts to exercise again all those functions that she lavished on them in their infancy; she does the same with the dead whose return she awaits, while accompanying them to the

sepulcher, knowing that she will encounter on the way the one who, moved by the tears of the mother and spouse, will tell her: *Do not cry*².

531.

The object of the apostolate of the soul-spouse is not limited to any principle of supernatural life placed in the soul, but it is the regular and normal development to the fullness of the vigor, age and activity of the first born of man, to the complete and secure placement of the soul in the world of the holy Church; there, the soul-spouse becomes the head of a new family of souls, transmitting to them the life that she has received, in the ways and levels she has received.

532.

As a method the soul spouse in the exercise of all good carries on the apostolate of every good deed, i. e. known, received, practiced or simply planned, she will expand it in any possible way; We should pursue this apostolate of every good deed until we arrive at the point when we can no more conceive a Christian that is not an apostle. Whenever we are to do an external virtuous act, as for example, going to Church to pray, we should do it with many others, attracted by us to do the same.

533.

The apostolate is the criterion of every perfect deed, because good is diffusive of its own nature, so that something that does not expand is not a good. This is the best way to distinguish true good from false good, the great good from the little good; that is,

²Lc 7, 13.

the greater or lesser spirit or zeal of apostolate, well understood in the charity of God and in the prudence of the Church. The soul-spouse, constantly and effectively, exercises and promotes the apostolate of this method and criterion.

534.

Usque ad summum - to the maximum! It is our watchword for all that concerns our personal perfection and the sanctification of our neighbor. We are always aiming to the conversion to God and to the conservation in his grace, but to ever more perfect consecrations and to more substantial increase in grace in order to a more intimate divine union. We dedicate ourselves to the apostolate of holiness and to the highest holiness possible and, likewise, to the apostolate of the heroism of every virtue in every act and state, in every soul.

535.

Usque ad mortem - Until death! This is our maxim concerning the duration and battle of this apostolate, not to intermittent ways but constantly permanent, not to decreasing but ascending levels of intensity until the total oblation of our life with the same objectives of the death of our Savior. The various conditions of age, health, functions, etc. should simply cause variations, without slowing down or interrupting of our apostolate for holiness.

536.

Omnibus omnia - (I became) all things to all men! The soul-spouse of the Trinity wants to become and be all things to all souls of heaven, purgatory and earth; she feels that she can do it motherly, in every thing, according to the need, the right and duty of every creature. She wants to rear to God every creature in her heart, in order to carry to God on her hands all souls, and not all

in general, but each one in particular, as if each one were her only task and her only child.

537.

Dei aemulatione - imitating God! The true spouse of God commits herself to make all souls (and every being that might be capable of it) spouses of God too. With the jealousy of divine love, she tries to be completely in every other spouse of God in order to render in, with and for others all that can be given to the spouse God; thus she will effectively carry the whole Church, all mankind and all creation to the reality of this supreme nuptial relationship.

CHAPTER XV

Dominion

538.

God grants to the soul spouse his dominion over creation, over the inferior creatures and over the souls in purgatory. This privilege gives her the opportunity to be the servant of all, looking after the needs of the souls. The object of this dominion is to spread the desires and laws of God. One of the powers, instead, is prayer. Then God grants her to be the mother of his children and queen of his empire and enables her to use grace and to open the Church to all infidels and to keep out those who are unworthy.

538A

God entrusts his dominion over all creation to his spouse, and to her he entrusts the administration of his entire house. He invests her with all his powers, sharing with her his rights, and he leaves up to her how to apply and distribute the divine merits of redemption, the divine favors of sanctification and the divine powers for every mission.

539.

The field of this dominion are all creatures and the inferior forces; such are for the soul spouse all the beings and forces of the mineral, vegetal, and animal world, the world of the damned

including the fallen angels, and the just on earth that are in a level of grace inferior to that of the soul spouse. Our growth in the level of grace dilates the extension of the dominion of the soul.

540.

The soul spouse receives from God her spouse the dominion of suffrage, because all the souls in purgatory are in a state inferior to that of the soul-spouse. The soul spouse, even in her superior grade of grace, is in a condition of inferiority to that of the angels, so her dominion over them is not full, it has to be exercised quite differently.

541.

This is not the case of the Virgin Mary, of St. Joseph and of whomever has been confirmed in grace, while still in this life. The soul-spouse must actualize the first practical goal that the divine wisdom had in mind when creating man in his own image and likeness: *ut praesit* - to dominate every being created inferior to him or rendered inferior by his own fault.

542.

It is part of the service of this dominion that the soul becomes the servant of all *sicut Filius hominis qui non venit ministrari sed ministrare et dare animam suam redemptionem pro omnibus (... qui erant multi)* - as the Son of man who did not come to be served but to serve and give his life for the salvation of all (... who were many); not simply helping those who ask, obeying to those who command him, answering to those who call him: this is proper of the servant, to carry out the service for which he was engaged. The soul spouse is not such a servant.

543.

The soul-spouse acts as mother in the family, as a regent queen in the kingdom that she has to present in its maximum splendor to her spouse. She wants to provide for all possible needs of the souls, of the parishes, of the dioceses, of the Church, of mankind, in order to effectively procure all possible spiritual increases in everyone, with all the ingenuity of the spirit of love of the spouse and mother.

544.

The soul spouse cares and acts as the pastor of every parish, rector of every church, as superior of every community, as the principal of every school, as the captain of every army, as in charge of every ministry, responsible for every government, as bishop of every diocese and all in all with priestly and pontifical care, with regal and imperial, with integral and universal care, *omnibus omnia factus*, in order to conquer and stabilize each and everyone to the nuptial divine union.

545.

The object of this dominion is to promulgate the law to all dependents and demand the observance of the same; to transmit every desire of God and make sure that he will be pleased with it, in order to harvest every possible fruit of glory and love to be presented to the spouse-God, to the king God and in this procure the supernatural wellbeing ever more elevated of the kingdom of God on earth, in all creation and all individual subjects and children of the kingdom and of the family.

546.

This dominion comports the highest firmness of authority and

the most intense life of laboriosity; we can have a pallid idea from the activity of the great conquerors and heads of states. Only the spirit of love of God can infuse the knowledge and practice, direct its execution and crown it with success, because in everything and always, God remains the first cause in every passive principle.

547.

One of the divine powers bestowed to the soul-spouse for the exercise of this dominion is prayer, which for the soul spouse, and consequently mother and queen, may be defined as the human exercise of the divine omnipotence; as such prayer is supplication before God and as order of God for every creature, to whom the soul spouse keeps repeating all the divine imperatives for their universal sanctification.

548.

Another of the divine powers conferred from God to the soul-spouse, mother of all his children and queen of all his empire, is the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus is adequate price for the cult of adoration, thanksgiving, reparation and intercession; both in the holy sacrifice of the Mass and in the offertory that the soul spouse offers *pro todo mundo - for the all world*, for every single soul, for all and for each one, in order to make them one host with Jesus-Eucharist.

549.

Another of the divine powers of the soul is the use of the grace of miracle, especially in the internal order, and always for supernatural reasons, according to the promise of Jesus to those who unite themselves with him in faith; miracles of conversions of individuals and groups, near and far, provided she is a soul-spouse totally possessed by God.

550.

Whether the soul is a priest, or shares in general priesthood of the faithful through the incorporation in Christ, she should see in the minor and major orders a clear idea of their powers and of their exercise in every soul and in the universe. The soul spouse should exercise her dominion always with the practice of sacramentalizing everything and the method of universalizing everything. She remains minister of the glory, love and will of God in everything and in everybody through grace.

551.

She has the power and the duty of opening the doors of the Church to all the infidels and lead them to the faith, of opening the doors of the tabernacle to all faithful and bring them to communion. She will open the doors of the soul to all those who belong to the soul of the Church and attract them to the divine union with the Blessed Trinity indwelling in them. She will be the first and most intelligent door-person of the house of God, for all the children.

552.

She has the power to keep away from the house of God those who are not worthy, not in the sense of throwing them out of the temple, but purifying them from evil; expelling from the temple of their souls what is not worthy of the divine inhabitation; expelling from the temple of the universe every influence of Satan destroying every right he may have and tying him in hell and shutting forever its doors; in the same manner all human conversations and relations should be purified.

PART V

VOW AND VIRTUE
OF
OBEDIENCE

VOW AND VIRTUE OF OBEDIENCE

CHAPTER I

Excellence of Obedience

553.

The fact that the sole vow of obedience would be sufficient to constitute a religious order should make us think of its importance. God only asked our forefather, Adam, one act of obedience. The sole state of obedience is suitable to the creature both in the natural and supernatural status. The exercise of the virtue of obedience is sufficient to salvation. To obedience is promised every victory over every enemy!

554.

It should be motif of reflection and meditation the fact that all beings, outside of God, are ordered in hierarchy: the angels, even the most sublime, and man, even the most consecrated through the discipline of obedience. Even the incarnate God has chosen a status and a life of perfect obedience, and he continues such a status in the Eucharist for our perpetual edification. He gives us the supreme and universal formula of obedience: *usque ad mortem* - *until death!*

555.

Every sin is essentially, and at the same time, pride and dis-

obedience, exactly like the first sin. Every virtue, theological or cardinal, is essentially, and at the same time, humility and obedience, exactly like the *fiat* of Mary. Every temptation is essentially an attraction to pride and disobedience, exactly like the test of the angels and of the forefathers of mankind.

556.

Every inspiration of the Lord leads essentially to humility and obedience. In the divine extraordinary interventions, the sanctifying Spirit of the Church and of every soul wants everything to be submitted to the control, to the blessing and to the ennobling merit of obedience. Divine criterion, divine instinct, divine seal! Seal of the works, instinct of the saints, criterion of every authority that comes from God!

557.

Holy faith - basis, foundation and root of justification, among the theological virtues - demands obedience. Holy humility - basis, foundation and root of sanctification, among moral virtues - demands obedience. Divine charity - essence, life, value and crown of every virtue, of every union with God - absolutely wants holy obedience.

558.

There is no individual or social holy deed that may bloom, bear fruit, survive and perpetuate itself (or that could be conceived or exist one moment), without holy obedience, that is, union of the intellect, will and person with the will, glory, and love of God. Personal sanctification and the sanctification of the universe are always directly proportioned to the obedience of the individuals and of all.

559.

Those who want to reach the summit in every virtue, work, apostolate, relation and union with God, will not be able to achieve it without the perfection of holy obedience of intellect and will *usque ad mortem - until death*; in theory and practice *usque ad mortem*; in private and in common *usque ad mortem*; within the community and outside, for ourselves and for others and leading the whole universe to it *usque ad mortem*.

560.

Let us embrace holy obedience for all possible reasons! For reason of truth, of humility and faith: because obedience is the only virtue that corresponds to our being (both in nature and grace) an essential, living personal dependence, both in our being and in our actions, in our beginning and in our goal; for reason of prudence, because obedience is the main tool for victory against evil and for the achievement of every good, both in our private and social undertakings.

561.

For reason of imitating God in the examples of the saints, the angels and especially of the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph, of Jesus Christ, *factus obediens usque ad mortem - who became obedient until death*. We must live as members of the head, to the point that he, not we, should live in us. Likewise we should live of the Holy Spirit, spired and sent to us by the Father and the Son; we must live of that Spirit as members of the heart, so that he will be our spirit.

562.

For all reasons of charity that wants our imitation of God to the

point of assimilation; this can be done only in the will that can become all will of God through obedience. For reason of charity that wants our union with God to the point of full unity and indivisibility, this may happen only through obedience and for the most pure motivations of the purest love of God.

CHAPTER II

Universality of Obedience

563.

So that we may attain the perfection of obedience, it is essential that we esteem, in the most elevated, real, reverend and loving manner, the divine persons even under the veil of laws and precepts, under the veil of the inspirations, of the superiors and of every person. We most ardently unite ourselves to the will of the Blessed Trinity in the inly and external life and this only for the most pure motivations of the purest love of God.

564.

The religious soul extends her obedience to the will of our fellow human beings concerning the sanctity of acts and intentions of our neighbor and subordinately to superior expressions of the will of God. We extend this obedience to our fellow human beings for the principle that, after the special representatives that are those in authority, every person represents God, since: *it is divine will all that is said or done to me, asked or given to me, without my will.*

565.

As our special vocation we practice, and as our special mission we lead others to practice, the most docile, faithful, generous and enlightened obedience of love to the inspirations recognized and

approved by the representatives of God. In the holy inspirations we see the will and guidance of the Trinity indwelling in us specifically to govern us in every act, to assimilate and unite our will to God, who is all holiness and love.

566.

True religious life will never be, not even one single moment, without the supreme act of religion, the sacrifice of ourselves, and communion with God. We are constantly, every moment offering our will obeying to one or another expression of God's will. In every act of obedience we communicate with the will, and consequently, with the holiness, love and life of the Blessed Trinity that is revealed and communicated to us only in her will.

567.

Obedience, as exercise of humility, attracts divine grace and predilection, in our capacities dilated by humility. Obedience, as exercise of charity, is all the cooperation required by charity and predilection. Obedience is a true synthesis of humility and charity, and as such is particularly dear to the Vocationists, who in theory and practice love the synthesis that are convenient to them.

568.

May the Lord grant us many souls who dedicate themselves to the heroism of obedience to timetables, to all community directives, to the interior works, to the particular precepts, making theirs, through this heroic observance, the entire Congregation, and with it the divine work of the redemption of the world and of universal sanctification. The more we are obedient and share the work of universal sanctification, the less personal initiatives there will be, and the more we make ours the design of God, with the union and assimilation of his will.

569.

May the Lord grant us many souls of great personal initiatives for the application and implementation of Christian principles, we, however, should never prefer personal initiatives to Christian principles; they however, should be equally estimated, if equal in obedience. Personal initiatives have value when approved and appropriated by the authority become precepts, object and exercise of obedience, which alone can develop, implement and enable them to bear the fruit that the Lord intended.

570.

This is the reason why religious community life is regulated in such a way that any member can become a saint with the sole community observance, filled to the brim by a spirit of humility and love, as should be a soul, a life and a world. We can become saints following our own initiatives, provided they have been approved and appropriated by the superiors, when they have discovered in them the signs of the Lord. The superiors should base themselves on the principle of recognizing in every person God and his will and for an openness of visions, works, principles and means of the Congregation.

571.

Once an inspiration, initiative of an individual has been approved and appropriated by the superiors, the individual proponent cannot back off and renounce; as first instrument wanted by the Lord he will also be the main executor of the design of God within the field of obedience. The superiors may subtract that individual for higher reasons; the individual can never subtract himself for laziness, narrow-mindedness or other imperfect motivations, even though they may be veiled by false humility. An individual should think well before asking for the approval of personal initiatives.

572.

No one should propose projects or agendas, unless he is ready and willing to be the first and main executor. Everyone should remain humble, strong, and firm in the common observance of obedience. Who is certain of the divine will, however, should not fear to propose projects and agendas, overcoming every idleness and narrow-mindedness. All this, however, always and only with the immediate or intermediate superiors of our Congregation, never and in no way with outsiders, or confreres, not even the most intimate, trusted and saints.

573.

Failing to follow this rule of prudence, of convenience, of hierarchy and of obedience will be a very unfavorable prejudice toward the private initiative, and, vice versa, following this rule will be a great positive recommendation for it. The safest norm to follow is to write with the outmost simplicity, in the book of the soul, all that comes down to us from above, every time, regardless if the inspiration is of theoretical or practical order, and submit it to immediate director who can discern whether it is conform or deform to divine graces, based on the experience of our life.

574.

In the very initiatives required by our religious observance: the daily ministry of the word of God, the college of apostles and disciples that everyone must form, the book that we always have within our hands, the multiple and perpetual laboriousness etc., it is necessary that everything be known to the superior in order to receive the merits of holy obedience, in whose spirit everything must be done, blessed and assured. Each one of us counts before God and before the Congregation and produces and deserves as much as his humble and loving obedience deserves.

CHAPTER III

Fullness of Obedience

575.

No one should wrongly weaken, depreciate and destroy the value, the merit and the power of obedience, pretending (if dependent, or giving, if superior) intrinsically or extrinsically the reasons of the command. Obedience consist formally in the union of the will of the dependent with the will of the superior on account of the authority of God that he represents, regardless of whether the reasons of the command, or the motivations that may have immediately or remotely influenced the order are known or unknown.

576.

Since the will is directed and moved by the intellect, the dependent should always unite his mind with that of the superior, who gives the order. We will always adore the divine wisdom, the Word of God in every hidden or manifested thought, reason and motivation of the superior. In the exercise of obedience, the dependent must recognize and adore the divine bounty of the divine Spirit in every command, counsel, desire or whatever manifestation of the divine will in his representatives.

577.

Let us be always aware that every command, counsel or desire

of God manifested in a command, counsel or desire of the superiors is at the same time a revelation of what we can do and an infusion of power and capacity to do it. God does not want the impossible, consequently either he has already given, or he gives to us at the time of the command, counsel or desire, or in time convenient for its execution he will give us the power and the capacity to do. From us the Lord only wants the union of mind and heart with him.

578.

Regardless of any difficulty that may arise to impede the obedience, from within or from without, we hold fast to the principle that obedience is not looking nor presenting difficulties; rather it will confront and overcome them, and the omnipotence and wisdom of God solves them all. The obedient person with the union of his will with the will of God participates in solving all difficulties. Whoever separates himself from the will of God will not succeed not even in the most simple, ordinary or banal things.

579.

When facing the exigencies of the glory of God, of the apostolate for the good of the souls and especially for the works of the Congregation and of divine union, when dealing with faithful and perfectly obedient religious, the superiors should not fear the difficulties of the enterprises, nor the dependents should fear the commands, desires or counsels of the superior, not even in the most difficult enterprises. It is always true that *omnia possum in eo qui me confortat - I can do all things in him who is my strength*. Never the Lord comforts as much as when he commands. Obedience is all-powerful.

580.

When it is a question of obedience, the religious consider one

and the same the command, the counsel and the desire of the superior and of our neighbor, in everything that concerns the observance, the works and the goals of the Congregation, and any other good, if there were any not embraced by such an immense setting. Our obedience is to the will of God manifested in the legitimate superior, not only to the Constitutions, but to the will of God manifested in the will of the legitimate superior, always.

581.

When the command, counsel or desire should concern only the person, the name, the heart of the superior, the religious should keep in mind only charity and humility coupled with reverence and devotion, (not the obedience that we do not want to extend to that sphere of the man as a man, not as a representative of God); save always the observance of the Constitutions and Directory, the religious will do his best even then to unite his will to that of God, as in every other person.

582.

All, and especially the more authoritarian characters and the more aggressive temperaments, should render all their life to obedience. No willingness can ever be saner, stronger or higher of the human will united, fused with the will God through obedience. No authoritarian character can be more powerful, victorious and captivating than a superior well united to the divine will through obedience, even for him.

583.

If in anything, the example is a powerful force of attraction, if the superiors have to drive with their example, they must do it in the life of obedience. Usually the souls that are more reluctant must be driven to this supreme sacrifice, and if the superior does

not remain solidly united to the one he represents, through the obedience to his respective superiors, he is no longer an authentic representative of God.

584.

Remaining true that we must obey our superiors even when they are not exemplar, and that we must abstain from any unfavorable judgment about the superiors, in dealing with his dependents. It also remains true that the superiors should be well aware (and every wayward superior should know it well) that obedience is still due to them, not for being authentic representatives of God, but for the exigencies of order and of common good that otherwise would be rattled.

585.

In order for a superior to be an authentic representative of God, and for his authority to be exercised with the edifying dominance of divine will, it is not enough to be a legitimate superior. A regular election or appointment is enough to be a legitimate superior. To be an authentic superior one needs to remain in union with the major superior, who has elected or given him a mandate. The mandating superior would certainly correct the rebel and unruly superior and if he should not obey, the major superior would withdraw the mandate and remove him.

586.

If the superior were to personally fail to be submissive and obedient to the Constitutions and to the major superiors and especially to even the minimum desire of the Holy Father, and if he were to expect the same behavior from his dependents, he should not be followed in any way. Obedience is due to the superiors, even when they personally disobey, but no obedience is due to

those superiors that officially disobey, that is, when formally as superiors they give orders contrary to an explicit obedience of the major superiors.

587.

May the Lord free us from superiors who have an unsympathetic heart, authoritarian manners, narrow-mindedness, not enough spiritual principles, uncertainty and weak command, inconstant and inflexible character, who seek a comfortable and idle life, particular friendships etc. etc. Most of all may the Lord deliver us from superiors disobedient to the Constitutions, to the spiritual directions, to inspirations because they lack the force of the example in the exercise of their power!

588.

As with every other good, the great esteem and the great love for obedience must create the proper environment of a religious family. All humility and charity must emanate and irradiate continuously from our superiors, from the first to the last; not only from their words, since the praises of obedience coming from those who are in authority are not convincing, but from their example of obedience. The example of obedience gives great force to the ones who exercise authority over others.

CHAPTER IV

Reverence for Obedience

589.

In order to form this supernatural environment, all perfume of charity and humility and force of obedience, we must cultivate maximally holy external reverence, which is manifestation of the internal devotion. As purity cannot be maintained without modesty, humility without self-lowering and prayer without recollection, so too obedience cannot be mastered, maintained and perfected without external reverence, always as manifestation of the internal reverence.

590.

If devotion is promptness of the will in accomplishing all that is of glory and delight for the Lord, we must have it for the Lord in himself and in his representatives, the superiors and his living images, our brothers, our neighbor; we must manifest it with very clear and dear signs, manifestations of honor that constitute the form of reverence; acts of obedience are the essence of an integral devotion.

591.

We will not enumerate all the external acts of honor due to our primary superiors (the incumbent, those presently responsible),

to our secondary superiors (the possible superiors, in image), and to all our neighbors. There may be some other books that talk about these external signs of reverence; they may also be conceptualized from the Liturgy of the Hours or of the Mass. The all day and religious life must be a liturgy. The external signs of honor can be adopted from the traditions of other religious orders and of the diocesan clergy.

592.

We must use the signs of honor with great generosity, abundance and cordiality, since we know well that man needs to be esteemed and honored more than loved. True love is found on the esteem and expressed with expressions of honor. When there is love all the signs of esteem come spontaneously and only then they are clear and appreciated. Only true love inspires so many fine attentions that are a form of wisdom.

593.

We indicate only seven of the external signs of honor that we wish to be appreciated, practiced by all the members of our community and equally from the superiors to the dependents and from the dependents to the superiors. The foundation of all these is perfect Christian, virtuous and supernatural friendship that we must have with our superiors, in such an intense and effective manner that our first friend must be the Superior General, our second friend the Superior Provincial and our third friend our local superior.

594.

The first form of reverence is the air of joy and contentment of love with which we must live in community and treat one another, based on our conviction that everyone is for the other the im-

age and representative of God and that to Jesus is directed what we are, what we say, do, manifest etc. to our neighbor and to the superiors. Air of sadness is injurious. Air of umbrage is vindictive. Injury and revenge are excluded by humility and charity of which obedience is a synthesis; the first sign of obedience is this reverence of which we talk.

595.

The second form of reverence is to stay voluntarily together and close to the superior, when he is present, listen to him with open heart and mind, procure his presence, make of him the only radiant center of every written or oral conversation, and if he is absent talk and write willingly about him. To subtract oneself to the vigilance of the superior is injury, to avoid his presence is vengeance; both of them very contrary to humility and charity of which obedience is a synthesis and reverence is a sign.

596.

The third form of reverence is to talk voluntarily to the superior if present, write to him if absent, taking every opportunity to do so, even if he would not be able to answer; but he will obtain from the Lord the grace of always corresponding. The object of these words will be all information concerning the Congregation, its subjects and works. Hiding something from the superior, knowing that he is unaware of it, is injury, knowing that he would like to be made aware of it is vengeance; both of them are grievous fault.

597.

The fourth form of reverence toward the superior consists in willingly confiding to him all the good you are doing or that you are inspired to do, and even more your actual failures and your temptations. Present periodically to the superior the book of the

soul and ordinarily choose him as your spiritual director. If he could not be your spiritual director, leave it up to him to choose another priest for your spiritual direction and for the book of the soul; keeping in mind that ordinarily doing otherwise is not considered an offense or a vengeance.

598.

The fifth form of reverence, which is very delicate, consists in abstaining from any reciprocal praise, when superior and dependent are both present. It is a sign that they esteem each other and do not need praise for their good. On the other side we should be generous in praising the other, when he is absent, following our principle that there is always matter for praise in the behavior, at least partial, of every person. We truly consider as an offensive joke any praise of the superior, in his presence, from his dependents. We consider as a wary reproach the praise of the superior to his dependent, in his presence.

599.

The sixth form of reverence, very high and meritorious, consists in abstaining from asking for the reasons of any command, counsel or desire of the superior; on the part of the superior it consists in abstaining from giving the reasons for any command, counsel or desire to the dependent; this should be the result of the great esteem and trust in God's will, on the part of the dependent that receives them, and from the good will of the superior who imparts them. All this is always done joyfully, never giving the impression of being forced, resigned or contradicted, on neither party.

600.

The seventh and truly supreme form of reverence consists in

the intimate, confidential, fraternal admonition of faults that one may have noticed in the other; the superior to the dependent, and whenever requested, also from the dependent to the superior. This is true love, humility, obedience and reverence so delicate, as, to the contrary, would be vulgar the grumbling of the dependent in private, or even much worse, if the dependent should reproach the superior in public. How disgusting it would for a superior to mistreat in public, or even worse, to belittle in private the dependent he must love!

CHAPTER V

Wisdom of Obedience

601.

At the sound of the bell indicating the beginning of a community's activity, everyone will genuflect wherever he is, even in the presence of outsiders, as to adore the voice of God that calls him; immediately he will leave everything and everybody, without fear of being irreverent to anybody and quickly proceed to the execution of the duty. Even though we have to leave everything promptly at the voice of the Lord, we must anticipate the sign of the bell and leave everything in proper order, and be for one minute in silent pause; this is more perfect!

602.

No one of those present in the house should ever miss the director's sign of peace, aspersion and benediction that he imparts respectively in the morning, at noon and in the evening, adding to all other intentions that of reverence and obedience. In particular, he receives the sign of peace with the intention of renewing the vows of obedience, he receives the aspersions against any temptation of disobedience, and he receives the benediction as forgiveness and indulgence of relative faults.

603.

Before starting anything of some importance, as for example,

before going out of the house when necessary, everyone should receive the blessing from the director, and he in turn from his vicar or secretary, as a practical contact of obedience with the Lord, who is the beginning and end of every good thing. Likewise, we do the same after every such action and as often as possible, without fear of exaggerating, unless the superior calls our attention and places a limit to this devotion that is all humility.

604.

During temptations in general, he who wants to overcome them safely, in addition to manifesting them to the superior or director, should ask for a special obedience, or at the very least purposely apply himself to do better the ordinary obedience. He will infallibly experiment an increase of strength and victory. Likewise, the superior who becomes aware of the state of temptation of somebody, should give him an obedience, in order to help him, manifesting to him with all charity and prudence some command or desire and inducing him to do it.

605.

The superior should recur to the means of obedience through a command, counsel or desire, expressed to the dependent, without any other motivation than to help him in the temptation. Whenever the superior would see himself or the dependent in temptation or in a state of temptation of mutual bad humor, it must be wiped away with holy obedience as quickly as possible.

606.

The greatest means of healthy growth, defense and sanctification is holy obedience. The worst evil, danger, diabolic illusion that we must face on account of past sins and as consequence of their malefic influences, is any umbrage between superior and

dependents, any coldness that may close their heart, any tepidity of charity among us, and especially with the superiors.

607.

The enemy has a form of silence that he demands from his slaves. To such a silence may be compared the silence that the superior imposes to his dependents, when he does not talk to them, and, or vice versa, when the dependents do not talk to the superior. The enemy has also a form of modesty that he imposes upon his slaves. The devil imposes such false modesty to the superiors closing their eyes, so that they may not be vigilant, or even worse, may not look at the dependents, who may have displeased them and vice versa. We repeat, with the strongest authority we may have: this is never a licit means of correction.

608.

As the divine union of charity for God and neighbor is necessary for us, so too it is necessary to cultivate the holy union of reverence, of obedience, of fear and of love with the brethren and especially with the superiors. I plead with everyone who notices any umbrage or distance between superiors and dependents, to do their very best to reconnect them, thinking of Jesus who spoke to Judas and called him a friend, at the very time of his betrayal.

609.

If obedience is the synthesis of holy humility and charity, it is also true that the first obedience is the reciprocal humility between superior and dependents; the very first obedience is mutual charity between superior and dependents, and this should be more intense in the inevitable cases of umbrage or coldness between dependents and superiors. Blessed be the one who takes the initiative of this special humility and charity in such cases; he will certainly be on his way to holiness.

CHAPTER VI

Ideal Obedience

610.

Everyone should pay attention to all the words of the superior in the announcements (even the particular ones made to others), in the sermons, instructions and every time he opens his mouth. We should receive everything in spirit and willingness of perfect obedience. Likewise the superiors must receive every word of the Holy See, of the Ordinaries of the dioceses and of the Congregation, in order to execute the commands, counsels, directions and desires contained in it, trying to solve and not to present or intermingle difficulties.

611.

Above anything else, night and day, the religious shall read and study the Constitutions and the Directory in the light of the glory, love and will of God to make sure that not even an iota will be left unattended. We should likewise be always well aware that we have the grace to understand and fulfill everything. We know that our paradise of divine union depends from the integral and progressive observance of the Constitutions and Directory.

612.

Constitutions and Directory are our code of holiness, the laws of the court of love, our dowry and our nuptial attire. Each ar-

ticle of them is an encounter, an embrace and communion with the bridegroom-Trinity. It is a great victory and conquest for the groom; it is a generation of saints in his womb; it is a preaching and implementation of the Gospel throughout the universe. Everyone must love the Constitutions and Directory in such a way as to be ready to give his life for them and work his whole life to spread them in the souls.

613.

In truth we love for all our religious to be men and women of great initiative, while remaining faithful, docile and generous in obeying the divine inspirations. We also want them to have the wisdom to always guarantee the observance of the Constitutions and Directory. Those who perfectly follow every canon of them, as true elect of the Lord, will find peace in divine union. No one should be against this observance, because the present body of laws, in each one of its articles, carries the seal of the Holy Spirit.

614.

We would not like to see our religious pigeonholed and ossified in any external nor internal common type; we would like to see each one of them develop and perfect his natural and supernatural self on his only pattern, Jesus. If we could express an ideal type of the Vocationists, it would be that of a soul all joy and devotion in fulfilling the will of God in that of the superiors, of every neighbor, every moment, without a will outside of that of pure love for God and neighbor, always aiming to love God for his own self and our brethren for God.

615.

We live the ideal of the slave of love of the Holy Family, in union and imitation of the one who came not to do his own will but the will of the Father. The religious must consider his Congregation

like the continuation of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. All souls must enter and be part of the family of God. As per their vocation, our religious enter into the Holy Family as slaves of love of Jesus, Mary and Joseph and as universal servants of all saints of God, of all the triple Church and of the whole world.

616.

To this Holy Family living in our Congregation, and to our Congregation living and as perpetuated in the Holy Family, we make our vow of obedience; we strengthen and specify that vow with the promise of fidelity, of slave of love; because our obedience is all humility and charity, of faithful slave. Our obedience is all familial love as that of the sons, as that of Jesus in Nazareth, of Jesus in the tabernacle.

617.

This duty of fidelity implies above all the virtuous and fruitful perseverance, not simply material, as the beginning of final perseverance: on the type of the most sacred and indissoluble bonds. We consider the entrance into discipleship or postulancy as an engagement that only for a serious reason may be broken; we consider our religious vestition as the consecration, and the first profession, as the nativity, and the perpetual vows as the marriage with the Congregation, mother and spouse.

618.

We are united with filial and nuptial bonds to the Congregation, to the holy Church, to the Holy Family, to the Blessed Trinity. More than the duty we must feel the need to persevere, progressing in the esteem for its goal, of its means, of its works, of its benefits, of its advantages, of its excellence, demonstrating it to ourselves till the evidence, and demonstrating it till the persua-

sion to others, when needed, and most of all demonstrating it in our holy life of divine union.

619.

This esteem will perpetually nourish our supernatural love for our Congregation, not as a love specifically different from our love for the catholic Church, for the Holy Family, for the divine Trinity, but intensely felt, as a family spirit, whose distinctive note will be the desire of transmigrating in all, of assimilating the good of all, attracting all, since it is the end result of the holy influences of the spirit of the Church, of the Holy Family and of the most holy Trinity.

620.

As the first practice of this esteem and love for the Congregation and of this sworn fidelity, every religious may not, must not ever be disinterested in the greatest wellbeing and perennial increment of the Congregation; first he constitutes himself before God as victim and intercessor, for life and for death, in time and in eternity, and then as if he were the only representative, the only one responsible, ready to carry the burden of all, to do the work of all, even if he were all alone.

621.

Before all the world, in every circumstance and with all argumentations, he constitutes himself as an ardent defender and propagator in aiming at universalizing the life of prayer of the Congregation, especially the offertory; in establishing a house in every neighborhood of the world; in facilitating the entrance of all souls in its spheres of the Divine Union (our external association), ready, if that were to be the case, to redo everything all over again the work and apostolate proper of the Congregation, even if he were the only one to do it.

622.

Our Congregation represents the maximum human cooperation to the divine work of universal sanctification in time, and of the universal glorification of the elects in eternity, thus extending our service even in heaven. Our fidelity and perseverance in the Congregation must correspond to the eternity and immutability of the sanctifying will of God; we adore this holy will, we implement it, and with this will we will work and triumph in God.

623.

Every age needs saints. The world needs saints. Every work needs saints. Our Congregation needs that each and every one of its members be a great saint, because we must provide saints for every enterprise, must sanctify the all world, from now till the end, and beyond; holiness indispensably needs union with the will of God; the only holiness then is obedience that in practice is the only union with God!

624.

The external sign of union of humility, of charity, of obedience with our superiors is the kissing of the mantle to our Local Superior, of the sash to our Provincial Superior, and of the hand of the Superior General; it remains abolished any other kissing of hands or genuflection, reserved for the Bishops. However, we kiss the hand of diocesan priests that come to our house or welcome us in their house. It remains also abolished the names *Father* and *Master*, reserved this for the Master of the novices and that for the Superior General¹.

¹ At the end of the original publication of this Directory in the magazine *Spiritus Domini*, Fr. Justin wrote: *These directive notes are applicable and useful to every religious family, and that is why they are being published.*

PART VI

ANGELIC VIRTUE

ANGELICAL VIRTUE

CHAPTER I

Foundation

625.

The perfection of charity, to which we tend and that we must, at any rate, achieve to its highest level of divine union possible to each and every one of us, according to the measure of the gift of God's grace, necessitates that the vow and virtue of purity be elevated to the most superlative spirituality, so that our religious Congregation may be an orchard of lilies in which the Beloved may find his delight, a throng of angels in whose midst the Beloved may be glorified, a multitude of virgins united with the Beloved.

626.

We would love it if those who come and remain with us in our Congregation were only and all those who have kept their baptismal innocence and are willing to laboriously elevate, enrich and crown it with ever more glorious spiritual conquests in the apostolate of universal and personal sanctification. This is one of the main reasons why we want to bring to the Eucharist all the children of the world; so that they may remain in their baptismal innocence and consecrate their virginity to the God of angels.

627.

We give a heartfelt welcome to all those that God has loved and called. He wants to unite them in the love for himself and for neighbor, even though he may have found them in the mud or on the road, pulled them out from the captivity of the devil and from the bottom of the abyss. God with his blood renders them even more beautiful than they were before sinning, and with his communion he grants to them with all other virtues and merits also his divine-human purity. Welcome, if they want to heroically cooperate to their divine redemption and sanctification!

628.

We must deeply establish ourselves in the knowledge, conviction and absolute consciousness of our essential, total dependence from our God and of his adorable glory, love and will in his holy law and divine examples; dependence concerning body and soul, reason why it is not licit to do whatever we like for our own satisfaction, independently from the will of God. We are by no means, owners of our body, soul, senses, heart, touch etc.

629.

Likewise we need to be deeply aware and well settled in the knowledge, conviction and consciousness of the unique and sublime destination of our being totally destined to the divine glory, love and will in the virtue of religion, whose supreme act is the sacrifice that above all necessitates the victim for the holocaust: *Ubi est victima holocausti? In monte Dominus videbit*¹. – *Where is the victim of the holocaust? On the mountain God will provide.* The host is our body, heart, senses, temporal life, with Jesus crucified on Calvary and on the altar.

¹ Gn 21, 1-22.

630.

We also need to be deeply aware and well settled in the knowledge, conviction and consciousness of the superior destination of man and of the religious. I would like to say this in a special way of us destined to the supreme espousal relationship, which requires the most perfect likeness with God, and God is the most pure spirit; the maximum union with God, and God is the most pure spirit; the maximum cooperation with God, and God is the most pure spirit, and this is the reason why the most sublime perfection of holy purity, both in its negative and positive aspect is required.

631.

I am not the owner of my body. My body is not destined to be instrument of pleasure, neither for me, nor for others. My body must be the host of sacrifice of all my life to the Lord. I am totally destined to the mystical espousal and to the divine assimilation. God is infinite purity. Principles like these must be skillfully presented to our candidates, starting from aspirancy, and to the world as the true foundation of purity.

CHAPTER II

Address to the souls

632.

We say nothing of the poor souls, who had the misfortune of consenting to grave sin, even if only with an internal act. Nor of those other poor souls, open in all their senses to all the impressions of the external world, who cannot spend one day without committing venial sins, at times deliberate. In them the malicious instincts and inclinations to evil are very acute, insolent, increased by diabolic influences.

633.

What can we say about those souls who have fallen into grievous external sins, and have become addicted and enslaved, and have been for others near occasions or cause of sin, and maybe even of scandal to innocent children, or in different other ways even guilty of sacrilege? Immersing them in the blood of Jesus we do not lose hope in them; we do not become presumptuous of ourselves, but together we trust in God's grace.

634.

We suppose the knowledge and practice of the ordinary effective means for purification, reparation and preservation from sin in general and from these sins in particular: confession that must be very frequent, if possible even daily, distinct for the clarity of

humiliation; the revelation of all temptations only and exclusively to the spiritual director; the most swift avoidance of all near occasions of sin, and, if it were possible, even of remote occasions of sin.

635.

Other means and practices of purification, reparation and preservations are: Corporal mortification, even bloody, according to the generosity of the souls; incessant laboriousness until sweating of the forehead; the immediate and violent resistance that would deprive the enemy and ourselves of any hope of succeeding in temptations; continuous, humble, confident and powerful prayer; the consecration to God as of one feverish or crazy, who wants to be subtracted to any possibility of evil, even at the cost of being restrained in a strait jacket.

636.

To those who feel that they may have sufficiently repaired for the past, provided for the future and triumphed over evil and to whom it seems impossible to fall again, we firmly say (and we want all confessors, directors and angels to always keep repeating): Do not ever consider yourselves safe until death; be always on the alert against horrible surprises; do not ever stop all precautions and penances, keep increasing them till death.

637.

To them we also say: Do not be content with the purification of the past. We also say to everybody: do not be content with the negative purification consisting in the exclusion of any fault and personal purity, without doing anything for the apostolate of purity in the world. We all constantly tend to the highest levels of purity, to the most sublime forms and conquests of this beauty of

spirituality and to elevate and assimilate the whole world in this sacred fire.

638.

Likewise we say to those who have been spared, preserved, immunized from the mud: Never brag or elevate in your self-esteem above the others; make yours all the forms of contrition, humiliation and penance of those who have fallen, in order to guarantee holy perseverance and most of all never despair of the perfect conversion of others, regardless of how weak in their will, or perverted in their senses, counting on the omnipotence of grace.

639.

We should always keep in mind that if there is a virtue to which is appropriate the evangelical principle: *Regnum coelorum vim patitur et violenti rapiunt illum* - *The kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent are taking it by storm*, it is especially the virtue of holy purity. If there is a flower and a fruit that is found only on Calvary, watered by the blood of Jesus, rooted in his holy plagues, guarded by the sorrowful Mother, pending and nailed to the cross it is precisely the flower and the fruit of holy purity.

640.

Everyone has in his character or temperament a weak point where the enemy counts to take us by surprise and make us capitulate, and that consequently must be diligently guarded, fortified night and day, it is that of holy purity. Regardless of what anyone may think of his dominating passion, it is certainly this, for everyone. Against it must be concentrated all the war of which we talk about the dominating passion.

641.

If anyone finds a malefic influence spread in the air, saturated of a spray-form poison in his environment of origin, family, school, institute, society or ministry, he must protect himself from it as from the most dangerous toxicity. We must concentrate all the war against the world and its spirit, against the bug of sensualism that permeates the whole world and the relationships of men.

642.

There are some periods more dangerous than others throughout the seasons of the year and the hours of the day, when we must fight a hidden battle against the power of darkness. These are the periods and the hours of greater inclination to sins against purity, we may call them the hours of the enemy, the hours in which we must fight to protect our purity. When we come out winners, we must immediately get ready for a much fiercer attack from the power of hell, which comes against us with its multi-secular experience of humankind, with its angelic-diabolic ingenuity.

643.

Every mortal sin must be infinitely hated and made up for. We can say that of all mortal sins the one to be most avoided, hated and repaired is the sin of impurity, because the inclination to commit it is the most violent and pleasant; likewise the occasion to fall in it is the most frequent and attractive; it is the most repugnant to the divine being, the most prostrating for the human being, the most impeditive of the elevation of the creature, the most corruptive of every goodness of the creature.

644.

Likewise every venial sin must be infinitely hated and made

up for. Amongst all venial sins the ones to be most attentively cured, repaired and prevented are those that more or less directly concern holy purity, as the closest to serious fault; they most attractively precipitate us into mortal sin and more obscure our mind and more harden our heart with sickening grease.

645.

Glory to God, thanks be to God, long live God! The merits of the battle for holy purity and the crown of victory are greater than the evils of sin. Greater are also the benefits of grace and the consolations of God to the pure of heart. Regardless of what may imply the enemy, great is the number of virgins, even in the world. Even greater is the number of virgins in the holy institutes that succeed in persevering and perfecting in the holy purity of mind, heart and body and enjoy already the divine goodness.

CHAPTER III

Holy Modesty

646.

It should not be considered superfluous the use of any means, nor exaggerated any caution, nor excessive any scrupulosity of conscience when it is a question of modesty. We retain all the means, cautions and attentions as inspirations of the divine jealousy of the divine lover of souls, who finds his delight among the lilies and protects them with a divine cloister to subtract them from any breath of corruption and nurtures them with a purifying fire.

647.

The fear of getting affected by the malady of scruples (may the Lord deliver us from them and from which holy obedience delivers us) that often find their pasture in matter of purity, should not keep us from using all the means, cautions and attentions, as the fear of inconveniences should not deter us from any good; because the evil that would come to us and others from a neglected behavior, that is close to vulgarity and exposes us to temptations, will certainly be greater.

648.

The general and ordinary means, through which the Lord safeguards this virtue in the natural and supernatural order, is the noble sense of modesty. We consider it a duty for us to maintain,

cultivate and consecrate this sense of modesty, especially because we see how the whole world is conjuring against it; we form our idea of modesty from those who have never neglected it and not from those who have mostly lost it.

649.

As far as our body, we will live and consider others as those angels represented as a head blossoming between two wings, without a body; as if we had only the head and the hands, without thinking at all about the rest of our volume completely covered by holy modesty and not wanting to be violated neither by looks, nor by touch, nor by any other sense.

650.

Our body is hidden under the adornment and dignity of our clothes, which would be useless if they were to render somehow visible the form of the body. Our religious habit is meant to hide the body in such a way that if somebody had no idea of it, he would not be able to figure it out by looking at us. Proper attire was the first thought of God for man after original sin, and must be the first care of the Christian, and especially of the religious for his body.

651.

Neither our body nor that of others will ever be the object of look or touch, nor of any other sense, not even covered by its habit. Not even the face and the hands will ever be the direct object of our attention since in our relationships and conversations we direct ourselves to the persons and to the souls, without focusing on their material physique, not even of images or of ourselves.

652.

As religious, from the moment we receive the religious habit

we will wear it at all times, both in public and in private and in its entirety; for us it should be like a horror to appear in civilian clothes, more than it would be for a holy layman to appear in the nude. Even when we go to bed and when we get up, as well as when we change our clothes, we should do it in such a way that we never appear in civilian attire, not even to ourselves.

653.

Even in our most humble human necessities, the religious should distinguish himself from the rest of men, just as man is distinguished in this from the inferior beings. We should keep our eyes in deep modesty and our hands are busy holding our habit, because usually there is no need of eyes nor of hands for our poor body to relieve itself; we should satisfy our necessities in the most saintly possible way.

654.

We will follow the same criterion whenever a necessity may force us to take off our clothes totally or partially, like when taking a bath, necessary for our hygiene and for the same virtue of holy purity; the bath should be taken in semi obscurity and using brushes and sponges, and in the shortest time possible. We will behave the same way in the occasion of itching; we will try to tolerate it in spirit of penance.

655.

Good principle is: not to apply our senses directly, where it is sufficient to apply them indirectly, and do not apply two senses, where one would be sufficient. Reduce to a minimum the sense of sight that is the most dangerous for the effect of the images that enter through the eyes and, at times, remain indelibly impressed in our fantasy and infernally torture us.

CHAPTER IV

Mortification

656.

Holy purity requires the mortification of the senses, especially of sight more than any other means after prayer, or better with prayer; especially with people of the same sex that at first sight may appear attractive, and with all people of the opposite sex, without exceptions. The eyes wound the heart. Eyes open, heart profaned! To the sight we apply the principle: *Principiis obsta – be firm unto the principles.*

657.

For this reason we make ours the rule of St. Augustine on this subject: If a confrere should notice that a brother looks in a suspicious way to another person (of either sex) he should admonish him. If he does not amend, he should have him admonished by a more respectable person, and if still he does not amend, the case must be referred to the superior, who will make of it the object of the admonitions that precede the expulsion.

658.

It is clear that no one must spy or maliciously investigate the behavior of others; nor should anybody believe all the accusations against another that may come *ex abundantia cordis* - from the

fullness of the heart of the accuser. Every good superior before taking serious decisions with lasting consequences should first apply the external remedy of changing of places, offices or houses. At any rate this lack of modesty is always a serious case.

659.

Every religious will try to heroically control his eyes, according to the modesty of Jesus. For those who are capable: it works to keep the eyes opened and yet veiled in such a way that one cannot distinguish the peculiarities of the person or objects that one sees; or fixing them between the chin and the neck in such a way that one gets a vague and unfocused impression. All should keep their eyes down and move them seldom, so that the spiritual eye may be a distinctive of our aspect.

660.

In a few words, we must subtract ourselves to every sense and impression of the human body, and of every other body, so that we will never procure the impression of any part of the body, not even of the hands and face directly and exclusively looked, touched or admired. We shall never indulge on the impression of the body not even when that should happen by accident or by necessity.

661.

Our religious must consider it a duty, in every time and place, with others or alone, during winter and summer, day and night, to maintain himself totally guarded in holy modesty and decorum of external and intimate clothes, without even fixing one's own hands or his own face in order to avoid any sensual perception of our or other's body.

662.

Likewise our religious must abstain from the use of perfumes, tastes and sounds combined by man only in view of sensible delight. In a special way we abstain from sentimental songs and music even if they are applied to sacred words, even more if originally they were applied to sentimental and profane words that come to mind in connection with the sounds. We should never classify as innocent or promote those satisfactions that are dangerous in weakening the human will.

663.

As far as perfumes, tastes and sounds created directly by the Lord, everyone is free to follow his internal criterion, inspired by God and approved by the superiors. He who deems himself unworthy of such gifts, should abstain in spirit of humility or enjoy them in spirit of gratitude. We should make sure that we never seek the sensible delight per se, while this was meant for the elevation to God, and only for this purpose may be used.

CHAPTER V

Cloister

664.

Our religious must guard himself from loving or wanting to be loved with sensible love. As sensible love we intend the love that is based on pleasant, external qualities; the love that nourishes itself of sensible manifestations and leads to sensible enjoyment. We shall not consider innocent these affections only because they are not immediately sinful; by their nature they lead and tend to the sensual as the sensual leads and tends infallibly to the venereal.

665.

Likewise we must be vigilant over our own heart, when very good, useful affections, based on spiritual and supernatural motivations of duty, with repercussion on the inferior part, would want to manifest themselves sensibly, and search some sensible satisfaction. Sensible satisfaction, whenever wanted and enjoyed per se, is ruinous and corrupting, it leads and tends to the sensual as the sensual leads and tends infallibly to the venereal.

666.

We abstain from any sensible manifestation of affection with words, caresses, embraces, handshakes, kisses, or being alone

with someone etc. We want to apply literarily *l'et in medio vestri sit Christus Deus – may the Lord Jesus be in your midst*, leaving always between ourselves and others even materially the space for Jesus; and the *deligamus non verbo sed opere et veritate - let us love not in words but with facts*; we will do so multiplying the attentions, the signs of esteem, real services, spiritual hidden gifts toward all we love in Christ.

667.

Holy purity requires everything in a more rigorous measure and without exceptions with people of the opposite sex, both in the ministry and in every other necessary relationship. *Sermo brevis et rudis - short and austere conversation!* Maximum seriousness, gravity and serenity without smiles! Writing letters we use simply the salutation: Mrs, Miss or Mr. without any appellative of affection. When we receive necessary visits from laywomen or religious sisters, we will not sit in their presence, we will not talk about them, nor make allusions to their external qualities in the conversations.

668.

This is considered our main cloister: do not talk not even with allusions, of people of the opposite sex, even if they were consecrated to the Lord. We shall be even more strict with consecrated souls by not admitting them in the sections of our religious house reserved only for the community, not admitting them in our conversations and in our sight, because without this cloister of looks and of words, the cloister of some sections of the house will be of no value.

669.

In our common and private conversations, as well as those of

instructions in school and in spiritual directions, we must abstain from dangerous allusion, from every word or sound that may be perceived as equivocal. Likewise we must abstain from any superficiality of acts, behavior and laughter that may have a profane hint. The instruction to young people on this matter is reserved to the confessors and spiritual director with prudence and caution.

670.

We sharply condemn any syllable on the matter, because we want and must observe the apostolic prohibition: *Nec nominetur in vobis sicut decet sanctos* - *Let no one talk about this amongst you, as is convenient to the saints* -. It is absolutely forbidden to confide even to the most intimate and holy friend present and past temptations and miseries. It is forbidden to instruct and advise on this matter even the most holy, wise and intimate friend.

CHAPTER VI

Illusions

671.

Our religious should guard themselves from any form of hidden luxury. We must be aware of the fact that since nature cannot pasture itself of this dirt, it tries to procure it under pretext of necessary studies, scientific consultations or clarification of doubts even with directors and confessors; Other ways of satisfying this hidden luxury are: bitter and loud condemnations of specific faults of worldly people, reporting to the superiors suspicious things, reproving with friends condemned things, with multiform depravity.

672.

In the necessary study of sexology for the ministry, no one should precede or anticipate the instructor's presentation one day or one page. Nobody should go back to it without true necessity after having studied and learned it. No one should procure other books to deepen its knowledge, because there is no science easier and more unforgettable. At any rate, to prevent any illusion no one should read a line of this stuff outside the assigned time and book, without explicit permission of the superiors.

673.

Those who on account of age, study habits, or needs of teach-

ing and ministry, have reached the point of a most serene insensibility on this matter, must use the same precautions, fearing until death the possibility of reigniting a fire that has never been extinguished, even though it may be buried under the ashes. They too must continue to tend to the complete purity of the mind in the exclusion of any such a thought, even though they may not feel any repercussion on the senses.

674.

To the integral purity to which we aspire, it is helpful to abstain from seeking, intending, enjoying and prolonging any voluptuous sense that one can experience while eating and resting, in necessary actions and in appropriate relationships. In all these things keep aiming to the goal, aware that they are only means, separating the pleasure in itself and per itself elevating and focusing to the goal of union with God.

675.

Our religious should go to the doctor only when necessary, for the sake of personal modesty and in order to stay immune from the preoccupations for our good health. With sobriety and laboriousness and especially with the fervor of the spirit we will maintain that level of good health and physical strength necessary to our external duties. We react with these means to any sluggishness and infirmity, knowing that nobody becomes a saint in sickness.

676.

Some Christian authors indicate various means to dispel the evil of impurity, and to protect the good-purity. If they talk about physical means they are meant for those who have fallen, or have gotten used to evil. For those who have maintained their purity and overcome the enemy daily, the knowledge of such means,

unless required by the ministry, may become a dangerous curiosity, and using them may even become a remedy worst than the evil itself.

677.

As far as moral and supernatural remedies, the more we know and practice, the better off we are. Generally they are reduced to: laboriosity, flight from the occasion, prayer and holy humility, whose main act, in this case, is to manifest quickly and candidly all doubts, temptations, failures, allurements and occasions to the director, without deciding anything by ourselves, especially in this matter.

CHAPTER VII

General Austerity

678.

When we say *Holy, integral purity*, we intend that highest level of immateriality and spirituality that we may attain. We try to eliminate ever more what is material, trying to spiritualize it in our intention and even in our use, when it is absolutely necessary. We take special precautions in making sure that we will never subject the major faculties to the inferior ones; to the contrary we always try to absorb the inferior forces in the service and in the exercise of the superior energies. We want to live abstract from what is sensible, absorbed in the spiritual, in an austere, elevated, holy state of life.

679.

We want that our religious be always far from any general and particular half-heartedness, as it appears from what is prescribed about the posture of the body, always erect, properly covered and straight like in a gothic style, kneeling without support, and when seated always well collected.

680.

The austerity of our life style appears also from the exclusion of any sofa and lounge in our houses. These are admitted only

for those who are sick, in lieu of the bed, when feasible. The core reasoning is that we try to make the bed invisible during the day. We would like for our beds to have only a wooden platform and no more than one simple mattress.

681.

The austerity of our life style appears also from the abstinence from every alcoholic beverage and from our moderation in the use of meats and sweets; from the prohibition of the afternoon rest in bed, from our early rising in the morning, from the modesty during external promenades and from the continuous and constant laboriousity.

682.

What helps us to be victorious in this battle and what gives supernatural value to this virtue is our ardent and tender love for Jesus, for the blessed Mother and for our angel, coupled with the holy fear of God, hatred and abnegation of self. We strengthen our vow and virtue of purity with the solemn promise of love to Jesus, in the Sacred Heart, considering in it also the angel, the blessed Mother and above all the most holy Trinity.

683.

While being tempted nothing is more effective than shifting our attention, i.e., while we are being attacked on holy purity, we apply ourselves with prayer and acts to holy humility. We do not deign the temptation of a look and apply ourselves intensely to something that requires our full attention, even if it were less useful in ordinary circumstances.

684.

Victory is always connected to some act of humility and to

some condition of humiliation. The candid manifestation of our temptation and weakness to the director, the most sincere confession even of the minimum fault in this matter, the constant fear of falling, the ongoing caution and an enlightened superior are effective in humbling and humiliating us.

CHAPTER VIII

The Snake

685.

Pride is the root of all evil, it is the impurity of the soul, and it immediately manifests itself with impurity, pride of the flesh. Pride and impurity are inseparably connected. As the soul is united to the body in a unique substantial being, one nature, one principle of operation, one person, so are united pride and impurity in one unique entity of evil, root of every other evil and end of attribution of every evil.

686.

Greediness stands between pride and luxury as the one that provides the means of money and whatever else it possesses to both pride and luxury. Pride further manifests itself in wrath and envy. Luxury manifests itself in gluttony and idleness; all evil and every evil is intermingled in that mixture, as on the other side, the glory of God and the happiness of man form inseparably our ultimate goal and the beginning of every good.

687.

Pride is directly opposed to the glory of God, substituting the false and vane glory of the ego to that of God. Impurity is directly opposed to the happiness of man, offering to him the false

satisfaction of the decaying flesh. Pride and impurity form like a unique principle and end of our deviation, of our corruption, of our infernal ruin, of our temporal and eternal deluge, deluge of every death.

688.

We must have in great consideration and esteem our religious poverty, every practice and every article of its Directory, because poverty subtracts every incentive element to pride and impurity. We must, likewise, have in great consideration and esteem holy humility, every practice and every article of its Directory, because humility leads all our being to the truth of our first principle and of our ultimate goal.

689.

We must be continually and universally on the alert for anything concerning purity, about ourselves and about others; about others relatively to themselves and to those entrusted to them. Everyone should keep this in mind, especially the superiors, when they entrust souls, ministry and offices. They should be particularly careful of those who demand absolute trust on this matter, thus they show a hidden pride and the possibility of imminent and terrible failures.

690.

We nurture in us the holy fear of sin and especially of this sin, mixture of the worse evils. On one side this sin is a danger for every man, on the other side is its temptation, especially when it is perceived and not avoided, when we are not in a regime of precautions, of penance, of modesty, and even more if we should not have in act and in fervor the spirit of prayer; this is the temptation that more deforms man from what he is.

691.

Under the beguiling grip of the serpent, the man who has perceived the temptation and did not effectively avoid it, is subject to an instantaneous metamorphosis; all his wisdom and virtues disappear, while his pride and presumption have rejected grace, he falls in the taste of sin, in the domain of sin, in the perpetual reoccurrence of sin at every occasion. He has become the pasture of the serpent.

692.

The serpent has been doomed to crawl on the earth and to eat the dust, and for this reason it is not able to attack those who do not crawl on the earth and are no earth. Such are the tepid souls, souls crawling in the dirt that encounter the snake every moment. Since they enjoy the world and want to please the world they become dirt, and thus they become pasture for the snake. It is necessary that they take a flight and fly high and enjoy heaven and try to please heaven and to become celestial.

693.

Bitten or in danger of being bitten by the snake of the impure and poisonous fire, they must look at the cross and to the crucified Lamb, wash themselves in his blood, drink that same blood in order to extinguish that impure fire, and to water the reborn lilies. That is why we recommend daily confession and even more than once a day, as our secret for success; that is why the perennial offerings of the most precious Blood of Jesus for the salvation of the world: they are our treasure and strategy.

694.

This supreme remedy alone is not sufficient against evil, as it is

not sufficient grace without human cooperation. Our indispensable cooperation to the grace of the blood of Jesus for purity is our regime of chastity, consisting in the observance of the Constitutions and this Directory, in our holy city, the Congregation, the enclosed garden, the sealed fountain and the paradise of delights, guarded by the angels as the dwelling place of the soul-spouse of the Trinity.

695.

To crush the head of the snake, this mixture of pride and impurity, to crush it in one's self and in others, we need the Immaculate Virgin, and precisely the foot of Mary, that is, the means that are more impregnated with humility! Her rosary, her medal, her scapular, her name, her heart! Her wings, her stars, her blessed Son! Amen.

696.

In order to dissipate from our internal world and from all external world this smoke of the abyss, this lava of poisonous and burning foam of the snake that aims at the death of the elect, we need the Spirit of the Lord, the blood of Christ, the docility, fidelity and generosity of obedience of love to all inspirations, to all the invitations to the union with God, to all the works of the Catholic apostolate, according to the vocation of all vocations. Amen. Alleluia.

PART VII
VOW AND VIRTUE
OF
POVERTY

VOW AND VIRTUE OF POVERTY

CHAPTER I

The Profound Reason of Poverty

697.

The perfection of charity to which we tend and that we must reach at any rate, requires the vow and virtue of poverty in its highest level. It requires it because eliminating every affection, hope and solicitude for created things we may concentrate them on the one we must love with all our mind, heart, soul and strength.

698.

The perfection of charity requires the vow and virtue of poverty for reason of that humility that is so important in the supernatural relations. In no other state it is so easy to conquer, conserve and increase humility as in the state of poverty. No other state is so rich of humiliations that nurture humility; vice versa it happens with pride that nurtures itself with wealth and comforts.

699.

Thirdly, the perfection of charity requires the virtue and vow of poverty for reason of the universal servitude that we profess toward the clergy and Christian people, for whose wellbeing and not ours we must spend all that we receive. Effective and affective pov-

erty disposes us well to the service of the clergy and God's people. Pride and comforts would certainly alienate us from such service.

700.

The vow and virtue of poverty is further required by that great laboriosity that we embrace, both in our external and interior life. Poverty with all its needs is the best stimulus to activity, stimulus that conserves and directs the energy of everyone; energies that otherwise would atrophy in the torpor of idleness caused by comforts and pride.

701.

Poverty is also required by reason of the sovereign purity that must shine through us in the world and by reason of universal obedience through which we want to conquer and offer the world and ourselves to Jesus Christ. Poverty is an indispensable condition to the practice of the two other vows, considering the weaknesses of the human will.

702.

The virtue and vow of purity are further required on account of the life of penance that we profess. Effective and affective poverty, which implies innumerable privations and austerity, does not only help but guarantees our life of penance. A status of comfortableness does not lead to the practices of austerity and privations, and if they were practiced, they would be profaned and rendered of dubious supernatural value by the spirit of proprietorship and liberty.

703.

Poverty enhances the life of prayer that we profess; this would

be greatly hindered by the preoccupations, satisfactions, sense of satiety and turbulence produced by comforts. On the contrary our life of prayer is greatly helped by our sense of peace and emptiness, by our need and contentedness of God produced, maintained and nurtured by Christian poverty.

704.

Poverty is required by our holy, filial, child-like abandon to love that we embrace and which pleases so much our Lord. The child, who possesses only his mother, cannot dispose of his anything but of his mother. Such a right derives not from him, but totally from his mother's love and freedom. The same is true of the poor of God in his arms.

705.

We want to practice poverty on account of our imitation of the Lord Jesus whom we follow. In his wisdom and divine nobility he found only the state of poverty as the most convenient to the glory of his person, of his mission and of his work. For this very reason he wanted it also for his disciples, so that they may be worthy of him and his true heirs in everything.

706.

We embrace the apostolate of separating the world from the illusions and seductions of material possessions turning to the Lord of true, eternal goods. This is yet another reason to practice the vow and virtue of poverty. We cannot carry out this ministry if we are not true poor of Jesus and if we do not aim at something outside of the good of this world, outside of the whole world: the lever capable of lifting and uniting the world to God.

707.

The divine nuptials of divine union to which we are constantly preparing ourselves with the help of the Holy Spirit also mandate our vow and virtue of poverty. Those nuptials expect a dowry, clothes and a nuptial dress worthy of God, all taken and made from the treasure of poverty and nothingness that the all who is God wants to espouse, in order to operate in him the marvels of divine life.

708.

The divine richness that we need for the work of God, for the exercise of the powers of which we are invested for the governance of God's peoples and for the formation of the elect of divine vocations also postulate our vow and virtue of poverty. The divine wealth is made available only to the true poor in spirit, who also are the ones who achieve the best results in their ministry.

CHAPTER II

Affective Poverty

709.

Every religious must keep away from his heart any sense of possession, any form and level of this sense of possessing any interior or exterior, personal or communitarian ownership, in order to descend and live in our nothingness, with the perfection of humility, in order to elevate and live in the divine all, with the perfection of divine charity and truly become poor in spirit and all, active and passive possession of God.

710.

In particular every religious should distance his spirit from any form and level of the sense of ownership of his country, language, nation, birth place and nationality, language, nation and country of adoption in order to be more intensely of the all world and of the universe, of all peoples and beings, in order to be more freely and integrally of God, and thus consider, serve, love and possess all and everything in God alone, and only God in everything and in everybody.

711.

Likewise every religious should distance his spirit from any form and level of the sense of ownership of his natural fam-

ily, people, things and history, and even of the religious family to which he belongs, in order to enter more fully into the holy Church; more intimately in the holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and more integrally in the divine Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God in him and he in God, through the divine mediator and head, Jesus Christ!

712.

Every religious should distance his spirit from any form and level of the deceiving sense of ownership of his own body, which has been consecrated and therefore belongs to God more than a spouse. Every religious should consider as a sacrilege using his body even for one atom or instant, for any purpose or use not sacred, without subtracting one single hair to the sacrifice of which the body is the host, with universal perfection of holy purity, corporal mortification and communion with the crucified.

713.

Every religious should distance his spirit from any form and level of the traitor sense of ownership of his consecrated heart and sentiment that belong to the divine love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with all the forms and levels of love of which he is capable. He must concentrate all his flames of love and reverse all his tenderness of love on the sacred humanity of Jesus, without deviating from him not even for one atom or instant.

714.

Every religious should distance his spirit from any form and level of the traitor sense of ownership of his mind, memory, intellect and fantasy, with any of their acts. They are consecrated, belong and are ordained to the divine truth and to the divine Word, revealed to us in Scripture and Tradition, and communicated to

us by the teaching Church; the religious wants to adhere and unite himself totally to the teachings of the Church in every atom and in every instant.

715.

Every religious should distance his spirit from any form and level of the sense of ownership of his will with all its internal and external acts of fear and sorrow, desire and joy etc. The will is totally consecrated and belongs to the divine bounty and holiness of the divine will, manifested in the commandments and counsels of God, in the laws of the Church, in the precepts and desires of the superiors; the will should never dissent from them, to them should always please and to them be united.

716.

Every religious should distance his spirit from any form and level of the sense of ownership of his freedom in every moment, never permitting to dream one moment out of the obedience, in all his external life, and from the attitude of wanting the ever more perfect in the interior life, in order to prevent all weaknesses, dangers and imperfections of our freedom, and to enter into the perfection and enjoyment of the freedom of his God.

717.

Every religious should distance his spirit from any form and level of the sense of ownership of his own personality, even though it is inalterable, indestructible and unidentifiable with others. Our personality in a special way is totally consecrated, espoused and belonging to the divine persons of the Trinity, in union and honor of that of the divine nature and person of the Word with the human nature in Jesus Christ. Every sense of ownership of one's own personality must be abnegated in a special way.

718.

The religious should distance his spirit from any form and level of the sense of ownership of his external good deeds, in which he will not find much of his own, except the many imperfections that permeate them. They belong mostly to the cooperation of others, and he has already offered them to the Congregation and to the Church; the best thing the individual can do is to kind of disappear and carry on as if those good deeds were not his.

719.

Every religious should distance his spirit from any form and level of the sense of ownership of his writings, talks and similar products of our intelligence. We renounce to them, as we do for every other good, in favor of the Congregation or of others, burying ourselves and disappearing in anonymity, preparing ourselves to better receive the action of the divine artist and inspirations for works of higher quality, in whom there may be always less of our human part and more of the divine element.

720.

Every religious should distance his spirit from any form and level of the sense of ownership of the projects of spiritual or material goods, of culture, and of apostolate, and of all good deeds that may bloom in his heart. He should present to the superior all good ideas, projects or inspirations humbly asking the effective realization of the same for the divine glory; he should be happy if such projects are entrusted to other hands or minds, who would get credit for them: he should disappear totally.

721.

Every religious should distance his spirit from any form and

level of the sense of ownership of his spiritual merits and treasures of grace and of glory, being deeply convinced that everything belongs to Jesus living in us. With act of heroic charity the religious should offer everything to the blessed Mother whatever he can both before and after death. He should not worry about himself with selfish spiritual interests; with supreme purity of love and theocentric attitude and method, he only seeks the active and passive complacency and possession of God.

722.

Every religious should distance his spirit and his heart from any form and level of the sense of ownership of any person, never wanting anyone dedicated to his person or service, in any way, time and place. Whenever a real necessity and obedience were to force him to allow and accept the personal work of someone, he should have no pretention of preference, or of exclusivity, with total detachment.

723.

Every religious should distance his spirit from any form and level of the sense of ownership of his own superiors that he must revere and love and whose services he must abundantly and constantly seek for his cultural, spiritual and even material good; we should receive their services as if we were actually serving them. We will never pretend any preference or exclusivity, we will be equally happy to share their attention with everybody or to be ignored.

724.

Most of all, every religious should distance his spirit from any form and level of the sense of ownership of any person particularly loved. For the reasons of humility, poverty and charity, this

special poverty of spirit and of heart, not wanting to be all of anybody, and not wanting anybody to be all for us is mandatory. For a religious there would be no greater impediment to the state and acts of divine union of the soul-spouse of the Trinity than this personal love.

725.

Every religious should distance his spirit from any form and level of the sense of ownership of his clothes, books, room and objects of personal use and even of our own Congregation: before we are separated from these things by departures, obedience, re-assignments, calamities, persecutions and death. It is much better for us to focus on the perpetual generosity of the Congregation for the vocations of the poor.

726.

All these internal detachments of poverty would remain pure illusions if not helped by the external behavior of the individual religious and by the practical application of the superiors. To every state of poverty and spiritual detachment prescribed must correspond various and continuous acts of poverty and external detachment imposed by the superior, and by the individual to himself, with real harmony of affective and effective poverty.

CHAPTER III

Effective Poverty

727.

In order to live holy effective poverty good religious will abstain from any act of ownership in the active form of selling, donating, rewarding or alienating even the smallest thing, and in the passive form of buying, earning or accepting even the smallest things for themselves or for the Congregation, if not authorized by the proper office or by obedience.

728.

The religious should be attentive not to be a victim of illusion in thinking that what is not licit in itself, becomes licit with permission. Holy obedience confirms but not destroys poverty. The permission of the acts of ownership concerns only the exteriority of the act, the formality of the act, not the essence of the act. The propriety of the things to which we have renounced through the vow of poverty coexists in perpetuity with the vow of obedience that simply regulates the external use of things.

729.

For holy effective poverty the religious will embrace and practice most generously the most religious economy of every material thing, both in quality and quantity, in matters such as clothing,

books and houses, trying to extend to the maximum the usability of things, even if it were only a flower, and not to waist anything regardless of their cost, like a drop of water, and this as a sign of reverence for the creator.

730.

It is the duty of the superior to decide when the economy should be done on the quality or on the quantity. We should keep in mind that the main purpose of poverty is not saving money but cultivating holy humility and holy abnegation and detachment in view of holy charity. In general we follow the standard followed by the very poor in their needs, with good taste and criterion.

731.

For the holy and effective poverty our religious will make good economy of the precious talent of time, of intelligence, of love, of the influence that they exercise or can exercise over others, and similar moral, spiritual and supernatural treasures; they will be very attentive not to waste a minute of their time, one beat of their heart, an oral or written word, a thought, or an internal act, but they will constantly value and utilize everything to the maximum.

732.

For holy effective poverty our religious will embrace and practice, individually and as community, simplicity in the room, as well as in furnishings, both for the religious and for the guests, having in the rooms only what is immediately necessary, so for example, in the private rooms only one chair, one table, few and inexpensive images, few books etc., and proportionately the same in the parlors, community rooms, sacristies, etc.

733.

This simplicity is extended to our buildings and to our churches. We do not consider art for the satisfaction of the eyes, of the heart or as objects of lavishness. We want to use art limitedly and only for instruction, edification and elevation of the soul to God. We condemn and prohibit any painting, sculpture, architecture, music or poetry if it should cause faintness of spirit in any way, shape or form.

734.

For holy effective poverty, our religious will exercise heroic patience in any ordinary and extraordinary discomfort, as flowers and fruits of the spiritual season, without pretending or even hoping that someone may soon come to free them from their discomforts; such a thing is reserved only to the rich and the nobles. They, however, will provide to their needs and the needs of others in spirit of fervor and love, trying to make every such opportunity motif of elevation to God-Father and friend.

735.

In everything, for a principle of assimilation and union to Jesus humble and poor, not only when required by God's greater glory, but even when it could equally satisfy otherwise the divine will of the divine love, the Vocationists will prefer poverty to richness, humiliation to honor, suffering to joy, as they prefer grace to nature, heaven to earth and God to man.

736.

From among all the discomforts of poverty, generously and frequently our religious will also have to suffer the privation of means necessary to the good works that they want to do in ac-

cordance to their vocation and mission. They will have to solicit the benevolence of others, and even against their will, in extraordinary circumstances only, they will have to contract debts and live under the cross of the creditor. The fact of not having debts to pay is a form of wellbeing not always possible to the true poor.

737.

Any discomfort of any kind, in any time, place and relation, will always find the Vocationists well disposed to tolerance, not only without grumbling but even without the minimum surprise, being always ready to face more abundant and more serious privations, because such is the life of the true poor of Jesus Christ. This is the type of life we want to live, creating our own discomforts when we do not find them in the circumstances of life.

738.

Corporal mortification for the Vocationists will consist in the voluntary external forms and in the generous practice of effective poverty. Likewise they will find their sensible humiliation in the voluntary and external practice of poverty. External comforts and honors of any kind, shape or form, are incompatible with poverty.

CHAPTER IV

Evangelical Servitude

739.

For holy effective poverty our religious constitute themselves entirely, the servant of all till death that is, in the interior and exterior life, in community and in the world, amongst themselves one to the other, with all the outsiders but especially with the clergy, with the superiors, with the souls entrusted to them (I mean entrusted to each religious). They will be servants and slaves in the most beautiful but also most true sense of the expression, correspondently proportioned to their union with Jesus.

740.

The religious must always exercise and manifest to the world this integral servitude with sincere reverence, devout interest in others' people wellbeing, fully oblivious of themselves as the most neglected and the least significant of all people, or, in truth, as the most assimilated and lost in Jesus, the servant of all till death.

741.

They must continually exercise and manifest this integral and universal servitude of the true poor of Jesus with the main act of every servant or poor: with the work! The laboriousness of the religious must be phenomenal and must become proverbially

unsurpassable. Our laboriousness must be intellectual and manual, written and oral, in every form, in every field. Everyone must work for twelve people, must assimilate himself to the activity of the pure act that is God!

742.

It is and must be always impossible to find an idle, ineffective and spineless religious. Even sickly people may be accepted in the Congregation provided they know and want to perform a work adequate to their condition with vibrant spirit, and especially the incessant work of prayer, even if only oral. Our chronically sick confreres, if they want to sanctify themselves as religious, must fructify their sickness with endless rosaries and offertories.

743.

In conclusion and above all, for holy effective poverty, all our confreres must generously embrace holy obedience; not only because they cannot legitimately do any act of ownership without obedience, but especially because it is proper of the poor, of the real servants, of daily workers to obey in everything and for everything, to be directed in everything and for everything by others. So for every good religious everything is reduced to holy obedience and it alone can suffice for everything.

744.

Let us be aware that, notwithstanding all its separations and abnegations, holy poverty does not exclude the healthy and holy love of family, country, nation, language etc. but elevates and extends it to the whole world, purifying it from imperfection and limitation; nor does it exclude the interest in the community, the protection of the rights of society, the safekeeping of the properties of the Congregation, but purifies it from any imperfection of selfishness.

745.

Let us also keep clearly in our mind that holy poverty of spirit and body, with all its discomforts and privations, with all its humiliations and works, does not exclude any sound and holy hygiene, the decorum of the house and of the person, because the religious *studium puritatis habentes* - are those who have the passion for the beautiful, but they cannot and must not appear rich, lords, as they cannot be and cannot appear unkempt and dirty.

746.

In conclusion and above all we should understand: We tend to the perfection of humility, charity and purity through effectiveness of poverty. Concerning everything else we dispose of the treasures of God and must imitate his bounty and munificence: Great generosity in giving and in dealing with the members of the community and the outsiders, as we would with the princes, sons of God. Great munificence in the houses of God, in the things of God and in the works for the Lord God!

746A

Our vow of religious poverty is reinforced, specified and perfected with the oath of servitude to the whole world and to the all Church in the clergy that represents the universe and the Church. The spirit of this oath of servitude constitutes the specific essence of our vow of poverty; this oath also adds new strength and new merit with the bond of the vow and renders it more precious with the double bond of the virtue of religion.

747.

We must consider this universal servitude, personally to the religious and diocesan clergy as our natural and supernatural state

and condition, both in the order of nature and of grace. As slaves by birth and by love we give everything without pretending anything.

748.

We give all our person, work, ministry, our natural and supernatural fruits, to our masters and lords, with all our heart living in the heart of Jesus. We do not expect any remuneration; we do not accept any recompense, we do not pretend any exchange of love or service. We place all our spiritual merits in the hands of the blessed Mother for the good of all. We spend all our natural goods for the Vocationaries at the service of the all Church.

749.

We must immutably maintain the principle that in our Vocationaries we will never charge any fees. It is a serious fault for the religious, subject or superior, who in any way or grade, place or time violates it! This principle guarantees the holy and effective poverty of our Congregation, of each one of its houses, churches, works and members, because the Vocationary is a bottomless well. It is also a spring that never ends!

750.

The Vocationary will always help us to live as true poor of Jesus Christ! The true poor are never able to provide with their personal work to their needs and those of their family, so they must depend on the charity of others. Likewise the Vocationists, regardless of how much they work and multiply themselves, by themselves they will never be able to sustain the Vocationaries, they must depend on the charity and almsgivings of the faithful, to the charity of the cooperation of the Sisters and of the spheres of our Associates.

751.

They will live in this perpetual and profound humiliation (but lovingly, for Jesus' sake, and in union with Jesus, who receives his nourishment from Mary and Joseph) of a Congregation of men, unable to be self sufficient for itself, its works, but is sustained and nourished by the Vocationist Sisters. They must be like the servants and educators hired by the Sisters, mothers and sister of Vocations, for the management of the Vocationaries, that must be considered as belonging to them.

752.

Often true poor must contract some debts, and for years and years they must carry the burden of debts, to the point of becoming slaves of their creditors. Even though they are not allowed to make debts, the Vocationists will have to suffer this condition when the impellent necessity will force them to bypass this prohibition, so they will work as slaves under the weight of chains, with the humiliating and crucifying apprehensions of debts.

753.

The true poor have no investments, so the Vocationists will never have funds, patrimony and scholarships for themselves, but all and only for the Vocationaries, their lords and masters. In the impossible case of a margin of profit not needed for the Vocationary, it should be devolved for other needs of the religious and diocesan clergy, or for the Propagation of the Faith, Peter Pence, diocesan ministries and Catholic Action.

754.

The true poor cannot afford to make provisions for the future. The Vocationists will never make provisions for themselves, ex-

cept what is needed for the Vocationary and other works of mercy. They will always be thankful to the Vocationary for their daily bread and for any other providence of which they benefit, since it is given to them mainly for the elect of the Divine Vocations that they serve.

755.

The true poor do not own houses or lands; they rent, or out of charity they are maintained in houses that belong to others, or at least, they enjoy the charity of having the use of the house. The Vocationists will not possess the houses in which they live, they will belong to the parishes, seminaries or Vocationaries that they serve, and their own Vocationaries will be considered propriety of the Holy See.

756.

The true poor do not have the luxury of taking time off for rest, trips or vacations, except the nights, the Lord's days, and the days of God's visitation during sickness, before the eternal rest in heaven. The Vocationists will distinguish themselves for their work and service without vacations; since even during school vacations they work more than usual, for vigilance, reparations, and restructuration of buildings or spiritual exercises.

757.

The true poor, even though they have a good heart rendered even more tender by sufferings, only rarely can have the joy of donating something to their friends, unless they want to deprive themselves of the strictly necessary. The Vocationist can, with due permission, deprive himself of something necessary given to him, and offer it to whomever he deems more convenient in the Lord; he does that without showing off, in silence, as the poor do. He

cannot, however, dispose of what he does not need because it belongs to the community.

758.

The true poor (to give a specific and practical example of many others that can and should be done in life following this criterion) do not find many faults with their clothes, as far as quality, cut, perfect fit, things that are very important to the rich of this world. So the religious must be able to be content easily, without exigencies, caring only about true cleanliness even externally.

759.

We should never separate the concept and practice of the poor from that of devout servants of all, always ready to give himself and much more their things to our lords and masters *in Domino - in the Lord*. In our poverty we must have an open spirit, big heart, spirit of munificence and magnificence, at cost and expenditure of sacrifices for others, especially for religious and diocesan clergy and for the bishops.

760.

Whoever will ask our religious for something, through mail or by voice, whether he asks for moral or material help, should always receive something. For example, whenever someone informs us about projects of charitable good works to be done, we will send a sum of money, at least the equivalent to the offering for a holy Mass. Even though we are in perpetual need ourselves of everything, we will try our very best to respond to every request with something and in addition we will also pass on to possible benefactors any request for help.

761.

Especially for the members of our Congregation, particularly for the most humble of them, we will cultivate this spirit of elevated charity, not only considering them in our esteem, but treating them in the reality of life as true princes in the Kingdom of God, as they really are. So, while every one of us tries to embrace all the rigors of poverty for himself, for others he will try to spend all the treasures of divine charity, taken from the inexhaustible chest of divine providence.

762.

This applies especially to our superiors, who should never be outshined by anyone else for simplicity, laboriosity and austerity of holy poverty; likewise the superior should provide with delicate charity to the needs of the house in general and of each member in particular, and especially of our sick confreres and our visitors, guests, external religious and diocesan clergy.

763.

Our civilization is constantly improving its means, ways and objects of personal and social comforts. Our religious will always distinguish between what provides only sensible satisfaction and what offers real advantage. We reject what provides only sensible satisfaction. We will use without any anxiety what may help to save time, to render more effective our ministry and to reconcile the hearts of the brethren.

764.

To give some specific examples, we always want to offer some little comfort, like a cup of coffee or tea or other healthy non-alcoholic drink, to all religious and diocesan clergy who come to visit

us, unless they happen to come more than once the same day, in this case it is enough to extend such a courtesy on their first visit, so that everyone may feel as being in the father's house.

765.

Likewise, we do not consider it contrary to the vow of poverty offering a sweet to our confreres on feast days, so that the joy of the spirit may redound also on the inferior part, especially at the beginning of retreats or spiritual exercises, as a sign and promise of greater graces of divine consolation, symbol of the prolonged reflection and assimilation of the divine truth to be chewed, tasted and enjoyed on those days.

766.

When it may be necessary to give, with due permission, souvenirs or gifts to confreres or other people, we should look at the usefulness, spiritual edification and to the devout beauty not to luxury, trying to understand their sound desires and needs, being always happy to meet a community rather than a private desire or need.

767.

Whenever a Vocationist, superior or subject, should receive a luxurious gift, even if it were useful for something, he can never use it nor keep it in his possession; it should be placed in the common goods of the community so that it may be sold and the income given to the poor of the Vocationary, unless it could be used for liturgical purpose, which is preferable.

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