

Blessed Justin Russolillo, S.D.V.

Works – Volume VIII

Spirit and life

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INTRODUCTION

This volume is divided into ten parts. Each one contains a series of articles published by Blessed Justin in the magazine *Spiritus Domini* or in small booklets.

The main topics of this volume are: Holy Spirit, Vocation, Divine Union, Nature of the Society of Divine Vocations and its various branches and some Historical Notes on the first years of the Society of Divine Vocations.

The golden thread that connects the various parts is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The title, **Spirit and Life**, has been chosen to remind us of the Spiritus Domini and to focus on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and works of Blessed Fr. Justin. Since the Holy Spirit has inspired and given life to the Society of Divine Vocations and to all its branches, in this volume, the reader has the opportunity to become acquainted with the Spheres of the Society of Divine Vocations, the Sodality of Divine Union, Universal Sanctification and the first historical account of the birth and infancy of the Vocationist Family.

Holy Inspirations

Holy inspirations occupy a prominent place in the process of working on our personal sanctification. I feel the need and the obligation to re-examine and to deepen, to appreciate and to ex-

plore, to teach and to inculcate the role of holy inspirations in our spiritual growth and in forming future saints. We will see holy inspiration in the context of Blessed Fr. Justin's spirituality and in the Vocationist culture.

The words of Jesus at the Last Supper seem to be a good example of holy inspiration. The way Jesus spoke to the Apostles publicly may be taken as an example of how the Holy Spirit speaks to us in our innermost being: *This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learned from my Father* (Jn 15 12-15).

Love consists in giving oneself to the loved one, in obeying the lover and in sharing that love. The Lord, who chose us to be his, continually gives himself to us in the Eucharist, in his Word, with his presence in us and with his holy inspirations. The love of a friend consists above all in opening one's heart to the other, sharing joys and sufferings, desires and preoccupations, dreams and fears, successes and failures. We may say that our love is a continual dialogue or exchange of information. True love of friendship does not admit secrets. God who is love does all these things, even greater than these; he acts through holy inspirations.

The secret of an ongoing ascensional religious formation includes fidelity, generosity, obedience and love of the holy inspirations, for one's own sanctification as well as for the sanctification of others. It follows that if we want to grow qualitatively and to develop formation in the Vocationist culture, we ought to begin with the holy inspirations.

The holy inspirations are the foundation-root of our every action, of every act of religion, of every act of love: *Take me all for you!*

My main acts in their origin, means and end, in their first inspirations and in their execution may all be religious acts, acts of love; may they be all our business.

The Most Holy Trinity, the center and the axis of our spirituality, is present and active in every holy inspiration. The Holy Spirit, through his holy inspirations, molds us like Jesus, as sons of the Father. Fr. Justin says that the Holy Spirit is the first and most influential author and teacher. Jesus says: *The Holy Spirit will teach you in all truth, he will remind you and will suggest to you all that I have told you. When the Spirit of truth will come, he will lead you to understand the truth, since he will not speak of his own accord, but only what he has heard. He will glorify me since he will take what is mine and will announce it to you* (Jn 16 13-15). Therefore, the Holy Spirit is like an interior director, and his mission is to let each and everyone understand and taste, practice and compel others to practice the teachings of Jesus to the point of incarnating them, so to say; *donec formetur Christus*; so that the Holy Spirit may form all the faithful in the mold of Jesus, as the Spirit himself had formed him - through the incarnation in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

Inspirations

What is an inspiration? The word itself is composed of three words: *in - spirit - action*. Etymologically, inspiration is an action that blows (breathes) within us and which comes from God. It is important to note that in dogmatic theology, the word *spiration* (breath) from the Latin *spirare* (to breathe) denotes the manner by which the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son. In ascetic theology, the same word is used to indicate the way in which the Holy Spirit operates in us and sanctifies us. Inspiration is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Here we do not intend to focus on the inspiration of the sacred Scriptures that constitutes canonical inspiration, also called public inspiration. Here we refer

only to private inspirations, received by each one of us; both are works of the Holy Spirit and proceed from the same Spirit.

Inspiration is an interior illumination, an attraction, an invitation, an impulse to do the will of God. Perhaps one way to understand an inspiration is to think of it as the opposite of temptation. Temptation comes from below and it is always an attraction, invitation, encouragement, opportunity, or inclination to evil, or anything, which is lesser a good than what we usually do. Inspiration comes always from the Holy Spirit, an interior illumination, an opportunity, an inclination, or impulse to conform oneself more and better to the divine will.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the divine inspirations differ from the gifts that are infused within the person and that dispose the person to obey readily the divine impulse. If those gifts of the Spirit are given to us to dispose us to obey the divine impulse, it follows then that the inspirations are more important and more precious than the gifts themselves.

The inspiration is the ultimate norm of our sanctification. Saying this, we mean that the inspiration is the most specific, detailed and personalized norm for our sanctification. Inspiration helps to understand the will of God for me in my actual state of life, in the actual situations, at this very moment. Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Divinum Illud* says that the inspirations operate in an area of actual grace, and that on them depend our starting on the right path, and our advancement toward achieving eternal salvation.

Inspiration is something that is strictly personal. What the Lord expects from me at this moment, in my specific condition; it cannot be applied nor imposed on others as their norm of life or as God's will for them.

The divine inspirations are part of the mysterious, life-giving

and constructive activity, reserved only to the Holy Spirit within the life of the soul. It is a source of life, a regenerating bath and a seal of consecration for the beginners; it is the light of the intellect, the force of affection, an incentive to every action for those who are advancing on the way of perfection; it is a gift of liberty, a bond of unity, a pledge of future glory for the perfect ones.

The late Fr. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O, in a conference to vocation directors, reminded us that the concept that each of us has of God is the result of various elements, or experiences. The very concept or image of God is influenced by various factors, or seen through different lenses: the history (of the people to which one belongs), the culture, the Bible (or the sacred books), the religious denomination of the individual, the teachings of the founder (for consecrated religious) and ultimately, the spiritual director. What Fr. Pennington was saying of God applies also to our understanding of the inspirations.

The inspirations invite and help us to remember what we should do in order to please the Lord. Fr. Justin makes us pray: *May your holy inspirations suggest and remind me to practice some act of extraordinary humility and charity, to be done in the two parts of the day.*

Pope St. John Paul II during the prayer of the Angelus on March 25, 1990 said: *He who decides to follow Christ must be docile and faithful to the holy inspirations without any reservation. Fidelity to the divine inspirations means a docile acceptance of the action of the Holy Spirit, in whatever form it may operate in the soul; it is a sincere commitment to accomplish such an action and to eliminate any obstacle that may impede it.*

Inspiration in Fr. Justin

In the writings of Fr. Justin, inspirations are ever present. The

fidelity, generosity and obedience of love to the holy inspirations were continuously the focus of his life. We now can access many of his ideas regarding inspirations through the publication of his writings. The fifty-five block notes, diaries and notebooks, that compose his personal Book of the Soul, have been published in the Opera Omnia, Volumes X, XI, and XII. They are the transcription of the holy inspirations he received and their execution.

Fr. Anella in his book, *Chiamato per Chiamare*, says: the cult of the divine inspirations was for Fr. Justin his daily preoccupation. He cultivated them and responded to them with promptness. It is a well-known fact that all his life was a continuous listening and responding to the prompting of the Lord. *The divine inspirations will be also for you (especially for you [Justin] all the light, the strength, the method, the works, the goal and the means as they are for others; as they are in a very special way for the entire Congregation.*

The inspiration that sprouts in one instant may extend itself and its effects for one's entire earthly existence, and even for all eternity.

Every law, counsel, inspiration and divine example is beneficial throughout our earthly existence and then for all eternity. First comes the gift of the sanctifying and beatifying grace and then the gift of glory. This heavenly glory is already contained in the grace, which is the essence of terrestrial paradise.

Every inspiration of the Holy Spirit, whatever its object, and regardless of its provenience from one or the other of the seven gifts (Oh! Seven shining suns of my supernatural heaven) will be welcome by me with adoration, and entrusted to the Virgin Mary with confidence, so that she may bring it to its highest efficiency in my soul. Through Mary, I receive every grace; she is the *Mediatrix* of every communication of grace, and the cooperator of every correspondence to the grace. Thus, through Mary and the

Spirit, the souls and the works will be formed according to Jesus; Jesus lives in a continuous growth in age, wisdom, knowledge and grace before God and men in the soul who submits herself humbly to the Spirit and to Mary.

I trust in you totally, and I entrust myself to you, God Holy Spirit, ever present and working in me! Grant that I may acknowledge, receive and follow all your divine inspirations, through which you continue to lead me to live the divine life, always more, always better. In this prayer we see that the inspiration is the stable means utilized by the Spirit to bring us to accompany, to sustain and encourage the divine life within us.

According to Fr. Justin, the inspiration is the first principle of our action and the way in which God works in us. In inspiring, God may act directly or may even use other persons; God is always present and working in us, and so likewise is the case with the inspiration. One, who is not open and attentive to the promptings of the Spirit, can fall naturally to the promptings of the enemy.

Either I accept the inspiration, lifting and applying myself to a higher form or level of goodness, elevating myself to you, or I halt and fall down to a lesser good, falling into the grips of Satan.

Our ultimate goal, the peculiarity of the Vocationist spirituality consists in desiring, tending, readying and enjoying the divine union in the soul-spouse relationship with the Most Holy Trinity, and in directing and bringing all souls to this end. The inspiration is the beginning and the means of reaching this goal.

Lord, you intend, desire and always hint to the divine union, and to this you attract, guide and accompany me with every law, commandment and precept, counsel and inspiration. You expect this from those who understand and correspond to you as to the feast of our nuptial banquet.

The inspiration may come in a form of a command or of a counsel, divine delight or divine desire, but it is always the revelation and the expression of the will and love of God for me. Therefore, before the will of God, there is no questioning whether it is a command or a counsel, a delight or a desire, whether it comes as a threat or a promise, but the desire to please the loving Lord. The God of love enables us to face even death in order to please him as much as possible, act by act. Following the inspirations is not an option but an obligation for all those who want to please the Lord.

According to Aristotelian philosophy, God is the first object of a free human will; according to Fr. Justin, the knowledge and the execution of the inspiration are the principle objects of the second exercise of liberty.

O fidelity, docility and generosity of obedience of love to the divine inspirations of my supreme Lord... communication of the absolute good, manifestation of his will which is essentially regnant, I embrace you, and I want to make you known and embraced as a unique activity and the perfect instruction of human freedom!

You, O divine inspirations, are the principle object in the second exercise of the formation of human freedom, as it is the loving attention to the divine presence in us and even outside us, in every creature and in every law, which leads all beings, in their innermost being and in their mutual relations. The divine inspirations are communications of the absolute good and at the same time, the main stimulus in making us feel and enjoy the divine presence of God in us and outside us.

This loving attention is certainly reawakened, attracted and nurtured by the abundance of the divine inspirations which are indeed marvelous and delightful, like seven worlds of light in various radiating colors within the soul; seven virtues which are confronting themselves and putting themselves one after another

together with the grace of nature and its faculties. These seven virtues dispose the soul to receive and follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit. They are like a divine instinct, superior to faith and reason itself.

Temporary and lasting inspirations

The Holy Spirit may suggest things for a person to do throughout his entire life or for a certain period of time, or for a particular occasion. Our very vocation to consecrated life and to priesthood is itself an inspiration. In talking about private prayer, Fr. Justin mentions the inspiration of the moment. It implies that God is talking to us every moment and for every moment, as if we could not live our spiritual life without the inspirations. We need to tune in!

In praying for final perseverance, we pray also for perseverance and stability in docility, fidelity and generosity to all divine inspirations.

Fr. Justin tends to consider the inspirations that come in every moment as stable norms of life for himself and for the congregation. In his personal diaries, we can see a constant progress even in the intensity of the inspirations. On September 23, 1932, he writes that his second priority as first superior of the S.D.V. *is to write the good inspirations, which come to me from heaven for the use of the present and future religious.* During holy week (the holy week, March 20-27, 1932), he penned: *I write some spiritual notes so that they may not be lost and they may become very useful.*

After the publication of the Ascension, when Fr. Mario de Rosa suggested some corrections of its contents, Fr. Justin immediately stated: *I would not make any change, since it was all inspired by the Holy Spirit.*

On July 23, 1937, Fr. Justin wrote in his spiritual diary: *I have published, under the title, Ascension, a collection of good inspirations received during my forty years of life, since the age of reason, for the good of the Congregation. It seems to me that in their totality and in their substance they have been received as intimate words, almost all of them especially during the celebration of the Mass; chapter by chapter, verse by verse, in the normative part. In the exhortation there is more human element, it seems to me.*

Before every true inspiration, all sort of reasoning, interest or obligation goes by the wayside, be it because of our personal devotion for the divine inspiration, be it because for every good inspiration there is a corresponding series of graces, or rather a state of grace and blessings. In order to help us understand the preciousness and necessity of affirming and seconding every inspiration, Fr. Justin invites us to consider what would have happened to St. Joseph, if he had not accepted the inspiration to take Mary as his wife, and concludes: *Every other reasoning does not make sense before an inspiration. This is the real test of our fidelity to the inspirations. My understanding, my common sense tells me that in that occasion I could do things differently, and yet I must renounce, sacrifice my own views and my own feelings, because a good inspiration tells me and wants me to do something else.*

What would have happened to St. Joseph happens to me. I would turn down a new series of graces, a new series of benefits, maybe a new world, or a new order of goodness. This internal tragedy happens too often. How should we behave in the practicality of our life? We are talking of a soul that is between two fires, so to speak; on one side there is a superior principle of goodness that says: do this, while on the other side there are all these human, natural, ordinary reasons that want me to do the opposite. It may be useful to pay attention to the fact that our very vocation to the priesthood and to consecrated life is an extraordinary, permanent inspiration, according to Fr. Justin. The above-hypothesized

case of St. Joseph is the case of the person who does not follow or betrays his own vocation.

Preparation for the inspirations

Good or bad thoughts, temptations and inspirations ordinarily are the direct or indirect result of what enters into us through our senses, especially through the eyes (readings and pictures) and the ears. We can and must prepare material for good thoughts, holy desires and divine inspirations. This is achieved through prayer, spiritual reading, meditation and listening to the word of God and spiritual conversations.

St. Francis de Sales maintains that inspirations are interior enlightenments, impulses, invitations, or warnings produced by God in the soul. They may come directly or through readings, meditations, sermons etc. and they always tend to enlighten, stir, inflame, comfort and attract the soul to God in order to facilitate the practice of virtues on the way to final salvation.

I believe, adore and want to receive all the time your testimony through every law, command, counsel, inspiration, as well as through the voice of the superiors, good books and good friends' edifying examples, and through the voice of the Guardian Angel and the inner voice of my conscience.

Recording of the inspirations

So many thoughts pass through our minds. Some of them remain for a short period and then are forgotten; others stay for a longer period and a few stay with us engraved forever.

In Fr. Justin, I have found that the writing down of the divine

inspirations is considered an act of mental prayer. The recording in our spiritual diary of the good inspirations and graces of the day in view of spiritual direction is part of our seventh devotional exercise of the day.

The spiritual director ordered Fr. Justin to write down in his spiritual diary the enlightenments received during the meditation. Fr. Justin obeyed and he used these recordings to better cooperate with God's grace. On September 22, 1931 he wrote: *write down every day the good inspirations as many times and when you become aware of them. Read them in the evening as subject of the meditation for the next day... and meditate on them as themes dictated to you by God himself. Consider everything, and especially the inspirations, as themes to be developed. Let this be a form, and not the least one, of human cooperation to divine grace. This inspiration has become a religious observance of the Society of Divine Vocations: As mental prayer, the confirmation in writing of the divine inspiration of the day in view of spiritual direction.*

The act of writing the divine inspirations is not something merely recording the past. Today, more than ever, there seems to be a greater interest in autobiographies, memories and personal diaries. Fr. Justin asks us to engage in the regular practice of writing as he did, so that we too may benefit from it.

Inspirations and spiritual direction

The most refined lenses through which we can focus on the image and will of God for us is spiritual direction. For the Vocationists, spiritual direction consists usually and mainly in submitting the inspirations to the approval of the spiritual director. When Fr. Justin talks about approved inspirations, or inspirations approved by the Church, he refers exactly to the inspirations that have been submitted and approved by the spiritual director.

It is not easy to know with certainty the nature of some inspirations, and that is why: *Usually we must turn to someone who might be able to tell us with competency even if not always with authority, do not be afraid. When we follow the directives of someone else - always a minister of God - we will never regret.*

The soul does not always clearly understand what is good and what should be done. If the soul had this innate understanding, there would be no need for any spiritual direction. The Lord does not give us the fullness of clarity in order to give us the opportunity to acquire the merit of obedience to his authority and to his will, even if not evidently manifested to us. *This is the true anxiety of a soul: not the temptations and tribulations, but the inability to always have a spiritual director available.*

For the common good, I transcribe here the entire chapter 23 of our *Regole e Costituzioni*, volume 1, about spiritual direction. I deem it very important for the direction itself and for the direction of holy inspirations:

As an exercise of perfection of prudence, humility and obedience, every consecrated person should practice spiritual direction with diligence and regularity. Usually it is enough once a month; but for beginners it should be done twice per month.

The spiritual direction must not necessarily be done with the confessor, but with the priest from whom one expects a greater spiritual profit, as long as he is from the same Congregation. Everyone should consider as the first director the daily exhortation.

For spiritual direction we are free to ask the directors, during their term of office, the masters of novitiate, even if they are no longer serving as such, and to the so called "Padri Nostri - Our Fathers" [Former superior generals]. Only in very exceptional cases, the major superior may allow a confrere to have a spiritual director outside the Congregation.

No exaggeration should be allowed in spiritual direction, neither for oneself nor for others, as to substitute the direction to one's own personality and conscience. The main characteristics of spiritual direction should be: simplicity and brevity.

The letters of spiritual direction should always pass through the hands of the superior, who in case of serious doubts, may read and even block them.

At the end of the day everyone should prepare the matter for spiritual direction by writing in a spiritual diary the main inspirations received during the day and how they have been accepted.

Our spiritual direction will always encourage a true devotion to the holy inspirations, keeping in mind all the norms of discernment of the spirits.

After the inspirations, another main object of spiritual direction must be our personal relationship of love with God, and our life of prayer, especially mental prayer. We also discuss with our Spiritual Director our relationship of love with the souls of our neighbor and all our private and public ministerial activities, as far as intentions and implementation.

On the days of retreat one should present a spiritual program of prayer, penance and humiliation, for its updating and approval. Everyone should also examine himself on the signs of spiritual fervor, progress, lukewarmness and decay.

One should candidly open his conscience to the spiritual director, especially on all those matters dealing with pride and ambition, sensuality and laziness, the dominating passions and respective temptations and occasions.

Everyone should always be encouraged to abound in the exercise of the Word of God, both by hearing and reading, in order to prepare the matter for the inspiration.

Everyone should implore the grace of the discernment of the spirits, and of docility, generosity and fidelity to the various inspirations and to the spiritual direction.

Every inspiration about an external or internal act, out of the ordinary, not common and not permitted or suggested by these guidelines, must be examined with the spiritual director.

The superiors and the spiritual directors must respect and second the private initiatives of the individual, whenever they carry the marks of inspiration.

No one can ever appeal to the authority of the spiritual director, against any ordinary act of authority of the legitimate superiors.

The inspiration becomes a safe norm of life only when the spiritual director has approved it. This explains why Fr. Justin keeps repeating in various forms: *Pay loving attention to the holy inspirations, so that none will be unfruitful. Pay intimate attention and religious correspondence to the approved inspirations.*

Criteria for the discernment of the inspirations

Not every attraction or impulse towards something good is an inspiration. At times the devil places in our mind a desire or an attraction to something that is a lesser, relative or partial good, in order to distract us from a greater, absolute or total good. Discernment is needed to prevent being deceived or deviated by false inspirations. Positive dispositions of the intellect and will are essential in discerning and implementing a true inspiration. The intellectual conditions are: humility to prevent obstacles to the light of the revealing Spirit; vigilance to perceive God's presence and listen to his voice. Conscious awareness is needed in discerning between the action of God and that of the devil.

Conditions of the will are: docility in accepting the impulses of grace communicated to the soul, constancy in not interrupting God's action. Every divine inspiration is a new and deeper possession of God in the soul.

Moral conditions are purity of affection and interior recollection. Purity of affections is needed because God does not give himself to those who are slaves of unruly passions, or of attachment to creatures and to earthly goods. Interior recollection is sustained by prayer, by the spirit of true devotion and by the presence of God.

Fr. Justin dedicates chapter seventy-four of *Ascension* to the discernment, implementation, and approval of the inspirations from the religious superior and spiritual director. When inspirations remind and compel us to fulfill our duties and to fulfill them with heroic and internal perfection, we must follow them without hesitation.

When inspirations remind us and compel us toward internal and external, generous and ordinary virtuous acts, which do not preclude any other obligation, they must be followed without hesitation.

When inspirations inculcate external, uncommon and extraordinary virtuous acts, we must accept them, but we must postpone their execution until after we have received spiritual direction about them.

When they inculcate acts that are even slightly imperfect in any virtue, for example, if they were obstructive, offensive or in any way not in accord with any of our duties, even just a duty of convenience, we must not follow them.

When they inculcate acts that in any way could inconvenience or displease anybody, or when in any way they could feed our pride and sensuality, we must not follow them.

When they cause confusion of the mind, discouragement of the will, sluggishness in action, bitterness and anger towards our neighbor, indifference and doubt about God, we must denounce them to the director.

When habitually they would drive us to the external rather than the internal, to quantity rather than quality, to rashness rather than prudence, and in our interior world to multiplicity rather than unity; and with the superiors, to concealment rather than to openness; and with God, to fear rather than to love, they must be denounced to the spiritual director.

To discern the divine inspirations from other promptings deriving solely from the world, the devil and the flesh, we often need the guidance of an expert and wise director. In order not to fall in the traps of the seducer and in its dangerous confusion, we need caution and intelligent prudence. For the less complicated cases, we can follow these criteria of discernment between true and false inspirations considering the effects caused in the soul; the object to which they aim, the action that they suggest, the principle from which they come and the end where they want to arrive.

The inspirations that come from the evil spirit do not correspond to the conditions and requirements of one's life. They lead the soul to a seemingly spiritual satisfaction, but then they cause restlessness and confusion, and give a sense of pride. The inspirations that come from God give peace and serenity and lead the soul to the perfection proper to one's own specific vocation.

Another piece of practical advice given to us by Fr. Justin is this: When there is no possibility to consult immediately with the spiritual director, and one cannot postpone a decision, generally choose what is less pleasing to human nature, so at least the Lord sees our good will, and we have a clear conscience that we did not do what pleases our natural will. If I am able to consult with a minister of the Lord, I should do it.

Cult of Holy Inspirations

One cannot treasure something without appreciating it. We value the inspirations because they are a gift from God, and a manifestation of his will for us, and the expression of his love for each one of us. If we appreciate the value of the inspirations, we will venerate them to the point of having an authentic cult of obedience for the approved inspirations.

In your inspirations, I adore the care and providence that you, my creator, have for all creatures, governing and guiding them all to their destination with wisdom, infinite bounty and justice. In a special way, in a very personal, intimate and direct way, you do this for every human soul.

Chapter Seventy-three of Ascension describes this devotion or cult that we have for the inspirations:

Ask the divine Trinity in the Holy Spirit for the favor, the understanding and the acceptance of the inspirations.

Prepare the matter for inspirations through abundant reading and listening to the word of God.

Live with modesty; subdue every impulse of the world, the flesh and the devil.

On becoming aware of inspirations, quickly consent to them, be thankful for them, and resolve to execute them.

Entrust them, one by one, to the blessed Mother as seeds are entrusted to the earth.

Every evening, write them down, both for spiritual direction and for their execution.

Make the inspirations the object of your daily, weekly, pentecostal [every fifty days] and yearly particular examination of conscience.

We believe that the blessed Mother is Mediatrix of all graces. As the graces, so the inspirations, true gifts of God, come to us through Mary. To assure a total and complete acceptance and execution of every inspiration that we receive from her, we execute it with her, and then we entrust to her the merit of its execution.

All graces start with the inspirations, and grow with inspirations... We should implore them from Mary, receive them from Mary and, because of them, honor her as queen and mother of divine inspirations.

Whenever we perceive a good inspiration of any gift of the Holy Spirit, we reverently accept it with our soul, and then we present and entrust it to Mary, as a very precious heavenly seed, that only in her finds its life.

Then we ask her to assist us while we correspond to that grace, in the execution of that inspiration, for the respect due to its divine author, so that Mary herself may be our main concomitant grace as she was our preparatory grace.

May God deliver us from even remotely talking against the apostolic and private inspirations, and from suffocating any spark of the divine flames of the divine heart, fallen into the heart of his young minister. As we want to be the servants of the divine vocations, so we want to be the promoters of the divine inspirations approved by our spiritual directors and blessed by our superiors.

How can anyone ever talk against the inspirations from the moment that everything that is good and beautiful, useful and alive in our holy activities is all divine inspiration? Every saint and the entire Church is the offspring of divine inspirations.

Conclusion

Every divine inspiration, properly accepted, corresponded to and executed is a new communication of the consecrating light and fire of the Holy Spirit in the soul. It calls for new effusions of divine light and fire, a new consecrating baptism of the soul to the Blessed Trinity, in the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Every divine inspiration, properly accepted, corresponded to and executed is a new communion with the sanctity of the will of the Trinity; it is a new progress in the ascension to the Trinity, a new touch in the formation of Jesus in the soul, and a way to become with Jesus a unique object of God's delight.

O fidelity and docility, O generosity and obedience of love to the divine inspirations, development of every grace of consecration, correspondence to every grace of the only authentic and total consecration, I embrace you forever as an integral part of my being and the best expression of my human freedom.

In you, O divine inspirations, I find the most intimately great and beautiful, sweet and convincing proof of the divine bounty toward me, of the divine providence for me, of the divine love for me, of the acceptance and enjoyment of my consecration from my God and my all.

The response of the creature to the inspiration, to the attraction and to the vocation of divine love brings about the happy transition of the faithful soul to a higher level of the spiritual ascension, to a new world and a new heaven.

By responding to the divine inspirations, the soul ascends from one level to another, from perfection to perfection. As if paraphrasing the words of St. Paul: *I live, but it is not I, it is Christ living in me*, Fr. Justin sees God present in us through the divine inspirations. Thus through the execution of the inspirations we

make it possible for Jesus – in us and through us – to reach many souls. Jesus wants to be in all souls. Every time that we accept an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we give Jesus a new presence in us. Oh! What a most glorious, most blessed possibility grace offers to the souls in the spheres of personal relationships with the Lord!

Only those who receive and correspond to the grace, and allow themselves be animated and led by the Holy Spirit, will achieve the perfect, interior resemblance with Jesus. We conclude by confirming our profound conviction and our solemn resolution of fidelity, docility, generosity and obedience of interior love to the divine inspirations. The divine perfections differ from soul to soul, from state to state, from acts to acts, but in all souls, they exist for the sanctification of every act, and for the divine imitation in every act. All inspirations are highly important. We cherish in a special way the inspirations that lead us to Jesus in general, and to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in particular, because we want to be perpetual worshippers in spirit and truth, and daily communicants in spirit and love. Amen.

We join Fr. Justin in praying with him: *I trust that you will let me know, moment by moment, through the grace of your inspirations, your divine will, and I want, as I must be all docility and fidelity in obeying you with love. Now I want to live in the full action of your grace, let it be done to me according to every inspiration of yours.*

It is impossible to be true Vocationists, saints and sanctifiers, ministers of sanctification, if we do not open ourselves to, if we do not listen to and obey the Holy Spirit, author of every inspiration, and link of love with the Father and the Son.

God-Trinity that loves us so much continuously knocks at the doors of our heart. He whispers his words of love in the depth of our being; he guides, accompanies and teaches us moment by moment, to enable us to direct all our efforts, all our actions to completing and perfecting his perfect image and likeness in us.

It is clear that Fr. Justin believes that we cannot be saints without a burning desire and firm determination to listen to the Lord. In addition to listening, we should write down the inspirations in order to prevent forgetting them and to make of them the object of our spiritual direction, study, meditation and examination of conscience.

Listening to what Fr. Justin wrote at age 22, we can see and understand that his ascension to the mountains of divine perfection and virtues is moved, sustained and made precious by the holy inspirations that he had been given. *My God and my all has wanted that even those things that are mandated by law, I would do them an account of his inspirations, as if I were responding to the voice of love, rather than obeying in submission to the impositions of the absolute Lord of the universe...*

My God and my all has wanted through a variety of circumstances - almost involuntarily - moment by moment, all I had to do or omit, I would do or omit it in obedience to an inspiration of the previous moment; at times this seemed to be contrary to common prudence, only to discover later that this impulse has come from an invisible guide, who knew the future and always directed me to a blind abandon in the hands of the Love.

Knowing and following these teachings, exhortations and directives of Blessed Fr. Justin we will be assured of progressive ascensions toward divine union and holiness.

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

PART I

INTRODUCTION
TO SPIRITUS DOMINI AND TO
THE SOCIETY OF DIVINE VOCATIONS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Spiritus Domini

This first part consists of three chapters: Spirit, Book and Word, and General Idea of the Society of Divine Vocations. The magazine Spiritus Domini wants to be the messenger of the Holy Spirit and of the Society of Divine Vocations. The Holy Spirit and the Society of Divine Vocations want to work together to promote Universal Sanctification, which is the main work of the Holy Spirit.

The Society of Divine Vocations came into being on October 18, 1920 in Piana (Naples Italy) and the first issue of Spiritus Domini was published on Easter Sunday of 1927.

The main works ad extra of the Blessed Trinity are creation, redemption and sanctification, attributed respectively to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. While the work of the Father, creation is essentially completed, and, likewise, the work of the Son, redemption is essentially accomplished, the work of the Holy Spirit, sanctification, is still in the process of being actualized and needs our cooperation for its total realization.

Spiritus Domini is seen and presented as a practical aid to promote universal sanctification and the Society of Divine Vocations. After almost one hundred years, the magazine retains its integrity and fidelity to the founding inspiration and continues to promote vocations to life, to faith, to holiness, to the priesthood and to consecrated life. From the beginning the monthly publication of Spiritus Domini continues to promote and serve in a special way the vocations to the priesthood and to religious life, because they are considered indispensable for the achievement of the other vocations.

The world continues to need vocations and the Society of Divine Vocations remains at the service of all to promote, prepare and form vocations for every diocese and for every religious order.

Spiritus

We are not talking of the spirit of evil that drags us to the abyss, not of the spirit of man that drags us to the earth, nor of the spirit of the world that is the fusion of the human and infernal

spirit. We talk only of the Spirit of truth, charity and unity, the Spirit that is the author of every heavenly gift to the souls and of every good fruit that is saint and sanctifier.

[We are talking] of the Spirit that is the soul of our soul, the eternal sigh of the Angels, the love of the Father and of the Son that hovers - as the breath of God - over the waters of creation (Gen. 2, 2), the Spirit that invests nature and elevates it to God's grace; the Spirit that occupies the soul and makes her God's heaven.

We talk of the Spirit that is poured into the depth of our being with inenarrable groans, the Spirit that speaks throughout the centuries through the mouth of the prophets, of the apostles and of the martyrs, the Spirit that fills the entire universe with the Gospel.

We talk of the Spirit that the Blessed Mother wants to sanctify the elect, as he did in the cenacle solidifying the apostles; the Spirit she wanted at Nazareth to form the humanity of Jesus; the Spirit that led Jesus into the desert to triumph over temptation and later to Calvary to attain universal Sanctification in his blood, and then attracts all souls to the mystical ascensions into heaven;

The Spirit that is the heart of the kingdom of heaven, the triple Church; the Spirit that within the Church constantly causes the blooming of lilies and the enkindling of new beginnings, the saints, and continues to enhance it with flower beds and divine constellations, the religious families.

The Spirit that in his divine vocations attracts us through Jesus to the bosom of the Father; who with his divine vocations forms us sons of the Father on the exemplar of Jesus, and with his divine consecrations leads us to the mystical marriage, in that kiss of love that he is between the Father and the Son.

Oneness in everything

Some souls, in the grace of divine mercy, have learned and experienced that every divine truth is eminently comprised in charity, that every Christian virtue is eminently practiced in charity, and that every celestial gift is eminently granted and received in charity and that everything is an irradiation of the Holy Spirit.

In the same light, they have understood and felt that all the needs of mankind implore priests and saints. All the external and internal apostolate of the Church pleads for priests and saints. God's kingdom of glory and love needs priests and saints. All these things come to us from the Sanctifying Spirit.

They have understood that the whole creation and redemption, necessarily lead to sanctification, and that, according to the divine will, all duty of man is the divine imitation, and all the desire of God's heart and of our heart as well, consists in their mutual possession in the divine union. All this is the work of the Holy and Sanctifying Spirit.

In our spiritual life, then, how is it possible not to be moved to unify and converge all our energies and unify all our acts in charity for the divine union, with the Spirit of the Father and of the Son? Could it be that the Baptism of fire and of Holy Spirit announced by the Gospel was the beginning, sign or promise of all this? How is it possible not to orient ourselves toward the altar, seat of the "God-with-us", sacrifice and sacrament? How is it possible not to consecrate ourselves to cultivate the divine vocations of those called to the priesthood? Or, how is it possible not to orient ourselves toward the center of the substance of the soul, seat of the divine indwelling of the Most Holy Trinity in us, and not to consecrate ourselves to cultivate the divine vocation of every soul to holiness? We are ambassadors and co-operators of the Holy Spirit. There are diverse gifts, ministries and operations, but it is the very same Spirit and Lord that does everything in everybody.

Everything in Oneness

These men [the members of the Society of Divine Vocations] were marvelously inflamed by a deep sense of esteem, affection and solicitousness for all souls, parishes and dioceses, for all associations, works and religious institutes, longing and working for all holiness, in theory and practice, past, present and future, hidden and glorified within the holy Catholic Church.

They were totally captivated by the interior and universal mission of the Servant of God Catherine Emmerick¹, extended to every form of apostolate, prayer, suffering and action. They made their St. Paul's statement: *Besides all the external things, there is, day in and day out, the pressure on me of my anxiety for all the Churches* (2Co 11 28). They were encouraged by: *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat - There is nothing I cannot do in the one who strengthens me* (Ph 4 13), and *omnibus omnia factus sum - I became all things to all people* (1Co 9 22). Much more he² was lighted up not by the redness of confusion for a feared presumption, but by all the divine smiles, hopes and promises of Jesus' words: *You know that among the gentiles the rulers lord it over them, and great men make their authority felt. Among you this is not to happen. Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many* (Mt 20 25-28).

They wanted to sing the Apostle's song of glory: *Whatever bold claims anyone makes - now I am talking like a fool - I can make them too. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I speak in utter*

¹ Katherine Emmerick (1774-1824), a German mystic, was beatified by St. John Paul II in 2004. Fr. Justin considered her his sister and twin soul.

² It is important to notice how "some souls" became "these men" and here, it becomes "he" [Fr. Justin] and in the next paragraph it becomes "they", the first Vocationists. It is clearly an autobiographic note.

folly - I am too, and more than they are (2Co 11 21-23). Likewise in their folly, thinking of other religious orders they said: Are they Monks? So are we. Are they Knights and so are we. Are they Hospitallers? So are we. Are they Friars? So are we. Are they Clerics regular? And so are we. Are they Missionary, and so are we. But how can that be? One can be “son” only in one family. The servant and the worker can render his services to more than one family, and so, somehow he can belong a little bit to everyone, rendering his services with the blood and with the spirit of service, all his life long!

They did expand. They did abandon and consecrate themselves to the Spirit of every good spirit, to the virtue of all virtues, to the work of all works, to the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. Now they want to remind everyone of the Holy Spirit; they want to enkindle the desire of him, they want to lead everyone to the knowledge of him. They want to transmit his messages, apply his directives, promote the union with him, and serve his work³.

Vocations needed by the world

The work of the Holy Spirit is universal sanctification! To achieve universal sanctification priests are needed. For the priesthood vocations are needed, and vocations need the seminaries. At the service of all and in everything there is the Society of Divine Vocations and its Vocationaries⁴.

³ This last sentence tells us what the Vocationists intend to accomplish with the publication of the magazine *Spiritus Domini*.

⁴ Vocationaries are institutes, proper of the Society of Divine Vocations, where are welcomed and trained, free of charge, all those who want to be priests or religious, those who have inclination or signs of vocation, but are not yet well oriented toward a specific diocese or religious order/congregation. They remain in the Vocationary for the time needed to discern their vocation, and then they are directed wherever God calls them.

In the spheres of the Society of Divine Vocations, near the Vocationaries, their centers, the Vocationist Fathers would like to gather all those who, directly or indirectly, nearby or from far away, work to protect and sanctify the priests, to search and cultivate vocations, always respecting any commitment to similar, modern or ancient, general or particular works or institutions.

In their spheres [groups] and near their Vocationaries, the Vocationists want to gather all the shepherds of souls who feel the urgency to cultivate, preferably, those we call the chosen ones of divine predilections; those who show signs of a supernatural calling and feel the great need of diocesan and religious priests; those who are willing to share the care for the flock that under their eyes keeps growing both in number and in exigencies and suffers in mortal anguish on account of slowing down, interruptions, extinctions of so many wonderful initiatives due to shortage of able cooperators.

In the spheres and near their Vocationaries, the Vocationists seek to gather those who feel the universal vocation to holiness and want to follow it; those who long to make of each and every one of their brothers an intimate of God; those priests and consecrated souls who justly fear the curse of the unfruitful plant, if it does not produce the proper fruit that essentially is its own reproduction; if the priest does not produce other priests, if the consecrated person does not produce other consecrated persons⁵.

In their spheres and near their Vocationaries, the Vocationists want to gather all those who, with supernatural pain, feel the divine lament: *Messis quidem multa, operarii autem pauci* - *The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are scarce*. Likewise they want to gather together all those who prefer to imitate the more proper work of

⁵ This concept is largely and competently developed in the Lecture "The priest and Ecclesiastical Vocations". See volume 7.

Jesus' public life, the formation of the twelve apostles and of the seventy-two disciples and all those who aspire to take the place and role of St. Joseph, the foster father, and of Mary, virgin and mother in raising the baby, adolescent and young Jesus, in the persons of his little disciples and future ministers, the elect of the divine vocations.

The World that seeks Vocations

We can truthfully say that the faithful world of our time trembled at the emptying of many novitiate-houses, at the closing of many seminaries due to the ever more grievous shortage of sacred ministers. The same inspiration, everywhere, compelled pious laypeople and consecrated souls to obey the divine Imperative: *Rogate Dominum messis - Ask the Lord of the harvest* (Mt 9, 337). All prayers and supplications were enclosed in the heartfelt invocation: *Mitte, Domine, operarios in messem tuam - Lord, send laborers to do your harvesting* (Lk 10,2).

It seems that this inspiration has been accepted and corresponded to by the very Rev. Hannibal di Francia⁶ with his Congregations that take their name, work and spirit from the "Evangelical Rogations and the Divine Zeal". The Society of Divine Vocations feels that its existence is fruit of all these desires, expressed in so many prayers and sacrifices of bishops, dioceses, religious orders, congregations and institutes, and by other holy initiatives blooming in the Church.

Providentially, at the same time, many necessary questions about vocation, its nature, signs and its culture were raised,

⁶St Hannibal Di Francia (1851-1927), founder of the Rogationists and of the Daughters of Divine Zeal. He was still alive at the time that Blessed Justin was developing the idea and programs of the Vocationist Congregations. Fr. Justin mentions the fact that he had been in contact with Saint Hannibal.

stressed and, at least partially, resolved. All these things enlightened us, at least about risky ways we had been following.

At the same time, on July 16, 1912, Rome, precisely the Sacred Concistorial Congregation issued the recommendation: *It is necessary that the Bishops of the dioceses excite the zeal of the pastors and of enthusiastic priests to search, within their parishes, young men of sufficient ingenuity inclined to the things of the church, and having found them, they should take special care of them and cultivate them in piety and studies, with patience, and with love, with every industry and also with some temporal help, so that if the voice of God calls them, they will be able and prepared to respond and to enter into the seminaries.*

These provisions were sanctioned and perpetuated in canon 1335⁷: *Dent operam sacerdotes, praesertim parochi, ut pueros, qui indicia praebent ecclesiasticae vocationis peculiaris curis a saeculi contagiis arceant, ad pietatem informant, studiis inbuant, disciplinaeque in eis vocationis germen foveant.* This canon is the basis, foundation and root of the Society of Divine Vocations, and the program of study, prayer and action of all its members.

What we would like to have

We would like to have a meaningful word of blessing from every Diocesan Bishop and from every Superior General of religious orders, congregations and societies, with permission to publish them [in the bulletin *Spiritus Domini*] for encouragement and for the edification of the people of God.

We would like that every soul, who somehow hears about us, would remember us, our aspirants and our work, before the Lord and especially in the Holy Mass and Communion, Liturgy of the Hours, Rosary and Benedictions.

⁷Code of Canon Law of 1917.

We wish that everyone who reads *Spiritus Domini* would consider each article as a personal letter addressed to him. We would appreciate it if every lector would respond directly to the Spirit of God in prayer, and indirectly also to us by correspondence.

We wish that everyone who receives this very small periodical might procure for us, in honor of the twelve apostles, twelve more subscribers ... who could become vigorous and active helpers in promoting the formation of more and more apostles.

We would love to be helped by everybody, in any way possible, to sustain the seventy-two disciples of Jesus, and to enable us to continue and to complete the construction of the *Vocationary*⁸ and future *Vocationaries*, and to give this modest magazine a wider circulation.

We would love to receive, in almsgiving, many good and beautiful books for the formation of our internal and itinerant libraries and for our lay associates. We would like to receive many beautiful catholic publications of any kind, always as almsgiving.

We would appreciate it if all Generalates of religious orders, Congregations and Institutes, both of men and women, would, somehow, be always present in the *Vocationary*, and that they would send us biographies, images and relics of their holy founders, so that they can become better known by our young aspirants that the Lord might call to their religious families.

We want everybody to join one of our branches or spheres. Anybody can do this very easily and conveniently. We want many to come and serve God in the *Vocationaries* and works connected

⁸The *Vocationary* par excellence, the first *Vocationary*, mother house of the *Vocationists* in Pianura of Naples was being built, its construction, in its present extension was completed only in the early nineteen fifties and re-structured in the first decade of the 21 century.

with them, lay people and clergy, laborers and teachers alike, as true members of the Society of Divine Vocations, and of the Divine Union. Amen.

What we would like to give

Every fifty days:

Our friends will receive this tiny messenger of the Holy Spirit.

Our associates will receive this organ of the Society of Divine Vocations.

Our present, past and future students will receive this bulletin of their Vocationary.

Our masters, the religious and our confreres will receive this directory.

Our benefactors will receive this continuous voice of thanksgiving and supplication for an ever-larger benevolence and munificence.

In every issue of *Spiritus Domini* we would like to offer:

A short instructional study on the Holy Spirit;

An ongoing commentary on the divine word for our life of prayer;

A prayer and a formula of consecration for some recurring feasts to nurture our devotion;

Some ascetical or mystical message and some inspiration for our spiritual direction;

A page on the Blessed Mother and on some hero of holiness;

Contemporary religious news on issues concerning diocesan priests and members of institutes of Consecrated Life for vocations;

Inspirational and edifying letters from us and from others, to strengthen and expand our relationships.

We are well aware and lament the scarcity of pages. We appeal to you, our good masters, to enable us to increase the number of pages and its frequency of publication.

CHAPTER 2

The Book and the Word

Jesus is the Word and the Word is present in the book. Not only the book of the Bible, but all good books are a precious help to comprehend and assimilate the word. This is the origin of the desire of having always some good book in our hands. We want to make of the book our faithful and inseparable companion and to propagate good books for the triumph of the kingdom.

A Practice

In *Spiritus Domini*, we will always give a simple notification acknowledging every book we receive. We intend to provide book reviews only of those books, which, in our opinion, can really inform, inspire and benefit readers.

We do not find helpful and useful many books with numerous repetitions of other people's thoughts or generally accepted ideas. If nothing else, such books make it difficult to identify really good books containing fresh and interesting material.

In truth, from time to time some beautiful, well-written book appears in the stream of graphic production that is worthy of its name, but unfortunately it is not always warmly received and gets lost in a general distrust caused by so many uninteresting books being written.

We could report here and comment on the lecture of Father Faber on the joy of reading, which is a true gift of the Lord, so abundantly given to the children of men today. We are happy to refer to the entire book of Faber's conferences.

We know and trust that many of our friends take our suggestions as obedience, especially when it comes to buying good books. (It is indeed an obedience that is easy to do.) The sacrifice of a small amount of money is so light that makes it worth buying for so little the feeling of being obedient and of having a spiritual director ... of tending seriously to one's sanctification. However, it takes much more to be truly obedient and truly directed in spirit, to be truly committed to working on one's own perfection and be truly ascetic.

Truthfully well-written books are a true grace of the Lord. We would like to have all the riches of these books and would like to serve as transmitters and indicators of their benefits to our friends.

The Lord placed us and made us find ourselves among those who are hungry and thirsty for justice understood in its true sense of our own sanctification and that of others.

For our own and others' sanctification, a good book is a great help and of great importance. We would really like a good book to be inseparable from us, night and day. We would like every hour and every place to find us always with a book in our hands, so that somehow this could be an identifying characteristic for us, and we could be denominated: *Men of the book*¹.

We were saying that many friends will follow our suggestions about good books. We will have no qualms about indicating this or that book being worthy of being present in every library, or of being on any desk, and in the hands of any reader etc.

In this (as in everything else) we want to be really straightforward with everyone. We want to achieve together what we aim: To do some good to souls; some real good, not illusory, something

¹ Fr. Justin always recommended, and determined in the Directory that every Vocationist must always carry a book with him to occupy all the moments of free time that occur in his day.

positive, not negative, not in the abstract but in the concrete, in order to improve our relationship with God. Everything else is not a real good.

Nothing is more useful to achieving our practical purpose than the lives of the saints. For this reason, of every new work of hagiography, of any biographical mention of Servants of God, we will always provide a book review. Every life of a saint we consider as a page of Jesus' life; for it is Jesus who lives in his saints: The life of Jesus deserves to be read and meditated upon.

This is eternal life, knowing the Father and the one he sent, Jesus Christ.

Secondly, although from other points of view, it may not seem right, we will refer to general and particular dogmatic and ascetic theology. We will prefer those books that besides the qualities of clarity and precision offer the attractiveness and taste of new fruit, of fresh fruit; likewise, books that offer spiritual unction communicated to the reader of goodwill. From this spiritual anointing we will discern them as graces of God, as means of the sanctifying Spirit. When we will enter into heaven we will gratefully kiss the authors' hands, since they will have helped us to make ourselves good servants of God.

Moreover, we like to present recreational reading books deemed beneficial and appropriate for children, adolescents, and young people gifted with a divine vocation. They are our favorite garden.

Recreation strengthens hygienically, emotionally and physically and elevates and expands in health and sanctity the faculties of the spirit, including also the poor good servant of ours: Our Sister Fantasy, and the poor servant of ours: Brother Feeling.

The will calls fantasy *"crazy"*, and the sentiment *"traitor"*; these poor faculties have accepted it in peace to a certain point; but now they begin to complain and want to clarify their proper

functions. Those attributes of *crazy* and *traitor* quietly go to stand beside the other faculties classified as *superficial* and *weak*, which crown our “*lady will*” that only limitedly and shakily makes use of *feeling* and *imagination*; the *will* herself makes them crazy traitors, and she doesn’t admit it yet.

But where am I going? Oh! I wanted to welcome the good books of pleasant reading for a healthy and holy recreation of our young people and of our old ones. Which amenity books are we looking for? We did not receive any yet. All right! We will go looking for them.

Not to be accused of preference, or partiality, we begin not with the life of a saint, not with ascetic treatises, nor with pleasant books, but with two anonymous books. These booklets are truly the fruit of a loving and wise choice of pious souls, who from the sacred books, whose author is God, have retrieved, as from precious mines, some thoughts and words and distributed them for each day of the year, as pasture for pious souls. The good thought of having present some spiritual maxim every day is both common and practical.

“The Spiritual Diary” that quotes a spiritual biblical maxim for every day is also enriched with edifying examples. There are many other good books that offer us every day of the year so many thoughts taken from a Servant of God such as St. Vincent de Paul, St. Ignatius of Loyola, Father Ginha, Gemma Galgani, Saint Therese of the Child Jesus and the Venerable Volpicelli², to mention only a few that have come into our hands.

² Venerable Volpicelli is now Saint Caterina Volpicelli (1839-1894) was an Italian Roman Catholic professed religious and the foundress of the Maids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Likewise, Gemma Galgani is now St. Gemma Galgani (1878-1903) was an Italian mystic, canonized in 1940. She has been called the “Daughter of the Passion” because of her profound imitation of the Passion of Christ.

Thank God, we have two other booklets that come as twins: Thoughts for every day of the year taken from the Gospels and from the Letters of the Apostles. They are very much recommended because they contain more Biblical words than all the lives of the saints. The words of the saint are inspired by God, but not at the same level as the words of Sacred Scripture, precisely for its unique divine inspiration.

Because of divine inspiration, each and every word of the Bible is enlightening, productive, sanctifying, effective and sweet. We are convinced that when the soul proposes to think about and meditates every day on a word of Sacred Scripture, she will find her vital nourishment. This word will be like her eternal star, like her internal flame, as it were another angel for her on her way to heaven. *Lucerna pedibus meis verbum tuum et lumen semitis meis. - Your word is a lantern to my feet.*

By itself, such a reading practice must be very pleasing to the Lord because he is the divine teacher and inspiring love. It is an act of love to ponder his words (it serves to better impress on the soul his divine lessons). This is also the most beautiful imitation of the main occupations of the interior life of the *Most Holy Virgin, who kept all these words meditating on them in her heart - Maria autem conservabat Omnia verba haec conferens in corde suo.*

CHAPTER 3

General idea of the Society of Divine Vocations

This "General Idea of the Society of divine Vocations" reflects the original presentation of the Congregation made by Fr. Justin to Pope Benedict XV in the year 1917. Basically this is also the first "Rule" that was later approved experimentally by Bishop Petrone, Bishop of Pozzuoli, on Pentecost Sunday of 1923. The same Bishop, on Ascension Thursday, May 26, 1927, approved the first Constitutions and the Society of Divine Vocations, thus constituting a Religious Congregation of Diocesan Right. The content of this "General Idea" has been maintained in all the successive editions and revisions of the Constitutions.

Its Goal

The Society of Divine Vocations is instituted for the cultivation, service and apostolate of God's vocations to faith, to priesthood and to holiness.

First, in its members and associates it tends to the goal of every vocation: Divine Union with the Most Holy Trinity, through the ascensional perfection of love of God and neighbors.

Its Work

Searching and cultivating, and, so to speak, insuring vocations is its central, primary and essential work. This work is carried out in the Vocationaries, proper residences of the S.D.V.

In order to accomplish this work, the Society embraces cat-

echetical and missionary, Eucharistic and Marian, liturgical and social works, each ascetic work both didactic and practical.

Extension

The Society struggles, to the best of its abilities, in accord with opportunities, to search, save and rehabilitate vocations, which, in one way or other, have gone by the wayside, lost focus, have been betrayed, or are at risk.

And then we try to make ourselves useful in everything to the ecclesiastics of the diocesan clergy, by serving them, establishing community life among them, and to cultivate, in the sacred ministry, the spirit and works of their vocation.

Its Relationship

With a sacred alliance, The S.D.V, considers itself essentially, and positively places itself at the service of the clergy and religious institutes, specifically and gratuitously commits itself to search, prepare and present to them good candidates.

The Congregation considers all priests and consecrated religious as its good masters; among them it considers as its protectors on earth, those who, in any way, before God and before men, favor it with prayer and action.

Operation

The Society seeks and assesses, among the sons of the people, those in whom they see signs of a divine vocation, and helps them to correspond to it, and to enter into seminaries, or into religious institutes, according to the dispositions of each one.

When the Congregation finds candidates who lack the neces-

sary means, or who are not yet well oriented toward particular institutes, it welcomes and educates them without charging any fee in its Vocationaries, until they are ready to join a diocese or religious institute.

Its Members

The Society of Divine Vocations consists of internal and external members, and of three spheres of associates. According to the predominant interior consecration, the members are called “of the Divine Union”, and the members of the three spheres are called “of the Communion of Saints, of the Ascension of Jesus, and of the Divine Predilections.”

With these sacred names and mysteries, the Society tells them the gradual program of religious life to be developed, and the progressive stages the soul must reach to adequately correspond to God’s vocations, as well as the progressive consecrations of the soul to God.

Female Branch

In addition to the Vocationist Fathers and Brothers, The Society of Divine Vocations also has the Vocationist Sisters. They live with the same norms, do the same works, have the same spirit, but they are independent of each other.

Links of union between the two branches are the collections of the tribute, prayers, mortifications, works and alms that are applied and transmitted to the Vocationary and to *Spiritus Domini*.

Admission to the Vocationary

For all that concerns the admission and the formation in the Vocationary, more than dealing with the families the Society pre-

fers to deal directly with the young aspirant and with the priest who presents him.

However, the administration will establish year by year and case by case the detailed conditions of a small dowry and a possible free contribution from the family. This small, free contribution from the family does not eliminate the fact that the Vocationary does not charge any fee.

Documents

The aspirant must submit an application to the director, at least before the beginning of the school year. As a trial and preparation, the candidate follows the discipline set in the bylaws, under the guidance of an assigned priest.

The aspirant will present the certificate of legitimate birth, baptism, confirmation, sound physical constitution and previous studies. The Society will gather information about the candidate's conduct, signs of vocation and economic conditions.

Life of formation

Very early the candidate should be informed that in the Vocationary he embraces a life of discipline, study, and work, even manual, which makes the lifestyle more like a religious novitiate than a boarding school.

The candidate must be well aware that in the Vocationary one studies exclusively for religious purpose, carrying out all and only the study program, mandated for the seminary by the respective sacred Roman Congregations.

Permanence and Exit

The candidate should also be aware of the fact that he can

never leave the Vocationary for the sole reason of holidays. One leaves the Vocationary only to go to a seminary, or novitiate of various religious orders, or to return to the world, by election or dismissal.

Each of the first five years is considered as a probationary one; therefore the Society can freely dismiss, even during the school year, those who persistently do not satisfactorily meet the requirements of discipline, piety and study.

Patron Saints

The Congregation is entrusted in a special way to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, Mary Most Holy, under the title of Queen of all Saints, Mediatrix of all graces and Mother of Divine Love (May 31st), as Queen and Mother of Divine Vocations, and to her Saint Joseph.

Likewise the Congregation is entrusted to the holy Angels and especially the Seven Spirits Assistants to the Throne of God. Among the Saints, the S.D.V. venerates as its Patron Saints, St. John the Baptist, St. John the Evangelist, St. Peter and St. Paul and all the Holy Apostles, Doctors, Founders and General Patron Saints.

Spiritual benefits

For all internal and external, male and female consecrated members, for all benefactors and protectors, the students of the Vocationary offer daily prayers to the Lord.

In the Vocationary we also offer for them the sacrifice of Holy Mass on all feast days of the Lord, of Mary, of the angels and Patron Saints of the Society: nearly one hundred each year.

Prayers for the Dead

The deceased also share these spiritual benefits and every other spiritual good of the Society. The Vocationary community offers for them the tribute of prayers, mortifications and almsgiving.

For a deceased external associate, as soon as a death notice is received, a Holy Mass is offered by all the external confreres. In the Vocationary, seven Holy Masses and all the other pious practices of the community are offered for a deceased confrere.

PART II

SPIRIT - LOVE - GIFT

CHAPTER 1

Third Divine Person

The world continues to be affected by a spiritual anemia, and it needs a special therapy. It needs strong doses of Holy Spirit. Fr. Justin proposes a question that is still very popular in our own days: Why does religious and devotional life focus on the Father and on the Son rather than on the Holy Spirit? Even today, "the universe is in mourning with darkness of great and prolonged horror for the unfair expulsion of the Spirit of God from humankind, and of the spirit of life from every living being."

Let us place the Holy Spirit at the center of our life to facilitate the passage from the "animalis homo" to "spiritualis homo." This is the only passage that leads us to salvation. In order to enter into the intimacy with the Holy Spirit, we immerse ourselves in this rich Justinian study on the third divine person.

Profession of Faith

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit we like to elevate ourselves in the splendor of the unity of their nature and Trinity of their persons. We feel within and around us the echoes of the so-called Athanasian Symbol [creed], as if it were a chant of the Cherubim. Of the three symbols entered in the Liturgy, the apostolic, the Nicene and the Athanasian, this last proclaims our faith in the first and greatest mystery of our religion, the unity and Trinity of God. The Athanasian Symbol, more explicitly, more diffusive and more triumphal than the Apostles' and Nicene's Creed, produces an effect of light, love and peace in the soul. We would love that it be recited in private not only every Sunday, but more frequently by the souls who must and want to nurture their relationship with God with dogmatic truths. We

suggest that every reader (as does this writer), pray the Athanasian Symbol before each chapter of this study, to obtain personal light in this work, and as a profession of faith before God and his Church.

Temptation or Inspiration?

Sometimes a question about the Trinity circulates among many souls, and they cannot easily distinguish if its origin comes from the abysses or from the heavens. Why does the whole religious and devotional life focus around God the Son more than around God the Father? And why does it focus more around God the Father and the Son than around the Holy Spirit? Is this a subtle temptation, or a breath of inspiration? If it is a temptation, I think that it does not touch, or barely bothers the souls who live the practice and spirit of the holy liturgy, or who enjoy the inner life of intimacy with the Lord. From the Liturgy and from mysticism they are enraptured continuously in that heavenly circulation of divine life that brings them necessarily from one to the other divine person.

In the Mystical-Apostolic Souls

The souls of a more intense inner life, whatever their predominant devotion, their field of action or their specific vocation, are always and in general, souls who from the ordinary norm of reason and faith, continually rise to live and work according to the norm of the seven gifts. In this way these souls establish themselves in a direct relationship with the Holy Spirit. They are souls who always find themselves in an increasingly fuller and overflowing life, truth and charity. They are inflamed with the desire to revive their neighbors with the same good, and therefore they become as many organs of the Spirit of apostolate, of gospel, and of holiness. The whole supernatural, infinite world is

the domain of grace and of virtues, of gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, to whom is attributed every work of goodness, love and, above all, the sanctification of oneself and of others. In the end, these souls are more truly mystical, as they are more truly apostolic. The more they are truly apostolic, the more they are truly mystical.

In the Souls of the Liturgical World

The same phenomenon happens in the souls who live the great catholic Liturgy, inspiration of the Holy Spirit, glorification of the divine attributes, reproduction of the divine mysteries in the life of the Church in general and of every soul in particular. Not to say anything of the longest liturgical period, which gets its name from Pentecost [now, known as Ordinary Time], it might be enough to think of the conclusion of all "Oremus" (prayers-collect), and to the minor doxology at the end of every psalm and hymn, in the ordinary form of *Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit*, and in the form that varies according to the verses, at the end of every hymn. Of the conclusions of each psalm and hymns we could say with the divine words of Ecclesiasticus: *Melius est finis orationis quam principium - It is better the end of the prayer than its beginning* (Qo 7 8). If every prayer is the elevation of the mind and heart to God, clearly its conclusion will be the supreme peak. The praying soul reaches that supreme height in the hymns and in the psalm, when with the most powerful impetus of faith, hope and love, intensified in an act that is always adoration and praise, the soul ascends to the *Father and to the Son who live and reign in the unity of the Holy Spirit*. The psalms and hymns are superior forms of prayer if nothing else, for the concluding doxology.

In the Unity of the Holy Spirit

In unitate Spiritus Sancti! Should we say that the Holy Spirit

is placed at the end, as to the last place or the first one? In the Blessed Trinity there is neither before nor after, first or last, more or less. The Athanasian Creed spells out: *In hac Trinitate nihil prius ac posterius, nihil maius aut minus - In the Trinity there is no before or after, no greater or lesser.* I wish that would not happen in our prayers that *motus in fine velocior - at the end the movement gets faster!* I wish that this faster pace were not due to irreverent boredom. I wish that at least the conclusions of the Oremus and the Doxologies could be enjoyed meditatively. Then we would not only hear or pronounce the words in *unitate Spiritus Sancti*, but we would feel and enjoy the lofty climax that the soul reaches in God, when she rests in God, unites herself with God and remains with God the Father and the Son *in the unity of the Holy Spirit.*

When the soul with its powers and her acts continually rises to her supernatural, she keeps collecting, simplifying and unifying herself in the sole glory of the only love, in the unity of the Holy Spirit! Also in this, the soul is the image and likeness of God. The Father and the Son, the two first and distinct divine persons, are one, not only in nature, but they are one, also in their being the principle of the Holy Spirit. *In the unity of the Holy Spirit!*

Not Temptation, but Inspiration

That question, snare of temptation or breath of inspiration, may come from the depth, of great ignorance, not always excusable from a great majority of the faithful, from their mediocrity, or even worse from the lowness of their practice in the divine service; thus they remain out of the temple, the heaven and the royal palace of the Lord, in which every soul wants and must be admitted. When this mediocrity does not end in half heretical gibberish, as if it were the fault of the magisterium and practice of the holy Church, their lack of knowledge and worship of the divine Spirit, then that question, while revealing and accusing this deplorable and common superficiality in religious science and practice, also

reveals the longing of the spirit of man for the Spirit of God, for whom we were created, from whom we can be taught and comforted, by whom we must be animated. Once we acknowledge it as an inspiration of the same Spirit of God, we understand that he wants to fill the whole world of souls with himself, and he is at the doors of minds and hearts, so that we can and will open ourselves to love out of love. Once acknowledged it as inspiration, there will be an incentive to apply ourselves to the study and worship of the Holy Spirit, joining the liturgical, mystical and apostolic souls who are so far ahead of us.

Direct or Indirect Adoration?

That question (not a snare of temptation, but a breath of inspiration) goes on and persists even though formulated a little differently in the souls who follow the Liturgy, but not in depth. They say: Why, (except for the Sequence and the hymn of the Holy Spirit, in which we directly invoke him), do all other acts of religion lead us to adore and thank him, to invoke and beg him, only and always indirectly? It could be said that what happens to him is the same that happens with light and soul. In the light, we perceive all colors, we grasp all forms, distinguish all objects, while of the light itself, we have only a general and indirect perception. Similarly with the soul, our vital principle, which makes us live and move, feel and speak, function and relate to the whole world, of the soul we have only a general and indirect perception.

We could say of the Spirit that fills, animates and strengthens everything with his grace, virtues and gifts and we live in it, feel, and operate supernaturally, and it seems that we cannot or it is not convenient to know how to go directly to him. The Holy Spirit is not a means, but the beginning and the end of everything because he is God.

Reasons for the Indirect Adoration

Can we conclude from the Liturgy of Pentecost Sunday that it is not proper to honor this divine Spirit addressing him directly, but that we address him in the Father and the Son? We need to clarify this particular attitude of the sacred liturgy about the Holy Spirit. Among the various names attributed to the Holy Spirit the name "Gift" stands out because he is really a gift "*ex personali proprietate*". His grace and virtues that infuse his beatitudes and fruits are all his gift. His mission in the world, in the Church and in the souls, is all a gift. He is the gift of the Father and of the Son. A gift must be asked from the other divine person and not from the gift itself. This is the teaching of St. Thomas: *Sanctus Spiritus ex personali proprietate habet quod sit donum et ideo magis competit quod ipse petatur quam quod ab eo aliquid petatur. By personal property, the Holy Spirit is a gift. Consequently it is more convenient to ask for the Spirit himself rather than something that can be granted by him.*

This teaching of St. Thomas must be the reason why the Pentecost Liturgy does not turn directly to the Holy Spirit. He is not simply a gift from someone else, nor is he only the Gift; he is the third divine person, and so with the Father and Son he is the principle and goal of our being; he is our All. The liturgical Hymn of the Liturgy of the Hours and the liturgical sequence of the Holy Mass of Pentecost, true poems of prayer and sacred elevations to the Holy Spirit, give us the most authentic example of the adoration, praise and love to the Holy Spirit, in the most direct form, ever.

Correctness of Direct Adoration

What Jesus said of the knowledge and adoration of the Father is true also of the knowledge and adoration of the Holy Spirit: He who sees me, sees also the Father and he who honors me honors also the Father. Likewise, he who knows and honors God the

Father and Son, knows and honors also God the Holy Spirit. On one hand, this shows us the ineffable union of the three divine persons in the unity of the divine nature, but it does not dispense us from the direct knowledge and adoration of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, to whom Jesus elevates us with his teaching. Religious piety must be a mirror of faith, a practice of faith, a life of faith. Faith teaches us equally the distinction of persons and the unity of nature, and the unity of nature no more than the distinction of persons. Consequently true piety must always have as its object internal and external, public and private adoration and must always propose as term of contemplation, imitation and union the distinction of the divine persons, not any less than the unity of their nature, perfections and operations. Adoration must always be one and triune as its divine object, and must be an impressive example to be followed throughout the yearly liturgical cycle. Our worship must be one because it is a continuous court of glory and love to the only God living and true. It must be triune for the central feasts of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, corresponding to the three divine persons. Cyclical and liturgical worship must be one and triune, not only successively but also simultaneously, as it appears to the person who knows and wants to meditate upon it.

One and Triune Worship

Christmas, because of its focus on the mystery and work of incarnation, past and future advents of the Son of God in the world, can be considered specifically a feast of the second divine person.

Easter, because of its focus on the mystery and work of redemption and of an adequate satisfaction for every sin of the world offered in the sacrifice of the man-God, can be considered as the specific feast of the first divine person, to whom it is offered the sacrifice of the man-God, as principle and font of the divinity;

In the sacrifice the most important person is the one to whom it is offered.

Pentecost, because of its focus on the mystery and work of sanctification, and of the Mission of the Holy Spirit in the world as teacher, consoler and animator, always and everywhere present, can be considered as the specific feast of the third divine person. Through the mission of the Holy Spirit man reaches the divine-human fulfillment of creation and redemption in his own sanctification.

In the celebration and contemplation of Christmas, we cannot separate, in the divine worship the divine Son from the Father, who sends him to us, nor from the Holy Spirit, who forms his humanity in the Virgin Mary.

In the celebration of Easter we cannot separate God the Father from the Son who offers himself and returns to him, nor from the Holy Spirit, who is like the sacrificing priest. *Amor sacerdos immolat - the priestly love offers the victim that per Spiritum Sanctum semetipsum obtulit immaculatum Deo - who through the Holy Spirit offered himself immaculate to God (Heb 9 14).*

Likewise in the mystery of Pentecost we cannot separate the divine Spirit neither from the Son, who first promised and then through his prayers obtained him for us, nor from the Father who is one with the Son in being principle of the Holy Spirit in eternity and in sending him to us on earth.

Under Divine Influence

In our worship we follow the one and triune liturgical cycle as divine object. Even though for us poor, successive and limited beings this is not possible, strictly speaking, in virtue of our limited and successive acts, yet it happens in virtue of the divine being, to whom our adoration is directed. Living and operating in

the truth and in the catholic piety, we cannot refer to one divine person without referring at the same time to the other two divine persons indivisibly united with each other.

The church sings: *Totus in Verbo Pater et totus in Patre Verbum. The Father is totally in the Word, and the Word is totally in the Father.*

Likewise the Father and the Son are totally in the Spirit, and the Spirit is totally in the Father and in the Son. We can apply ourselves with many good reasons in the religious study, to the divine person we want, and in our case to the adorable Spirit, without lessening our due regard for the Father and the Son, but also in the sense of: *Per te sciamus da Patrem, noscamus atque Filium - Grant that through you we may also know the Father and the Son.*

For our supreme trust and consolation, we are never so united to the Son as when we are moved toward the Father because it is the Spirit of the Son that animates and takes us to the Father. We are never more united to the Father as when we are moved toward the Son because it is the Spirit of the Son that animates and leads us to his Son.

Now for our supreme trust and consolation we find ourselves in a state of enlightenment and motion of grace from the Father and the Son if we feel the attraction to apply ourselves to the study, love and union of the Holy Spirit. We are sure that we are continually enraptured by the Holy Spirit to the Father through the Son, in the circulation of divine life of the divine relations: *O Beata Trinitas! O Blessed Trinity!*

Divine Missions

In conclusion, every good son of the holy Church can have his own holy reasons to apply in his religious study and in his devotions what the holy mother Church does when she directs her liturgical adoration more explicitly or more openly to one divine

person or another. Doing this we do not add or subtract from one divine person the adoration and love rendered to the other.

These holy reasons must be evident to all persons and institutes consecrated to cultivating the universal vocation to holiness of all people as well as the vocation of all those called to the priesthood and consecrated life. These reasons should not be seen only by a few or by particular interest groups because the catholic priesthood in the holy Church is for all, and all who are in this world are called to universal sanctification. We must also reflect on the fact that the first divine mission in the world is that of the Son of God. The second and last divine mission in the world is that of the Holy Spirit. As far as we are concerned, the mission of the Holy Spirit is the last to be achieved and the first from which we must start; and the first and the last that we must reach in order to unite ourselves to the Holy Trinity in the bosom of the Father!

The divine Son, the man-God who was sent and came to us to show us the Father and to reconcile us in himself with the Father, unites us with himself to the Father. Referring to the time after the resurrection, that is to our time, Jesus speaks of himself as one absent from the world, and of the Holy Spirit as one always present. He speaks about his mission as having been completed, and of the mission of the Holy Spirit as something still ongoing. The Holy Spirit enables us to understand Jesus' teachings and reminds us of them in every circumstance of life. He is the Spirit of our life. For all this, we always invoke the Holy Spirit with the certainty that he will elevate us through Jesus to the Father in that circulation of divine life that is the divine relations. O Blessed Trinity!

CHAPTER 2

Preparation

No one has ever seen God (Jn 1 18)

All that Jesus says about the knowledge of the Father applies also to the Holy Spirit, that is, that no one has ever seen him. The dove, the cloud, the wind and any other sign of the Holy Spirit, do not constitute a vision of him. So, we find ourselves, like St. John the Evangelist, before the book of the Father and of the Son that is shown to us closed with seven seals. The sole vision of it makes us burn with the desire and the need to open, read and devour it; even in us St. John cries because in heaven and on earth no one can open it. One of the twenty-four Seniors consoles him: *Do not cry because the divine Lamb will open it with his sacrifice* (Rv 5 4-5)!

So, no one has ever seen God... but the only Son who is in the bosom of the Father and became man for us, has revealed him to us (Jn 118). *In diverse and numerous instances, God spoke from of old to our fathers through the prophets; lastly in our days, he has spoken to us in the person of his Son* (Heb 1 1-2). The Word is the revealer of the divinity because of his divine essence. The divine teacher, Jesus, affirms and reveals the Holy Spirit at the beginning of his human life, in his supernatural conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary, at the beginning of his public life and at the Baptism in the Jordan. In the teaching of the Messiah, the Holy Spirit is explicitly revealed to us, gravely promised and solemnly given to us. Toward the end of his earthly mission, Jesus tends to identify the Spirit's mission and the place he holds in the eternal divine generation. He blooms

like a supreme flower from the stem of the Gospel, appearing as divine iris at the top of the ascension. Every word of Jesus regarding the Holy Spirit is the opening of this book of the Father and the Son. This book is shown precisely to let us know of the desire of having it and reading it. It bears the seven seals so that we may remember that we are unworthy and incapable of the science of God, and we expect it only from the mercy and love of the Master, Jesus Christ.

The Theophany of the Holy Spirit

It seems that divine revelation is rather abundant with regard to the first and second person of the Most Holy Trinity, and less abundant with regard to the third person, the Holy Spirit. This is true only if one considers and compares those scriptural passages that refer to each divine person directly, distinctly and singularly. On the whole the theophany or revelation of the Holy Spirit is equal to the revelation of the Father and the Son just as the three divine persons are perfectly equal to each other.

The Center and the source of the light of revelation is Jesus Christ, *locutus est nobis in Filio*, thus projecting this light on the Old and New Testament, on the synagogue and on the Church. O how many words, how many facts, how many symbols and figures come to life to reveal the Holy Spirit to us!

The Holy Spirit is contained in the Father and in the Son from whom he proceeds eternally, so, likewise, every revelation of the Father and of the Son contains and communicates a revelation of their Holy Spirit. Likewise, with his grace it will be possible to collect an entire treasure of sacred notions about the Holy Spirit from the perfections, from the works and persons of the Father and the Son.

In the Sacred Scriptures we pay attention more to the Spir-

it than to the words. We must pay more attention to their spiritual sense than to the literal sense, also and especially because the scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit and they must be learned from the same Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the first and main author of the entire Bible because men of God talked and wrote not by human inspiration or will, but because they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is the first author of this divine book, he is also the first teacher in this school of the divine book. In every school, before listening to any lesson, more than learning any truth, we get to know the person of the teacher by his presence, his accent, his behavior and other revealing hints. We become more familiar with the person than with the book; we receive more from him than from the book. So likewise, at the school of divine scriptures, of the life of Jesus, of the history of the Church, the Holy Spirit reveals and communicates himself, more and before any other subject.

One is your Teacher

Saying that the Holy Spirit is the first author and the first teacher, don't we say something that goes against Jesus solemn affirmation: *Magister vester unus est, Christus - One is your teacher, Christ* (Mt 23 10)? Certainly, as in the divinity he is personally the Thought, Wisdom, Word, so in humanity he is essentially Teacher. To condemn the vanity of those repeaters or copyists of the book who enjoyed the title Rabbi, and so that his disciples would not make themselves unworthy and inept messengers of the Word, with the same presumption, he expressly forbade them to allow themselves to be called both teachers and fathers.

In the life of the natural world, man can truly be a teacher, as can truly be a father. Therefore nothing impedes that he is called a teacher when he is teaching; likewise one can be called a father

when one is such. In the supernatural life, the divine goodness also communicates to men some participation of this sovereign dignity of being father and teacher. He does not want anybody to appropriate this name and makes it a reserve of glory as for the very name of God. *You will not have another father and another teacher as you will have no other God outside of me.* That prohibition of Jesus is directed to men in their supernatural state, but it cannot be understood as extended to the other two divine persons, who are one and only God, one and only Father, one and only teacher. Of the Holy Spirit in particular Jesus says: *He will teach you all things and he will remind you and will suggest to you everything I have told you* (Jn 14 26). When that Spirit of truth comes, you begin to understand every truth. He will not tell you about himself but will say everything he hears. He will glorify me because he will take what is mine and announce it to you.

The Holy Spirit is like the inner teacher, and his mission is to make the doctrine of Jesus understood and appreciated, applied and observed by individuals to the point of embodying it in them: *donec formetur Christus, until Jesus is formed* in all the faithful by virtue of that same Spirit through which he became incarnate in the most holy Mary.

Therefore let us not say with the pagan poet: *altiora te ne quaesieris, Do not seek higher things*; nor will we oppose it with: *Qui scrutator est maiestatis opprimetur a gloria - whoever tries to scrutinize the majesty, will be oppressed by his glory.* We do not intend to depart from Jesus and from the Spirit of truth. We will know the Holy Spirit through the words of Jesus and we will understand Jesus in his Spirit. Our study is a likeness of the study of Mary Most Holy, his mother and our Superior¹. *Maria autem conservabat omnia verba haec*

¹ On May 10, 1926, Blessed Fr. Justin was given by the Blessed Trinity the assurance that the Blessed Mother would be the immediate Superior. of all Vocationist communities, present and future.

conferens in corde suo - Mary for her part, kept all these things, mediating them in her heart (Lk 2 19).

The Natural Person does not understand (1Co 2 14)

If the Theophany of the Holy Spirit is so pronounced and continuous in the life of Jesus and in the holy Church, how do we explain the fact that a majority of the souls misses it? In reality the entire universe more than being a fullness of beings, lives and atoms, is a fullness of Spirit, since *Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum - The Spirit of the Lord filled the whole universe (Ws 17)*. In this universe there is a great world of free beings, and the Spirit is also free, better, he is freedom itself. *Spiritus ubi vult spirat et ubi Spiritus Domini ibi libertas - The Spirit blows wherever he wills, and where is the Spirit of God there is freedom.*

There are some beings that cannot receive the Holy Spirit because they do not want him, and there are some beings to whom the Holy Spirit does not want to communicate himself because he cannot even get close to them, so to speak. To the first category belongs the so called *animalis homo*, who cannot perceive what is spirit because he does not want to understand, and naturally if he does not want, he is unable to understand. For a free being it is impossible only what in no way is wanted by anybody. When something is wanted, it has already happened in the soul.

Now *animalis homo non percepit quae Spiritus Dei sunt - the natural man cannot understand the things of God*. Earthly man is surrounded by and continuously receives the fullness of the Spirit. However, whatever is received is always received according to the dispositions, capacity, and proportion of the receiver: *Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*. The *animalis homo* receives everything, even the Spirit, materially as the animals do, unworthily, falsely and willy-nilly. Jesus Christ admonishes us not to throw our precious pearls to the swines: *Nolite mittere margaritas*

vestras ante porcos. This admonition is given in order not to lower the value and dignity of the divine pearls that have been given to us generously from heaven. Because they have been given to us, they can properly be said to be ours. (These pearls [graces, gifts and talents] would like to transform all human mud, and change all human pigs into stars). The unclean, welcoming them materially as animals do, and being unable to find and to taste in them something of material and animal, would only brutally trample on them ... grumbling indecently. *Beati mundo corde quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt* - *Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God* (Mt 5 8). *Spiritus est Deus et qui adorant eum in spiritu et veritate oportet adorare* - *God is spirit and those who adore him, must adore him in spirit and in truth* (Jn 4 24).

My spirit will not always remain in man (Gn 6 3)

The Spirit that from the beginning hovered over the waters of creation, the Spirit whose image was the human soul, the divine breath that animated man, that Spirit was with men even after original sin, and kept compelling them to reparation through faith, hope and charity. Men, on their part, kept abandoning themselves freely to an invading and domineering corruption. The Spirit was infinitely saddened by an immense suffocation and withdrew from man with that threat: *My spirit will not last forever in man because he is flesh and every flesh on earth is corrupted, and all the instinct and purpose of the human heart was continuously turned to evil. Being flesh means having the instinct and purpose of the heart turned to evil* (Cf. Gen 6 5 ff).

The spirit of human life cannot last in the flesh, much less the Spirit of God! When the spirit dominates and animates matter, we have the life that gathers, unites, and raises the same matter to the quality of the Spirit. If matter presumes and tries to dominate and animate the Spirit, this is disturbed, compressed, dispersed and flees; this is death: since the properties of matter, quantity, inertia

and passivity are opposed to every vital principle, and they cannot prevail over the spirit without destroying it, if it were possible, or at least without rejecting and losing it, and, therefore, without falling into death. Consequently, every domination of the flesh is corruption of death in which the spirit of human life cannot endure, let alone the Spirit of life of God.

Upon the expulsion of the spirit of God from humanity and upon the expulsion of the spirit of life from every living being mourns the universe with darkness of great and prolonged horror. The whole universe cries with the flood overflowing from the abysses and from the heavens. This is not the death of the living that the Lord wanted, and he shows it by saving in Noah's Ark every life in which the spirit dominated and animated the flesh.

I shall pour out my Spirit upon all mankind (Jl 3 1)

Could it be that the groaning of the agonies of all living beings touched the divine Spirit of life and of love and reconciled him with the World? Or did the flood cause such a universal purification as to restore every flesh to angelic purity? Since the Lord said: *Never again will I curse the earth because of human beings, because of their contrasting hearts. Never again will I strike down every living thing, as I have done (Gn 8 21).*

Does the Spirit of God give up his rights and demands before the abuses and insolences of the material world? From today onwards will the *animalis homo*, which is mainly flesh, know, taste and possess the things of the Spirit? It is a fact, the dove is sent to the world. It comes back the first time because it has not found a place to rest; sent out a second time, it returns with a sign of peace, an olive leaf. The third time the dove is sent to the world, to stay there forever!

The rainbow appears as the ark of conjunction between heaven and earth; with its seven colors it manifests harmony between

God and men. Tell us, O Son of man, O Lord, redeemer and master Jesus Christ, tell us: Will the dead turn back to life? And, will the graveyard of the world return to become the living world? For the Lord says: *After these things I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh* (Jl 31).

Tell us, O Son of man, what are these conditions, these dispositions, these things after which the spirit will be poured forth on every flesh, the Spirit who protested that could not remain in man because it was flesh? Here it is: *In every place, an immaculate oblation is sacrificed and offered to the divinity: The Host! That is you yourself, O Son of man!*

The work and virtue of the Spirit creates a new flesh worthy of being assumed by a divine person. And it makes this divine flesh the universal host for the faults of every human flesh, the food of true life for every man, who does not want to be the animalis homo but the spiritualis homo, animated by the spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit of instruction flees deceitfulness (Ws 1 5)

The Holy Spirit flees every deceitfulness and hypocrisy that makes of it a habit and practice; relatively speaking we can say that every man is a liar and all lies are in opposition to the Spirit of truth. However, not all lies are equally repugnant to that divine Spirit because they do not have the same object, finality and circumstances. First of all, simulation is not a simple lie, but a series of lies, indeed a great web of lies. It forms the exterior habit of the hypocrite who dresses well among men and has the inner habit with which he strips himself of all good before God. The simulation of the hypocrite is very deep and very dark pride. With the idolatry of pride, the creature falsifies himself becoming his own goal, his own center and wanting all for himself; with the arrogance of hypocrisy, he aspires to become so also for others. Now, all this is nothing, not the nothingness requested by the Lord, but

the guilty nothingness that is opposed to the all that is God. Not the nothingness that is recognition of the truth, but the nothingness that is the denial of the truth. God shuns this nothingness. The simulation then of the hypocrite is a fiction of holiness; true sanctity is attributed only to the Holy Spirit; false sanctity is opposed to the Holy Spirit who shuns the hypocrite and every simulator and their judgments, or else gets close to them only to confuse and disperse them.

The heavens open, the dove descends and settles upon those who do not hesitate to appear even externally in the humiliation of the confession, and recognize internally in their conscience without illusions, that they are sinners, in need of purification and mercy. The heavens open, the dove descends and settles happily upon those who gather around the Baptist, herald of penitence while descends with confusion in the crowd of sinners in the Jordan. These receive the theophany of the Holy Spirit and feel the need of the desert to fully enjoy it.

CHAPTER 3

Dispositions

Confiteor Tibi Pater

Glory to you, O Father, because you have hidden these things to the wise of the world and have revealed them to the children. When we think of the teachings of the Gospel so deep and sublime, so complex, and yet announced not only to the rabbis and to the scribes, but to uneducated disciples, to the crowds in masses, all uneducated people. We can ask ourselves: Could they understand such things? The use of parables, humble, beautiful, proper and effective on the mouth of the Master did not lessen the height and depth of the doctrine. With much more reason we ask ourselves the same, in reading the epistles of St. Paul, also addressed not only to his most cultured and enlightened disciples, but also to all the recent Christian communities of new converts, among whom not all enjoyed charisms, and not all the charisms involved a higher intelligence and wisdom, necessary to comprehend Paul, of whom St. Peter says: ... Our brother Paul, who is so dear to us, told you this, when he wrote to you with the wisdom that he was given. Peter makes this point in his letters as a whole wherever he touches on these things. In all his letters there are of course some passages that are hard to understand. These are the ones that uneducated and unbalanced people distort, in the same way they distort the rest of scripture, to their own destruction (2Pet 3 15).

One thing is for sure that the human mind is made for truth, from the child who enters the age of reason to the adult expert

in every culture. Not for this or that fragment of truth but for the entire truth that is God himself. Truly, there can be a risk of great errors in the use of the human word. Do the words reveal adequately the thought, or simply give a glimpse of it? The full truth gets reduced in thought and further reduced when the thought is expressed in words. At the end, through the word, man captures the thought moving beyond the limits of the word. The thought then expresses the truth, not closing up in itself, but as if being torn apart in its excessive content. Words are like a veil of clouds in front of the sun. They must be very soft and clear, so as not to get in the way of the light, but rather make it possible for us to contemplate the sun lessening its dazzling splendor.

When it comes to the supernatural, it is not enough to propose truths that can be understood, or expressed behind veils of words, so that they may be savored. For the full understanding of the truth, it is necessary to rely on supernatural means, on the grace of faith, on the gifts of intellect, counsel and science, all applied through the Spirit-God. He enables souls to learn and to apply every truth of the supernatural order because he is essentially and infinitely the Spirit of truth. The Master Jesus rejoices in the Spirit for that mystery of wisdom through which certain truths remain hidden under tenuous veils to the wise and learned. Souls that have the simplicity of children can understand also truths proposed under profound enigmas. This holds true and perhaps especially for all the truths concerning the divine Spirit himself. It is so, Father!

You hid these things from the learned and the clever (Lk 10 21)

Is there any grave fault in being wise and prudent, if the Lord who is infinitely diffusive of his goodness and truth hides it from the wise and prudent? What guilt, what disposition or

state of guilt, is signified in these virtues as great as wisdom in the speculative order and prudence in the practical order? What in particular are the speculative and practical truths that are and remain hidden to those known for their foolish wisdom and false prudence in those ironic labels, wise and prudent, or better pundits and wizards? Not every truth is hidden from them, but some; their ignorance, however, is so painful, so humiliating, so prejudicial as to warrant a grave punishment from divine justice, wisdom and prudence: *Abscondisti heac!* In reality in every privation that the Lord inflicts on his reasonable and free creature, we must not see a positive act of vindictive justice, but rather a positive indisposition, opposition and contradiction in which the creature unreasonably but freely puts himself.

The principle of the divine penal code is verified and carried out in this world and in the other: *Per quae peccat homo per haec et cruciatur* - man is afflicted by the same things he sins for. The very object of sin becomes the object of punishment. Man with his great mysterious privilege of freedom is cause of his own happiness, when he consents to his God. He is the only cause of his evil and unhappiness when he disagrees with God.

Wise and prudent people can often remain in the privation of certain divine goods solely for reasons of opposition or contradiction, in which their prudence and wisdom put them. The knowledge of their guilt will make them recognize the goods of which they are deprived, and vice versa, the knowledge of those goods denied them will make them recognize their guilt. If we have two contradictory terms, knowing one leads to know its opposite.

The Gospel indicates this truth by contrasting the wisdom and prudence of the adult with the simplicity of children and little ones. The wise and the prudent can be contrasted with the ignorant and the foolish. The child and the little ones can be contrasted with the adult and the old. Jesus is essentially the Son in divine nature and in human nature. For him the name, the im-

age and the state of the child or little one more than anything else recall the reality of a child in the mind and heart of man. In the name, image and state of the child, Jesus synthesizes all the natural and supernatural virtues proper to man in his state of relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a relationship of essential and perpetual dependence, to which is added the relationship of perpetual filiation.

In concrete way the Gospels describe and summarize all natural defects, acquired vices and current faults of some men in this world today, they want to do anything but to depend on God in their being and operations. They want to be everything except children, sons of God. They want to know anything but the demands of the glory of divine love.

You revealed these things to the little ones

For centuries the divine wisdom, thought of the Father, voice of the Word, breath of the Spirit, has been saying: *Si quis est parvulus veniat ad me - If one is little, let him come to me!* Jesus makes it a necessity for us to have this quality of little children when he says: *Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli non intrabitis in regnum coelorum. Unless you become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.* If one is a child, let him come to me, but the one who is not a child will not understand my invitation; he will continue to behave as if he never heard that invitation, and will not come to me. The one who humbles himself and becomes like a little child will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven; he will receive divine wisdom more than anybody else. The more the divine life is infused in him, the more intimately he will unite himself to me.

Maybe these are the reasons why as the life of man gets closer to its sunset, little by little it is reduced externally and internally to a state very similar to that of infancy. These natural conditions then might propel the soul to become virtuous like a child, like a

son and thus disposes herself to paradise, and to reconcile herself with the Father.

Now omitting any other meaning of the kingdom of heaven in time and in eternity, we think that the life process from birth to old age is the permanent and great school of thought of the Father, of the voice of the Word, which reaches us through the breath of the Spirit to the core of the soul. Consequently, we consider in the child, not so much the simplicity, purity, humility and every other grace of his innocent state as the disposition of the pupil in relation to the school of the internal and external divine master. How could pundits and clever people be as pupils in a school? They are the ones who think, feel, say implicitly always, explicitly too often that they have nothing to learn from anyone, and that the true wisdom and prudence of life is learned only at their school.

Those of them who are out of the Church simply deny all the supernatural; those of them who are in the Church disdain what is most arduous and pure, most arduous and sublime in the supernatural because they would be urged to learn something that they do not know and would be induced to practice something they do not want, and to become disciples, which would be totally absurd for those wise and clever men. They reached the last corporal development, and, likewise, they think that also their soul, living in the body and for the body, has reached all possible growth. In fact, they have renounced any further progress. Without telling anybody, with hidden understanding the poor soul has closed herself in a small cocoon of the limited ideas to ruminate excrements of human knowledge, or succeed somehow in spinning some web of repetitions that the broom of passing time will sweep from the face of the earth. The poor butterfly will die, as the daughter of caterpillars and mother of caterpillars, never developing into the angelic, divine butterfly that is meant to be. It will live eternally in its own death, that is, of its own wisdom

and cleverness that is its death, and therefore deprived of divine wisdom.

Exulted in the Holy Spirit (Lk 10 21)

The child (aged seven, seventy or seven hundred, it doesn't matter) soon gets tired of what he knows, of what he does, of what he is. He always wants new things for his life and activity, for his intellect and will. He wants to discover new worlds, wander in new horizons, ascend to new lives, face new difficulties. He wants to achieve new conquests, and he is especially thrilled for what is true when it's hard, and for good when it's difficult. This craving for conquest and perfection is the disposition of the eternal child and disciple needed for the admission to the school of the divine Word and of the Spirit.

This is the revelation in us that God is the beginning and the end of the soul. The soul is made for the infinite good that is God and does not find it in anything created. The child looks for him in everything and he ascends to him in everything. When in one thing he has discovered, enjoyed and taken all that little bit of image and vestige of God's goodness that he has found, he leaves that to move on to another that offers him something more and better and so indefinitely because no one thing is his God who alone is the end of his aspirations.

I would like to have the speed and brilliance of light to be able to fly from one thing to another, from one virtue to another, from one sphere to another until I can rest in God! Indeed, in him I will expand, I will find space and I will ascend from contemplation to contemplation, from happiness to happiness, from paradise to paradise with the lightness of sound, light and Spirit.

To the wise and clever I will leave the gravity of the stones, of the cadavers and of every evil. *Confiteor tibi Pater!* At this point

and in this regard, Jesus glorifies the Father exulting with the Holy Spirit! Exulting in him who is at the same time the Spirit of the Father and of the Son! Exulting for that divine doctrine that is not primarily his because it is of the Father, and because it is of the Father, it is also of the Son, who receives everything from the Father in the eternal generation. Doctrine, which after having been taught briefly by the Messiah, will then be widely explained, inculcated and implemented by the Spirit in the Holy Church in general, and inspired to every soul in particular.

We exult in the Holy Spirit for the infinite elevation of this divine doctrine above all ideas, all knowledge, every human culture; for infinite truth, beauty and goodness, worthy only of God. Beauty truth and goodness become one with God. We exult in the Holy Spirit for the divine life, which God alone communicates to those who receive it by participating in the most fruitful vivifying virtue, which is the love-God, the Spirit of the Father and of the Son.

We exult in the Holy Spirit for the infusion of his grace in nature, for the illumination of the faith to reason, for the superior action beyond the ordinary norms and ways of faith and reason, of the seven mystical gifts. This constitutes a true higher education school, whose master and director is not so much the man trained and assisted by God, directly by the same Spirit of God through the ministry of another spirit superior to man, the angel. The student is no longer the man, the ordinary man, but the man in whom Jesus lives, formed by the Holy Spirit and Mary.

Jesus exults in the Holy Spirit because if poor mortals grieve him by renouncing his school, his gifts and life for an illusion and fiction and for a false wisdom and cleverness, there are still little children and poor in spirit. Each generation brings forth many little ones, who enter joyfully into the school of the Word and abandon themselves spontaneously to the action of the Spirit, and ascend with the Spirit and the Word to the Father, in the glory

of life of the divine union. *Confiteor tibi Pater! Ita Pater! Thank you, Father! Amen, Father!*

This is Eternal Life

This is eternal life, says Jesus, the master, to know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent (Jn 17 3). We do not immediately understand in what sense we must see eternal life consisting in the knowledge of the Father and of the one the Father sent. Eternal life is essentially the sharing of God's nature and life granted to man, his reasonable and free creature. Eternal life indicates both the grace in time and the glory in eternity. To know the Father and the one the Father has sent. Clearly this does not mean just any knowledge of God that is shared also by sinners, damned and devils. It means an integral knowledge corresponding to a living and operating faith in this world, and to the beatifying and glorifying vision in the afterlife.

The Lord wants to make us understand that supernatural, eternal life consists essentially in the grace now, and in the glory afterward. The essential, necessary and permanent act of eternal life consists in the knowledge of the Lord in all the mysteries of his life, persons and works. Our supreme duty is to live always dedicated to the full, progressive, loving and active knowledge of Our Lord God.

Ut cognoscant te! That they must know you, Father so that they may have life! That they know you, Father, so that they may remain in life! That they know you in order to grow and bear fruit in this life! With this knowledge starts the infusion of life. All growth in the life of grace, all the enjoyment of the life of glory depend on the knowledge of God.

If we consider eternal life from the perspective of God who grants it to us, we find ourselves before three great divine works:

Creation, redemption and sanctification; from them flow the eternal springs of the river of life. After the first infusion of eternal life by the first cause, the cooperation of the secondary cause is necessary, thus, the new, intelligent and free being is elevated to the supernatural state.

He must drink from these waters, and he must abandon himself to this flood, if he wants to land on the shore of heaven, or better, to end up in the ocean of the life of eternal glory.

Every human cooperation in creation, redemption and sanctification is synthesized in applying oneself to an ever deeper, more profound and more practical knowledge of the Lord. With this knowledge we become more and more the image and likeness of God, creator, redeemer and sanctifier in our intellect because all knowledge involves an assimilation between the intellect that knows and the known object. The knowledge of God enkindles ever more our love for God, creator, savior and sanctifier. Love is increasingly ignited in our will because in our will we are always more image and likeness of God. Every love always produces some assimilation between the lover and the loved object.

By becoming more and more the image and likeness in the intellect and will of our God, creator, redeemer and sanctifier, we become more and more cooperators of the continuous creation and divine redemption and sanctification. Authentic image and likeness of one who is always active can be only one who works with that person, does the same things and cooperates with him. And behold ... life comes ... grows ... and perfects itself in us. *Haec est vita aeterna ut cognoscant te et quem misisti. This is the eternal life that they know you and the one you sent* (Jn 17 3).

The One you sent

The supernatural life of grace necessitates, as its essential act, the knowledge of the Father and of the one sent by the Father. In

the actual economy of God's grace, it is not possible to have a true and complete idea of the Father without knowing also the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God with the Father. In the words, *the one the Father has sent* we understand them to mean primarily Jesus, the Son who became man, who was the first sent to humanity, but also the Holy Spirit, who, likewise, was sent by the Father after Jesus ascended into heaven. Every knowledge of the Father and of the Son would be very much incomplete without the knowledge of the Holy Spirit! In all truth, without the knowledge of the Holy Spirit we could not have the complete and full knowledge of the Father and of the Son. Likewise, the Holy Spirit wouldn't even exist in our mind without the Father and the Son! It is written: *no one knows the Son except the Father and those to whom the Father has revealed him. Likewise, no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son has revealed him* (Mt 11 27). We can rightly conclude that no one knows the Father and the Son, but the Holy Spirit and those to whom he has revealed them.

Quis enim hominum scit quae sunt hominis nisi spiritus hominis qui in ipso est? Is there anyone who knows the qualities of anyone, except his own spirit, within him (1Co. 2 11)? *Likewise, who can know God's things, except his own Spirit? Quae Dei sunt nemo cognovit nisi Spiritus Dei* (1 Co. 2 11)? So, only the Holy Spirit can communicate the knowledge of the Father and the Son, essentially required for supernatural life. The same appears from the other principle: *Spiritus est qui vivificat. Only the Spirit gives life* (Jn 6 63). Only the Holy Spirit infuses the life of grace in souls, and so he alone can grant the knowledge of the Father and of the Son necessary to the life of the soul.

Jesus exclaims: *Ego veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant. I have come so that they may have life, and have it to the full!* (Jn 10 10).

We take the freedom to refer to the time of Jesus' mortal life the saying: *that they may have life*. Likewise, we like to refer the words: *and that they have it to the full* to the time of Jesus' glorious

life after the ascension into heaven, while sitting at the right hand of the Father sends us the Holy Spirit. Jesus previously told us: Let anyone who is thirsty come to me! *Let anyone who believes in me come and drink. From his heart shall flow streams of living water. He was talking of the Holy Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for there was no Spirit yet because Jesus had not yet been glorified* (Jn 7 37-39). The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church in general, and upon individual souls in particular is the beginning of the flow of the life of the Spirit, first on the humanity of Jesus, and then from him keeps overflowing in every soul connected with Jesus, through the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit.

Qui Spiritu Dei Aguntur

It is necessary that each one of us should convert and become childlike, and flee from any simulation, with the simplicity of a dove and elevating ourselves above animal matter, with the wings of a dove. with simple and pure spirit. We should seek the place where he invites and awaits us, where he is pleased to come down and rest, where he speaks and provides and where he prefers to work.

As a child you need a mother. As a dove you need a nest. As a lily you need a bulb. All the wild forests have been eradicated and charred. Only one stock will remain alive. From the root of Jesse, a shoot will sprout, and at the top a great flower will bloom. Here is your bulb, o lily; here is your nest, o dove, here is your mother o child. *Et requiescet super eos Spiritus Domini* (Is 11, 2). God does not rest but in God, he is not pleased but in God, he glorifies only in God. The Holy Spirit rests, is pleased and glorified only in God, whose Spirit he is. He is glorified only in the Lord Jesus, his principle as God. his flower as a man. He is glorified in Mary, who is the earth, the world, the universe that the Spirit has filled with his presence. *Spiritus Domini replevit orbem* (Ws 17). For Mary, with Mary, in Mary, for Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus... the Holy Spirit

descends, rests in us, he is pleased and glorifies himself in us also; he gives and works his sanctification also in us.

Every light is for life, every love is for fruitfulness and every study for the practice of life. This is supremely true for the light, love and sovereign school of the Spirit of truth, of charity, of God. He is Spirit, he is essentially an animator, a vivifier. Anyone who would not want to be animated and vitalized, moved and directed, uplifted and spiritualized will see something like letters that he cannot read. He will perceive sounds that he does not understand in this divine school. He will feel like one gasping for air; he feels like dying, as if in a suffocation of agony because he has grieved the Spirit that wanted to be pleased in him. He has tried to extinguish the divine flame that wanted to enkindle, enlighten and transform him.

We must surrender, give and abandon ourselves to the Spirit, to all his life to all his action. Away from this, I abandon all ideas of rest, drowsiness, inertia and annulment. Every abandonment must be specified and named, not by the one who abandons himself, but by the one to whom one abandons himself since the Spirit is the initiator and the prevailing factor in such a union.

Only those who abandon themselves to their own selves can have an illusion of inertia, drowsiness and annulment; they can have only an illusion, since they are at the mercy of so many destructive forces of corruption and death, that they never know inertia, drowsiness and rest. If you abandon yourself to a lion, you are devoured. If you abandon yourself to the fire, you burn yourself. If you abandon yourself to another human being, you can be enslaved. If you abandon yourself to the world, you are unhappy; if you surrender to the devil, you are damned.

If we abandon ourselves to the Spirit of God we are enraptured, ascending from earthly matter to the sky, from darkness to light, from inertia to maximum activity, enlightened, inflamed,

spiritualized. Then we are animated by divine life. We become children, brothers and spouses of God. We become as one Spirit with God, one life, one mission with Jesus Christ; we achieve (then only!) the whole purpose of divine creation, redemption and sanctification. Amen! *Deo Gratias! Alleluia!*

CHAPTER 4

Knowledge

Go out into the deep (Lk 5 4)

We suppose that we have learned, studied, meditated all that catholic theology teaches from the sources of divine revelation, the Sacred Scripture and ecclesiastical Tradition. We would like to see the souls for whom we write highly, intensely and continually exercised in docility, fidelity and generosity of loving obedience to all the divine inspirations. We recognize and we remind others that it is impossible for us to speak, or simply think about the Holy Spirit without continuing to relate with the Father and the Son equally directly and immediately, as we relate with the Holy Spirit, who is the subject of this study.

So, we feel transported, not without trembling depths, as proof of our great confidence in love, in the one and triune God. So, we abandon ourselves to that intimate impulse in order to seize, from all points of the natural and supernatural, the revelation and the communication with the Lord; in order to see ourselves as face to face with the Lord; to hold each other heart to heart until we merge as spirit in Spirit with the one and triune Lord.

The Impetus of the River

Once the horizons of the supernatural open, with the vision of

faith, with the sails of holy charity, we feel immersed in conquests of heavenly empires with a method that knows less through the battle of reasoning and more through the triumph of intuition. Since *Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum* - the Spirit of the Lord filled the whole earth - that is, the world of the soul. The Spirit of the Lord has filled us with the action of his gifts.

This holy city of God on earth, this vision of peace, the small or large earthly Jerusalem no longer needs lamps, globes, lights, or human reasonings (Oh, they are good lights too, but good for the nights!), because the three suns of wisdom, intellect and knowledge shine from above, and glow around the three suns of piety, strength and fear of God; all converge as in one great, perennial and central fire, counsel. Because of her inextinguishable thirst for truth and charity, the soul no longer needs laboriously to dig a well, or to tap into the lakes and sip a little water (Oh, the waters of the earth are so good, but good for the deserts!) because *flumen Dei* - the river of God, *repletum est aquis, regurgitates with waters* and with its impetus, that is, with its spirit because the spirit of the river is the impetus. It brings joy more than refreshment to the city of God, the earthly paradise of God, that is, the soul of the just. *Fluminis impetus letificat civitatem Dei. Fluminis impetus!* - The impetus of the river brings joy to the city of God. The impetus of the river!

Per viam aliam

The gifts of the Holy Spirit work in the souls according to a norm superior to the ordinary norms of reason and of faith. It is never possible that the Spirit's gifts may contradict reason or faith. We do not need to prove it now; we will gladly speak about it later.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit presuppose reason and faith together, and they envelop and penetrate them and put them into

use at the highest degree, and surpass them like air compared to the earth. For this reason and in the same way, it would seem to us that our study of the Holy Spirit should not properly follow the common path of ordinary methods; it must also follow some frameworks but on a higher level; as an airship rises in the skies above the course of a ship at sea, but in the skies. Likewise, this study on the Holy Spirit will be in the intellect, education; in the will, union; in life, direction; in a word, it will be a prayer in its broadest, most integral, most true meaning. How will it give us a greater knowledge of the Holy Spirit?

I believe in order to understand

Do we want more knowledge or more love? Of course, I want to know the Holy Spirit in order to love him. We want to love him for his glory and our happiness, inseparably joined, as the sole end of all creation. We do not start right from the beginning, but leaving aside the elementary doctrine on Christ, we rise to what is higher, not insisting again on the fundamental principles. We trust in better and healthier things; the will is enkindled, it is true, by the light of the intellect; but then, once it is enlightened, it dilates, sharpens and elevates the intellect too. The act does not only specify the potential but perfects it as well.

Action in general and by itself does not hinder our knowledge but becomes its greatest incentive to grow. Following St. Anselm's principle: *Fides quaerens intellectum* - Faith seeking understanding, we add our own principle: *amo ut intellegam, and ago ut magis intellegam* - I love to understand, and I apply myself to understand more. We tend to this in order to love more and to act better. We have an example of this in the highest mystical states, with their contemplative acts, when everything seems to be reduced to a vague, sweet and painful sense, which seems like mist in the night to the intellect, quiet of sleep to the will, inertia of suspension to the action

and almost death to life. Yet, it is a synthesis (and not syncope) of the highest intuitions, of the most effective actions, of the most delightful joy and of the most intense life.

Omnia ad aedificationem

In the unity of our composite beings, and even more so in the so simple unity of the soul, and much more in the divine design of the supreme goal of our being and life, we must recognize a wonderful and very intimate subordination among our faculties. This makes sure that the intellect is for the will, and the will is for action, not for a certain prerogative of the Italian, Roman race, but for nature itself and for the grace common to every human person.

For this “action” for which everything is ordered, we intend only what is the sovereign perfection and the complete fulfillment of every rational life: divine union. This is true, great, worthy action of the creature: bonding itself with the act that is God.

The acts of the intellect, and therefore every science are limited in their nature; These acts are incomplete and imperfect if they are not followed by corresponding acts of the will to which they are ordered, by their nature, and therefore by God. Oh, how revealing is the fact that in the angelic hierarchies, the first supreme spirits are the Seraphim, those living loves, who receive illustrations from the Cherubs, those living intelligences, and not vice versa! Complete and perfect, integral and ideal study is only a harmonious ensemble of intellect, will and action of divine union, which is what we want our study to be.

In enigmas

Now we see God through enigmas! Under this name of “enig-

mas" we intend to group all the vestiges, all the signs, all the symbols that we can collect. They are scattered profusely in creation, and we find some of them in detail and others more generic, among accidents and substances, in appearances and in the intimate composition of the smallest and greatest things of nature. They are scattered profusely in the sacred scripture and stories of that people who was elected by God to be his revealer and depository of his revelations. They are vestiges, signs and symbols not only of God in general, but of the divine persons as well, and therefore of the Holy Spirit in particular.

In the search, in the solution and in the fusion of these enigmas, we will exercise our intellect, which is challenged and attracted by the mysteriousness of these enigmas. They offer the intellect the satisfactions of the conquest of the truth, for which they were made, established and offered by the Lord, who wants for himself all the attention, all the research, all the satisfaction of every intellect.

We will then put together all ideas captured by these vestiges, signs and symbols of the Holy Spirit, and we will see that they are not disordered, scattered fragments, but all rays of a single fire, and features of a single physiognomy, syllables of a single word; only for its greatness cannot be embraced in a single intuition.

Through the looking glass

Oh! If we could see in a single intuition all the science of the Holy Spirit that can be gathered from so many vestiges, signs and symbols and have other, means and way of knowing more directly the Holy Spirit God!

The Lord actually makes himself known more closely, as in a very faithful mirror through his words, his gifts, and his living

image and likeness. Indeed, the word is the mirror of the Spirit that is reflected in it, especially as a thought! Indeed, an image is a mirror of the Spirit, which is reflected especially as life!

In words, we pay attention especially to the spirit with which they are spoken. In the gift, above all, we pay attention to the spirit with which it is offered. In the image and living likeness, that is man, we particularly consider the spirit that animates him. Words, gifts and images of God are particularly the mirror of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the divine Spirit, cherished by the intellect through so many enigmas of vestiges, signs and symbols, is made present in the mirror of words, gifts and images, and the will is completely taken, conquered and ignited with desire, pleasure and love. The more spiritual an object is, the more intelligible it is; it is equally true that the more lovable it is. The lovable object, the closer it is, the more it will ignite the will. The mirror of the word brings the Spirit closer to our mind, the mirror of the gift brings the Spirit closer to the heart and the mirror of the image brings him closer to life.

Face to face

Now, in our state as pilgrims in exile, we see through the reading glass and enigmas. Later, in our heavenly home, we will see face to face. For the moment, we take the freedom to use this expression "face to face" to indicate the ever more direct, ever more intimate, ever more personal knowledge of the Holy Spirit. This face-to-face knowledge is the one that arises from the Spirit's work, his mission, his procession from the Father and the Son. Evidently it is something more, much more than the knowledge of vestiges, signs and symbols, of gifts, words and images.

With this face-to-face knowledge, the will is expanded and brought to the maximum degree of fervor of love. The will comes out of itself in the action, and becomes one with the act of infi-

nite and personal love, which is the Holy Spirit, who applies it to his work of sanctification, admits it to share in his mission in the Church in general and in souls in particular and raptures it in his divine procession from the Father and the Son. Thus, science becomes asceticism, asceticism becomes apostolate, and the study of life is perfect and integral. *Omnia ad aedificationem fiant*: everything is needed, everything is done for the elevation of souls, that is, to unite them to God and bring them to the true eternal *facie ad faciem* - face to face!

PART III

DIVINE VOCATION

CHAPTER 1

General Vocations

Everything is divine vocation in life: Vocation to life, to faith and to holiness. To every being corresponds a vocation. Vocation is considered from the part of the one who calls, and from the part of the one who is called and must correspond to it. The calling, which is perceived in the dialogue with God, is not something temporary. It is forever! Vocation grants to man the greatest dignity that we can ever imagine.

In a general sense everything is vocation in the world: Vocation to life, vocation to faith, and vocation to holiness. Everything and every state worthy of the being, responds to a divine calling.

In the world of intelligent and free beings, their condition will be worthy of their status, and their doing will be worthy of their life only when with their mind they understand, and with their will they follow their own specific divine vocation.

In a less general and more appropriate sense, when we say divine vocation, we refer to the vocation to faith and to holiness. In a more particular sense, we mean the vocation to consecrated life and to the priesthood. In reality the vocation to holiness is contained in the vocation to faith; unless we want to understand it as that vocation to a particular form and level of union with God, in each individual's state, which is true and proper in each and every soul, as the physical and moral physiognomy of each soul.

We understand specifically that a divine vocation is the call-

ing made to beings capable of listening and following, not with the simple power of obedience of a soulless animal. So, we speak only about the divine vocation to faith, to consecrated life, and to particular holiness. In a more focused sense, we talk also about the vocation to the priesthood.

The priesthood by its very nature has been established by the Lord in order to serve all other vocations already mentioned and contains them all. No other vocation, by its nature, contains the vocation to the priesthood.

The topic of vocation, all questions pertaining to the science of vocation and the work and ministries of divine vocations, are of the greatest importance. They are as important as faith, religious life, holiness and priesthood. They are of great interest for all souls in general because they are all called to faith and to holiness. They are of particular interest for the souls called to consecrated life and to the priesthood. They are of the greatest importance for those who work and are entrusted with the pastoral care of souls and must discern, transmit and cultivate in them their own divine vocations.

The Lord will not fail to enlighten those he has entrusted with the guidance and government of souls, those who must instruct us about the divine will and our obligations. May the Lord free us from any presumption to address in any way, shape or form, in these notes, the spiritual director and the shepherds of souls. We address these notes to those, who tempted by theoretic errors about the vocation, often end up by betraying it, with practical errors. We do not address them to substitute ourselves in any way to their spiritual directors and shepherds designated by the Lord, nor do we intend to lead them to presume that they can direct themselves. Our intent is only to help them become more humble and docile, more faithful and generous in their direction and guidance.

All practical errors about vocation are almost and always a consequence of theoretical errors as often happens addressing other questions. All theoretical errors are caused by the confusion between the vocation to consecrated life and the vocation to the priesthood, or by confusing the divine act of the vocation with the human act of the correspondence to the vocation. Some people confuse the principle of the divine vocation with the end result of the human correspondence, or separate the general and particular vocation to holiness from the vocation to faith, and to the priesthood. Still others become confused in considering the divine vocation as a passing act, separable from the successive series of divine inspirations that are an authentic continuation of the divine vocations. Errors about vocation keep piling up by confusing the principles of the general and theoretical obligation with the principles of the practical and particular obligation in each individual case. Errors may also derive from ignorance of true understanding of the basic idea of vocation. This ignorance, more or less, is the root of every other practical error concerning vocation's. It is important to begin with a correct knowledge of what divine vocation is.

CHAPTER 2

Idea of Vocation

The word “vocation” means “calling”. For centuries, this word has been reserved in biblical and ecclesiastical language to the calling of God. Vocation is God’s calling. To properly understand every calling we need to distinguish the one who is calling and the one who is called; the way the vocation is given and the way it is received; the purpose of the calling, and the way its purpose may be achieved by the one who is called. Those who really want a complete knowledge of vocation will not find it difficult to understand which aspects is more important,

In all things, even in the least important, the main aspect is always the one that concerns the Lord God; this is much more true when we speak about divine vocation. In truth. Looking at all things from the point of view of God, we see them in their true and full light, in all their aspects and relationships. Only in studying all questions from the point of view of God, can we answer them correctly both concerning God and our neighbors. In the real world, all that exists has its reason for being only in God, its principle, and for God, its goal.

Only studying vocation from the perspective of God who calls, the way in which he calls and the purpose for which he calls, will we get to know the subject to whom it is directed, the way in which divine vocation is usually received and the means needed to reach its goal. Thus, we will be able to form not the science of vocation, but at least formulate a clear and full idea of vocation;

most likely this study can help to attain a science of vocation, and certainly it is helpful in considering the process of discernment, spiritual direction and practical correspondence to the vocation.

The divine vocation is a distinct, explicit and particular act of the divine will that calls souls. It is a call from God, not from man. The call of man can get lost either because the one who is called is nowhere to be found, or because obstacles interfere and intercept the voice of the caller. God's calling can never be lost in emptiness. The very fact that God calls an individual, reveals that this person has been for eternity in the mind of God, and now with the very act of the first call, the divine will brings him into existence.

The perception, the awareness and the consciousness of the vocation are like elements inseparable from the vocation itself. We must not confuse or take them as the vocation itself; they are not essential to the vocation itself.

It could be said that the awareness and the consciousness are, at least at the beginning, accidents inseparable from the substance; they manifest the substance, these are accidents and remain always accidents and must not be confused with the substance. Much less, then, must they be confused or taken as the vocation itself. They are elements, which at most are presuppositions and preparation for the vocation, or effects and consequences of it in the creature; but they are not the vocation!

The divine vocation is essentially not this or that sense of inclination to the things of God and of the Church. Vocation is not this or that special suitability in the service of God and the Church. Vocation is not this or that degree of rectitude of intention in the worship of God and in the ministries of the Church!

How fatal it can be for souls to confuse and mistaken the appearances with the reality of substance! All these elements are found on the subjective side of the vocation, that is, on the part that concerns the creature, and therefore the vocation necessar-

ily already exists, has already been sent, already existing! The essence of the vocation is in its active side, that is, in the part that concerns God, since it is a distinct, explicit and particular act of the divine will that calls. Vocation is essentially and exclusively the divine call.

Is this call of God an invitation? An advice? A command? How necessary it is to know this in order to regulate oneself and behave properly with the Lord? The divine vocation is not an invitation, it is not a council, it is not a command, it is simply a call in itself, with which the Lord attracts my attention and wants that I turn and listen to him. The vocation can be ordered by God to participate in a life, to suggest a council, to give a command, to make a conversation, to offer a gift, to entrust a mission; The unpleasant question begins when we try to identify the greater or lesser obligation of following the vocation (a question of slaves not of sons to whom the only desire of the father is law).

Vocation in itself is essentially, exclusively the call with which the Lord wants the soul to interrupt every action, suspend every relationship to turn to him who calls, with the greatest attention he is capable of, because God is calling. He holds what he is about to say in the greatest consideration because it is God who speaks. The one who is called wants to do all that the Lord desires, with the most loving union of will of which he is capable.

It is of God who invites, counsels, desires or commands ... and we are his children, not his slaves, by his grace! If a man, a friend or superior called me, and I heard his voice and did not even want to listen to him, and he understood that I heard his call and did not even want to turn around to listen to him, it certainly would displease him badly. He could not attribute my behavior to anything else but to some sort of contempt for the friend, insubordination to the superior. This could start breaking any type of relationship, and initiate every internal or external hostility. The same happens at every call of God, at every divine vocation.

If a person becomes aware of God's vocation and does not pay any attention to it, he will never be able to consider what the Lord says and execute what he wants. Oh my God! It is only because one doesn't want to do what the Lord asks that he doesn't take into consideration what he says and doesn't pay attention when he calls. And behold, I do not see a sin or a series of venial or mortal sins, but this is certainly the beginning of internal hostilities in a relationship with God. This is the beginning of the breakup of relations with God.

CHAPTER 3

Simile and application

Callings

Let us imagine all souls scattered throughout the world as young people, students in schools, institutes or workshops, all gathered in a big area enjoying their recreation. Undoubtedly, we see a very busy, lively, noisy and deafening situation. From the top of a terrace appears the director, not so much to check on how it is going, but to summon someone he needs. There is no need to ring a bell, which would be a general sign that ends the recreation and gathers everyone for another community practice. He only wants one or a few persons. If these are at hand, he will certainly call them by name. Yet they are so involved in their activities that the director is not surprised at all if they cannot hear him. He continues to call until his voice is heard by the person or persons whose attention he wants.

Finally, the person or persons being called turn, and the director with words and gestures makes them understand that he wants to see them. Then he retires to his office and waits for them to arrive.

Other Callings

If the person he wants is so far away that no voice would reach him, and recreation is so loud that no voice would overpower it, or the person is of such importance that it should not

be called that way, the director, in this case, will send someone to convey the message. The director may watch and see from his observation post, that his message reaches the person concerned. He will see the person turn toward him, so that he can also give him a nod, and then he will retire to his office and wait for the person who has been summoned.

Responses

In each of the above cases, those who have been individually called, must leave recreation, even unwillingly, and report without delay to the superior to receive his orders. They will not be excused, if for the sake of not leaving the recreation, they became so distracted that momentarily they forgot that they had been called and had to report to the superior. When they remember and become aware of their failure, they must report to the superior. When eventually they get into his presence, first of all they should apologize for the unjustifiable delay, since they had clearly received the superior's call. We pray that they would find him in a pleasant mood and that he would receive, forgive and give them the good news and glorious dispositions for which they had been called. We promise and guarantee that they will find him in a good mood, willing and ready to forgive, if, when they go to apologize, are truly confused, humbled, sorrowful and willing to obey. We can make this promise because we know that the superior has a big heart and open mind.

Other Responses

They would be totally inexcusable, ridiculous and miserable, if unwilling to interrupt their recreation and obey their superiors, they would try to justify themselves saying that they no longer hear with their ears the superior's voice, that they do not see with their eyes the superior's nod, that they no longer feel on their

shoulders the touch of a hand that shakes them, or they no longer feel in their heart the desire to report to the superior. Such a response makes them suppose that the superior had the obligation to keep shouting continuously their name, to continuously gesticulate in their direction, to throw a rope around their neck and drag them to his presence, to receive, in one way or the other, his communications and orders.

The superior, out of his goodness, seeing their delay, and understanding that they are faking a misunderstanding, could reappear on the balcony and call again maybe with louder voice, gesticulate with his hands and send another messenger. He may as well repeat one or more times the same story with sweetness and promises, or with sternness and threats; but he is not bound to do that. It is sufficient that he has called once, and that his will has been amply perceived, for the Lord expects to be obeyed. Those who have been called, servants or children, are rightly expected to go to him and to obey him.

What counts

More or less, the same thing happens when considering divine vocation to the priesthood, to consecrated life, to extraordinary forms of holiness, to non-ordinary missions to the apostolate. To the ones he has chosen, in various ways the Lord makes sure that they receive his appeal, his vocation. He is expert in the art of adapting and proportionating his vocation to the external and internal conditions and dispositions of his chosen ones. In other words, the chosen ones respond variously to their vocation, according to their conditions and disposition. The ways of God, first in the vocation and afterward in the guidance of souls, are as innumerable as the diverse physical and moral physiognomies of the sons of man.

Relative to the duty of responding to the call, the way the

call is made is totally indifferent; nor does it make much difference whether the vocation is more or less felt in the heart of the one who is called. It is necessary, as a matter of fact, that the call has reached the chosen one, and is clearly perceived because consciousness compels obedience and compliance with it.

Vocation of a Young Child and of an Adult

The young child, in whom the reasoning faculty is not yet well developed, is still guided by instinct, senses and fantasy. To the young child, the vocation usually comes in form of celestial attractions, spiritual enjoyment, strong and sweet impulses from the part of the heart. Once the child has experienced sufficiently these spiritual attractions, enjoyments and impulses, in his own way, he begins to understand the plan of the Lord for his life. We recognize that he has received the divine vocation.

The adult receives his vocation more by way of reason than by way of sentiment. When reason is more enlightened by faith, more favored by grace, when this supernatural enlightenment is projected on the vanity of the world, on the glory of spiritual conquests, or on the intimate relationships with God, we recognized that he has received the divine vocation. To others, the Lord sends some of his ministers, his servants to call them. Jesus repeats everything, preaching, sacrifice and sacraments in the person of his ministers. Why shouldn't he convey also the divine vocation through them? Repeatedly and continually Jesus sends his servants to call those he has invited. Come to the wedding feast! It seems that these servants have no other duty in the house of God but to transmit divine vocations.

Hearing and not Feeling

Lucky indeed are those who have truly felt this divine vocation

in any way, by any means and at any time, even if only once in their lives! They can never be excused from answering with false pretext that they no longer hear it. Even less excused are those people to whom the Lord has given the grace of being aware of the vocation for a long time. We must distinguish between not feeling the vocation and not feeling the strength to follow the call. Not feeling it anymore after having heard and understood is quite normal because the one who calls is not obliged to call continually. Not feeling the strength to follow the vocation can be the main effect of venial sins, or worse if the catastrophes of mortal sins had occurred.

Venial sins, vampires of souls, wound us, poison us, bleed us. Once we have been weakened and sickened, no wonder we don't feel like complying with certain duties anymore. Remedy them, purify the soul of them and the vigor and the previous enjoyment will return. Thus, he will have strength and joy to do everything he has to do, and he will also be able to correspond to the inspirations. No one should ever say that he no longer has a vocation once he had it merely because he no longer feels it.

God Does not Regret his Gift and Vocation

If culpably the soul had not turned and gone to the Lord who called her, not for this must she ever fear or believe that the vocation has been taken away, provided that the soul has not unfortunately committed herself in other ways that she can no longer renounce, or otherwise fastened herself with other knots from which she cannot ordinarily untie herself.

Vocation is God's gift, the greatest gift of God. There is a general principle that: *Sine poenitentia sunt dona et vocatio Dei* - *There is no change on God's part about the gifts and vocation he has granted* (Rm 11 29). The non-use must not be confused with the abuse of vocation. If in abusing the vocation we are guilty of a permanent scan-

dal to the souls, and of real apprehension to superiors, we deserve to be rejected by the superiors, we deserve to be rejected even by the Lord, rejected by right and often in fact. If we don't use the Lord's gift, he is offended. He really forgives us, only if we truly repent. There cannot be true repentance without the will to repair the evil done; therefore, one could not repent without wanting to return to live his vocation. Likewise, a true pardon on the part of the Lord would not exist if, together with his friendship and, as a sign and proof of it, he would not return his vocation, if, so to speak, he had withdrawn it. With his forgiveness, the Lord also gives us his communications, instructions and dispositions, and the loving friendship with which he had called us.

Come to the Wedding Feast

We say nothing about the holy Pastors of the Church, the bishops who according to the needs of the souls entrusted to them, can and must call to work in the vineyard of the Lord those souls, whose physical, moral, spiritual, cultural and integral fitness they know (official, canonical vocation). The servants of God, the priests can compel to the observance of the evangelical counsels and call to consecrated life, and commit to the perfect consecration in the divine service all the souls they encounter and know, before the Lord, to be capable of this elevation. Excellent example of this canonical vocation are all the holy hermits who were called, compelled and consecrated priests and even bishops, notwithstanding the resistance of their modesty and humility that surrendered to the supervening duty of obedience and charity, manifested and imposed upon them by the legitimate ecclesiastical authority.

An outstanding example of this second kind of vocation is offered to us in the person of the well-known Father De Condren, who found it very easy to assimilate the spirit of every religious

order but could never decide for any of them, until he was besieged by the care of the founder of the French Oratory, Cardinal De Berulle. Fr. De Condren was conquered by the sole reason that Cardinal De Berulle had been the first to have decidedly called him to a religious family.

We must call ... our Lord who alone can act directly on the mind and on the heart and call through internal ways. The Lord did not expect the apostles to go to him, but after having prepared the way in their soul by the preaching of the Baptist, he himself then called his apostles. Thus Jesus gave us a method: A precursor, a Baptist, a catechist who instructs and applies souls to purification and then shows them the Messiah. Then Jesus, in the person of his ministers, and through his servants, calls his chosen ones. We repeat it; he calls through the person of his ministers and through his servants.

An Argument, a Warning

The duty of every good friend of souls, I do not say of every good superior, confessor and director, but also of every good friend of souls, is to examine and ascertain that the young man leaves his recreation's place and goes to the superior's office, because interior call to obedience keeps summoning, for whatever reason.

The first impulse to the religious or ecclesiastic state might have been from the part of the flesh or blood, from the part of the earth or of men, or from part of heaven and of God. It could have been motivated by interests or vainglory of a person or of family, or of anyone who could have influence, or could have been motivated by faith, or supernatural attraction. In truth, this supernatural motivation can also come after one entered into a seminary or religious order without divine vocation. In this case a simple intervention of these supernatural motivations is not enough for

admission. A serious, constant and proved overriding reason is needed to recognize these traits of special mercy of God that are quite frequent.

Supernatural motivations, having no other author than God, are by themselves a proof of divine vocation. I do not say that they are precisely the divine vocation, but they are a positive indicator of its presence, of its taking place in the mind of God and its being passed on to the soul.

Once it has been morally ascertained that an individual has indeed been called, he should be told clearly and strongly that he has a serious obligation to accept his vocation with docility, faithfulness and generosity.

CHAPTER 4

Three Vocations

First of all, we should not confuse the vocation to the priesthood with the vocation to consecrated life, or with the vocation to holiness. They are three vocations very well distinguished amongst each other. This is true also when they are combined in the same individual, as, for example, there are distinctions among the three vital functions, vegetative, sensitive and intellective of the human soul. The three vocations are distinct on account of their extension, that is, the number of individuals to whom they are directed, on account of comprehension, that is, the number of commitments they impose on the subjects, and on account of secondary goals that the Lord wants men to reach, in the unique ultimate goal common to all.

Likewise, the Lord entrusts different people to propose, or better, to transmit these divine vocations to souls. There are the messengers of the divine vocation to holiness, the servants of the divine vocations to consecrated life, and the ministers of the divine vocations to the priesthood. Not everyone indoctrinate can call someone to the priesthood; not everyone can competently call anyone to religious life, and not everyone can effectively call anyone to holiness.

The internal attraction and the external signs of the vocation to holiness in each individual are not the same. The internal inclinations and the external signs of the vocation to consecrated life in each individual are also not the same, and still different are the

internal dispositions, intentions and external conditions of the vocation to the priesthood in the individual candidates.

While we all labor in the same field of the Lord, while we all draw from the same springs of God's grace, while we all apply the same norms of the same Gospel, given to us by our common mother, the holy Catholic Church, the means and the ways of helping vocations to holiness differ from the initiatives and systems of formation for the vocation to religious life. Likewise, the attentions and training for the formation of priestly vocations differ.

It is difficult to find a spiritual director endowed with talent and spirit, I would like to say, with charism sufficient to address every class of persons and every state of souls. Ordinarily some are successful in converting sinners, some are talented in invigorating the lukewarm, some are gifted in giving serenity to people afflicted by scruples, and some are capable in directing works etc. Many more diverse talents, spirits, gifts and charisms are needed for various vocations.

I would like to say something about each vocation, starting with the one that presents fewer difficulties because it must be accessible to everyone, the vocation to holiness. For the sake of clarity, we will follow this pattern as we speak about each vocation: First we develop its extension, secondly, its comprehension and thirdly its goals both for the private and common good. We will then talk about those who are ordinarily entrusted by God to transmit the vocation and the external signs through which they may recognize the internal action of the grace of the divine vocation that they complete, call and confirm with their ministry. We will also speak about tools and methods that can help the souls follow the Lord, who calls them. We will also always stress the fact that in practical life, we need a very special vocation for the discernment and culture of particular vocations. What is needed is the vocation to cultivate vocations.

Vocation to Holiness

Extension

The Vocation to holiness is a general vocation because it extends to all those who have been called to life, and much more to all those who have been called to faith. We could say that the vocation to holiness is remotely proper to all living and intelligent beings, and proximally proper to all living faithful.

All the work of the divine creation of souls is ordained, in the thought of God to the divine work of the sanctification of souls. We could convince ourselves with a variety of argumentations, but we always start and build our convictions on the fact that God himself willed to create souls in his own image and likeness, that is, in the image and likeness of his own divine nature, and of his divine persons.

Starting with this principle it is easy to see among the divine works *ad extra* (creation, redemption and sanctification) an order that is a created image of an order existing among the divine works *ad intra*, that is, the processions of one person from the other through *generation and spiration*.

Creation, first divine work *ad extra*, principle of the existence and knowledge of every being outside of God, corresponds, as a created image, to the first procession of one divine person from the other, that is, the eternal generation of the Word, through which we know the first two relations that are the two divine person of the Father and the Son.

The first divine procession is united with the second divine procession; so, the eternal generation of the Word is united to the

eternal active *spiration*, the third divine relation, the third divine person, the Holy Spirit. Likewise, in the created image of the divine works *ad extra*, to the work of the creation of the souls, in the natural order and state, is united the work of the elevation of the souls to the supernatural order and state. What is called divine work of sanctification of souls, is nothing else but their very elevation to the supernatural order and state, through the gift of sanctifying grace and all other natural and supernatural divine gifts. This divine elevation, faithfully maintained in the time of temptation and generously increased with the divine service, is called the work of sanctification.

The two divine works *ad intra*, the *generation* and active *spiration*, while being two distinct *processions*, they can never be separated. They are eternally and necessarily united in the very supreme and ineffable unity of God. Likewise, the natural order and state, and the supernatural order and state, the creation and sanctification of the souls, while being two distinct divine works, they have never been separated in the will of God and for the glory of God. They must never be separated in the will of man, whose free cooperation is required because of its supernatural elevation, which, if faithfully maintained throughout earthly life, and generously increased through divine service, will be successful for the universal sanctification, crowning of creation.

From Creation to Sanctification

It is true that between the first and second divine procession, that is, between the generation of the Word and the spiration of the Holy Spirit, there is no other divine work *ad intra*. However, between the creation and sanctification of souls intervened another divine work *ad extra*, the redemption. Redemption reveals in a more splendid way the thought of God. Redemption took place to actualize, more wonderfully, the divine design that cre-

ation should flow into sanctification. We are ever-more convinced that creation is for sanctification.

While the original plan of God required cooperation of fidelity on the part of man on earth, very painfully the saddest experience of sin took place, which separated with an unsurpassable abyss, through man's only fault, those two divine works that were meant to be always united, according to God's plan. To reconnect creation and sanctification intervened the divine work of redemption. Redemption can be considered as a new and more marvelous remaking of the wonderful work of the creation of souls, ruined by original sin and its consequences. We may also consider redemption as a new and more sublime elevation of man through the incarnation of a divine person, the Word.

With Jesus, the Incarnate Word, creation and sanctification were reunited in the world of souls, as they have always been intended in the mind of God. Jesus demonstrates that in the ineffable circulation of divine life, in the one divine nature, the limitless limit of divine *processions* is the Holy Spirit. In the ineffable circulation of grace in souls, which goes from creation to sanctification through redemption, the supreme fruit of the divine action, with the proper cooperation of man, is sanctification. As it is true that every soul is created in the image and likeness of God, so it is also true that every soul who comes into this world is called to be a saint.

When Jesus says: *Be perfect as your Father who is in heaven is perfect*, and when St. Paul says: *We are destined to become images of the Son*, they merely point out the consequences of that divine principle of creation: *Let us make man in our image and likeness*. All human perfection consists in charity, in the full and complete observance of the divine commandment of charity: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your mind, with all your heart, with all your soul*. Only by becoming all love, will we be in the image and likeness of God, who is all charity in his divine nature, all charity

in his divine persons, relationships of infinite love. The vocation to holiness coincides with the same vocation to life, and to faith, which is as good as saying that the vocation to holiness extends as much as the redemption of souls, which extends as much as the creation of souls. In other words, vocation to holiness is strictly universal in the world of souls.

PART IV

JUBILEE OF REDEMPTION¹

¹*This entire section was first published in the publication “Il Sangue Prezioso – The Precious Blood”, edited by the Daughters of Charity of the Most Precious Blood on the occasion of the centenary of the redemption, 1933.*

CHAPTER 1

Voice of the blood

The devotion to the Most Precious Blood, classified by Blessed Fr. Justin as the most priestly of all devotions, is not limited to adoration, and praise, love and thanksgiving, reparation and intercession. It must take us to emulate, with the divine intentions and dispositions, to the reproduction of the acts and states of Jesus' sacrifice. This blood, being the price of redemption, must circulate to bring life and salvation to every soul.

In the inferior nature, every creature has its language. In the world of the spirit the supreme and most extraordinary language is that of the blood. Every divine person talks to the other with the voice of the blood of Jesus.

In Jesus Christ everything speaks to the Father and to man. Jesus is the very Word of the Father, who became man to be at the same time also the Word of mankind to God and the word of the divinity to man. He is the eternal immense Word of each one of us in the Holy Spirit. That is why the Father recommends us only to: *Listen to him. Ipsum audite.*

Even in our inferior nature, everything has its own language with which only talks of God with the vestige of its creator impressed in every creature. Much more, in intelligent nature, everything talks: not only the tongue with each word, but the trait in every gesture, the physiognomy with each of its features, the eye with its every look and the heart with its every beat.

Supreme and extraordinary language is the blood! Why the vision of blood stirs us, and makes us tremble and cry? Blood is the

language of the very essence of life. Life enclosed in the arteries like a thought is enclosed in the mind. Thought pours out of the mouth with words, and life is poured out of wounds with blood. Blood is language of life, but indicates death.

Life and death, life that succumbs to death; I quiver and cry. In Jesus, everything speaks to the maximum degree of expression as far as form and content. Not only the preaching of the Gospel, but his examples and his ways, all his action and work, and above all his sufferings with the voice of blood flowing from so many lips of wounds of his humanity, nailed and torn apart and that continues perennially to flow in the sacrifice of the Holy Mass, perpetual crucifixion.

If he in his wisdom found a way to continue the preaching of his gospel to all souls of every age with the magisterium of priests, and to renew the edification of his example by living in his saints, and all the action and efficacy of his work through his holy Church, he is always the one who continues to speak in the eucharistic sacrifice, with the voice of blood.

Every plague of the sacred body of Jesus reflects the wound of his sacred heart. That blood uses the same language as the holy flames: The flames of Mount Horeb and of Sinai, the flames of the sacrifice of Elijah and of the zeal of Elisha, the flames of the cenacle upon the apostles, the flames of the sacred heart of Jesus himself.

That blood flows from within the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ and reveals what is the inner life of the man-God, and what must be the life of man according to God.

Those flames rise from within the sacred heart and reveal what the man-God feels in himself, and what every man who lives according to God must feel. Flames and blood! Flames that rise, blood that flows hate and love!

CHAPTER 2

Hatred and love

Hatred and love! Life and death! Life that only God instills. Death that every sin inflicts. Hate to death for every sin, love and life for every soul. One at the service of the other, one nourishing the other, one that explains the other! Blood that is understood only in the light of those flames that are understood, only reflected in that blood. There is one language, one life, that of the heart of the man-God!

Those who think only of God's love and not also of his hatred, do not know him. Those who think only of his mercy and not of his justice do not know love. Do not know mercy those that think only of forgiveness and not also of sanctions. Do not know forgiveness, those who think only of the tears of the sinner and not also of the blood of the Redeemer, the price of every remission of sin, the price of every concession of grace.

Because of this infinite hatred for sin, Jesus wanted to place the sins of all humanity upon himself, one by one as if to fight them as close as possible, and destroy them with more security and root them out more radically, and repair them with maximum munificence he could. He willed to pursue them in each man and separately, as if he had feared that some might escape his infinite hatred.

Because of his infinite love for every soul, he willed to punish each and every sin in himself, instead of punishing them in the

sinner, almost fearing to involve even the slightest manner, in the same hate, war and death that he felt for every sin, the souls who had committed it, through their fault, through their fault alone. He never ceased to love the sinners' souls. He always willed to unite them to himself, all out of his love and merit because of his love and his merit alone.

Because of this hatred and love, his blood tells us, he could not content himself with any reparation and satisfaction of sin, but wanted to make reparation and satisfy it adequately. Even though any act of reparation, made by the divine person in humanity would have been enough to expiate all sins, he willed to exercise and apply such a quantity and intensity of satisfaction, so as to reveal, also sensibly, his endless hatred and love.

As if all that world of sins were really of his humanity, he crucified and disfigured it. As if all the sins of the world were all in his head, he pierced it with thorns. As if they were all in his heart, he tore it apart and applied flames to his wounds. As if they were all in his blood, he squeezed and poured it all with inexorable vehemence.

Thus, he reveals, to those who live in the sensible world, what sin is for God and for the soul: both mortal sin and deliberate venial sin. They are wounds, real wounds, and even though they are not all mortal, they are all bloody. In each sin, even minimum, there is certain infinity of evil for the soul, and an infinite offense for God. God never offends anyone and envelops everyone with the eternal effusions of his divine goodness, loving as the God that he is.

CHAPTER 3

The Cry of the Blood

When the soul that God loves remains attached to sin that God hates, she makes an infinite violence to the Lord, who does not cease to attract the sinner to himself; God is in a perennial attraction toward the sinner. This violence is made visible in the man-God Jesus in the adorable blood of the perpetual sacrifice, and those ever-open wounds in his humanity, even in the glorious state of resurrection.

When the soul consents to grace and returns to the Lord, with the burden of her sins to be deposited at his feet, she finds him on the cross, with open wounds, hands and feet nailed, with pierced heart, the head aching in thorns, and a wounded heart, the soul then begins to hear the voice of blood and feels herself shaken in purifying storms and melts away in tears; this is man's response to the blood of God.

When the Lord will come in his glory and all humanity will be resurrected, seeing and hearing Jesus, savior and judge, everyone will shed the supreme tears. This weeping is the first act of every risen man, seeing the one whom we have pierced, both for those who rise to glory, and those who rise for their punishment. This shedding of tears will be our response to the voice of blood, and it expresses consolation and despair, hatred and love, life and death, heaven and hell.

We have the impression of seeing tears of blood coming from

every resurrected human body, as well as the sweat of blood of Jesus in the garden of olives. It seems to see tears like a wave of colors and perfumes, on the garment of light and glory of those who resisted to the blood in the struggle against evil. I see like a wave of bitumen and flames on the dark garment of fire and pain of those who did not want to resist to the end in the struggle against sin.

Only his blood can tell us how much he suffered in his heart for every abandonment and betrayal of son and friend, for every delay in returning, for every departure and eternal separation. The moral torment was so painful that the most excruciating physical pain was only relief; it can be said that he enjoyed shedding his blood, and thus relieving his pain, hoping to move those for whom he was suffering to love him.

Only his blood can tell us how much he suffered in his being as man-God, for every offense against God, misunderstood, incomprehensible infinite offense. The voice of the blood of Christ's sacrifice is the song of the divine joy, of the reparatory love of the Son of God to the Father in the Holy Spirit, the exultation of giving in his blood the greatest proof of his love.

With a very sweet eye he gazed at those who with terrible looks scourged him, nailed him, so with affection and supreme sweetness, he shed all his blood. More than any mother and more than all mothers together in feeding the child at their own breast and of their own substance, Jesus, with languishing love, with consuming love, felt in himself the loss of life in all that profusion of pain and blood, while burning with love.

CHAPTER 4

Blood Image of the Trinity

With Jesus' blood each divine person speaks to the other divine person and speaks of each and every one of us. It is true that only the Son became man and gave his blood, but his humanity is inexpressibly, in a different way, also in the Father, who sent his Son. Likewise, Jesus' humanity is also ineffably, even though in a different way, also in the Holy Spirit, who formed that body and created that soul to make possible the incarnation in the Virgin Mary.

O Blessed Virgin Mary! The humanity of Jesus is also intimately and ineffably of his mother. So it is also true that with the voice of the blood of Jesus, the holy Virgin Mary speaks to each divine person for herself and for us; that is why her word to the Blessed Trinity is so powerful and acceptable, and it resounds in the soul of every man, near the throne and in the heart of God.

Let us make man in our own image and likeness. O image of the Father infinitely dear to the Father and to the Holy Spirit! O image of the Son infinitely dear to the Father and to the Holy Spirit!

O image of the Holy Spirit infinitely dear to the Father and to the Son! Each divine person says to the other: *After you, God, outside of you, God, there cannot be anything dear, sweet and precious for me but your own image.*

O image fallen in the hands of the enemy, disfigured by all evil and

marked by the character of the beast! I don't want to lose it at any cost. I buy it again and make it new again in my blood. I renew it and raise it beyond the original beauty, in my blood, for your love! I want to possess it, and I want to unite it with me more and more with eternal covenant in my blood for your love, says each divine person to the other.

In your blood, O God, how beautiful and dear your image becomes! It is worthy of God. You are my seat, my rest, my throne and my paradise. Outside of you, O God, I find your image worthy of being my garden of delight, my heaven of glory, my palace and little paradise where I come to dwell with you, says each divine person to the other.

Here I am living in your living image, O God. I have become your creature, to honor you with the honor you deserve for yourself, O God! I exert every power to the last degree of intensity of acts and rip every limit of created capacity to correspond with the glory created to your infinite merit, and I find myself in the currents of the blood of the perennial sacrifice of the cross and the altar, says each divine person to the other.

The same thing says all the earth that drank this blood that was spilled on the earth. The Lord, even though he had taken everything up again in the unity and integrity of his body, in his resurrection to the glorious state, he willed in his love and in his wisdom he found the way, and in his omnipotence he made possible that his blood, like streams and rivers, with oceanic waves keeps flowing from the center of paradise to purify the world from evil and pain, to enrich it with goodness and joy and to remake it a paradise of glory for God and happiness for man.

Chapter 5

Price of the Blood

May the Lord grant us what we ask in the most frequently used prayer in the liturgy (the prayer-collect for the Blessed Sacrament), that is, to venerate the sacred mysteries of his body and blood, and continuously enjoy the fruits of redemption.

The devotion to the most precious blood is the most priestly among all catholic devotions, because it is the one that mostly identifies with the sacrifice of the cross and of the altar, and therefore is the one most appropriate for priestly souls.

In this, as in every other devotion, it is wise to look at the practical side of the perfection and enrichment of the soul helping her to fulfill her supernatural duty, through the subsidies that can be drawn from it.

Therefore, in our devotion to the most precious blood, we must not stop at the worship of adoration and praise, of love and thanksgiving, of reparation and intercession, to be offered to the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, who with his blood has redeemed us.

We must aim at the assimilation of the divine perfections shining in the blood shed for us; to the union with the divine intentions and dispositions with which he poured it; to the reproduction of the acts and states of his sacrifice, and so our worship will be more complete.

Thus we will come, almost naturally, to the cooperation with Jesus, our redeemer, through the apostolic use of the perpetual and multiform applications of the most precious blood, which are the acts especially proper to the relative devotion, and the best valorization of this divine price.

Since the precious blood of Jesus, the highest expression of his immolation, is essentially the price of universal redemption, its special devotion will consist in circulating this divine price to obtain all the effects of grace, throughout the whole Church and throughout the entire world.

CHAPTER 6

Value of the Blood

We must keep circulating the precious blood of Jesus to pay all debts and to acquire all merits, to erase every stain and to adorn us with every beauty, to fertilize every desert and extinguish every fire, to seal every mouth of the abyss and open all doors of heaven.

Blessed certainly is the soul who from every event and from every circumstance will know how to draw from it a theme of prayer, and a stimulus to make an offering of the most precious blood appropriate to the moment, both for the fight against evil and for the triumph of good.

The offering of the most precious blood is not a simple form of prayer. Christian consecrations are not mere forms of prayer. As always, so in this especially, it would be a big mistake for anyone to evaluate things on the basis of the quantity and variety of words.

There is a difference between the poor man who asks for an object in alms, and the rich man who buys it with money. There is a difference between the signature on a greeting card, and the signature that signs a contract. As a meeting of people differs from a family relationship, so every offering of the most precious blood and every true consecration differs in value and efficacy from any other long and beautiful prayer, from any other practice of piety. All consecrations and all offerings of the most

precious blood of Jesus are inspired signed and embellished by the same blood.

Only those who possess something can offer it. Only those who, at least in some way, participate in the priesthood can offer the price of sacrifice. The most precious blood of Jesus can be invoked by everyone, and must be for all the foundation of hope.

The blood of Jesus cannot be offered unless, at least in some sense, through baptism, we participate in the christian priesthood, and through the state of grace, we possess this treasure that is the family inheritance of God's adopted children.

CHAPTER 7

Blood's Effectiveness

The more a soul is elevated in the state of grace, the more a soul is full of the spirit of the catholic liturgy and the more a soul shines with priestly character, the more effectively she offers the most precious blood of Jesus.

A greater faith, a more intense love, a more ardent zeal will greatly contribute to the efficacy of the Offertory of the most precious blood. The efficacy is above all dependent on the state of grace and on the participation in the priesthood on the part of the offerer.

The method of meditation of the ascetic school of St. Sulpice synthesizes the main exercises of mental prayer with three formulas: *Jesus before the eyes* (adoration), *Jesus in the heart* (assimilation), *Jesus in the hands* (cooperation).

Adapting these formulas to the main devotions to Jesus Christ, we say: *The Holy Name and Face of Jesus before the eyes* (ideal and program), *the Sacred Heart and Sacrament of Jesus in the heart* (Spirit and life), *the Sacred Wounds and the Most Precious Blood in the hands* (offertory and apostolate).

May the Lord deliver us from believing that the repetitions of the offerings of the most precious blood are in vain! May the Lord enlighten us about its value and merit, both from the perspective of glory that is rendered to God, and from the perspective of the good that derives for the souls.

The repetition of the Hail Mary in the Holy Rosary, or the repetition of the psalms in the holy Breviary, or the repetition of the Holy Mass so often celebrated every day on the altars of the christian world is not in vain.

Likewise, it is not in vain the perennial repetition and multiplication of the offertory of the most precious blood, which, rightly, can be considered and called the *small christian sacrifice*, extension of the great sacrifice of the Holy Mass.

CHAPTER 8

Significance of the Blood

As it is true that the most precious blood was shed for our redemption, so it is equally true that every soul in grace possesses it as her treasure, and because it is hers she can offer it in sacrifice to God.

As it is true that God alone knows the merit and value of Jesus' blood, as it is true that the blood of Jesus is the only offering worthy of God's holiness and justice, so it is true that God accepts it with infinite pleasure.

Even without considering the value and merit of acts of faith, hope and charity, which the soul implicitly exercises in every offering of the most precious blood of Jesus, these acts have in themselves and for themselves an incalculable effectiveness in the bosom of the Father.

To understand we must think of all the terror of the infernal abysses, of all the sinking of the powers of hell at the sign of the cross, of the judge's curse on the day of the universal judgment and of the final apocalyptic cataclysm.

Indeed not even all this can give us the full idea of the immense deluge of tenderness, divine mercy and redeeming action that flows upon the world, whenever, in the Holy Spirit, we offer the most precious blood to the Most Holy Trinity.

Only if we had the mind and heart of Jesus' Virgin Mother,

could we feel, at the memory of the blood shed by the Son of God, something of what passes in the bosom of the divinity when, in the grace of the Holy Spirit, we name Jesus and we offer his blood.

Therefore, all the days of our mortal life, *cum valido clamore et lacrimis* - *with a loud cry and tears*, we will offer this precious blood. We have the certainty that whenever we offer the most precious blood, we will be heard in consideration of the merits of Jesus Christ, and by offering his blood we render the greatest possible glory to the Trinity. The salvation of the world is fruit of the precious blood.

PART V

ADVENT OF THE KINGDOM

CHAPTER 1

Banner of Advent

This section includes all the articles published in *Spiritus Domini* during the years 1934-1935 as part of the section "For the Advent of the Kingdom". Jesus invites us pray "Thy Kingdom come" and all those who are part of the Kingdom cannot fail to preach and work for his advent. "The Kingdom of Jesus is not of this world", but "It is already in our midst".

It is natural that this section begins with an invitation to the missionarity and ends with a thought on the Assumption of Mary. The function of the Kingdom is to ensure that every believer becomes the perfect image of the Son of God as the Virgin of the Assumption has become. Being the perfect image of Jesus means to make ours the desires, visions, attitudes, dispositions, anxieties and virtues of Jesus and all his teachings as well. Blessed Fr. Justin guides us on this journey to Jesus, with Jesus and in Jesus.

1. He Comes! *Ecce sponsus venit; exite obviam ei. Amen! Veni Domine, Jesu. Behold, the bridegroom is coming. Let us go to meet him. Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!* The Christian feast is not a simple remembrance of the past but a reality that is always repeated with some great novelty. We prepare for the feast not only commemorating it, but living it with all our being, *in novitate spiritus - in the newness of spirit*, with novelty of dispositions, novelty of intentions, novelty of expectation, for the novelty of graces!
2. He Comes - *et cum eo sanctorum milia - and with him thousands of saints!* He comes to triumph, to defeat all the enemies of his name and to establish the Kingdom of his heart in every soul

and in every people. All the angels and all the saints descend with him to do the work of God in the world, ministers of his will and messengers of his love. He comes. Let us stand and go to meet him, with the vision of faith and in the exuberance of hope.

3. He comes to us! He comes, and for the souls dead to his grace, he descends to their grave, to call them to the resurrection. He wants to be invited, expected and accompanied by sisters and mothers in tears over the death of their loved ones, over the affliction of their people, over the pitiful state of the world. He commands that someone remove the stone from the entrance to the tomb. Doing so he gives his creature the possibility of giving some cooperation in preparation and correspondence to his grace. The Lord always wants to accomplish marvelous things in and for us.
4. He comes! *Et cum eo sanctorum milia – and with him thousands of saints!* He comes to encounter the souls who are already in his grace and to unite himself more intimately to the most chosen souls. He does not intend to descend to their stationary level, in their environment of mediocrity, in their torpor of lukewarmness. He expects that they elevate themselves going to meet him with torches to honor him, with weapons to fight his battles and with open and purified hearts to receive his gifts. *Ecce sponsus venit, exite obviam ei. Go to meet him!*
5. We will meet him! We may meet him on the way, at night, in some serious, physical or moral discomfort, in the cold, or in the dark and in some kind of humiliation, as in unpleasant company of inferior beings and people of bad disposition. We will meet him! When we meet him everything will rise, everything will be transformed and everything will exult, but in another order, in a state above the natural state. He will see every heart, and every flesh will be aware of his presence.

Every flesh will share the salvation won by the Lord, for he comes and *merces eius cum eo - and his recompense with him.*

6. Many souls are undecided, even though they have some good will; they keep looking around as if searching for a guide. We hear the sound of lamentation in the psalm: *Signa nostra non vidimus - we do not see our banner. Iam non est propheta - There is no prophet to guide us. Et nos non cognoscet amplius - as if the Lord does not want to recognize us anymore.* We may feel that the Lord does not want to call us near him. There is nothing more false than this. Only an unnerving sloth could make us complain in this way.
7. Human beings, made of body and soul, need a banner. We need a banner that makes the idea of the celestial homeland, the program of our supernatural life and the supreme model of interior perfection shine in our mind. We need a banner, able to awaken the sleepers, to attract even the most distant ones and to excite even the most timid. A flag that is alive and life giving is needed to instill value in its followers and lead them to sure victory.

CHAPTER 2

Toward the Advent of the Kingdom

While distributing Holy Communion, the soul becomes aware of a dark rumbling of imploring crowds, around the altar, around the priest, around the Eucharist. *Ne irascaris, Domine, ne ultra memineras iniquitatis. Lord, do not let your anger go too far, do not remember our guilt forever* (Is 64 8). We carry the weight of our guilt, the weight of punishment for a long time. You alone are the God who saves, forgives and redeems. What they hear and perceive is not the song of the faithful, our daily communicants, who walk in the light, towards ever-greater splendors and who receive the Lord for their nourishment to possess and enjoy him more intimately. Could it be the guardian angels of the world around the altar of the Savior that transform the confused clamor of humanity into such a heartfelt prayer?

With the words and spirit of Isaiah, our prophet, the song says: Behold, Lord, that the holy city has become deserted. The temple that was the dwelling place of your holiness is destroyed, where your glory was revealed, where our fathers, the only people so particularly peculiar yours, among the peoples of the earth, the people that praised you with what was the only worship you wanted. *Where is that temple?* Sings the cry of Israel. From every part of the earth where Israel is dispersed its cry reaches our altar and our soul. O millions of our brothers, we cry with you for the desolation of the temple of your soul, wandering outside the new temple of the Lord; but God is God, and you will return to be his

people in his holy Church! We turn our thoughts and desires first to you, with the same loving spirit that the Apostle of the Gentiles himself had for you, our beloved brothers.

Peccavimus et facti sumus tanquam immundus nos. We have sinned and become unclean (Is 65 5). After a pause, I continue to hear the song of that cry. The tears break into sobs and then get lost in the silence of the sepulchers on which the word of the resurrection has not yet resonated. Larger and more numerous multitudes occur and explode: *Peccavimus et facti sumus tanquam immundus nos. We have sinned and become unclean!* We have sinned and we have become a quagmire of impure mud.

Millions of Muslims followed and spread a false creed with a more false tool, the sword; they overwhelmed hundreds of catholic dioceses making them ruins of deserts. You still await from Christians a greater victory that will free you from evil, retrieve you from the mud and bring you to the sun. The empty deserts will blossom with lilies, will resound with melodies of angels, and you will be the knights and messengers of God's love. For God is God and he wants to make you his people in his holy Church, O our millions of Muslims!

More tumultuous crowds break in, more terribly unhappy and they sing: We have become like leaves and the whirling winds of iniquity detached us from the mother plant and scattered us through the icy earth, poor dead leaves at the mercy of enemies. And now the enemies have gathered and piled them like mountains and have set them aflame with the fire of personal hatred against God; the fire of death that would like to consume the world, as a diabolical response to the fire of God's love that gives life to the world.

O my millions of heretics! O my millions of schismatics, among you millions of godless people are organized and roam around. O my millions of godless, even your supreme misery is a

supreme prayer! But God is God, and you will be his people in his Church. God does not want to be without you, who now glory in being without him.

O faraway islands, O shadowy continents, O scattered people! Oceans of faithless souls to be saved! Listen you too, especially you! For each and every one of you there is the grace of redemption, effective graces, prodigious graces! Graces already properly obtained for you by the Savior Jesus. Graces already prepared for you in the treasures of mercy. Your place is in the holy Catholic Church, kingdom of heaven on earth. We are awaiting new ministers of redemption and dispensers of the sacred mysteries, new disciples and warriors of the Word, new heroes of the gospel and of the Church, souls-mothers of peoples of souls. In the spirit of prayer and with the apostolate of prayer they are already preparing themselves for the conquests of the gospel; they have already begun their journey to you.

Audite insulae et attendite populi de longe. Faraway islands and farway people, listen.

CHAPTER 3

For the Advent of the Kingdom

The baptism administered by St. John the Baptist was a preparation to the baptism of Jesus. Baptism with water was the precursor of the baptism with fire and Spirit, according to the expression of St. John. Likewise, we can think and say that the deluge of water with which God purged this world of sin, did not take away the sins of the world. It was sign and precursor of another deluge much more purifying. In that first deluge, all sinners died, but sin did not die with them. Sin also was saved in the ark of Noah. It was hidden in the depth of living nature, in those few just people who were spared in order to continue the human family.

The world was waiting for the foot of the Immaculate Virgin to crush the head of the sin introduced by the snake, to crush the head of that snake of sin. The first effect of the fullness of grace and of sanctification produced in the apostles, who were with Mary on the day of Pentecost indicates the beginning and the way in which the second deluge must destroy the kingdom of sin, through the effusion of the blood of Jesus.

After the apostles had been formed by the preaching and example of Jesus, and had been washed in his blood, the Holy Spirit descends upon them in form of fire. Immediately the apostles began to flood the world with the word of God to prepare it to receive the same baptism of fire and of Spirit that they had received.

A deluge of words of God that produces a deluge of pious works and forms a deluge of saints of God that generates a deluge of holy families and forms the new chosen people, the great kingdom of heaven on earth. The deluge of the word of God in its written and oral form is the prerequisite of every work of salvation and sanctification. Jesus is the living word of God living in the Host, the same Jesus that multiplies his presence and fills the world with it. Sea of Word, sea of Host, sea of sacrament that envelops and floods the world! Sea upon which descends and hovers the Holy Spirit and produces a deluge of holy works, a deluge of marvelous saints, and brings about new earths and new heavens worthy of God.

Thus we see and feel the need for a very special consecration to the Divine Word taken in its entirety; that is, to the word spoken by God as inspiration; to the word spoken by the soul to God as prayer; to the word spoken by God and the soul together and addressed to the world as preaching. Preaching proceeds from inspiration and prayer, as from a single principle in imitation of the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son. The righteous Noah, who first found grace in the sight of God had the mission of saving humanity in the ark. The just man, who in our time has found grace in the sight of God, has the mission to open the cataracts of the heavens of the Word to flood the world again with a new deluge.

The just man, who finds grace before God, for the faith that he received and according to which he lives, becomes a spring, a flood and a cataract of words of life according to the promise of Jesus. As a restorative and fecund rain, he spreads his holy words. We prepare ourselves to become springs of living water in silence, refusing to listen or to pronounce any useless word, meditating on every divine word. At the same time, with the constant exercise of uplifting conversation, with docility and generosity in carrying on every mission of the ministry of the word, we make

our own the dispositions of our prophet Isaiah: *Propter Zion not tacebo, donec accendatur sicut lampas iustus meus. For the sake of Zion he will not keep silent, until I have stirred up in every soul the saint who is there as if in a germ (Is. 62 1). God told me: Clama, ne cesses, quasi tuba exaltas vocem tuam. Shout for all you are worth, do not hold back, raise your voice like a trumpet (Is 58 1).*

CHAPTER 4

All in God Alone

In order to enter the kingdom of heaven everyone must impose upon himself a fierce and persistent effort and be aggressive as a king marching against powerful enemies to regain a lost kingdom. A much greater effort is required to bring each and every man into this kingdom and establish all souls on the throne of God's kingdom. An enterprise worthy of God! An enterprise to which God calls us by placing before us the most glorious roles, and implanting in our hearts the desire and encouragement to choose the heroic. Since it is written that: *Regnum coelorum vim patitur et violenti rapiunt illud. The kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent take it by storm* (Mt 11 12).

The Holy Spirit, who brought forth the incarnation of the Son of God in Mary most holy, the same Holy Spirit who later led Jesus to pour out his most precious blood on the cross for the redemption of the world before putting his hand externally to the work of salvation of the world, led him into the desert for an external concentration of his humanity in his divinity. Desert, sea and sky are like small images of divine immensity. Jesus was led into the desert to draw from the divinity and from the conversation with God, all the treasures of glory, love and divine will that were going to be poured out upon men, and to teach them the need of elevating and concentrating upon God, before doing works in favor of others.

The desert experience is the best preparation to every apostolate. The prudence of the world also envisions and weighs the pros and cons of every decision. The city, the public opinion, the circle of friends impose many human considerations and values in the process of making our decisions. Supernatural prudence meditates in the desert, far away and in the complete absence of all that is material, worldly and human. This is not a dream, but the best preparation because everything is left in the hands of God. The desert enables us to live the supreme reality of the supernatural: *All in God alone and God alone in all*. All the power of the word of God in the world resounds only from this interior solitude. Only from this interior hermitage of the love of God flows every vital lymph, and spreads the spark of holy flame to set the world on fire.

The Holy Spirit brings Jesus and every soul into the desert above all to fight against Satan. Before we turn to the souls, we have to sever all our dealings with Satan, and wipe away Satan's influences. He has pawned the souls and they need to be freed before they can be conquered for Jesus Christ.

All diabolic possessions show the disarray of a fleeing enemy; they demonstrate also the obstinacy with which the enemy asserts the rights that souls gave him, to one who otherwise would not even be a subject of right in this world. We do not choose our temptations, but we should anticipate them. The fight takes place at the very threshold of the desert because he is very much opposed to our recollection for prayer, for the apostolate! O epic battles of heroes and saints!

All the sensitive reluctances, all the external difficulties, variously combined together and gradually administered as a charm filter, arise to prevent our entering into the desert. We might have longed for solitude, as a need for every tired being, for every great spirit. As long as we see the desert as an opportunity of abandoning ourselves to the torpor of a false rest, of abandonment to a

false peace, to inertia and sentimental dreams, we will be able to procure it and enter.

The solitude for a higher recollection of prayer, for a more intense spiritual work, for a solid beginning of a true apostolate, is taken away, removed, denied us by the world, by men and by whatever is in ourselves that can serve as an ally of Satan. It is he who does not want us to find the desert, and tries his best to make it impossible for us. But God wants it!

CHAPTER 5

Into the Fray

In solitude, sadness brought the soul to the Lord and she found herself elevated. Voices of affliction come from the world. Who's crying? It is as if passing by, you could hear crying in a house and the mother is far away. A tragedy has occurred, blood is seen, one child trembles, another moans, and another cries out in despair. The mother approaches, understands and feels the cry of her children. She feels her bowels lacerated. From every country, from every people comes a cry, from every family from every heart a cry. They are heartfelt cries, pleading cries, desperate cries, the more secret these cries are the more heartbreaking they are. They reach him who is essentially the Father, essentially the bridegroom and they break his heart with a cry of blood. The soul forgets the pains of all her personal human miseries. O heart of God, you cry, what do you want me to do? O heart of God, you cry in every human heart that cries. Can I comfort you in any way?

I look at the land with the eyes of the Lord: All over I see a fierce, bloody melee. How many shadowy and filthy, ferocious and bestial beings, everywhere! Everywhere I see slaughtered children, chained teenagers, and adults rotting in ignominious masses. Everywhere I see those who are in the power of Satan using endless argumentation to distract from the struggle between good and evil. With vain and illusory promises they weaken the resistance of those who are about to give up. Then all at once, I

see all pushing toward a wide-open abyss! The great jaws that hell has opened.

Show the sign from above; make resound the name from above! How come the chains are suddenly broken? Are those monstrous beings swept from the earth? Did the mouth of the abyss close on them? The soul traced that sign, pronounced that name!

The soul relaxes. Hell reopens its jaws and once again vomits its hordes on the earth. How is this possible? Men themselves called them back and raised them for the corrupt pleasure of those who give up, who fall, contaminate and deteriorate themselves to death.

O animal man, more or less unreasonable, more or less ferocious beast! Over and over again, every day, every hour! No, my soul, it is not enough to show the sign and pronounce the name, you must get down in the fights of the fray, with the chalice of the blood to restore, heal and give back eagerness of strength, of conquest, the longing for ascension into heaven, for divine relationship. You, my soul, cannot give yourself rest. All work is renewed in every generation, and therefore every new generation of men needs new supernatural generations of saints. All work is renewed every day, every hour. Let us enter the fray.

We descend into the fray. That sign always proceeds before us to defeat enemies and gather ever more faithful warriors, heroes, even, and especially, among those who yesterday were lying bloodless in the field. The name of Jesus resounds like a war cry ever more horrifying and terrifying the enemies, ever more triumphantly thrilling the followers of Jesus. O name above every name, O heart of every heart! O my world of Islam, O my world of heresy, O my world of schism, O my world of lukewarmness of Christians, O my world of idolaters! O world of death! Dry bones, *audite Verbum Domini! Listen to the Word of the Lord!* Come all in the currents of life flowing through the Hail Mary of the Rosary and

the psalms of the Breviary. Come all into the arms of the praying priest, come on the paten and in the chalice of the offering, consecrating, communicating priest. *Audite Verbum Domini. Listen to the voice of the Lord!*

Let us keep moving forward against the power of darkness, against all its influences, against every form of its presence, against every right that the souls might have given to the devil. The fight is against the devils. They direct every movement of opposition to the Lord in every creature. According to the Apostle, they are so against the Lord that they seem exclusively against him. It is so because they give the direction and the impulse to the mass of the flesh, to the crowd of human spirits. The three temptations of Jesus are attributed to the devil, just as to him is attributed the temptation in which our progenitors fell. Perhaps all hell is on earth, and it has unleashed and applies the black power of its hatred, to attract the earth into its evil and plunge it into everlasting pain. Likewise, heaven is also on earth. And when the Lord comes, he comes with thousands of saints. The Lord comes to his saints. He fights through them.

CHAPTER 6

Conquest of the Kingdom

As long as we are on earth nobody should think that he has definitely triumphed over the enemy. Likewise, nobody should think that he has totally eradicated a vice, as long as he is in the flesh. Likewise, nobody should think that he has saved a soul until she has been entrusted bodiless to the Lord in paradise. Many times we had false illusions about these successes that were only initial or partial and we considered them as final and total successes; thus we exposed ourselves to new pitfalls and new revenges of the enemy. Our present life is always and in everything essentially militant, and requires that we be always awake, ready to fight, vigilant and in ongoing battle. *Vigilate et orate. Be alert and pray.* Continue to walk as long as there is the light of life. Fight always against the ancient dragon, always endowed with new hatred and poison.

We are moved by the tearful fate of a poor soul, or of a hapless people. Did human superiors entrust them to us, or did angels-ambassadors entrust them to us? We go to that poor reject on the wings of charity, with the power of the holy Name, with the powers of the Sacred Heart, with the powers of the most precious Blood! He was still breathing. Victory! The waves calmed at our nod, the clouds dissipated at the breath of our prayers. Victory! The shipwrecked person in our arms was alive again. Filled with joy we opened our arms, waved our hands to call other neighbors to share our joy, and raised our voices as a sign of invitation to

those who were at a certain distance. The poor victim we had rescued fell back into the waves and being very weak he drowned. We lost him.

We cultivated our interior camp passionately, under the frost and under the flames, not as naive amateurs of asceticism, nor as simple listeners and readers of the word of God, but in genuine mortification of the senses, abnegation of the will, and in continuous vocal and mental prayer and sacramental communion! What a beautiful, blooming spring of the soul! Now we understand that the soul is the garden in which the Lord walks, the palace in which he resides, and the sky to which he attracts us. He is the beloved! It is spring! It is spring! *Cedant vetera, Nova sint omnia. Let the old come to an end, and let everything be new.* We begin to hear *the Song of Songs*. What a surprise! While we relax in the song of joy, the flowers wither, the enemy scatters weeds. Weeds come up from every lump of soil, and we resume once more our rough labors!

The temptation besieged us, and was determined, with mounting violence, not to leave unconquered that strong point of our life. In order to resist, we kept calling our heavenly allies; we continued to believe that the more our resistance seemed impossible the closer was our liberation. And the violence grew. A counterattack would lead us to capitulation! The divine help of the inspiration came through the underground tunnels of humility, and attacked the enemies from the side of their pride and defeated them.

We won. Now we are finally safe. We open the doors, we breathe, we move, and we go out freely without all those precautions! We are beautiful and special! But the enemy is inside. Within us there is what we thought we had already thrown into his abyss.

When an unclean spirit has come out of a man, he goes through dry places looking for rest, not finding it he says: I will return to my house

where I came from. When he reaches it, he finds it swept and well decorated. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits worse than himself, and entering they settle inside. And that man's last condition is worse than the first (see Lk 11 24-26).

The Lord allows revenge by the spirits of evil, only to put us on guard and on the defensive against every surprise of the devil. On this point we should remember that divine saying: *Beatus qui est semper pavidus. Blessed is the one who is always vigilant. All the present life is to be passed in the temptation of every species and form, since regnum coelorum vim patitur et violenti rapiunt illud. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent conquer it (Mt 11-12).*

CHAPTER 7

Aiming for the Goal

It is not possible to determine whether temptations aim more at completely preventing even the slightest principle of good, or delaying, interrupting, misleading, or actually corrupting the same good already begun or undertaken. The enemy does not have as its norm in the struggles against the good, against the souls, against God, the principle: *All or nothing*. The enemy ordinarily aims at: "All", but usually he proceeds gradually from a part or from a small detail, being aware that he cannot get everything at once. When he seems to despair of bringing a soul to damnation instead of giving up, to be true to himself, does not cease his attacks to impede even minimally her progress in grace, to make her practice christian virtues less intensively, to curtail her practice of good deeds to weaken her little by little. The unsuspecting soul does not pay attention to the small losses, and the enemy makes her decay with the intention to slowly enslave her completely. Evidently this diabolical war is greater around the souls who are more dedicated to the apostolate.

If every good that we begin were carried out without modifications or alterations, but only with real improvements, without interruption and delay, but only with intensification and acceleration, without any deviation or wavering, but always with prudence of direction and rectitude of intention, we would have many more triumphs of the Kingdom of God in the individual souls and in entire populations. Our present condition and ex-

perience show us that it is impossible to always keep this line: Always forward, always upward. Unquestionably, the soul that listens and practices continuously Jesus' command "*follow me*" succeeds.

It is written: *The way of the righteous is like the light that appears, advances and grows until it is high day* (Pr 4 18). As rays of sun, as children of light we are told to continue: Always forward, always upward, always in fervor. Lukewarmness and slowing down, deviation and interruption of what is good is not the normal way.

Aiming at the goal, and constantly and ardently striving for it, more than a condition, it is the essence of the fervor of every apostolate. That is, to aim for God in all things, and to tend to join him through all creatures, and to lead all souls in this direction. We should at all times look directly only to God. We should look to creatures and to all that is not God only obliquely and just enough to serve God, the minimum indispensable it takes to bring souls to God.

Everything that attracts our attention to the point of shifting the attention even for an instant and for things of no importance must be considered as a temptation. The whole surrounding world of beings and relationships to which our inner world may be attracted, and all our natural affections must be considered as temptation. It is easily admitted that everything can help us in our service of God. Everything is created solely to give us this help; everything is disposed to prepare us to receive this help. We do not easily understand how everything can be used exclusively for the duty, the real duty to go directly to God from everything, always and everywhere. This specific duty is not understood.

Very easily we reprove any person that enters the temple and does not pay attention primarily and directly to the altar, and on the altar to the tabernacle and in the tabernacle to the real presence of the Lord, to Jesus. Likewise, we reprove anyone who takes

the holy water for any reason other than presenting himself spotless to Jesus. We say the same of anyone who implores the saints for any reason other than asking their intercession with Jesus, or of anyone who implores the Virgin Mary for anything other than for the fact that she is the way and the door to Jesus.

Let us apply the same discernment to everything else; so in the world we should pay attention only to the great reality of the Church and to all people and events only in relation to the Church. In the Church, focus only on its visible and invisible head and every other member only in relation to the divine head. So, in each neighbor we do not pay any attention to the body but to the soul. We look at the body only in regard to the soul. In the soul, we do not pay attention to her natural condition but her supernatural being and state, as if we were looking for God's place in the soul in order to court him, if present, and to enthrone him, if absent.

Thus, in the execution of every good work that takes place in the world, we should pay attention directly to the spirit that animates it, so that it may not be affected by the influences of the worldly spirit, of the human spirit, and of the infernal spirit. May the good spirit of religious piety nourish above all the stimulating force that tends to super naturalize everything.

Thus, in the practice of every virtue, we must look directly at the charity of God that animates it and confers merit and value. We must keep alive, nurture and increase the flame of God's love, because without the charity of God, the virtues are without life. Only charity directly serves the glorification of God, the union with God. With this principle everything is united with that union which is the true source of every success in spiritual work.

CHAPTER 8

Cooperation with the Divine Action

By order of the Lord God, man had to go through the whole world from one extreme of the earth to the other. Having to go through high mountains, he prayed the Lord to make them disappear, or at the least remove them so that he could carry out his order. But the mountains did not move at all! God, however, gave him ingenuity to go around them, to cross them, to pierce them; so, the mountains remained but they were no longer an impediment on his way. Then he found himself facing the sea. It was so big that it seemed immense. It was so deep as to be called abyss. Pleaded with God to dry it up. The man asked things that God had already done before for others. Again, there was no answer. God, however, gave him the genius to navigate through it. And the whole sea became a great way for the man that was carrying on God's orders.

Man is aware of his many insufficiencies, he feels his many needs of every kind, in every order of things, for himself and for others. Immediately his thought reminds him that God knows everything and can do everything, and from the premise of divine omniscience and omnipotence, he is immediately led to the conclusion that he can abandon himself to the will of God and dedicate himself to the service of man. This may be deceiving. To the deficiencies, insufficiencies, and needs that are not even perceived by his dear creature, the Lord provides by himself alone, so to speak. To the deficiencies, insufficiencies, needs and neces-

sities that the creature is aware of, God intends to provide. He generally provides after the prayer of his creature with which the creature recognizes the proper nothingness and emptiness; with prayer the creature disposes itself to gratitude; with gratitude the creature cultivates the sense of gratitude and dependence on God and its obligation to God. With prayer the creature expands its ability to receive the gift of God. Man, for his part, is willing to do what is needed and cooperates with God, as he initially does with his prayer.

The soul feels the many deficiencies and insufficiencies of her neighbors. How much she suffers for them! But will it be enough to pity them? The soul becomes aware of many moral miseries and real faults of her poor neighbors. How much sadness and bitterness fill her being! But will it be enough for her to deplore and condemn her poor neighbor? I think that our Lord makes us realize by ourselves, or makes others inform us, of so many physical and moral evils of our neighbors. God permits this not only to make us pity them, nor just to let us condemn them again, nor just to alert us, in order to avoid those evils and not become ourselves guilty of it. Certainly the Lord does not make us know so many miseries to cause external slander and internal discord, not to sadden us and make us miserable with bad humor, nor to cause pessimism that brings the earth into the environment of hell, but only to compel us to rescue, to heal, to console and edify our brothers with all our forces of natural and supernatural goodness. This is a divine alarm for the holy war, divine invitation to the war of mercy. This is not the response of sloth that awaits this divine invitation!

There are endless difficulties in the great work of the kingdom of God on the part of hell, of the world, and from the part of flesh and blood, by the human spirit and the environment, but all can be overcome, all must be overcome.

The only difficulty that seems impossible to overcome is that

of man himself, the servant of God, the minister of God; servant and minister, who, to justify the great guilt of his discouragement hides the great shame of his sloth, weaves painfully a garment of all the real and imaginary difficulties that the struggle against evil presents, and all the partial failures in the struggle for the conquest of good. There are terrible obstacles to impede the Church's triumphant advance; weeping willows that sadden with shadows of death the bright way of life; arms bent and paralyzed in the midst of the indispensable laboriousness of the imitators of God, who is action! But no, poor brothers! The reproach of the Master is enough, men of little faith and consequently of little strength. You go into the field of conquests to be achieved.

Ecce non est abbreviata manus Domini. The arm of the Lord is not too short to save (Is 9 1). Of course, all graces are available to the workers of the vineyard, to the knights, conquerors of the kingdom, all the most effective graces. Amen. All miraculous graces are available. Amen. From our part, we need to practice virtue up to heroism, as God prepares graces that lead us to the charisms. The ordinary way and the common procedure to obtain graces also extraordinary is always through good human will, the obedience of the creature, the activity of the faithful servant, the constant and generous cooperation to the divine action.

Our cooperation to the divine action is like the staff in the hands of Moses. Why that rod? We see this human cooperation in the water with which the servants filled the water's jars to the brim. Why that water? Again, it is like the removal of the sepulchral stone of Lazarus, before his resurrection, and the carrying of the paralytic to the miraculous presence of Jesus, before his healing. Since the first cause [God] has created the secondary causes, by means of them he intends to operate those effects to which they are destined to cooperate; only in their absence, not in their negligence, God ordinarily intervenes alone.

CHAPTER 9

Here I am

It is helpful for us to remember and meditate on the individuals that God has chosen and raised throughout the centuries to save his people. From their life of correspondence to the grace of their vocation and mission, we can understand and use many of their known practices to enlighten and regulate the journey of some souls that God chooses now to save others.

There are plenty of souls chosen by God to be instruments of salvation for others. Since the world of the unfaithful, of heretics, schismatics, of atheists, and of lukewarm or bad Christians is so vast, the needs of the souls are so many, and the evils of mankind keep mounting, God keeps calling and raising many, many people for the salvation, if they respond to their vocation. The good Lord opens before them a horizon of visions of mankind in its evils and in its needs, and expands their heart to a sense of unlimited love for the brothers, and enkindles in their mind great desires to do good. Sublime moment and divine torment!

The palpitations of the Divine Heart reach the soul and make her vibrate. Within herself the soul hears the divine question: *Who will go? Whom will I send* (Is 6 8)? Blessed is the soul that immediately replies: *Ecce ego, mitte me. Here I am, Lord, send me* (Is. 6 8), and prepares herself for the divine formation as an earthly seraphim, to become a heavenly apostle. If, on the other hand, the soul lingers, other voices will come from all sides, and cast the shadows of doubt on the light of that inner word, and throw all the ice of

human difficulties and calculations on that inner spark. ... And the little crib of baby Moses is swept away by the waters of the river.

To be apostles for souls, we must first be seraphim for God. On the part of God, creation is all a work of love, redemption is all a question of love and sanctification is all a process of love. There cannot be another principle and motive in the soul that the Lord chooses to be a conscious and personal instrument of redemption and sanctification

True love and pure love is one, it has God as its formal object, even when it is applied and ends with one's neighbor. Therefore, Jesus first chose, called, attached the twelve to himself, in a very sweet unity of supernatural family and then sent them to the souls. First, he made them his seraphim and then his apostles. *If you love me, feed my lambs and my sheep* (Jn 21 17). *If you love me* (not if you love my lambs and my sheep!). They are mine and not yours. I ask you to feed them so that they may be mine and not yours. You must do this only for me, for my glory, for my will and for my love.

The individual angelic hierarchies receive one from the other illustration and motion; an inferior order receives from the immediately superior order all the illustrations and motions for every angelic ministry in the government of the universe and of humanity. At the very top are the seraphim, they are the supreme created spirits, and they receive illustrations and motions immediately from God. They represent the maximum communication and union with the divine nature, which is charity, so they come to be in the greatest relationship and union with the divine persons, who are charity. Every apostolate springs from charity.

Maximum, (for us still in the state of way, *maximum and ever increasing*) intimacy of charity, intensity of charity with our God! The seraphic element for the apostolic element! In God directly

we have the vision of the world. Only in the light of God's love do we discover the true evils of the world and the real needs of souls. Only in that light, we can perceive the true plans for spiritual conquests, and have available the true means to carry them through. Only in that light the soul does not fall into any doubt about the possibility of healing the evils of nations, and about the perfectibility of souls. The holy passion of working for salvation lights up in the soul only in that light, and as the light grows, the ardor for sanctification becomes more intense.

So practically, only a Seraphim is an apostle; the larger is the enterprise and the higher the work, the more seraphic love is needed. The same and identical love is what redeems us and sanctifies us in God, because God is always infinite. In the animated tool that is in the hands of God, the love that is required to work for the sanctification of a soul and of the world, is more intense and higher than the love that is required only for salvation from evil. When salvation is yearned integrally, then it becomes one with sanctification.

Thus, a burning bush appears to the soul, on a mountain summit, as the language and word of the mountain itself; it invites us to ascend and then keeps us from approaching it, because it is the presence of God. Only on the mountain of the divine perfections, face to face with the divine love, we receive the first true vocation to the apostolate. *Vadam et videbo visionem hanc magnam. I must go and see this great vision* (Ex 3 3).

CHAPTER 10

Every Salvation comes from the Lord

Domini est salus! Every salvation comes from the Lord (Ps 3 8). Whenever the Lord willed to save a people, he raised a soul that, in his name transmitted his message of salvation, and with the power of God, accomplished that mission of salvation. To raise this servant and entrust to him that specific mission uses two methods. Either God calls him directly and gives his command, or he first calls into his presence, confides to him his plan, or by so doing he manifests his desire. In the desire of God, the soul becomes aware of God's will and offers herself to accomplish that mission. *Ecce ego, mitte me! Here, am I, Lord, send me* (Is 6 8)! I would be wrong, if I were not to see in this spontaneous availability of the soul a true vocation, received and corresponded. Such an availability is not a simple presumption, exhibition or human ambition of the soul. In accepting the offer of his creature, God expresses his will, and this equals a true calling. If we really think about it, this is a more gentle, higher way to communicate a vocation and mission to a soul. Why would God make that revelation and those confidences to that particular soul, if not to arouse in her an adhesion to God's desire, an ardor to please him, whose every desire is a command for a faithful creature?

This second way is the most common way in which the Lord solicits the correspondence and obedience of his creatures. Even in the ordinary cases of our life of temptation on earth, the Lord first sends us a tender, delicate inspiration to get us away from

that evil and move us to that good. If the soul does not perceive it on account of her dissipation, or does not receive it because of her obstinacy, when it is a question of a mandatory good to be done, or a serious evil to be avoided absolutely, then the internal voice becomes stronger and proclaims the positive law of the Lord, the grave duty to observe it, or the sanction to those who infringe it. If the soul corresponds to the first inspiration making it her duty to correspond to what, at first, appears only as a desire from above, God is more glorified, the soul is more sanctified by this act of pure love, and the human will is fortified and elevated by this prompt union with the divine will. Such should be the normal disposition of the creature, so much so that the state of fervor does not represent an exceptional state in our relation with God. The observance of charity in this way, which we call third degree, should be habitual in all and always. This is the fervor and the perfection of charity: to do every moment what is known of greater pleasure to God, only because he deserves it, because he is God, our God!

In these two ways that the Lord uses in arousing and sending his chosen ones, we can find a certain similarity to the two main human characteristics, with respect to the life of relationship: the timid and the active. As an example, we consider the vocation and mission of Moses, and the vocation and mission of Isaiah. Moses is attracted and called to the divine presence by the vision of the burning bush, and immediately receives the mission of taking the chosen people out of Egypt and to lead them into the Promised Land. The long conversation that follows between Moses and the Lord is a presentation of many difficulties that nature opposes to the will of God. God listens to his difficulties with much wisdom and patience, and then he ends up imposing his command with his power. Isaiah instead is admitted to the vision of the infinite majesty of God and of the glory of the divine sanctity sung by the Seraphim. While he is all enraptured in adoration before the Lord and in confusion for himself, the Lord makes him perceive

something like a question: *Whom will we send* (to announce the divine sanctions to the world)? *Who will go* (to establish the kingdom of divine holiness)? The divine question could not remain without a response from the humble, ardent and great soul of the holy prophet. Having comprehended the desire of God, he offers himself: *Here am I, Lord, send me!* The Lord immediately tells him: *go and talk...* and God makes him his universal prophet! This is repeated again and again in the spiritual elevations of souls to God and in the intimate communications of God to souls.

CHAPTER 11

Joseph of the Old Testament

With this chapter starts a series of meditations and elevation on Joseph of the Old Testament, as type and model of the hope of Israel for the advent of the kingdom that will be realized in Jesus. Joseph is one of the figures of the future Messiah that suffers and sacrifices himself for the salvation of others. He is the first and most expressive example of the philosophy of the cross, of one who achieves glory through rejection, slavery and every kind of sufferings. Thanks to his sufferings, Joseph receives the gift of prophecy, is capable of forgiving his brothers and becomes instrument of salvation for his entire people. Fr. Justin sees Joseph of the Old Testament as a model of Saint Joseph, who becomes Patron of divine providence. What Pharaoh used to say to his people is repeated by Fr. Justin to his Vocationist Fathers, Sisters, Apostles and devotees: "Go to Joseph".

When Pharaoh named and imposed Joseph as his viceroy, he changed his name to "*Savior of the World*". Thus Joseph is the first to carry this name of *Savior of the World* in sacred scripture. It is true that it was the idolatrous Pharaoh who gave this name to Joseph, but it happens at a time when the only true God invests him with a great ray of truth, and consequently pours onto him a great throb of goodness. Pharaoh is favored with a prophetic dream, with which the Lord begins to provide for his Egyptian people's needs, and in a special way for his chosen people. By making Pharaoh the representative of his divine authority, the first official of his divine government, foresee the not so distant and frightening famine that would have desolated the earth, if it had not been foreseen and provided in a timely fashion. The pro-

fane eye of the idolatrous Pharaoh is dazzled by the great ray of prophetic light that has invested him in the dream, and he wants absolutely to get out of the anxiety, in which his spirit is floundering, like one who has suddenly become blind. He feels threatened by dangers on all sides.

Joseph stands before him like a living ray of the divine wisdom that placidly attracts him in his sphere of light, and he accustoms him to see the designs of God, with the consciousness of truth. The idolatrous Pharaoh becomes a worshiper of the Lord, the God of truth. In this moment of mystic elevation, the Lord infuses him with the awareness of truth, the disposition to humility, the expansion of charity. In this sacred moment of mystical elevation, Pharaoh radiates upon Joseph the benefit of the light that he himself received, and reveals and proclaims Joseph as the Savior of the World.

Joseph is aware of his mission as savior of the world and manifests his loyal and mature ingenuity, at a time that was the most pathetic of his life and the most revealing of his interiority. This time is the high point of his humility and charity; he does not display any sign of presumption, or any shadow vainglory in the moment of his exaltation. In order to infuse a sense of trust in his brothers, who prostrated themselves at his feet, dismayed in the horrible fear for the deserved punishment for the fact that they had betrayed him and sold him as a slave, he says: *God sent me before you to assure the survival of your race on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So, it was not you who sent me here but God (Gn 45 7-8)*, to be the savior of his young Jewish people, the savior of the young chosen people.

After the death of his father Jacob, while his brothers were once again harboring fears of revenge and punishment, Joseph reassures them and repeats: *The Lord has disposed these things to save many peoples through me, so that he may be the savior of many peoples.* We think of this savior of the world as the first type of

those chosen souls that the Lord arouses for the good of many brothers. We think of them with the soul moved by the blessing of his dying father who lingers on him, in a final outpouring of that predilection for which both Jacob and Joseph had suffered so much. *Joseph is a fruitful plant near a spring, whose tendrils reach above the wall. Archers in their hostility drew their bows and attacked him. But their bows were broken by a mighty one. The sinews of their arms were snapped by the power of the Mighty One of Jacob, by the name of the stone of Israel, the God of your father who assists you, El Shaddai who blesses you: Blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep lying below, blessings of the breasts and the womb, blessings of the grain and flowers, blessings of the eternal mountains, bounty of the everlasting hill may they descend on Joseph's head, on the crown of one dedicated from among his brothers (Gn 49 22-26).*

We are deeply touched by the praise of divine wisdom that *did not forsake the upright man when he was sold, but snatched him away from sin; she accompanied him down into the pit, nor did she abandon him in his chains until she had brought him the scepter of the kingdom, and authority over his despotic masters, thus exposing as liars those who had defamed him and giving him honor everlasting (Ws 10 13-14).*

We are touched when we think of him praying the psalm that sings the benefits the Lord showered on his people and indulges in extolling him because when:

*He called down famine on the land;
he took away their food supply;
he sent a man ahead of them,
Joseph sold as a slave.*

*His feet were weighed down with shackles, his
neck was put in irons.
In due time his prophesy was fulfilled,
the word of Yahweh proved him true.*

*The king sent orders to release him,
the ruler of nations set him free;
he put him in charge of his household,
the ruler of all he possessed,*

*to instruct his princes as he saw fit,
to teach his counselors wisdom.*

Then Israel migrated to Egypt.

Jacob settled in the land of Ham (Ps 105 16-23).

Everywhere Joseph knew how to reconcile love of predilection, in the paternal house, in exile, in prison, and in the royal palace. The blessing of prosperity that descended on everything entrusted to him was like the approval of heaven for the trust and predilection that men placed in him.

In all this, he is a revelation of the Joseph of the New Testament, the virginal spouse of the virgin Mother of God, our Saint Joseph. We feel, and everyone must feel something of this blessing for Joseph. We and everyone want a blessing on all initiatives undertaken for the kingdom of God. All men must long for the great commandment and need of brotherly love to share his mission and his name, and militate under the name of Jesus: *Savior of the world!*

CHAPTER 12

Predilection

Since childhood Joseph is the most beloved of his father amongst the brothers. In the predilection of the father, we can see the predilection of the Lord. I wonder whether we can ask: was he destined to the salvation of many because of the predilection of the Lord, or vice versa, was he favored by the Lord because he was destined for the salvation of many?

How willingly the soul lingers on every revelation of God's love! The words that say love and divine complacency in his creatures shine like stars in the skies of Holy Scriptures. Noah found grace in the sight of the Lord! Israel loved Joseph more than all the other children! Can we enter the mystery of divine predilections? It is easier for us to be object of predilection, than to give a convincing explanation. All that is love remains and is founded in the divine nature and persons, and therefore participates in the mystery of God.

We can say that Joseph, because destined to the salvation of many, was loved with love equal to the sum of the affection with which all the others were loved, and this sum of affection becomes the predilection with which he alone was loved.

There is no reason for individuals to see the predilection of one badly, since everyone is loved in it, and each is the cause of the love with which he is loved. For a certain respect and in a certain way, he is loved more than the beloved. But why was he

chosen to receive this sum of affection, with which each other was loved? The question remains unsolved. He must therefore have been chosen, predestined, and therefore favored for some other divine reason, which perhaps was independent of the love with which every other brother was also loved. He was favored, honored and privileged with a mission of primacy of light and goodness, of munificence and magnificence, which revealed precisely the predilection with which he emerged in the mind and heart of God. His earthly father to express how he was more beautiful, sweeter, dearer to the eyes of his heart made a more beautiful, refined garment, dearer even to the eyes of the people. Jacob willed that even in the eyes of all, Joseph would appear beautiful, sweet and dear as it appeared in the eyes of the father.

This predilection is manifested to all, certainly not for blindness of murky passion, in the lover, but for good reason to see as loved by everyone the one whom we prefer, because we believe him worthy.

Divine predilections, I adore you! I know that every soul is a favorite of God, for a certain aspect all her own.

Beloved of God, I salute you! I know that every soul has some part in the mysterious cause of your predilection. In the same way I know that each soul receives, in form of benefit of salvation, some part of the treasure of divine love accumulated in you. We will always find this mystery of divine predilection and divine mission linked to the salvation of many.

CHAPTER 13

Prophetic Visions

Very early in his life, the Lord shows Joseph the goal to which he wants to jump-start him, and which he must reach.

Joseph gets a hint of his future mission through dreams. He had a great dream of primacy, a primacy of light and goodness, all for the good of others, as he has been shown in the dreams.

Oh, the poetry of youthful dreams! Poetry of prophesy in the dreams of that adolescent!

I am enchanted by the ingenuity of the story he narrates to his brothers and his father. A young man who says in the family, all older brothers of him: I have seen my sheaf of golden ears (perhaps a small bundle for the weaker forces of the adolescent compared to strong adults). I saw my sheaf rise and stand upright in the middle, and all yours around as a crown, solicitously bowing to mine (Gen 37 5-11).

What invisible hand did lift up and kept standing in the middle the sheaf of Joseph and arrange around it as a crown all his brothers' bundles, and make them bow to his? Was it not the hand and spirit of one who caused the stems to germinate, to grow and to produce grain, and glorify them with golden ears? Teenager of divine predilection! The bundle of ripe ears is a sign of the one who was destined to become the bread of all, bread of every other bread, and substance of every other food that is why all the other

bundles of ripe and golden ears bow to it. (As when on the altar the priest raises the bread of eternal life, every other bread bows and fades away, in the fasting of the communicating, in the spiritual hunger that the soul has of her God).

Going from earthly to heavenly visions, Joseph recounts to his brothers this other dream: There were the sun, the moon and eleven stars, bowing down to me (Gn 37 9). The homage of the ears of grain bowing to his sheaf is understandable; it reveals the primacy of goodness, but it leads us also to understand the homage of the sun and the stars to another main aster, to which, between the sun and the stars, is also given the primacy of light. The heavens have their influence upon the earth. Likewise, the primacy of light in the mind affects the primacy of goodness in the heart. From the effects we can discover the cause, from the earth we go heavenward, first comes the predominance over the ears of grain and then comes the dominance over the stars. From the primacy of goodness, we can discover the primacy of light. Together, the primacy of goodness and of light, constitute the primacy of the elect, of the divine predilection, destined to the good of others. People need him. Those, who while listening to him are consumed by envy, demonstrate, in their suffering of envy, the need of goodness, and they can receive it only from God, who is the fullness of goodness. The one who rebuked Joseph for the dream of the sun and of the stars, closes himself in his confused thoughts and reflects on it, shows with his silent consideration that he is in the dark and needs the light. Light that he can receive only from God, who possesses the fullness of light. So, we begin to see the blueprint of Joseph's vocation and mission.

CHAPTER 14

No one is Prophet in his own Country

The Master makes us see this fact, and the observation remains as a principle: *No prophet is welcome in his homeland and in his kinship.* He is either thrown out, or he remains there without honor.

As an observation this concerns the whole past of the history of the chosen people, to whom the prophets had been sent. As a principle we seem to be able to refer to the whole future of the history of the world to which the Lord keeps sending his special envoys.

We see these special envoys under the name of prophet. As soon as something extraordinary is revealed in young Joseph, as soon as there is some clue of a special mission that he could have received from above, he begins to become hateful to all his brothers, and the hostilities against him begin. The forced delay in expressing this animosity does not dampen but sharpens and increases the hostilities and prepares the violent eruption. It is true that the young man began to disgust his brothers, by rightly accusing them to the father of "a bad crime".

Holy scriptures point out as true cause of the brothers' hatred the jealousy aroused by the predilection that the father nurtured and showed toward Joseph. The ingenuous manifestation of his dreams contributed remarkably and impressively to *the jealousy and hatred that becomes brutally cruel against their father and their brother.*

The young dreamer, they thought, (we say the young prophet), must be suppressed! Only because the utilitarian motive of monetary passion prevailed in their Jewish soul, he will be sold as a slave; thus they will vent their wounded pride, making of the free young man a slave; the outburst of their avarice gets a profit in the price; the outburst of their jealousy rips away from the father his favorite son, his heart; the venting of their hatred keeps the one whom they considered an enemy away forever, and together they calmed the remorse of a conscience that still gave some signs of life, not staining their hands with fraternal blood. (Likewise, in the future Sanhedrin pride, envy and avarice decide the death of Jesus and then cover themselves with the hypocrisy of prudence and patriotism).

The young prophet is suppressed. In the great intelligence of the enlightened youth, the brutal passions of the brothers, conspiring for his death, appear clearly; in the great simplicity of the pure young man, experienced and living of predilection, they descend like ironmen. The young prophet must be suppressed! My soul sees you pale and sad, after the first surprise of the hostile reception, and after the first terrors of the violent assault, you look at those eyes of beasts and demons that tear off your clothes and lower you into the cistern. Was it very deep? Did you know, or were you unaware that it was empty? I see you pale, sad and trembling, looking from down up to your enemy-brothers, who, sitting on the edge of the cistern, consume their lunch and their murder. I hear in my heart that you call them by name, now one, and now another; you recommend yourself to their heart, pray and implore them with a crying voice, almost not believing yourself. Your heartfelt voice leaves a trail of sorrow that reaches us, as the first voice of the immolated Lamb of God.

The eco of that cry pierced the hearts of the brothers-executioners every time they passed through that place, and it became more and more strong, penetrating, until the vision of their fa-

ther's love, and their father's daily unhappiness began to make them repent. Many years will pass ... everything will seem forgotten ... and on the day of affliction they will see how the vengeance of divine justice for that young child's unheard cry. Oh, yes, we are guilty about our brother, because seeing his tribulation when he begged us, we did not listen to him, this misfortune has now happened to us, they said.

The young prophet must be suppressed, or at least driven away, far away, without possibility of returning.

The prophet goes far away without hope of returning to his homeland, among his loved ones and he feels like dying!

Not by his own will, the envoy of God leaves his country and his kinship. Someone else's violence sends him away.

The small plant would gladly have remained where it was born. But others uprooted it and the plant seems to die. The hand of God transplants it where he wants the plant to produce its extraordinary fruit. The hand of God accompanies the just in exile, to the prison to bring him to the royal palace, to heaven, to the fulfillment of his mission. The ordinary way is sufficient for an ordinary mission. An extraordinary way is needed for an extraordinary mission.

CHAPTER 15

Nemo Propheta in Patria sua

In one way or another, this exile of the prophet from his homeland and from the exercise of his mission almost always happens. By prophet we mean every man chosen and commissioned to a special mission by God; a person that consecrates himself to God, totally a man of God, and makes his own the words and the works of the Lord.

If every man needs to be more esteemed than loved, he who has a special high mission of moral good to do among his neighbors needs an esteem that becomes honor and manifests itself with manifestations of honor. The simple coldness, and worse still the detestation, humiliation and persecution place the man of God in a state of hardship and violence, not so much for his personal suffering, but for preventing the work of God; in this condition, sooner or later the prophet finds himself in his homeland.

We try to figure out the reasons for this opposition of the environment that puts the man of God in such embarrassment, discomfort and violence as to force him to plant his tents at sea.

A man who lives by faith and acts according to supernatural norms of faith, cannot avoid standing out from the mass of the profane that lives according to the spirit of the world, and with criteria of the decayed nature and consequently the prophet cannot avoid the disapproval of many.

A man who lives in spirit of faith, prayer and penance and follows the norms of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that are norms, not contrary but certainly superior to the ordinary norms of faith, cannot avoid distinguishing himself among the practicing faithful, but at a rather low level, and settles in a mediocrity that only ironically can be called *golden mediocrity*.

The man of God that lives a full and ardent supernatural life, and is animated by the good spirit, fights the spirit of the world in the profane, the state of lukewarmness in Christians; he lifts up in fervor and thrusts into a flight the enfeebled souls. All this is cause of resistance and opposition to him, and often leads to his expulsion.

While it is true that this happens everywhere, and in every environment, resistance and opposition are usually greater and certainly more remarkable in one's own country. First, because generally it starts there, and there it begins to manifest and to assert itself as man of God, and therefore there also begins to break out the opposition. Secondly, because his co-villagers are less than everyone else willing to recognize a merit and a superior value, in one, who may be their contemporary and countryman; they are accustomed to thinking that he is of the same intellectual and moral level, one equal to them in everything, not willing, in their pride, to recognize favorably the presence, the intervention and the work of the Lord in one, to whom they should later, for that reason, bow down.

The main reason is on the side of the same man of God. He must be totally at the disposal of the Lord, all elevated, absorbed in God, and in everything directed, moved and inspired by the Spirit of God, as a personal instrument of the Lord. For this it is necessary that he be detached from the world, from the flesh and from the blood, without any influence from friends, relatives, habits, kinship and customs of homeland. This detachment will be easier for him when it is not only affective, as he could even

be remaining in their midst; but it should also be effective, on account of his expulsion or departure from his own country, relatives and family.

He therefore leaves country and family not of his own will, which could give him the illusion of easy returns to relations that are not terminated, but only slowed down; he leaves as a result of expulsion, of violent separation from all bonds, friendship and country.

Another equally major reason is the fact that he, as one sent by God, must do good to a wider circle of souls, and must be raised to a higher sphere so that he can spread the light of the Lord in a greater orbit. This is what we must think of the removal of every man of God, chosen for a special mission; it is not a change of residence, of country, of friendship, of relationships; it is an elevation to a higher heaven, above every country and natural relationship, from where he should do good to a world of souls, to the whole world of souls, he who otherwise would have restricted himself to one group, to one country.

CHAPTER 16

Faithful Servant

Fidelity is what is most required by the dispensers of the Lord's gift. Fidelity is the end result of the fusion of humility and charity. Humility enables man to seek only the one he loves, and the best interest of the one he loves, in everything. This is what being faithful to another really means. When this other is God, considered in himself, even through his representatives, that is, the superiors in authority, or through his images, that are all our brothers, we have the supernatural fidelity, which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

It is a fruit because it is the produce of other virtues, infused, in their principle, and animated in their exercise by the grace of the Holy Spirit. We find this fruit of the Holy Spirit with all its sweetness, in our young hero, both as an adolescent in his father's house, and as an adult in the house of his Egyptian master, and his maturity at the royal palace of Pharaoh, and in the government of the kingdom.

We find fidelity in Joseph at a level of growing perfection; because his fidelity is severely tested, and always comes out victorious; his fidelity always costs him serious sacrifices. He accepts them with generosity, remaining ever more faithful to his own loyalty.

He was faithful to the Father who loved him and whom he loved for this reason he is not afraid of accusing his brothers of a

crime which, if perpetrated, would have compromised his father and his family's honor; and it would have attracted the curse of God, like in the deluge of the waters on the world, and like the fire on the Pentapolis. He does it with the certainty of incurring ever more in the brothers' hatred, anger and revenge. And in fact, soon after he was a victim.

Joseph was faithful to his Egyptian master, who loved and trusted him wholeheartedly; Joseph loved him as a second father, did not give in to the domestic seduction, explicitly and determinately he does not consent to the conjugal betrayal, he could not betray the trust his master has placed in him. He remained faithful, even though he was sure to incur hatred, anger and revenge of the tempting lady, greatly aggravating his condition as a slave; in fact shortly after he became victim of her.

He remained always faithful to Pharaoh who appointed him head of Egypt. He provided for the prosperity of the people by saving them from the unheard-of famine. Much more he provided, with a method of administration and a highly Jewish policy, to strengthen the right of the Pharaoh, foreign king, managing to make him the direct owner of the whole earth, of all the goods and of all the people of Egypt. Did he realize that doing so he began to attract universal hatred to his person and to the small Jewish people, which could always grow and flare up?

He had already suffered such a lowly utilitarian spirit of the first Jewish Judas who says: What do we gain by killing our brother and covering up his blood? Now, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, thus we shall have not laid hands on him. After all, he is our brother, and our own flesh (Gn 37 26-27). Did he say that out of some remainder of brotherly love? Not at all, as it is evidenced by his own words: What do we gain by killing our brother? We are better off selling him as a slave. We will get rid of him and we will get some money without feeling guilty for his blood. That money, however, spills tears and blood of young Joseph sold as slave.

In the great Viceroy of Pharaoh, as it should be, prevailed fidelity to the sovereign, just as it should prevail in all the ministers of the kingdom, as it should prevail in the highest possible level in the ministers of the highest kingdom. *Ut fidelis quis inveniatur - So that some faithful people may be found!* Finally, he remains movingly faithful to his blood, to his blood brothers. When they recognized him, in his highest position of viceroy, and much more later, after his father's death and funeral, they feared a punishment, which would have been very just, a revenge that would have been very natural, for the crime committed against him and that remained unpunished. Joseph answers them only with the language of the heart, with cry and tears of a vehement affection, to which the many macerations of numerous sufferings have given a tenderness that does not surprise, but moves us.

CHAPTER 17

Joseph Servant of All

From the salvation of the small and yet great chosen people, in the families of the twelve patriarchs, sons of Jacob, flowed also the salvation of the entire Egyptian people, because every elect of God is always cause of salvation for the world. Even if in some cases it were not so, it is certainly so in the case of Joseph. He, the elect of the Lord, is such because he must bring about the fulfillment of the plan of God for the salvation of the world.

Joseph fulfills his mission with the peaceful entry of the Jewish people, and with the legitimate establishment of the small Jewish people in Egypt. Every authority is always ordained to the common good, and therefore can never be considered as an end in itself. Likewise, the authority is never given for the profit and honor of those who are invested with it, but always for the common good. Nothing is more pernicious to the representative of God, than to use authority for personal convenience and advantage. Authorities and dignities are given for the common good. Therefore, it is written: *Iudicium durissimum his qui praesunt fiet. There will be a very severe Judgment for those who rule.* For this possible danger that they present, authority and dignity may appear to some superficial people as an impediment to personal holiness. In reality they are very greatly helpful if legitimately received and exercised. It is impossible that the very instrument used to produce a well-determined effect in others, might produce an effect totally contrary in the person that possesses that instrument as

first user. The first user of a good is also its first beneficiary, if he does not abuse it.

Pride, first radical and general abuse of God's gifts, places in the human creature that horrible inclination to turn to one's own damage, what was received for the good of all. This helps us to better understand the Lord's words: *Anyone who wants to be first among you must be servant to all* (Mk 10 43). These words express a divine truth regardless of the angle or way we meditate them.

The Lord does not reject the man, who would like to be first, on account of this desire, even though it may seem an ambition. The Lord seems pleased with this desire and teaches us the way to become first: *Be servant of all!* The way to really make it to be the first is simple: *Be servant of all!* The way we must behave, once we have become first, remains the same: *Be servant of all!* What will be the goal of our primacy? *Be servant of all!* What should we do with our primacy? *Be servant of all!* How can we maintain our primacy among men? *Be servant of all!* What is the way, what are the means and the method to be and to become more and more the first even before God and in the heart of God? The answer is the same: *Be servant of all!*

The one who exercises his authority by being the servant of all doesn't do it in force of any obligation, but only out of love: like a father and a mother that become servants of their children. The more one loves another, the more he becomes servant of the one he loves. The more one serves his beloved, the more he feels like father and mother toward the beloved. *God made me like a father to Pharaoh*, says Joseph, without any sign of pride. The proud is so gelidly cold that he can never behave as a mother, or feel like a father; he can only feel to be the owner and he only behaves like a tyrant. Joseph had only love for the one, who in the Lord, became his liberator. Even while being at the supreme height of power, Pharaoh bowed to the gift and sign of God, in the poor

prisoner, and handed to him, as the most worthy, the best of all his authority, the exercise of it.

Joseph had been tested, prepared and formed by over ten years of humiliation and slavery to that spirit of lovable humility toward superiors equals and dependents; this was a required condition and disposition in the one the Lord wanted first in everything. Thus, it was guaranteed, in the person chosen to be the messenger of the Lord, the ultimate goal of every divine vocation: personal holiness; and the supreme purpose of every mission: universal sanctification.

The divine mission is always accomplished. Notwithstanding all the difficulties that may occur, notwithstanding all the hidden or open oppositions of hell and of the world, notwithstanding all the deficiencies, all the inevitable shortcomings in the one chosen by the Lord, the divine mission will be accomplished,

The person chosen by the Lord for the mission, after having gone through all the difficulties, oppositions and shortcomings, will succeed and achieve its goal. We can easily realize and notice that he will enjoy its success, even in this life, provided he will remain faithful to the divine will, in every circumstance. All his work, all the secret of his success consists and depends on the humble, faithful and generous union with the divine will, in whatever way it presents itself, moment by moment. This is true both for personal sanctification, in private asceticism, and for universal sanctification, in the asceticism of apostolate.

The martyr does not resist, does not react to the tyrant and to torment, and so also behaves the apostle and every other elected, chosen for a divine mission; likewise, he does not react against human opponents. Only in the face of sin, even only venial, does he say his absolute “no”. In all the rest, he always finds some manifestation of the divine will, and he feels and follows it with

patience and constancy; so doing, he sees with peaceful joy that difficulties, oppositions, and deficiencies, either disappear before the Lord, or serve the plans of the Lord.

The Lord remains glorified, with more splendid manifestation of his power and his wisdom, when all difficulties, oppositions and deficiencies serve his works. The human instrument can enjoy his human success, but he can never glory of it, because he sees and feels that: *Dominus solus dux eius fuit - The Lord, and only the Lord is the originator and the principal executioner of every good work.*

After all, everything cannot go straight according to our petty designs and imperfect criteria. Curve lines should go well beyond straight lines, due to the beauty of harmony. Gradients are necessary prerequisite to create steps, and steps are needed to climb up, to ascend; they are constituted precisely by difficulties, oppositions and deficiencies.

The unfolding of events, contemplated in the synthesis of the end-result, will always show that: *Diligentibus Deo, omnia cooperantur in bonum - For those who love the Lord, all things will be of advantage for them. Pietas ad omnia utilis est promissionem habens vitae quae nunc est et futurae - Piety is good for everything because it contains the promise for the present and for future life. Also: Dicite iusto: Quoniam bene quoniam fructum ad inventionum suorun comedet - tell the just: he shall enjoy the good and the fruit of his inventions. Happiness to the creature, but glory to God alone!*

CHAPTER 18

Assumption of Mary

This section on the Advent of the Kingdom of God could not end without a Marian note. As Jesus came through Mary, so his kingdom will come through Mary. Here Fr. Justin repeats his theological view that while the Blessed Mother was immune from the law of death, she voluntarily submitted herself to death in order to be more conform to Christ her son, and at the same time to be closer to us, her children. This voluntary death, embraced and willed by Our Lady sheds more light and glory to her Assumption into heaven, in body and soul.

Mary's life in heaven, amongst the elect and the angels, starts with the Assumption. The glory of paradise at her Assumption!

Above the heavenly harmony resounds the thought and the word of the Virgin, and it reaches us with her inspired words: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum - My soul magnifies the Lord!*

What happened at the Assumption happens also at her Immaculate Conception, at the Annunciation of her divine maternity, at her co-redemptive compassion. It happens even more at the Assumption because it is the epilogue of all the privileges of the Blessed Mother, it is the crowning of all the great things that God did for Mary Most Holy. Glory to God!

We are more inclined to admire her death than her resurrection. Death is the consequence of original sin, and by divine privilege she was preserved from original sin, why then do we have her transit from earth to heaven through the doors of death?

Mary came into this world flying above the sphere affected by the contagion of sin; if she would have passed on to heaven bypassing the boundaries of time and space dominated by the law of death, Mary would have been the full actualization of God's plan in the creation of the world: Holiness, impassibility, integrity and immortality.

The state of original justice is repeated, or better, renewed in Mary in a much higher level of holiness and integrity. In her, however are missing the two beautiful notes of impassibility and immortality. Grace, although more royal and triumphant in her, lacks her noble pageantry. Yet this is not a defect, but a greater perfection. The perfection of the creature consists in being the image and likeness of God. In the creation of man, the Lord does not list one by one the individual gifts he gives, but they are all summarized in his image and likeness.

Jesus is the divine type to which the chosen ones must conform, the Jesus who was crucified, died and was buried, before he was the risen one, the ascendant and triumphant in heaven. Mary's death and assumption concur to her highest grace of union with Jesus. Something would have been missing in Mary if she had not had this trait of resemblance to her son of whom it is written: it was necessary for him to suffer and die in order to enter into his glory! In order to be in all like her son, Mary embraces death and pain in order to enter into her glory. Mary's glory is her son and to be like him! Besides that, pain and death have no right over Mary! Only resurrection and assumption!

The heavenly life begins. Glory corresponds to grace. The grace of Mary is the divine motherhood of Jesus and of souls. In the heavenly life, she continues this mission in a state, in a degree filled with most perfect acts. So perfect! Of the other saints we have something with us, the relics. Mary's body is in heaven and yet we have more than a relic, we have her special presence. Like her son she says: *Here I am with you, I will not leave you orphans.*

The whole life of Jesus in heaven at the right of the Father, and all the heavenly life that Jesus lives in the Eucharist among men, all his intercession as our mediator at the right hand of the Father, and all his communion of sacrament in the Host, has a mystical parallel in the Holy Virgin. Who knows the mother's heart? Who knows the secrets of divine wisdom? Union and communion are the supreme need for goodness and love. Mary longs to communicate to souls her treasure, which is Jesus! The Blessed Mother yearns to repeat her visitation to the souls to sanctify them, to form Jesus Christ in them. Sweet mystery of Mary in her life of motherly relationship with souls!

PART VI

HOLY COMMUNION

CHAPTER 1

Holy Communion¹

Fr. Justin made divine union the supreme, ultimate goal of his life and his works. Holy Communion is the highest and most beautiful expression of

¹This section was first published in the Vocationist magazine: *Spiritus Domini*. Fr. Justin published it under his pseudonym of “Primo Sud - First South”. This pseudonym, used frequently, could mean: the first member of the Society of Divine Vocations. Instead of the initials S.D.V. for Society of Divine Vocations, Fr. Justin used “Sud” meaning Society of Divine Vocations and Society of Divine Union, explaining that in Latin the letter “u” was also used for the letter “v”. Fr. Justin was born in **Sud - southern** Italy; the Sud is geographically the lower part of every continent, nation or locality. So, this **Primo Sud** could be taken as meaning: *The lowest or the last*. A variation of this pseudonym is “Padre Primo - First priest of the S.D.V.; Even to this date, several Vocationists continue to refer to Father General as “Padre Primo”.

Instead of a specific date, Fr. Justin uses: “Loreo 1918 - Pianura 1928”, intending to remember the tenth anniversary of his military service during World War I. At Loreo, near Rovigo in northern Italy, where Fr. Justin was assigned, he wrote the first manuscript “*For the Divine Communion, The Servant of God*”, and many letters to his very young aspirants. In a letter to his nephew Nicolino, dated June 9, 1918, he gave the news of his transfer from “*Monselice to Loreo*”. In a letter to the future Fr. Giuseppe Di Fusco, dated May 24, 1918 he wrote: “*I did not finish yet the work on “Holy Communion.” This is for you in particular. Please, take care of these manuscripts, do not let them go lost. Everyone who would like to read them over and over, should copy them in their entirety or in part. Please, keep them together with the previous ones on “St. John, the Evangelist” and “for the Catechists” ... I am sure that I will need them in the future.*”

this union. Fr. Justin could very well be called the apostle of daily communion. Communion is the realization of being with him! It is not enough to receive sacramental communion once every day; we must receive it as many times as possible, and then continue to receive it through the intimacy of spiritual communions. What are our Eucharistic entertainments but spiritual communions?

The Eucharist is the sacrament of charity. The more we are united to charity the more we enter in God and God in us in the most holy sacrament. Just as the prayer must be abundant and varied to prevent monotony and to keep aflame divine fervor, so the Eucharistic prayer and entertainments must be many and varied. Object of our dialogues with Jesus-Eucharist are all our anxieties and apostolic, hagiographic, biblical, evangelical, Marian, liturgical and mystical events. With Jesus-Eucharist we can talk about everything concerning his kingdom.

I write to you once more, not so much for the proper celebration of the solemnity of the Body of the Lord, now near, but much more for your proper perfect daily communion. I do not mean to tell you about the sublimity of the Eucharist, sublimity of every kind of that little white bread: veil woven of mysteries, God-with-us! The Lord made in the Eucharist a compendium of all his wonders! How many divine wonders in the creation of the universe, in the redemption of men, in the sanctification of the elect! All together they are in the Eucharist, synthetized, not in the sense shortened or shrunken, but in the sense of being united and revealed in the highest level. Behold the bread of the angels, our daily bread! Since you eat it every day, I do not need to tell you about its divine taste and its divine effects. You taste and experi-

In the publication in *Spiritus Domini*, this section was dedicated or addressed to "The Three Spheres of the Society of Divine Vocations". These three spheres are: Vocationist Fathers and Sisters, The Vocationist Apostles of Universal Sanctification (Consecrated living in the world) and the lay cooperators.

ment it every day! The only service I would like to render to you is to suggest some thoughts to better dispose you to taste it and to better receive its effects. I leave all the rest to the study of your entire life, even better, the rest we expect from the Lord himself.

Every sacrament produces in us its good, even without our work, provided it does not find in us the obstacle of sin. Based on this principle, if a child without the use of reason were to receive Holy Communion, he would be sanctified by it, even without preparation and thanksgiving. For this reason, we encourage children to receive Communion every day, notwithstanding their scarce seriousness; we are sure that every Communion will produce in them its divine effects. In a similar way, in the opposite sense, a poison, once has been swallowed, always produces its destructive effect, whether we want or think about it, or not. How much more then, if we prepare ourselves in the best possible way! Then, the divine life will sprout in us, will give health and vigor, and will produce flowers and fruit of eternity. We will live, but it is no longer us, Jesus will live in us.

The Eucharist is the sacrament of divine charity; therefore, the more we are in charity, the more we will enter into God, and God into us, in the Blessed Sacrament.

The first degree of charity consists in being willing to do and to suffer everything in order not to offend God, with grave sin. Anyone, who receives the Blessed Sacrament without this first degree of charity, would commit sacrilege!

The second degree of charity consists in being willing to do and suffer everything, even death, so as not to offend God, not even with venial sin. Blessed is he who receives the Eucharist in this second degree of charity! He speaks seriously with the Lord about his good will, and uses it as a background to his various acts of faith, hope, charity, humility, contrition, desire, thanksgiving and intercession. This is the Communion of the fervent!

The third degree of charity consists in being willing to do and to suffer everything, even death, in order to give, in all things, the greatest pleasure and glory to the Lord! Only saints receive Communion this way. You must also receive it this way! Only then the soul finds and possesses her paradise in Jesus, and Jesus finds and possesses his paradise in the soul. Let us not deceive ourselves, our Communions are not yet such!

We must assess the quality of our communions not by the beautiful words we say or read in the preparations and thanksgivings, nor by the pleasant feelings or flares of affection that we experience, but by the way we live our entire day. Our way of living does not evidently indicate that we are concentrated on pleasing and glorifying God in the most possible way, we are not always willing and ready to do and to suffer everything, even death, in order to render to God the greatest glory. The Lord himself produces in us his holy disposition of the third level of charity! This is such a spacious and high level and we imagine that Jesus deserves to be loved to the supreme degree for so many endless reasons!

The soul should think, study, meditate and pray over it, before and after receiving him; the soul should settle, consolidate and confirm herself, more and more in this disposition, or at least in the true desire of it. So, we will get closer and closer to the ideal communion that Jesus likes. Please, note that I do not suggest words to you, but ideas. With heart and mind full of these ideas, the words come by themselves, no matter if few or many; the necessary is that the mind or the heart be full of these ideas, and that these ideas please the Lord; your conscience itself tells you that Jesus likes them.

Let me tell you that every communion must establish and perfect you more and more in this third degree of charity. The thoughts that can illuminate us, the affections that can inflame us, the divine favors that can enrich us, in our Eucharistic union, are

so many, that it is impossible to talk about them all and to know them all. They vary from one soul to another, with the mysteries, the vocations, with the days, with the graces with the genre of each one. Well, everyone should establish and perfect the soul in the third degree of charity; otherwise they will not produce the effect desired by God! Another thing is necessary for this purpose: The whole day must be dominated by the communion, and that we go to holy communion and get closer to the Lord, as we are, that is with our desires, with our needs, with our own evils, with our goods, not with the desires and needs, evils and goods of others and therefore false, fake and insincere for us.

Regardless of how beautiful and holy they may be, the preparations and thanksgivings of the books are good to a certain point, at best, they can help us to humble ourselves, because we do not see in ourselves those holy affections, and they can inspire us to desire them; as it seems to me, they can also provide for us hints of instructions and edification. I wouldn't want to see you beautiful with the words of others, if you are not also beautiful with the virtues of others! We must first acquire the virtues of the saints, and only then we can speak with the words of the saints.

All virtues are contained in charity, and the highest level of charity is that of the third degree. If we really want it, we will have it! Let us ask for it, and we will obtain it! Let us live as we already had achieved the highest level of charity and we will truly have it. If we could understand what a great and useful means this is, living as if we already possess that virtue, and in our case, that level of holiness and of charity that we long for!

What would you do and how would you behave if you were already at the highest level of charity? Do that and behave like that, with no need of other words, and very soon you will really have it. So, I will do well not to write for you formulas of preparation and thanksgiving to Holy Communion. I will only suggest some ideas that you can use only when you will feel the spiritual

enjoyment. We must eat this divine bread with delight if we want it to give us life in its bloom!

I repeat: Holy Communion must dominate the whole day; you must go and bring all yourself to Communion. Let me explain: A wish comes ... we will tell Jesus! A need comes ... we will tell Jesus! A defect comes ... we will tell Jesus! A debt comes ... we will tell Jesus! An attraction comes ... we will tell Jesus! A mortification comes ... we will tell Jesus! A pain comes ... we will tell Jesus! An inspiration comes ... we will tell Jesus! A good work comes ... we will tell Jesus! Everything, everything, everything, we will tell Jesus, so that he might correct, forgive, instruct, comfort, strengthen, modify, and encourage us, according to the opportunities and occurrences ... certainly not miraculously, but as he wishes ... certainly not exactly and always at the moment of the thanksgiving, but when he wants. We tend to union with God.

Down here union is called communion! We have set ourselves on the path of love, well, the visit, the gift, the conversation, the possession of the beloved ... that is communion. I would not wish that every quarter of an hour a confrere would tell you mournfully with the voice of a funeral: *A quarter of an hour of our life has passed!* I would like to have an angel tell you, with the joy of the love of paradise: *Ecce, sponsus venit, exite obviam ei!* - *Behold, the bridegroom is coming! Let us go to meet him;* and the soul would respond as a lover that yearns for the wedding: *Amen. Veni, Domine Jesu! Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*

I am sure that you will say it among yourselves, when you are together, at the sound of the hours and that is fine; and you will think each time of the following communion and of eternal communion; to the communion of the day after the next night, and to that of the day after the approaching death. This is very good! But let us move forward! Every communion, according to the purposes of the Eucharistic sacrifice is, and must be, adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and intercession. Ordinarily every

communion must be full of acts of adoration, thanksgiving, reparation and intercession (i.e., a request for grace). Everyone can focus, at his pleasure, on any of these four acts according to the occurrence.

It is really beautiful, it is indeed the best thing we can do, to unite ourselves in spirit, all the time, to all adorations, thanksgivings, reparations and intercessions of graces that are rendered to Jesus in the triple militant, suffering and triumphant Church, and in particular to those rendered by our patron saints, by the seven seraphic spirits, by the Blessed Virgin, Mother of Jesus and ours. It is even more beautiful to unite ourselves to all adorations, thanksgivings, reparations and intercessions rendered by the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament to the Most Holy Trinity, because only Jesus renders to the divinity every perfect adoration

We should also unite ourselves, with our thoughts and desires to the very delights of the three divine persons in themselves.

It is not necessary, however, that every communion be preceded and followed by those acts, in the same order, invariably. It is not necessary that those acts be always explicitly expressed and in detail. They can be intertwined in different ways and may be contained in other entertainments that even though are not called acts of faith, of humility etc. ... Easily and appropriately contain them, just as a good piece of bread contains dough, water and salt. We must always go to this banquet with the wedding dress that is grace and charity. This dress can be differently weaved and adorned. I present several of them, so that everyone can choose the one that renders him more beautiful before the Lord.

CHAPTER 2

Eucharistic Entertainments

For order's sake we want to name these various entertainments with the Lord in sacramental communion. We call them with names that may seem curious: 1) Ascetical Entertainment, 2) Theological Entertainment, 3) Apostolic Entertainment, 4) Hagio-graphic Entertainment, 4) Biblical Entertainment, 6) Evangelical Entertainment, 7) Marian Entertainment, 8) Liturgical Entertainment, 9) Mystical Entertainment.

Eucharistic Ascetical Entertainments

In the Eucharistic Ascetical Entertainment, we entertain especially about our perfection in God, and his greater glory. On one hand our mind is full of the highest idea of God's holiness, of his perfections and of Jesus' virtues, and on the other hand is full with the idea of our wickedness and unworthiness. Our abyss of miseries invokes the abyss of glory of the divine perfections. Meditating on how the divine power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy and holiness has become food for us, and how the divine vision of humility, purity, sweetness, patience, obedience, charity and zeal of Jesus Christ give themselves as a gift to those who communicate. The soul sighs this food and this gift, and renouncing forever, with contrition to her defects and vices, wants to receive with charity, in the Communion, all these goods of God. The communicant really receives them! What joy, what riches, what

greatness, to become a saint in a moment, not of any ordinary sanctity, but of God's own holiness! How one cannot be ready to do everything, to suffer and to pray, even if it means having to die, just to please, and to render greater pleasure to the God of holiness who gives himself totally to us and so mercifully? This is said in general and is applied to all; everyone must try to understand, to appropriate, and do it, if he tastes and finds it suitable and convenient.

With the persuasion that there is never holiness that is enough to receive worthily the gift of God, to unite ourselves with God, and that only communion gives us grace sufficient for everything even very high holiness, to go forward from communion to communion, from virtue to virtue knowing, that there can be no excuse for our coldness and lukewarmness, for our sins and defects, since we receive the God of the saints every day! (Each and every one should proceed with firm and specific purpose, which, at the same time, will be a tribute to the Lord and an advantage for the soul).

Eucharistic Theological Entertainments

We call Theological Entertainments the ones in which our soul entertains herself with Jesus filled with thoughts and affection for his humanity and divinity or of the adorable Trinity that come into us. Within herself the soul adores the man-God in his glorious state, with the stigmata of the passion. The soul kisses all those wounds that remind her of many sweet and painful things, because she knows that she has not been alien to the passion of the Son of God! The soul thinks of the holy name, of the precious blood, of the Sacred Heart, to the infancy and youth, of the private and public life, of the sorrowful and glorious life, and above all the eucharistic life of her Jesus. The soul thinks that she receives the Father who loves her with the Son, in the very same

love the Father gave him in redemption. She is aware of receiving the Son, who loves her with the Father, in the very same love, given her by the Father in adopting her. She is aware of receiving the Holy Spirit, who loves her in the Father and in the Son. While abiding in the soul the Holy Spirit unites her always more with the Son to the Father. He sanctifies her with the teachings and virtues of Jesus, and pleads for her with unspeakable groans, and wants to make her all love with renewed baptisms of fire and the Holy Spirit.

The soul ponders the promises, treats, commands, counsels, and invitations of the Lord! She reflects that Jesus is the judge of the living and the dead, the pontiff and the victim, the supreme king of everything and each one of these thoughts is enough to enlighten, nourish and prepare her well for days, months, years, and entire lives! See how greater education is necessary. There are many things for which we ought to worship, to ask, to thank and to make reparation. For each one of them the soul feels the need to consecrate herself to the Lord with the third degree of charity. How can anyone survive without doing this for the Lord our God? May he enable us to understand and practice it!

Eucharistic Apostolic Entertainments

When we receive Holy Communion full of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of the souls, especially with the prayer of intercession, we are engaged in Eucharistic Apostolic Entertainments. The soul feels in herself something of the fire that Jesus came to spread on the earth and wants it to flare up all hearts. The soul feels in herself something of the zeal of Jesus for the glory of the Father. She feels in herself something of the maternal heart of the Virgin Mary towards the souls of sinners, of the just, of purgatory and of all souls.

The soul wants everyone to convert, to be sanctified and to be

blessed in God, and God to be glorified in them. Then she goes with Jesus throughout the world among the infidels, heretics and schismatics. The soul goes with Jesus to the holy Church, the society of saints, and she finds sinners, lukewarm, and failed saints. She goes with Jesus in the prisons of purgatory and everywhere with ever greater intelligence, faith and strength and says with the Heart of Jesus: Our Father in heaven, may your name be sanctified ... and she does not know how to express herself without the words of Jesus; sometimes she opens the gospel and says the prayer of Jesus with which he closed the priestly prayer, after the last supper, according to Saint John.

The soul is aware that the little good that the Lord finds in her is all effect of the prayers of good souls, of the Church and of Jesus himself; the soul then works to repay the benefit. The soul knows of the promises that Jesus made us, in the name of the Father and in his own name, to fulfill whatever we ask. The soul knows that by uniting our desires to the desires of Jesus, our prayer to his, all is obtained, much more when the Father finds in us his complacency, because he sees in us Jesus Christ. Then also the soul of the faithful man becomes a great power in the Church of God.

Who wouldn't want to become an apostle at such a low price?

Hagiographic Eucharistic Entertainments

Hagiographic Eucharistic Entertainments are constituted by the time when we receive Holy Communion with our mind and hearts filled with the lives of the saints, or of a particular saint. The lives of the saints, the devotion to the saints and the Communion of the Saints have become a very important part of our life that, of necessity, they must be object of our Eucharistic entertainments. Every life of a saint helps us to know Jesus better, because every biography is a page of Jesus' life, who lives in his saints. We

receive Jesus in order to love him better in this new knowledge, and to adore him living in his saints.

Every life of a saint stirs in us waves of desires and flames of emulation, of remorse and regret; we go to receive Jesus because he blesses those desires, those flames, those sorrows and regrets and sanctifies us as well. Every saint's life reveals to us so many operations of grace, from God in that blessed soul, and we go to receive Jesus to enjoy with him the works and the loyalty found in that saint, and the harvest of glory and of triumph of glory found in him. Every life of a saint tells us a whole world of adoration, thanksgiving, reparation and intercession of that saint for himself, for his fellow brethren, devotees and enemies, and we go to receive Jesus to unite ourselves to all this worship rendered by this saint, and thus participate in his merits.

Since we live in the communion of saints, we enjoy the good of others also because it is ours, but above all, because it is of God. The culminating thought should always be ... *O Lord you were his holiness; his holiness was never the result of the strength of a man. You yourself are my God and my love. Your power and goodness never fail! For your honor, make me a saint! For the good of your Church, make me a saint! For the sake of your saints, make me a saint!*

We pray for the devotees of that saint, living and dead, for the writers and panegyrist of his life, for his religious, if he was a founder. We will renew our consecrations with his. We can do this every day, with the saint of the day, and with the saints whose lives we read.

Biblical-Eucharistic Entertainments

When we prepare ourselves to receive Jesus, with our soul totally immersed in an event, symbol, or word of Sacred Scripture, especially of the Old and New Testament, we enjoy these

Biblical-Eucharistic Entertainments. At times the Lord makes the soul understand how in Holy Communion and in our life is renewed in a higher and deeper level, in a more spiritual and more sublime manner, the creation of things and of man as image and likeness of God. Noah's ark is the holy of holies that contained the law, the manna, and the presence of God. The vocation of Abraham, the exodus from Egypt, the peregrination through the desert, the manna and the water springing from the rock, the conquest of the Promised Land, and so many other passages of the Bible and pages of the prophets can admirably serve us for Holy Communion.

From now on you will notice that the reading of sacred history, which is a compendium of the bible, will no longer be sufficient. We must familiarize ourselves with the entire text of the Bible, book by book, and appreciate this great love letter sent by God to mankind; many pages of this letter concern us personally. It will be for us something sweet and useful to have the help of the written word of God to receive the Living Word, the Incarnate Word and to entertain ourselves with him.

To many saints, both men and women, uneducated in literature and science, through his free grace, God granted them the highest intelligence of the divine scriptures; they are one of the most important tools of sanctification. Even the priest, in the Mass, prepares himself to receive the Eucharist through biblical readings that constitute the Epistle and the Gospel. O Lord, since you have addressed to me that great letter that is the Bible, send me one of your good angel to read and explain it to me, and you yourself open to me the sense of the Scripture as you did with your apostles and with the disciples on the way to Emmaus, before revealing yourself to them in the breaking of the bread, in which they recognized you.

Evangelical-Eucharistic Entertainments

We call Evangelical-Eucharistic Entertainments our preparation to receive Holy Communion, when we go to receive Jesus reproducing in us some of those people who welcomed Jesus in their home, pleasing him immensely.

Even in the Old Testament it is said that many people found favor with the Lord, that is, they pleased him! What an enviable thing: To find favor with the Lord! I would love it, if could be said of each one of you those verses written for a religious sister: *That burning soul, that young heart had nothing but the vow: To please the Lord! She had no dream but: to do good to the brothers.* We should do a special study (and we will do it) on the motivations that made those persons find favor with the Lord, and a particular exercise to reproduce in us all those motivations, so that the Lord may be pleased with us also. Very clearly the Gospels spell out the virtues and dispositions that pleased Jesus in those people who encountered, spoke, hosted and followed him. Going to receive Holy Communion we will reproduce in us, one by one, the persons of Peter, John, of the publican and of Zacchaeus, of Martha and Magdalene, of the centurion and of the man born blind, of the pious women and of the cenacle too as Jesus willed it. I cannot bypass the great ones like John the Baptist, St. Joseph, the old Simeon and the Magi. Much can be said about each one of these people to facilitate the internal reproduction. Let the Guardian angel and Jesus himself tell you. This kind of entertainment seems to be more familiar to us, because we move in the gospel, we breathe and live it.

Eucharistic-Marian Entertainments

We practice these Eucharistic-Marian Entertainments when we receive Communion in union with Mary, because the Holy Virgin pleased the Lord more than any other person, she was the

very first person to receive in herself the Incarnate Word, and after the Ascension was the most worthy communicant, so much so that according to a revelation to Blessed Martinengo¹, Jesus willed to remain in the eucharistic species, in the chest of the Virgin Mary forever, even after his ascension into heaven. We have consecrated ourselves as slaves of Mary to live her life, if not every day, at least very often. Certainly, our communion must be received with the dispositions and intention of the Virgin Mary! Is there anything sweeter for us, dearer to God and more appropriate to the circumstances than to receive Jesus, as Mary received him in her womb at the Annunciation, in her arms at his birth, at the foot of the cross, in her house of Nazareth and in her Eucharistic Communion? What could be sweeter for us, dearer to God and more appropriate to the circumstances than to unite ourselves to Mary in her adorations and consecrations of servant and mother, to her supplications for all souls with maternal love? Is there anything more beautiful than to offer to Jesus for us her humility, purity and charity? Is there anything more precious than her maternal services?

After what has been written by St. Louis the Montfort, author of the *Devotion of Slaves of Love*, about the Communion in union with Mary, in his beautiful treatise, I cannot, and it is not convenient to add anything else. I can only recommend that you read and practice it and be ever more faithful and perfect Slaves of Love of Mary, in order to better unite yourselves to Jesus in the Eucharist now, and tomorrow in heaven.

Liturgical-Eucharistic Entertainments

When we receive Holy Communion more properly through the exercise of our priesthood, we are engaged in Liturgical Eu-

¹ Blessed Martinengo, a Franciscan mystic, beatified by Pope Leo XIII (1687 - 1737).

charistic Entertainments. Even the lay faithful have a share in the priesthood of Jesus, as it has been written by St. Peter, our first Pope: *You are a chosen race, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a people to be a personal possession to sing the praises of God* (1P 2 9). The soul reminisces what is written in the Letter to the Hebrews: *Every high priest is taken from among human beings and is appointed to act on their behalf in relationship with God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins; he can sympathize with those who are ignorant or who have gone astray, because he too is subject to limitations of weaknesses* (Heb 5 1-3). We should do what Jesus did during his earthly life. *He offered prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears to the one who had the power to save him from death and winning a hearing for his reverence* (Heb 5 7). We should enter the sacred temple like Jesus did, not to offer lambs and calves, but his own blood for eternal redemption.

Likewise the soul presents herself before the Lord, carrying in her hands all the tears to be wiped away, all the wounds that need healing, all the afflicted hearts, all the souls to be converted, in order to offer everything to God, for all those who suffer in the body and in the spirit, for those who are tempted, troubled, prisoners, dying, for all the exiles, and for those who need purification, for all those who sin, for those who are expiating their sins, for all those who need to thank, to make reparations and supplications and do not do it, or are not capable of doing it. She offers to God everything, the universe, mankind, the Church, the most loving and the most loved souls, and herself in the bread and wine, in Jesus' sacrifice, in union with the priest and Mary at the foot of the cross. Since every sacrifice ends with the sacred meal, in which those who offer the sacrifice eat the immolated meat, the soul receives the body of the Lord. This Communion renders the soul ever-more victim and priest with Jesus. The entire day becomes like a long Mass and the heart becomes the altar of sacrifice. All souls continuously sacrifice and crucify their soul and their body received by God's special providence. These sacri-

ficed souls powerfully irradiate goodness for the neighbors, and for the entire church.

Mystical Eucharistic Entertainments

We call *Mystical Eucharistic Entertainments* the experience of the soul that, in an extraordinary manner and level, feels the action of the divine lover that keeps uniting her always more to his will, to his glory, to his love, to his perfections and operations, to the complacency of the creator, of the savior, of the sanctifier in all things and in all souls. The soul experiences the extraordinary attraction to the complacency of the three divine persons among themselves ineffably ... all things that I cannot comprehend nor explain, because they are not done by us, but by the Lord working in us. We should let the Lord work and talk in us and to us! The Lord is the giver, we should let him give as he wishes, when he wishes and to whomever he wishes. Amen!

When Jesus comes into the soul, he comes to possess everything, to arrange everything. He comes to be our fullness and our all. If Jesus lets himself be eaten by us, it is not to be digested and assimilated by us, but to absorb and assimilate all our being in himself. He absorbs our body in his eternity, our littleness in his infinity, and our humanity in his divinity. The soul should be aware of all this and consent to it generously, crave for it and cooperate faithfully. The soul goes to communion precisely in order to increase, so to say, the divine rights over herself; to give Jesus ever more freedom of action in herself; to immerse herself little by little in God. All this requires the need for a progressive self-denial, a progressive consecration and even death to one's self. He is the Lord!

We have believed in his eternal, immense, infinite, immutable love for us, manifested so evidently and divinely in Holy Com-

munion, a gift of all of himself. Could we hesitate to surrender ourselves to him? Can we not desire, with an exchange of love, to be eaten by him too, that is, by his glory, by his love, by his will? Can we not wish to pass into his blood, into his name, into his Sacred Heart? Amen! Amen.

PART VII

SODALITY OF THE DIVINE UNION

**Statute of the “Sodality of Divine Union”
With the Most Holy Trinity**

Ecclesiastical Approval¹
Bishop’s House
Policastro Bussentino (Salerno)
Policastro August 21, 1951

Very Reverend Father.

“... I am honored to inform you that I fully approve the Sodality of the Divine Union and its Statute, compiled by your eminently priestly mind and heart.

... I impart upon you and your entire spiritual family a particular blessing, extensible to the various works of apostolate and to the new Sodality of Divine Union with the Most Holy Trinity.

At your service in Jesus Christ

Signed: Federico Pezzullo,
Bishop of Policastro.

¹From the letter of Most Rev. Federico Pezzullo, Bishop of Policastro to Fr. Justin M. of the Most Holy Trinity of the Vocationists.

PRAYER – PROGRAM

O my God and my all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

May your will be done! May your love reign! May your glory shine in me and in everyone, always more, as in yourself! O my God and my all.

THE THREE SPHERES OF ASSOCIATES
OF THE SODALITY OF DIVINE UNION

TO THE GREATER GLORY
OF
THE MYSTERY OF THE ASCENSION OF JESUS
THROUGH THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY,
THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD.

CHAPTER 1

Its Nature

Fr. Justin was a tireless worker in the vineyard of the Lord, yet he was never completely satisfied with what he had done; he wanted to do more and more; he wanted to extend the holy and sanctifying works indefinitely and therefore he wanted to leave behind him structures and organizations that could continue indefinitely to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls. In the Sodality of the Divine Union he organizes a "spiritual constellation of various spheres, companies and groups of souls that, in the spirit of truth and charity, tend to the goal of holiness in perfect dependence on the ecclesiastical authority". The Society of Divine Vocations, which works and promotes universal sanctification, must be the promoter and propulsion center of the Sodality.

1. In the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the service of universal sanctification, works also the Pious Sodality that takes its name from the divine union with the Most Holy Trinity (S.U.D.).
2. This Sodality of Divine Union is like a spiritual constellation of various spheres, companies and groups of souls that, in the spirit of truth and charity, tend, as their goal, to holiness in perfect dependence on the ecclesiastical authority.
3. Its center is constituted by the internal religious of the Congregation, Society of Divine Vocations, who make of this Sodality their main tool of apostolate, for the irradiation of consecrated life in the world.

4. The individual spheres, companies, groups of the Sodality of Divine Union are associations of faithful not constituted in an organic body, united only in the exercise of zeal that renders its members external religious of the Congregation.
5. Each of the three spheres, companies and groups with its various categories corresponds to progressive levels in the practice of individual good and in the exercise of apostolate, to facilitate for each soul her perfection and to attract her to higher ascensions.
6. These spheres, companies and groups, in their external organization, depend directly upon the local pastor; the Sodality aims at intensifying and perfecting parish life in order to make of every parish the ideal christian, religious community.
7. The three spheres relate to the center as Associates, the three companies as Aggregates, and the three groups as Affiliates, according to the progressive and mutual assistance and union among the external and internal religious, in the spirit and works of the Congregation.

CHAPTER 2

Its Goal and Means

8. The ultimate goal of the Sodality of Divine Union is to cultivate in the souls the divine friendship till the divine union with the Most Holy Trinity, through active communion with Jesus in his Gospel, in his Church, in his Eucharistic Sacrament.
9. Its intermediate goal is to form in every parish, a people of integral, practicing Catholics, authentic religious of God living in the world, daily communicants, perpetual worshippers and apostles of universal sanctification.
10. Its immediate goal is the practical help organized for every good work that is being done in the parish, in the diocese, according to the need of the time, according to the initiative of the saints and according to the guidelines of the ecclesiastical authority.
11. Since the greatest need of the souls and of the works is always the priest and the saint, the Sodality will give its greatest cooperation to the increment of ascetical life in the world and to priestly, religious and missionary vocations.
12. To achieve these goals the Sodality proposes those means and ways that the ongoing experience of the apostolate finds more appropriate to the times and the places, always, though, trusting most in the spiritual means.

13. Always must be introduced and practiced: 1) The perennial religious education. 2) The maximum and optimal use of the sacraments. 3) The asceticism of the degrees of perfection. 4) The way of true consecrations. 5) The culture of the various relations with the Lord.
14. Each member of any sphere, company or group must have his own program to be observed every day and perfected every year, for his personal practice of adoration, asceticism and apostolate, in addition to the one proposed for everyone.

CHAPTER 3

Spiritual Program

15. The Sodality of the Divine Union tends in everything and above all to increment in its members the perfection of supernatural life until holiness to be achieved through adoration, asceticism and apostolate in the personal, family and parish life.
16. For the increment of public devotion, the sodality promotes the assistance to the parish religious functions with active participation to the liturgy, to the external processions suggested by the Missal and by the Ritual, to the perpetual eucharistic adoration and to the monthly pilgrimages to the sacramental churches of the area.
17. For the increment of personal asceticism, the sodality educates to fidelity, generosity and loving obedience to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit that animate us in grace and in charity, submitting the non-ordinary inspirations, and those that in any way suggest something beyond the duty of one's state to the approval of the Church.
18. For the increment of apostolate, the sodality respects the precedence and the primacy of all pontifical and diocesan works (e.g. the Catholic Action). The other acts of the Holy See and of local episcopal curia must be religiously meditated and carried out in their dispositions, as official messages of the divine will.

19. Special patron saints of the sodality of Divine Union are: The Guardian angels and the three Archangels, the apostles, the saints designated by the Church as general patrons of people and works and the holy Doctors and Founders, and in a special way, St. Joseph, St. Michael and the Virgin Mary.
20. In order to achieve the goal of the sodality, all members must zeal the union with the divine persons, especially in their indwelling in the souls, through the union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in the Church, in the Gospel, through the devotion of union with the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Mother.
21. Each sphere, company and group must consider in concrete its ideal in the christian mystery, or in the category of saints assigned to it, as its own world, its own heaven, its own ambience, and, from it, receive and develop progressively, one's own personal program of adoration, asceticism and apostolate.

CHAPTER 4

Sketch of a Personal Program

22. In the very early hours of the day, in private: Morning Prayers and meditation, or, at least a meditated pious reading; then: Holy Mass, possibly in common, and Holy Communion, possibly every day.
23. At noon: Examination of conscience, some special devotional practice, in honor of the Most Holy Trinity, which precedes, follows or is intertwined with the Angelus. Most indicated are the Offerings of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus.
24. At sunset, in common, Marian Rosary, visit to Jesus, Mary and Joseph and benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. In private: Evening Prayers, recording what happened in our external and interior life.
25. Devotions proper of the sodality are: The Offerings of the Most Precious Blood, frequent spiritual communions, the direct, explicit, intense and multiform act of love, as adoration to the Most Holy Trinity in union with the Sacred Hearts.
26. Consider and make the personal habitations as religious houses and small private sanctuaries, in which is enthroned the Sacred Heart. Imitate the Liturgical worship of the Church, and tend to establish a small cenacle, center of blessings for the neighbors.
27. As their distinctive sign, they will use and spread the greet-

ing: *Jesus, Mary and Joseph*, and our motto-program: GAUDIUM, that is: Glory, love and will of God through the entire world. Another distinctive sign is: The inseparable spiritual book, which generally is the unified gospel.

28. The great common enterprise for each and every one is: 1) To become as father and mother of priests and saints. 2) To make of every catholic nation a metropolis of colonies of faith in the missions. 3) To lead people to the daily, general Eucharistic Communion, for the divine union with the Blessed Trinity.

CHAPTER 5

Admission

29. Every soul of good will can join the Sodality of Divine Union, provided she intends to ascend to ever-higher levels of knowledge, practice and apostolate of christian perfection in order to correspond to the personal vocation to life, faith and holiness.
30. The petition of admission is addressed to the local Director of the closest Vocationist residence of internal religious; it must indicate the sphere, the company or group in which the candidate wants to start the spiritual ascension and Vocationist cooperation.
31. The admission takes place in groups of at least 12 people together, in the presence of the spiritual servant or his vice, and through the local pastor, who presides personally, or through a delegate. The admission generally takes place on the Apostles' feast days.
32. Every admission must be preceded, at least, by a day of spiritual retreat, and by pious practices in honor and union with the Sacred Heart, and it is considered as the beginning of a new period of religious formation, in view of a superior christian profession.
33. The admissions take place through progressive consecrations to the Most Holy Trinity, containing always an explicit prom-

ise of obedience to the proper pastor in all that concerns the sacred teaching and apostolate, as liturgy and asceticism.

34. The common and fundamental minimum duty of every member of each sphere, company or group is the so called spiritual tribute, which consist of a daily prayer, a daily mortification and a daily almsgiving for the work of the Divine Vocations to priesthood, to consecrated life and to the missions.
35. The center will assign in every province, a Director to each sphere, company and group, choosing them from among the congregated religious with the title of "Spiritual Servant" and with the mission to be the soul of the Sodality, for its continued diffusion and perfection.

CHAPTER 6

First Sphere of Associates

36. The character, the spirit, and the activity proper to the first sphere is the cult of divine grace for the supernatural life, and the struggle to eliminate all its enemies and impediments, and to always increase it with the sacraments, prayer and acts of love.
37. Every soul must guarantee herself from every mortal sin, fighting every venial sin. She must guarantee herself from every venial sin, eliminating useless things, and renewing the resolution in the morning, midday and evening prayer.
38. The members of the first group of this sphere commit themselves for each month, at least to a sacramental communion, to an hour of Eucharistic adoration, to an ascetic meeting as monthly retreat, and to the pious practice of the first Cross-day (Friday) and Sabbath for the Sacred Hearts.
39. The members of the second group of this sphere commit themselves at least for every fifteen days, to a sacramental communion, to an hour of Eucharistic adoration, to their ascetic meeting, to the pious practice of the first Ostiadi (Thursday), Cross-day, Saturday and Sunday of the month.
40. The members of the third group of this sphere commit themselves to at least one weekly sacramental communion, to an hour of Eucharistic adoration, to their ascetic meeting, to the pious practice of the first sanctified week of each month.

41. The hours of adoration are to be spent in a sacramental church, not necessarily in the parish churches, and not always in the same days of communion; they are done in common or in private, on the day and at the time convenient to the possibility and devotion of each one.
42. This sphere leads to the daily participation in the divine sacrifice and sacrament, expressly to offer the Holy Trinity, indwelling in the souls in grace, the glory of the Eucharistic liturgy, asceticism and apostolate, and therefore takes the name of the divine communion.

CHAPTER 7

Second Sphere of Associates

43. The second sphere is that of the faithful daily communicants who want to place themselves at the service of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus in his affirmation: *I have come to bring fire to the earth, and I wish it were blazing already* (Lk 12 49)!
44. This second sphere consists of three groups of associates, who to the practice of the daily tribute, add the direct exercise of the apostolate of the Servants at the banquet of the divine Word, offered in the form of the written and oral divine word, and of the host of sacrifice and sacrament.
45. To the first group belong those daily communicants, who can, want and can dispose, for the service of the banquet of the souls, approximately three hours every day to be spent mainly in religion classes to crowds of souls of children and adults, both workers and students.
46. To the second group belong those daily communicants who besides the above services, can and want to be disposed, for the same purpose, all or almost all feast days and Sundays, and one or two days every week, to provide the same services to those who live far away from the parish center.
47. To the third group belong those daily communicants who can and want to dispose almost all their time in the above services, and in specializing, perfecting and exercising themselves in every aspect of the catechetical and eucharistic apostolate.

48. To them is entrusted and recommended, in every parish and hamlet the perfect functioning of the confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament and Christian Doctrine, at least as spiritual servants, if not always as directors and members.
49. This sphere wants to lead the souls out of quagmire of lukewarmness and mediocrity, to help them in their spiritual progress, to establish themselves in fervor and to strive for heroism, and therefore takes its name and program from the divine perfections.

CHAPTER 8

Third Sphere of Associates

50. The third sphere is made up of people, free from natural family bonds: Clerics, lay people, celibates, widows and widowers that consecrate themselves, directly and intensely, to the service of the kingdom of heaven.
51. The members of the first group offer themselves to the office of advocates of the spiritual tribute, or of organizers of catechists, or propagators of various means of religious culture, such as missionaries of the book, consecrations of families and missionary cooperation.
52. The members of the second group will try to recruit and gather approximately 70 people, generally children, to be educated and formed as chosen and beloved disciples of Jesus, initiating them to any apostolic work, suitable for them.
53. The members of the third group, in addition to the seventy-two disciples, dedicate special attention to those who are more capable and more willing, possibly 12 and will keep them together almost the entire day, when they cannot live in community, and make of them their small apostolic college.
54. To these souls in a special way must be inculcated the way of the progressive consecrations, to all grades of perfection, toward all relation with the Lord, because they need a deeper and more intense interior life to accomplish their mission.

55. They can be encouraged to profess temporary evangelical counsels in private after a sufficient formation, provided they are determined to practice them in such a way that they may foster and not hinder their internal and external spiritual activity.
56. This sphere takes its name from the visible and invisible missions of the Word. With its groups this sphere intends to honor, imitate and, somehow, reciprocate the acts of divine love.

CHAPTER 9

Apostolate of Holiness in Charity

57. Jointly, the three spheres of associates honor in a special way the Ascension of our Lord, trying to transform every christian/parochial community in a great ascensionary of souls in a progressive fervor of works and of supernatural life.
58. As every sphere tends to lead its members to the higher sphere, so, all together they stimulate their neighbors, soul by soul, to want to save themselves as saints and so become apostles of universal sanctification.
59. Holiness is nothing but charity of God and of neighbor habitually exercised in a heroic degree, and therefore each associate applies himself to acquire and spread the science and practice of the perfect charity of God and neighbor, with all the best means of the time.
60. They consider as many chapters of the code of holiness to love God, 1) with all your heart, 2) with all your soul, 3) with all your strength, 4) with your whole mind, 5) and love everyone as oneself 6) for love of God, 7) as Jesus loved them.
61. Since the love of God is exercised mostly in the love for the neighbors, the apostolate of holiness becomes visible through the practice of organized charity, in addition to private charity, of all the works of spiritual and corporal, individual and social mercy.

62. So, the sodality of Divine Union, through "brotherly christian help" wants to make sure that each parish may become self-sufficient, in such a way that every material and spiritual need may finds its adequate aid in a very loving, great and wealthy family.
63. Every soul should open the mind to the splendor of truth and the heart to the ardor of charity, to help all mankind and embrace the universe in the spirit of the Catholic Church, in union with the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in the divine union with the Blessed Trinity.

CHAPTER 10

Formula of Consecration

64. O Adorable Trinity, grant that I may walk all the ways of consecrations to be united with you through all the relationships of love to which your grace elevates me! Make me according to Jesus Christ!
65. For your greater glory, love and will, O my Lord God Trinity, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I renounce Satan, the world, the flesh and all their works, pomp and temptations forever.
66. I commit myself to hate and fight every mortal sin, every venial sin, and every voluntary imperfection. To guarantee myself, I give up everything that is unnecessary, and I want to pray always, in some way.
67. I want my whole life to unfold in the grace of holy Baptism, Confirmation and the divine Eucharist, growing in the science, practice and apostolate of holy religion.
68. I consecrate myself to the culture and triumph of God's and neighbor's love; to perfect obedience to my holy mother, the Catholic Church, and to the apostolate of universal sanctification, according to my strength.
69. I consecrate myself to participate very often in the banquet of the host and of the divine word, and to the court of glory of

Jesus with us, through the hours of adoration, and the sanctification of one week every month.

70. I dedicate myself to the study and propagation of the catechism and the lives of the christian heroes, to arouse and imitate, in me and in all the emulation of the saints and the imitation of Jesus Christ.
71. Everything I entrust to you, and I trust in you, O Immaculate Heart of Mary, O Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, with the intercession of Saint Joseph and all the saints, of Saint Michael and all the angels.
72. O my God and my all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, may your will be done, your love triumph, your glory shine in me and in everyone as in yourself, O my God and my all!

PART VIII

UNIVERSAL SANCTIFICATION

CHAPTER 1

Logic of the Work

The divine works of creation and redemption are ordained to the universal sanctification and perfect divine union with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is the ultimate goal of the entire Church and, in this, works the Society of Divine Vocations. The work of universal sanctification approved and inculcated by the Church is like a new Pentecost. This is an invitation extended to all souls, but in particular to those entrusted with authority, to commit themselves to this work, starting, as always, with the children. Everything must be carried on within a perennial novelty of spirit, in the spirit of the Vocationist Apostles of Universal Sanctification, the Secular Institute of diocesan right, blossomed from the great heart of Fr. Justin. The Apostles of Universal Sanctification are souls consecrated with the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, who want to be yeast of sanctification in the world in which they live.

The Apostolate of Universal sanctification works and cares first of all for sanctification of priests, because they are the chosen ones of the Lord. Their holiness is most effective in communicating and igniting the desire for holiness in all souls. To achieve this goal, the priests must be prepared in the same way that Jesus prepared the apostles. The priest must live the presence of the Lord in himself and must see him in all souls, acting always as the good Shepherd.

The divine works of creation and redemption are evidently ordained to the work of sanctification of each and all souls.

Every vocation to life and to faith is only the beginning of the vocation to holiness, for the divine union, with the august Trinity. The sanctification of each and all souls is ordained by the divine love to dispose, lead and establish them in the perfect union with the three divine persons.

This is the goal of all the work of the holy Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church, the only holy Church of Jesus Christ Church: Universal sanctification for the divine union.

At the service of universal sanctification of all souls for the divine union with the Blessed Trinity is totally committed and works also the smallest Society of Divine Vocations, within the holy Church. Its ultimate goal is precisely that of all divine vocations, that is, the perfect union of each and all souls with the three divine persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Its intermediate goal is to help each and every soul to long for and ascend from virtue to virtue, in truth and charity, to the perfection of holiness, as a requirement for the divine union.

Its near-immediate goal is the irradiation of consecrated and ascetical life, in each category of people. This is the best way to achieve universal sanctification as willed by the Lord.

Its immediate goal is the culture and formation of the chosen ones of the divine vocations to consecrated life and to the priesthood, to *missionarity*, and in general, to holiness. Priests and saints are needed to lead the souls to a greater correspondence to the divine Love, which created and saved them in order to sanctify them and unite them to himself.

Ours is the Society of the Servants of Divine Vocations to universal sanctification, for the ascension of every soul to the divine union with the Blessed Trinity.

Once the apostolate of Universal Sanctification has been formed, the Congregation establishes the center of congregated religious priests, and works with it for the irradiation in the world of many spheres of chosen people, aspirant to holiness through divine union.

With joyful spirit the Congregation, accepting and making

this movement its own, places itself at the service of the movement for universal sanctification, inspired also to others, and started also elsewhere. All great ideas and all wise directives will remain ineffective, if they do not find faithful, docile servants, generous and diligent in accomplishing them.

The father of the family is only one, but the servants are many; the bridegroom is only one, but the invited guests are many; the owner of the vineyard is one, but the laborers must be many.

He who wishes to be first, should be the servant of all, like the Son of man, who has not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life for the salvation of all (Cf. Mt 20 28). Today, many wonderful works are springing up among the Christians, especially for the exercise of brotherly love, within multiform works of corporal mercy.

They are all ordained to the kingdom of God in the souls, and to the salvation of the world, in the kingdom of heaven, the Church, and for the triumph over every evil! This work of the apostolate for universal sanctification, more explicitly, more directly and more intensely aims at the triumph of the divine glory, love and will! For this reason, in every residence of the Vocationists, and of all those who unite themselves to us in holy alliance, must be established a center for this work of apostolate for universal sanctification.

Each and everyone of our congregates, aggregates, associates, or affiliates, each ally or confederate of ours, dedicate themselves to raise in their own ambiance many, many apostles of universal sanctification. To our formula of life: *Contemplation for action, and action for contemplation, we now add this other formula: To sanctify in order to save, and to save in order to sanctify.*

CHAPTER 2

New Pentecost

The classical organization of ascetical and apostolic life in the western world started with St. Benedict and from the west extended to the whole world. From a Benedictine Abby, *Saint Andre - les Bruges*, the *Ora et labora - Pray and work* has resounded with the new formulation: Contemplation and apostolate and it has bloomed into the Apostles of Universal Sanctification.

The idea has been submitted to the judgment of holy Church in the person of the Holy Father, Pope Pious XII, and to all pastors of souls spread throughout the entire world, even in mission lands. The Holy Father, Pious XII expressed his sovereign approval for *this initiative destined to raise ever more in the souls the desire to become saints*.

He has deemed this initiative *the most opportune in the field of apostolate* and deserving the best success; he has encouraged and blessed the organization. Over one hundred sacred pastors (Cardinals, bishops, Apostolic Vicars, Apostolic Prefects) have lavished encouragements, prayers and blessings. The Apostolic Nuncio in Belgium accepted the high patronage and said he was profoundly convinced that this is the supreme necessity of our times. Only the saints can radiate the sense of the divine in the poor human society, driven from one abyss into another by the materialistic conception of life.

What we want is a new Pentecost that alone will be able to

renew and transform the face of the earth through new apostles of holiness. The Apostles of Universal Sanctification have as their very first intension throughout their life (of prayer, action and sacrifice) the sanctification of all. Evidently, they will apply themselves, with all their energies, to their personal sanctification, and then to every form of apostolate for universal sanctification.

They will want to sanctify themselves and sanctify others in order to save souls. They will want to save souls to sanctify them, and so please the Lord more. The saints are the glory of God! Like so many other Jesus, they want to give to the Father, in the Spirit, the greatest glory that consists in the greater correspondence to the mysteries of the divine love, from the part of the souls.

This is achieved and actualized only in universal sanctification expressed in the charity of God and neighbor. Above all, the Apostles of Universal Sanctification must propagate these ideas: Holiness is not only possible, it is mandatory for all, according to the solemn proclamation of the law of love.

To love God with all the heart, with all the mind, with all their being, with all their soul, and the neighbor as oneself, for the love of God, as Jesus loved him. This and nothing else is holiness, in every time, in every place in every condition. Grace and charity are inseparable, charity and holiness identify with each other.

Practically only the saints really love God with all their being, and love the neighbor as themselves, for the love of God as Jesus loved him. Only the saints! The terms that promulgate the commandment of the love for God and for neighbors are not only beautiful words, they are chapters and articles of God's law.

To love God 1) with the whole heart, 2) with the whole mind, 3) with all strength, 4) with the whole soul, 5) love everyone as oneself, 6) for the love of God! 7) As Jesus loved! These expressions are well known and often repeated, taught and sung as sub-

lime words, but they are not understood, practiced and lived as chapters of the law and as program of life except by the saints.

Let us also impose to ourselves the science, ascetics, and the apostolate of the whole code of love, summarized in the commandment of love, the only fullness of the law, so that we too may become apostles of universal sanctification!

CHAPTER 3

Starting with the Children

All those constituted in authority, especially the members of the clergy should spare no effort to truly form to holiness the children entrusted to them. Educators and parents will strive to theoretically and practically present to children the concrete ideal of holiness. The children more than anyone else are predisposed to holiness. Priests, missionaries and religious will use their spiritual energies, their supernatural powers to the maximum in their interior life and in their apostolate to this end.

Knowing well that the Lord converts the hearts, they seek to stir up saints, who are the true traits of union between heaven and earth.

The Generals or Provincial Superiors will strive to extend the benefits of their institute and its spirituality to the whole Church. The Apostles of Universal Sanctification will support with their prayer, especially the hierarchy, the religious, the educators, the parents, whose influence is very incisive. The apostles of the Universal Sanctification will support each other, uniting themselves according to the circumstances to oppose an intense opposition to the intrusive materialism.

All the categories of diocesan and religious clergy, educators and superiors do not need to be conquered to the ideal of holiness. It is enough to remind them often, or at the most it is neces-

sary to put oneself at their service in making it shine and put into practice in the fields of apostolate entrusted to them.

We will start with children! With this apostolate of holiness, every parish becomes an *ascensionary*¹, and every college is a *perfectionary*, like every house of ours is a *vocationary*.

Let the little children come to me (Lk 2 7). Every religious of the Divine Vocations should say this: Let the children come to me, to the ascension with Jesus towards the union with the three persons, one God. Every Apostle of Universal Sanctification should say it if he really wants to establish the Lord's kingdom in the world, with the most holy and necessary religious revolution.

Only the Lord God can start with adults. As creator, God starts with Adam and Eve creating them as adults. As Savior, Jesus starts with the apostles calling them to follow him as adults.

Man starts with the child, his son, with the child as a pupil; every other beginning can only give an illusion of new starts. *Let the little children come to me*. With them we will start the Sodality of Divine Union, as with the children started the Society of the Divine Vocations, following the footsteps of the announcement of the Archangel Gabriel to St. Zachariah, with which starts the gospel.

The precursor precedes the Messiah Jesus, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to bring the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the rebels to the wisdom of the just and so: *Parare Domino plebem perfectam - Prepare the perfect people for the Lord*.

¹ Fr. Justin often takes the liberty to form new words, like, *ascensionary*, a place where one must ascend, get better and higher; *perfectionary*, a place where one tends to perfection, keep in mind the we are always perfectible; likewise, every vocationist residence is called vocationary, a place where vocations are cultivated, formed and developed.

We aim to convert all people to be sons and children in order to be able to bring the rebellious world to holiness, and make of it the people of God in the empire of divine love. O mystery of divine wisdom! Forward! Every generous person will find and call, cultivate and form with the children his little college of the twelve apostles, the army of the seventy-two disciples, and bring them to Mary Most Holy, to follow Jesus, to receive the Spirit. We will begin as usual with the imposition of the Miraculous Medal because the Immaculate is the banner of the Advent of the kingdom of heaven and of the empire of the divine love in hearts.

We will advise all those who want to commit themselves to universal sanctification to make a novena to the Holy Spirit, so that they can make their commitment in spirit of ardor, no less than in spirit of prudence. All souls of good will, after becoming Apostles of Sanctification will not cease to ask: *What will we do for ourselves and for others, in an eternal newness of spirit?* In response we could gently draw them into the various spheres of the Sodality of Divine Union and gradually bring them to the heroisms of God's love in the most effective exercise of love for our neighbor.

CHAPTER 4

Priestly Sanctification

1. Why do we start talking first of the priestly sanctification? For many reasons, and especially for the following three main ones:
 - a) For many reasons, priests more than the simple faithful are obliged to holiness, whether we consider it as personal perfection, that is spiritualization, or ministry of salvation for the people. In every aspect they are the chosen ones and must be saints par excellence.
 - b) After the great means of grace established by Jesus Christ, their personal holiness, among all the secondary causes, is the most effective and the most appropriate to provide to everyone the idea of holiness, inflame the desire of it and communicate its impulse to the souls. The sanctity of the priests provides the most powerful attraction to Jesus for the souls.
 - c) Every sanctification is essentially priestly, because it is essentially relation with the Lord through the exercise of religion, and therefore and above all through the altar and the sacrifice, by way of immolation and communion, by way of mediation between heaven and earth.

The current of grace that forms today's spirituality flows into the apostolate, and not just in any apostolate of any moral good, nor in the simple salvation of a soul, but in the integral and universal apostolate that is only that of sanctification, and

of sanctification in its superior forms, and consequently both subjectively and objectively in the priestly sanctification. For this, we deem it convenient to think and to talk explicitly of it in fraternal conversation with our brother priests.

2. One thing is to talk about holiness, another is to talk about sanctification. To talk about holiness is like to talk about the Lord, because the Lord is holiness! Once we have received the revelation of the Trinity, rather than multiplying words amongst us, we like to unite ourselves to the chorus of Seraphim singing the triple *Holy, Holy, Holy*. As an answer to the humble prayer we make every day, profoundly inclined at the center of the altar, we like to imagine that the angels place in our heart and on our lips many sparks of sacred fire, the divine words with which the law of holiness is revealed to priests: *Sancti estote quia ego sanctus sum - Be holy because I am holy*, says the Lord. Could it be useless to talk about holiness to the priests? Who thinks or says that it is useless?
3. If a priest were to think and say that it is useless for him to talk about holiness, he would reveal himself as being discouraged that having made attempts at sanctification more than once and having failed, now he almost despairs of succeeding. We must pray for him that he may obtain again the grace of fervor and full trust in the Lord.

If we think and say that it is useless to talk about priestly sanctification to our confreres, we should attribute it to gross and refined malignancy, which makes us suppose and generalize that states of lukewarmness cannot possibly be changed into fervor. We could say it useless, only because they already know very well the obligation to become saints in view of all common and particular reasons to their state, functions and missions in the Church. They know the theory, more or less complicated and complex, according to the various schools of

asceticism and spirituality. This cannot be doubted! It should not be questionable.

4. What is useful and necessary for us is to meditate on it, so that the duty we have is made present, and therefore increasingly certain, more and more pressing, so as to lead us to do it; if it is not remembered and meditated, it is removed always further away from our mind; and because of the distance it appears to us as faded, to the point of seeming uncertain, and finally even doubtful, and as such it ends up losing its stimulus of undeniable law to which corresponds a definite obligation, a precise duty of one's own state. What matters is to make it present ... and this is done in meditation. What matters even more is making it attractive... and yearning does this.
5. Priestly sanctification is *conditio sine qua non* for the achievement of our goal. It is precisely the goal that moves the subject to act, and this moving especially concerns the will. In order to move the will, pleasure is more effective than duty. Therefore the Lord always mingles some pleasure with every duty. Knowing that the greatest duty of our state is sanctification, we would expect it to be joined by a maximum pleasure in the heavenly world, in the supernatural order, and also in our human world. Instead we are always faced with repugnance, oppositions and reactions of every kind, in front of this sublime duty, so we must always force ourselves to make some progress. Usually effort and violence do not last and we end up being inconstant in the good, and yet this is a good that only can be achieved with constancy.
6. Have we ever wondered why the supreme duty of sanctification does not excite us and does not enrapture us? Has it ever occurred to us that there could be some fault on our part in this abnormality of a duty to which we are not attracted by a proportionate pleasure? We must consider the fact that there may be something wrong on our part. We often confuse the

means with the end. Having lost the clear idea of the means, we easily lose the good use we could make of it, and yet means are necessary to the achievement of the goal. We accumulate means upon means without ever ending it, without ever being satisfied. This dissatisfaction is good about the ultimate goal: God, the infinite good! But, about the means it's a real evil. When the means are misunderstood, and therefore badly used, it happens that they really distance us from the goal. We are like those who want to continue walking even after reaching the destination, and thus they move farther and farther away.

7. The availability of many means to achieve a goal is something good. Any comfort consists in having available the means we need. The abundance must only invite us to choose the one most appropriate for some need, without oppressing ourselves under the disproportioned quantity. As an example, there may be (I do not know whether there are any more) some edifying priests that spend most of their energies and time doing supererogatory practices of pity, without end, while only one or a few would be enough to nurture their fervor.

Others truly edifying for their apostolic zeal, consume most of their time, resources and even money of their own or of the faithful, multiplying the means to attract and amaze, at least with the novelty, while one or a few would be more than sufficient to get to the essential point of the theoretical and practical religious culture.

8. This reflection on the exaggerated multiplicity of means that makes us forget their purpose, impedes us to achieve the goal, makes us pass by it, and we could say hides it from us, or make us stumble upon it, should be applied to every occupation or preoccupation of ours, also to intellectual culture,

social works and domestic affairs, because everything must be only a means to sanctification.

9. When we directly apply ourselves to study our goal in order to explain it to ourselves and to others, we can recklessly deprive it of its attractions, with a mistake which is also very common, which consists in focusing, in preference, albeit not exclusively, to their negative side, neglecting to bring the positive side to light. A long series of prohibitions and refusals, an interminable series of sins and related punishments can never be pleasant.
10. The worst mistake is to concentrate oneself on natural, temporal motivations, and to touch only the points of human interest, leaving in the shadow, pointing out only obliquely the supernatural reasons that are the ones that count. May the Lord grant us, and for this we must pray to him often, an idea of our sanctification as really is in the divine mind, so that we can be enraptured and excited, and to such a degree, that we can communicate to others the same flame and the knowledge of the appropriate means to use them perfectly.
11. The Lord usually grants us all our needs through Scripture, and especially through the Gospel, provided we apply ourselves not only with the forces of ingenuity and human study, but with the superior help of the gifts of wisdom and intellect, science and counsel of the Holy Spirit. We will find in this topic like in all others, what wisdom says: *God made man righteous and simple*; later he got involved in innumerable questions. This is also true of our vocation, our mission, and our specific sanctification. *Lord, you are almighty, make me a saint* (St. Alphonsus). Since the Lord wants our cooperation, we expect from him the intelligence and the good will to understand, to taste and to practice this sanctification of ours!
12. Priestly sanctification in its personal element consists essen-

tially in *Follow me, come after me*; from the part of the Lord, it consists in *I am with you*, and in that they *may be one*. In its social element, priestly holiness lies in: *Go to the whole world, preach the gospel to all nations and teach them to practice all that I have taught you!* It is the same process of sanctification of the disciples, that is, an entire evangelical formation regarding the apostolic ministry. An evangelical formation for the perennial vocation and attraction of the souls to Jesus leading to the mystical incorporation that culminates in the life of Jesus in them, and in the formation of Jesus in all, through the presence, the action, possession and fruition of the Holy Spirit.

13. All this, in the midst of the world, in the midst of others. *I do not pray (and therefore I do not mean, I do not wish) that you, O Father, take them out of the world! But save them from evil in the world, from the worldly spirit, from being of the world.* Our sanctification is all, as they say today, Christocentric in its formation, and all seraphic-apostolic in its manifestation. United to Jesus Christ, we are continually elevated by him, brought to the Father in the virtue of the Holy Spirit, and sent to souls to make Jesus live in them in the virtue of the Holy Spirit, within life and Trinitarian action.
14. *Come after me! Follow me!* In this consists all our sanctification, in this apostolic formation! In this going with Jesus, staying with Jesus. Not precisely to Bethlehem, to Nazareth, Egypt, or to the desert. I mean: going with Jesus, being with Jesus precisely in his public life.

What? Shouldn't there also be a period of imitation of Jesus' hidden life for us? Certainly there must be, since all our work is a work of imitation of the Lord. All our being is continually becoming a better image and likeness of the Lord God; and now practically, we must be the image and likeness of the Incarnate Word, of the man-God Jesus.

15. There must be a hidden life also for us before the public life. Our hidden life consists, as it was for the apostles, in going to Jesus and being with Jesus in his public life, attentive to him, absorbed in longing for his person, attentive to listening to his doctrine, concentrated on understanding his examples. It is not a question of going to this or that place, admiring this or that landscape, visiting these or those people, attending to this or that miracle. Always and everywhere it is a matter of following him, being with him, living with him, sharing his human condition and considering his divine condition.
16. The faith of the apostles was enlightened through hearing. Love was kindled in them through vision. In virtue of their faith and love, their lives kept raising, modeling and conforming to the life of the Lord, and according to the divine design. They were preparing themselves to be animated by the Holy Spirit. Now, it could seem to us that we are disadvantaged compared to the apostles who had the Lord's visible presence. Reflecting upon it, however, we see that our difficulty in stabilizing ourselves in the presence of the Lord is similar to the difficulty the apostles experienced in getting used to the divinity of Christ.
17. The difficulty that tested the faith of the apostles continuously to believe in the Son of God while seeing the Son of man, is the same difficulty that our faith must overcome to see the man-God Jesus, who is always living, present and acting in the world, beyond the sphere of the senses. The indispensable condition to follow and imitate Jesus demands a faith great and alive enough to be able to supersede the vision and yet capable of still being called vision.
18. How can we follow, how can we imitate one we do not see? How can we love with an assimilating and transforming love one, when we cannot yearn with perfect sympathy in his infinite amiability? Our sanctification requires such a great and

lively faith that enables us to experience Jesus living and active among us. We must experience this not only in the Eucharist but also in the living book, the uniquely living book of the Gospel, not only in the Host and in the Gospel, but I dare to say, much more in the Church, in our humanity, in our time, in what we have, in our towns, in the events in which we are spectators and actors. We must experience Jesus' presence in the environments of our human coexistence, so that in everything we can approach him, be on his side and see with his eyes. We will be able to think with his criteria, be guided by his point of view and subordinate everything to his divine interests.

19. We must become accustomed to the divine presence before anything else, so that we may refrain from evil and be urged to do our duty. The divine presence should form our environment, our climate, our atmosphere indispensable to life. Initially, the poverty of our religious experience will make it seem almost impossible. Let us begin by seeing Jesus humiliated in his suffering members. We move toward the cry of suffering wherever it comes from; let us go with an open heart and an open mind, and our inner awareness of God's presence will become sharper.
20. We will see Jesus also in little ones with our eyes purified by tears of compassion, and then our interior sight will be enabled to see Jesus near us and, at the same time, going after the lost sheep, from common sinners to the persecutors of the Church. The Good Shepherd is always searching the lost sheep. We will be with him to recall them, trace them and bring them back to the Lord. Then the soul purified by the flame of zeal will see Jesus alive also in his representatives, the priests, the superiors in any order of constituted authorities, and after a short time we will see him in the mystery of the souls of the just who ascend to heaven from earth and from

purgatory. We will see them in the glorious cloud of spiritual progress, in the Holy Spirit, and so it will be easy for us to follow Jesus and cherish him, love him and accept his ways and his doctrine, training ourselves to cooperate in his work, through the intrinsic principle of charity, life and spirit.

21. Enabled by faith, accustomed by charity to see Jesus Christ, we will be led to see God and with the eye of God to see the whole world in the christian conception, all humanity as always proceeding from the Lord through the ways of continued and ever ascending creation to the Lord through the ways of applied redemption. We will unite ourselves and become like co-workers with the Lord Jesus. In the virtue of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to carry out and bring the individual brothers to universal sanctification through what is the fulfillment of priestly sanctification, the apostolate.
22. Let us say immediately that all this which concerns our sanctification must not be confined to certain days of the year, such as days of exercises and spiritual retreats, nor reduced to certain hours of the day, such as for example the hours of Holy Mass and Eucharistic Benediction, but must embrace all our life, every year, every month, every week, every day, every hour. This, instead of making our lives sad will make it full, flourishing and perfect, and consequently also blessed, because happiness always follows the perfect act. Therefore every day must be holy with priestly sanctity, and since priestly holiness is essentially apostolic, it follows that every day must be sanctified in the apostolate.
23. Apostolate, understood in its full meaning, embraces all of Jesus' acts. He has called us and joined us in faith and love. He transmitted his mission to us and communicated his powers to us. The apostolate is not only what we call "action", but everything that continues the work of the Lord. The work of Jesus is the mediation between God and man, through the

sacrifice and redemption of souls with the communication of the life of grace through the sacraments (in the sacred mysteries). Jesus' work is the perennial magisterium of the doctrine of eternal life, spiritual government of souls with the various forms of pastoral care in various degrees of spiritual hierarchy.

24. All this constitutes our priestly sanctification. All this must fill our lives and enter into our every day. We are not used to considering as exclusive elements of our daily sanctification: meditation, examinations of conscience, visiting the Blessed Sacrament, holy rosary, Eucharistic Benediction, frequent confession and spiritual direction. All these things are fine, if we consider them as means of asceticism to animate our priestly action and our apostolate. If we stop at them and give them so much time that we cannot dispose of anything else, or apply ourselves to them in a way that exhausts our limited strength, we will not be fulfilling our full duty, nor will we achieve the sanctity of our state.
25. We will always find something to correct in our mentality and something to improve in our conduct, not so much because we are imperfect, but because we must always improve ourselves more. How will we correct our mentality and how will we improve our conduct? The answer is clear: Longing for the Lord in union with the Father's pleasures in him, and following the direction of the Holy Spirit, with ever more generous docility. The Spirit brings us closer to the Lord with ever more faithful imitation day by day. Thus, we honor and imitate him every day in his function as glorifier of the Father through the divine office, which is therefore an apostolic action. We honor and imitate him every day in his role as mediator between divinity and humanity with the offering of the divine sacrifice in the Holy Mass. The sacrifice of the Mass is an apostolic action. We honor him and imitate him every day in his function

as communicator of life and grace through the administration of holy sacraments to everyone we find well disposed. The sacraments are also apostolic actions.

26. We honor and imitate the Lord in his function as teacher of truth through our religious teaching starting always with the most humble functions that are most precious and meritorious, healthy and necessary: Teaching catechism to all our neighbors that in one way or another are entrusted to us. We honor and imitate Jesus in his function as way, by finding and using means and methods most opportune to our time to help others in their relationship with the Lord. This religious teaching and this multifaceted christian help are easily recognized as apostolic action. We will equally apply ourselves to honor and imitate the divine example by imposing, in our external actions, the limitations needed for the accomplishment of the mission entrusted to us. Doing so, we follow the example of Jesus who limits his action to the dispersed sheep of the house of Israel, to whom he was primarily sent.
27. As an internal action they shall embrace, with their heart and in prayer, the entire world, so as to feel the *sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum* - *solicitousness for all the churches* as it was in the heart of St. Paul, which was according to Jesus' heart. We will be training a small apostolic college of approximately seventy-two disciples, and among them we will pay special attention to form like a small apostolic college of a dozen of more generous souls, to make of them our chosen auxiliaries in the ministry, in honor and imitation of Jesus and his twelve apostles. Thus, we will participate in the spiritual government of souls, as it is common and mandatory for every priest.
28. The general government of the Church is entrusted to the successor of Peter, who is the Vicar of Jesus. The government of the diocese is entrusted to the successors of the Apostles. The administration of the parish is object of pastoral care of

the pastor. The spiritual guidance of individual families and of various groups is entrusted to the ministers of God, to the priests of Jesus Christ; without their intelligent and fervent cooperation, authorized and organized, the benefit would not reach all souls in the Church, in the diocese and in the parish.

In the ordination of a priest, the consecrating bishop says that the priest: *Debet preeesse - must preside*. If this means anything, it must not refer to a higher level of hierarchy but to the pastoral care of souls. No priest can speak, believe and behave as if the ministry were not his responsibility. He cannot remain indifferent, without failing in his duties.

29. We ask: What is the relationship between the fulfillment of one's duties and universal sanctification? It must be said that the fulfillment of duty is cause and effect, essence and consequence of personal sanctification. This refers to all the common and particular duties and therefore also to the duties of one's state.

On the other hand, by judging things superficially, we think that the sum of the other duties is ordered to the sanctification of others, and we judge these last *ab extrinseco - from the external* - and objectively.

The duties of one's own state are first and foremost actions of the operating person, and therefore are the perfection of the operating subject. They serve to specify one's own sanctification. Thus, apostolic duties are properly the duties of the priestly state. They constitute our sacred priestly holiness and can never be separated from other personal duties as a man and as a Christian, as an elect of a vocation and as a person consecrated.

30. Therefore let us not be pleased to hear only on certain occa-

sions that we are: *Alter Christus - another Christ*. This should enlighten and inflame us as our divine ideal and program. To be "other Christs" we must place between the souls and ourselves the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mother of God because through them the incarnation of the Word takes place. Through them joyfully takes place the formation of Jesus Christ in us (and this is all the personal holiness). Also through us, but always in *Spiritu Sancto et per Mariam - in the Holy Spirit and through Mary*, takes place the formation of Jesus Christ in our brothers, and this is the universal sanctification to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity. We will meditate quietly and serenely on each of these paragraphs separated from each other specifically to facilitate our good work.

CHAPTER 5

Catechism of Universal Sanctification

Universal sanctification is the greatest cooperation of the soul with the work of the Lord continually addressed to each person and in every human society.

Question: Why do we say that Universal sanctification is the greatest cooperation with God's work?

Answer: Because in universal Sanctification there is the human cooperation with the beginning, conservation and development of physical-moral life, and it is cooperation with the divine creation. This is a wonder filled collaboration! There is also cooperation with the freedom from sin and for the triumph of grace and eternal salvation, which is cooperation with the divine salvation. This is an even greater cooperation. There is also cooperation with the achievement of the supreme forms of perfection and the highest levels of life and states of the Lord's glorification. This is the supreme cooperation possible with the divine work: In this consists the entire apostolate of universal sanctification.

Question: How do we cooperate with the apostolate for universal sanctification?

Answer: We participate in the apostolate for universal sanctification by applying ourselves seriously to know the theory of sanctification, that is, Christian asceticism and its practice. We learn through the lives and the works of the saints how to em-

brace generously the whole gospel in our own lives so that we live in Jesus, and allow Jesus to live in us.

We cooperate with the apostolate to extending God's goodness to all souls, with a general, indirect action in every circumstance and in every setting, and then, with direct action in some particular field with special resources.

Question: What does it take to be an Apostle of Universal sanctification?

Answer: To be an Apostle of Universal Sanctification one needs the knowledge and loving acceptance of the universal vocation to holiness. All souls are called to faith, to the militant Church on earth, and to the triumphant Church in heaven.

To be an Apostle of Universal Sanctification one needs the knowledge and loving acceptance of the universal vocation and apply it to the work of sanctification. This mission is inherent with human nature as what each soul receives from the Lord in the natural and supernatural orders, since goodness is and must be diffusive.

It takes constant, practical, supernatural and effective application to attract and help every soul to become a saint. We achieve this through the intense and heroic culture of religious instruction, sacramental practice and friendship, intimacy and familiarity with the three divine persons.

Question: What is the essential element in the apostolate of universal sanctification?

Answer: The essential element and the animating principle from within is the fidelity, docility and generosity to all divine inspirations of the Holy Spirit, (recognized and approved as divine by the Church), because the Spirit alone is sanctity and sanctifier.

The essential element and informing principle from outside is the imitation, union and assimilation of Jesus living in the Host, living in the Gospel, living in the Church of Jesus the only man-

God, who communicates to us as our head and mediator the grace of being saints of every ascension to our Lord God and our Father.

The essential element and immediate principle-motor of every apostolic activity with our neighbors is the zeal for the love of God and the faith in the omnipotence of grace, triumphing over every opposition, resistance and human indisposition.

Question: In which field can each one of us exercise the apostolate of sanctification?

Answer: The ordinary field for our apostolate of sanctification is the very setting in which the Lord has placed us, in our own parish, town or area.

Only in special circumstances can the soul bring her apostolic activity elsewhere. Every Christian community, every human association has many spiritual necessities that keep renewing themselves in every generation. They supply sufficient work for all talents and activities enough to fill the life of every human being.

ITE ET VOS IN VINEAM MEAM! YOU TOO, GO TO MY VINEYARD!

PART IX

DIVINE UNION

Chapter 1

Toward Divine Union

The Lord leads us into the desert to talk to our heart and to be accepted by us. The divine word that interests us the most is "Follow me." We must follow him wherever he calls us, and the way he wants us, eliminating every obstacle and impediment that may prevent us from following him. We immerse ourselves always more in divine union cultivating the spiritual, intimate and personal relationships of servant, disciple and friend to ascend progressively to the relationships of child, mother and spouse, and establishing ourselves in the third level of charity.

The second chapter of this section, From Heaven to Heaven, published in Spiritus Domini of 1961, is probably the last written work of Fr. Justin, just prior to his death. The practical suggestions, rich in theological, ascetical and mystical teachings, may be considered as his spiritual last will and testament to all those who want to respond to their vocation to divine union.

All that existed, exists and will exist is done through the Word. *Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil - Through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him (Jn 1 2).*

The Lord leads and settles us into solitude to speak to our hearts and to place us in a favorable condition to listen to him. *Audiam quod loquatur in me Dominus - I will be listening to whatever the Lord will tell me (Ps 84 9).*

Here is the entire practice of interior life:

1. Listen to the Word and respond to the Lord. Since in each word he offers us a gift, we must receive the gift and recip-

rocate with love. Since in every gift there is a work of God's grace, we must consent to the divine work and cooperate with it in the best way we can.

2. Answer, reciprocate and cooperate. We should transform our perennial soliloquy with ourselves in an ongoing dialogue with Jesus, or with another divine person, always present in us. So, we carry on our dialogue with the Holy Spirit within us, with Jesus at our side and our heavenly Father above and in front of us.
3. The divine word that is most important for us is: Come after me. Follow me. He proposes our goal under various aspects:
 - A. The kingdom of God to be conquered;
 - B. Divine perfection to be achieved;
 - B. A world of souls to be sanctified, etc.

Everyone can yearn for his own goal in a form that he finds more appropriate for himself, in the light that he finds more attractive. The objective remains always: reaching for a better comprehension and practice the goal. "Follow me" is the formula of our goal, directed by the heart of God to our hearts.

Come to me. It is not question of changing hometown but going to him. It is not question of leaving one's family, but of going to him. Nor is it question of living in a different environment, but of going to him! It is not question of embracing other interests, but of going to him!

The ever more full and perfect union with the Lord is the whole goal of our vocation to life, to faith, to religious life and to holiness.

Let us eliminate all impediments to attaining divine union. The most dangerous impediment is lukewarmness. We should examine ourselves often about the causes of our faults, and especially if among them there is one to which we are drawn, and

to which we may be attached. The state of lukewarmness is: habitual venial sin, due to an attachment to some defect, on account of the satisfaction we find in it, or to our vainglory, or other sensibility in our heart.

Let us place our trust in the promises of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Let us choose and cultivate a special devotion to his Sacred Heart:

1. To pass from lukewarmness to fervor. (To this end we can honor the divine heart that reveals itself in his words, focusing on one every day and meditating upon it).
2. To ascend from fervor to great perfection and divine union. (To this end we can honor the divine heart that reveals himself in the Holy Face, frequently devoting to the best of our ability, but often, five or six minutes of loving attention to his presence).
3. For the power of converting sinners. (To this end we can honor the divine heart in his agony, devoting our adoration, as an exercise of compassion in the afternoon at the hour consecrated to the death of our Savior, Jesus Christ, on the cross).

We grow and draw closer to the divine union with the Lord resolutely cultivating our relationships with him, beginning with the relation of servant, as the maidservant of the Lord, the Virgin Mother of God. As servants, we want to cultivate in ourselves the characteristics of the good servant, praised in the Scripture.

The characteristics of the good servant are:

1. **Humility:** *Servi inutiles sumus* – *We are useless servants*;
2. **Laboriosity [Laboriousness]** Using our talents;
3. **Fidelity** – to the interests of the Lord;
4. **Obedience** *usque ad summum* – *to the Maximum*, as the Virgin Mother recommended us: Do all he tells you to do;

5. **Watchfulness** - to properly welcome the Lord in our soul, at each visit, at each new invisible mission.

Our basic relationships with God are:

1. **Relationship of Servant** - being always willing and ready to do God's bidding with the above characteristics.
2. **Relationship of disciple** - being totally attentive at the school of the Teacher. Jesus speaks to us from the outside, and the Holy Spirit teaches us from within. The Lord will speak to us about his Father and our Father, and will reveal himself to us in his mysteries and his truth.
2. **Relationship of friend** - to whom the Lord reveals the most intimate confidence of his heart, his agonies caused by sinners who are lost, and of his delights for sinners who convert.

Uniting together these three relationships of servant, disciple and friend, we have a *triple cord that is difficult to break - funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur* - according to the Scriptures.

As true friends and sons, we want to strive in everything to know and do what most pleases the Lord, thus, establishing ourselves in the third level of charity, which is the normal state of the elect. What pleases the Lord most is revealed in his law, in the duty of our state of life and in the holy inspirations. For the inspirations we need approval and advice only when they suggest something beyond our duties, or that are not common and ordinary. We entrust our inspirations, at least the more important ones not to the wind (namely, to publicity), not to the fire (to our vain complacency with some natural satisfactions), but to the holy Virgin Mary, so that she can safeguard them for us and enable us to put them into practice. In this way we can unite ourselves to the divine will, not with a simple resignation but with the joy of love. The divine will is the metropolis and the house in which we were born. The divine will is the food of life! The divine will is the

best thing for us in every aspect, physical and moral, material and spiritual, natural and supernatural, temporal and eternal.

He who does the will of the Father becomes Jesus' brother and sister. He who leads others to love and do the will of the Father becomes Jesus' mother.

CHAPTER 2

Ascensional Journey to Divine Union

Prelude: We have been created by God's love.

We are created by the hand of God.

We are created by the three divine persons who are one God.

We are created by each divine person out of love for the other divine person.

We are created also for our own self.

O mystery of creating love, I adore you, I abandon myself to you.

1. Since God is infinite goodness, he wants to communicate all the holiness of his nature, all the happiness of his life.
2. Because he is infinite love, he wants to give himself entirely to us and he wants to unite us to himself infinitely, in each one of his three divine persons.
3. This explains why in creating us he says: *Let us make man in our own image and likeness* (Gn 1 26). Thus he reveals and puts into action his divine thought and desire.
4. *Let us make man in the image and likeness of our divine nature and perfections, of our unity and trinity of relations.*
5. Let us make man in the image and likeness of our divine ac-

tivities and operations, our missions and divine circuminsession! Let us make him like us!

6. Since by necessity man is limited and successive, he can become evermore like God Trinity in a perennial beginning and ascension.
7. Since the divine work of creation is always in act in the conservation of the created universe, our divine molding must also always be in ongoing action.
8. Our becoming his image and likeness in the work of redemption and sanctification also takes place through action.
9. In the image and likeness of God we have life, intellect, will and the freedom with which he expects us to correspond to his love.
10. Love does not expect anything but love. In this consist his glory, his will, his kingdom and happiness.
11. This correspondence of love necessitates that we accept all the gifts of his goodness and tend to union, possession and enjoyment with him.
12. This correspondence of love requires that I begin, continue and complete my union with God according to his desire and infinite love.
13. Revelation and faith are based on divine unity. Likewise, divine formation starts and is based upon divine union.
14. In the present condition of fallen and redeemed nature, divine union starts with Baptism through the state of grace for each individual.
15. If it is question of an entire people, it starts with an offer from God and an acceptance by the chosen people as a holy covenant.

16. This covenant of the people is not complete if it is not extended to each individual member.
17. Likewise, the reconciliation of an individual will be perfect only when the elect desires and works to bring each individual to reconciliation.
18. Covenant and reconciliation, however, are only a germ, a beginning of an unending ascension of levels of union until one reaches the level intended and willed by the Lord.
19. The divine union intended and willed by the Lord is the one that fully corresponds to the infinite and infinitely diffusive bounty of the good that God is.
20. The divine union, intended and willed by the Lord, is the one that fully corresponds to the infinite and infinitely diffusive love of God's charity.
21. The divine union, intended and willed by the Lord, is the one that can really be an image and likeness of the unity of God among the three divine persons.
22. The divine union, intended and willed by the Lord, is the one that most imitates and honor the hypostatic union of the human and the divine nature in the divine person of the Incarnate Word.
23. The divine union, intended and willed by the Lord, is the one that unites the imitation of the hypostatic union with the likeness of the Trinitarian union.
24. As in the divine Trinity we have the unity of nature and the distinction of the three divine persons, so in the divine union while we become one with God, we still retain our distinct human individuality.
25. Simultaneously, in divine union, the human soul is joined

with each of the three divine persons in a mysterious, unique way.

26. A soul's union with the divine resembles (but never identifies with) the union of the person of the Word in Jesus Christ.
27. The Son of God has taken on human nature to make us understand to what extent he wants to be united with each human person.
28. In his last, perpetual invention, revelation and effusion of the wisdom and omnipotence of his love, Jesus gives us the most living idea and reality of love.
29. In the Eucharistic Communion, he gives us his body, blood, soul and divinity, as food and drink, so that he becomes all ours, all us.
30. In the personal divine union, he welcomes, receives and unites all of himself to our being and person, so that we become totally his, all him!
31. In the Eucharistic Communion even though we receive him as sacred food, have and possess him, we do not assimilate him. He remains all that he is.
32. In the personal divine union, even though he receives, absorbs and transforms us in himself, he does not annihilate but maximizes our reality and person.
33. Love requires the distinction of the two relational terms that seek and offer themselves mutually to each other, and their perfect union.
34. A mother in the folly of her love is capable of saying that she wants to eat with kisses her babe. Yet if this were really to happen, where would her beloved be?
35. Every soul that receives the Eucharistic Communion of her

Lord God should think, desire and offer herself to this personal divine union.

36. The exchange of love is the supreme gift; it is the only correspondence that most resembles the gift; it is most willed and most appreciated by the divine lover.
37. As our Lord Jesus instituted the Eucharist, the sacrament of his love, at the end of his life, so the soul reaches her perfect dedication only after an entire life of spiritual ascensions.
38. The Lord Jesus has revealed, operated and offered to everyone the divine union from the first moment of his incarnation and assumption of his human nature.
39. Likewise, the soul should understand and offer her personal union with the Lord, from the moment of her Baptism, from the first infusion of grace.
40. This mutual charity and grace, a powerful germ of divine life, is given by the Lord even in the minimum level of habitual, sanctifying grace.
41. Freely and lovingly the soul must want to develop and increase that grace living an entire life of imitation and adhesion to our Blessed Lord.
42. This is how we understand the ultimate reason and cause of the fundamental, supreme law, the divine imitation, which is affirmed in every commandment and counsel.
43. God is love! Jesus is love! Love seeks and desires correspondence. The correspondence consists in reciprocating to the lover all that he offers, and in exchange doing all that he says, offers and does.
44. Our responding to God, in all he says, our giving back to him all he offers to us, and doing to him all he does to us is imitation of him.

45. In order to correspond to his love and become another Christ, every soul must relive the doctrine and work of Jesus Christ all over again throughout her entire life. There is no assimilating strength or power greater than the divine grace and divine charity in our supernatural Trinitarian order.
46. Grace and charity are always infused and incrementally bound inseparably together, and upon them we must trust for the personal divine union.
47. Grace unites us to the divine nature, to the unity of God in a vital and life giving way. Grace is divine life in us.
48. More properly, charity unites us to the three divine persons because every loving soul turns to the person rather than to the nature.
49. We can say that grace makes us like the three divine persons and unites us to them; charity makes us like the three divine persons and unites us to them as they subsist distinctly in that nature.
50. We can also say that the assimilating power of grace and of charity depends on how intensely we live and maximize their efficiency.
51. In the natural order, all our activity is exercised with our faculties. Through them nature operates and manifests itself.
52. In the supernatural order, we feel the level of grace present in us only through the intense, profound, elevated and vast exercise of charity.
53. We can also say that all assimilating power depends on charity, and all power of union depends on grace.
54. Charity connects to the divine person through the relationship of love, which distinguishes and attracts the two lovers to each other.

55. Grace instead draws them into one another, and merges them, so to speak, into a single life, one joining the other, one living of the other.
56. We can think of this union of life of one in the other also as a divine person united to the soul, provided this soul is personally united to another divine person.
57. The Lord wants this personal union with every soul and human person; this, however, as a work of love requires our freedom.
58. A love relationship requires our free election, free acceptance, free cooperation, free necessity and necessary freedom of love.
59. This election, acceptance and free cooperation require an ever deeper, greater and measureless knowledge of the ways of the Lord and of his heart.
60. Grace places in us this germ of life of divine formation, which in its complete development is the divine union with the Blessed Trinity.
61. Charity, corresponded and exercised to the fullest extent and to every degree, is our free election, acceptance and cooperation with the Lord.
62. Grace is the element in which divine action predominates in us. It corresponds somewhat to our receptive side, not to say passive because it is not completely so.
63. Charity is the element that predominates in human action, aided by the divine action.
64. The grace that we receive is the grace of Jesus Christ, our head. It flows from him into us. It makes us worthy of him, and simultaneously makes of us another him.

65. Grace makes us worthy of him as members of his mystical body, as living parts of the total Christ who embraces all redeemed mankind: Jesus-Church.
66. He makes each one of us another Jesus, as his continuation, more than irradiation, more than reproduction, another Jesus living in us in the personal divine union.
67. This is the grace of Jesus Christ, our head and mediator. The grace of divine union is hypostatic union in him. In us it is a likeness, but non identical to the hypostatic union.
68. Every exercise of charity, whether in the election, acceptance or cooperation, is always corresponding to some element of this divine union.
69. With grace and charity, from their first infusion, we receive the life of Jesus, unifying us with the Son made man.
70. Our union with the Son of God starts from the lowest levels and tends to the highest, in reality it ascends, reaches there and triumphs depending on our nature and culture in the exercise of charity.
71. With grace we also unceasingly receive divine life, given to us for the honor of God, and in image and likeness of the eternal generation of the Word from the Father.
72. For this reason, the life of grace establishes us in the supernatural order that we can call *filial*, in the fundamental relation of sons.
73. Essentially it is union with Jesus, not only because he is the meritorious cause but also the exemplary cause of this new life.
74. With charity we receive the power to realize ourselves in this supernatural life and we breathe love to God himself, in hon-

or and as image and likeness of the eternal "*spiration*" of the Holy Spirit from the one principle who is the Father and the Son.

75. Through real love we establish a special relationship with the Holy Spirit, as in an embrace and kiss of a supernatural "es-pousal" relationship.
76. In this ascension of life from the supernatural *filial* brought to its perfection in the supernatural *espousal*, we unite ourselves to the divine principle, the Father.
77. From this supreme union with the Father we receive the capacity to be able to become mothers of Jesus, giving him a new life in souls, through the ministries of the apostolates.
78. In the ministries of the apostolate the *priestly* supernatural is realized as in a mystical divine maternity toward Jesus in the mystical body, which is the Church.
79. In every sanctified soul, the Church at the same time is like a part, a member of the whole, and also, in a different aspect, she is like the whole itself.
80. While always ascending to higher degrees of union with each divine person, the soul becomes more and more daughter, spouse and mother of the Lord.
81. Thus, we imitate the Most Holy Virgin Mary, supernaturally daughter of the Father, spouse of the Holy Spirit, mother of the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, and of every believer.
82. Thus, the one divine union with the divine nature that we share through grace, flowers in triple divine union with the three persons-God, through charity.
83. In its turn the divine union with the three divine persons fructifies the one, triple divine union of each soul we serve in the sacred ministries of salvation for universal sanctification.

84. It happens that the apostolic soul that lives in the *supernatural ordinary* of grace does not always rise to the *supernatural extraordinary* of charity.
85. No effect can surmount the cause. The cause cooperates with the apostolate only in the reconciliation of souls with God, in the state of grace.
86. The most that the cause can do is to cultivate the ongoing increase of grace. We do not limit ourselves to looking at grace, but are always working to increase it in ourselves and in everyone.
87. The apostolic soul that lives and grows in the extraordinary supernatural of God's love feels the need to communicate grace also to all others.
88. We could also say, without exaggerating, that union with Jesus elevates the souls to know and cultivate the relationship of *sons* of God-Trinity in the Father.
89. From their union with the Father, the souls are elevated to know and cultivate the relationship of spouse of God-Trinity in the third person, the Holy Spirit.
90. From the union of the apostolic soul with the divine Spirit, the souls are elevated to know and cultivate the relationship of mothers of Jesus in the souls, immersing themselves in the apostolate.
91. The good of divine Trinitarian life flows from divine goodness and divine love, and becomes ever more eminent and life-giving, because it is God who works in us.
92. It is God in person who carries out in every soul the wonders of creation, redemption and sanctification, always rising mysteriously.

93. The Lord God wants the soul to know all that he intends to work in her as her personal individual creator, savior and sanctifier.
94. He wants the soul to know and desire him, rather than to simply consent to him; the soul should prepare herself to welcome him and cooperate with him in a correspondence of love.
95. The Lord wants this knowledge and correspondence of the soul to divine action, to the point that very often, if not always, he provides opportunities of knowledge and correspondence for the soul.
96. It is absolutely necessary for us to remove all obstacles and not to place any limits to receiving the divine good and to radiating it to souls.
97. This divine good is all revelation and action of love, is all communication in a relation between lovers. Cooperating with divine good requires from us a greater correspondence.
98. Each one of the Lord's words expects our response of love, and a reciprocation of love. It expects our correspondence that is imitation.
99. Each visit of his requires a visit from us as a return of love. Each action of his expects a cooperation of love. Imitation is correspondence.
100. Divine imitation, divine correspondence! Sublime names of sublime acts and states of the soul, and yet they are small and imperfect before the divine love and lover.
101. He alone can give a value and meaning to our reciprocations. He alone can desire and require them. He alone can turn them into his glory and delight because he is infinite love and infinite lover.

102. Eliminate every impediment, do not place any limit, and correspond with imitation. Imitate with correspondence. This is the practice of the faithful soul.
103. We are always supposed to know and believe, to admire and praise in adoration of the Lord God, creator, redeemer and sanctifier.
104. The creator reveals himself as Lord and Father. The Savior reveals himself as friend and brother. The sanctifier reveals himself as lover and spouse of every willing soul.
105. The soul must always deepen her awareness that the Lord God is always in the act of creating, saving and sanctifying. This unique, triple divine action is always in act.
106. The soul must always deepen the awareness that she is perfectly in the mysterious, marvelous, reverent and wise action, and she is loved by her creator, savior and sanctifying God.
107. Nothing can escape, and everything is made to serve the divine action both in the internal and external world. Everything is in divine harmony, in the divine present.
108. God's wonders are infinite in the work of creation of the entire universe, both external and internal to the soul. Blessed are those who know and contemplate them in some way!
109. He, who contemplates the marvels of creation, can receive an idea of the truly infinite wonders of the work of redemption, glorified and made sublime by the marvels of sanctification.
110. In each soul these divine marvels unfold according to a type that in its unity and infinity gives rise to distinctions and innumerable differences.
111. Diversity and distinctions take place not only in the number

of created people, but about the many varieties of their dispositions and reactions to the divine action in each atom and instant.

112. The ideal is the personal divine union, not only as a term, but also as a principle and continuation, in its various degrees, already so sublime in its principle.
113. The human person is not simply helped by grace to correspond and imitate the action of the creator, the savior and the sanctifier God,
114. One of the three divine persons joins the poor human soul (real and distinct always); she receives him and cooperates with him worthily in divine action.
115. Only God is the glory of God! Only God is the love of God. Only God is the goodness of God. Only God is the will of God. Only with God can one please God, imitate God and correspond to God.
116. Since we are limited and successive beings, it is understandable for us to imagine how to create equally indefinite spaces in which the soul can unite herself with the Lord.
117. He is infinite, eternal, immense, and we can think of him as alive and active in himself, in his unity and Trinity, in the mystery of his divinity.
118. We can think of him as present and operating in the soul, which is also an immense sky in its indefinite capacity received from the same Lord.
119. We can think of him present and operating outside ourselves, and outside the soul, in an intermediate sky, which is the created universe, also immense.
120. What a profound joy that unforgettable day will be, when for

the first time the soul sees her inner sky open and expand to her inner sense!

121. Until then she experiences her interior, like a dark corner that she didn't like to enter and imitate. Only out of a duty of conscience did she dare to glimpse inside, from time to time.
122. Jesus said: Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him and we shall come to him and make a home in him (Jn 14 23), that is, in his soul.
123. Why is the Holy Spirit not mentioned? Could he be absent or uninterested in this divine visit and indwelling of the Father and the Son in my soul?
124. The Holy Spirit does not accompany the Father and the Son because he has preceded them. He was sent by them; he has been given to the soul to make her worthy of receiving the Father and the Son.
125. How could these divine persons come to the soul, if she were not in a state of grace? How could they cohabit with her if she were not in state and acts of love?
126. For this the Holy Spirit came first to raise and establish the soul in grace, an outpouring of the divine nature, which is all pure spirit, and is attributed to the Holy Spirit.
127. The Holy Spirit came first to ignite and nourish in the soul the charity of which the Holy Spirit is the uncreated, personal fire of the divine life.

CHAPTER 3

Need and Duty of the Union

1. In every field of their activity men feel the need to unite themselves with others to reach common goals. This happens in politics, in economy, in industry, and we can say everywhere.
2. This need is much greater in the moral field when men face the danger of contagion of evil that invades from all sides. The divine union is needed to counteract the influence of the evil that besieges from the outside and threatens from within.
3. The vision of forms and degrees of ever greater perfection compels us to achieve and possess the supreme good, divine union with God.
4. Normally this yearning for divine union is all the more felt when nature is respected, which is essentially social and therefore stronger in those who are wholly healthy.
5. The yearning for divine union is even more powerful in those who want to become truly holy because every good, especially in its higher forms, always tends to spread itself in others to unite them in the good.
6. This is why those closest to perfection and those who embark upon perfection, feel the need of union with their neighbor no less than with the Lord.
7. They feel the yearning in proportion to their goodness. The yearning grows in them with every spiritual progress;

it weakens in them at their every moral decadence, and becomes numb in the state of lukewarmness.

8. They feel and notice in this the need for union, placed in souls, the spirit of a holy family; only the Holy Spirit of God compels all souls to live their lives in Jesus Christ.
9. The Spirit, through this need for union, placed in souls, sets out to gather the scattered members in a single mystical body to vivify them in Christ, the only head of humanity.
10. Spirit of association and communion, spirit of relationship and union, spirit of sacred family! It is the Holy Spirit of God, who wants to animate everything with, in and through life in Jesus Christ.
11. Any other spirit that is not in communion with him is always a principle of separation, of opposition, of disintegration even under the mask of organization, a mimic of union.
12. Oh, if everyone understood that the only solution for our health is the action of the Holy Spirit; the only normal state is the union with the Holy Spirit; and the entire supernatural life consists in letting oneself be animated by the Holy Spirit!
13. Apart from the Holy Spirit of the Lord, there is only the spirit of the world and the spirit of hell. The spirit of the world is all selfishness; no less than the spirit of hell is all hatred.
14. Egoism is essentially repellent, and hatred is essentially dissolving, so that any true union becomes impossible under their deadly poisonous action, which is essentially murderous from the beginning.
15. When the spirit of the world and the spirit of hell go together, their selfishness and hatred bring the human spirit that welcomes them into a state of violence for the desperation and ruin of humanity.

16. Violence, after having attracted many by deception, does not unite them. Rather oppresses and crushes them and makes them weapons of hatred and selfishness in eternal tyranny.
17. Only the spirit of the Lord is all goodness that spreads; it is all peace that strengthens. It is all happiness that expands the mind and the heart in the possession and enjoyment of the divine life.
18. With regard to this union of the Spirit of the Lord with the soul, of which all those who are animated by good spirit feel the need, not everyone understands that in order to actually achieve union, we must make it our duty.
19. This duty is as serious as it is serious to avoid a serious danger. This duty is as great as the good to be pursued; it is a sacred duty because it is the synthesis of all the means necessary for the achievement of the ultimate goal.
20. When this responsibility of union is not recognized, the very need of it is weakened, and unconsciously one admits infiltrations of the spirit of the world and of hell in the good works themselves and in the workers of good.
21. The good to be effective and efficacious must be good in every respect. Otherwise good works might not serve a good cause, or the workers of good might not keep the interests of the soul and of the Lord at the center of their actions.
22. Does it not seem to some (or most?) that there is a certain disorientation and almost a disintegrating principle in the militias of good, doing serious damage to the work undertaken in the kingdom of the Lord?
23. This is effect of human miseries produced and nourished by the influences of the spirit of the world and of hell. It heightens the egoism of the human spirit that is the maximum impediment to the compact unity necessary for common victory.

24. Honoring the union of the Spirit of the Lord with the soul is a duty and a need like charity and holiness! If well fulfilled, it becomes the evangelical beatitude of the peaceful, of which it is said that they will be called children of God. They have well deserved entry into the kingdom of the Father!
25. One is peaceful not only for the exclusion of all forms of war, but because he is operator of harmony, and therefore of union of life in justice, union of minds in truth, union of hearts in charity, union of spirit with the Blessed Trinity.

CHAPTER 4

Union in Unity

1. How can we bring into the apostolate the movement that today moves people toward the predominant interests of the moment?
2. Each division must be eliminated because it is a wound in the human structure, and every wound not cured on time, is a source of pain and principle of corruption for the whole organism.
3. True union eliminates divisions but does not abolish distinctions. Divisions come from sin and generate aversions that cannot be useful to anybody but only play the game of the evil one.
4. Distinctions, however, come from the Lord and consequently by their own nature they are ordained to union and they depend on the unity; they are willed as the beginning of order and add greater efficacy to the power of goodness.
5. Among the workers of the Lord and among the works of zeal what could be the basis of common understanding for this greater union, which while removing each division respects the necessary distinctions?
6. The union of the Spirit of the Lord with the soul cannot be composed of lesser and contingent goods. These are innumerable and everyone can find what is to his own advantage,

some in this some in that without taking away or negating anything to others who judge and decide otherwise.

7. That is to say that there can be no union in the choice and in the use of means (both of works and of methods) because the means are multiple, given abundantly by God who gave us the freedom to choose the means, not the end.
8. Here the great human misery is revealed: while all converge on the ultimate goal, our true God in three persons, yet many divisions (that sometimes degenerate into aversions) are noticed also among true believers and militant Catholics.
9. Could it depend on the fact that not everyone is offered the ideal of the ultimate goal in the same way, in the same light and with the same formula? Such variances, too trodden, end up prompting the element of division in different mentalities.
10. The ultimate goal is the Lord God known and loved, possessed and glorified, enjoyed by us and communicated to our neighbor in the highest degree, in the most perfect way, to the fullest extent possible.
11. We indicate this on our part with the word *divine union* which together constitutes the supreme glorification of the Lord, the supreme perfection of human persons, the supreme happiness of all our being.
12. It is a perfect union with the three divine persons, a union of supreme relationships of love that maintains our distinction as individual persons, while also making a perfect union of love, in the image and likeness of God, one and triune.
13. Only God is the will of God, only God is the glory of God, only God is the love of God, only God is the happiness of God, and only by uniting myself with God personally I do the glory, will and love of God that for many is the formula of the ultimate goal.

14. This perfect union with the three divine persons takes place exclusively and perfectly through the one and only mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word. He is the first means for the ideal of the ultimate goal!
15. Jesus is the perfect first means for the achievement of the ultimate goal in each of the three supreme religious activities that are made possible in our adoration (through Jesus-Host), in asceticism (through Jesus-Gospel), in the apostolate (through Jesus-Church).
16. Certainly proposing this, with the same identical formula, the ultimate goal and the first means could somehow contribute a little to the greater union in the minds of believers and militants. This is not cause of division, with the consequent human weaknesses.
17. The cause of division lies in the depth of man, in his selfishness impregnated with pride, sensuality and sloth, so that in striving for the ultimate goal through the scale of means everyone is tempted to linger and finally settle into some of the intermediate means.
18. To justify the underlying pride, sensuality and sloth, the true cause of every disorder, one ends up giving value of ultimate or almost ultimate goal to what was only a means along the path to the ultimate goal.
19. This happens in our conduct, sentiment and practical judgment; each one of us can gradually make an idol of his work, of his method, of his institute, in a word of his little world, while believing and adoring one only God.
20. This experience is felt more or less in the imperfect, and to the extent that one progresses in being purified of pride, sensuality and sloth, one puts on the dress of the sanctity that is one, one enters the light of holiness that is one, and unites us in charity, which is one!

21. Above and beyond the divine union, the only ultimate goal, should we also have the union in all the means necessary to achieve the goal, and therefore reduce to one all the flourishing works in the Church, all the methods of holy achievements? To do so would be harmful, impossible and offensive.
22. Such union of means would be harmful in reaching the overall ultimate goal, which we want and must achieve, because the diversity of means is a necessity and irrepressible need corresponding to the diversity of environments, temperaments and events in which the life of each one takes place, journeying towards the same ultimate goal.
23. It would be impossible for man to reduce countless human persons to one! It is futile to persuade men to renounce what in all their work, methods and institutes is inseparably linked to their personality, which in itself is sacred.
24. It would be offensive to the Lord, because every good work present in humanity, and much more in the Church, is a heavenly inspiration that must not be stifled. The divine Spirit fulfills the work of his mission of universal sanctification through a variety of means.
25. The variety of means does not cancel or lessen works and methods of any holy initiative, present and future, but rather intensifies them, enhancing them and sublimating them to the maximum effectiveness of their sanctifying power.

CHAPTER 5

Divine Union in Personal Holiness

1. Divine union is not, and cannot be done through all means. The fact that we are united in the intention of reaching the ultimate goal is insufficient to live the union necessary to achieve the same good. We must conclude that this union must be lived through some means, in some way.
2. Divine union cannot and must not be lived solely in the supreme and absolute good of pursuing the ultimate goal. It must also be lived in that good, although it is a means, so directly linked to the goal as to be indivisible from it, and so indispensable to the goal as to be quasi identifiable with it.
3. Divine union is indivisible from the goal. Personal holiness is the indispensable means to divine union. The union of devoted believers can and must take place in the apostolate of universal sanctification.
4. Precisely because of this connection with the goal, it is enough to just point it out, because everyone agrees with it, without needing other arguments. We all accept it from the heart based on the evidence of its truth and goodness, and in proportion to our good will.
5. Let us then consider this blessed union in the apostolate of universal sanctification as inseparable from the union of the Holy See of divine revelation, as inseparable from union and obedience to the one holy Church of Jesus Christ.

6. We should begin this union with all souls first in ourselves, uniting ourselves to the esteem and love that the Lord has for them, and becoming servants of all in all things for everyone, in the sense of the apostolic saying: *Omnibus omnia factus sum - I became all things to all people.*
7. Let us make this union outside our own selves, among the souls themselves, uniting them in the intention and ascension to personal holiness, and in the apostolate of personal sanctification, with the correspondence of cooperation to the sanctifying Spirit who fills the world.
8. We make this union of all souls in the Lord God-Trinity, helping them to know the divine union with all their mind and to tend to it with all their strength, to establish themselves in it with all their heart and to progress in it throughout their lives.
9. We make the union of all good works (and of all methods to the good) by directly demonstrating, practicing and propagating them, explicitly and almost exclusively, as means of personal sanctity and universal sanctification as they are in fact.
10. Only the soul who is conquered by the ideal of holiness can understand, want and fully implement the usefulness of the means of sanctification offered by every good work that is affirmed in the holy Church, throughout the centuries of Christianity, through the many avenues of the apostolate.
11. When we have inflamed and excited souls to this ideal of holiness, they immediately ask: What must we do to have eternal life? And even more: What must we do to reach Christian perfection? And further: What must we do to be admitted to divine union? The charity of Jesus Christ urges them onward.
12. Then every worker of the Lord, made an apostle of sanctification, will answer: *Come to this or that other work, accept this or*

that program, according to this or that method, and in these invitations the voice of the only master resounds in various ways: Come after me, follow me.

13. It is the Lord who places that apostle of sanctification on the path of that soul; it was precisely to that soul that the voice, the work, the spirit, the program and perhaps the same method that other soul needed to be sanctified, according to the design of divine providence.
14. We refer to the souls already conquered by faith to the Church, and therefore already believers and on the go. By the law of integral and universal progress they are well disposed to holiness and ask to be helped in this which is the only true human ascension.
15. It is necessary first of all that these souls be helped frequently, for a long time and almost continually, with loving attention, to envision and yearn for the ideal of holiness, which they somehow had already perceived, but which could disappear from their presence in a cloud of distractions and earthly worries.
16. If the goal is constantly longed for, its attraction becomes increasingly powerful, triumphant and overwhelming. If the goal is lost from sight, it no longer moves us. When the goal does not move us, it is no longer our goal. This is especially true when pursuing the ultimate goal.
17. We will then take care to push ever more forward and upward towards heroism and towards the apostolate, every practice of virtue, every work of good, since without the heroic element there is no holiness, without full engagement in apostolate there is no sanctification of others.
18. To the soul that asks to ascend to sanctity, one can indicate the marvelous variety of religious families from which to choose,

according to their particular attitudes and aspirations, their place of work and battle.

19. Another may suggest: Live as a perfect Christian, in the proper sense and in the full sense of the vocation to faith, in the grace of the sacrament of Confirmation, that is, of christian perfection in the parish, liturgical, ascetical and apostolic life!
20. Another may suggest: Come to The Catholic Action, in the section that corresponds to your age and condition. Do all that. The Catholic Action suggests to you to commit yourself to doing more and always better and to spread your good work to others. You will be holy and you will sanctify so many brothers!
21. Another can say: Come to my third order. Do not judge it as any practice of devotion, but rather as a real form of religious life, under a rule, animated by the spirit of saints. It can then fill your life with the supernatural.
22. Another will be able to say: Come and cultivate your friendship with the Lord corresponding with the divine love, under the guidance of the sanctifying Spirit, directly, intensely: *Come to the Sodality of the Divine Union, to be Apostle of the Universal Sanctification.*
23. When an initiative of greater utility for the Christian people arises in the Church, it is elevated to the rank of Pontifical Work. Then everyone understands its value and the duty to attend to it propagating and increasing for instance, the missionary activities of the Propagation of the Faith, of the native clergy etc.
24. The apostolate of universal sanctification is the work proper of the holy Catholic Church, which affirms in it the note of its sanctifying power, to which everything is subordinated and everything ordered in its mission. As a work of the Church, it cannot be the monopoly of anyone.

25. The apostolate of universal sanctification must be the work of each one and the goal of every other initiative, and the objective of every other good work; it must be the soul of every apostolate. This apostolate requires intentions and dispositions to carry it out with heroism; it requires a commitment to doing the most and the best in everything, for love of God and neighbor.

PART X

WRITINGS OF HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 1

First Years of the Vocationary

More than history, the writings published in this section of Spirit and Life, Fr. Justin writes the theology of the history of the Society of Divine Vocations and of the Vocationary. The main author of every event is always God Trinity, who works his divine plan in and through our history, notwithstanding the obstacles placed by secondary causes, or by those, who humanly speaking, should be the main actors. Fr. Justin is far from showing off; he tries to disappear completely, and he defines himself as "foolish mind, weak heart, vulgar life, weak being, cabbage" and the like. The Society of Divine Vocations is a work of God, and God himself entrusted it to the Virgin Mary, immediate superior of all Vocationist houses. His story is not made up of great events, business and constructions, nor is it made up of numbers and successes, but of divine benevolence, interventions of Divine Providence, through priests, bishops, consecrated souls and spiritual and temporal benefactors. For those who would like to study the history of the Vocationist Congregation, in the classical sense, we recommend to read "Chiamato per Chiamare"¹ and also to consult the "Positio"², especially volume II from page 1006 to page 1066.

This is the seventh year of life for the Vocationary³. Divine Providence, in these first seven years, has brought and main-

¹ Oreste Anella, *Chiamato per Chiamare*, Vocationist Editions, Rome, 1997.

² Congregation for the Causes of Saints, P.N. 1291, *Positio super Vita et Virtutibus*, Rome, 1991.

³ This summary was written and published in *Spiritus Domini*, Easter 1927, pp. 10-12.

tained a total of well over a hundred young people, volunteer representatives of about twenty dioceses: Acerra, Amalfi, Ariano, Avellino, Aversa, Benevento, Castellammare, Isernia, Larino, Montecassino, Naples, Nola, Nusco, Oria, Policastro, Pozzuoli, Potenza, Salerno, Sorrento, Teano, Trani, Troia, Vallo.

Of all these little disciples of the Lord, many have returned to their families after a few weeks in the Vocationary. They experienced and tasted its life; the weakness of their will or the baseness of their intentions could not withstand it.

Only two are already priests, ordained on March 20, 1926⁴. Thirteen passed to diocesan and regional seminaries; fifteen joined various religious institutes. The majority of them have remained in the Vocationary; some to better study and test their specific vocations and others are waiting to reach the age and the academic formation necessary to be admitted into the novitiate; still others joined us permanently. In all, sixty students are present in the Vocationary.

The religious orders to which the Vocationary has sent some students, up to now are: Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians, Jesuits, Lazarists, Salesians and Saverians. We ignore what happened to these former students of ours. For fear of hindering, albeit minimally, the work of their present educators, we did not keep in touch with them. But we have rejoiced knowing that their new superiors were pleased with them, and that someone having completed the novitiate, was admitted to the vows. Oh, how we wish that all would remain faithful to their vocation until death! Now, in the Vocationary, at least fifteen more, our special group,

⁴ The first two followers of Fr. Justin, ordained as Vocationist priests were Fr. Salvatore Polverino and Fr. Giorgio Mele.

are preparing to follow them⁵. We would love to be able to present, every year, a good number of vocations to each and every religious order! They are our greatest love!

We started with 12 students welcomed in the poor parish house of Pianura, our Bethlehem, aiming as our first objective to reach the number of the seventy-two disciples of Jesus. We did not reach that goal yet but we are close to reaching it. Our students, during the summer vacations, have become laborers, bricklayers, carpenters and blacksmiths to enlarge the house and make it more appropriate for their formation. Temporarily we have rented another larger and more decent house. Divine providence has provided for us sufficient building land and laid the foundations of the first real Vocationary⁶.

From the divine providence we now expect, through the usual way of our work and the benevolence of others, the grace to continue the construction. The Vocationary must arise as a small (large) cenacle, around a small (or large) temple dedicated to God-Holy Spirit. Oh, if all would say: Fiat, Amen!

⁵ Father Justin respected the choices that the Vocationary's students and he made sure that those who entered with a more or less clear choice were affirmed in their decisions. Fr. Justin told a group of novices that a young man (Father Antonio di Marino, S.J.) had joined the Vocationary with the clear idea of becoming a Jesuit. After staying in the Vocationary, he asked to be a Vocationist. Fr. Justin replied: "When you came to the Vocationary you said you wanted to become a Jesuit. Go to them, because this is your vocation. Fr. Di Marino became an excellent Jesuit and taught Moral Theology at the pontifical faculty of San Luigi at Posillipo, where he had the opportunity of teaching many Vocationist students.

⁶ Following the example of the first Christians, Sister Clara Loffredo, one of the first Vocationist Sisters, sold all she had inherited from her parents and gave all the proceeds from the sale to Fr. Justin to buy the land where now stands the first Vocationary called "Deus Caritas – God is Love"!

We have tried to do everything in silence. Without any advertisement the news circulated and attracted ... not benefactors, but requests and requests for admission! Oh, how we wish we could accept all the aspirants and take them away from the contamination of the world, give them a chance, and, after testing them, consecrate them to the altar in the priesthood.

There was no shortage of benefactors, and really great ones, because they were small, poor and humble. Thanks and glory to the good parish of Pianura, which, with its intense christian life and daily charity, became worthy of being the cradle of the Vocationary.

We would like to mention that poor servant of Fossadalbero (Ferrara) who had scrambled together some money for a pilgrimage to Lourdes, hoping for a miraculous healing; she renounced her plans to send all her possessions to support religious vocations. And that good seminarian that put together alms he received for his assistance in the sacred functions, during the summer vacations sending the alms to the Vocationary.

Especially moving and encouraging are the offerings of the confreres of the diocesan clergy, because the clergy, in general, are as poor as Jesus Christ! In order to express our thanks and propose a good example we like to mention the Most Reverend Fortunato Farina with his annual offering of one thousand lire, and the Most Reverend Father Provincial of the Society of Jesus in Naples for his offering of one hundred lire, and others, for whom we are still waiting.

"Spiritus Domini" applies to itself those words of Moses to the people of God: *This month must be the first of all months, the first month of the year* (Ex 12, 2) and it arrives with the glory of the resurrection of the Lord with best wishes to all for a great Ascension moving toward the divine Pentecost.

Spiritus Domini asks *lire seven* for an ordinary subscription, in

it is also included an offering for vocations and lire twelve for a supporter subscription. It also hopes to find many generous souls who would open many scholarships for our students and many supporters for the construction of the Vocationary.

Upon ourselves and upon all we invoke the blessings of the most Holy Name, of the Sacred Heart and of the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Glory, love and will of God in all.

CHAPTER 2

To the very Reverend Vincent Cafaro¹

May 26, 1927², Ascension and St. Philip Neri

1. On the mountain of the Ascension, on the day of Jesus' return to his heavens, one of his apostles, received and transmitted to the Society of Divine Vocation the blessing of the divine founder of the holy, Catholic Church, with a vocation that is all priestly, all evangelical, all sanctifying. The apostle opened a new cenacle, gathered in it other small disciples of the teacher and Lord Jesus, he brought them close to the Virgin Mary, so that persevering unanimously in prayer they would prepare themselves to receive the Holy Spirit. To the apostle was entrusted and recommended a seed fallen from heaven and after examination, test and time, with shaky hand, not for doubtful weakness of mind, nor for fear, for lukewarmness of will, but for the sake of authority he had thrown it into the furrows of the Church³.

¹ Msgr. Cafaro was a classmate of Blessed Fr. Justin in the seminary, Pastor of the parish in Soccavo (neighboring parish of St. George's of Pianura), Vicar General of the diocese of Pozzuoli, great admirer and benefactor of the Society of Divine Vocations in the first years of foundation.

² May 26, 1927, Ascension Thursday, is the date of the first canonical approval of the Society of Divine Vocations.

³ This entire paragraph refers to Bishop Giuseppe Petrone, Bishop of Pozzuoli, who approved the Society of Divine Vocations, thus making it a reli-

2. The Lord had looked to the humility of his maidservant that he liked so much for her immaculate purity. At the announcement immediately followed the incarnation of the Word through the work of the Holy Spirit. Saint Joseph, to whom the Blessed Virgin belonged as a true bride, was neither first consulted nor even informed. He had reason to worry to such an extent as to want to secretly send away the most holy Mary because of her motherhood. But the angel intervenes promptly, makes him aware of the mystery, entrusts and recommends it to him, long before the divine child came to light. In the end, the child had to be presented and officially considered as his son.

Likewise, even though not always, every spouse of holy Church is the first vehicle of every new seed of good that comes from the sky, and he must always be its farmer, shepherd and official father since its first sprout.

3. The seed had fallen on a very high plain above sea level. A chain of hills gives the appearance of a large crater - dead or dormant? - It had fallen in the midst of mines of tuff and piperno stones, mothers of modern cities - at the foot of a Camaldolese hermitage that invites the plain to the mountains. Poor seed! Entrusted to a foolish mind, a weak heart, a vulgar life. This feeble being sowed it in the fire, later in the tuff, then in the ashes and in the clouds. He thought that doing so he would have his plant all strength and sweetness, all humble and great, all fire and sky. How did it come about that these elements scattered intact the poor seed that should

gious congregation of diocesan right. He was born in Naples on 27 August 1872, and was ordained a priest on 4 June 1898. He was appointed bishop of Pozzuoli on September 23, 1921 and received his episcopal consecration the following October 28 by the then Archbishop Michele Zezza. He died in Pozzuoli on March 23, 1933, while preparing the documentation needed to obtain the pontifical approval of the Congregation.

have been destroyed or lost? As if stunned, he found himself one evening expanding the anxieties of his feeble mind, of his weak heart, of his vulgar life at the foot of the altar of his first communion, of his first Mass, and first inspirations. He understood that other hands saved the seed from death and sterility to which he exposed and condemned it ... these other hands entrusted it to him again⁴.

4. The seed was tossed in the furrow of his native earth. The mother earth in which lives and operates every man and every city, the earth that contains, nourishes and perpetuates all living creatures, the one on which the heavens and the stars shine, that for which the seasons alternate. The fertile land which alone is the city of God and the mother of Saints: Mary! But the man with a foolish mind, weak heart and vulgar life, went every day to cultivate it to hasten its bud, and he continuously shoveled the earth around to make it more active, and watered it with tepid waters and saw with warm tears that the seed was not sprouting. Those invisible blessed hands then removed that foolish and reduced him to impotence, to a moral exile, to meditate on God's hour and wait in peace for God's hour ... which was finally approaching. He had to learn again from heaven the cultivation of that plant of heaven. Oh, what will my plant be like? He thought. And all the greatest elements of the vegetal world joined him in his great dream, but he could not foresee the future result.
5. The seedling appeared in a mystery of silence, in a mystery of cloudiness, in a mystery of drowsiness all around and also

⁴ In the decree of approval of the Congregation, the Bishop appointed Fr. Justin as the first superior general of the Society of Divine Vocations. While expressing the fact that he was restless, and kept trying everything possible for the survival and approval of the Congregation, he also touches the highest peak of humility, describing himself as "a foolish mind, a weak heart, a vulgar life."

in that foolish mind, and in that feeble heart of that unrefined life. Some of the great men passed and did not notice this new life: others glimpsed at it as a blade of grass, or as a common weed that would not have the beauty of a flower, an inebriation of sweet-scented fruit. Only a few children celebrated its birth; only some poor people smiled at it with confidence. The children and the poor surrounded it like a protective hedge; the children and the poor attracted to her the blessings of heaven. This fool wanted to eat the tender little top, as if it were a cabbage; he wanted to deprive it of the small leaves and prune the small twigs. He could have destroyed it. In fact, it grew dismal, yellowed and could not manage to stand straight; it was bent from the beginning. And the foolish one finally began to feel guilty and desolated.

6. He prostrated himself before his altar and his soul peregrinated to all the powers of intercession from purgatory to Saint Joseph; from the angels to the holy Fathers; and he was crying at the grotto of Lourdes, and he kept sowing miraculous medals and begged all heaven for its favor. He arose from the foot of the altar only to circumvent all his Pianura, singing (or moaning?) *The Litanies of the Saints*. O Divine May [month of Mary], O imminent Ascension, O near Pentecost, O Litanies of the Saints in the evangelical Rogations, official omnipotence of prayer! The mystery of silence is torn, the mystery of the penumbra, the mystery of drowsiness and the sight of the soul is opened, the hearing of the soul, all the senses of the soul are opened as God alone can open them. The hands to which the seed is entrusted are revealed, the hands that shed rays on the world because they brought Jesus to the world, because they offered Jesus to heaven⁵. O Holy Mary! O Blessed Trinity! *Ita Pater!*

⁵ Allusion to the extraordinary vision Fr. Justin had almost one year before, that he recorded in his spiritual diary, thus: "May 10, 1926, first day of the

7. The seed has been sown, sprouted and grown. The shape, nature and flowering of the plant is now taking shape. All the great trees of the garden of the Church have been thrilled in their peaks, already flourishing in heaven, seeing in the Lord the life of the new plant. It is like a new oriental sundial - climbing but not parasitic - that goes, goes and keeps going from one tree to another and it is all intertwined in large festoons and to all brings some vital sap; they humbly accept this new plant, as a mother accepts the gift of her child, as the master accepts the gift of his servant, and meanwhile their roots transmit their best sap to this new liana. This is why the liana is loaded with fires and flowers with the sweetest color, as if in each one of them were shining a rainbow⁶.

This new liana offers the sweetest fruits to every flock of lambs, to every host of doves, to every crowd of children, to every army of soldiers, to every team of workers. And Mary with those flowers and fruits makes a garland for her child, for the cradle and for the cross.

Rogations, It was given to me the certainty that the Blessed Trinity has given the Blessed Lady the office of immediate superior of the Society of Divine Vocations and therefore of all the offices, mansions, studies, works, spheres and everything. She is the authority of the Society. Glory and thanks to God and to Mary. Therefore, the established practice of having one person always present and on guard in the room dedicated to Our Lady to honor and venerate her perpetually: L. Caputo, *Vocationist Marian Devotions*, Vocationist Editions, Rome, 2010 (p. 35-44).

⁶How beautiful is this image of the Society of Divine Vocations as an eastern liana to express the mission of this new creature at the service of all religious orders and congregations, of all the dioceses and of the whole Church, uniting, serving and mutually revitalizing each other. Fr. Justin also describes the Congregation as a synthesis of the spirituality of all religious orders.

CHAPTER 3

Visits

Sunny days and May rains alternate on the small sprout of the small seed of the small Vocationist Society in its Bethlehem of Pianura! This year the most beautiful days were those in which the excellent bishops of Campagna, Ariano di Puglia, Nola, Capaccio Vallo and Policastro honored the poor Vocationary "Deus Caritas" with their visit. As when in the first years of the institution, the smile of the young bishops of Troy and Foggia, of Tricarico, and the Camaldolese bishop hermit Don Arsenio came to see us.

Visits of protectors with a friendly heart, which leave behind a wave of blessings. We are caught up in this warm current of their benevolence, and we follow them, with the heart of children more than disciples, since they accept to act as fathers of the nascent religious family.

O holy, dearest dioceses, now, perhaps, believed to be small, but so rich in great memories of a rich past; you are all going to reach again your metropolis greatness!

Please, accept and welcome with your citizenship also these new nucleuses of religious colonizers. They will cooperate on their part to make you the city mothers! Mothers of colonies of faith and holiness! O good flying crows, flying on the bell towers of the cathedrals of Puglia, spread far, telling the other towns

and villages of the new first nest that is intertwining on the city located on a triple mountain around an altar¹.

Much more, spread around asking and bringing the bread of providence to the many chicks of the new nest, you who brought it to Elijah and Paul in the desert. Keep in mind this charitable mission given to you by the good Lord, thus forgetting the injury of the name, taken from you, innocent creatures, by the enemies of the black cassocks².

Old, abandoned, crumbling, profaned convents³! Where the Lord once had his throne, his residence! Where families of chosen spiritual aristocracy were formed and lived! The spirit that hovered over you clothed you with immortality. You are resurrected and renewed for a family of souls that wants to live like the synthesis of every good spirit and every good work of every religious institution. The small Society of Divine Vocations is open to receiving all your invitations, and applies itself to collect all your fragments religiously! For us, of all past glories, there is nothing more sacred than you, O ancient houses of vocations, and center of departure and arrival of so many religious saints! The Society of Divine Vocations sings in its heart Isaiah's prophecy: *Your ancient ruins will be rebuilt; you will build on age-old foundations. You will be called Breach-mender, restorer of street to be lived in* (Is 58 12).

¹ Reference to the opening of the house-sanctuary of Bovino in the province of Foggia.

² Reference to the insult often addressed to priests, called disparagingly "black crows" because of their black cassocks.

³ Specific reference to the sanctuaries of Valleverde in Bovino, of St. Mary's of the angels in Perdifumo and of the Annunciation in Cava dei Tirreni. Fr. Justin wanted to give new life to all abandoned, desolated monasteries and convents as he did with these three, and later also with Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Mercato Cilento, St. Michael's in Laureana Cilento, St. Francis in Altavilla Silentina, and St. Francis in Acquaviva delle Fonti.

From all the centers of asceticism and from all ascetics comes to you, O child, O inexperienced, O very weak creature, the admonition to escape the noise, to withdraw into solitude, to work in silence, to strengthen, develop and spread yourself in integral humility. Be as if you were not ... Where will you find the desert? Where will you feed on oblivion?

The firefly will not even be seen; it will not even be noticed, except in broad daylight. Should we hide in the great modern city, all splendors of great holy works, of illustrious, victorious men, oceanic stream of human lives! This is why Saint Proclus directs and entrusts the little Society of Divine Vocations to the holy Bishop of his martyrdom, St. Januarius⁴. The purple color gives way to the flame of the red color in the dawn, in the sunrise, in the morning of our day! Here we go!⁵

⁴ Veiled reference to the fact that, at the time of this writing, the bishop of Pozzuoli, whose patron is St. Proclus, asked Fr. Justin to find another diocese, and as a matter of fact, he was accepted in the archdiocese of Naples, whose patron saint was St. Januarius.

⁵ At the end of this chapter, Fr. Justin affixed the date and his signature: December 11, 1928, First Sud.

CHAPTER 4

First Expansion¹

Go, my dear ones! He who envelops the souls (and certain souls with very delicate attentions) does not allow me to be present at your departure, as he kept me absent at the departure of others. I could not send you off in a better way than by going myself to enthroning the Divine Heart in a parish². I could not accompany you better than accompanying the procession of the triumph of the Sacred Heart in a village rekindled by divine fervor.

Go! The rain of flowers and confetti with which our great family of maternal hearts of our native town³ greets you is a veil of a sad and sweet flood of tears to the altar of the common offeratory and sacrifice. Oh, what a weak and tender heart the Lord has

¹ This article was published in *Spiritus Domini*, Spring 1928, pages 18-19. On a copy of this issue of *Spiritus*, with handwritten notes, Fr. Justin specifies that he is talking about the opening of the house of Baronissi, gift of the Servant of God, friend and benefactor, Bishop Fortunato Farina, who donated his family house to the Congregation.

² It is the parish of Galluccio di Vaglie, Diocese of Teano: Fr. Justin had been invited to preach and preside over the enthroning of the Sacred Heart, by the pastor, Fr. Paride Crescenzi, classmate of Fr. Justin at the Seminary of Posillipo, and external Vocationist.

³ Fr. Justin's native town of Pianura. What a wonderful tribute and gratitude to the people of St. George's parish, who in every way sustained, cared for and loved the new Vocationist family!

chosen as an instrument for great and solid things!⁴ Go, following the footsteps of St. Joseph and Mary who bring the child Jesus to the first liturgical public offertory to the Father in the temple.

Our celestial knight St. George, and the apostolic pilgrim St. James have been asked to accompany you! Go!

In the valley of the river Irno

As they go, they stop at the feet of the throne of the daughter and spouse of God, of our teacher and mother of saints, of our queen and superior. Keep them close to you, O holy Mary! Make them apostles of the Rosary for your new victories and conquests over Islam.

As they continue their journey, they arrive at Pagani. O my St. Alfonse, come to the door of your convent, open the window of your cell and bless them with an effusion of spirit to be great workers in the Lord's vineyard.

As they reach Cava dei Tirreni I implore: O my St. Alpherius, for a moment come down from your holy and blessed abbey, turn toward them those three rays that one day enlightened you.

Behold them in Salerno: O apostle St. Matthew, welcome them. Entrust to them your Gospel so that they may live it. Stabilize them in your region so that they may preach your Gospel, admit them to your banquet with the divine Teacher.

The valley of the river Irno waits to welcome them in the diocese of Salerno, the valley that is all poetry of plains and hills with plenty of houses of men and churches. A priestly soul who

⁴ Autobiographic note that indicates his emotional sanguine temperament.

wanted them in his house and who left them his own place, awaits them. An entire choir of Guardian Angels is waiting for them for a perpetual Catechetical Mission to so many children, young and adults.

Our St. Joseph (of heaven and of earth)

A small house in a vast field, walled like a hermitage awaits them at the foot of a great and beautiful Franciscan convent, near a large and beautiful church dedicated to the Blessed Trinity. After the first hut of Bethlehem, St. Joseph prepared the house of Nazareth where the young Jesus will grow in age, wisdom and grace before God and before men under his fatherly care.

There, the first small group of Vocationists found a worthy representative of St. Alphonsus, St. Alferius and of St. Matthew. A great soul of bishop, a great heart of bishop! He presented them officially to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to souls. He freed them from the discomforts of the beginning; he consoled them in the sadness of isolation, he enlivened them with his constant example of every virtue. May the glory of the Lord surround him and God's love make him blessed, this bishop of our soul and of our heart. Everything, everything, everything in our house of Nazareth is an expression of his benevolence. Everything is a gift of his generosity toward us. He is our St. Joseph on earth⁵.

⁵ Our St. Joseph on earth is the Servant of God, Bishop Fortunato Farina. How much esteem and affection for this Servant of God!

CHAPTER 5

In the Family of the Cenacle

Best Wishes

To all our brothers in the Lord and especially (if it is permissible to their last servant) to the venerable seminaries and religious houses, heartfelt wishes for the sacred divine Pentecost! May the Holy Spirit find many, many reunited from the beginning of the month of Mary, and persevering in prayer with Mary the Mother of Jesus, and therefore willing to receive his sanctifying flames. May these burning hearts make the great court of glory of love to the divine heart of Jesus in his month [June] and forever.

Gratitude

The Holy Mass celebrated in the Vocationary will be offered for all our associates and benefactors on the following festivities during the fifty days after Pentecost: Holy Trinity, St. Basil, Most Holy Body and Blood, St. John the Baptist, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Saints Apostles Peter and Paul, Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, Precious Blood, Visitation of Mary, St. Bonaventure, Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel, St. Camillus, founder, St. Vincent De Paul, founder; St. Jerome Emiliani, founder; and Mary Magdalene.

Thanks

Wholeheartedly we thank the bishops of various dioceses, the Very Reverend Abbots, Generals and Provincial Superiors of various religious orders and congregations that subscribed to our magazine and favored us with abundant blessings, help and financial assistance. We are humbled by such a great benevolence; we are intimately burning with the desire of offering them in reality what we wish to achieve with our program. We hope to do it before God.

We have received with joy the “Campana di San Paolino”, magazine of the diocese of Nola; “Cor Unum in Christo”, periodical of the regional seminary of Campania, “La Cultura” of the diocese of Ischia, and the “Voce della Verità” of the diocese of Pozzuoli. We are filled with thanks for the many gracious comments they had for the Vocationary, for Spiritus Domini and for the Society of Divine Vocations.

CHAPTER 6

Formation in the Family of the Cenacle

After the month of the Marian Rosary, we will celebrate in this parish, cradle of the Society of Divine Vocations, the popular mission preached by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The mission will conclude with the enthronization in the parish church of the image of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus and the consecration of the entire people of Pianura. The consecration will be done first, family-by-family, courtyard by courtyard (this work is already well advanced), and then by the entire town together. We will pray for the optimum success of the mission of these pious and industrious religious; we wish that they might return to their motherhouse... with a group of vocations harvested in the Vocationary.

For the past feast of the Assumption of Mary, in its novena we had spiritual exercise for several candidates to ordinations. We touched on the following topics: The meditation as the foundation of spiritual life, then meditation on the great theme: *I can, I must, I want to be Jesus*. After this we explored three agents: Jesus-man, the Holy Spirit and Mary; the Holy Spirit and the priest; the factors of Jesus-man in his mortal life and in his sacramental life; life under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and finally hints on the external associates. It was an intense apostolate of prayer and preaching. On the day of the Assumption we had the ordination of a sub-deacon and two members of the Society received minor orders. On the day of St. Joseph Calasanctius we had the conse-

cration of more men and women as external and internal associates. Thanks be to God!

Not even one stone has been added to the Vocationary under construction! Our stay in the hut of Bethlehem is prolonged! During the summer vacations, our students again became workers of stone, wood and iron, and performed small wonders and heroisms to enlarge and remodel the house. Oh, how we burn with the desire to be able to satisfy all the requests for a place! We would love to remove from the street all the small and poor aspirants to the priesthood that many reverend parish priests of many dioceses present to us.

Thanks to those who welcomed our propagandist and collector¹ and helped him on his tiring journey. We ask the same charity from all the parish priests, especially those who present us youngsters for the Vocationary: Please, welcome and help every semester, or at least once a year, our collector in your parish.

This year, even with greater rigor, we have reinforced that regulation which prohibits vacations in the family for Vocationary students. We would rather lose some students, who would like to go home at any cost, rather than loosening discipline on this point. Those who apply for admission should keep this in mind. One leaves the Vocationary only to go to seminaries, novitiates or other apostolic schools, or to return to the family, but forever, as far as we are concerned. We will not allow anyone to go home, not even for bath treatments. We are confident that, when they are really indispensable, divine providence that assists us daily with more than motherly care, will provide, but in the Vocationary. It is one of the tests of vocation; it is one of the means to preserve it.

¹Fr. Francesco Sepe was a diocesan priest; he joined Fr. Justin and became the first Vocationist priest.

Gratitude

In the Vocationary, during the fifty days between October 30 and December 18, we will offer the Holy Mass for all our associates members, protectors and benefactors on the days of: All Saints, St. Proculus, patron of the diocese of Pozzuoli; St. Felix of Valois, cofounder of the Trinitarians, Presentation of the Virgin Mary to the Temple; St. John of the Cross, Doctor of the Church; Apparition of the Miraculous Medal; St. Sylvester, founder of the Silvestrini Benedictines; St. Francis Xavier, Patron of the Propagation of Faith; St. Peter Chrisologus, Doctor of the Church; St. Ambrose, Doctor, the Immaculate Conception.

Wholeheartedly we thank the Very Reverend Idelfonso Schuster for the gift to our incipient library of three copies of the biography of Fr. Placido Ricciardi; the Most Reverend Giuseppe Palatucci of the Conventuals, who sent us several lives of Saints and Blessed of the Seraphic Order. The Rev. professor Mattia Chicchi donated to us two of his lectures and the big *Prontuario Sacro-Profano*; The Superior of the Servants of Mary also sent us many biographies of the saints of his order; the Seminarian Armando Lombardi who sent to us Volume VIII of *Liber Sacramentorum* by Schuster.

Some of the students of the Vocationary have ascertained their calling and followed it: One joined the Passionists, one the Dominicans, three the Salesians, one the diocesan seminary, seven the regional seminary. Others will shortly join other religious orders. They are not ripe fruits! The new, more substantial and suitable sap for their vocation, will bring them to perfection. We follow them with our prayers and with the perpetual wish of fidelity, generosity, and perseverance. Our prayer is more assiduous, confident and anxious for others who have left us ... that they may return.

If this periodical "*Spiritus*" were *tanquam advenientis Spiritus*

vehementis - like a violent wind coming from heaven, it could invade and fill all the houses of the clergy, all the institutes, all the seminaries, as a true messenger of the consecrating and sanctifying Spirit. Now it is nothing but a faint, feeble breath ... It does not arrive to many to whom it should arrive, and it does not succeed in shaking those who receive it, and does not enkindle in them the divine fire. If the living human spirit of that foolish mind, weak heart, and vulgar life was sufficient to obtain this change of heart it would already have been obtained. We really need each other's help!

If all the reverend parish priests, who in complying with their great duty of seeking and cultivating ecclesiastical and religious vocations, find themselves facing the often insurmountable obstacles of financial distress, knew something of the Vocationary "Deus Caritas" ... we would have many more willing and ready to suggest this or that way to make the Vocationary better known! We sincerely thank everyone, and to begin, we kindly ask that they try to do what they themselves would suggest and then ask others to do the same. Thus they will procure not only a flood of petitions for admission, but also ... something more besides.

Likewise, if all those who live in the world do not want to be totally mundane, and if all those who live in the world do not want to be totally secular, but aspire to a more perfect, more apostolic and more seraphic life, they should flee all vulgarity and disdain every mediocrity. As good servants and children of the most high God, disciples of the most holy Master ... if more knew about the Society of Divine Vocations with its center of external members, and with its spheres of associates, living as religious of God in the world, they would no longer feel isolated, discouraged, useless ... a beautiful, blessed day would spring up for them!

For the formation of our library we have received the following works: Several biographies of the Servites, amongst others, the life of Filippo Benizi written by P. Soulier from Fr. Morini of

the Servites Fathers; three copies of the life of Fr. Placido Ricciardi from the Very Reverend Idelfonso Schuster, abbot of St. Paul Outside the Walls; some lives of the saints of the Conventuals, among others: The biography of St. Joseph Cupertino by Fr. Francis, and that of St. Bonaventure by Fr. Sparaccio; *La Guida delle Anime Consacrate* in two volumes by Fr. Giuseppe Bollena, O.F.M., from the seminarian Modesto Putrella; the life of Fr. Riccardo Friedl by Fr. Ingoni from the very reverend P. Jollain, Provincial of the Jesuits, and Volume VIII of *Liber sacramentorum* by Schuster from the seminarian, Armando Lombardi. Fr. Pandolfi, pastor of Quarto, donated two volumes: *L'Educazione del Cuore* and *L'Educazione del Carattere*. Thanks to everyone for everything.

In a special way we thank Fr. Gaetano Gallone of S. Ambrogio sul Garigliano, and Fr. Pier Paolo Starace and the Mastrostefano family of Teano for the extraordinary assistance to one of our collectors. We thank Fr. Antonio Chiaro of Soccavo and Fr. Geremia Piscopo of Arzano for the collection taken up for us in their parishes in a mini Vocationary day. We thank the Rev. Professor Fr. Lorenzo Roti of Pignataro.

In gratitude, we will offer the Holy Mass in our Vocationary during the fifty days that extend from September 11 to October 30 for our members, associates and benefactors on the days of The Holy Name of Mary, Exaltation of the Cross, Sorrowful Mother, St. Matthew, Apostle, Blessed Virgin of Mercy, of St. Michael, St. Therese of the Child Jesus, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Bruno, abbot, Holy Rosary, St. Theresa of Jesus, St. Luke, evangelist, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Raphael the Archangel, Saints Simon and Jude, and Christ the King.

CHAPTER 7

Ironical Curiosities

We feel really uneasy to answer some questions about the *Vocationalary, Spiritus Domini* and the *Society of Divine Vocations*. How many students? How many teachers? What about the approval? Why do you write in verses? Why do you use numbers?

We hope that with our answers we may manifest the truth and, at the same time, encourage charity more than satisfying mere curiosity. Our answers would be more appropriate if we knew first who you are? Are you an indifferently curious? Oh, please, do not make us waste time! We multiply ourselves from morning to night, from January to December, with no vacations, marching during the day and camping out at night! What? That good former policeman at the door did not detect by seeing you that you are an indifferently curious?

Okay! Please, don't exhaust yourself! You spend more time talking about yourself than answering any question. It is clear that you have the picture of St. Francis de Sales hanging on the wall, yes, but as a show, but not at all in your spirit.

O, my dear! Heartfelt thanks! I understand well that I was wrong and I misunderstood you. You are a benevolent, curious inquirer bringing to us the benefit of good advices and lessons ... and undoubtedly something else as well. O brother, you love us. You know our concerns much better than we could ever manifest

them to you, because benevolence (can we say it?) ... is a small omniscience!

Or are you a malevolent, curious person? (There are such people too in this world). Come, dear friend, my very first benefactor. I want to tell you everything, even if that might take some entire days; they will be more full than if I would spend them preaching and teaching, hearing confessions or writing ... Come, you want to know how many we are? We are so many... so many!

Petitions for admission rain in from everywhere, and even though we cannot satisfy all requests, we receive them in our mind and in our heart, we keep these little elect of the divine vocations in our chapel, upon our altar... I understand, I am confusing you ... you do not want to know how many students we have in the chapel, but how many we have in the refectory!

Well, we have all those created by our good God and by him gathered in our Vocationary and daily nurtured by him; for God, it is indifferent to provide for them, in one place or another, in their small family of origin, or in the big adoptive family of the Vocationary... He, and he alone provides for them always!

Don't make fun of us with these sermons. We also have faith in providence ... and therefore we want to know the number of your students. You are so fond of numbers where they are not needed, and now...

- I understood! You want to know precisely the number of those who sit at the refectory of the Vocationary of bread eating men (Oh, the good Homer who brings us the good Ulysses more needy than we are!). Here: The students of the Vocationary have the good will to be seventy-two. But I cannot guarantee that this numerical goodwill does not sometimes fail either by defect or by excess.
- Come on! To whom do you want to sell this story? The line of

your students is really interminable and you want to make us believe that they are only seventy-two?

- Calm! I count the students of the Vocationary, not including in their number the pupils of our small Congregation who are also growing on their own. Since I do not know how to count the sand of the sea and the stars of the sky and all the flowers of future springs I cannot publish the exact statistics.
- Buffoon!
- We really don't know how many there are. Their old father on earth wants to be weak of memory; the fact is that they are not yet a memory and they are not and will never be a past, and they are so deeply engraved in our hearts that they seem one (himself) or at most three when he sees in the upper part of his mind.
- It is useless to continue on this theme! But how many teachers do you have in the Vocationary? I believe one ... maybe because of the perfection of the unity they are ... just one ... that old father.
- Let me tell you straight we are always aware that "Your teacher is really only one, the Christ... in the unity of the Holy Spirit". In the Vocationary we respect and reserve these sovereign names for God alone. In the natural order the teacher has never been only one, after the first year, after the so-called "First Father" came a second, and then a third... Now we have seven active teachers, I mean seven as the seven gifts, without counting two priests who are available when needed; in this number are not included those students more advanced academically who are capable of teaching something.
- And the canonical approval? I think it is enough for now! I am in such a hurry (... and I am so tired!). Please, check

the archives of the Congregation, or of the diocesan curia of Pozzuoli and you will be able to read a beautiful document. Maybe, better, without “maybe” I assure you, shortly before the atoms of the old father [myself] - through the circulation of matter - pass from being human body to being paper, pen or ink, there will be other more serious and higher approvals. Enough for now.

- What is important is that instead of expecting a big Christmas gift for yourself, you prepare one for each one of the seventy-two disciples of the Lord, who wish to each and every indifferent or benevolent reader of these pages, the most holy wishes for all the Christmas festivities.

CHAPTER 8

First Anniversary of *Spiritus Domini*

With this issue of *Spiritus Domini* we complete the first year of publication. We heartily thank all who will subscribe to our magazine and will follow us as our friends. May they help us to spread this little messenger of the Holy Spirit among the laity, the clergy, the seminaries and religious houses of men and women! We hope to continue publishing the magazine, to make the publication more frequent and to increase the number of pages. Many would like a newsletter of popular character, an organ of the spheres of external associates, a means of divine providence in favor of the Vocationary. If they really want it, they will get it!

Mourning. The first to favor us of his subscription to *Spiritus* was the Very Reverend Fr. Stefano Loffredo, rector of the church of St. Martino (Pozzuoli). He has concluded his austere and industrious priestly life of true zeal with a pious death. His secluded house was often the destination of our students' walks for whom he always had edifying words and a friend's gift. He loved the Vocationary because he understood its importance and never stopped recommending it to the generosity of the faithful. Thus, for example, at the end of the months of Mary and of All Souls, which he celebrated with great devotion, he always proposed and obtained an abundant collection and offerings for the Vocationary. May the good Lord reward him in heaven and from there may he continue to raise many imitators of priestly virtues and his charity for us too.

Mystical and Romantic Literature: We have received “*O Mio Dio Trinità che Adoro*” by Vandeur (Ed. Libreria Fiorentina) and “*An- nia*” by Pio Ciuti (Ed. Giannini e Figli - Napoli).

By God’s grace the souls keep ever more centering and elevating themselves on the mystery of the Trinity in itself and indwelling in us. Sister Elizabeth of the Blessed Trinity, a young religious sister of the Carmel of Dijon, will pass to history as one of the most outstanding souls in her correspondence to the grace of this divine union. Vandeur, a Benedictine monk, takes one of her prayers and makes it a theme of truly sublime elevations that for many will be a revelation.

With the novel by Ciuti we think that we no longer have much to envy to foreign writers, for those beautiful and good works such as *Fabiola*, *Ben Hur*, *Quo Vadis*. The *Annia* is of the same kind. For *Annia* it may seem disadvantageous that came after them. But who can blame this masterpiece for this reason? Welcome: *Annia*!

The friendship, with which some venerable seminaries, following the example of graciousness and protection of their respective bishops, begin to honor us, is a great encouragement and consolation for us. Allow us to thank publicly, for the help they offer us, the seminaries of the Abbey of SS. Trinità of Cava dei Tirreni, of Aversa, of Salerno, of Campagna and of Troy, not to mention the Seminary of Pozzuoli and the regional seminary of Campania that made us servants and ministers of the Lord. Good seminar-ians should understand that among the ways of cultivating one’s vocation there is also that of helping the children of the people to cultivate theirs. Thus the seminaries, as in a holy covenant, give support to the Vocationary, which, in turn, will be eternally obligated to them.

CHAPTER 9

Second Anniversary of Spiritus Domini

This number of *Spiritus Domini* is published as a double issue containing the one for Easter and the one for Pentecost. So it brings a bundle of wishes for several Christian holidays ... but there are few subscribers!

Best wishes to you, small presumptuous magazine! May you become more humble, to enter more doors, to be in more hands and bring more blessings and help to your dear friends. See, your friends are so happy to see you, and they make you understand it all the time offering you an icy welcome, and they keep proving it to you by not reading you in your entirety!

You were hoping to find a place, more than on the study-desk of your readers, on their kneeler of prayer, since they need your external help for their daily elevations and perpetual contemplation! Yet in vain you have multiplied thousands of copies from the first fruits of your spiritual songs! They will remain useless clutter on shelves, or on your stomach, or in your pockets, for lack of anything else!

The Divine Spirit whom you announce, certainly did not wait for you to fill Sion with his ineffable words, and to fill his people with his glory! As the saints of the Old Testament prayed: *Fill Zion with your praises and your sanctuary with your glory - Reple Sion inenarrabilibus verbis tuis et gloria tua populum tuum* - (Si 36 14).

Don't you see how your spiritual songs are imbued with pri-

vate personality? Perhaps, someone in the future can enjoy them; someone, who, for particular reasons, may also love this private person, when he cannot receive any harm, having been silenced by death.

What did you expect? Did you pretend to be the object of study with those abstruse articles of yours that wrap in cold tangles of shadows the most luminous and warm subject of catholic theology, the spirit of love? Suspend for a while that little study on the third divine person and no one will be bothered to ask you to continue it; maybe someone would even send you a special "thank you" for less annoyance. Believe me, it is not enough to speak of the Spirit of love to be loved, and it is not necessary to address the uncircumcised mind and heart to find resistances, oppositions and contradictions. You caressed an intimate dream and lived a desire. You thought you would be able to find a place in readers' hearts, and implicitly despised all the other magazines and periodicals that tend and manage to find a place in readers' pockets and find a more or less large space. You dreamed and wished to make some space but to find space in the hearts in order to sow a germ of heaven. You were really bold more than naive! The hearts that you solicited are already full of the Lord and already live in his heaven; you do not find in them any place. If they loved you they would have spoken of you to someone; they would have given something to your children, they would have procured some friends for you! You should know that the mouth speaks, the hand acts and life is guided by the abundance of the heart! No one considered your pages as a letter personally addressed to him, and no one felt the need to respond.

Not even the members of your religious family, from whom you could have demanded it, felt the need to say *thank you* or to respond.

I do not deny that this answer of yours, this prayer of yours was brilliant, was inspired and could truly gather and animate a

family of souls in an ideal monastery of ascetics, in an ideal coenobium of apostles. But, be patient, you have the possibility and the capability to repeat at any time this proposal of yours, perhaps your brilliant idea, this inspired prayer of yours!

When we really want to reach a goal we need perseverance in the use of means. Would you expect your friends to go every day to re-read your first covers of the past year, in which you asked so many things and this one among others? Did you ask them to make another particular examination of conscience about your desires?

Come on ... Let us be reasonable and practical! Many ask for a more popular paper that talks about the Vocationary, relating more facts and fewer words, capable of procuring adoptive mothers to these little elected and endowed with vocations, and making benefactors and friends aware that stone upon stone is being added to the Vocationary. (A paper that can make a little noise, throw a little dust in the eyes. What do you expect? The world is like that!). You had almost been guaranteed it! Now the few subscribers have hurried not to send you a subscription for a New Year. Take courage and be strong with so many powerful members!

Best wishes to you, O presumptuous little magazine!

We would like (we repeat it again and we do it in a more subdued tone, with a more anxious heart, and also with more lively hope), we would appreciate if each diocesan bishop, superior of orders and religious congregations, institutes and pious organization would send us a great word of blessing, with permission to share those words in *Spiritus Domini*, for our encouragement and common edification.

We would like if every soul, who in one way or another, hears about *Spiritus*, would remember us, our students and works before the Lord, especially when celebrating Holy Mass and Communion, and benediction and when praying the breviary and rosary.

We wish that anyone who reads these pages will consider each item as a letter sent to him personally, and that he may answer, directly to the Spirit of God and indirectly also to us by mail.

We ask anyone, who, in a way or other, receives this small periodical, in honor of the holy Apostles, to procure for us twelve other subscriptions from people full of life and zeal, who in turn can help us to form more and more apostles.

We beseech everyone to help us, in any shape or form, to sustain our young seventy two disciples of Jesus and to enable us to continue and complete the building of the Vocationary Deus Caritas and to establish other Vocationaries, and to make this small periodical bigger and better.

We would like to receive as almsgiving many good and beautiful books for the formation of our internal libraries and for circulating libraries available for external associates. We would also like to receive complimentary copies of good catholic magazines of every kind.

We would like Religious Orders, Congregations, and Institutes of men and women, to maintain a place in the Vocationary and send us the lives, images and relics of their saints, especially of the saint founders, so that they may be known and inspire our young people whom the Lord will call to their respective orders.

We would like everyone to enter into our spheres, since all can do it easily and profitably. May many come to serve the Lord with us in the Vocationaries and similar concentric works, workers, teachers and priests, all as true members of the Society of Divine Vocations, in the divine union.

We would like all those who receive this issue of Spiritus Domini to send us promptly their subscription in order to have the honor of sending them the third ... fourth ... and so on.

CHAPTER 10

Twelve teams

We want to present the twelve teams of voluntary and precious auxiliaries of the Vocationary.

They have been formed slowly, almost spontaneously, but with all the necessary permissions of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities. They are not a simple committee, nor a properly formed patronage. They are a sphere of external associates of the Society of Divine Vocations; they are not yet a third sphere, but much more than a second sphere.

Most members are laborers who want to multiply and intensify their work in order to provide a home and bread for the Vocationary. They are almost all fathers of families, who now extend their attention and paternal care also to the larger family of the Vocationary.

They are good Christians who want to cultivate their vocation to holiness, cooperating in the formation of vocations of the elect of the Lord. It is not the solicitude of a man who brought them together, but the spirit of faith and love that raised them. It is not the hope of a human reward that sustains them, but the ideal of the kingdom of heaven, which captivated them, like the model of Jesus among the twelve apostles, among his seventy-two disciples, on earth and in heaven. The Vocationary gave them the word of God in abundance, every day. The Church has fed them bread from heaven, the Blessed Sacrament with great abundance

every day. The Word of God led them to an exuberant youth of supernatural life and they now feel the need for holy works and effusions among the brothers.

They made theirs our desire to build a temple to the glory of the love of the Blessed Trinity in their Pianura.

In three more years they will see seven young priests whom they helped to respond to the divine vocation ascend to new altars.

Team I

Zeccone Florindo
Di Dio Antonio
Manna Stanislao
Nugnes Ferdinando
Fontana Salvatore
Di Mare Casimiro
Pomaretto Costantino

Team II

Polverino Vincenzo
Di Vicino Vincenzo
Costantino Giuseppe
Varchetta Vincenzo
Testa Giorgio
Mele Vincenzo
Russolillo Salvatore

Team III

Di Costanzo Giorgio
Di Costanzo Giovanni
Di Fusco Salvatore
Mele Giuseppe

Scogliamiglio Giovanni
Varchetta Felice

Team IV

Di Fusco Beniamino
Mangiapia Serafino
Sorrentino Giorgio
Polverino Ferdinando
Di Fusco Luigi
Polverino Eduardo
Lanzaro Diodato

Team V

Marrone Giuseppe
Pacileo Carlo
Cicchetti Raffaele
Mangiapia Francesco
Castiglione Paolo
Di Fusco Giorgio
Longobardi Salvatore

Team VI

Mele Raffaele
Trenca Giovanni
Varchetta Felice
D'Angelo Giorgio
Polverino Ferdinando
Del Vecchio Pietro
Supino Domenico

Team VII

Romano Giuseppe
Varchetta Vincenzo
Di Fusco Salvatore

Mele Giuseppe
D'Alessandro Salvatore
Mangiapia Salvatore
Di Costanzo Emidio

Team VIII

Di Fusco Gennaro
Saggiomo Luigi
Migliaccio Carlo
D'Angelo Josuè
Di Fusco Luigi
Di Costanzo Luigi
Trenca Vincenzo

Team IX

Russo Alfonso
Sorrentino Giorgio
Varchetta Tobia
Mele Vincenzo
Polverino Luigi
Fontana Vincenzo
Scognamiglio Giovanni

Team X

Lanzaro Diodato
Del Vecchio Pietro
Di Costanzo Giorgio
Supino Domenico
Di Costanzo Giovanni
Varchetta Vincenzo
Cioce Tobia

Team XI

Scherillo Vincenzo

Di Costanzo Luigi
Di Fusco Giorgio
Fontana Vincenzo
Scherrillo Salvatore,
Migliaccio Carlo
Simeoli Domenico

Team XII

Riccio Giorgio
Scognamiglio Giovanni
Cioce Fortunato
Pacileo Carlo
Romano Giuseppe
Di Vita Giorgio
Vincenzo Alfonso

CHAPTER 11

The Book of the Offertory of the Precious Blood

A Catalogue! This is how we can define this poor book. A book-catalogue! It is a catalogue of graces. Every company offers its catalog! This is the catalog of the Society of Divine Vocations. Next to each grace is indicated its respective price: The Blood of Jesus Christ! Every verse, every number of the book is like a bonus to buy a grace ... as long as the buyer gives ... in gratitude and in the grace of the Master-God! Unfortunately, despite the care of one of our Reverend Confreres, to whom we are very grateful, there are many printing errors that obfuscate thoughts and expressions. The book costs a little too much (Lire 8.50).

Holy Masses for the Friends of the Institute

In each previous issue of the magazine, we indicated the days on which we offered the Holy Mass in the Vocationary for our benefactors, friends and associates. Now, no more! Is our gratitude so cold? We no longer indicate the days because since November 15, 1929, every day the Director offers Mass for the intentions of all those who have done or will do something good for us.

Someone, considering our dire poverty, deemed this excessive. But this someone certainly did not have the correct idea of religious poverty, which is wealth of a superior order. This "someone" was not in the number of our generous benefactors. The di-

rector personally celebrates his daily Mass for our benefactors and their intentions, except on the days when he cannot due to other obligations, such as the days when he is obliged to offer Mass for the people of the parish. On those days another priest offers the Mass for our benefactors and associates.

Catechetical Missions

We deem it convenient and useful to publish this outline of guidelines for the Catechetical Missions. We think that it is sufficient to give an idea of these missions, to help us understand their utility. These Guidelines are the fruit of the Lecture dictated and of the desires proposed and approved by the Catechetical Congress of Naples¹ (1928). We did not want to talk about it before testing it practically. It is the experiment repeated several times, in various parishes of various dioceses; it has been deemed successful and fruitful. Now, the Vocationists offer these catechetical missions only during the summer vacations, when the priests and the professed brothers are free from school and enjoy their vacation, not ceasing to work, but changing the type of work they do. It is a healthy change of work ... healthy training for the major ministries, good exercise of the spiritual energies stored in man. Whoever would like to have these missions can request them now.

A book

To the summary of *Mystical and Ascetical Theology* of Tanqueray, translated into Italian, a book very useful and opportune for

¹This Lecture on the *Catechetical Missions* is published in Volume VII of Fr. Justin Works, published by Vocationist Editions, Florham Park, New Jersey, 2019, pages 47-66.

our necessary religious culture, we like to add now, with great satisfaction of the spirit, "*Dottrine Spirituali*" (Spiritual doctrines) written by Rev. Fr. Angelo Portalupi (Ed. Morcelliana of Brescia). It is a true excursion through the history of christian religiosity, very rapid in truth, but the book is sufficient to "see the ways of God in consciences, to make contact with so many voices of superior souls ... to investigate different methods through which the Lord calls to himself and strengthens their determination to keep growing through the gift of wisdom." We did not have anything like this in Italian. We point it out to those who want to educate themselves in spirituality, not because we received it as a gift, but, because several times we have suggested some books, which in our poor opinion, can really benefit souls.

Ecce Homo!

The establishment of scholarships for the Vocationary ... and for all Vocationaries is a necessity. There is a family, there is a soul (and in that family they are all like a single soul) that after having made itself meritorious in extraordinary ways and generosity, extended its charity, with the spirit and work of a mother (and it is precisely the first one) even to the small Society of the Divine Vocations. As we now have the first floor of the first wing of the Vocationary of Pianura, we also have the beginning of a series of scholarships named after the mystery of the sacrifice and blood of Jesus, in the culminating scene in the process of the passion, among the "crucify" of the people and the cowardice of the judge, "Ecce Homo!" We do not say its name for now, it would be inappropriate because the beneficiaries are many, and ... because the family wants to sanctify itself in christian modesty and humility. We have the first scholarship! Now, we wait for the ... seventy-second ... nothing easier than finding seventy-two people who ... etc. etc.

Series of Lives of the saints

It is a series of over twenty books both large and small, each one of them narrates the life of a saint. The simplicity and naturalness with which the various authors, in different styles, carefully sketched the great figures of the servants of God is admirable. Characteristic of each book is the solid veneration and affection with which the authors surround the saints and follow them from the cradle to the honor of the altars. Some more, some less, all these saints' lives had great success and widespread circulation not only among the people but also among the members of religious and academic institutes.

CHAPTER 12

We also must Sacrifice our Life for our Brothers¹

And the soul shrank under the weight that was tough also for the angels. What weight? The greatest cross! At the bottom of every street of man there is a Calvary, and on Calvary is outlined a cross, on which one day will be consummated the supreme act of worship, the sacrifice. For the Savior and Father of the souls the whole route winds along rugged heights of a chain of Calvaries, one flattened after the other, and then one surmounting the other. At the top dominates a cross, like those placed on the mountain peaks by pious faithful. It may seem small only because it is seen from a distance. It may seem like gold and gems only when it is totally enwrapped by the sun. It may seem beautiful and sweet only when it is seen in a dream or worn visibly around the neck. As for carrying the cross, it is enormously grave, enormously weighty because it is the result of the fusion of many crosses, as

¹This writing was published in *Spiritus Domini* of July 1934 with the heading: *For the Episcopal Consecration of the Most Reverend Alfonso Castaldo*.

Castaldo, Bishop of Pozzuoli and later Cardinal Archbishop of Naples, in addition to being diocesan bishop was also a secret Apostolic Visitor for the Congregation. His differences of opinion, his determination to make the Vocationist Congregation a congregation at the exclusive service of the Diocese of Pozzuoli and some shortcomings of the beginnings of the religious family caused considerable sufferings, inconveniences and slow-downs; nevertheless Castaldo always enjoyed the esteem, affection and unconditional obedience of Fr. Justin.

many as the thousands of souls of the flock. It is ordered to a sacrifice resulting from the sum of all the priests, and lower ministers.

If the applauses of hosanna resound around, it is due to the courage of those who walk peacefully, even in the struggle, and radiantly also ascend in pain. If "*Ecce Sacerdos magnus*" resounds around and inside, the soul is well aware that she must interpret it with *Ecce sacrificium magnum - behold the great sacrifice*. Priesthood and sacrifice are terms always interconnected. The fullness of the priesthood corresponds with the fullness of sacrifice. The soul keeps trying to avoid the weight of the heaviest cross.

I see the heaviest cross coming to life; it rises, advances and gets closer to the soul; it is carried by thousands of guardian angels of the peoples and animated by Jesus, who in perpetuity sacrifices himself on it. Only for you, O angels, only for you, O Jesus, the soul says her *fiat* (*let it be done*) to the cross of so many other souls and in turn she is also revived, advances and draws closer to the cross. The cross will shine on her chest!

I will lead you into Solitude. Come and follow me

... The soul felt the need of solitude, the glorious need of every great souls, and every new interior elevation sharpens until it becomes a torment. Not the solitude of inertia and emptiness, but the solitude in which the Word of God resounds, the solitude in which the Spirit of God burns. Only the God who inspires this desire can satisfy it. God himself guides the soul into solitude: *Come, follow me!* The soul follows and meanwhile goes dreaming of a desert or a cloister. Look at the city and the crowd! Do not fear; do not be troubled! God who is faithful leads the soul there, not to submerge her in the sea of the crowd, not to scatter her in the chaos of the modern city, but to raise her up over the city like a peak, to elevate her over the crowd like a star. The resounding solitude of the word of God is found among the angels, his prime

ministers. The angels do not populate the woods and deserts; they crowd instead the mass of men. And, behold you as a priest are elevated to a high role! You are more alone! When you were a child a multitude of your fellows surrounded you; they got close to you. When the child segregated himself from the world and entered the seminary, the multitude fell away, but still a good number of companions were around him. When the cleric ascended to the altar, that number had already diminished around him! When the priest was entrusted with the care of souls, he began to be alone, in his limited area; only outside his small area could he find a fellow priest. When the priest is elevated even higher, he remains completely alone in an entire region.

Around him there is always a more intense labor, a larger battle, a wider chorus, but the voice of the command echoes alone, it must resound alone. At the bottom of the heart, on the part of men, there is a void! And the soul in solitude turns to her God with more heartfelt necessity and more tenacity. This is what both the soul and God desire.

Do you love me more than these? Feed my lambs

How many times my soul has been troubled by anxiety of the most intimate and piercing doubt: Do I really love the Lord? Since charity is indissolubly united to grace, only from its presence and activity in the soul can I discern the presence and activity of grace. Meanwhile, man does not know if he is worthy of love or hate. One day Jesus and the soul met more specifically and approached each other more confidentially and Jesus revealed to the soul that anxiety of the subtlest and transfixing doubt. He said: *Do you love me more than these others?* The soul remains pacified and enthusiastic, because the simple question: *Do you love more than others* is first of all a security, a divine affirmation that she loves him! But: More than others? You know it, Lord! The soul does not dare to

affirm it. As the soul is being asked three times, she keeps always replying with a more heartfelt assertion: *You know that I love you*. I know it too, because I feel it; but I don't dare to tell you that I love you more than others. You know it, Lord!

The Lord knows it, and wants to reveal it to the soul with the highest act of trust, with the most glorifying imperative, with the most divine mission. It is true, I, your Lord and your God, tell you: You love me more than others, and therefore I entrust others to you. May you lead them to the throne of God! And the throne of God among men is you, my prime minister. May you lead them to the source of truth! And the divine spring is in your lips! May you lead them to the banquet of love, which is prepared on your heart, because I find it true that you love me more than others.

Pianura: from the Vocationary *Deus Caritas*
Justin M. Russolillo
of the Vocationists

CHAPTER 13

Fr. Procolo Limoncelli¹

Fr. Procolo Limoncelli was born in Pozzuoli on July 11, 1842. His honest and dignified family lived in a modest residence close to the cathedral. As a child he had a wonderful Christian formation. He was alive and daring, but good.

Some elderly people remembered him as a child running happily around the bell tower, but without offending or disturbing anyone.

Feeling in his heart the vocation to serve God and segregating himself as much as he could from the world, he joined the clerics called Sacramentalists in Portici, founded by the Servant of God Fr. Raffaele Fiorelli, and there, totally dedicated to the mystical life with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, spent his youthful years. With the consent of the bishop of Pozzuoli, Msgr. Purpo, he was ordained a priest.

¹ Fr. Procolo Limoncelli was for many years confessor of the seminary of Pozzuoli. Fr. Justin had him for many years as his confessor and spiritual director. From him, Fr. Justin learned to practice devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, a deep sense of poverty and bodily mortification. Fr. Procolo, who appreciated the talents and spirituality of Fr. Justin, first when he was a seminarian and later as a young priest, pastor and founder, was very generous with wise counsels. He guided and sustained Fr. Justin in the project of dedicating his life to searching and cultivating vocations.

Very soon after his ordination the storm came; the Italian liberal government in 1866 dissolved orders and religious congregations and confiscated their houses and monasteries. Fr. Procolo had to return to Pozzuoli with his family where he formed a cell in his room and spent his days, when he could not remain in the nearby cathedral. In fact, getting up very early, he would start praying, waiting for the nearby church to open. When the hour came, he speedily walked in and with great fervor prepared himself for the holy sacrifice of the Mass. He celebrated with the greatest possible devotion, remaining silent and often absorbed for a few minutes so that his Mass did not last less than fifty minutes.

Full of charity to all, invited by the canons to celebrate the conventual Mass sung to substitute the oldest or those occupied in other ministries, Fr. Procolo chanted the conventual Mass every day, except on Sundays, when he celebrated in the church, where the need was greater. When he was not celebrating until noon, he spent the entire morning kneeling by the holy sacrament in the tabernacle. At Vesper he was again there, in front of Jesus, always praying with fervor. Only as a courtesy, he allowed some friends to join him for a short walk that he almost always took in silence. Then, again he was before the Blessed Sacrament until evening.

He loved chastity; he fled contacts with women, young or old, and if while walking, he noticed that a group of women was approaching, he hastened his walk to prevent any possible temptation. Forced by the bishop to listen to the sacramental confessions, at first he wanted only to hear the confessions of men. Later, again out of obedience, he resigned himself to hearing women's confessions with the greatest severity and prudence.

While hearing confessions he learned that St. Mark's church, humid and far away from his house, near the temple of Serapis, needed a priest. This church has been demolished for the reclamation work at the Torre's district. The church was very low, almost below sea level due to the ongoing erosion of the soil of Pozzuoli.

This church had been neglected; it was dusty and devoid of everything. He went every morning to this church accompanied by a young penitent of his. In order to avoid the noise and confusion of the square of Pozzuoli, he walked through more distant streets. He took care of all needs and expenses of the church; he was assisted by some of his penitents, to whom he was very grateful.

He did not allow any collection of money. A good woman, who took care of the lamps and the wax for the altar, spent the little money that the faithful dropped in the offerings' box. Fr. Procolo never touched money. After celebrating his long and fervent Mass in the church of St. Mark, he would go to the confessional and stay there sometimes until noon.

At Vespers he went out to his church or to another church to hear confessions or to pray. Compelled by doctors to take long walks, and not having other time available, he often took his amblings in the hours after midday, even in the summer sun. He walked fast and on solitary roads. Most of the times he arrived at the cemetery, where he paused to pray for the dead.

He was exemplary for the mortification of his body. His food was scarce and very simple; he did not drink wine, but a clay crock with water was next to him to accompany his very modest meal. He maintained silence as much as he could, but he became very eloquent when he had to uphold the rights of God, the Church and morality.

He was heartily charitable toward neighbors and gave all he possessed, distributing the alms of the Mass and the little income from his family inheritance to those in need.

He was very fervent in prayer. At his waistline pended a long rosary of fifteen decades that touched his feet. He consecrated the whole day to prayer and never missed celebrating the divine sacrifice, even when he was sick and exhausted.

He endured with patience the natural weaknesses of the body, tired and tormented by the labors and penances that for the love of Jesus and Mary were not spared. He received Holy Communion every day until the day before his death. Two days before dying he asked the priest who assisted him not to abandon him anymore. Before he died he wanted to recite Compline of the Divine Office together with the assistant priest. He passed away on January 19, 1923, pronouncing the sweet names of Jesus and Mary. The people wept for him and recommended themselves to his prayers. His funeral was very solemn and all the clergy and the bishop participated. People had never seen the body of a priest followed by so many mourners. Since his death many devotees do not cease to recommend themselves to him and hope that God will glorify him.

CHAPTER 14

Msgr. Nicola Causa¹

We keep seeing him as we saw him on the most sacred days and hours of our youth, in his exercise of prayer and preaching. His person always radiated as a soul that lives in the presence of the Lord, imbued with the same spirit of adoration to the divine majesty, pierced by the holy fear of divine judgments, always ready to carry out every indication of the divine will with loving fidelity.

When he was in prayer as in the celebration of Holy Mass and in prolonged thanksgivings in the hours of Eucharistic adoration, in the recitation of the canonical hours, the edification became compelling.

This continuous preaching by the holy example confirmed the preaching properly so-called, to which he was continually invited

¹ Msgr. Causa was born in Pozzuoli on June 4, 1848 and died on March 17, 1939. He was confessor and spiritual director of Fr. Justin. The friendship and spiritual harmony between the two was such that the professors of the seminary often called the canon: "the grandfather of Justin." According to Fr. Anella, this profile of Canon Causa "is an autobiographical page of the grandchild become adult." Besides being a living example of prayer, mortification and preaching, he was one of those who worked very hard, especially as Vicar General of the diocese, to prevent the work of Fr. Justin from taking root outside of the diocese of Pozzuoli, notwithstanding the tenacious opposition of bishop Michele Zezza.

by the confreres and superiors. He was continually led to preach zealously by his zeal for the eternal health of souls. We have in our hands the manuscripts of his sermons of the early years of his priestly ministry. We were struck by the fact that immediately after the theme, explicitly indicated, we find, as in a warning to himself, the supernatural intention for which he preached the sermons. With the passing of time the multiple and demanding occupations and the fullness of the interior divine word made the written preparation unnecessary. It became sufficient to preach *ex abundantia cordis*, concentrating himself in prayer for a few moments in obedience to the mission received.

The effects of his apostolic words on the eternal truths, and even more on the themes of corporal mortification, obedience, devotion to the Blessed Mother and to the divine crucifix are still deeply rooted in our soul. When he preached on these sacred themes he became more radiant than usual and became more communicative, impacting on the awareness of the audience. The austerity of non-ordinary penance gave substantial food to the elevations of his genuine apostolic eloquence. Some laconic words of his found written on the paper that wrapped some of his tools of penance, say the high and very pure intention that animated the practice of his corporal mortification: *Ad excitandam Caritatem* - to kindle and ignite the flame of love. All that is done against the imperfect love of our own self is beneficial to the uncreated supernatural love of God and neighbor. He led with a sure hand to the perfection of charity through the classic ways of traditional asceticism all the souls who relied on his spiritual direction, in addition to his sacramental ministry. The simplicity, the brevity and the security of his answers reveal the expertise and the competency in the matters of the spirit and the consoling and sanctifying effectiveness in the souls with whom he worked. This all revealed the presence of the divine master and of the Holy Spirit in their faithful servant.

CHAPTER 15

In Memoria Aeterna erit Iustus¹

Short History

Antonio Palmieri as a youngster was among the first students in the nascent Vocationary. The attraction to priestly life soon became in him an aspiration to religious life through the relationship of intimacy of spirit with the one who gave origin to the Vocationist Congregation. He was continually aware of his vocation to holiness and responded by binding himself early and forever to God, with the holy vows of the evangelical counsels, to which he added the vow of perseverance in the institute². Thus he dis-

¹ Fr. Antonio Palmieri was born in Pianura on September 10, 1906 and died at Orte on March 30, 1934. His premature death left a great void in the heart of Fr. Justin and of the entire Vocationist family. This obituary written by Fr. Justin and published in *Spiritus Domini* of May 1934 points out the profound spiritual intimacy of spirit between Fr. Justin and his favorite disciple, who became the first Vocationist in heaven. It is very important the detail of the vow of charity to the third degree that Fr. Palmieri had professed following the example of his spiritual father and teacher. More than a short history of the natural life, this is the history of the spiritual growth of a soul that in a very short period of time has become soul-spouse of God-Trinity and the incarnation of true vocationistality.

² In imitation of the vow of stability of the Benedictines, Fr. Justin wanted that the Vocationist should add to the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience a fourth vow of perseverance in the Congregation. The revisers of our Constitutions did not accept this desire, and yet it remains in a veiled form in the solemn promise of "Fidelity to the Holy family in the Congregation."

posed himself to be led by grace to the holy vow of charity at the second degree.

The fidelity to his vocation and to his sanctification was put to the test by the illness that caught him from the end of the philosophical studies through the first year of theology. After careful, slow, prolonged struggle, he won and was elevated by grace to join himself to the Lord with the sublime vow of charity in the third degree and to consume his life in the service of vocations.

He wanted to take the name "Of the Immaculate Conception" and as his motto by lot had that of the prophet Isaiah: *In doctrinis glorificate Dominum - Glorify the Lord in his teachings* (Is 24 15). He was among those who signed the petition for the canonical diocesan, and, later, pontifical approval of the Society of Divine Vocations, in which he served as the first General Secretary.

Having been entrusted to his religious family the venerable seminary of Orte, he was appointed first rector. He leaves a sweet memory of himself and remains a source of blessings as one who was beloved in this world, and willed by God first professed member and first Vocationist priest in eternity, on the very day of Jesus' sacrifice, Holy Friday of the nineteenth centenary year of redemption. He is the first fruit of the Congregation to open to the confreres the eternal in coelis habitatio - the eternal dwelling in heaven.

For Holy Easter of Resurrection

We do not like to wish resurrection to all those who are in communion of spirit and works with us. We only wish, always and ever more elevated ascensions in God Trinity.

Every resurrection supposes a preceding death, which is something that does not deserve to be and live in us! And yet

there is something in us that must die, the world with its endless threads ties us to it from every corner. They must be cut one by one when they are not cut altogether at once, so that the soul may freely ascend to God-Trinity.

Wholeheartedly we wish and pray that you may be resurrection for the many fellow human beings who lay in the shadow of death, polluting the human environment with the smell of corruption. This indeed is our wish!

Through our ministry the Lord wants to be resurrection and life for all. Through the ministry of all of you who live the spiritual life, Jesus wants to resonate on every tomb, clearly and loudly, the vocation to new life.

Let us all be angels of the resurrection!
God has empowered us to do it.
This is the mission God has entrusted to us.³

³ The Italian edition of this volume continues with Part XI containing religious songs and hymns written by Fr. Justin. Some of these songs are still popular in Pianura and in the Vocationist Communities.

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