

# The Spiritual Conferences



of Mother Leopoldina Naudet

***CONFERENZE SPIRITUALI***

A cura delle Sorelle di Marzana

May 31, 2009

English Translation

Rev. Joseph Henchey, C.S.S.

2014

**TABLE of CONTENTS****Biographical Note****Introduction to the Text****The Conferences**

1. Perfection
2. The Superior
3. St. Ignatius on Humility
4. Regarding Aridity and Consolation in Prayer
5. Concerning the Art of Governing
6. Internal Mortification
7. Steps taken by the Bartoli Novices
8. Instruction of St. Jean Frances de Chantal, Superior of the Visitation Community
9. Passages from a letter of Blessed de Chantal of the Visitation Community
  - What Means One Would Need In Founding a Community
  - Special Concerns regarding those who are Novices.
  - How necessary is Poverty of Spirit.
  - What is maintained today as necessary to inspire Novices from  
any unnecessary baggage and dangerous imperfections they  
might have.
10. Letter of St. Francis de Sales to a Superior
11. Conference regarding the Sprit of the Institute
12. Concerning Seeking the Lord in Truth - the Conference also treats of Charity.
13. Self Knowledge
14. Discretion
15. For Religious Sisters
16. Self Love
17. Humility
18. Obedience
19. Obedience
20. Obedience
  - Example
  - Further Considerations
21. Statements of St. Teresa regarding Obedience
22. Concerning Prayer
23. Prayer
24. Vocal and Mental Prayer
25. Concerning the Light of God and that of Faith
26. He is One Alone, and All stands before Him.
27. A Conference regarding Simplicity
28. Patience
29. Questions to be asked of a Postulant.
30. What needs to be known from those who are admitted
31. Questions, etc.
32. Temptations
33. Concerning the Temptation of the Devil regarding our own Will and how he often  
deceives us.
34. Solitude for One's Own Soul

35. Zeal for Souls [St. Teresa].
36. Concerning the travail and Crosses of the Soul
37. Love of God
38. Conference on Mortification, considered on the Day of Retreat in the month of October.
39. Conference regarding Death
40. Retreat Day Conference
41. Concerning the Passion of Jesus Christ
42. Self Emptying
43. Concerning Divine Charity.
44. At the Table of the Lamb
45. Perseverance
46. [No Conference]
47. The Altar of the Most Holy Cross
48. For the Day of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, March 25<sup>th</sup>.
49. Conference on the Ascension
50. For the day of the Lord's Ascension
51. For the Novena of Pentecost.
52. Conference given on the Feast of St. Michael, the Archangel, September 29<sup>th</sup>.
53. Nine Principles Virtues of St. Francis [Feast on October 4<sup>th</sup>] from which he merited outstanding Graces from the Lord.
54. Prayer of St. Francis
55. St. Francis: Obedience
56. St. Francis: Poverty
57. St. Francis: Exhortation of the Saint on the Meditation on the Passion
58. St. Francis: Patience and Humility
59. St. Francis: Poverty of Spirit.
60. St. Francis: Spiritual Caution and Consideration.
61. Conference on the Virtues lived on the Feast of St. Teresa [October 15].
62. A Letter of St. Francis Xavier
63. Conference on the Feast of St. Francis Xavier.
64. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception [December 8<sup>th</sup>]
65. Conference delivered during the Christmas Novena – on Recollection.
66. On the Genuine Wisdom and Light of the Lord [December 16].
67. Regarding Simplicity – December 17<sup>th</sup>.
68. External Mortification – December 18<sup>th</sup>
69. Three Christmas Meditations - Second Meditation
70. Third Meditation
71. 4<sup>th</sup> Meditation a Continuation of the Third.
72. Conference for the Illrd Sunday after the Epiphany.
73. St. Magdalene de' Pazzi: Humility

## APPENDIX

**BOOK 3**  
**CONFEEENCES OF OUR VENERATED DOUNDESS**  
**SISTER LEOPOLDINA NAUDET**

**PRESENTATION**

**V.G.M.G. St. Philip Benizzi of the Servants of the Sorrowful Virgin. Documents on the Mutual Charity among his Religious.**

**V.G.M.G. Documents of St. Philip Benizzi of the Servants of the Sorrowful Mary, for those who govern young Religious.**

**Conferences of the Venerated Foundress**

**Conferences on the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist**

**Holy Christmas**

**Regarding Aridity and Consolation in Prayer**

**Instruction**

**Conference on the Virtues for the Feast of St. Teresa.**

**Conference on the feast of St. Francis Xavier.**

**Novena for the Nativity of Jesus Christ**

**Conference – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany.**

**Brief Remarks concerning the Spirit of the Institute:**

*Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, let Your will be done in me.*

**Advantages in the Renewal of Vows.**

***Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of heart!* - Jesus Christ – regarding Gentleness**

**Perfection**

**Mortification of the Senses**

**According to the End of our Institute, one's Own Perfection is coupled with the Salvation of Souls.**



## INTRODUCTION

### Biographical Note

Leopoldina Naudet was born in Florence May 31, 1773, of a Florentine father and a German mother, living in the royal court of Tuscany. She was educated first at the monastery of St. Ferdinando in Florence, then at the *Mesdames* of Our Lady in Soissons, France. At only 17 years of age, she became a servant girl and governess to the children of the Archduke Leopold, whom she followed to Vienna, when he became Emperor after the death of his brother Joseph II in 1790.

At the Royal Court of Vienna, she met an exceptional guide in Fr. Nicholas Diessbah, a former Jesuit<sup>1</sup>, who earlier had established a group known as the "Christian Friends" in Turin. Fr. Diessbah became an ardent promoter of the piety and devotion of Leopoldina to God and toward others more needy in society.

On the death of Leopold II (1792), the Naudet blood sisters, Leopoldina with her sister, Louise, took up residence at the royal court of Prague, as Maid of Honor, to the Archduchess Maria Anna. She, as the sister of the new Emperor, Francis II, was appointed Abbess to the contemplative nuns at St. George in Prague.

Here Leopoldina came to know the 'Fathers of the Faith', a group founded by Fr. Nicholas Paccanari, whose avowed purpose was to see the Society of Jesus restored. After some time, Leopoldina was invited, with her sister Louise, to serve the same Archduchess Maria Anna, to implement a project, a similar institution for women. For this purpose, she transferred first to Padua, then to Loreto, then to Spoleto and Rome.

The community which gradually came into being was called "the Beloved of Jesus". The little group had an auspicious beginning, not only in Italy but also in France and England. In Amiens, the Sisters were called "*Bien-Aimees*" ['the Much Beloved']. Among their number very soon there was enrolled the young Madeleine Sophie Barat, who later became the Foundress of the 'Madames of the Sacred Heart', and eventually she was canonized a Saint. During a visit made by Luisa Naudet, the sister of Leopoldina, Madame Sophie Barat was named the local superior, in dependence on Leopoldina, who guided from Rome the whole group of these Nuns.

For various reasons the Sisters of France, under the leadership of Madame Barat, became independent - and the other group then in Rome under the

---

<sup>1</sup> At this time, the Society of Jesus was officially suppressed.

leadership of Mother Naudet, were forced to make their way through Italy in search of some final settlement. They were first in Padua, and then Venice and eventually came to Verona on the invitation of Canon Pacetti, who had served as an advisor of St. Magdalene di Canossa. In this Convent, they received hospitality for eight years.

During this time Leopoldina and her community collaborated along well-defined juridical terms, the new charitable Institution of Mother diCanossa had the particular care in behalf of the poor girls in the former monastery of Saints Joseph and Fidenzio. In this Canossian Retreat, Mother Naudet also found the real ‘father of her spirit’ in the person of St. Gaspar Bertoni, who was to guide her along the path of Holy Abandonment to the highest mystical union with God and accompany her in the foundation of the "Sisters of the Holy Family."

In 1816, Mother Leopoldina was finally able to get into what had been known as the "Monastery of the Teresian Sisters", in Piazza Cittadella, Verona. This enabled her to give a more solid format to her new institute devoted to the teaching catechism to the children of the district, and, above all, to the training and education of young girls, either those of noble families, as well as to those who were poor. The work of the Mother Naudet was highly appreciated and much desired in many other cities, but the venerated Foundress barely had time to obtain both government and pontifical approval for institute, which took place on December 21, 1833.

A few months later, in fact, Mother Leopoldina came down with a severe illness, which led to her death, which occurred August 17, 1834, at the age of 61. At the present time, the process of the Cause of the Beatification of Leopoldina Naudet is underway – and on June 22, 2007, she was officially declared ‘Venerable’.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT

These *CONFERENCES* are spiritual instructions, which Mother Leopoldina Naudet (1773-1834), as the first president of the Institute known as the ‘*Dilette of Jesus*’, delivered every day for the ‘Associates’, or ‘*Companions*’ of the group, according to the Regulations of 1799. In the beginning these gatherings were more on the style of informal, friendly meetings or fraternal exhortations. However, gradually as the number of *Dilette* grew, these instructions took on a more elaborate form.

The original pages of the Spiritual *Conferences* did not bear any title of their own<sup>2</sup>. Eventually they came to be known as the *Spiritual Conferences*, taken from the titles placed on some of the pages of the written document. Mother Leopoldina, in addition to jotting down her own personal reflections, it is evident that she certainly copied some passages *according to the letter*, from the writings of saints or recognized spiritual authors. Then, editing these texts somewhat, she developed, adapted and applied the various points for the consideration of her listeners. Thus we can say that all the *CONFERENCES* are truly the work of Leopoldina, since it was she who chose the topics and the texts according to her own sensitivity and exposed them after having she had lived them herself.

The authors, from whom she draws the most for her *CONFERENCES* are: St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis de Sales, St. Jeanne Fremiot de Chantal, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila, the Jesuit spiritual author, Bartoli and others. We reserve a particular observation for some of *Conferences* - in which she specifically mentions that she is quoting a Fr. Paccanari, as Mother Naudet herself tells us.<sup>3</sup> These reflections of hers reveal a clear and profound difference in language, style and content, compared to all the others, but we also publish them in this document to respect her history and memory.

Generally the *Conferences* are not dated. Only rarely does there appear vague hints, such as the *Conference for the Novena of Christmas* and one for the *Feast of the Ascension*, without any specified year or month. It is believed that these writings were composed between 1800 and 1816, during that period in which Leopoldina Naudet exercised the office of superior of her *Dilette of Jesus* in the convent in which she dwelt with her religious companions at the Institute of Mother diCanossa (1808-1816). The only dates that can be discerned are more towards the end of the manuscript. In the meditations of December 16th, Padua is remembered, and it seems, with a certain regret. Mention is made to a climate of uncertainty and instability present, certainly elements that led them to the dwelling of Murano.<sup>4</sup>

With regard to its authenticity, the manuscript, with its 73 *Conference* autograph, concerning which there can be no doubt, does contain certain pages, which are not in the hand-writing of Leopoldina Naudet and they are not actual conferences. So we decided not to include them now in these *Conferences*<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> On the cover of the writings of Leopoldina there is found this title: *Scritti – di proprio pugno della Venerata Fondatrice – ed altri scritti*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the original manuscript, pp. 23; 44; 47; 86; 90; 97, etc. cf. p. 54, *Regarding Simplicity*

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *ib.*, pp. 105.

<sup>5</sup> In the Index, there are 65 Conferences, while in the body of the Work one may discern 73 of them.

As already mentioned, the *Conferences* treat especially of the spiritual and religious life, the acquisition of virtue, asceticism, the different times and manners of prayer, love of God and of Jesus Crucified, as well as some liturgical feasts, such as the Annunciation, Christmas, Ascension, Pentecost, etc. We do not present here a unitary outline and or a well-ordered plan, but the *Conferences* as they are deal with matters that make up the daily life of a religious community. They are therefore writings that respond more to the criterion of '*occasionality*', than to that of some special importance. It should also be borne in mind that Leopoldina Naudet burned many of her *papers*, containing exhortations to her daughters. Despite their limitations and shortcomings, the *Conferences* do offer a panorama of the spirit and life of the group of the first companions of Leopoldina. Hers was especially an Ignatian spirit, characterized by contemplation and action.

The fact of bringing forward the inner thoughts and writings of saints and ascetical authors in no way detracts from the personal authority of these *Conferences*. Mother Leopoldina Naudet herself both chose and treated the various themes in the spirit of her own particular Institute. Sometimes she herself realizes that it would be better for her to speak from her heart, and spontaneously, rather than to present and comment on the ideas suggested to her by others. There is clear evidence of this principle in a glimpse into a page of her *Spiritual Diary*, in the year 1811 where she wrote:

"...it seemed to me I have to use greater confidence in God in speaking, that is, in presenting the meditations and instructions to my Companions, and not support myself so much on a few notes that that I take from here and there, but to trust in Him and that, as I have already experienced on other occasions, I need prayer and to trust more in prayer "<sup>6</sup>.

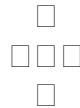
Nonetheless, Mother Leopoldina Naudet continued with her method. The end result of all this is the fact that her text does present a greater personal authority. The fact is that she exposed her ideas and sought her own self-diminishing, by maintaining in her work that humility that led her to communicate truly what she desired.

In her *Conferences*, the spiritual and religious life come across to us as a most authentic and serious ideal in her mind. This demanded of her a commitment of directing attention not so much to her own person, but she evidences a constant effort to be emptied of herself in order to follow Jesus Christ more fully and to practice virtue.

---

<sup>6</sup> Leopoldina Naudet, *Memorie secrete*. Dalla Scala Edizioni, p. 158.

In recent times, after the publication of the official Vatican Document of her Cause of Canonization, called the Positio on the Virtues of Leopoldina Naudet (Rome, 20 October 1994), there has been found in the Archives of the Institute of the Sisters of the Holy Family, apparently a manuscript bearing on these *Conferences*. It is a simple little note-book, a hand-written manuscript, which bears the title: "Book 3. Conferences of our Venerated Foundress, Sister Leopoldina Naudet." Given its relevance to these *Spiritual Conferences*, it was decided to publish it in the appendix.



## INVITATION TO THE READING OF THE TEXT <sup>7</sup>

### A Contribution by Adriana Valerio <sup>8</sup>

In the spring of 1815, Mother Leopoldina Naudet (1773-1834) and Mother Magdalene diCanossa (1774-1835) were finalizing the drafting of their respective Rules. Shortly thereafter, in November 1816, the communities in which they were leaders, from the year 1808, were both under the direction of Mother Naudet. This single group would give rise to two separate foundations: *The Daughters of Charity* and the *Sisters of the Holy Family* <sup>9</sup>

The not yet completed Process of Canonization of Sister Leopoldina has not yet allowed an adequate knowledge of her sources, left somewhat in the shadow compared to those of Saint diCanossa. Yet she, too, does provide a careful evaluation of sources still unpublished. These are also preserved in the Archives of the Motherhouse of Verona. She is a leading figure in that troubled process of transformation involving Catholic women of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. There was a concerted quest in these years for new models of religious communities, no longer tied to the strict rules of monastic seclusion of the post-Tridentine period, but rather those open to the needs of the social apostolate.

### 1. The Library

The personality of Leopoldina Naudet is certainly characterized by a passion for study, which is a prerequisite for designing a project and in the abiding interest to establish a broader, appropriate education of women. We know of the interest of Joseph Naudet for the harmonious and complete education of his daughter. This also included music and dance, and he personally accompanied her to Paris to visit museums and monuments. To date, the Sisters of the Holy Family retain what has been the library of Leopoldina and that shows us the high level of education of this woman. There are more than 800 volumes, some of which, for her private use, bear some of her own handwritten notes, garnered through her reading of the volume.

---

<sup>7</sup> The original title of this was: 'Da donna a donne: Leopoldina Naudet e l'educazione femminile agli inizi dell'800,' in: *Santi, culti, simboli nell'eta' della secolarizzazione 1815-1915*, ed. E. Fattroini. Torino: 1997, pp. 515-528.

<sup>8</sup> Adriana Valerio, with a degree in Philosophy and in Theology, teaches History of Christianity, at the 'Frederick II' University in Naples. She is President of the organization known as the 'Pasquale Valerio Foundation for the History of Women, and of the 'Associazione Femminile Europea per la Ricerca Teologica' [AFERT]

<sup>9</sup> Regarding Mother di Canossa, she was declared a Saint by Pope John Paul II. Vanzo 1985. This work lacks a specific Bibliography regarding Mother Naudet. The reader may consult Fr. Dalle Vedove 1954, 1980; Fontana 1993.

The library is not characterized by a broad patristic and medieval content - although there are not lacking popular texts of St. Jerome, S. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Augustine, St. Bernard and St. Thomas<sup>10</sup>. This Library is rather notable in its ability to accommodate contemporary works, which reveal the remarkable intellectual sensitivity of Mother Naudet. Her careful choice of texts and authors, for the most part, Italian and French, appear to be not so much the result of just collecting, but rather there is the perception that there was at work here in this gathering of books a specific logical and spiritual sense that each of these books provides a source of culture and spirituality. This library, then, reflects the specific interests of Leopoldina, but at the same time, it is one that is also geared toward a spiritual and moral formation of religious sisters, and likewise being such as would have benefited the students of their schools. A library is not "graveyard of dead ideas", as Rabelais stated in his *Pantagruel* [the giant ruled by endless thirst]. The Library of St. Victor's is rather a place of meditation and verification. This library does not have merely a scholastic character, but one that is homogeneous with respect to three main orientations: biblical-homiletic; devotional-hagiographic; and apologetic.

With regard to the first sector, its marked attention for the sacred text is not the ordinary remembering that this was in a Catholic and Italian setting, including ignorance, or at least of some disaffection for Sacred Scripture<sup>11</sup>. Introductory studies to the Bible are along-side the historical and moral studies of the erudite scholar, Antonio Cesari (1760-1828). There were also the works of the great orators: Francis Panigarola (1548-1594), Paul Segneri (1624-1694), Louis Bourdaloue (1632 - 1704), Jean-Baptist Massillon (1663-1742)<sup>12</sup>.

---

<sup>10</sup> Jerome, *L'epistole*, a cura di P. Canisio, Venezia 1749; Gregory del Nazianzeno: *Due orazioni volgarizzate*, Verona 1755; di S. Augustine: *Le divote meditazioni* Venezia 1594 e 1753; *Meditazioni, soliloqui*, Modena 1713; *The Confessions* Venezia 1746, 1752 e Bassano 1803; *Delle confessioni*, a cura di P. Gagliardi. Venezia 1762; *The Vigils*, a cura di G. D. Giulio, Venezia 1806 e Bassano 1816; *Sermons*, Milano 1820. Of S. Bernard: *Letters*, Roma 1756; *Volgarizzamento del trattato della coscienza*, Verona 1828. Di S. Tommaso: *Meditazioni cavate dall'angelica dottrina di S. Tommaso*, a cura di A. Massoulié, Venezia 1711, 1722 e 1740. (I am very grateful to the *Sorelle della Sacra Famiglia*, e in particular, Mother Marisa Adami, for having granted me access to the Library and to the IArchivio of the Mother House of Verona, where there are kept the still unpublished writings of Mother Naudet).

<sup>11</sup> cf. *Le siècle des lumieres* 1986.

<sup>12</sup> Del Cesari: *Geremia*, Milano 1815; *Giuseppe*, Milano 1815; *Il Mosé e il Giosué*, Milano 1815 *Daniele e le SS. donne*, Milano 1816; *Storia dei Maccabei*, Milano 1816; *Abramo e Tobia*, Milano 1817; *Vita di Gesù Cristo e la sua religione*, Verona 1817; *I fatti degli Apostoli*, Verona 1821. Del Panigarola: *Dichiarazione dei salmi di David*, Venezia 1586 e 1757. Del Segneri: *Esercizi spirituali*, esposti da A. L. Muratori, Venezia 1723 e 1784; *La manna dell' anima*, Venezia 1728 e Udine 1823; *Panegirici sacri*, Venezia 1757. Del Bourdaloue: *Sermons pour le carême*, Lion 1708 (II tomo). *Ritiramento spirituale ad uso nelle comunità religiose*, Venezia 1742, 1753, 1774 e Parma 1757; *Pensieri sopra diversi punti di religione e di morale*, Venezia 1800; *Prediche recitate in due avventi*, Venezia 1800; *Sermoni per le domeniche dell'anno*, Venezia 1801 *Sermoni sopra i misteri*, Venezia 1802; *Prediche quaresimali*, Venezia 1802; *Esortazioni e istruzioni cristiane*, Venezia 1892 *Panegirici e sermoni*, Venezia 1805. Del Massillon: *Prediche sopra i principali misteri di Gesù Cristo della SS. Vergine e in lode di alcuni santi*, Venezia 1790; *Quaresimale*, Venezia 1803; *Prediche*, Venezia 1803.

The books kept in this Library, do not reveal [and this could not be otherwise] any careful attention given to such interests to that type of exegetical analysis that was developing in the era of the Enlightenment. However, the emphasis was rather geared toward a practical study, aimed at the formation of a truly Christian mind and heart, with a clear spiritual and pastoral interest which we find then in those efforts and service which Mother Naudet brought forward. She was much dedicated to these works in trying to make their expressions her very own, when directing her Sisters in meditations on Scripture. It is of great interest to me here to emphasize her serious and evident taste for the Bible, that had fall into oblivion, especially among the women of the post-Tridentine church. As a result of those times there became a more required serious attention to such studies, as inscribed within the program of the Catholic efforts at '*Aufklärung*: a reform of study and piety, which would led to a renewal of *lectio divina* and that would find in Mother Naudet an original representative.

There also appear here some writings controversial in nature, among which are some of the works of Bossuet (1627-1704), of De Maistre (1753-1821) and of Lamennais (1782-1854) (the latter absent from the current shelves). These denote a considerable attention given to cultural issues and the troubled political issues of the age, even within the over-all program of the Catholic restoration. Within these parameters may be inserted the Plan of Education worked out by Mother Naudet herself.<sup>13</sup>

Special attention deserves to be committed to the devotional-hagiographic [biographies of saints] sector, the traditional cultural resource for the feminine religious world. However, here in this library under consideration, it is noted that it was much enriched by very select works of literature. There are numerous Lives of Saints but one will not succeed in finding a prevalence of female Saints: there are, of course, the lives of Gertrude the Great, Angela Merici, Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Bologna, Domenica da Paradiso, Catherine of Siena, Mary of the Incarnation, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, Catherine de 'Ricci.

These works then are flanked by those of men saints: Francis di Sales, Philip Neri, Lawrence of Brindisi, Peter the Martyr, Aloysius Gonzaga, Vincent Ferrer, Alfphonsus Maria de 'Liguori, Francesco di Paola, Charles Borromeo, Lorenzo Giustiniani, Pius V, Gaetano Thiene, Peter d'Alcantara, Ignatius of Loyola, Dominic Guzman, Paolo Sarpi, Joseph of Cupertino, Giovanni Colombini, Anthony of Padua (to

---

<sup>13</sup> Del Bossuet: *Lettere spirituali*, Venezia 1797; *Istruzioni alla filosofia, ovvero trattato della cognizione di Dio*, Venezia 1897; *Choix des meillenurs morceaux*, Besançon 1822; *Discorso sulla storia universale*, Milano 1824. Il *Du pape* (1819) del De Maistre e *l'Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion* (1817) del Lamennais non risultao oggi nella biblioteca, ma sappiamo che appartenevano alla Naudet, che li aveva dati in prestito al Bertoni (cf. Stofella 1954, pp. 230-232 e 248).

mention only the better known). I also point out here the presence of a work entitled, *The Mystical City of God*, without any indication of authorship, as well as significant works of Catherine of Siena, Francis de Sales, John of the Cross, Paolo Giustiniani, Ignatius of Loyola, Mary Crucified of the Immaculate Conception, St. Teresa of Jesus<sup>14</sup>.

Further, I point out the presence of the *Mystical City of God*, without any indication of the author; the much-discussed Maria d'Agreda, in three editions (1712, 1721 and 1723); and *The Short Compendium of Christian Perfection*, attributed solely 'Gagliardi', indicating perhaps that there may have been some interest in Quietism that might be studied further<sup>15</sup>.

It is not possible here to recall to mind all the volumes present in this Library. However I would like to highlight the two lines direction, or orientation, that seem to me to better categorize the spiritual texts found here. Some seem to aim at considering the purpose of the spiritual life as a path way towards mystical union. While other works present the spiritual life simply as a moment to comprehend it entirely as ascetical-contemplative endeavor. Very strong here is the influence of the Jesuits: concrete precepts and moral direction toward devotion are placed along-side that practical discipline that is aimed at regulating mystical fervor. The works of Scaramelli and St. Alphonsus refer to a spiritual orientation that seeks to temper those contemplative experiences of the Quietistic flavor, of which perhaps Mother Naudet herself was not totally free, even though she received spiritual direction from the balanced Fr. Gaspar Bertoni<sup>16</sup>.

---

<sup>14</sup> Di Caterina: *Lettere*, Venezia 1562 e 1583. Di Francesco di Sales: *Opere*, Venezia 1662, 1777, 1804 e Padova 1729: *Massime dottrinali*, Bassano 1768. Di Giovanni della Croce: *Opere spirituali*, Venezia 1682; *Trattato delle spine dello spirito*, Venezia 1750. Del Giustiniani: *Trattato dell'ubbidienza*, Padova 1753. Di Ignazio: *Esercizi spirituali*, Padova 1703, Venezia 180~ *Regole della Compagnia di Gesù*, Roma 1716. Di Maria Crocefissa della Concezione: *Scelte di lettere spirituali*, Verona 1727. Di Teresa: *Opere*, Venezia 1712, 1714 e 1789.

<sup>15</sup> Su Maria d'Agréda, cf. Cabibbo 1989. Per l'edizione critica del *Breve compendio*, testo di Isabella Berinzaga e redatto da Achille Gagliardi, cf. Gioia 1994.

<sup>16</sup> Dello Scaramelli: *Direttorio ascetico*, Venezia 1762 e 1793 *Direttorio mistico*, Venezia 1788. Di Alfonso: *La vera sposa di Gesù Cristo cioè la monaca santa*, Venezia 1741, 1761, Bassano 1781, 1791, 1819, 1829; *Vita della salute, meditazioni e pratiche spirituali per acquistare la vita eterna*, Bassano 1793; *Opere spirituali*, Bassano 1807, 1811; *Riflessioni sulla passione di Gesù Cristo*, Bassano 1820; *Discorsi sacri morali ossia sermoni*, Bassano 1820; *Pratica di amare Gesù Cristo*, Bassano 1826, Venezia 1828; *Apparecchio alla morte*, Milano 1827; *Meditazioni per otto giorni d'esercizi spirituali*, Venezia 1828. Da segnalare anche la presenza di sette edizioni *Meditazioni* del gesuita Ludovico da Ponte († 1624), molto utilizzate per la vita ascetica. Sull'esperienza mistica della Naudet, guidata dal Bertoni sulla via del santo abbandono, ricaviamo notizie dall'*Epistolario Bertoni* (Stofella 1954) e dal ms. *Giornale spirituale di Leopoldina Naudet* (1800-1831) (Archivio S. Sacra Famiglia Verona), Leopoldina's Spiritual Diary in which she recorded her thoughts on the various stages to follow in her own interior life.

However, Mother Naudet's own cultural level is not measured by a mere knowledge of her library: she herself much encouraged the reading of its books, giving them on loan to Mother diCanossa, to the men at the Stimmate, to her confessor, Fr. Bertoni, and to the learned Antonio Cesari<sup>17</sup>

The continuing need to be updated, a veritable passion for culture, willingness to participate in the debates of the time, along with an exchange of news and prayerful reflections, all concur in this role of cultural inspiration and mediation. She it was who sent to Fr. Caesari the *Del Papa* of De Maistre, then an unknown author in Verona. And it was she who made known to Fr. Bertoni the works of Luis Gaspar de Bonald (1754-1840) and of Lamennais. Neither should there be forgotten those relationships, still to this day, very little studied, that she established with the young Fr. Antonio Rosmini, urged by Mother diCanossa to found a male institute corresponding to her *Daughters of Charity*.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. ***Dominus scientiarum* [The Lord of All Knowledge – 1 K 2:3]**

The cultural insight that Mother Naudet brought was her realization of how ignorance can become, even for women, a germ of corruption and how urgent it is for them to study.

In the drawing up of the Plan of Studies for her fledgling community, the contribution of Fr. Bertoni was certainly decisive. He loved to emphasize: "*Deus Scientiarum Dominus est* (1 Kings 2:3: God is the Lord of All Knowledge!). She was also convinced that without the help of the natural sciences, no one would ever arrive at the height of spiritual matters<sup>19</sup>.

While advising her and providing her with educational materials, St. Gaspar Bertoni, however, does not replace Mother Naudet in drafting the curriculum of studies. It was his insight that he encouraged her, as Mother and Foundress, to draw

---

<sup>17</sup> Da una lettera della Canossa alla nipote Metilde, entrata nell'istituto della Naudet nel 1824, risulta che Leopoldina le ha inviato la biografia di Domenica da Paradiso (1473-1553), profetessa mistica legata al Savonarola: probabilmente una riedizione fiorentina del 1806 del lavoro di Ignazio del Nente (Venezia 1622): vedi Dalle Vedove 1954, p. 330; su Domenica cf. Valerio 1992. La Naudet mandava in prestito alle Stimmate libri e riviste che servivano all'aggiornamento dei preti. Tra i periodici: *L'Ami de la Religion et du Roi* e le *Memorie di Religione, di Morale e di letteratura* dirette dall'abate Giuseppe Baraldi: cf. Stofella, 1954, pp. 232 e 248.

<sup>18</sup> Antonio Rosmini aveva accompagnato nel 1820 a Verona la sorella Margherita Genoveffa, che, ospite di Matilde di Canossa perche intenzionata a dirigere un collegio di orfane a Rovereto, entra nel '24 tra *Le figlie della Carità*. Nel '26 il filosofo Resmini conosce il Bertoni al quale comunica i propri progetti per *I Figli della carità*: cf. Radice 1968, pp. 355 ss. Nel *Diario dei viaggi*, in data 25 febbraio 1826, così annota: «A Verona conobbi D. Gaspare Bertoni che con sei sacerdoti fa un gran bene. Sono stato dalla Sig.a Leopoldina»: Rosmini 1934, p. 243.

<sup>19</sup> Stofella 1954, p. 74.

up with full responsibility, and in the spelling out of the many details for a school, in which the students were to prepare themselves to become Teachers themselves. It was meant to be a kind of educational institution of the Ignatian type. St. Gaspar suggested to her *The Course of Studies* of the philosopher Condillac (1715-1780) and the Cartesian method in order for her to acquire those tools for the analysis of texts that would be both "clear and distinct". The practical applications made through Dante to Corneille suggest a method for enabling the students competence in their study of any author.

Both of these placed on the same level a solid education for both sexes, rejecting the common but more than antiquated view that culture is harmful to girls. The novelty of this approach stands out mostly to one's mind if we compare these to the interventions that would be published 1854 by the renowned periodical, *La Civiltà Cattolica* regarding female education, which at that time was severely limited with regard to its necessity, breadth and depth<sup>20</sup>.

I recall furthermore the debates regarding the formation of the women who at that time would have been living in Italy and France, especially after the publication of *Emile* by Rousseau (1762) and during the Revolution. At that time the State governments had been urged to concern themselves with the problem of public instruction, particularly that orientated toward family concerns and the social status of women. Governments, in fact, noted the need to build a certain consensus among them to win over for them entrance into the new or old orders of life-style. Let us just think of the lively debate in the Jacobean period (1796-99), even if we do not find any bold anticipations that reach the point of re-defining the traditional tasks and roles<sup>21</sup>.

Woman became a challenging political issue, as reflected in the pedagogical treatise entitled *A Friend of the Beautiful Sex* by Vincent Catalani (1769-1843). However, the education of women remains fragmented and a marginal matter in projects of school reform. Even though, the important role of women in society was not neglected, it was believed, that all of this should be cared for more in the private sector, with a view the maintenance of society<sup>22</sup>.

The suppression of the Society of Jesus had favored the revision of the studies, facilitating the process of nationalization of the school, which in some cases, were favorable to women. The social impact of the institution of public schools now open to them, which was an achievement of Ferdinand IV in 1784. This did not escape the

---

<sup>20</sup> *Dell'educazione dell'uomo e della donna*, «*La Civiltà Cattolica*», 5, vol. VI (1854), pp. 491-505; 977-991; 1237-1252; 1369-1388. Cf. Valerio 1981.

<sup>21</sup> Ricaldone 1984; Guerci 1987.

<sup>22</sup> *Sui problemi dell'educazione femminile*: Franchini 1986; Porciani 1987; Guerci 1988, pp. 231-258; De Giorgi 1994, p. 194.

attention of one Fr. Celestino Ludovico Vuoli, even though he personally did not succeed in going beyond the common view that looked simplistically on the higher education of women “as useful and valuable to the State, when ‘they are dear to their spouses, and respectable to their children’”<sup>23</sup>.

This restricted view did not differ had been diminished much from the vision of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth-century reform according to the minds of the following: Antonio Genovesi to Gaetano Filangeri, from Bernardo Tanucci to Benvenuto Robbins<sup>24</sup>. Nonetheless the traditional teaching role of the Catholic Church was much diminished. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Church felt herself being moved even more toward intensifying her presence especially in the field of education. This was concretized also through the rise of educational institutions dedicated to all this. This proved to be an attempt, never interrupted, to supervise the intellectual formation of an ‘elite’ and to recover the lower middle classes for Catholicism.

The need for women's education, still institutionally limited, did not escape the mind and heart of the Veronese church, especially after the suppression of the religious orders of April 25, 1810. The ‘popular schools’ [for the poor] of Peter Leonardi arose from this public urgency of training for girls who lived in a wretched state and one of particular poverty<sup>25</sup>. Even the aristocratic Mother DiCanossa addressed her attention not to the wealthy classes, but to offer at least a basic education, that would not remove them from their family circle.

This was not meant to be the plan of Mother Naudet which involved that social utility that would be included in the cultural elevation of the entire female youth, even though these were divided on the basis of class. Her school requires a two-fold regulation: it would be tuition-free for poor girls, to be educated in a Christian manner as family members; there for a fee, tuition, it was also open to young boarding students in order, “to make them educated in accordance with their family life-style”<sup>26</sup>.

Nourished by some readings, such as the *De studiis Monasticis* of the erudite scholar, Jean Mabillon (1632-1707) and especially the *Constitutions* of St. Ignatius, Mother Leopoldina drew up a broad-based curriculum and one that comprises

---

<sup>23</sup> Vuoli, 1789, p. 270.

<sup>24</sup> Balani – Roggero 1977; Guerri 1987; Rao 1992.

<sup>25</sup> Rocca 1973; Dalle Vedove 1971-91, IV, p. 61 ss.

<sup>26</sup> I recall here the rather pungent irony of Mother di Canossa concerning this Plan of Mother Naudet who wanted to found an institution for the daughters of noble families: ‘Very well! This means that in front of your Institute, carriages will arrive – while before our school, the students will arrive in wheel barrels!’ « cit. in Dalle Vedove 1954, p. 328.

religion, history, grammar, Classical Italian, writing style, calligraphy, arithmetic, geography, German and French, drawing, painting, home economics.

The institute, characterized by the Ignatian spirit and a devotion to the Holy Family, foresaw a cloistered life inside, coupled with an apostolate demanding specific pedagogical service, and not limited just to primary education. Within the over-all educational plan, this includes courses of spiritual exercises [retreats] directed to the situation of the retreatants: this activity has proven to be of great importance for the history of women's spirituality.

### 3. Mother Naudet and her sacred Oratory

**The Church in today's Gospel (Mt 8:1-3) gives us two beautiful examples of faith and confidence in God. These obtain everything, both for the leper and also for the centurion. And in the latter then there is also combined humility. This union of these two virtues has provided me with the desire to explain a thought of mine, and a truth about which I feel very convinced; but I do not know if I can explain it to you in a clear way. This thought of the conviction of mine is that there can be no true humility unless it is accompanied by confidence, nor genuine and solid confidence without humility<sup>27</sup>.**

These are the opening words of the Conference for the Third Sunday after the Epiphany that Mother Naudet addressed to her own companions and to the Sisters of Mother diCanossia. The occasion would have been a regularly scheduled meeting, which would find the Sisters all gathered around a text of the Gospel, or a liturgical passage. Mother Leopoldina, from the year 1801 on, was accustomed to comment on the Scriptures to exhort, to correct, to encourage. Mother Magdalena diCanossa, greatly admired this oratory and with all "the other Sisters in a circle, as she, too, had come to listen there as a disciple"<sup>28</sup>.

She was much imbued with style from her reading of the *Sermons* of the French preacher Bourdaloue, a much admired Jesuit. His reputation was attested for us also by Mme. Sevigne. For his sheer oratory, and free from the excesses of the Baroque era, [and the knowledge of these from Massillon, who was also a famous preacher, much esteemed for the clarity and elegance] - all of these sources profoundly influenced the style of Mother Naudet, as a loving and sensitive speaker. With her "sermons", she is linked to that line, never sufficiently studied, of the preaching of women. In history. This form of communication was bound to juridical

---

<sup>27</sup> *Conferenza per la terza domenica dopo l'epifania, doc. 37. Le Conferenze spirituali* (ms. presso l'Archivio di Verona) è una raccolta di discorsi, tenuti dalla Naudet dal 1801 al 1833, ad opera delle prime sorelle della Sacra Famiglia.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Fr. Dalle Vedove, 1971-1991, I, p. 610

forms and was not juridically recognized as such. This would have been particularly noted, especially in the monasteries, and the broad possibilities of expression afforded there, that made of these discourses nearer to what was considered 'collatio', more than formal homilia<sup>29</sup>.

The term '*Conference*', is the one that Mother Naudet gives to her own speeches. This does suggest a form of sacred oratory in vogue in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but which hardly responds, in truth, to the style of expression of Mother Leopoldina. The *Conference*, in fact, emphasized especially the reconstruction of the *Praeambula fidei* [fundamentals of the faith], in a distracted society and one that was more and more capitalistic, with great use of profane information that ever more drew the attention of its adherents. Mother Naudet, however, addressed women (her own fellow Sisters, students, and to committed Christian women in general). She spoke from within a horizon of faith that included everything in the spiritual and moral principles governing one's personal life. It is clear that her instructional intention, her insistence on moral applications, was without any distraction from her constant reference to Scripture that forms the backbone of her every message.

In her, maybe we can find elements of their scriptural lessons - a certain innovation of oratorical style, in the Jesuit style, much employed throughout Italy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This style was successfully taken up anew by Fr. Anthony Cesari. The style of these '*Lessons*' were geared toward the recovery of the reading of the Bible, through the Liturgical Cycles. Their intent was not so much a return to the allegorical senses, but rather they were based on the historical-literal interpretation, in order to highlight the moral applications.

I believe that other factors need to be in play in order to understand the familiar tone of her oratorical speaking style; her ways of biblical reading, may derive from the tradition of *collation*, which the Jesuits kept alive with their others forms of preaching, such as those with the name of *Domestic Exhortations*. All of these forms manifest the intention of encouragement that revolves around the biblical texts frequently quoted. However there was at the time a very broad diffusion of the *Sermons* of Charles Borromeo aimed at his women religious; the *Entretiens spirituels* of Francis de Sales addressed to the Visitandines; the *Spiritual Conferences* of St. Vincent de 'Paoli: these were all well known texts and annotated in his mother Naudet's own hand-writing.

---

<sup>29</sup>For some understanding of the rhetorical forms employed in preaching: Bonfanti 1964; and the word '*Preaching*': For a knowledge of some of these oratorical forms: cf. Bonfanti 1964; and consult the word '*Preaching*' in the «*Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*» 7 (1987) coll. 513-571. For the matter of female preaching, I recommend Valerio 1994.

Finally, I wish to emphasize anew in her the ‘*Ignatian Economy, the Jesuit Milieu*’. There is also much evidence of her basic rhetoric of an interior *Bilderreichtum*’, although this scriptural approach indeed is present in Mother Naudet, it is much tempered by her own personal use of the Bible. While this remains a prelude to her own contemplation, she never loses her literary and historical connections<sup>30</sup>.



In Mother Naudet there are simultaneously other influences: that model urging French scholarship directed toward an active life; and an Ignatian spirituality that does not renounce the development of a mystical and contemplative life, without falling into any of the eclipse of Quietist bent, part of the rationale of the times. A *Contemplative in Action* can describe this singular woman, using an expression given to describe the personality of Ignatius of Loyola. She indeed was living and moving in anti-revolutionary circles (as I remember here the controversy of Fr. Bertoni against Jansenism and the Enlightenment]. There intensified in her a devotional spirituality aimed at a re-consolidation of the Catholic world. In all this, Leopoldina Naudet marks a turning point for autonomy and personal authority, which reflects a change deep within a female role that seemed earlier rigidly codified.

She was not alone: she was accompanied in this redefinition of the traditional monastic model with many other women, especially in Lombard-Veneto area, who significantly developed new institutional models of religious life. But what I find unique in her is her experience of a great passion for study meant to be transmitted to other women through reading, school, conferences. This enabling of women was played out in a world of women, through the use of Scripture and the word.

I cannot delve here into those intense relationships, conflicts, enriching Mother Naudet and her companions of faith: Mother diCanossa, Madame Magdalene Barat, Mother Gagnère... A deeper knowledge concerning them would help to rebuild that network of female friendships, made up of exchanges, mutual recognition, competition, but also deep affection and subtle irony – that all characterize the history of women and in particular, those women religious who lived among women and for women, in a continuous construction of identity and symbolic references, not always easy to be codified.




---

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ossola 1975. For a more detailed study, I would suggest the analysis of the language of this Florentine Sister and her manners of speaking of God: hedge, enclosure, center, abyss, sea, ocean, mother : all expressions that can recall that tradition of customary feminine phrases , a clear break from that academic, decisive language.

## 1. Perfection

True perfection is what the Word of God taught us in his mortal life, during which He went with great solicitude to His very shameful death of the Cross. In no way, did He dodge any effort, nor did He neglect to go there. This was so even though He saw our ingratitude and our ignorance in not recognizing the benefit that He bestowed upon us – He did not side-step the persecution of the judges, nor the taunts, insults and critical murmurings of the people.

Rather, He endured all this as our captain and true knight, who had come to teach us His way and His doctrine. He arrived at the door with the key for His precious blood, poured forth with the fire of His love. In Him reigned a hatred and displeasure for sin, as though this Divine Word in love wanted to say: - 'Here I have shown the way and opened the door with my blood. Do not fail to follow it, laying aside all the rest, personal pride and any claimed ignorance of not knowing the way. Let there be no presumption of wishing to choose it in your own way and not in the manner that I have traversed it. '

Get up then, and follow me, because no one can come to the Father without me. I am the way and the door.<sup>31</sup>

Then lovingly the soul enkindled with love, and having fallen head-over-heels in love, hastens to the table of holy desire, not seeking oneself, nor your own spiritual or temporal consolation. But be as a person who has denied her own will, do not refuse any effort from whatever source this may have. Rather accept all the sufferings, the shame and the many obstacles of the devil, and the criticism of others, for the salvation of souls. Come to eat at the Table of the Cross the Food of God's honor and the salvation of souls.

And do not look for any remuneration, neither from God, nor from human beings. Do not serve God for your own delight nor even your neighbor just for their own benefit, but always out of for pure love.

They are to lose themselves, stripping off the old man, that is, their own sensuality and put on the new man, Christ sweet Jesus, following Him in decisive manner.

---

<sup>31</sup> cf. Jn 14,6; 10,9

Such as indeed have placed their solicitude more in mortifying their own will rather than in killing their own body. They have indeed mortified their body, but this is not their principal effect. Mortifying the body serves as an instrument that goes a long way in enabling them to mortify their own will, so that each does not seek nor wish anything other than following the Crucified Christ, seeking both His glory and the salvation of souls.

Such as these remain always in peace and quiet and they have nothing that might scandalize them, because they have dispatched all that might give scandal, that is, from their own will.

All the persecutions that the world might inflict and the devil himself, all are relegated under the feet of each sister.

Each stands in the water, attached to the shoots of all desire that is drowned and is not released.

The soul in love enjoys everything and does not become as a judge over the other servants of God, nor of any creature at all which enjoys reason. Rather she enjoys every state and every modality that she encounters, while saying to God:

‘I thank you, eternal Father, that in your house there are many mansions...’

And the person who loves rejoices of that varying life-styles that she sees, rather than seeing them all go by one and the same path. In all these, the loving soul sees and admires the more the greatness of God and His goodness.

And even of those matters that she may expressly see as sinful, she does not judge. Rather, with a holy and genuine confession she says: ‘Today this is your concern, and tomorrow it may be mine, were it not for the grace of God that sustains me.’

Beloved souls that you might be nourished at the table of holy desire, and that you may be vested in the robe of the Lamb, that is, of His charity, you do not lose time in making false judgments, neither of the servants of God, nor of those in the world.

Do not be scandalized at any murmuring whatsoever. Your love is ordained toward God and toward your neighbor, and it is not disordered.



## 2. The Superior

Be obedient to God in bearing the fatigue that He has imposed on you, i.e., of governing His lambs. And do not let it seem that you are out of sorts if many times you find yourselves upset for the inconveniences and in the fact that you will have to struggle a bit more with your neighbor for the glory of God. The reason is that I see that this is what the Apostles did, they who disdained all spiritual and temporal consolation.

Oh! How much consolation would all have discovered with the Mother of Peace, of the Mother of God, and with each other. Nonetheless, vested in the wedding garment of the Master, they committed themselves to the arduous task, shame and death, out of honor for God and for the salvation of their neighbor. And this, one by one.

Disdaining consolations, and embracing sufferings, they would have eternal life.

Now, this is what you are to do. And if you should say to me: I would rather not be occupied in temporal matters. I respond to you such challenges are temporal if we make them so. Everything proceeds from supreme goodness: therefore everything is good and perfect.

Therefore, you are not, under the excuse of other tasks, to consider just temporal realities, ever to reject fatigue – but, rather with your eye directed toward God, you are to be solicitous for those souls who, as St. Bernard notes, His charity entices you, it does not deceive – if it corrects you, it does not hate you.

Therefore, support strongly with hardiness and with yearning, according to what is required in your state. And do not be negligent in correcting the defects in so far the person to be corrected is open to receive it. And so, if there is a person who is able to accept ten pounds weight, do not impose twenty on them, but take just what you are able to carry.

Therefore, be solicitous to work for the salvation of those Sisters entrusted to you, without fear or sadness; do so with security, thinking that you can do everything through the Crucified Jesus.

Just imagine that God has made you a gardener in order to root out vice and plant virtue in its stead.

The soul which is enveloped in the blood of Jesus Christ, if she is a superior, let her carry and support patiently the defects of her subjects, that is, with every persecution she might receive, or any ingratitude that she may discover in them towards her. Furthermore, she disposes herself for her own death by drawing out those thorns of vices like a good gardener, and plant in their place virtues in their souls, really doing justice, seasoned with mercy.

Do not worry about the pain, do not dodge the fatigue but rather with great joy, willingly bear every weight.

You should not lose the time so that one may have, that which she does not yet have.

The reason is that sometimes such thoughts and battles do occur in the struggle in ones heart that should you not experience that anguish and sense of fatigue wrought by being superior, thinking you might be able to have God, but only in your peace and quiet . And the devil makes use of all this, to place before one a feeling of peace to make one react as though she was in a state of continuous warfare.

The reason here is that when one does not keep her will peaceful in that state with which God has endowed her, remains always in some agony and she is unbearable even to herself; and thus, she loses in each situation, by not spending her time in superiority neither in a sense of quiet, and thus abandons both the present and the future.

Therefore one is not to give credence to her own malice, but she is to take hold boldly of that remedy, as that soul does when invested by the will of God. Such a person knows well how to navigate in all times, both in the time of struggle as well as in that of consolation.

Or further, out of love for Jesus Christ, bathe yourselves, bathe yourselves in His Blood, and remain in continual vigilance and prayer, keeping vigil with the eye of your intellect, out of hunger and real concern for the love of God and the salvation of souls, over your subjects.

In this manner, you will have continuous prayer, that is, a continual holy desire.

Since it is God Who has placed you in the state of being superior, it is not fitting for you to be negligent, nor fearful, nor ignorant, as going about with eyes cast downward.

Be in total hunger for the honor of God and for the salvation of souls, learning from the Lamb whose veins have been severed and consumed for you. He in His turn, with such affection and hunger for the honor of His Father and for our salvation, followed the path toward a shameful death on the Cross.

This you ought to have always as a mirror, which God the Father has represented to you and placed before your eyes, that is, the Word of His Only-Begotten Son, and His Blood, in order to remove from you every fear, negligence and blindness of ignorance.

And if you say: I am ignorant and I do not know myself well, even less do I know that which I have to do for others. I respond that, having hunger for the honor of God will supply for all that you do not have. And He will work out in you that of which you will need for the salvation of those Sisters who stand under your charge.

This hunger you will not be able to experience without the means of this Precious Blood. And therefore, I desire to see you bathed in It, because in this Blood one loses love for her own life, of that perverse love, that each person has for himself. This impedes one from accomplishing justice out of fear of losing that state of life, or through which one is impeded from accomplishing justice, but does so only according to human pleasures and opinions.

It is this that has dissipated and which dissipates the Community, as what is not corrected with perfect solicitude.

Therefore, recollect in this point of time. Notice defects and be solicitous to punish them, so that the member who may be corrupt in this, might not waste what is healthy, while always accomplishing justice with mercy.

And do not move lightly, but investigate the truth thoroughly through discreet persons and those of good conscience. And always whatever it is that you have to do, carry it out with divine counsel, that is, through holy prayer.

Keep careful guard so that the devil might not disperse your sheep.

O, how sweet and gentle it is for you, if you do not pay excessive attention either to life or to death, nor to honor or shame, nor to jokes or to injuries, nor to any persecution whatsoever that the world might be able to heap upon you, or even from those subject to you, and only strive to foresee those injuries addressed to God!

Here, place all your concern so that you might show yourselves to being a good shepherd and a real gardener. You are a shepherd in order to correct, and you are a gardener in order to turn over the soil, that is, to cultivate the disordered life, and bring it into order, rooting out vice and planting there instead virtue, in so far that this will be possible for you, with the assistance of that sweet and divine grace, which is poured forth abundantly into the soul, that is thirsty and desirous for the honor of God.

And for this thirst, you will acquire merit on the wood of the most holy Cross.

There you will find the Lamb with His veins all opened with such hunger and desire for the honor of the Father and our salvation, Who does not seem able to show in effect how much He indeed He desires our salvation.

This is manifested when He cries out: *'I thirst!'* - as though He were to say: *'I am so thirsty for your salvation, that I cannot slake my thirst. Give Me something to drink!'*

The most sweet Jesus asks for something to drink of those whom He sees of those who have not shared in the redemption of His Blood. And all that was given Him to drink was bitterness.

Continuously we see that not only in the time of the Cross, but again even now and continually He asks us for something to drink and manifests His continuous thirst. But, we see that the Christians do not give Him anything else to drink other than bitterness and the stink of sins.

Oh, how ungrateful we are! Let us hasten, let us run, to saturate our souls with His precious Blood, since He is continually waiting for us, and let us slake His thirst, so that inebriated, our souls may not desire anything else, nor love anything but that which God loves and to hate that which He hates.

Charity is particularly necessary for those who are called to rule and govern, because theirs is such a heavy weight, that if they were to be lacking in charity they would not be able to bear this yoke without offending God.

The charity of a superior should not be tepid, but perfect with the very intense heat of love and the desire for the salvation of her subjects and with the light of discretion, that each will know how to give to each one whatever it is she is able to receive.

Correct charitably, becoming weak with them, and together in yearning for them and correcting, in accord with the demands of both justice and mercy, seeking the lost sheep. And then once it has been found, place it on your own shoulder, thus bearing their weights on yourself, and rejoice and celebrate a festival for the lost sheep that has been found and brought back to the flock.

I desire to see you despoiled of heart, and from that affection of all your own self-love, so that this may not impede you from being His genuine Spouse. And may this make you fearful so that out of fear you will not set aside any zeal for holy justice and both with regard to yourselves and toward those who have been committed to your care.

The reason is that in whatever self-love finds its support, there cannot shine authentic justice, neither toward yourself [since it is a requirement to render toward oneself that which is one's own due, that is, self-hatred and displeasure out of the authentic knowledge each has of herself] – nor toward God, but render glory and praise to His Name. And to the subject, she would not give the example of a holy and perfect life; she should not give a second thought to that which is defective, nor benevolence toward the good, but comforting each and adapting each to the Community.



### **3. St. Ignatius on Humility**

This is advice that he gave from heaven to St. Magdalene de' Pazzi:

'I, Ignatius, have been chosen by the Mother of your Spouse, to speak to you about humility. So, listen to my words.

Humility ought to be poured as oil in the lantern of these new plants of religion. And just as the oil occupies the entire receptacle into which it is poured, so humility and true knowledge of it should in this manner occupy the powers of the sisters' souls, who - no matter where they turn to their right or to their left, they will not discover anything else other than humility and meekness.

And just as the wick cannot burn without the oil, in like manner the new plants will not live in the religious state in the splendor of holiness and perfection, unless at every moment of time there is not given some evidence of this humility; train and exercise them in this, by making clear to them how necessary is this virtue for the authentic living of religious life.

These needs to be brought about in them through the exercise of lowering themselves which is asked of them, so that the virtue might come to them in rejoicing. Let it be firm and immobile, reminding them that there was no other reason why each needs to make a habit of it.

And since the devil has no part in us, the one providing them with spiritual nourishment needs to employ a holy art. This means that wishing to move them to lower themselves both in their judgment as well as in the use of their wills, and should they reject this training, or even respond to it impatiently, the one responsible for them might even severely correct them, and make very much out of such an attitude, even if the matter of itself may not seem very important.

However, while the oil of humiliation is poured out, on the other hand each must maintain a gentle balm, by showing them how much God Himself honors them in such actions. They will draw much fruit from this in falling in love with this humility, and they will come to want nothing other, no will they aspire to any else than this humility.

There needs to be this humility manifested in their exterior conduct and it should show forth in all their words, gestures and works.

And there must be avoided every word in which there is not that flavor of humility, just as cursing needs to be avoided in the world. Each must eliminate pride in the religious life just as in the world every effort is made to eliminate all gestures offensive to one's own honor and reputation. The Sisters must abhor all works that are perpetrated without humility, much like a king would abhor that any son of his should be dressed in the vesture more characteristic of those assigned to taking care of the animals.

Humility in superiors is so necessary [but, let them first give an example of this] in their corrections administered, their exhortations and in all other contact. In their entire demeanor it is necessary for them as well to show acts of humility.

Each one of these 'spouses' – I mean by this, the religious - must act in such a way that they might indeed be harvested and the superiors must be able to harvest the most sweet and most precious fruits, whether in the mountains, or valleys. They must never allow any planting of the less precious creep in here and there.

All must be the spouses in the building up of spiritual perfection, and as the stones that were employed in the building of Solomon's temple, in which there was not even heard the sound of the hammer and chisel [cf. 1 K 6:7].

All those who would open their mouths in being adapted to the building, are to be brought to the font and there become drunk – partly in the act of love and partly in severity. In this way, it will be that they would be unable to open their mouths, but being apparently drunk, they are surprised by a sweet slumber.

And to anyone who would find humility repugnant, their crucified Spouse should be handed to them, thereby showing that it is He Whom each is to imitate.

Never, even unto death, should anyone fail to be exercised in this practice of humility. And to whomsoever is bestowed the care of souls, should never be found wanting in exercising the Sisters in this virtue, for as long as their bodies and bones remained united in life. The reason is that life is like a stair way in which there are so many steps that no one would never succeed in climbing them all. And the same stairs need to be climbed many times, by multiplying the acts of humility.

Those souls who may not have thus humility, will not be able to go out from themselves, because there rise up in them a thousands upon passions and much curiosity, and they will be absorbed by those.

It is thus that the Word constituted the Apostles as Fishers of Men, and thus He has constituted His Spouses. That they might be on the hunt for souls.



#### **4. Regarding Aridity and Consolation in Prayer**

There are two lessons that the Lord gives us – rather, He Himself provides one of them and the other He permits that this be given to us through life.

The one He gives us is that of interior consolation and when He comes, he exterminates from the heart all disturbance and fills each with the love of God, with which he ravishes all.

The light which each Sister receives within comforts each mind with many secrets, that reveal to them and discovers for them how sure these are and what dangerous passageways, there are in the ways of the Lord.

The fervor He bestows is such that there is no travail so great that it does not seem to be consolation, nor is there is noisy fatigue that would not seem to them to be rather repose.

Every weight seems to be light, and every penance seems sweet.

This consolation is not perpetual in us, but it comes and goes, it changes its times and its specific presences, in accord with the good pleasure of God. It is He Who gives it to them and He Who then takes it away, and both of these are bestowed on us for our own profit.

When the time of consolation of God has departed, the devil discovers an opportunity to introduce them to his discontent and desolations, treating us with manners that are downright contrary to those of God. And the Evil One does this in order to take away that spirit of doing good and in order to draw us away from the affection and service of the Lord.

He fills us with melancholy and very often, while we are experiencing melancholy, we are not able to know why we are so.

Prayer seems sterile and dry, meditation has no flavor nor taste, hearing the things of God spoken of and heard, increases within us our annoyance.

There come to us those thoughts that are so upsetting toward ourselves, that we give every appearance and we weep as persons who have been rejected, abandoned and separated from God. And it seems to us that whatever it may be that we have accomplished up until now, none of it has been pleasing to Him, and no matter what it might be that we might accomplish in the future, none of this would ever seem to help us.

Therefore, all these experiences of abandonment, the diffidence that we know as well as that mind-set, seems to be that everything is a very serious fault, and that our every misery is beyond remedy.

In the end, however, neither is this a perpetual state of mind. Nonetheless, we need to make the best of both of these situations. Indeed, while we are being consoled, let us humble ourselves, reminding ourselves just how different we are whenever desolation overtakes us; on the contrary, when we are desolate, we need to find courage with reminding ourselves that after the first streaks of light of the consolation that may come to us, all the terrible shadows will vanish, and light and serenity will come back to us as before.



## 5. Regarding the Art of Governing

St. Gregory Nazianzen has said that the competent being in charge of others is the art of arts and the science of all sciences. Looking at the certain sublime challenge there is in this very arduous undertaking, due to the inherent matter about which it is concerned, this is harder to do than to take care of bodies and restore them to that health that the right medicine achieves. The reason is that the medical care of bodies considers that part of them that need to be restored to health, and this is somewhat hindered by the various humors encountered in the ailing person. Healing considers all these, and they are truly a challenge. Neither physical nature nor the ailing bodies actually work against this art, nor do they put up artifices of opposition against the one who has the orientation for this art.

On the contrary, though, we have this fallen intellect of ours, and this love for ourselves, as well as the lack of expertise, that does not want to tolerate easily being ordered around by others. All these, of course, provide a very large impediment toward virtue, and they put us to the battle against those trying to help us. And there is so much that we do in order to side-step being cured by others. And we truly become formidable enemies against ourselves, and we actually learn the tricks that hinder our spiritual health.

St. Ignatius legislated for all such self-despoilment and such resignation into the hands of the superior, much like a soft glob of clay which will always become that which the one who handles it may choose. No differently should his men conduct themselves, but need to be readied and disposed at the same to become thus theologians –or, as porters, to navigate in any eventuality in that ocean on the far side of the world – or accepting that obedience of never setting one's foot outside the door.

With all this, the Saint's manner of governing would listen for the expressed willingness that results from the command. And wherever authority or a command should be manifested, this would be done in the manner of a loving father, with a certain freedom of love and confidence.

Also in applying his subjects to the offices and ministries of his Order, he maintained a supreme regard for the natural inclination of each man, in so far as this would be possible. This would be not only regarding the talent the superior might have and interpret nothing that would be forced or harsh. Rather each would seek for one performing a task with a certain satisfaction and taste, knowing that in the last analysis, nothing that is forced is ever lasting. The highest level of results ordinarily spring from only those whose wills that are lead, and not being dragged

along by those in authority as with violence, but each much rather would be led through their inner abilities.

Therefore, the Saint's custom was toward those whose office or ministry was yet to be determined, he would propose three points to consider before God to resolve the proposal that he would have in mind:

1. Whether they were prepared to obey, in whatever manner they might be employed.
2. Whether to one ministry or toward some other endeavor, to which his men might feel the more inclined.
3. He would see whether his men, being placed in a certain set of circumstances, whether they were the more willing to work in this one mission, or in some other, and to which should they be applied.

It is true that when the Saint would find in some of his men such great self-despoilment of their entire self-will, that once he had made the above-mentioned consideration, he would get back to them with this response, that he did not know what to respond. It would come to him that they would be motivated by nothing other than the desire, and that of obeying. The Saint would rejoice mightily, for having found among his community precisely these men, so much in accord with his heart.



## 6. Internal Mortification

The ordinary theme of St. Ignatius' Domestic Exhortations was dedicated to that of becoming an interior man. This implies rushing toward the foot of the Cross of Christ with one's own will and to conquer one's passions and one's affections even to the point of reducing them to obey at the slightest intimation of a superior's will.

Indeed in the sessions of his domestic 'story-tellings', nothing other would appear so often to his lips as '*conquer yourself!*' This was a lesson so well grasped by St. Francis Xavier that he, even more so in the Indies, did not ever more frequently than any other principle repeat this: '*conquer yourself!*' to his companions. This highly valued principle of such few words manifested the art of making saints. This principle includes and teaches more than many books which wax eloquent on this same idea in long and doctoral discourses.

St. Ignatius held prayer in very high value and he personally spent many hours daily in it. However, he did not measure with prayer the holiness of any other, nor did he ever think that the longer it was, the better it had to be. Rather he would notice the man who the more generously conquered himself and the one who rendered his will and senses subject to authority.

Truly he was accustomed to say that the experience of a long time had taught him that out of 100 persons who placed the marrow of their perfection in spending many hours in prayer, more than 90 did so out of their own head. Such persons are often difficult to manage, as they are obstinate in their opinions and badly subjected to the government of the Rule. This is all because of the high concept they hold regarding themselves as never to be able to be regulators of others.

On the contrary, true value is much more a resolved and heroic act of dominating their own opinion of themselves rather than spending many hours in sweet tears and very delicate yearning.

Therefore, he would say very often that in the Company that he had founded there should be feared that they would put these matters upside down and would journey more according to their own wills on the path to holiness. Rather each should submit to prayer the mortification that the rule required.

He said once to a Jesuit who had made the observation that more prayer was needed. The other view was that long meditations were clearly necessary for them in order to acquire dominion over one's passions, by praying and figuring out within oneself the best manner to do all this. Ignatius, though, maintained that another could achieve all this with 15 minutes of recollection, and one would much sooner be united to God, rather than some other religious, who was only personally very badly mortified, could ever achieve with a good two hours poured out in this way.

The reason is the greater impediment of bringing oneself to God and placing oneself at His disposition, is being attached to oneself. This is the heaviest of all burden which impede a soul from rising up out of this attitude.

In like manner he once remarked to another brother because the saint noted how fastidious and in such bad humor he was, and he always fled from the public. He would often be found alone by himself when he heard the explanation of all this: - You, the Founder said, have not figured out that this kind of enemy cannot be conquered by fleeing, but by contrasting him directly. Solitude does not take away acts of impatience, but just covers them over. And the more you give to God the

more you will gain for yourselves with those acts of mortification, no matter how few or many they may be. This will provide you with the occasion to overcome more that rigidity of your nature and to be able to treat better with others, than if you were to bury yourself in a cavern, and would not have said a single word in an entire year.



## **7. Passages drawn from Bartoli for Novices**

St. Ignatius used to make clear to Novices that once each one accepted entering the community, and came to live in the house, that by that step they took, coming from the world to the Company, they showed every intention that they would never leave, but that they would remain in stability and in permanence. This would not be possible to them unless they did all on these two feet: the surrender of their own wills and judgment, and they would be ready to subject themselves to the decisions of the one who took the place of Christ Who governs.

Regarding the virtue of the Novices , most especially the young men, no one should ever place his trust in occasions of danger, because each has that age in them in which they will be equally subjected to good impressions as well as to evil ones. And their spirit is like those budding branches in the spring-time, that produce a new shoot very soon and in joy, but they are so tender and delicate, that just as soon as they are touched, they dry up.

The Saint was rather rigorous in demanding from them those experiments of mortification prescribed for them. However, he did not expose them those trials of dangerous risks, as out of doubt that they would be able to withstand them. And this is so, even though some among them might have overcome with great constancy the contradiction of their families, who wanted to draw them back out of the religious life. Thus the Saint did not trust to leave them near to their families and sent them outside of their native land.

Regarding the austerity of the Institute, the following must be observed:

- the subjection of their own judgment;
- obedience in all things, even to their very last breath;
- dependence in each particular minute on the will of someone else;
- the denial of all that one feels as total freedom and one's own satisfaction;
- the self-emptying of each one, and to whatever each has of his own merit and talents that each one renounce even his own reputation;

- one should never harden his spirit, not should anyone ever give way to callousness; and so with the passing of the years and with the continuous exercise of this self-denial, each one would come to the level of not even feeling it;
- rather, on the contrary,. The more one increases in age, in judgment, in authority and in merits, so much the more one becomes by his own condition disposed not even to feel this, and because of long years of observance, may all be obliged not to resent it.



## **8. Instruction of Saint Jeanne Françoise Fremiont de Chantal**

The greater secret of the religious life is that of being most exact in the observance of the rules that have been given to us by the loving hand of God.

We are therefore to be most diligent in this, and not only merely attached to the exteriors and to the letter, but to the spirit in imitation of our divine Savior. He perfectly carried out the will of His Father, and allowed Himself to be directed in accord with the wishes of all.

And since He has chosen us and drawn us out of the world, in order to be His spouses, and like unto Him, let us conform ourselves to Him entirely, since wherever there is not conformity, nor is there found either union of heart, or of will.

Let us not betray ourselves from this grace. The time has been given to us in order to suffer, and eternity is provided for rejoicing. And we will not be able in heaven to wear on our heads the crown of glory, if first we have not worn on earth the crown of abjection.

This is the part that I leave you.

Do not be frightened with the difficulties deriving from human nature, but combat them with generosity. And it is in this that the greater majority of these difficulties will be put to death, and, the more there are of these, so much more victorious will you be.

But, do you know what the victory will be? Forbearance in repentance; love for humiliation; the submission of one's own judgment and one's own will, united to the exact observance and fortitude in temptations: since in this manner, the Lovers of Calvary become victorious on earth and eventual possessors of heaven.

And since the principles of the religious life are that we perform works worthy of our vocation. So, I beg you that your obedience be fair, abject, without personal choices, simple, solid, authentic – such that by triumphing over them by means of obedience over ourselves. Let us find our repose in its bosom and in its arms like little children, without any other care or thought than that of obeying the religious sate, your good mother, who guides us with the divine Spirit to the continuous fulfillment of its most holy will, strongly and sweetly, urging our hearts that there might go out from them all that is of ourselves.

Let us then let ourselves sweetly force the issue, without placing any impediment and we will make a happy voyage and its goal will be eternity.



### **9. Passages from the Letters of the Blessed Chantal of the Superiors of the Visitation.**

It is very true that it has been said to you that there are found in religious life many who encounter great difficulties. But, it is also true that ordinarily they are those who in the world have lived with greater personal freedom and the more subjected to their own passions. This, thanks be to God, has not happened to you, since there has always been your natural sense of quiet and one that is subject to reason, which in you has dominated.

And therefore, presently you live satisfied in your vocation that you have chosen, in which everything is ordered in accord with reason and piety.

But a word that you say to me has brought to me supreme consolation, and it is that you have felt a little bit of annoyance in this, and so you resign in yourselves everything to God, trusting that if He has you experience difficulties, He will communicate to you also the strength to support them.

With what arms should those who want to found a religious community be endowed?

The arms that you ought to bear in the foundation of a work are none other than holy humility; of this, it is necessary that one be blanketed in from head to foot.

The reason is that humility is totally generous, and it moves us with indescribable courage to undertake all that pertains to the service of God and to the increase of His glory.

And the more incapable that we recognize ourselves to be to do all this, all the more should we unite ourselves and connect ourselves to God, trusting totally in His assistance. He will never fail to grant it to us so that we might fulfill our obligation, if we are indeed full of diffidence in our selves.

Since it is most certain that in God everything is possible, we may not be capable of keeping the accounts, nor are we ever superior to those talents that God has placed in us. We are but the dispensers of these in order to distribute them to others, bearing the spirit of the Institute in order to communicate this to our neighbor. Our task is to work for striving to purify them, re-polish them, and form the souls of those Sisters whom God will commit to our care and they are indeed far distant and different from this ideal.

With these Sisters it will be necessary that we exercise a very broad sweetness, tolerance and patience, in order to see them walk along very slowly and may always commit new imperfections. We need to inculcate to them the authentic sweetness, humility, generosity so that by following this street they might achieve perfection of holy love and for the union of their souls with God, which is the ultimate purpose for which he has called to the religious life.

Further arms that are needed – regarding those who are novices.

It is necessary to have these dear young daughters to avoid absolutely making believe they are saints or ecstatic, because a most beautiful holiness is a profound humility and submission accompanied by a holy joy in the common life.

And still additional arms are needed:

I would never finish saying that there is a great difference between external good and that of the interior.

I make this comment in the light of a letter I have recently received from [NN...] and so that you might ever more direct our Sisters into authentic, lively and solid virtue. There is no need to pay much attention to external appearances, of certain affected exercises of recollection, those apparently ardent desires and sentiments of perfection that are not of grace.

The reason is, unfortunately I often see such appearances that are the operations of human nature alone and that when God withdraws his sentiments of joy, through the trials of aridity, these souls remain quite disturbed, very slow and frightened, that they might not be found to be really what they wanted to believe that they were.

Therefore, go ever more deeply into the depths of these souls and see if their virtues have indeed struck down strong roots – if their determinations for good are truly authentic, and to see if they truly practice in all occasions those acts of virtue. This means that these Sisters need to respond in desolations, humiliations and contradictions, just as they do when immersed in consolations and pleasant events – see if their love for poverty leads them to love the state of need, and to accept the most lowly goods – whether their humility makes them stand as lowly and abject in the eyes of the rest of us, and makes them love being held and considered in this way – whether their sweet charity enables them to pleasantly support contradictions that happen to us all with our fellow Sisters and with our neighbor, without being excessively saddened by this - see if their simplicity has them stand in union with the Will of God in those matters that prove to be the most bitter, and likewise to see whether this is their immediate reaction to such events - and look to see if their patience has them persevere without boredom, not in travail or suffering.

Finally in the spiritual life it is necessary for our activities to correspond always to our genuine affections, even though we always desire to perform ever better whatever it is that we do.

And still there further arms needed for this endeavor:

That which I ask of you is that you proceed as though blind, without knowing or desiring to notice yourselves in order to know whether you are proceeding well, or not.

And the same I say regarding the travails that you suffer, in those frustrating circumstances, tiredness and disturbances.

And it is necessary for us to be content with that which our superiors say to us to know why God will not provide them with sufficient light to guide us, and moreover, not to will anything if not that which God wills for us.

And if His goodness wills that we obey His commandments and those of our superiors and that we should live peacefully and tranquilly, placed under His will and that we are the very least and most lowly religious sisters of His Church – what, then, is there that could cooperate more in this than the rejections of us which are never lacking, as that His principles have never been lacking for the greatest saints in the religious life.

And still further arms are needed:

It is necessary to refrain those sentimental ardors, and to distance them from us, because these matters are of God. As simple as they are far more quiet and far

from those emotional sentiments, they are also the more excellent than the internal senses themselves.

And another arm is how necessary poverty of spirit is for perfection:

And I say to you that blessed are the poor in spirit because of them is the kingdom of heaven [cf. Mt 5:3] and God wills that you should go to Him by this path. Do not doubt at all: this has been the most secure path that the Saints have had. In substance, this is the poorer and more destitute way than anything else, except for a firm resolution of not willing to offend God freely, but rather to will to please Him in everything and above all to be totally His.

The genuinely poor soul has nothing other than this and has this in such a manner that one does not experience any satisfaction from it, nor any feeling one way or the other. Such a person says only, even though without enthusiasm, that she does not want to see any more, and that she desires to fulfill in herself His will.

Evil is abstained from and the good is done with only the supreme part of reason. All else is put aside then in the rest, living without any other satisfaction, other than this one and this is worth more than a thousand other possible ways. And of this the poor soul ought to be content in this: that of being and willing freely and remaining sweetly deprived of all for the will of God alone. This is what He wills, holding this in greater esteem over all of His consolations and proper satisfactions.

This is what 'poor in spirit' means.

Support this state, then, quietly and with a good heart, without being disturbed about anything. Work, speak and achieve good and the virtue to the extent that you can and be content to say at times to our Lord, even though without much enthusiasm: I am totally Yours and I do not choose to act, nor put aside anything, other than for Your love alone.

And never make any useless reflection in order to notice what your souls are doing, what you will do and what you have already done. Ultimately this is to observe what the temptations are, because all these things are sheer curiosity. They are not only without value, but they are very dangerous.

And rather than all this, look on God, achieving good and fleeing evil to the extent that you are able.

And whenever in this you may note that in this you fail, return to God with submissive spirit and full of sweet confusion. And do this, walk on saying: God will help me to do better.

And thus strive to be joyful.

Be patient and suffering under the Cross of Jesus Christ and do not desire to be alleviated from your burdens, but walk in simplicity and obey faithfully all that is suggested to you.

And still further arms that you will need: this means it is necessary to root out from the Novices every ineptitude and those imperfections dangerous for the religious state. e, is the most dangerous evil for the religious life.

If the wrong pertains to the body alone, there is not so much to worry about. But if it pertains to the spirit, it may create a great evil. Do this by making them realize the importance, the beauty, the usefulness of the good that there is, and lead them to perform all their actions vigorously for God.

The reason is that performing in this way, you do not bind the spirit – all that is necessary is that their hearts are in their tasks.

It is necessary to suffer with sweetness and patience, seeing that all do not proceed at the same rate, and with that determination and resolve that are indicated.

Not all the fruits on the tree are mature at the same time.

And other principles you need to work by: a few counsels for the guidance of souls.

Do not suffer over the defects and imperfections of these dear daughters, because God has not committed them to your care so that you will make them perfect, but so that you will teach them about perfection and the obligation they have for it.

If they will believe you, it will go well for them; and if they do not, you cannot do much else for them, since it is your task to plant them and then enable them to proceed. It is for God to make them grow. [cf. 1 Co 3:6, ff.].

And therefore you ought draw out from everyone of them that which you can and in proportion to the to the capacity of each one.

Explain to them the obligations that they have and do not let them continue on in their imperfections, without correcting them with sweet energy. It is necessary to employ this, in a singular manner with those who need to come to know the subjection and religious holy modesty.

It is necessary to walk along step by step, being content with the little that each one might be able to give.

Do gently that which you will be able to accomplish, by asking favors, giving reasons, corrections and penances and leave the remaining care of all this to God, for He has a greater interest than you do in these souls.



## **10. A Letter of St. Francis de Sales to a Sister Superior**

My Beloved Daughter,

If His Excellency, the Archbishop, tells you that he has written to me and spoken of your concerns, you will respond to him in whatever manner God has been served by the Congregation in which presently you find yourself, you will be satisfied.

In fact, it is necessary to have this spirit in our Congregation, since this is the perfect and apostolic spirit.

If this one could be useful to establish other Religious Congregations of good Sister Servants of God, without this one ever being established on its own, it would be in this manner more pleasing to His Divine eyes. The reason is there would be a lesser occasion of self love, notwithstanding the fact that I have had a singular gratification with the title of this simple Congregation, in which only charity and the fear of the Spouse might make use of the Cloister.

I fully agree, therefore, that we should establish a formed religious community and I give my consent with sweetness and tranquility and with an incomparable gentleness. Not only my will, but also my judgment still has great pleasure in rendering my obsequious service which is due to this worthy and great Prelate. As a result, my beloved daughter, I do not pretend anything else, other than God being glorified and that His Holy Name be spread abundantly in the hearts of these souls, who have the happiness of dedicating themselves to him.

That this ideal might succeed by means of other lights rather than by means of my own, I could not feel better, because in so doing I would be the more defended from the spirit of vanity, than having wasted everything.

Our good Mother is of this same sentiment.

I hope in the grace of our Lord, that His sovereign hand might make greater use of this little Community to accomplish that which men could hardly imagine.

St. Francis de Sales used to say: Give me a mediocre spirit, a week holiness, but a good heart, that is sincere and docile and I will most surely do all the rest.



## 11. Conference on the Spirit of the Institute

*Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to Your word!*  
[cf. Lk 1:38].

Every time that we gather for the Conference, we repeat this ejaculatory prayer. However, I would like to know whether at any other times this prayer comes into your minds, or whether you think of it in other circumstances, where it could indeed remind you of that which makes up the very foundation of our Institute.

You should know that this ejaculatory prayer has been chosen by us not simply to have it on our lips and to just say it, but rather it is offered in order to remind us with it that which we have proposed to ourselves as the ideal in embracing this Institute.

The Spirit of the 'Beloved' is that of being poor regarding ourselves, despoiled of every personal will, affection and desire of our own, which would all tend to one decision, rather than to another, in the choice of means chosen in order to arrive at our end – or, whether we leave up to God that care of there being fulfilled in us His most lovable will, by praying in all confidence: *Behold Your Handmaid, let Your Will be done in me!*

The perfect denial of ourselves is precisely that which constitutes the very spirit of the 'Beloved' [Sisters], and that which ought to console us is that which is of Jesus Christ and it is He Whom puts together these maxims of the Gospel. Since it is the Lord Himself Who has said that *whoever wants to follow Him, ought to renounce herself* [cf. Mt 16:24].

This, then, is the great means we have in order to follow after Jesus. It is this that leads you more securely without any confusion that other means do bear with them.

All those means that are taken up in the spiritual life are in order to lead us to this; but by following other means, we only lengthen our journey, while it is much more short, when we go directly, by embracing this denial of other resolutions, without stopping by so many other possible alleys.



## **12. Seeking God in Truth - Treats also of Charity**

I desire to see you seeking God in Truth, without any other means proposed by sensuality, or from any other creature; the reason is that with these others means we cannot please God.

God bestows on us the Word of His own Only-Begotten Son, without respect to how useful this may seem.

It is true that in Him we cannot reduce Him to any convenience of our own, as this is not what we are about; this is because whenever we do not serve God for His own sake, nonetheless it is of the utmost profit for ourselves. To Him belongs that flower, that is, the honor, whereas the fruit of this profit is our own.

He has loved us without being loved, and we love because we have been loved. He loves us through His grace while we love Him out of debt because we are held to love him. And so it is thus that profit succeeds; it is not that we are able to provide God with this, as we are not able to love Him except out of grace, or without fulfilling our debt. This is because we are indebted to Him, and not He to us, because before He had been loved, He loved us, and this is why He has created us to His own image and likeness.

And this explains why we are not capable of being profitable to Him, nor love Him with His love that came first.

God asks of us that since He has loved us without any regard to what we are, and so, He desires to be loved by us. And, therefore, in what manner can we accomplish this, since He does demand this of us and we are simple unable to offer this to Him?

I will tell you: with the very means that He has already given to us. Therefore, we ought to love Him freely without any regard to do so just for our own profit. This means that we ought to be profitable not so much to Him [as this we are incapable], but to our neighbor.

Now, with this means we are enabled to observe what it is that He asks of us for the glory and praise of His Name.

And in order to manifest to Him the love that we owe Him, we need to serve and love every creature which has within it that quality of reason and to extend our charity both to the good as well as those who are evil, and to every generation of

persons. So, we need to be considered by those not profitable for us, and who may even be scandalized in us, as one who serves them. God Himself does not respect the principle of 'respector of persons', but He is of holy desires, and His charity is extended both to the just as well as to sinners.

And is it not true that some may be loved as children, others as friends, and others as a servant and still others who started out with Him, and whom He has desired that such as these return to Him? And these are those unfortunate sinners who are deprived of His grace.

And for such as these, what is there that we reflect the love of this supreme Father? It consists in offering others our time. And in that time, He places before us many means: as, the repentance for sin, by removing from them the place and the opportunity, so that they may not be even able to accomplish as much evil as they would like to commit – or, the Lord offers them many other means enabling them to hate vice and to love virtue.

Love of this kind for virtue removes that will for sin.

And so during the time the Lord provides for them, those who were enemies become friends and they are provided with grace and are enabled to have their inheritance offered by the Father.

Love of them as beloved children are for those who genuinely serve Him without any servile fear. Such as these, have already been drowned and have mortified their own will, and are obedient to God, even unto death as they are for every other creature, who is endowed with reason.

Such as these are not mercenaries who serve others for their own profit, but they are His beloved children, who disdain consolations and are delighted with tribulations and they seek to discern in what manner they might be conformed to Jesus Crucified and to be nourished with His shame, fatigue and sufferings.

Such as these neither seek nor serve God out of sweetness obtained thereby, nor for spiritual or temporal consolation which they receive from God, or from creatures, because they do not seek God just for themselves, nor the good of their neighbor for their own benefit. Rather, they do all this for God Himself, in so far as He is worthy to be loved and all others for God, for the glory and praise of His Name. They serve their neighbor for God, by rendering to Him that profit that is possible for them to obtain.

Such as these follow in all the footprints of the Father, by all delighting themselves in charity for their neighbor, loving the servants of God because they love these others out love for their Creator. And they love also the imperfect out of that desire that such as these come to perfection, by bestowing on them that holy desire and continuous prayer. They love also those evil persons, who languish in the death of mortal sin, because they are creatures endowed with reason, created by God, and redeemed with His very blood.

And the persecutors and murmurers and those who pass judgment on others; and they love others, even though these others may reject them and they are scandalized by them. Indeed they do, because all these are creatures of God, as I have said, and these others are also the instruments and the very reason why they are able to acquire virtue, and they come to perfection in the authentic virtue of patience: this sweet virtue, that does not find scandal in others, nor is it disturbed by them, nor does patience cast aside anyone because it does not cede to any contrary wind, nor is rejected for any bother brought to them by others.

Such as these who seek without any personal temporary benefit and they love God in truth, as His legitimate and genuine children. And He loves them as a real Father and manifests to them the secret of His Charity, in order to share with them an eternal heredity.

And so, they hurry along, inebriated on the Blood of Christ, burned in the fire of divine charity, from which they are perfectly illuminated.

Such as these do not hasten along the way of virtue, in their own manner, rather more like the Crucified Christ, following along in His footprints. And were it possible for them to serve and to acquire virtue without fatigue, they would prefer not to do so.

Such as these do not accomplish all this as would personal servants, that is, like a personal friend would or a slave - because sometimes their serving is done with some self-interest, and perhaps at times, with some personal advantage. And in this manner, they arrive at sublime friendship in that one comes to understand the need of this. And each is something like a grand Benefactor who sees that a better result can indeed be and wishes to make some contribution. It may be even though that before such a person had acted more like a servant, recognizing in her own previous unhappy situation, there came the realization that it was indeed worth while to change.

Furthermore with the fear of penalty, one eliminates vice and with love embraces with virtue. This means that each strives earnestly to serve his Lord, whom he had offended, and begins to build up hope in piety, considering that the Lord does not want the death of the sinner, but that each one be converted and live.

This is because that were one to remain in fear, it would not have sufficed to be given life, nor would such make a return to perfect grace with her Lord, but would remain a mercenary servant.

The true religious should not bask in the love of the fruit of good works and consolation, that would be received from the Lord, since such a person indeed has become a friend. In such a case, this love would not yet be strong enough, but would waver should the granted sweetness fade as would the feelings of consolation and delight should there rise up any contrary wind of persecution or temptation of the devil or the flesh. Eliminate them right away, or confusion and impatience would return.

And so you see that such love was not strong. Rather such a religious who would act with such love would be more like St. Peter who before the Passion loved Christ in sweetness, but it was not strong enough and as a result, it failed at the time of the Cross.

But if you begin with the love of an accompanying sweetness, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, and there is put aside the fear, and there comes instead a strong love, and one proven in the fire of many consolations.

And so, Peter, having come to what is called filial love, was able to bear all these things with real patience. Rather, he even hastened forward with very great joy, as if he were coming to nuptial festivities rather than to torments. And this was because he had reached filial love.

However, if Peter had remained in that sweetness he had experienced and in fear, that he shared during the Passion of Christ, he would not have arrived at such sublime perfection as having reached filial love and became a champion of the holy Church, and a consumer of souls.

Just look at the manner that Peter shared with the other disciples in order to be capable of losing servile fear and that love of his for consolations. He came to receive the Holy Spirit as had been promised to him from the first sweet example of authenticity.

The Scripture says that the Disciples closed themselves off in the house and stayed there keeping vigil and in continual prayer for ten days and then the Holy Spirit came, who illumined them with the truth.

I had come to see the secret of that inestimable charity of the Word with the will of the Father, Who willed nothing other than our sanctification. And this His most precious Blood had manifested this to us, Who was bestowed on the Disciples, that is, when the fullness of the Holy Spirit arrived.

And the Spirit came with the Father's supreme power, with the Wisdom of the Son and with the piety and clemency of Him Who is the Holy Spirit.

And so, the truth of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, is fulfilled when He said to the Disciples: *I am going, but I will return to you* [cf. Jn 14:28]. And then, therefore, He did return, because the Holy Spirit could not come without the Son and without the Father, because He was one with them.

The Apostles show this very well because immediately through their love they lost their fear. Hence, it was with authentic wisdom they came to know the truth and with great power they went out against the infidels, and cast to the ground all the idols and cast out the devils.

This did not come about with power from this world, nor with the strength of their own bodies. Rather it was accomplished with the strength of the Spirit and with the power of God, which through divine grace they had received.

The same result will be had by those who will be liberated from mortal sin and from the misery of this world and they begin to experience the supreme good and they fall in love with the sweetness He provides.

However, as we have already said, to remain solely in fear and there would be no flight from this hell, but one would perform much like the thief who fears the gallows and therefore he does not steal. But he still indeed would steal were he to think that he would be able to get away with it.

This happens also from the love of God out of sweetness, since this would neither be strong nor perfect, but weak and imperfect.

Those who love God, without any regard for spiritual sweetness, do not stand still, but hold to the highway and the manner they choose with genuine perseverance to arrive at perfection.

The manner of arriving there is that of the disciples which we have cited above, as Peter and the others closed themselves off indoors.

This is what they did and should be done by those who have arrived at this level of love for the Father, that they are His genuine children. As a result when they want to pass on to this level, they ought to enter and close themselves indoors, i.e., in the dwelling of their own self-knowledge. This is that of the religious cell in which the soul needs to dwell and in which there is found still a further inner cell, i.e., that of the knowledge of the goodness of God in itself.

Therefore, from the knowing of oneself, there is drawn forth a genuine humility, with a holy hatred for the offense that has been committed, and perpetrated against their Creator. And through this conviction one comes to perfect patience. And in the knowledge of God, which the Sister has found within herself, she acquires the virtue of the most ardent charity, from which one derives holy and loving desires.

And through this manner one discovers the vigils and continuous prayer, while she remains inside in such a sweet and glorious dwelling, when there is in her knowledge of oneself and that of God.

I speak of vigils not only with the bodily eye, but with that of the soul, i.e., the eye of the intellect. This must never be sealed off but it should always remain opened up on its ineffable object and love of the Crucified Christ. There are found there His love and our own faults, because it is for these faults that Christ has given us His blood.

Therefore, the soul is raised up through that most sublime affection to love all that God loves and to hate all that He hates.

Now, this is the way of being raised up from being merely a servant to a friend. In other words this means being elevated from servile fear or from that tender love for one's own consolation, and to arrive at being an authentic servant, an authentic friend, an authentic child of God. Nothing is lost by not being a servant and true friend, but one becomes in truth a servant and friend, without any respect for one's own interests, nor even those of others, but solely that of pleasing God.

We have said that the Disciples stayed ten days within and then the Holy Spirit came [on Pentecost]

And thus, the soul who wishes to arrive at this perfection, it is fitting that it remain those ten days, i.e., within those ten commandments of the Law and with the Commandments of the Law, each will observe the counsels, because these two are bound to each other and one of them is not observed without the other.

And the truth is that those are of the world, have to observe the counsels mentally out of a holy desire – and those who have been taken out of the world ought to observe them both mentally and actually.

And thus, there is received the abundance of the Holy Spirit with the genuine wisdom of the truth and the perfect light and knowledge, with fortitude and the strong power on every battle, principally against oneself, dominating over one's own sensuality.

But all this you would not be able to accomplish if you waste time wandering about with much conversation, outside your cell, etc.

I desire to see you burnt up and consumed in the ardent charity of Jesus Christ and in a deep sea that burst forth with this saying: *God is love!*<sup>32</sup> And in this word, as in a mirror, there is represented the face of a human being and the sun sheds its light on the earth. Thus there are represented every one of our activities that become solely love, because they are not accomplished for any other motive than out of love. And so He says: *I am the God of love!*<sup>33</sup>

We have a ray of light of this in the inestimable mystery of the Incarnate Word, Who by force of love has been given with such humility, that this confounds our pride, and teaches us not to pay attention so much to his varied operations, but rather the fiery affection of the word which has been bestowed on us.

And He says to us further let us act as one who loves, that whenever a friend meets his friend, the former does not look at the hands of the latter, just to see what gift he may be bringing to him. Rather he opens up his eye of love and notices the heart of the other and his genuine affection.

Now this is what He wants us to do when that supreme, eternal and most sweet goodness of God visits our souls.

---

<sup>32</sup> cf. 1 Jn 4:8

<sup>33</sup> cf. 2 Co 13:11.

Therefore, whenever He visits us with immeasurable benefits, see to it that your memory is ready to receive that which the intellect grasps in the divine charity and will there is aroused with most ardent desire. Receive with high regard the heart consumed by the sweet and good Jesus, Who is the Giver of all gifts. And thus you will find yourself enflamed and vested in fire and with the gift of the Blood of the Beloved Son of God, and you will be totally lacking in every suffering and *malaise*.

This is what took away the suffering of the holy disciples, when the time had come when they had to take their leave from the most holy Mary, and everyone of them was on his way to plant the Word of God, and willingly they carried it.

I desire to see you totally engulfed and overwhelmed in the fire of the most ardent charity of God, despoiled of your own perverse garb and you become vested and covered over with the fire of the Holy Spirit.

This garment is of such strength and durability, that the heart that is vested with it never softens the heart under it and never becomes too delicate. Rather this garb is able and strengthened to receive the very weighty blows of many persecutions from the world, from the devil and from the flesh. These never penetrate within because the garb of charity resists, since the love for all things bears and supports it, i.e., with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

He is that light which casts outside all the darkness and is that hand that sustains the whole world.

He Himself says:

‘I am He who sustains and maintains the whole world.

I am that means which unites the divine nature with the human nature.

I am that strong hand in which I hold the inflated banner of the Cross and I have heard this read about, holding united God and man. He is so strong, that if the bond of charity, fire of the Holy Spirit had not held him, the nails themselves were insufficient to hold Him.

O sweet love and inestimable charity, You are the administrator and the servant of the most vile creatures.

What heart, then, would defend You, unless it was already stripped of the garment of the old man and of self-love of oneself and would not hasten toward such fire and heat in order to be vested as the new man?

Tepid, cold and negligent hearts do not defend themselves. And this springs from the perverse root of self-love.

However, I tell you that you are to be dressed in that fortitude and fullness of the Holy Spirit, because the soul that has aroused its affection upon itself. In the blazing desire for God, such a person does not fall into this defect.



### **13. Self-Love**

I desire to see you dwelling in the abode of self-knowledge, because there you will acquire every virtue. And without this, you will live in every evil and without any purpose.

You will say to me: how can I ever enter there? And I can I keep myself in there?

I respond. You know that without light, we can never go into any place, other than in darkness; from those shadows we will be impaired and in that situation will never be able to know that which is necessary for us to find the way.

We are like highway-men and pilgrims, placed along the highway of the doctrine of the Crucified Christ.

There are those who travel along with the commandments in common charity, and there are those who make progress with the counsels for perfect charity, without however, ever disagreeing with the commandments.

Along these paths no one can travel without light, because, if they do not have it one could never see the place where it would be good to rest, in what place it would be necessary to take a stand in order to discern what is an obstacle and what assists one in the journey.

This place, then, is the dwelling of knowledge of oneself. In this dwelling the soul sees with the light of the most holy faith that she is still on the highway of the doctrine of Jesus Christ – i.e., whoever is it who wants to follow it, immediately enters within herself.

In this habitation there is found her principal enemy, what which to lead one into offending God, i.e., one's own sensuality, covered over with the mantle of self-

love. Such an enemy has two principal companions, with many other vassals on either side.

One of these is the world, with its vanities and promised delights. This has befriended the sensual appetite which it desires in a disorderly manner.

The other is the devil, with his deceptions and with his false and diverse thoughts and disturbances, to which the sensual will is inclined.

These principal enemies have many servants and all stand ready to offend the soul, unless through the light received does not conclude that it is proper to place a remedy to it.

And yet, reason draws forth the light of our most holy faith, enters into this dwelling, and sets one's proper sensuality in order. Faith comes to see that sensuality seeks nothing other than faith's death, since it is accompanied by false friends. And this becomes known through the accompanying light.

Thus, with a certain impetus it raises up and draws out the knife of hatred of this sensuality and of the love of the authentic and real virtues, and with these, sensuality is put to death.

When this sensuality is mortified all the other vices remain defeated, in such a manner that no one can offend this light, unless it allows it to happen.

From this light one can see who it is that has supported her that organized and liberated one from death and led to a blessed life: and all this is the fire of divine love.

Therefore, God out of love has granted the virtue and the power to the soul, which with the power of the intellect and of reason ascends above the death of conscience. With the wisdom of the most holy Word, which He allows them to share in, dictates the sentence that sensuality remains stabbed to death by the will. This participates in the clemency of the Holy Spirit and the sweet will of God and with the hand of free will, puts sensuality to death.

Realizing therefore that for the soul God is its remedy, the One who brings support and assistance. Thus, the soul grows in this dwelling of good pleasure in itself in a ray of truth and in an inestimable and incomprehensible fire, which burns and consumes that which is found in this dwelling all that is against reason. There is consumed in the furnace of the charity of God and of one's neighbor. The water of

both spiritual and temporal self-love, while nothing seeks the affection of the soul, other than the Crucified Christ. The soul ardently chooses to follow along through the path of sufferings, in the manner of God, and not in a way of one's self-choosing. The soul is thus free and allows itself to be guided by the sweet will of God.

Therefore, one's enemies are unable to offend the soul, however there is given to them by the permission of the just Lord to knock at one's door; and this permits that the guard be more solicitous in not falling to sleep in the bed of negligence, having her all the more keep vigil.

And the Lord allows the enemy to prove whether this house is strong, or not, so that in the case it is found not to be strong, it would have the material wherewith it could be fortified. And it is provided with the light to see whether the soul is found strengthened and persevering, and after having discerned this, she is able to bind herself the more solicitously to Him.

And just what is it that renders us strong and persevering?

Humble and continuous prayer, offered in the House of our self-knowledge and where the goodness of God in Himself is the more recognized. However, striving to achieve all this outside this house the soul would only derive very little fruit from it.

This prayer has for its foundation humility, which is acquired in the above-mentioned house and is vested in the fire of divine charity, which is found rather in the knowledge that we have from God, when with His light the soul comes to see that she is loved inestimably by Him.

Love of this kind offers proof and is certified to do all this in the first creation, realizing that it has been created out of love to the image and likeness of God – and in the second creation, she sees herself recreated to grace in the blood of the Immaculate Lamb.

These are the two principal graces, which include within themselves every other spiritual or temporal, particular or general, grace.

And so it is with this light, the soul is vested in the fire of divine charity, and tears follow. The reason is that when the eye feels the pain of the heart, it wants to satisfy it and therefore it moans and weeps, as the green wood when it is put into the fire due to its great heat, casts forth some water.

And so, when the soul experiences itself in the fire of the divine charity, its desire and affection remains in the fire and the eye cries, showing externally that little particle that is possible to it of what is going on inside.

This proceeds from various sentiments within, to the extent that this is borne from the affection of the Soul, as is said in the treatises on the gift of tears.

Now therefore you have understood what it is that enables us to persevere firm in the house of our self-knowledge, which conducts you and where we find it. We come to see that the light guides us in the doctrine of the crucified Christ, and it is prayer that seals us within and so is the truth.

This house, then, when the soul's enemies are cast outside I and the principal enemy has been put to death that of the sensual will, the souls is then replenished and adorned with virtue.

You ought to strive to realize all this. Therefore, it would not suffice should the house remain empty and does not become full.

I desire that you will always be in this self-knowledge of yourselves.

This is that cell that you ought to carry with you in all that you have to do. And that you never, ever abandon it, in the Choir, in the refectory, in the assembly, in the spiritual exercises – and, in all that you have to do, hold this closely to yourselves.



#### **14. Discretion**

I desire to see in you the holy virtue of discretion; this virtue is quite necessary to have, if we want our own salvation.

But, why is it so necessary? The reason is because this virtue flows forth from the authentic knowledge of ourselves and of God and it is in this that our dwelling has its roots.

This has come to birth from charity, which is properly discretion and light and a specific knowledge of God and of oneself, as I have already said.

The principal activity of discretion is the following: having seen with its discreet light to Whom it is in debt, and what it is that this should render,

immediately it brings results with perfect discretion, and so it renders to God glory and praise of the honor offered. And all of the operations that lead to the affection of the soul, it does so with this light: i.e., that all are brought to bear for this purpose, that to God there is rendered that which is His due, honor. It does not operate as would the discreet *thief*, that the only honor it provides is for himself and to seek out his own honor and satisfaction, and not care at all about the insult he gives to God and neighbor.

And since the root of the soul's affection is corrupted by its indiscretion, all of its operations as a result are likewise corrupted in itself and in others.

And I say this also includes 'others' because indiscreetly it imposes its weight and commands others either seculars or spiritual men and women, of whatever walk of life each may be in, and this is all done indiscreetly. And he operates indiscreetly, and this imposes that same weight on himself, that he then wishes to inflict on every other person.

The exact opposite to this is what is achieved by the discreet soul, who with discretion sees her own as well as that of others. As a result of all this the discreet soul renders the debt to God's honor, and renders the proper debt to self: and this is hatred for vice and for one's own sensuality.

How is all of this brought about? It requires love of virtue, loving it in itself.

This same light with which discretion renders what is due to itself, renders this also to one's neighbor. And therefore I have said: toward itself and toward others.

Therefore discretion renders benevolence to one's neighbor as each is obliged, loving in the other the virtue and hating the vice. And it loves the other as a creature created by the supreme and eternal Father. And it renders either less or more perfectly, that love of charity, according to that capacity which each one has in herself.

And so, this is the principal affection that the virtue of charity accomplishes in the soul, because with its light the soul is able to see what debt should be rendered and to whom.

These are the three principal branches of this glorious off-spring of discretion in the soul, because with its light one has seen the debt that ought to be rendered, and to whom.

Of these three branches there spring forth infinite and various fruits, all quite tasty and of the utmost sweetness, which nourish the soul in its life of grace. This is particularly so when with the hand of free will when one consumes them with the mouth of a holy and truly enflamed desire.

In whatever state in life anyone might be in, each tastes of these fruits provided that each consumes the fruit of obedience to the commandments of God, and at the same time, displeasure with the world, by mentally despoiling oneself of it.

But let us presuppose that each is concretely vested in all this.

But if indeed there are off-spring, may each consume the fruit of the fear of the Lord and with this holy fear, each is nourished.

If she is in authority, let her partake of the fruit of justice so that she might then discreetly render to each one her due. And so, with the rigor of justice, the unjust is punished, by castigating the fault committed. And the just is rewarded, enjoying the fruit of right reason, in such a manner that neither through inner yearnings, nor out of servile fear, no one departs from the path.

On the other hand, if one is a subject, she must take the fruit of obedience and reverence toward her lord, eliminating entirely the malice and the path upon which one might offend, since with the light such possibilities had not been grasped, they would not have drawn her away.

If they are subjects of superiors, let them draw on the sweet and tasty fruit of being careful followers of the way of life of their religious community. This means they need to bear and support the defects of one another, embracing the same and the displeasures, by placing on their own shoulders the yoke of obedience.

The superior needs to take on a veritable hunger for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls by sporting the armament of doctrine and an exemplary life.

In how many different ways and in various creatures are these fruits harvested! It would be too long to narrate this and with the human tongue one would never be able to express this. But, let us see now and let us speak more in particular that it is the Rule that provides this virtue of discretion in the soul.

It seems to me, speaking now of ourselves, that the Rule brings this both to the soul and to the body [in those persons who truly want to live both concretely and

mentally] what we have said above: it is that of rendering that honor to God and that benevolence to our neighbor, and to oneself that hatred of the vice of each one's own sensuality.

So, the Rule gives order to this charity in one neighbor, that in behalf of the other one does not wish to make some personal commitment, that is, in order bring some utility or pleasure, as she does not want to offend God. Discreetly she flees all faults and disposes her body for every burden and torment and even death itself, in order bring some quiet to the soul. And how many would not thus find peace free of the clutches of the devil. And one becomes disposed to offer some temporal substance to bring some relief to the body of one's neighbor.

This is what charity achieves with this light of discretion in that in a discreet manner, the discreet person becomes regulated in charity toward her neighbor.

The exact opposite is noted in the indiscreet person, in that such a person does not care about offending God, nor of committing her soul in order to offer service and pleasure to one's neighbor in an indiscreet manner. And this is the rule of indiscretion, which flows from pride and from the perversity of self-love and from that blindness of not really having come to know oneself, let alone God.

However, once discretion has regulated the soul in this ordered charity toward one's neighbor, it regulates it further in that direction which conserves it and that charity grows in one, that is, in the humble, the faithful, and continuous prayer, by placing these under the mantle of the affection for the virtues, so that a Sister would not be hindered by tepidity, negligence and self love, neither spiritual nor corporal.

Discretion provides each one with this affection for virtue, so that her affection not be placed in any other direction, from which she might not any way be deceived. Thus discretion orders and regulates the creature in this manner: the discretion which disposes her to love God, makes her own that principle we have described here.

But since we still have the encasing of the human body, it is fitting that this light might place the Rule before each one, as discretion has already placed this in the soul, as an instrument that might be committed to the increasing of virtue.

The rule is this: that it withdraws one from the delights and the delicacies of this world and from the conversation with worldly people, and provides the Sister solely with that conversation of the servants of God.

All the members of the body the Rule provides this order that all might be modest and temperate.

In this case, the eye does not settle on anything she should not, but always places before the thoughts of each, those heaven and earth.

The tongue thus flees any aimless and empty chatter and becomes more ordered to announcing the Word of God for the salvation of one's neighbor and for the confessing of one's own sins.

The ears of the one ordered by Charity flee from wandering conversations and distraction, that these might be heard, and she comes to attend the more to hearing the Word of God, and to the needs of her neighbor. In other words, she willingly listens the other's needs.

In this manner, too, the hand in whatever it touches and in all its activities – and the feet as well in moving about, will do her proper duty, as the Rule provides all this to all.

And so that the flesh might not rebel against the spirit to create havoc among these instruments, the illuminated soul would apply the Rule also to the body, by truly mortifying it with Vigils, with fasting and with other exercises, all of which have the capacity of cooling off our bodies.

But one must be careful not to all this indiscreetly, but with that sweet word of discretion.

And in what will this be made manifest? In this that the soul might not place as lights her principal affection any act of penance. And so that the Sister might not fall into any such defect, there is provided the light of discretion in order to give shape to the soul with virtue. Therefore, the soul should make use of discretion as the instrument for well ordered times and places, according to the need.

Should it be that the body kicks up as an obstacle to the spirit, the Sister needs to take in hand the whip of discipline, fasting, the use of the penitential chain and therefore, that these instruments might be adapted to provide a real challenge, so that one spiritually might stand more straight.

However, should the weak body take on some malady, the rule of discretion never intends this. In such a case, it might prove more prudent to leave aside the

fasting but to eat some meat; and if eating only once a day should prove insufficient, the Sister may eat as many as four times. And if one feels unable to stand up, then let her remain in bed. If she cannot support herself on the kneeler, let her remain seated or lie down in accord with her needs.

Discretion asks for all this because it envisages that all these practices be accomplished merely as a means, and not as one's principal affection.

And do you know what discretion does not want? That the soul might serve God with what cannot be taken from it and with anything that is merely finite. Rather, discretion needs that the soul respond with a holy desire – this is infinite through that union it has with the infinite desire for God and for virtue. Neither the devil, nor any creature, nor infirmity cannot take us from the above desire, if we choose not to let this happen.

And even in times of infirmity, by means of this holy light of discretion, the soul is to exercise the virtue of patience. The spiritual combats and the trials provided by the devil, give rise to the exercise of Fortitude and a long perseverance. And in that adversity that one receives from creatures, inspires one to respond with humility, patience and charity.

And so it is with all the other virtues, which allow God to see that these are tested in us with many contradictions, but that the virtues never be taken from us, if we do not wish this to happen.

It is in this that we must build our foundation, and not in penances.

Two fundamental exercises the soul cannot do: both demand that we leave aside all that which is not principal, and make use of it solely as an instrument.

If I were to establish my principal practice in corporal penance, then I build the city of the soul on sand [cf. Mt 7:26], which every slight wind will push over and in such a structure I cannot place any building whatsoever.

But, if I build on virtue, my spiritual building then is founded on the living rock; Jesus Christ. And there is no building so big that cannot stand well on its own, nor is there any wind so contrary, that could tip it over.

For this and for many other inconvenient possibilities, that may crop up, the light of discretion does not wish that penance be used in any other manner than as an instrument.

Of the many penitents that I have already seen, there are many who are not patient, nor obedient because while they have come to learn the ways of mortification of the body, they do not get this regarding the will.

And it is this that brings about indiscretion.

Do you know then what comes of all this? Their affection and consolation is geared toward doing penance in their own manner, and not in the manner of others: in this, they actually nourish their own will. While they are carrying this out, they do experience consolation and joy, and it seems to them that they are indeed full of God, as if they had already accomplished all they should be doing. And if everyone else does not follow this path of theirs, it seems to them that these others are in the state of eventual damnation.

It is indiscreet when we choose to measure all other bodies by one and the same standard, as they consider themselves, and anyone who wishes to withdraw from this procedure, either to break their own will, or out of need that they have of this, they maintain a will that is harder than the substance of a diamond.

These live in such a way that in the time of their trial, or of temptation, or some injury they suffer, they find themselves in this perverse will that is weaker than hay. Their indiscretion shows them that their penance might restrain their anger, their impatience and other vices that issue forth from their hearts, but such is just not the case.

This glorious light shows us the hatred and our own displeasure when we aggravate the fault with our own repentance considering that God is indeed offended by us, and just who we are to offend Him.

With calling to mind the moment of death and with affection for virtue, you will indeed mortify the vice of the soul and you will tear up its roots.

Repentance cuts deeply: but we always find what needs to be shaved off, that which is apt to germinate further. But, this light levels it, uproots it.

This world is always active, as it is here where the vices are planted, and one will need to deal with them if their own choice and free will puts itself to them. Otherwise, they would have no chance, since their root has been torn up.

And if, by any chance, it happens that due to that body which is infirm, it is befitting that one give up her own manner of proceeding, as this brings in its wake a certain boredom and confusion of mind, deprived of all joy. And it seems to such a person that she is damned and confused as she does not find sweetness in prayer, as it seemed to her that she enjoyed in the time of her own penance.

And where has it gone? Into her own will, where it was based; however such a will cannot benefit by it, and since this is not possible to her, she has instead suffering and sadness.

And why has she come to such confusion and almost desperation? And where is that hope that she once had in the Kingdom of God? It has all been withdrawn into her affection for penance, by which means of which she had been hoping to have eternal life; and not having this experience any longer, she feels deprived of it.

These are the fruits of indiscretion because if an individual did have discretion, she would see that only being deprived of virtues is God taken from her; and with the means of virtue, through the blood of Christ, she has eternal life.

Let us therefore leave behind all imperfection and let us place our affection in the authentic virtues, as these are of such delight and joyfulness, that the tongue cannot even speak about them.

There just is no one who could ever bring disturbance to the soul well founded in virtue, nor could anyone take from her that hope for heaven. The reason is that such a person has already mortified her own will, in spiritual matters as well as in those that are temporary. And further, because her affections are not placed in the penance of her own choosing, nor in considerations of herself or even revelations, but rather in being supported by the Crucified Christ and her love for virtue.

For this reason she is patient, faithful and hopes in God more than in herself, nor in her own activities.

She is humble and obedient in believing in others rather than trusting in herself. And since such a person does not presume on herself, she casts herself into the arms of mercy and with this, she casts out confusion of mind.

In her darkness and battles, she draws forth the light of faith, exercising herself in it very courageously with genuine and profound humility. And in sheer joy, she enters the more into herself, so that her heart is not drawn by any vain hope.

She is strong and persevering, because she has mortified in herself her own will, that had rendered her weak and inconstant.

All time for such a person is the right time for her, and every place is the right place for her.

If she is in the time for doing penance, for her this is the time for joy and consolation, making use of this simply as an instrument. And, if by necessity, or out of obedience, there will be times that for some reason she must leave this, the principal foundation of her affection remains authentic. These virtues cannot be, nor will they ever be taken from her: further, also because she is seen denying her own will, which she has seen with the light, that this exercise is always necessary for her to resist with great diligence and care.

In every place, she discovers prayer, she bears within her the best place where God dwells through grace. This is where we all ought to pray, that is, in the house of our own soul, where holy desire constantly prays.

This desire is enkindled with the light of our intellects, reflecting in itself that inestimable fire of divine charity which finds in the Precious] Blood is poured out through the breadth of love. This Blood might be discovered in the receptacle of our souls.

On this, our soul attends, and ought to attend, in knowing, so that in this Blood one becomes satiated and in this blood one's own will catches on fire and is consumed, none of which depends on how many 'Our Fathers' might be prayed.

In this way we will be sure that our prayer is both continuous and faithful, because in the fire of the charity of God we come to know that He is powerful in bestowing on us that which we beg. And it is supreme wisdom which knows to give and to discern that which is necessary for us. He is the most clement and merciful Father, Who wishes to give us evermore, which we surely do not sufficiently desire and He grants even more than we would ever know how to beg, in the fulfillment of our needs.

Such prayer is humble and it teaches one her defects and the 'non-being' of her very self.

This is that prayer through the means of which we come to virtue and we retain within us that affection for authentic virtue.

Just what is the off-spring of so much good?

It is discretion, charity's child.

And this sheer goodness that there is in each one, is meant to be shared with our neighbor, as the foundation that gives rise to all this is charity. Along with the doctrine which it has in itself this must be poured out to others, and this is manifested through the example of life and of doctrine, that is, by giving counsel, when she sees the necessity, or when the neighbor might request counsel of her.

She comforts and never confuses the soul of her neighbor, when she tends toward desperation when she perhaps has fallen through some defect. However, out of charity, she becomes infirm with her neighbor, sharing her weakness. She is able to communicate this by giving her the remedy to the extent that she can and by deepening hope in her in the blood of the Crucified Christ.

This and an infinity of other fruits the virtue of discretion gives to her neighbor.

Since this is as useful as necessary, I invite you to practice it with that perfection which is due, since you, as a person who would like to draw the young women of your group, so that they might not be of rebellious soul. You have taken the most sublime manner in acting this way. It might even seem that you go beyond the bounds set by discretion, but in my view it is indiscretion that would want you to share her apparent fruits, thus leading another to live in this way, more in accord with your own will.

This would displease me greatly, and I believe this way of acting would be a great offense against God. And as a result, I want that your foundation be in authentic virtue, with genuine discretion.

Thus mortify your own wills and do what you know that you should achieve. Attend to the views of others, even more than to your own.

Let us hurry along the well-beaten path of genuine virtue and along this same way let us guide others, breaking and overturning our own wills.

If indeed we do have discretion within us, we can achieve all this – otherwise, we cannot. And so, this I desire to see in you.



## 15. For Religious Sisters

I see that Divine Providence has placed you in a small boat, so that you do not become overwhelmed in the tempestuous sea of this dark life, that is, our holy and true religious life. This little ship is conducted forward with the yoke of a holy and genuine obedience.

Just think how great is the grace of God has bestowed upon you, even knowing the weakness of your arms: whoever is in this world navigates in this sea on the strength of her own abilities, whereas the one who is in religion navigates on the arms of another.



## 16. Self-Love

One can never arrive at authentic love if first her heart and affections are not despoiled of her self-love. This is that tenderness of ease that each one retains of her own sensitive passion.

And this takes away the life of grace and darkens the light of the intellect. This is positively a cloud placed above the very focus of the light of our most holy faith and it loses the enjoyment of holy desire.

Therefore, virtue at first seemed good and it is delightful for all to witness it in virtuous human beings and of itself seeks in the Crucified Christ. When this encounters self-love, it then seems to all the contrary. It comes across as weak and fearful, and its shadow causes fear.

This is the reason that a person does not persevere in that which she has undertaken.



## 17. Humility

Pride is not the virtue in-grafted into human nature, nor is it proper to the nature of human beings. *Pride is not created for men*<sup>34</sup>. Indeed pride was not created for men, but it is a vice taught in the earthly paradise to our first parents by that contrary spirit and the head of all the proud, Lucifer. He had learned at his own cost that the most ruinous falls are of those who choose to support themselves more

---

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Si 10:22

on high. This led Adam to seek to better himself more than he should have, to become himself a companion in the precipice.

And that which is even worse, this spirit of pride, which Adam learned from the serpent, was then transferred to his entire race. These descendants, rather than humbling themselves for the damage incurred from their first parent, found motivation by becoming more and more proud, and they redoubled this spirit within themselves.

Much like a deflated ball that then swells up, the one who the more seeks his own betterment, and increases his own disgraced failures, our attitude of superiority is fomented by the losses endured, as humans seek all the more to raise themselves up even further all the, in absolutely undue manner, to the extent that they see themselves despoiled of every good.

Precisely as with grains of wheat, when they are empty, they hold themselves even more high.



## 18. Obedience

The religious Sister who wishes to make progress in the religious state, ought to impress upon herself this faith of seeing God in the person of her superiors. And so, all that will then be said and commanded to her, she ought to think of it as though God Himself had said it or commanded it of her.

St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi<sup>35</sup> stated that those who do this will discover five special graces:

1. That, through the medium of their faith, God would communicate Himself the more to that superior and to that subject, who maintain this conviction alive.
2. That all obedience would be grace-filled, both in prosperous cases as well as those adverse.
3. That there would always be found in one's heart quiet and tranquility and there would be found interiorly contentment and great sweetness.

---

<sup>35</sup> cf. Her Letter to the 'Beloved' Sisters of Mantua, January 21 1808, where Mother Naudet mentions this teaching on obedience of St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi.

4. That one is rendered more apt to assist the Holy Church with prayer, because Jesus mercifully hears the prayers of the obedient. And persons described above as most obedient would be graciously heard in whatever they may seek.

5. The Lord Himself makes a crown out of these souls. And since a crown manifests the greatness of the king, so these obedient persons glorify and honor God in all their endeavors.

In order to know whether obedience is accompanied by this faith, I would propose to reflect to see if it is joyful, humble, simple, ready: and each of these qualities are to be explained.



## 19. Obedience

Obedience follows after poverty and humility. As a result, the more the spouse is voluntarily the poorer in spirit, so much the more humble she is; and the more humble she is, so much the more will she be obedient. The proud person is never obedient, nor willing, because of her pride, to bow down to the fact that she is a subject, nor does the proud ever allow being subject to anyone.

You must, therefore, be humble and empty from your hearts every worldly affection, even unto death. [cf. Ph 2:8].

Learn from your Eternal Spouse, the sweet and good Jesus, Who indeed was obedient even unto death. Without obedience you will not be able to participate in the Blood of the Lamb.

Or, just what is a religious Sister without the yoke of obedience?

She is really dead to the religious life and is truly an incarnate demon. Such a Sister simply is not an observer of the practices of the Community, but rather one who scrambles it all up.

She is being led into the assembly of death, not having observed the commandments of God. And in addition to the Commandments she has not fulfilled her promise and vow, that she made on her Profession Day.

Do you wish to be a delight to your Spouse? Mortify, then, your perverse will and do not ever rebel from authentic obedience.

The genuine religious. Never goes to investigate the will of her superiors, but immediately inclines her head and heart, and puts that will into execution.

So, fall in love with this genuine and real virtue.

Do you want to have peace and quiet? Then deny your own will, because every penalty proceeds from one's own will.

Put on, then, as a garment that sweet and eternal Will of God and in this manner you will taste eternal life and you will be thought of as terrestrial angels in this life.

Be obedient unto death, so that you will be genuine spouses. Do this in such a manner that when the Spouse calls you, in the final extremity of death, you will have your lamps full and not empty, as the wise virgins did, while the stupid ones did not. [cf. Mt 25:12].

Your hearts should be like lamps, which should always be full of oil, and within them place the light of self-knowledge and that of the Goodness of God. He is the light and the fire of charity, fed and enkindled with the oil of authentic and profound humility, because anyone who does not have this light and self-knowledge, cannot be humble.

When the lamp is full, you must hold it firmly in hand with a holy and genuine intention for God, that is, in the hand of a holy fear, which ought to regulate our affection and desires.

I am not speaking of servile fear, but that holy Fear, which for no cause whatsoever would ever want to offend the supreme and eternal goodness of God. So, if the Sister has in hand a holy fear of God and holds it steady, she is well supplied and is truly well. Whereas if she holds it in the manner of servile fear, she has turned the entire endeavor upside down, because she is really serving and loves out of her own self-love, and not from her love for God.

Such a Sister snuffs out the lamp and pours the oil out on the ground, because she does not have the light of charity and there is not in her possession the oil of an authentic humility. And such as these are those about whom the Lord was speaking when He said: *I do not know you, I do not know who you are!*<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Ib.

And further, as the lamp is narrow at the bottom, and burst forth at the top, so the human heart and affection need to be drawn back from this world and from all that is just one's own. It ought to be broad at the top, that is, that the heart, the soul and the affections should all be placed in the Crucified Christ.

I beg you, depart from the one who has been the bearer of all human misery, and turn yourselves through the narrow gate of our obedience, so that the pride of your wills does not break off the head of the lamp and let our holy conversion not appear to you as too tiring.

Oh! If you only understood how demanding is one's conversion to God which is leveled at the soul which the conversion toward this life makes one a slave.

It is better, then, that our negligence and ignorance and the little love that we do have for holy obedience be punished with the demands made by conversion to be accomplished in finite time, rather than to receive that harsh purification in infinite time.

Do not fear any shoals, as you have behind you the favorable wind of authentic obedience.

The obedient Sister rejoices because she navigates beyond the strength provided by her own resources, but proceeds on the strong arms of the whole Community. A person of this nature is deprived of its *afflictive* penalty because she has mortified her own will which gave her much penalty.

Every fatigue endured is judged to that extent to which the will provides the fatigue. But to the obedient Sister who does not have an independent will of her own, the fatigue is delightful to her and her sighs are food for her and her *tears* her drink. And placing herself at the nursing breasts of divine charity, she sucks the milk of divine sweetness by means of the Crucified Christ, genuinely following in His footsteps and teaching.

O obedience which is always united in peace and in the obedience of the Divine word, you are the queen crowned with fortitude. You bear the scourge of a lengthy [perseverance. You hold in your bosom the flowers of authentic and real virtues. And since each human being is mortal, you provide a taste of immortal goods. Since you are human, you do all this in order to become angelic, and as a human being, a terrestrial angel.

And in brief, whoever has this holy virtue, is always subject to the least realities. And the more one becomes a subject, the more is such a person really a lord – because such a Sister exercises dominion over her own sensuality and accomplishes this through love, as she is obedient.

And from her cell, such a Sister has made a heaven, because she does not leave her self of self-knowledge. Rather, on the table of the Cross, with the obedient Lamb she is fed on the honor of God and the salvation of souls, that is, of those two realities, she is nourished.

In you, obedience, there does not all our judgment rise up against any creature and singularly toward your superiors. The reason is you look for your judge in the will of God and God wills nothing other than your sanctification. And all that He grants, as well as all that He promises, He does this for this purpose: that you apply compassion to your neighbor, but not any judgment or murmuring.

You do not wish to investigate the will of the one who commands, but immediately, with simplicity of heart, seasoned with prudence, you obey in those matters wherever there is no fault of sin.

Therefore, it is good that you experience in bitterness a certain sweetness, and at the time of death, the life of grace.

The tongue would never suffice even to narrate the evil that flows from disobedience.

The disobedient person is impatient and cannot put up even with an adverse word: it is entwined in many threads and cannot escape from any of them, but rather seems to enjoy in the life the foul breath of the nether world.

I say, therefore, that every evil pours forth from disobedience, because it is deprived of charity and of the virtue of humility. These are the two wings that enable us to fly toward eternal life.

Disobedience is deprived of patience, which is the sap of charity, with which the soul comes to obedience. And this cannot be had without patience. However, through love the disobedient person is made patient once again, anointed with a true and perfect humility.

Now, therefore, since you have already entered into the boat of the religious state, hurry onward with the favorable wind of genuine obedience even unto death, so that without any danger you arrive at the harbor of eternal life.

Sweet obedience, that never experiences any penalty, you bring to life and have hurry onward those who were already dead to the spiritual life. This is because you mortify each one's own will. And the more that this is really dead the more swiftly can one run, because the mind and the spirit, which have died due to the perverse sensitive will, are then able more lightly to run her course and be united with her eternal Spouse with the affection of authentic love.

And she reaches to such a height and sweetness of mind that, being mortal, she commences to experience both the odor and the fruit of the immortals.

If a religious only had the light of faith, and even further were her superior an incarnate devil, she would judge that the clemency of the Holy Spirit would lead her to work out toward the superior all that would be for her salvation.

But one's own excessive tenderness does not allow her to see, because her eye is not well focused on the obedience of the Divine Word, Who proved to be obedient even to His shameful death on the Cross.

O disobedient judge, tepid and lover of herself, why do you not place yourself before the Precious Blood shed with such ardor of the fire of love out of obedience which the eternal Father imposed on His Only-Begotten Son?

This sweet Jesus did not set Himself to investigate the Father's Will, nor did He seek to hate the one who persecuted Him. Neither because of His own innate tenderness He never refused the trial of fatigue, nor did He ever say: 'Father, please find some other way and see to it that I bear this penalty and I will fulfill this obedience!' He never said anything like this nor act in this way, but only as one inebriated with love for the honor of the eternal Father and our salvation. It is in this spirit that He took on the yoke of obedience and in order to carry it out well, He wanted to be satiated with shame, rebuttal and ridicule.

O what a marvel! His precious Blood, as such poured out, manifests this prompt obedience and that ancient truth is shown once more to us. It is ancient in so far as it is from the eternal smoke in the mind of God – and it is New when He created us in His own image and likeness, granting to us therefore that we might enjoy the supreme and eternal good, which He has in Himself.

In His precious Blood, there is dissolved our hardness. In His Precious Blood the bitter experiences become sweet and the great weights, become light.

And yet, as light of faith makes clear His Precious Blood, this bears the heavy weight of obedience with sweetness and gentleness. And since in His Precious Blood the virtues come to maturity, therefore the soul, which becomes inebriated and drowned in His Blood, one puts on as a garment the authentic and real virtues, for the honor of God and to realize in itself the truth that is once again shown to us through His Precious Blood.

The disobedient person does not consider any of this, as such a person only passes judgment on the will of her superior. That if only she would make these considerations, she would hasten to drown all that is her own and every aspect of her own will. She would submit all into the will of God and of her superior.

The reason why some do not overcome disobedience means that they have to bear the state of continual burdens, and they stay always in their tepidity and imperfection. They remain submerged in their own mantle of self love, because they have chosen not to consume this in the Precious Blood, in the fire, and in the obedience of the Incarnate Word.

And so God does not bless these even in that obedience which He asks of those in the world, other religious, prelates and in old and young subjects, those in every walk of life, in all times and places: in consolation as well as in tribulation, in peace of mind and in disturbances, in wars and finally in all ways and manners.

And to us it pertains to choose and we also ought to bless God with the affection of our virtue and with our words, whenever the opportunity presents itself.

It is to this that I invite you because this is the way and the manner of rendering to Him the glory due to Him, and to bless Him in all time, and not only with words, but much more with our deeds.

The time invites us not to wait for the right time as there is the danger of losing ourselves.

It is not to be doubted that as long as there is planted the root of self-love, this means that self-will has not yet been put to death in us. Rather its eye-sight is clouded over and all the fruits of the virtues are imperfect. This is why we see that every perfection proceeds from mortifying our own sensitive self-will and to give life to right reason in the will of God.

If the religious were obedient, she would bear the discipline of God and that of the superior with the due reverence; but since some are not obedient and want to act according to their own whim, they fall into impatience and disobedience toward God and the superior.

Since the will of God is that which we bear patiently every discipline, that for any reason whatsoever is granted to us. It is indeed a sign of authentic obedience to receive it from Him through that path of love, which He deigns to bestow on us.

So, all that which His goodness bestows and grants us, it is all for our sanctification. Therefore, lovingly we ought to receive all this. So, by not doing so, we are disobedient to God and we fall into murmuring and into a false judgment which binds us with an excessive tenderness toward ourselves, and consequently with pride and infidelity of wanting to choose and serve God according to our own whims.

If indeed we really believed that everything does proceed from God, with the exception of sin. And He cannot will anything else than our own good, which we see and taste in the Blood of the Crucified Christ. [The reason is that if He had wished anything other than our sanctification, He would never have granted us such a Redeemer]. In this case, the light of faith would not have been covered over by our own self-love. We would indeed receive whatever He gives us with a certain reverence.

Since there is infidelity, therefore we receive burdens and we are impatient with the penalties that we have to sustain.

The humble, obedient Sister seeks to obey her superior in all. And if there are grave burdens placed on her through obedience, she receives everything patiently, judging that the will of God is to have us in the same manner toward the superior, as toward Himself. This is done either to carry out the will of God and for the needs of one's own salvation, or to lead one to some great perfection. And therefore, the obedient and humble Sister receives this obedience in peace and quiet of mind, and she has some taste of eternal life already in this life.

You should be grateful for the grace that God has bestowed on you that of taking you out of the spiritual miseries of the world and placed you in the garden of the holy religious state to become terrestrial angels in this life.

This is a grace for which God asks you that you should manifest to Him some sign of gratitude with your genuine and holy obedience. This means that each

religious will so demonstrate her grasp of her state, to the extent that she is obedient.

You must always obey becomes sometimes the devil makes us see under the appearance of virtue and of greater devotion that we would choose the places and the times in our own manner, by saying: in such and such a place, I could have more consolation and peace of my soul and nonetheless obedience at times will not permit this.

You must rather follow obedience than seek your own consolations. Just keep in mind that his is a hidden deception, that touches all the servants of God: that under the specious appearance that they are serving God, in truth they render him disservice.

Keep in mind that the human will is that means which both serves but also offers disservice. Therefore, if you as a religious woman, have the will, that does not lead you into any monstrous activity with the great things of the outside, which you have already given up, since you have left the world behind. But He places you within a religious community, with spiritual persons. She may discover some whispering within to the Sister: 'it seems to me that I would have more peace and more love of God, by placing me in this particular place, rather than in some other. '

And in order to receive this, such a religious resists obedience. And if it ever seems fitting for one to carry it out, she does so with real difficulty, such as seeking peace, she removes herself from it.

It is better, therefore, to take away your own self-will and do not think anything of yourself, but see to it only in yourself to carry out the will of God and of this holy Community and fulfill the will of your superiors.



## 20. Obedience<sup>37</sup>

There are those persons who experience only disgust when for the greater part of their day that are not retired and absorbed in God, even though they are employed in matters to which obedience has prescribed for them.

---

<sup>37</sup> This Conference too has been subdivided into two others. Cf. Introduction to the text, n. 3.

It would be a very strange matter where God would make it very clear to us by saying that if we would only go to do something that is of great importance to Him - and our response is that we do not choose to do this, but only stand by and admire it, this being done in response to our own greater taste and pleasure.

What a ridiculous service of the love of God this is!

O my Lord, how different are Your ways from the wildest stretches of our imagination. And how often you Sisters maintain that you do not want anything else in your souls other than obedience, while you are informed inwardly only of that which is more the service of yourself, and all this really only manifests your desires.

A religious Sister has no need of choosing the pathways, nor to select them, because His will is yours.

O Lord, please take this thought and guide it to where it may prove to the more be profitable. And although the Superior may not go along with this thought of guiding it to where one's own soul might seem to profit the more by it, while many do only those assignments which seemed to be the more directed toward the community. However, from Your perspective, my God, You look it differently and set about disposing the soul and those matters that are to be treated without ever understanding them to the full. Souls are found to acquire great profit and spirit, by faithfully obeying such orders: and they are the more to be admired.

This was the situation of a Sister whom obedience had kept for about 15 years and was totally exhausted in offices and government and was totally worn out. In all this time she did not remember ever having a single day free for herself, even though she tried to do the best she could, to steal an hour or so for prayer and for moving about with purity of conscience.

This describes a person who was most inclined to obedience, which she attached to whatever she undertook.

Did not Our Lord, though, pay her very well, because without knowing how, she was found to be with that much esteemed freedom of spirit that was profoundly appreciated and which perfect souls have, as in this she found her entire obedience that anyone could desire in this life? Such as these do not want for anything as they possess all, they fear nothing, nor do they desire anything of this earth.

Travails do not upset them, nor does contentment and prosperity work any change in them. In brief, there is nothing that can take away the peace of such as

these, because their obedience depends solely on God. And how true it is that nothing is ever sufficient to draw God away from them. Only the fear of losing Him could ever bring them concern. And so, everything else in this world is in their view, such as though it did not even exist, once yet is understood that nothing can remove the contentment that they have.

O happy obedience, and o blessed distraction, in that because of her, that such good was able to be acquired!

And it is not only this person, that others that I have known of the same type, who already for many years they have set aside their own points of view. And whenever they are asked how had their past been, I came to understand that all had been committed to duties of obedience and charity.

On the other hand, I saw them so improved and having profited so much in spiritual matters, that I was truly amazed.

Have courage, then, and do not be neglectful in the exercise of this virtue. But whenever obedience might employ you in exterior matters, as in the kitchen for example, just know that among all those plates and pots and pans, the Lord comes there helping you but inwardly as well as outwardly.

I believe that as the devil sees that there is no other pathway that leads more directly to supreme perfection, as that of obedience, he places before you so much disgust and difficulties under the guise of some good. And this, if you note well, it will be clearly seen that such is indeed the case.

It is clear that supreme perfection does not consist in interior preferences, nor in grand ecstasies and raptures, nor in visions and revelations, nor in having the spirit of prophecy, but rather to be in conformity with Him, and to keep our wills united with that of God, and this in such a way that there is nothing that we intend to want from Him, as we desire nothing from Him but to follow Him with all our will: and with equal joy we thus accept the bitter as something sweet and tasty, knowing that His Divine Majesty wants this, too.

That which above everything else I want to make very clear the reason why obedience is offered most swiftly; as well as being the best means to arrive at such a happy state. And it is this, that there is in no other manner in which we are the masters of our own wills in order to commit them purely and promptly to God, we need to subject them together with our minds. And in order to subject the will, obedience is the best short-cut, the briefest and the most true.

A question is: why would one wait to subject the will seeking this course of action with the best of reasons. It is a process that never ends, and this is a very long and dangerous path. It is understood that our nature tending toward self-love provides so many reasons for each activity that we would never arrive at our goal should we take them all. And very often the most convincing reason of all is whether or not it pleases us. This seems to be a mistaken choice, because of the little will power we can muster to bring this about.

One would never finish in waging this interior battle, and there are many means that are at work in the world that the devil and our sensuality make use of in order to befuddle our reason.

What then is the remedy? It is this: that just as in a lawsuit the outcome of which remains very doubtful, one seeks a judge, and the various parties by now worn out in litigating the case, place the case entirely in his hands. The parties would free themselves for whatever the judge may say in order to be freed of further litigation. In like manner, our souls in order to liberate them from every conflict with the demon and with sensuality, chooses one means, that is, the superior, and the Sister with her firm resolution of not continuing any further litigation, nor will she think over the matters any further in our case, but trusts herself to the words of the Lord Who says: *whoever listens to you, listens to me* [cf. Lk 10:16], and no longer pays any attention to her own will.

This subjection [and with good reason, because this is to exercise dominion over the free will to choose that He has given us] esteems His divine Majesty in this subjection. As we exercise ourselves in this one or more times, and detaching ourselves, we eventually arrive with this challenging exercise [even though enduring nearly a thousand battles, while it may seem to us to be a mistake when judgment is made in our own case] to conform ourselves with that which they command of us. And so, either with struggle or without it, finally we just do what is asked.

And the Lord helps so much from His part, that for in the same case that we subject our will and discussion out of love for Him, He makes us lord and master of all the means at our disposal. So, exercising dominion over ourselves, we are able perfectly to hand the whole matter over to God, giving to Him our pure and prompt wills, so that He might unite them to His own. We thus beg Him that He might have descended on us from heaven that fire of His Divine Love, which burns up and consumes this sacrifice removing far from it all that might be displeasing to Him. So, there no longer remains anything of ourselves in the command, since we – even

though with much fatigue, place it all on the altar. And to the extent that it is possible to us, there is nothing earthly about our decision, nor even the odor of it.

It is quite clear that no one can give what she does not have; so it is first necessary that each be endowed with these sentiments.

So it is that in order to acquire this treasure there is no better way than to work very hard in drawing this out from the mine of obedience. Whatever we are able to dig out from underneath, within, then we will find all the more available for our external actions. And the more we subject ourselves to human beings, not maintaining any other will than that of our superiors, the more will we exercise dominion over it, in order to conform it with that of God.

This is the union that I desire to see in all of you; and not those many abstractions and delays so much in favor with us that we find, to which some have given the name of 'union.'

And this is the way it will be. However, if after all this there only remains but little genuine obedience and much of one's own will, the Sister will remain more united with her own self-love and not with the will of God.

The second cause that brings about this distaste is that as in solitude and reflection, there are fewer occasions to offend God, but some occasions [as everywhere there are found demons and ourselves] are never lacking. Yet in this situation it seems that the soul might journey onward with more purity. And if one is fearful of offending Him, there is very sublime consolation in there not being anything to serve as an obstacle. And surely this seems more than sufficient reason to desire not to deal with anyone, other than enjoy that area of great fulfillment and the caresses of God.

Here therefore, one encounters love; and this is not just for reserved places, but in the midst of busyness. And believe me that with any defects there may be, and also some minor falls, yet, it is safe to say there is no comparison here for our greater profit.

Notice, however, that I always speak presupposing that one only proceeds in such paths out of obedience and charity. So, we never place ourselves employing these means, and I always reply that solitude is surely better. Rather we have to desire this even following the path as I describe it. Truly this desire continuously is re-discovered in those souls who authentically love God.

I say, then, there is profit, because these situations point out clearly who we are and to what level our virtue reaches.

A person always living in solitude, no matter how holy one might seem to be to herself, no one knows if she really has patience and humility or not, nor is it known how this ever could be come to be known. How can a man be truly thought to be brave and courageous, and by whom will it ever be known if he has never been seen in battle?

St. Peter, who was indeed quite valorous and faithful, believed himself to be thus with regard to his Lord. But look at him as he was tested to rise to this occasion. Even though he got up again from his fall; and he learned never to trust in himself again. And from this he eventually came to placing his entire confidence in God, and suffered the martyrdom of which we know.

O good God, if we only knew how great is our misery! In everyone, there is the danger, but we do not know what it is. And for this reason it is a great blessing that we are commanded those acts of obedience through which our lowliness is uncovered and seen.

I hold as a greater grace of the Lord one day of humble self-knowledge, even though this would cost us a thousand afflictions and travails, and much time of prayer.

All the more so, then, that the genuine lover loves through every inconvenience, and always keeps the beloved in mind. It would be a hard experience if only in the nooks and crannies could one offer prayer: I see already that there cannot be many hours for this.

But, o my Lord, what power before you has a much suffered sigh that pours forth from the heart, in order to see that it does not suffice that we are in this exile, but that there is hardly ever given to us that comfort that we be able to be retired and alone, in enjoyment of You.

Here one sees well that we are His slaves, that we have come out of love for Him, and our new heart-felt yearning for the virtue of obedience. The reason is that we leave from this virtue to enjoy God Himself. And this is nothing if we consider that through obedience, He left His Father's side, and came to make Himself our slave.

So, with what could one ever pay Him back, and with what services could we ever pay Him back for this grace?

However, it is necessary to keep going with the warning of not neglecting in any manner regarding one's works, provided they are accomplished out of obedience and charity, which often interiorly the person does not have recourse nor remember her God.

And believe me, that it is not the extended time that enables the soul to profit in prayer. Rather, the Sisters are called by obedience and charity to other tasks, they should commit themselves even to these menial undertakings, as has been already said. This will prove to be of great assistance because in a relatively short space of time there might be garnered a better disposition for enkindling the soul in the love of one's God, than when one in lacking these dispositions chooses to pass many hours in meditation.

Everything has to come from His most liberal hand.

### **An Example**

St. Teresa never did anything of her own head which came to her through prayer. She always manifested her all with her confessors, who sometimes directed her toward a contrary path to what the Lord had said to her privately, and this she would do and obeyed immediately.

And another

A religious had determined and made a most firm resolution of never saying 'no', nor to deny anything that the superior commanded him to do right away. And even being so tired from committing himself to this fatiguing endeavor, he had hardly enough strength to stand up. In one case, it was already the night and going forth to sleep a little, he sat down for a brief respite. In this situation, the Prior came upon him, and told him to take up the hoe and go out to hoe the ground in the garden.

He, while keeping silent, even though his human nature was so tired that it could hardly be of any help to him, he took up his good garden tool. And while he was walking along a certain path which led into the garden, Christ our Lord appeared to him with His Cross on His shoulder. He, too, was so tired and afflicted that He gave it to be understood that in comparison to him, his experience was all nothing to what He was actually suffering.



## 21. Sentences of St. Teresa regarding Obedience

It is not really obeying if the person is not resolved to depart from self-will.

Whoever remains under the obligation of obedience by vow, and then chooses to fail in it – not aiming with every effort and with greater perfection that this vow be fulfilled, I do not know why such a person would remain in the religious state.

- As long as one will choose to fail in obedience, she will never arrive at becoming a contemplative, and neither as a good active religious.

- To go forward in meriting and in order not to lose ourselves, our assurance is that we can have obedience, and not twist the Law of God out of shape.

- In obeying and in being very careful of any offense rendered to God, this is the remedy for all in not being deceived.

- The Lord loves greatly the one who remains in her place. This is a matter of that same truth and clarity that each one is bound to do in this life of religion.

- Obedience is that which gives us assurance in the face of suspicion and fear. It is good that we have to contend with these in this life, in order not to err along the path to heaven.

- In obedience there is found that quiet so much esteemed by those souls who want to please God.

- By obedience, our journey is made more quickly, and while the path is indeed winding but authentic, and it is the best means in order to arrive at a most happy state.

Once St. Teresa was thinking of some great penance that a very religious person was doing, and thought that the person could have done very much more. But, this was all in conformity with the desires that the Lord had given to her, as she had been under obedience to her Confessor. And she wondered whether it would not have been better in the future not to obey in such a case.

The Lord answered her: In this case, no My daughter, as you are going along a good and sure path. Do you notice all the penance that this person was making? As for me, I esteem much more your obedience.



## 22. Concerning Prayer

Since in the last Conference I spoke to you of the virtue that we need to practice in order to be saints. We speak today on the most efficacious means for the acquisition of these virtues: that is, about prayer which does not have any other end than this one, that is, to provide for us the means of asking for these virtues from the giver of every good, that of enabling us to discover the manner of acquiring these, and the practice of the same.

The Lord has said: *Ask and you will receive* [cf. Mt 7:7]! What else, then, should we ask for if not that which can render us grace-filled enough in His eyes in order to enable us to achieve a happy eternity?

The daily memory of our miseries teach us and let us know our own wretchedness and poor basis, from which nothing of good can be derived. Furthermore, we are surrounded by enemies on all sides. So, what should we do in our perplexity?

Follow the counsel that Eternal Truth has bestowed upon us, Who by taking compassion on this wretched state of humanity has declared these words: *Ask and you will receive!* [ib.]

Let us keep these words in mind with pleasure, and with recognition for these words, and at the same time, with much confidence, as we are now on the receiving end of them.

It is usually stated by all the spiritual masters that there are three kinds of prayer: continuous, oral and mental.

That continual prayer is that continuous desire which prays before God in all we do, when this desire directs in His honor all our spiritual and bodily activities. And this is why it is called “continuous”.

From this manner of prayer there are gathered many fruits, for the practice of virtue. And the other two kinds of prayer, that is, the vocal and the mental, are all orientated to make us practice well the continual prayer. They would be of little fruit if they did not produce this effect.

Just think a little on how to practice the virtues well, how much perfection does prayer place in a soul for its activity, which accompanies them with this desire, which conserves for us the presence of God in all which is done, in all that is thought

and in all that is said. With what quiet and serenity does one receive every command, every decision of the superiors.

Through these prayers there is had that union of one's own will with that of God. One becomes content notwithstanding the weights that have to be borne, as those required in manual labor, in the assistance of the infirm - in brief, in all that needs to be done according to the circumstances because in all this one prays and offers prayer.

Do not let yourself be deceived by the desire of rest and of those other kinds of prayer. Because it is well known that these other forms are offered solely to become more exercised in the main-stream forms of prayer. It is of little sense to make use of such means if they do not serve that purpose for which we take them on.

This form of prayer is justly called 'continual' since there is no legitimate reason that could be conjured up to impede offering it. There is no reason arguing from one's, or the multiplicity of them, and not even illness, that is often considered as an impediment to the other two forms [vocal and mental]. These are not valid excuses because your body may still pray before the lord.

In that illness, even that which is not serious, the religious may still be submitted to God's most holy will, in whatever He chooses for us. And with this submission, this resignation is a situation which even then prays to Him.

That patience with which every evil is supported by one who suffers, the profound experiences of dryness that are associated with this and the consequences of the malady itself - all can be ordered to the honor of God, to that will to which we submit ourselves. And this is fulfilled all the more perfectly when there is not any murmuring of the need of these trials. Rather, we humble ourselves under the hand of God and recognize our dependence on Him. This forms our wills in all that we would like to achieve for the glory of God, but it is always very inferior to that which He wills and asks of us.



## 23. Prayer

Prayer is of three kinds.

One is called 'continuous', that is, the continual and holy desire which prays before the face of God in all that one does. Since this desire addresses to His honor all our spiritual and corporal activities. And therefore it is called 'continuous'.

It seems that the glorious St. Paul was speaking of this when he said: *Pray always!* [1 Th 5:17].

The second manner of is called 'vocal prayer', as when one prays the Divine Office vocally, or some other prayers.

And this form is ordered to arrive at the third form, that is, to 'mental' prayer. And the soul arrives at this when with prudence and humility it exercises vocal prayer, that is, that prayer offered with the tongue, one's heart is not distanced from God, but one must make every effort to pause and to fix one's heart in the affection on divine charity.

And when a Sister has experienced that that her heart has been visited by God, that is, when in some manner she comes to think of her Creator, she ought to abandon the vocal prayer and steady her heart with the affection of love, in that when she realizes that God is visiting her. And then, when this has ended, if she has time, she should take up the vocal prayer again, so that her mind be always open and not empty.

And even though during prayer there might abound those very challenging battles and in different ways, and darkness of mind [with much confusion, which the demon brings about in trying to make sure that Sister's prayer is not to please God, because of the battles and darkness that she has] – she should not for this reason leave aside her undertaking of prayer, but she should remain steady with firmness and long perseverance, thinking that the devil does this in order to withdraw us from the mother of all prayer.

And God permits the demon to bring a severe trial to this particular soul in its constancy and also to see to it that in her battles and darkness, she might come to understand that she is not able to do anything about these difficulties in her prayer. However, in the good will that she experiences that she has held in reserve, she comes to understand that good will is not denied to anyone who really wants it.

In this manner, therefore, the soul arrives at the third and ultimate mental prayer, in which she receives the fruit of her struggles that she endured in her imperfect vocal prayer, and then comes to taste the milk of her faithful prayer.

She then rises above her own self, that is, beyond her own crude sensitive sentiment and with her angelic mind she is united to God out of her affection of love, and with the light of her intellect she comes to see and understand and becomes wrapped in the truth.

Then, she is truly made the sister of the Angels. She is then standing along-side her Spouse at the table of her crucified desire, finding delight in seeking the honor of God and the salvation of souls. It is all because she now clearly well that for her sake, her eternal Spouse hurries on to that shameful death of the Cross, and she travels the same path her obedience to the Father and for our salvation.

In brief, such prayer really is a mother, which in the charity of God, conceives all the virtues, and in her love for her neighbor, she gives birth to them.

Where do you manifest love, faith, hope and humility? In prayer. It is true that what you do not love, you make no effort to seek it. But, whoever loves always wants to be united to that which she loves, that is, with God.

With the means of prayer [in which a Sister's knowledge is founded all genuine prayer], you realize you have great needs, sensing that you are surrounded by your enemies: by the world, with the injuries received and memories of old pleasures; by the devil with his many temptations; and by the flesh, with its continuing rebellion against the spirit. And you come to realize that you are really nothing in yourselves, and since you are nothing, you are not able to help yourselves.

And yet with faith, you hasten toward Him Who is, Who both can and will help you in your every need, and with hope You ask for and await His help.

In this mentality prayer should be offered, for the sake of obtaining from it that which you await.

There will never be denied anything that is right that you will ask for in this manner of the divine goodness. However, offering prayer in any other manner only very little fruit will you ever draw from it.

Where do you empty yourselves of your self love, which renders you so impatient in that time you receive injuries or other set-backs – and when will be you vested in divine love which will make you patient, and you will glory in the Cross of the crucified Christ?

In Prayer.

Where will you experience hunger for martyrdom, disposing you to give up your life in honor of God and for the salvation of souls?

In this sweet mother, that is in prayer.

This will make you faithful to the ordinances of the Community; it will seal into your mind and heart the three solemn vows that you made in your Religious Profession, leaving on you the imprint of the desire to observe these until death.

This will raise you from conversation with creatures, giving you in instead that exchange with the Creator. It will fill the vase of your hearts with the Blood of the humble Lamb and will recover you with fire, because through the fire of love was this Precious Blood shared.

The soul more or less and receives and tastes this mother of prayer, in accord with which one is nourished with that Angelic Food, that is, with that holy and authentic desire for God, raising oneself on high, as had been said, and to partake of this according to the teaching of the most sweet Cross.

What is the fruit that the religious receives from the first type of prayer, that is, that which is continual.

Each receives a serene tranquility within the soul, and a will that is in full accord and placed under the requirements of the religious state. All of this occurs in a manner that does not draw attention, It is not difficult for such a soul to carry the yoke of genuine obedience, when there have been placed upon burdens and manual responsibilities, or all that is commanded of a Sister in the service of her brothers and sisters, according to the situations and times that occur.

Accomplished with these dispositions, prayer does not lead to boredom nor to any affliction of mind. The Sister does not allow herself to be deceived by the desire of the soul that yearns for her cell, her own consolation and her own peace.

This also holds true when she truly wants to pray actually, while it is fitting for her to accomplish something else. The Sister does not allow herself to be deceived by any such desire, even though she may be enduring boredom and affliction. Rather she will draw upon the odor of genuine humility and the fire of charity for her neighbor.

Whoever does not commit herself to such prayer will never be able to that which would give her life. And all who would give up this effort at prayer to experience her own peace, actually loses her peace.

This mother of prayer is of such sweetness that our tongue is unable to express it. So, we should carefully exercise ourselves in it, and find our repose on her breast without ever leaving her, even if some times the devil as we are praying might clutter our minds with darkness and with different and evil thoughts.

Yet, we should not because of all this, ever allow ourselves to give it up, but rather we need to persevere in it. And with holy thoughts, we have to expel all that is evil and maintain our good and holy will that would not consent to these evil thoughts.

Acting in this way, the Sister will not fall into confusion, but will take hope in God and with patience and will bear come to bear these episodes of fatigue of the mind, and humbling herself, she will say:

- O my Lord, I know that I am not worthy of the peace and quiet of mind, as your other servants enjoy. However, please keep in me good will so that I might never offend you.

Then God, Who takes notice of the perseverance and humility of Your servants, grant to that soul the Gift of Fortitude. Pour that soul a light of truth and an increase in her desire for virtue, with a cordial joy, that everything seems to militate against, with a fervor of charity toward God and towards her neighbors.

Such are the graces and gifts that are received from God by means of prayer. Indeed, it wishes to be humble, faithful and continual, that is, with a continuous and holy desire. Let it lead me into the sight of that God that she might always be exercised in good works.

Let us say that it is only around genuine prayer, based on charity, that one seeks in what is prayed, for three outstanding effects of virtue:

The first is that one be humble; this is because prayer deals with knowledge of oneself, considering oneself as non-being, other than the fact that each is created by God.

The second is that prayer be continual; because it treats of knowing the goodness of God in Himself, where one has come to grasp that His Majesty works continuously in the one who prays, pouring out on each many graces and different benefits.

The third outstanding effect of prayer is that one be faithful, that each one hopes and with living faith believes that God exists, and that He can and chooses to listen to our just requests and to provide for us all that is necessary for our salvation.

This is that prayer which flies and soars even to the very ears of God and is always mercifully heard.



## **24. Vocal and Mental Prayer**

In the last Conference I spoke on that Prayer which is called continuous. In this Conference we will speak of the other two kinds of prayer, that is, “vocal” and “mental”, which facilitate prayer becoming continuous and they teach the one praying by its practice.

From the spoken word each comes to understand what this kind of prayer truly is. However, it is necessary to take note that it would not be prayer at all if it had only that one quality expressed by the word “vocal”. Rather, this prayer must also be accompanied by the attention bestowed by the spirit on the words that are pronounced and by that inner sentiment that should accompany these.

By “mental prayer” I do not pretend to explain this to you and to enter into detail as this is not only contained in many books, but of this we have already spoken on other occasions. I want rather to speak of the method of practicing this exercise – and that part which the intellect needs to play in it and of the will and regarding those effects that this excites in you and the resolutions derived from it. In brief, I want to make clear what it is that pertains to meditation. However, my desire is to have you listen to its necessity and the facility of this exercise, against all that you might imagine it to be.

There are many who find mental prayer so difficult simply because this is what they figure it really is. And if they think of it in these terms, it is because they really do not know what is really is. And as they begin to have some idea of what it is, they form an idea of it that is so sublime, so challenging, that from the term “meditation” they become totally discouraged, when they have to undertake it. And then meditation comes across to them as the most difficult exercise of anything they have to do in the course of their day.

This is the way it goes, and I want to assure you that it is much easier than you may think that it is.

So, I am not yet speaking to you yet of “contemplation”, because that is bestowed by God. We cannot arrive at this level on our own efforts. And St. Teresa, even though she did achieve this sublime level, says nonetheless that it is not necessary in order to achieve holiness.

Mental prayer, therefore, really is easy and you will see this just as soon as I report to you in the very words taken from the Saint to her own religious Nuns.

She presented to them the comparison of that solicitude that persons of this world exercise when they are going to choose an earthly spouse. The Nuns are to observe all that same care of an earthly choice of a spouse, in order to conform themselves in religion as is done in choosing a life-long partner in this world that would be pleasing to them, one who would be the more to their liking. And this, the Saint taught, is what you, too, are to do.

And I say the same thing to you: that is what you have to do in order to make a good meditation.

As you already have the good fortune of being the Chosen Spouses of a God, we ought to seek out to chew over all that might be pleasing to Him, and all that which can be displeasing to Him, or that disgusts Him, in order to chose the one and discard the other. First of all, it is necessary to keep the commandments, in order to bring into conformity ourselves and life-style, and the like.

When each one acts in this manner, there will succeed in every one of you that which the Psalmist states of a soul in prayer: *Blessed is the one... who on the Law of the Lord, she should meditate day and night. And she shall be like a tree which is planted nearing the running water which shall bring forth its fruit in due season and its leaf shall not fall off...* [cf. Ps 1:1-3].

A soul in prayer, says David here, is much like a tree planed near the current of fresh waters, which will bear much fruit in its time.

And what does the expression mean – *to bring forth fruit in due time* - if not to practice virtue in those occasions which present themselves, especially when self-love makes itself felt, and the like?

Then, that soul which occupies herself in prayer is much like what the worldly woman ought to do for her Spouse. She makes every effort in this to imitate Him, bears fruit with her practice of patience, resignation and humility – and so likewise for all the virtues, each one in its due time.

[In this point, I expressed myself at some length: regarding the recognition we need to show God, and regarding our own self-knowledge which we acquire in prayer, and the real need we all have for this to bring forth the fruits of virtue].

Notwithstanding that ease that is found in offering mental prayer in this way, this leads to nourishment and repose as the lot of every soul who rejoices in having that time for this sole object of occupying herself and with all that which might be pleasing to Him – I ought to respond and say something to those among you who might say that they do not always find that facility in that their minds are often distracted, and other like challenges.

To any such person, I say that the difficulty and the aridity that we experience might come from two sources: from our own faults, through the lack of preparation for prayer, lacking in our preparation for prayer, failing to recollect our spirit, neglecting to distance from ourselves every lightness and failing also in that moment of prayer in re-animating our faith in the presence of God, and of directing our senses, so that none of this give the occasion for being distracted.

And we ought to apply the remedies for these failures, and to make every effort that here is not lacking on our part that which could render our prayer fruitful for us and pleasing unto God.

But when we have not been found lacking in any of these, and when the Lord permits us to find in all this activity that all the faculties of our soul might be silent – that the intellect does not choose to serve us in its capacity of comprehending and penetrating – when the will has nothing of itself, nor can it suggest anything to our affections – then it is the time to practice other virtues, to please God with constancy to persevere in prayer, to be pleasing to Him with that patience with which we will practice any other like exercise.

Therefore, making a good meditation and as the purpose of our every activity is to please God, and if we truly are seeking only Him, we will know Him by discovering ourselves equally content in pleasing Him with these virtues that we will practice, as achieving the same goal with a most pleasant prayer, one that is the more affectionate, more consoling for ourselves – but which is not for that reason a prayer the more pleasing to God.

The devil who experiences the loss whenever a soul remains faithful, persevering in prayer in the times of aridity. In such experiences the persevering soul does not fail to make her prayer, in such a way that she is not even noticed. But, her actions speak louder than words as continues her prayer as would a good servant of God. Such a person might not even experience in prayer even a single good thought, no special affection, or anything of the like. In fact all this appears to such a soul, leading to thoughts such as:

- What are you doing here? Don't you see that you are just wasting your time?

Then, the faithful soul would respond to this:

- I may be here just counting the stones on this pavement. And I think that I already achieve much if I do not depart from the feet of my God.

And you, too, should do the same when you hear these words of the devil in your ear. Rather than responding to him, as happens at times in such circumstances, it seems as though the devil is right. You could certainly productively do other things but take note that this is the devil's instigation.

Therefore, do not believe this, and make fun of him, after he has just made fun of you.

From all of this, learn to bring to prayer those dispositions that are necessary to occupy yourselves in all that it is your responsibility to do in order to correspond to the most amiable Jesus. He has called you and elected you to be His Spouse. In brief, you are called to persevere in prayer, and never neglect through your own fault and negligence. Prayer is an absolute necessity for you and of supreme advantage for your soul.



## **25. Regarding the Light from God and that of the Faith**

I desire to see you with the genuine and most sweet light of God.

This light is necessary for the soul, and this in order to open up the eye of the intellect, and in order to see, and to know, and to judge His supreme and eternal Will.

This is that sweet light which makes a person prudent and not ignorant. It makes one careful, and so does not judge lightly the will of men, as the servants of God may often do, with the appearance of virtue and with the zeal of love.

This light renders a person virtuous, and not fearful. And with all due reverence it is enabled to judge the will of God in itself: that is, that that which God permits [either persecution, or consolation, either by other human beings or by the devil] it comes to see all and to know that all takes place for our salvation and sanctification.

And it rejoices in that charity of God beyond measure, hoping in His Providence that provides for our every need, and provides all with right measure. And if the measure increases so does fortitude increase.

This Light of God, therefore, the soul sees and knows when the light of her intellect is illumined, that is, whenever it sees and knows the will of God being in itself.

I say that this light not only guides the will of the Servants of God, and not that of other creatures but also makes one see and believe that it proceeds from the Holy Spirit and that it is He Who guides them.

And yet, it does not hazard murmuring, and to say that they are being guided by other human beings, but only by God.

But it might be said: is there no servant of God who would be so illumined that no other would ever be able to see more than she does? And is it not a necessity [in order to manifest the magnificence of God and to use the order of charity] that a servant of God with another might make use of this light and participate in it together, as well as the graces and the gifts that they receive from God, so that there might be known that His power and virtue are infinite as it truly is and not finite?

And why therefore are we do not humble ourselves to know the light to know the light and the grace of God, which He places before us most strong?

And there are those who hold a drop of one virtue and who does not hold anything more. And these have been placed in this life in order to enliven themselves, and for the consolation and refreshment of the other servants of God who are truly thirsting to drink of such waters as these, that is, of these gifts and graces that God places in them, and with these means He comes to the assistance of our need.

And so we see that there is just no one who is that illumined that she does not have any need of the light shed from others.

But the soul who is illumined and who participates in this sweet will of God, shed light with genuine faith and charity. Such as these do not judge though murmuring and giving scandal to one who would want to share in this grace. Others are counseled in this special manner, that each remains without trouble and darkness.

As a result if such counsel is heeded such a soul experiences joy and happiness, and judges sweetly that this light is without mystery and totally free, and is bestowed and governed with the providence and will of God.

And so, such a soul remains in peace and quiet, without any struggle or obscurity.

Therefore it seems clear that such a soul is wrapped in this will, in that one does not become exhausted with words, by judging with others one's neighbor. Rather this soul makes every effort within to mortify her own opinion, and by offering up every doubt and fear that one might otherwise experience before God.

Now, with such prudence those proceed and remain as illumined by this light, which even in this life they taste something of eternal life.

The contrary is the situation of those who are ignorant, who serve God only by appearances and they think they are illumined. With such distorted light they want to judge their neighbor, under the appearances of their having zeal for virtue and love.

In this manner we fall many times into very serious errors and in many scandals brought by grumbling about others. And therefore there is much need for us all to have the genuine and very clear light.

But I really do not know in what manner one may have the perfect light, if first one does not become lost in the cloud and darkness of our own selves and that we cast away from ourselves our own judgments and erroneous views.

O glorious light! O my soul! You are drowned and lost in the light. Therefore, you do not look to your own selves, but see only due to the light that there is within you. And it is only with this light that you see and judge your neighbor.

This is not how you are to see, and love with only reservations, your neighbor in the authentic and holy light. You are not to make your judgments and false opinions, even though you are convinced you do this out of genuine love. With such conduct it is not through any authentic light, by so judging your neighbor.

Therefore it is good to open one's eyes and to see with the eye of our intellect that totally lost and drowned will, and to consider the light of love of God's will, and of that of His servants. With this, we will acquire the genuine light, and we will gain the perfect and authentic purity.

And we will not be judged, nor scandalized by other servants of God, because we will not set ourselves up as their judges. Rather, we will be consoled by them, by their life-style and in what they do. We will rejoice in every activity of theirs, having come to know and judge the will of God in them.

Come on now, let us place ourselves at the breast of divine charity and there we will taste this sweet and pleasing flavor. This will lead us to the perfection of the saints, and we will follow in the footsteps and the rule of the Lamb of God.

And we will lose all fear, and with all security we will place ourselves among the thorns and tribulations, and we will pay no heed to the offenses and to the insults of other human beings. Rather, we will feel sorry for their offenses and murmurings, and we will bear to them only great compassion before God.

And we will follow their holy activities, undertaken for the honor of God and the salvation of souls and we will finish in His sweet Will.

The Blood of Christ manifests to us and renders clear to us this truth of His sweet divine will. And if all is considered well, no virtue has life of itself, if it is not accomplished and exercised in the soul with this light of truth.

O ancient truth and ever new! This is what the soul possesses in you, as it is deprived of those abject limitations imposed by darkness, but rather is well endowed with light.

This is not the light for mental visions, nor for any other personal consolations, but the light of truth. That which is known as the Truth of the Blood, the soul

becomes inebriated tasting God through the effect of charity, with the light of the most holy faith. It is with this that all our occupations should be seasoned, delighting us in the eating the food of souls for the honor of God, on the table of the most holy Cross.

This is not taken on the table of personal delight, or consolations, either spiritual or temporal, but on the Cross, rooting out and breaking our every personal will, bearing being the butt of mockery, torment and villainy for the sake of Christ crucified and in order the better to become conformed with His sweet will.

As a result, the soul rejoices when it is seen that she has become one single reality with Him, through the affection of love, and in seeing herself as vested in His robe. And the soul so delights Him in sustaining sufferings for the glory and praise of His name, and that if it were possible that she could partake of God Himself, in tasting that food of souls without suffering, out of love for her Creator.

And from what is this desire born? – From the truth.

With what is this seen and known? – with the light of faith.

And upon what does one concentrate in order to see it? – On the blood of the Crucified Christ.

In what container has this been found? In one's soul, when she truly knows herself.

This is the way to know the truth. And in no other way is it seen.

I wish to see you illumined by a genuine and most perfect light so that in the light of God, you will see the light [cf. Ps 35:10].

Because in seeing in this way, you will come to know His truths, and by knowing these, you will love Him. And thus you will become the faithful Spouse of His truth.

However, without this you will end up in the darkness; and you will not be faithful, but an unfaithful Spouse of the Truth.

This is because such light is the means which renders the soul faithful, distances it from the deceit of one's own sensuality, and leads it to become dead to all else in hastening toward the doctrine of the Crucified Christ, Who is the Truth.

This renders the heart mature, stable and not unsteady, that is, that when in fatigue, she does not become impatient, nor seek her own consolation or prosperity, nor with any disordered joy. Rather, in every matter she goes forward orderly and very sedate in her customs.

Her entire activity is accomplished prudently and with the light of great discretion, and as she also acts prudently, so she speaks prudently and prudently keeps silence, delighting herself the more in hearing the necessary matters rather than speaking without any need to do so. The reason is because with this light she has seen the Light itself. As a result our sweet Lord finds His delight in her few words and much action.

Without such light she would not have known any of this, and as a result would have done the exact opposite, by speaking much and accomplishing very little.

Her heart would have gone forward without sighting anything of all this; as a result, in her joy she would manifest lightness of spirit, with a disordered vanity of heart and in bitterness she would have found herself in a state of disordered sadness.

And she would be the more prone to failure as one deprived of light. She would have fallen into the very contrary of all that she would see in the light of God. In such light, she would thus be disposed and apt to reach toward great perfection.

And so one would reach such a hatred of herself and with the love of virtue she would live her life. But, this would not be so acting in any other manner. Rather, she would end up totally imperfect and her life would be corrupted.

I desire to see in you the light of this most holy faith, as such light shows us the way to the truth.

Without this light, no exercise of ours, nor any desire or activity would ever bear fruit, nor would they ever reach that goal toward which they have set out to achieve. But everything would result as imperfect and consequently we would be very slow and hesitant in our charity for God and our neighbor.

The reason for this is the following: it seems that to the extent that love takes over our lives, this depends on our faith – and our faith is as strong as our love.

The one who loves is always faithful to the one she loves, and faithfully serves him until her death.

This is what I come to when I do not love God sufficiently, then neither do I love creatures, or God. For since were I to love Him in truth, I would be so faithful that I would put my own self to death a thousand times each day, if there were need of this and if it were possible, out of the glory and praise for His name.

And faith would not be lacking to me in that out of love for God and virtue and for the Holy Church, I would commit myself to sustaining all, in the belief that God Himself would be my help and my defender as He indeed is for those glorious martyrs who joyfully went forward to the place of their martyrdom.

And if I indeed I were faithful, I would not fear, but I would hold myself as strong on a given day, which would be for me one like they endured.

His power is not limited to being able, to knowing and to wish to provide for my needs. But, since I do not love sufficiently I really do not confide in Him.

But my sensitive fear demonstrates to me just how tepid is my love, and how shaded is the light of faith with my infidelity toward my Creator. And therefore there are impeded those operations in my hands, that God wills me to achieve. So it is that these do not ever arrive at that lucid and fruitful purpose for which God leads me to undertake.

O my Lord! Therefore, will I find myself in every time, in every place and in every state this way? Will I always shut off my infidelity along the way of Your providence? Indeed this is the way it would be if You by Your grace did not tear me down and then build me up once again.

Therefore, O Lord, tear me down and break open the hardness of my heart that I may not be an instrument who would waste Your interventions.

This faith bears that which it loves; and there just is no reason ever to lessen this, nor for any insight coming from a creature, nor through the delusion of the Devil, nor for any change of locale.

And anyone who acts differently, this is a sign that she does not love God and her neighbor other than imperfectly.

I desire to see you illumined by the truth, so that by knowing it, you might begin to love it, and by loving it you will come to dress yourselves in it, and you will hate whatever is contrary to it and that you will rebel all such, and you will love that which is in truth and which the Truth loves.

O how necessary this light is for us! The reason is because in it, there is contained our salvation.

But I do not see that we can even have the above-mentioned light of the intellect without its pupil of the most holy faith, as this is within the eye. And if this light is covered over by our self-love, the eye simply has no light; and therefore, it does not see, and not seeing, neither does it know the truth.

We must, therefore, lift this cloud so that our seeing might remain clear.

But with what is the cloud clarified and lifted? It is with a holy hatred of ourselves, coming to know our faults, and the breadth of divine goodness, as it operates in our regard.

In such knowledge there is acquired the virtue of patience; because anyone who knows her defects, and that law of the senses that militates against her spirit, hates these. Such a person is content that not only creatures endowed with reason, but even the animals in some way, take vengeance upon all this.

This self-hatred fattens up on injuries, mockeries and insults; it delights in persecutions and sufferings, considering all these experiences as delights.

This self-knowledge that one has of herself germinates a profound humility. This does not raise its head through pride, but rather humbles itself all the more. And further, through this knowledge of God's goodness, there is nourishment and increase in affectionate charity and the Sister who is nourished by humility has genuine discretion.

Hence, she discreetly renders her debt to God, offering Him praise, glory in His Name. And for herself, she renders her debt to God, giving Him praise and glory to His Name. And in her own regard, she renders hatred and her own displeasure with her own sensuality.

To her neighbor, she renders benevolence, loving each one as each should be loved with genuine fraternal charity, one that is free and ordinate, and not indiscriminate, nor inordinate.

This is because the virtue of discretion has its roots in charity. And this is nothing more than an authentic knowledge that the soul has of herself and of God, and thus, she renders to each one her debt.

But, this is not accomplished without light. Since if she were not endowed with this, every beginning of hers and her every activity would be imperfect. And this light simply cannot be without a genuine self-knowledge from which one assumes a certain hatred, just as from God's goodness, love is drawn.

But whenever this Sister is found at this level, then that which she possesses, as being the servant of God of her Creator. As presently all stand in the dark night of this very dark life there comes the light. And finding herself in a stormy sea, she comes to enjoy and receive peace within herself.

And she always moves forward toward perfection, with constancy and perseverance even unto death. With fortitude she passes through the siege of the demons, and never falters in the battle, in whatever state she may find herself.

Hence, if one is a secular, she remains a good person of the world. And if she is a religious, she is a perfect religious. And she navigates in her little ship of genuine obedience, and from this she never departs.

The mirror into which she looks is the one that reflected by our Religious Community and its customs ...



## **26. The more 'Together' one is, depends on what She is before God**

If indeed I were of God and entirely so, it seems to me that so united to Him, how little I would care about all that is outside Him. And I would keep myself in a particular closeness with Him, and I would not even feel the after-shocks that would come to me from outside Him. A bad opinion of others about me could indeed show me what I really am within. Finding myself in this disposition, it would make me humbled before God in thinking that regarding Him, I would merit even worse. And none of these things could dishearten my spirit thinking on these great truths: *One is the more 'together' one is, depends on what she is before God*'. There is an affliction that I have experienced sometimes when I stand accused against all that I seemed to have undertaken. This affliction of mine comes from self-love and from not being really attached to this great truth: *The more 'together' one is, depends on what she is before God*. For as long as I am considered as pertaining to God, I have overcome the world's opinion in general, not longer occupies with certain opinions concerning me that I once had. Now I am very much attached to the opinion of me in the Community ... from that esteem of my fellow Sisters that I must stand before my commitment, because this helps me so much the more.



## 27. A Conference on Simplicity

I would like to speak to you today of a virtue which very few possess, and it is one which all admire and find very difficult to acquire. And it is a virtue which renders one lovable to all others, even for those who do not possess it.

This virtue is simplicity.

By this word 'simplicity' many are disturbed, thinking that it is a virtue that really cannot be acquired. And this is what is still claimed every day:

- How could one ever come to this level? It is just totally opposed to my human nature. Something else must be necessary in order to reach this! And the like.

But, I say to you that all of you, therefore, in place of seeking to have it, and to apply this to your manner of acting, you often lose yourselves on this imaginary impossibility, and you do not reflect that there are several species of simplicity: there is that of nature, that you only look at – and that which is gift, that of that which is to be acquired.

As for this last mentioned I direct my comments, because this is consoling, and provides you with a hope that is well founded, and which can only be realized with the means of daily practice, which will lead you to the acquisition of this.

Simplicity, says St. Francis de Sales, is nothing other than an act of charity pure and simple, and this has but one purpose only, which is that of acquiring God's love.

However, this saying of the Saint is too generic, even though in these few words all is said. Nonetheless, it is well worth our while to flesh this out a bit. And I will do this, basing myself both on the sayings of the saints, as well as on the Conferences that the Father General has addressed to us.

The very foundation of this virtue is the right intention, that of not seeking anything other than God.

Simplicity seeks purely God Himself. If one prays to Him for it, without much further ado, it leads to Him and to His promises.

With simplicity there is acquired that interior mortification, humility of intellect and of the heart; since all this is internal, one cannot accomplish this unless when one's spirit is united with simplicity to God.

With such simplicity the intellect comprehends better those truths in that one is yet not able to teach to others. This is because these may be known immediately in themselves, with a clearer light than that with which even books are not endowed. Simplicity is united to that good which loves immediately, without making use of any other means, without mixing in other affections, and the like.

In order to have simplicity there is no need to speculate so much on one's actions, whether or not they are performed well, and the like. The reason is that the person who is simple in this sense has no need of many speculations in order to examine her own activities. She should retire within herself, and immediately she experiences whether she has fallen into some fault, or not – whether there had been something mixed into her activity, that would have impeded the simplicity and rectitude that there should have been. And this is known immediately through its customary purity, which cannot suffer any admixture.

God loves the simple of heart and willingly deals with them and communicates to them the understanding of His truths.

And do you know why? Because He disposes them to respond according to His pleasure.

He knows that that simple soul does not spend time in speculating on what is asked of this matter, but she rather conducts herself easily toward the good she knows, not having anything else in mind than pleasing Him.

Since, as the Father General has pointed out, the simple have this correspondence toward grace, toward His inspirations, and the like. The simple do not spend time ruminating over themselves and they permit grace to work in them without placing any obstacle in His way.

And in fact, look closely at religious persons [as these are the persons that we should look to], notice that their spirit is pure and can be better understood by those simple souls than by all the wise and knowledgeable, as these usually are somewhat timid in acting. Excessive prudence has no place in the matters concerning God, due to the bond that is in place that puts them to working toward that right end.

I am speaking here of that prudence that is a virtue. Otherwise, what is St. Francis de Sales talking about? This virtue of prudence is not opposed to simplicity, as some may believe, because, as the Saint notes, the virtues cannot contradict one another. Rather, there is among them only a great union.

Thus, such simplicity is opposed to being astute, but not to prudence.

There is the example of St. Flora, martyr.

Simplicity brings embellishment to all the virtues. It makes all these virtues stand out the more, as a polish over colors. And in order to make use of the example provided by the Father General, simplicity is like a crystal that is often placed over a picture, that brings all that is in the picture to stand out more, and conserves it and defends it from the dust and the moths.

Thus simplicity does accentuate the virtues, and at the same time, conserves them, defends them from self-love, from vanity and from fears, and from all that which could diminish them.

Let us now come to the practical application, which is our principal point and which you could easily miss my main point and conclude: Right intention is all that is needed in order to have simplicity.

Just remember that I have said that this is the foundation – but you cannot be truly simple if all you have is the intention that is needed to be so. It is necessary also to be pure, that is, simple, in working this all out.

Simplicity takes from a soul any anxious thought which many have in performing many specific exercises, making use of many means in order to be able to love God. This is the way certain individuals may express themselves while there is really no art other than in loving Him. They might be of the opinion there must be some task to perform in order to undertake love of God: and nothing can be found other than simplicity.

Such simplicity embraces the means that are prescribed for each one according to her vocation in order to acquire the love of God. Simplicity does not seek anything outside of this, because it does not want any other motive in order to acquire this love than its very scope.

There is the example of St. John Berchmans.

Therefore, a simple religious person does not hide her spirit from her superiors. Such an individual does not speculate on whether she should bring her superior up to date regarding all her current affairs. Such a person is not afraid that whatever she might have to say could indeed disturb her superior, or others. However, simplicity pertains solely as to whether this ought to be done, and without

brooking any further delay, she sets to setting the record down without any other reflections.

But from what source do we think disturbance might come? St. Francis teaches: solely from the lack of simplicity. Some stop at thinking over very minutely just what should be communicated, or what might be thought of by others – rather than thinking of God and of all that might make us pleasing to God.

And it is against simplicity to make further conversations when one Sister or another is seen committing some failure, in order to seek out carefully what things are necessary to tell to the superior. Basically, it is up to you to speak out, and it is up to the superior to make the judgment whether this is something that would require correction or not.

And it is against simplicity to engage in all these following reflections: whether all of this was being engaged in with, or without any bad intention - or, whether the matter is of such little consequence, and the like. However it is not one's intention that ought to be accused – it is just the exterior action, without any further reflection upon it.

But what if – let us think of a case that should not be presupposed - that a Sister might take badly what had been reported concerning her. The wrong committed would not be yours, but would be due to the other Sister's lack of mortification.

There is needed that simplicity in order to allow oneself to be guided by the superiors. This virtue needs to accompany obedience, which receives its perfection, and its luster from simplicity.

So, it should not be stated: But I really do not know for sure - or, I may not have understood well, and other such excuses. The call is to obey without further reflections, without personal observations.

And one derives greater utility from what is actually done, in following the direction of the superiors than one's own purposes. At times what is being done under the appearances of good, there is hidden often one's own self-love.

Our good, therefore, depends on allowing ourselves to be guided and governed by the Spirit of God, without reserve.

The soul that is endowed with simplicity has one sole love, and that is God. She leaves aside all her own cares up to God without putting herself in some pain whether or not she should keep herself this holy confidence.

The Lord Himself said to His Apostles that it is necessary to become as little children in order to enter into the reign of God. Little children do not ordinarily have any care or thought regarding themselves. They leave their care to their parents. They keep themselves well attached to their elders, without turning to and fro to look to their own satisfactions, consolations that they receive with simplicity. They do all this without the curiosity of seeking the why's and wherefore's of all this things, their personal effects – and so on.

Take the example from Cardinal Tomasi.

All Sisters living thus united to God through this lovable virtue of simplicity, the they will end all the restlessness of our hearts. These then hide themselves from the desires that self love suggests to us all, that certain tenderness that we have for ourselves. In a hidden manner, all these render us restless in those satisfactions and perfections of our own selves. And so, with the exercises of our vocation, with this simplicity and confidence. We will make great progress almost without even noticing it.

St. Francis de Sales states that, whenever one speaks of simplicity, it is necessary also to say a brief word on prudence, and the like. But he presents this in a very beautiful manner:

... Be prudent as serpents which, whenever assailed, they expose their entire bodies in order to save their head. We ought to do something like this ourselves, by exposing our whole selves, when it is necessary in order to conserve in us healthy and entire our lord and His love. And this is the prudence ... [left incomplete].



## **28. Patience**

Patience is really not proven unless one undergoes some fatigue; because without disturbances, this virtue is not tested.

One who is not in tribulation has no need of patience, for the simple fact is that such a person is not suffering any injury heaped upon her.

Patience shows whether the virtues are indeed in the soul, or not. And in what manner is this shown? By acts of impatience if perchance there is any in the soul.

Do you wish to see whether the virtues are still imperfect, and whether the root of self-love is still alive and well in a person? Just look at this person in the moment of fatigue, with the fruit that is garnered for her in such times.

But if from such a person there springs forth the fruit of patience, this is a sign that the root of one's own will is already dead, and that the virtues are truly alive.

But if there springs to the fore the fruit of impatience, this shows most clearly that the root of one's own will is still alive and well in it: and for this reason such a person reacts to annoyance.

But if impatience is still alive in a person there is a strong reaction from it, but if the vice is dead there is no such reaction. But the virtues are shown to be alienated in the impatient soul.

Pay attention that there are two kinds of impatience. From one is that from which death is drawn, because it springs forth from death. And in the other, death comes from those imperfections within.

Those, therefore, having experienced tribulation and persecutions in the world [which really in this life, one does not pass through without much fatigue and travail in whatever walk of life one may follow], there comes to birth in these persons an impatience with hatred and displeasure toward their neighbor and with grumbling toward God. Thus one judges as evil for precisely that which God has brought about for her betterment. His purpose in all this is to submit all to the state of grace. This is done by freeing its adherents from the death of mortal sin.

However, such souls are ignorant and miserable because their root is dead to grace. Therefore they can only produce the dead fruit of impatience. With this sign of impatience they manifest the death that they have within their souls.

Another form of impatience is that which I say impedes perfection and gives evidence of imperfection. If a person does not make corrections, it comes to bear that the fruit of all fatigue would be that enduring a continuous suffering.

Those, therefore, who are liberated from the darkness of mortal sin and who live in grace, but are such as still having in them the root of self-love, it cannot be said that they are dead to this world and alive in Christ. Such as these are still

imperfect through an excessive tenderness toward their own selves for whom one may have compassion. By the fact of loving themselves, they suffer adversities and would like it to be that since they do have compassion, others similarly should bring it to them. And if they do not find this, they become annoyed.

So it is that every experience of suffering or tribulation, such as infirmity, mental adversity, persecution from the part of other human beings, or of any other sort of disturbance such as these, coupled with that which they already bear in themselves, that is, that of really wanting to be shown compassion, makes it clear that they come to impatience many times by grumbling against their neighbor and even to judgment, because many times they might be able to have compassion for another without ever showing it to him.

And all this happens because the root of their self-love is not really dead in them. And this impatience manifests that which has been brought forth to life in them as an imperfect fruit. While this state is not one of out-right death, but one of displeasure and bitterness, which these persons receive from their own fatigue.

This is an imperfection that impedes the grand perfection of the Monk, and other religious. While they have left the imperfect level of common charity where seculars live, and wanting to live in grace and to aspire to great perfection – this is because they live as reflections of obedience and of patience, with a will that is dead and no longer alive.

It is seen by experience that a religious who does not have her own will dead within, if other times they then, fall ill, such a one is impatient by that excessive tenderness that one nurtures for her own body. And often under the appearances of good, in grumbling this person might say: “If only I were afflicted with some different malady, I would nonetheless be able to move along in peace.” However, this is something hidden and is not seen, and yet this is my belief. And so this state impedes me from my duty and other duties, and I cannot act like others, and I am still unable to enjoy peace.

Such a one would prefer to choose the time, the place and the fatigue in a personal manner. It should never be done this way, but it is needed that we be humbled under the will of God, and to adore Him in all and to do whatever one can.

When a Sister cannot satisfy the debt incumbent on her duty and provide for others with her duties, she at least must render the debt of patience. Since God does not ask any more than what we are able to do, but only seeks for our death to self,

finding in us with the holy desire, bearing each and every inconvenience and fatigue in all time, and with a holy hatred for and displeasure for our sensuality.

This is what those who wish to be perfect do and this brings flavor to life. Therefore, under stresses and experiencing some discomfort, none of this would be felt, but there would be refreshment, thinking that one might bring herself into conformity with the same endured by the crucified Jesus Christ.

And would not each Sister, as hand-maids, wish to maintain her own life and manner that our Lord Himself maintained, bathing herself very efficaciously in the most precious Blood of Jesus, Who is most pleased with those souls who love Him with the affection of charity, and asks that they put to death their own self-will?

You are able to [and if you are placed in the state of perfection, you should] be patient in this role, bathing your own wills in the blood of the crucified Jesus – since by doing anything else you would offend your own perfection, for which you have entered to serve. And thus you would fall into a second impatience.

O patience, how pleasing you are!

O patience, how much hope you bestow to anyone who possesses you!

O patience, you are the queen of all whom you possess and you are not defeated by anger.

O patience, you administer justice to all our sensuality. When a Sister might choose to raise their heads up in wrath, you bear with you a garment with two cutting instruments, in order to cut and shave back both wrath and pride. I say two cutting instruments: that is, hatred and love.

Your garment is that of the sun, with its light of genuine knowledge of God, and with the heat of divine charity, which casts its rays with which you strike those who bring harm to you, but casting on their heads burning coals enkindled by charity [cf. Rm 12:20].

And so, therefore, sweet patience rooted in charity, you are the source providing fruit for one's neighbor and you render honor to God.

This, your robe, is covered with stars of various and valuable virtues, because patience cannot be in the soul without the stars of all the virtues, with the night of self-knowledge. There comes the day, with the brilliant light and heat of the sun, which is the vestment of patience.

Who then would not fall in love with anything so sweet as is patience, in sustaining all for the crucified Christ?

So, do not lose time, but strive to know yourselves so that this queen might dwell in your souls. For she is indeed of great necessity for us all. And thus you will find on the Cross with the crucified Christ, and you will be nourished with His food, to which God has called you and chosen you.

And it will seem to you that you are being bathed in the light of the noon while you will be sustained with it. But in sustaining all this, you will find the light of the sun.



## **29. Questions to be asked of a Postulant<sup>38</sup>**



## **30. What should be known about those Young Women who come to be admitted<sup>39</sup>**




---

<sup>38</sup> The text itself has been lost. There exists only the title in the Original Index.

<sup>39</sup> Id.

**31. Questions to be asked of those Young Women who come to be admitted<sup>40</sup>****32. Temptations**

The fact that challenges may not be coming, this I do not claim; because there is absolutely no creature who can state this because the devil never sleeps. And God does permit them for the reason of rendering His Spouse perfectly cautious and to make her grow in virtue.

And further, this is the reason why some times God allows the mind to remain sterile, darkened, and immersed in many perverse inclinations. In such times, it does not seem ever that one could even think of God, not even practically to recall His Name.

Be on your guard, therefore, that when you feel anything of all this in yourselves, that you do not give in to tiredness nor to any disordered confusion.

And do not give up on your religious exercises, nor ever the act of prayer, because the demon will try to persuade you that when you give up prayer out of affection, or with some desire, and that thus it would be better not even to undertake it.

Do not ever give prayer up for any such reason, nor become confused, but respond always strongly, as follows:

‘Rather, I wish to exercise myself in prayer for Christ crucified, even feeling some real difficulty, and darkness and struggle, which I would not experience were I to choose rather repose from prayer. ‘

And just think that such struggle is the condition of the perfect: that if it were possible for them to associate with the powers of hell, and to experience all the delights of this life, and despite all this, still to be able to enjoy eternal life, they still would not choose this course of action due to the affection just noted, as it remains such a delight for them to be in conformity with Christ crucified.

Hence, they would rather choose this, the life of prayer, along the way of the Cross and of real suffering, rather than to think they could ever be without struggle.

---

<sup>40</sup> The manuscript has been lost. There exists only this title in the Original Index.

Furthermore, what greater delight could the Spouse have that to be in conformity with her Spouse, to be vested in a wedding garment for him?

Therefore, since the Crucified Christ in His life did not choose anything other than the Cross and its sufferings, and of such garments did He vest Himself – therefore, His Spouse comes to achieve beatitude when she is seen dressed in these same robes.

And, as a result, the Heavenly Spouse comes to love her so beyond all measure, that she comes to love Him and receive Him with such desire that there is no tongue even capable of describing this.

And yet, His supreme goodness enables her to reach such a most perfect love, and to maintain such great humility, He does permit great battles, and one's mind seems to be left bereft of ideas. This is all so that the creature might come to know herself truly, and that she might think of herself as non-existent. The fact is that if indeed she truly were something, she would carry the burden as would be demanded. But, since she is non-being she cannot achieve this on her own.

And since it is in knowing herself that she humbles herself in her non-being, and comes to recognize the goodness of God that He has bestowed on her through grace, and all grace is based on the fact of one's God-given being.

But you might respond to me: When I have to undergo such difficulty, experience such battles and darkness, I cannot see anything other than my own confusion. And it does not seem to me at such times to be able to muster any hope, as I see myself immersed in so much misery.

I respond to you that if you seek God, you will find Him in your own good will.

All right, let us admit that you indeed are undergoing many harsh battles; yet, you do not experience being deprived of your own free will that some might respond: 'But, I really do not choose God'! And this is the very reason why one suffers and is in distress: for the simple reason that one fears offending God.

So, you must therefore rejoice and exult, and not to come to confusion due to these many battles required of you, as you will see that God conserves in you your good will and makes you experience real displeasure at mortal sin.

This insight was revealed to one of the Servants of God [St. Catherine of Siena] among the very first truths she grasped.

As indeed she was undergoing very great trials and difficulties, and among so many others, she also experienced a very great inner confusion and the devil saying to her: 'What difference will it make for you, if you remain your entire life in these sufferings, and then you will still end up in hell?' The Saint then respond with her courageous heart, and without any fear, with a holy hatred for herself, she said:

'I do not duck difficulties, because I have chosen the difficult way for my restoration. And if in the end, hell should be meted out to me, it would not be as a result ever my giving up being a servant to my Creator. Indeed I am already worthy of remaining in hell, as I first offended the first sweet truth. As a result, should He decide hell for me, He would do me no injury, because I am truly His.

Therefore, our Savior, for that sweet and genuine humility, lifted the dark shadows and the disturbances of the devil, as happens on a cloudy day, in which the sun remains.

And immediately the presence of our Savior arrived, to such intensity the Sister pours out a flood of tears, and with a sweet and warm love, responds:

- 'O, sweet and good Jesus, and where were You when my soul was in such affliction?'

And the sweet Jesus answers as the Immolated Lamb: 'I was with you, because indeed I am unmovable, and I never take leave of My creature, provided that she does not depart from Me with mortal sin.'

And she remains in a sweet rational reflection with Him, and said:

'If you really were with me, how come I did not experience You? How can it be that anyone standing in the fire would not experience its heat? And yet, I felt nothing more than sheer ice, sadness and bitterness. And it seemed to me that I was full of mortal sins.'

And He would respond:

'Do you want me to show you, My beloved daughter, how it was that you did not fall into mortal sin, since I was indeed with you? Tell Me: just what is it that alone brings about mortal sin? It is only free will. The reason is that both sin and virtue are in the realm of the free consent of the will. Otherwise, there can neither be sin, nor virtue.

Such free will to choose sin simply was not present. Because if it had been present sin would have taken hold of My beloved and she would have taken delight

in the temptations of the devil. But because such a will was not present, you chose and endured the suffering, out of fear that you would offend Me.

Therefore, you see that both sin and virtue stand in free will.

... and I say to you that you could never come through those battles and disordered confusion. Just as soon you came out of this darkness into the light of true self-knowledge, you exult and rejoice in good will, as you come to understand that all the while I was within you in a hidden manner.

And this good will is a sign that I am in you – for the simple reason that if your will had indeed been wicked, then I would not be in you through grace.

Now do you understand how it is that I dwell within you? In that same manner in which I was on the wood of the Cross. And in that manner I am with you as My Father is with Me.

Just think, beloved Daughter, that on the Cross I was both blessed and sorrowful.

I was blessed through the union of the divine nature in my human nature. And yet, My flesh endured the pain, because the eternal Father withdrew to Himself the [external appearances of that] power, allowing me to sustain the pain.

But, He did not withdraw the union, even though [human nature] had not always been united with Me.

It is considered that in this manner, I dwell in the human soul. So, I often times withdraw to myself the feeling of my presence in one, but I do not withdraw the grace. The reason is that grace is not lost except with mortal sin.

Do you know why I do this? I do it solely in order to bring the human soul to genuine perfection.

You know that the soul cannot be perfect unless with both of these two wings: humility and charity. Hence, humility is acquired through genuine knowledge of oneself, to which one comes in the times of intense darkness. And charity is acquired in seeing that I, out of love, have conserved in human beings their holy and good will.

Therefore, I say to you that the soul is wise in seeing that from all this there proceeds so much virtue, that there is developed in all this all the more securely, and such time is held to be more dear than any other imaginable.

And for no other motive do I ever allow the devil to be engaged in temptations.

Keep in mind that such time is of great benefit, leads to the salvation of your souls, and thus it is of the utmost necessity for the same reason. And so if the soul were not sometimes seemingly overwhelmed by many temptations, it would fall into the greatest negligence and would lose the exercise of continual desire and prayer.

The reason is in the time of spiritual combat one is all the more cautious out of her fear for our enemies, and she strengthens the fortifications of her soul by having recourse to Me, since I am her Fortress.

However, the intention of the demon is not like this. Since I do permit it that he might tempt you, in order to hasten you toward virtue, while he tries to lead us into despair.

Understand that the devil will tempt one who may be assigned to serve My better interests. This is not so much that he really believes that one will fall into sin. It can also be that, and even more that he is actually able to offend me.

What is this all about? He does all he can to induce confusion into souls, by suggesting:

- 'In order to counter these thoughts and interior motions that come to you, there is nothing good that can help you.'

Now just see how much malice the devil has: in the early phases of the spiritual combat he was able to conquer nothing; in later phases, though, many times he does conquer as certain ones proceed under only the appearances of authentic virtue.

Now I do not wish that you should ever follow his malicious will, but I wish that you might follow my will in this. And this is the rule that I give you, and that I would like you to teach to others, whenever the need presents itself.

This is what sweet virtue has proclaimed, and this is what you are to do.

Without the intervention of free will, neither could sin ever really be 'sin', nor could virtue be genuinely 'virtue.' This is because neither can the rational soul commit any sin, not even in the very act of sinning, nor for any other reason, if the will does not consent to this. Neither could the good reason employed in the act of virtue, ever grant a life of grace, if the human will did not consent to receive these with affections of love.

And keep in mind that the human will is so strong that neither the devil, nor any creature, or any other influence, can ever move it, or ever make it consent to sin, or virtue, but just when it makes a free choice.

Paul has shown us all this when he said: *neither hunger nor thirst, neither persecutions nor fire, nor the knife - neither present realities nor those of the future,*

*neither the angels nor the demons – nor even practice virtue as much as one might wish it [cf. Rm 8:35, ff.].*

In these words, the glorious Paul shows us how powerful is the strength of our wills that God has given to us out of His mercy. So it is, that no one can rightfully claim: 'I cannot!' nor can ever anyone have an excuse for sin.

There may be many evil thoughts in the human heart which no one can help them from coming. But the mere fact that they do come is not a sin, But, if one grants them willing access and free will. This is a sin. And in order to commit one, one has to do no more than to consent to it.

Therefore, since we do have such a great treasure in that no one can be conquered unless she chooses to be, faults are not to be neglected, but one needs to be delighted in being always in a state of combat, for as long as we live.

Should anyone consider how much fruit there is to be garnered in this battle, there would be no one who would not willingly yearn for this.

If one does not endure the battle, she will never know victory: and those who have no victory, experience much confusion.

In addition to this we need to be certain that God knows how, and can and does choose to liberate us, when He sees that the time is expedient for our salvation, of alleviating the temptations and our every fatigue. Therefore, whatever it is that He gives us, and permits, He does all for our salvation, or for our increase of perfection.

Now, with this light of the faith and a genuine hope you will surmount all this and every other deception of the devil.



### **33. Concerning the Temptation of the Devil regarding our Own Wills and how often this deceives us**

I desire to see your own wills drowned in the furnace of divine charity, and enveloped in that blazing fire. It is our own independent will that takes real life from us and gives us death in its stead.

But let us open up our eyes because we have as it were two wills of our own: namely, the one which seeks sensible and bodily delights for ourselves, and the other

being spiritual. The former under the appearance of virtue remains firm and much alive, without being mortified.

The former shows itself when she wants to choose the place and the times and the consolations, all in accord with her own manner, and claims: I would want this, or that, only to please God and not for my own consolation.

However, this is a gross deception and an illusion of the devil. He is simply unable to deceive the servants of God with their own wills. [The reason is that this has already undergone mortification in those matters contenting our senses from the outside] – then he turns his attention to their second will, that concerned with spiritual matters.

Thus it happens that often times the soul does receive consolation from God, and then one seems deprived of it [but only that it might have another consolation: this one might indeed be a lesser consolation, but one that will bear most lasting fruit]. Then it is that the soul which is animated and more disposed toward that consolation of greater sweetness, of which when she is deprived, she feels disturbance and boredom.

Why is there this boredom? The reason is that due to her own will, that was fixed on that sweetness, she would not want ever to be deprived of it. Therefore, she muses within herself:

- 'It does not seem to me that I love God and possess Him the more with one of these situations over the other. Therefore, there is the former [sense orientated] experience of which I do not feel any further fruit other than disturbance and often times a spiritual combat, and it seems to me to be offending God.'

This is why I have said that such a soul deceives herself with\ her own [sense orientated] will, because she would not ever want to be deprived of that sweetness that it provides, and with this opening, the devil takes hold of her.

And so often souls such as this waste time, because they want the time always on their own terms, and do not commit themselves any further than the delight they already have, which truly ends in disturbances and suffering.

Our sweet Savior once made known to a Servant of His the reason for this manner:

-‘Do you know how souls such as this who believe they are fulfilling my will, but for their own consolations, and sweetness and personal delights? ‘

However, when they are deprived of these, they want to leave behind what would be My Will for them. It seems to them that they are acting well and there is no offense in their choices. But to such as these there remains hidden their false sensuality. In their reaction, in order to avoid the challenges inherent in My will, they fall into offenses, and they do not even notice these.

However, if such as these were indeed sage and if they had the light directed toward My will, they would regard the spiritual fruit that would come to them, and not just its sweetness. ‘

Just what is the fruit of the soul? It is the proper hatred of self and love of Me. Such love and hatred has come to them from their genuine knowledge of themselves. In this state, they recognize themselves to be defective, and really to be non-beings. And they ought to see within themselves My goodness that would conserve them in good will.

Thus, they would come to know that all I have done is for the purpose of what serves for their greater perfection, and there are those who judge that I have carried this out for their betterment, and their greater good.

Such as these, my most beloved daughter, do not want to choose the times for the exercise of My will in accord with their own limited time frames. This is because they are already humbled, and recognizing their own infirmity, they would not trust in their own choosing, but would show themselves the more to be faithful to me.

And so they envelop themselves in My supreme and eternal will, because they come to see that I do not give, nor take anything away, for any other reason than for their own sanctification. And they do see that it is only love that moves Me to bestow sweetness on them, or to take it away. And for this reason each Sister cannot regret the lack of any single consolation that might have been taken from them, either from within, or from the outside: either from the demon, or from some other creature. Since they have come to comprehend that if it were not truly for their greater good, I would never permit it.

This is why such as these would rejoice because they have the light both within and outside of themselves. And they have been so humbled that when the devil appeared to obfuscate their minds, by maintaining for their greater confusion: ‘This is for your sins.’ The Sister properly disposed, responds like a person who is not dismissive of suffering, and says:

- ‘Thanks be to You, my Creator, Who has been reminded of me in the time of darkness, by castigating me with challenges in this passing finite period. And His great love consists in this that He does not wish to punish me in infinite time.’

O, how great is the tranquility of mind that such a soul has, having drawn up out of that will of hers that brings her only storms!

But this is not the situation of the one who has within her that committed will, always seeking her own solutions according to her own mode of looking at life. In this, she seems that she knows better than God of what it is of which she has the greatest need.

Souls such as this would say: remove from me all offense, and I will do whatever You want. But, this is a sign that her offenses have been taken away from her: this occurs when you see in yourselves that good will of not wanting to offend God and to have the unpleasantness of sin.

Therefore, you ought to take up hope. The reason is that if all your operations are according to your own view, toward the externals, as well as those consolations from within your own choices become ever less, this is a sign that your good will remains firm in wanting to please God.

Because on this Rock grace is founded.

But you might say: It does not seem that I have this.

And I say that this is false because if you really did not have this you would not have feared offending God. But it is the devil who has you see differently, so that your soul might end up in disordered confusion and sadness, and also because a will of this inclination is fixed on getting consolations, and choosing the times and places according to its own fancy.

Do not believe him, my beloved Children; but let your soul be disposed always so sustain all, in whatever manner God might mete it out to you. Otherwise, you would do that which comes along at random with your light in hand. In this case, if you play the light in your hand outside, you provide light outwardly but within, all remains in darkness.

This is what one does who is already in harmony with exterior matters, performing God’s will as far as it goes, by disdaining the world: but one’s own spiritual will lives within, it is veiled, covered over with the sheer appearance of some virtue.

This is what God has said to this servant of His of whom we spoke just above. And so I have said to you that I have desired that your will might be drowned and transformed into His, by always disposing you to bear the penalties and the fatigue in whatever manner it is that God wishes to dispense all this to you.

And acting in this way we would be deprived of the darkness, while we would be gifted with the light.

Just consider that there are some who commit themselves perfectly to castigate their bodies, doing penances both harsh and great in measure. And so that sensuality would not rebel against reason, such souls have placed all their desire more in mortifying their bodies than in restraining their own self-will.

Such as these graze at the table of penance, and are already good and perfect but if they do not have great humility, and are not resolved in not making judgments about their neighbors, many times they might offend their perfection, making themselves judges of those who go by the same route they are traveling on.

This happens because they exercise greater concentration and desire of mortifying their bodies, rather than mortifying their own wills.

Such as these still want to choose the times to their own liking, the places and their consolations of the mind according to the own liking – and also would like to choose which tribulations of this world and the battles brought about by the devil, in saying: ‘I would like this consolation, but not these particular battles, nor the troubles from the devil. This is not so much for myself that I so desire, but in order to please God the more and to have Him, because it seems to me that it is better for me to all this in this particular manner rather than in some other.

By traversing this road often one falls into boredom and distress, and the Sister becomes insupportable to herself. And the very perfection she has sought becomes offended, as inner pride comes down upon her without her even noticing it. For if she truly were humble, and not presumptuous, that it is God who is the One Who chooses the status, the time, the place, the tribulation and the consolation, according to what is expedient for our salvation, and for the acquisition of that perfection to which her soul has been elected.

She would see that God bestows all out of love, and therefore, it is lovingly and reverently that she ought to accept all.

This is how those souls respond when they have the light; since they are perfect in whatever state they may find themselves to be in, in all that God permits that would happen to them, they would receive all with the proper submission, thinking themselves to be worthy more of the sufferings and the scandals of this world, and to be deprived of all consolation.

And since they think of themselves as meriting sufferings, and also those fruits that would come from these.



### **34. Concern for One's Own Soul**

I would like to see you as a real gardener and in charge of the garden of your own souls and those of your subjects.

We are indeed comparable to a flower or vegetable garden, from which their gardeners have produced the first truths, by having bestowed on us reason and free will, from which, with the help of God's grace, we have to root out the thorns of vices and plant there in their stead the sweet-smelling virtues.

But it would be impossible to plant the virtues there unless first the soil be turned upside down as well as the thorns weeded out: in other words, the soil of one's own sensitive will, which does not delight in anything other than the earthly and transitory delights, that are actually full of tribulations, thorns, vices and sins.

By overturning such terrain through the power of love, having made use of this little bit of time that remains at our disposal, by planting in it those good and sweet virtues, with an ineffable love. This would be drawn from the Immaculate Lamb, Christ Jesus, together with that proper displeasure and hatred, with a living faith and not one that is dead, and with authentic spiritual activities and the proper disdain of this world.

And let there be authentic justice seasoned with mercy toward our fellow human beings, with a genuine readiness of a good spirit, and obedience to Christ and to our Community, persevering in all this even unto death.

Since this garden is well endowed, I wish that you would put there the watch-dog of your own consciences. And see to it that this dog is tied to the gate, so that if any enemies should come, and the eye of one's intellect should fall asleep, the watch-dog would bark. This is because consciences bark with the right stimulus that

awakens the intellectual vision, so that all would react against those enemies with a proper hatred and displeasure, and would immediately make up the harm, picking up the cudgels of love.

However, this dog needs to be fed so that it remains attentive. And its food is nothing other than its proper hatred and love, carried in the container of genuine humility, and held with the hand of patience. This is because between hatred and love there spring humility and sweet patience.

And the more food that you will give it, the more solicitous and careful will the dog become: when friends pass by the dog might bark, so that the intellect be aroused to see just who they are, and to discern if they are of God, or not.

And so the gardener cannot be deceived, nor could the garden be robbed. The enemy will not come to plant the cockle of self-love, as this love of self germinates thorns and suffocates the seed of the virtues.

Be sure, be sure to give this dog something to drink. In other words, fill the container of your memories with the blood of the Crucified Christ. And place it before the animal continuously, so that it might not die and perish of thirst.

You need to take perfect care to acquire and to conserve virtue; because without such care the soul does not find these virtues, nor all that it ought to conserve.

Love is that reality that makes the heart careful, and which moves the feet of the affections to go into the place where virtue is found. The soul that is not thus solicitous, is a sign that it does not love.

It is fitting for us therefore, to love strongly and openly, and without the means mixed in of one's own sensuality or of any other creature.

And in order to arrive at this sweet love, it is fitting for us to open wide the eye of the intellect, and to come to know, to see just how much we are loved by God.

But in order to have this knowledge, it befits us to walk with the feet of the affections into the house of authentic knowledge of ourselves, because in such knowledge, there is conceived one's proper hatred toward one's own sensuality, and there is conceived true love for God for His inestimable charity which one finds within.

As a result, then, the heart immediately is aroused with a stimulus of fervent desire, and continues seeking in what manner it might be able to spend its time more perfectly, as it seems always to be suffering from some famine. As the time comes and goes, one is seen to have acquired the treasure and then to lose it when it is right to do so.

And having seen that in no matter can one arrive at authentic virtue, other than with the means of charity for one's neighbor. [Charity treats of the knowledge of God: because in the goodness of God, there is seen and come to know unmeasured love – and this is not only extended to Him, but to every creature that is reasonable, even towards one's enemies]. The virtuous soul loves out of love for virtue, in so far as the other is a creature of God.

And the unjust and wicked sinner loves, and this is so because such a person was created by God, and also because this person is distancing himself from vice that virtue might be achieved. And thus, the sinner becomes a lover of souls in order to honor God.

And in order to draw souls out of the hands of demons, such a one would accept even death. And with much care, time would be stolen for oneself, that is for one's own consolation, of whatever type this may be, either new or old, and would give this to one's neighbor.

And therefore, it was responded once to a Servant of God, as she said to Him:

- 'My Lord, what do You wish for me to do?'
- And God responded to her
- 'Give honor to Me, and spend yourself for your neighbor.'
- And to what extent should I spend myself for my neighbor?
- Give what you have within yourself, mentally and corporally.

The mental exertion that you spend is that of a holy desire, and consists in offering holy, and humble and continual prayers, that joy of the virtuous. And even to the point of suffering for those who lie in the death of mortal sins. You need to sustain the scandals, the infamy, their murmurings, which they direct toward us [not holding back your efforts for any reason]. Offer your prayer, the fervent yearning for them, and that hunger and over-riding solicitude for their salvation.

Therefore, the soul comforts others with the Crucified Christ, eating this food on the painful and trying Cross of the desert for Christ, and this would be a greater exertion than the efforts of your physical strength.

He further wishes that you might commit to your neighbor also your corporal exertion. And this is when we are tired corporally in the service of our neighbors, serving each in whatever service may be required, even putting up with your own corporal discomfort and sufferings.

And sometimes God permits that we endure from them even their blows, undergoing hunger and thirst, and even many persecutions, as the holy martyrs did, who sustained sufferings and great torments. However, our imperfection is so great that we are not yet worthy of achieving such good, as to be persecuted for the sake of Christ.

Now, it is in this manner that we ought to give our efforts to our neighbor and for the honor of God, and to work at all tasks for the Glory and praise of His Name. Otherwise, our best efforts will not bear fruits of new life.

In God, therefore, conceive love, in seeking for His honor and the salvation of souls. And in our neighbors, may they experience that love of ours conceived in the virtue of patience.

Do not be slow and negligent when you have to work for the Lord God and in the service of your neighbors.

And just as soon as you experience fatigue, flee into your cell, and do not go wandering about under the guise of apparent virtue.

You will accomplish all this if you will have perfect solicitude and a hunger for virtues. But, if you do not have any of these, neither will you conserve those traits that you do have.



### **35. Concerning Zeal for Souls [St. Teresa]**

There are two manners of expressing zeal for souls: false zeal and genuine zeal. False zeal is of four kinds.

The first is that indiscreet zeal of those who, without having the talents, and without prudence and the wisdom of God, they still want to be occupied in assisting souls. Concerning these, the Apostle [cf. Rm 10:2] says they do have zeal but not according to Knowledge.

The second kind of zeal is dangerous for those who in order to win over the souls of others, place themselves in a real danger of losing their own souls, or to suffer considerable detriment in their own perfection. Of such as these, the Lord says: What use is it to a person who wins the entire world but suffers the detriment of his own soul [cf. Mt 16:26].

The third is contentious zeal. St. Paul speaks of this when he says: *Since there is among you both zeal and contention, it is clear that you live according to the flesh and walk you not according to men...* [cf. 1 Co 3:3].

And the idol of this zeal is that of which Ezekiel speaks when he stood by the gate of the siege of the destroyed Jerusalem [cf. Ezk 8:3].

The fourth type of zeal is that which is harmful. When under the title of doing some good for souls and to teach them doctrine, some commandment or other is broken, or the statue of the rules or the constitutions, or some precept of the superior, or when any are found lacking in the obligations of their state in life.

This would be when Nuns, or Carthusian religious, should go out from their Cloister which they profess, or other similar situations with the ideal in mind [without any permission from those who could grant it] in order to acquire souls.

Concerning this type of zeal Christ our Lord states: *Anyone who would break any of the least of my precepts, and who would teach this to others, will be the least in the reign of heaven* [cf. Mt 5:19].

Authentic zeal, contrary to all these, is discreet zeal, one that is sure, charitable and observant.

This is what St. Teresa had and which she taught in her books and writings as is gathered in Article 19 of the scroll that the Supreme Pontiff, Paul Vth, presented for her canonization.

Her was a discreet zeal for it was born of the light of her prayer, where one learns divine prudence and wisdom. If human prudence and wisdom are not present, this is not properly zeal: since the wages of sin are death, as the Apostle says [cf. Rm 6:23].

This wisdom of prayer was that with which the Saint desired the salvation of souls, the conversion of heretics and sinners. And she prayed to God for the ministers

who could bear much fruit for the Church, and she expressed authentic sadness when one of them died, etc.

Her zeal was indeed secure, always accompanied with regard and consideration. Therefore when she went out to care for her Foundations, she proceeded with such honesty, recollection and regard just as she would conduct herself at home in the monastery.

Such was also her zeal of charity and of peace, and it was not contentious. Because in her arduous undertakings of establishing monasteries and converting souls, she never spoke badly, nor calumniated her neighbors.

Being deeply steeped in her love for God and in humility, her heroic virtues, so also was her zeal in observing the law, because she never broke a commandment or a precept of her superiors in order to attend to her Foundations, nor in going out from the monastery for the assistance of souls: it is understood that she always left it when those authorized to give her permission did so.

And the one time the Father General while being in the Monastery of Seville, closed her in a monastery from which she no longer left to make further establishments. And a Confessor commanded her that embraced the project of a book to be written on the Song of Songs, and she instantly obeyed.

The motive behind all this was that she saw how right it was to maintain that these flowers of love with zeal for souls exceeded that unitive love for God, that was privileged, firm and strong.

Let it be noted that this commandment for the zeal of souls is the end purpose and of all perfections, because this is the principal part of charity for one's neighbor, of which the Apostle has maintained: *Love is therefore the fulfilling of the Law* of a pure heart, etc. [cf. Rm 13:10].

And the Royal Prophet stated: *I have seen an end of all perfection: Your commandment is exceedingly broad* [cf. Ps 118:96]. He thus refers to the zeal and love for neighbor, because it reaches even out to the love for one's enemies.

And since there is nothing clearer than this commandment: *You will love your neighbor as yourself ...* [cf. Mt 19:19]. And I, for my part, desire that the seeking, striving for and being exercised in the work of salvation of my neighbors with zeal for their souls is the most clear ideal to be among the most sublime levels of love that there could possibly be.

For this zeal that as our Savior Himself states through the mouth of David, ... *for the zeal of Your house has eaten me up...!* [cf. Ps 68:10], is the reason why the Lord Himself came down from heaven for us human beings and for our salvation, and chose to die on the Cross in order to save us.

And St. John states: *If any man say: I love God and hates his brother; he is a liar...!* [1 Jn 4: 20].

One cannot love his neighbor who sees him fall into the ditch of hell, and does not reach out to help him, to keep him from falling. This is why with this love *who sees an ass or an ox fall into a pit and will not immediately draw him out, on the Sabbath day*, as the lord says [cf. Lk 14:5].

Zeal, among all the other benefits that it bears with itself, diverts one from being overly impetuous in prayer, so that the soul might take care of its salvation and life, for the His Spouse for the flowers of her zeal for souls [cf. Ct 2:5].

Authentic zeal does have three parts:

The first: to desire and to seek that all souls in the world be saved. All Christians can have this level, in whatever state they may live, even though they might profess the cloister, as Carthusians and contemplative nuns.

The second: to work for this salvation by means of those ministers to whom the Church has assigned this purpose. And this properly pertains to the Prelates of the Church.

The third: to bring about these conversions by treating with souls.

All these three types made up the zeal of St. Teresa.



### **36. Concerning the Travails and Crosses of the Soul**

... which are called apples, fruits of the Tree of the Cross.

There are two kinds of travails and crosses: some are useful and others are bereft of fruits.

The crosses are of 4 types:

The first, when God gives them to sinners as a punishment and castigation, as the principle one is hell itself: as the sorrows of Antiochus [cf. 1 M 6:1, ff.], the

persecutions of Heliodorus [cf. 2 M 3:25, ff.], and the death of Julian the Apostate, etc.

The second: those travails that a person takes upon himself, by following his own unruly appetites, as the sufferings of contagious infirmities that flow from [unruly life], etc. - when poverty is a player, there are fears, restlessness, and the wounds of one who lives in hostilities, factions, etc.

The third: those travails that might come to inconsiderate souls, when without regard they might place themselves in danger. And so, as St. John Chrysostom states that if one sets sail in the winter, he should not be surprised if he has to face storms.

The fourth: those travails that are not supported by patience, and they cause in the soul desperations, blasphemies and any other sins whatsoever.

This does not mean that one loses patience when she experiences travails, and laments about them: the fact is that if such as these were not experienced, they would not be Crosses. Like Job [c. 3], who whenever he would experience these, he would lament, saying: *Cursed be the day on which I was born*, etc. [cf. Jb 3:3]. IN none of these complaints of his, did he offend God nor did he make unreasonable statements against God.

Those travails that bear fruit, are like apples harvested from the Cross, and they are of three kinds, and in each one of these there are four types: which in all, these add up to twelve, in conformity with the twelve fruits of the tree of the Apocalypse [cf. Ap 22:3].

The first are those which the soul suffers in order to maintain in oneself purity and rectitude. Such as these might be referred to as corporal afflictions, or exterior tribulations.

And the first type of these is that one that the soul takes hold of by itself in order to do penance, as fasting, ashes, disciplines, roughness of clothing, and ones bed, etc.

The second: are those which God sends and which the soul supports patiently, such as infirmity, sufferings, weaknesses, etc.

The third: those which develop in the soul in serving the Lord, such as tiredness, vigils and the like.

The fourth: those which are born from poverty and need, and which the soul supports with patience and love, and offers all these to God, such as hunger, thirst, nudity, the cold, the heat, etc.

The interior travails which with great propriety these can be called afflictions, anguish, tribulations of soul, and these are of four types:

The first: compassion in suffering, pains and the passion of Christ, and for the many who suffer the condemned in hell.

And thus the sacred Virgin Mary suffered, in such a high degree, that through her sufferings she merited more than the martyrs, such as the great martyrs suffered.

The second: the impetus of the power and love of God and the salvation of souls, that so engulf one that rightly the divine Spouse notes that *love is as strong as death*, and that zeal lasts as long as hell. And He points out that the lamps are like the fire and that flame which no water on earth could ever extinguish them [cf. Ct 8:6].

This suffering is somewhat alleviated with the other travails, and with one attending on the salvation of souls.

The third: would be the sadness, fears, loneliness, aridity of spirit; melancholy, abandonment of God, and similar anguish.

This is a matter of all those disturbances that do not bear with them any imperfection, and they are what the Blessed Virgin suffered when her Son was lost [cf. Lk 2:48] - and when He was separated from them in His burial. And Jesus Christ, our Lord, suffered these when on the Cross, He lamented saying to His eternal Father: *My God, My God, why have You abandoned Me?* [cf. Mt 27:46].

The fourth: the temptations of the devil and his bad treatment, both in the interior as well as on the exterior. These would be like the sufferings of St. Anthony. And since Jesus Christ had been sorely tempted in the desert [cf. Mt 4:1, ff.], His servants have absolutely no reason to think that they, too, will not have to be tempted.

The travails and persecutions of human beings are also of four other kinds:

The first: grumbling, false testimonies, temerarious judgments and calumnies, of which the royal Prophet lamented, saying: O Lord, deliver my soul from wicked lips, etc... [cf. Ps 119:2].

The second: abandonment and disdain from other human beings, who sometimes, even though they might be relatives and friends, distance themselves and allow one to suffer. Rather than encouraging those suffering, these others afflict them, much like the [false] friends of Job, and when Christ our Lord, saw Himself abandoned by His disciples, and He says with David: *And I looked for one that would not grieve together with me but there was none and for one that would comfort me, and I found none!* [cf. Ps 68:21].

The third: injuries, evil words that other human beings direct in hatred, rancor and hostility. These would like those words that the Pharisees addressed to Jesus, calling Him a seducer, drunkard, and the like. [cf. Mt 27: 63; Lk 7:34].

The fourth: when others come to offend by their deeds, or in their uncivil manner, either from one's own relatives, or in other personal offenses. Some even find the boldness to put hands in anger on the person they persecute. This would be like the lot suffered by the martyrs and as that of Christ our Lord, by the executioners. They even made bold to scourge Him, to crown Him with thorns, and to put Him on the cross.

Let us conclude this point of the apples from the Tree of the Cross, with hinting at the great goods and fruits that derive from travails.

And among all the saints who have written diffusely about all this, there is the Doctrine of St. Athanasius of Nicene fame, of Sacred Scripture, citing Nemesis, the Greek Bishop, St. John Chrysostom, St. Isidore. And then all that St. Antony the Greek has written of his Melissa, St. Niles, the Abbot, etc. : it is from all these sources that the teaching on the 12 fruits garnered from travails are based.

These indeed would purge the soul from mortal sins- from venial sins – from imperfections – and the passions.

They cause patience - provide interior light – lead to the imitation of Christ.

They give glory to God. – They increase and conserve grace – they mitigate the penalties of purgatory – they temper the impetus of love – through these there is obtained greater glory in heaven.

And may God grant us all this. Amen.



### **37. Love for God**

It is the love of God which is the First-born of grace – the life of the soul – the hidden treasure – the precious stone- the oil for the lamps of the prudent virgins – the measure of glory – the wedding garment – purified gold – Jacob's ladder – the purpose of the commandments – the summit of perfection – and it is the first and the greatest of the precepts, as the Holy Spirit states in many places [cf. Mt 22:38; Mk 12:30].

St. Augustine calls it the font from which flow all the virtues and perfections of conscience.

Prosper of Aquitaine refers to it as that natural heat which vivifies the soul. And the same Saint teaches that it is the livery of the just, through which they come to be known and are distinguished from sinners.

St. Maximus teaches that it is the term of contemplation and of all good knowledge

St. Gregory Nazianzene calls it that magnet which draws the hearts of the people of God.

St. Basil refers to it as that leash with which God draws the heart of the Souse with Christ.

St. Dorothy sees it as a circle the center of which is God, from which flow all the lines of loving actions

Cassiodorus calls its fire, which is enkindled on the wood of all the virtues and good desires.

St. Bernard says that the love of God is the money with which alone can we pay back to God all that we owe to Him, since He does not accept any other payment from us other than by loving Him.

Eusebius, the Emissene, calls it the stimulus of perfection toward God and towards other human beings.

Lawrence Justinian compares it to the nails with which is built the mansion of God.

All these names, and others that are beyond number, treat of the love of God and of one's neighbor.

It can also be called the Tree of Life in the midst of the terrestrial paradise, or the tree planned along the currents of the river of living water, in the heart of the city of Jerusalem.

This tree contains 6 parts, that are: the roots, the trunk, the branches, leaves, flowers and fruits – and these are called 'apples'.

The roots are those virtues and dispositions through grace and love are acquired – contrary to that false peace with which rise up impediments and blockages to walking toward perfection.

These, no matter how many they may be, I will bring forward only nine.

The first: penance and the genuine frequency of the sacraments, with which mortal sin is put away.

The second: observance of the religious laws and constitutions, from which flow remorse of conscience, contrary to excessive relaxation.

The third: fear of God, which the soul procures in order not to return immediately to fall into the sins one has confessed.

The fourth: mortification of the passions and appetites, in order not to commit willingly any venial sins.

The sixth<sup>41</sup>: a genuine examen of conscience, in order to know those hidden sins in which there is hardness of heart.

The seventh: profound humility, with which one flies acting just to please others.

The eighth: obedience and subjection to superiors, following the judgment of another, and not one's own.

The ninth: mercy and thoughtfulness for ones brothers and sisters, from which springs zeal for souls, contrary to the disdain for their salvation.

The trunk of this tree is that authentic surrender of our own wills to that of God. He asks of His Spouse: *Let Him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth...* [Ct 1:1]. It should be understood here that this kiss is the union of these two wills which comes from Christ, since His beloved spouse is not on the level yet to arrive at this.

The branches of this divine tree are harvested from these words: *I sat under His shadow whom I desired: and His fruit was sweet to my palate* [cf. Ct 2:3].

Since this shadow comes to be from the sun that blinds, is the first branch, which is living faith. And the second branch is genuine confidence, which springs from the protection of God, while appearing as a fresh tree, it provides shade for the soul that trusts in it.

The third type of branches are those fervent desires, firm proposals and the interior actions that the soul continuously offers in order to arrive at genuine divine love. And this is what is meant by *Him Whom I desired...*

The fourth branch is perseverance and constancy in love, with which the soul comes to sit under this tree: and this goes on constantly, and not just now and again, and not as wild fennel shaken by every wind, but one that perseveres in love for God.

---

<sup>41</sup> The fifth root to the tree is missing here.

The fifth branch is to show love with works, which are its fruit. Since as it is stated, works enable others to recognize the good; and by accomplishing these, love increases.

The sixth is that taste and contentment with which the soul serves God joyfully, contrary to that sadness and displeasure that are experienced in the service offered by those who really do not love.

And for this reason its fruit is called 'sweet'. And just as that palate that is not healthy does not taste the sweetness of good food, so the soul that is not pure does not receive in itself that authentic love. And from this perspective, the purity of spirit is the seventh branch of this divine tree.

The leaves, no matter how seasonal they may be they are essential to three and they also decorate it very much. These would be those *graces gratuitously bestowed*, and that interior sweetness that the souls truly in love experience. They are signified as those breasts of the spouse, of which the beloved states: ... *for thy breasts are better than wine. Smelling sweet of the best ointments...* [Ct 1:1, f.].

This interior sweetness is experienced in many ways. Among others, there are numbered those joys, that spiritual rejoicing, the tenderness, sweet tears. And above all these is the sweetness of that fullness that springs from the assistance brought by Christ to the soul.

Likewise, those embraces and ecstasies are like leaves in the trees, with alienation from the senses, which the Spouse declares in these words: ... *He brought me into the cellar of wine..* [cf. Ct 2:4.].

And I call all these experiences 'leaves', because in the winter of dryness of spirit and interior tribulation, these graces and favors seem to fall away, much as the leaves fall from the trees. All this while the love of God remains, as grace itself remains.

The flowers of this tree are those heroic deeds and virtues of each one's conscience, such as are the three religious vows of obedience, chastity and poverty.

The following are like red flowers of the honor and glory of God, and these are prayer, both vocal and mental, the divine praises and sacrifice.

And the sprouts of zeal for souls, are that by which subjects are governed and are practiced the seven works of corporal mercy, and those seven spiritual works of mercy.

All these flowers the much loved souse seeks when she says: *Stay me up with flowers ...!* [cf. Ct 2:5] - sustain me with flowers.

And lastly, the apples, which are the fruit of this divine tree, are the travail, the afflictions, the tribulations and persecutions, which the soul supports patiently when God bestows this to her. And she procures some of these in order to serve Him the more greatly, imitating Christ in suffering.

And of all this the beloved Spouse speaks when she says: *Compass me about with apples, because I languish with love...* [ib.] – fortify me with apples as I languish with love.

May God grant all this out of His infinite goodness and love. Amen.



### **38. A Conference on Mortification given on the Retreat Day of the Month of October.**

As I have already told you that my intention in establishing among us a day of retreat, this is not so much just to occupy your spirits with a natural dread that death brings with it, but rather by means of a certain reform of yourselves in whatever it is you may be lacking, in order that all will effect a life more corresponding to your state in life. This is so that you will apply a more secure preparation for a death that will be happy and content.

The reason is that the goodness of life is that which gives us a pledge of dying well.

If this is the situation, then, what better can I do than to propose to you in these conferences such as I am offering on this day, something on what it is that should occupy a religious sister, that is, on those virtues necessary for her?

Today I have chosen mortification for my theme, something that is more essential and proper in order to have you understand on what a member of the 'Beloved' should be, she who is the Spouse of Jesus Christ.

St. Ignatius so esteemed this virtue that he chose it as the basis of his Society. And, as a result despite how much affection he had for prayer and spent many hours at it, notwithstanding all this, he used to say that he still feared that it would be erroneous in the tending toward perfection, if one were to place that time for prayer over that which he had placed for being mortified.

Just notice, therefore, how necessary is mortification, since this saint, so instructed in the ways of God, reasoned about all this.

In embracing the religious state you have accomplished your basic obligations, which as all Christians are called to do in observing the precepts, and now you are to follow the counsels. To these counsels you are now held.

How is it, then, that you do not fear, but rather flee from all that obliges you to do this?

Your own self-will is what is ruining you, that which betrays you in the same way that Judas did, that is, by kissing you, with infusing into you other yearnings.

This will of yours is no longer your own. You have given it over in the religious state. Therefore, do not any more strive to take it back, and mortify it every chance you get.

St. Gertrude in the Solemnity of All Saints, saw that religious were to be included in the number of the martyrs, having already received their palm. But these persons she had in mind were surely those who practiced mortification and self-abnegation.

You are to choose this, and you are obliged to tend toward perfection and to sanctify yourselves. But, just look a bit to see if what you are presently doing could ever win for you the palm of the martyr.

I know full well that I am continuously forced to make comparisons with persons called to live in this world, and we in no way should remain behind them.

It is my experience that all of them still living in the world, are diligent in their duties, they are occupied and intent on accepting the fatigue of all these, without complaining about the heavy burdens they have to bear, etc.

But then, in sharp contrast, I see that among us the contrary, or if you will, those who want to live undisturbed, without any discomfort, or the very minimal of anything difficult, is considered with utmost repugnance, becoming upset and with much annoyance.

And so it seems, it would be that the religious state, in place of being a state in which there ought to imply a continuous martyrdom, with that level of mortification that should be practiced there, it should become rather a state of repose, where there is just about nothing to suffer.

O, surely you would never want to be robbed of that palm. Martyrdom is a challenging word and one has to really tire herself in order to acquire it.

When you do experience the weight of religious observance, and that it seems difficult for you to bear it, just remember then, and ask yourselves: Is my course of action truly a martyrdom? You should do nothing less than be truly ashamed even at a question such as this, due to your faint-heartedness, of your very little courage. So it is that at times, that which seems to you to be so much, really is nothing more than a creature of your imagination: while in itself it is really nothing.

Just figure out how much is lacking in order to arrive at something more!

Therefore, always hold mortification in mind, make use of it in every circumstance.

Remember that in us this is a duty that we are obliged to practice both internal and external mortification, in order to moderate our every motion, every gesture, and to mortify all our senses. And that even after we have labored much, and after we have applied all the daylong mortification of our every inclination and desire, we will not have done anything more than a strict duty that is incumbent upon us as religious persons.

Therefore, mortify yourselves at every turn: in speaking, in looking about, in eating, in all. Do not ever leave the field for your passions to hold full sway, nor let your inclinations that sometimes might get the upper hand within us, that is, by taking over our superior human traits – and this is because these will enslave you.

But if you accustom yourselves to mortification, this will be of profit to you: this will enable you to blunt always, the very early beginnings of every motion within that would lead you contrary to religious mortification, and thus, you will conquer them all, and you will dominate over them.

It is for this reason that you need to be vigilant over yourselves, loving this virtue that bears with it so many advantages.

It seems that mortification is harsh to nature, and perhaps you will experience a certain repugnance in embracing it. But, I assure you that this is not the case” rather I assure you that its practice will render you quite content, and you will see that it is the means of being happy. The reason is the dominion over ourselves is that which renders us genuinely happy. The mastery over ourselves is that which renders us so and provides us with that interior peace and spiritual contentment.

From this, you will also receive additional fruit: and this is that you will have greater fervor and attention in prayer.

You often complain that this does you so much harm. Well, St. Ignatius said that a mortified person is the more united to God in 15 minutes of prayer than someone else might experience in many hours of it.

This, therefore, is the full reason that you become so distracted in prayer: simply because you are not mortified.

Become mortified, and then you will experience what this saint proclaims.

And, in fact, a soul mortified in all, ought to have God present, because He is at work continuously in such a soul, and remains with such a person [since human nature lacks mortification] and is united to God.

And this is a proof that one is united to God whenever it moves contrary to this human nature, remaining always attentive to walk in His presence. This is verified also when the person commits herself to prayer, because she finds Him already within, in whom He dwells through His grace.

Be animated, therefore, toward this mortification that is of supreme necessity for you. Seek in your reflections how you conduct yourself in this manner, and avoid the following in yourselves:

That desire to know everything and to seek to find out, this is not mortification.

That curiosity of informing yourselves by asking about those matters that do not pertain to you, this is not mortification.

That change of face that is noticed immediately when another sister says something to you even in jest. This is not mortification.

Those excuses you make whenever a superior might correct you, this is not mortification.

Your observance of the defects of your fellow sisters, this is not mortification.

Your following after all that your imagination proposes to you and leads you to trust in it without cutting off immediately that which renders you overly fastidious in personal matters and which impedes you to attend seriously to your own duty, this is not mortification.

That condescendence that you have in yourself, in order to follow your own will, this is not mortification.

That falsity that you demonstrate when the superior acts contrary to this will of yours, and gives you an obedience that is not pleasing to you, and decides that you should not be committed to that task which you would like to do, this is not mortification.

Those failings against the community rule with such facility, particularly regarding silence, that lets you go at will to that yearning you have to speak and laugh outside the proper time, this is not mortification.

Then that keeping silence when you should engage in conversation as in recreation, and to allow yourself to fall into that laziness which comes upon you except for speaking, this is not mortification.

In brief, that annoyance you demonstrate for the common exercises, and which at times you let it be known with bad example for your companions, this is not mortification.

And so on, running through the rest of religious regimen, you will see how much this virtue of mortification will assist, in order to accomplish all in its proper time, and to do it well. Whenever one follows the path of mortification and keeps this in mind, acts in every occasion with the guidance of grace and against human nature.

It will not fail, then, to bear fruits of virtue which then seek out quiet and consolation. And this produces in each one of you that you would indeed strive for this, that interior silence which only the truly mortified enjoy.



### **39. A Conference on Death**

We are all born, as is usually said, with a rope around our necks: that is, condemned to die.

However, this condemnation we can render favorable in our own regard, with our lives, so that it becomes a reward rather than a punishment.

Therefore, let us not wait for the last instant in order to draw up our own accounts, but let us profit from the time that life gives us, particularly in this retired place, which is consecrated for this very purpose. Let us put a stop to those thoughts that would occupy us whenever we would feel that we are in some danger, and that we need to think of our own destiny, as there is no other remedy for us.

What would these thoughts, remorse, regrets, desires mean, as all serves us now, because we have the time to be sorry for having done what we did uselessly in the past: there is no longer time for such.

We have also now the advantage of having a clear and healthy mind, in order to know better that which we need to reform in ourselves, and then that which will render us content. We have the physical strength in order to carry all this out with the help of God: all such things which later we will not have.

What happiness therefore will there be to take care of all this now, and to string together a chain of preparation for death, as that really will be the final ring and would bring to this endeavor completely to a close, in a manner to garner the fruit of whatever may be done in these matters.

That which weighs on us the more in the final moment will be our own wills. This is because in following our own wills, the soul is put to death.

The Lord for our greater merit has given us free will. But this tends more to evil than to good. Therefore [since the Lord has bestowed on us the grace of renouncing all else in the state of religion] we have made more to our own benefit than others.

But, why, then, do we sometimes take up again our own choices, as this unfortunately is done? How much more correct will your accounting be, provided that you are faithful to this renunciation, you will see unfold a life-time of obedience and the submission of your own judgment!

You will be discomforted in the thought about how you have conducted yourself in the religious life. You ought to be able to respond to yourselves: I have not anything left just to my own judgment. O Lord, I have done all out of obedience to those who have taken Your place. In obeying these others, I have come to understand that I have done it all for You.

Therefore, do not totally put to death your own wills, while you still have time. Reform that which in these wills are still rebellious and obstinate. Renounce those limited manners according to which you look on virtue and want to practice it your own way, because this is not of God. He wills that you carry out His Will, practicing that which there is suggested to you in His Name.

Renounce that self-love upon which you rely, following your own judgment.

Renounce that esteem that you yearn from others. Give up those satisfactions that are so important in your own view, so that you might be able to be considered in a more particular way than all others, that you find that is the more sought after, consulted and employed.

Renounce yourselves, and learn to have that self-hatred in a holy manner, in order to love God alone.



#### **40. A Conference given on a Day of Retreat**

In your attentive reading that you give to the Rule, this leads to the reflections on whatever it is in which you may have failed. I believe that you should pay attention to those areas in which you may have failed: I would like to speak with all diligence with which each one of you ought to undertake this endeavor, or on one's own effort in the matter.

I have said that perhaps only few of you reflect in this way, and I have every reason to think this. Because your very works so indicate. These actions bear with them some undefined negligence and failure. This leads to one's thinking that you might observe the rules without love, without commitment and only materially.

In my view, I assure you that you would have greater fulfillment in giving more care to this over that to which you may not be so committed. And do you know why? Because in doing so it prejudices you the more by going on as you are, and this helps you to deceive yourselves. This has you think that you have fulfilled your duty when called to the various exercises of the day, or to some task or other. You seem to drag yourselves to this or that assignment only bodily and put very little spirit into it. You thus neglect animating this whole endeavor of charity and love for God, that would bring you to a greater diligence.

I would tell you that you may think it better not to dominate all, because then you would recognize that you are lacking and you would humble yourselves. Whereas, as it is, you do not recognize having in yourselves any defect and so you never correct yourselves.

Such diligence is more necessary than you would think. And without this diligence you will discover yourselves at the hour of death, with hands full of works, it may be true, but works that will not serve you for anything, because they are lacking in that spirit that ought to be present to animate them, in directing them to God and to render these works both good and perfect.

What, then, would such works as these serve you?

Absolutely nothing. They can only deceive you during life and defraud you in death.

The Sage states that cursed be that man who performs his duties negligently.

And this negligence, it is necessary to tell you the truth, is found in the greater part of you.

You do not manifest either spirit, nor inspiration in any notable manner. Everything seems to languish in your hands, and does not succeed. There is not among you that certain yearning to acquiring the genuine spirit of the Institute.

There is some good in each one of you, a certain will to go here and there, to change assignments – but, there does not seem among you to be evident those desires that are more in accord with the spirit of the community.

And do you know why? Because, if there were, and that if you loved the Institute, you would not wait for some proper moment nor for some particular place in order to work this all out, according to the spirit and purpose of the Community.

Perhaps to you it might seem that this is not the situation, and this does not apply to you. And I tell you that it does. While this might not seem to you to be the proper occasion or that this applies to you, you are found lacking in working according to the scope of the institute. It is the spirit that you lack.

To prove this to you let us see briefly by making a short examen on this matter. What is the spirit of our Institute? The Glory of God, and the usefulness and advantage for our neighbor, seeking to help to bring this about.

The glory of God is never more perfectly communicated than by fulfilling His most Holy Will. This you are to do with passing the time here below in that manner that is pleasing to Him.

But you are not doing that which He wants of you. You do not render Him that glory you are held to render Him, because you are lacking in diligence. And the negligence which you bring to your daily exercises, proves that you do these with ill will, and without thinking of rendering to God that glory which He has the right to expect from all of you. This He expects of us even more so, because we are obliged doubly, by being bound having made a profession of all this.

You have also the occasion to work in the other purpose of our Institute, that which regards our neighbor.

You have a 'neighbor' so dependent on you and who needs much from you: these are your companions, to whom you owe good example and edification.

But in place of doing this, you do offer some help to one another, without even paying any attention to what you are doing. This flows from that negligence with which you do everything.

If a fellow sister converses about this world, you immediately enter into the conversation, rather than changing the subject and trying politely to get her to give up her conversation.

Should there be a companion of yours who, out of her own weakness proper to human misery, who has felt the weight of virtue, and it happens that she might say something totally out of order which flows from her misery, you immediately take part in all this and even laugh, or add to it. And so this does not seem present in you, that constructive assistance that you might give them by regulating your conversations and responses in accord with the virtues, and those virtues particular to religious life.

Here are the good influences you can offer for your neighbor.

You would most likely not even have thought of what I am telling you today, and yet this is the way it is.

At least, humble yourselves. Recognize that which you truly are because of your own faults: that is, by delaying the graces of the Lord, Who, in knowing that you have been good at doing what you have, and at least up until now what you should have done, and something that is really quite easy. Do not enter into the situation of doing even greater harm situations from which you will not be able to exit.

Strive then to work out your own perfection, because this is what God expects of you. Just understand that He wills the diligent fulfillment of His Will and to render to Him the greatest glory that we can.

Edify your companions by showing yourselves in everything to be in accord with those virtues of the religious life, and so you will learn to give edification to your neighbor, and to be able one day to work for the advantage of your neighbor.



#### **41. From the Passion of Jesus Christ**

We were all part of this creation to which was affixed the banner of the Cross.

We are meant to be like a receptacle to receive the precious blood of the Lamb, which flowed the most from the Cross.

Why were we put on this earth?

Because there world was not sufficient to hold the Cross up straight. Rather it would have been preferable to refuse so much injustice.

Nor was the nail sufficient and enough to hold Him fixed to it and nailed to it, were it not for that ineffable love that He nurtured for our salvation; anything else would not have been able to hold Him.

And so it is, therefore, that it is fervent charity for the honor of the Father and our own salvation, that held our Jesus on to His Cross.

We are, therefore that earth in that we hold the Cross up straight – and we are that receptacle as we receive His blood.

Whoever will come to know and to become the Beloved Spouse of that truth which is God, will find in His blood the grace, the richness and the life of this grace.

And she will find her spiritual nudity redressed. She is to be vested in the wedding garment of the fire of charity, soaked and made into a kind of paste in His blood which out of love, was poured out; and being united with the divinity, in this Blood she will feed and be nourished by His mercy.

Thus immersed in His blood there will be dissipated the darkness and the Sister will come to enjoy the light. The reason is that in the blood each will lose her overly sensitive self-love, and that servile fear that creates disturbance. And each will receive in their stead a holy fear, and the security in divine love, which would have been already found in His blood.

If such light as this and this truth are not found within the soul, such a one would never become that receptacle that would have been able to receive the blood of the Lord. Rather, because of her own false judgment and inner confusion, each would live in darkness and denuded of being redressed in grace, and would receive only justice. This would not be by reason of any defect in the blood, but because this blood would not have been appreciated for what it truly is, and as it is. And when one

is allied with self-love, she would not be able to see nor recognize the real truth of this blood.

Hence, the Sister would receive Him in a state of personal ruin, and with the experience of great bitterness, each would have been deprived of the joy that flows from this blood of His, that sweetness and being able to taste the fruit flowing from this blood. She simply would not have real self-knowledge, nor understand the true nature of this blood in itself.

So, immerse yourselves into the blood of the Crucified Christ, and bathe yourselves in His blood, become inebriated in His blood, slake your thirst in His blood. And vest yourselves in this blood.

If you have been unfaithful, re-baptize yourselves in His blood.

If the devil has confused the eye of your mind, wash it clear in His blood.

If you have fallen into ingratitude of gifts that you do not understand, be gratified in His blood;

If you have been a vile shepherdess and not equipped with the scepter of justice seasoned with prudence and mercy, dip it into this blood. And with the eye of your intellect see it immersed in the blood, and with the hand of love, draw it out and with feverish love, hold it close to yourselves.

And in the warmth of this blood dissolve your tepidity. In the light from His blood, chase away the darkness. Do this so that you might indeed be the Beloved Spouse of the Truth, and an authentic shepherdess.

Lock yourselves into the pierced side of the Most beloved Son of God, which is like a shop open for business, permeated with a pleasant odor, to such an extent that any sin becomes for you truly foul-smelling.

There the beloved Spouse reclines on the bed of His blood and of fire. There she comes to see and is shown the secret of the Son of God.

This is a thorny bruise, which gives you a drink, and inebriates you with every desire of a lover. It brings you joy, and illumines every mind, and fills each memory which is immersed there, to the extent that the beloved Spouse can neither understand nor retain, nor love anything else, other than this sweet and good Jesus: as blood and fire, He is inestimable love.

If you could only have seen the divine goodness, with its delights, pleasures and the proper love of oneself, then that vanity and inconsistency of heart which once may have seemed good to you, you would have chosen the former for yourselves.

But, since the Wisdom of the Word Incarnate looks on and understands that voluntary poverty, patience under injuries, being mistreated and even persecuted, was always the preferred choice for Him, He immediately loved all this and was enveloped in it all.

And this is what His Servants and Children do, as they follow along in the footsteps of their Father.

So, do not withdraw yourselves from this sweet and delightful path, and sweet school. But, be as true children, remain close to the cloak in which you are wrapped, and in this manner you will become incarnate in it all, and it will never be separated from you, until you leave this present life.

Therefore, we will abandon that garment of penalty and we will remain vested with the garment of the beloved, and we will eat at the Table of the Lamb, as the fruit which follows all the fatigue.

This is what that gentle Apostle Paul did, who was vested in Christ crucified, and in nothing else did he care to dally. And he stated: *God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ...* [cf. Ga 6:14].

And this pleased him so much that this same Apostle once said to a servant of his:

‘Beloved Daughter, of mine, how much does the above noted pleasure unite me with bonds of affection and of love, may these never depart from me, nor at any point begin to slow down, except when my life will be taken from me.

It certainly seems that Paul would have studied this doctrine. He knew it most perfectly, in so far as he was the most rabid and committed seeker of souls, in this endeavor being much like the sponge immersed in water, drawn from it and soaked by it. And so it was that he, journeying along the way of much humiliating shame he discovered the inestimable charity and goodness of God, with which he supremely loved creatures.

He came to understand that His will was our sanctification, the honor of His eternal Father, and our salvation.

And he desired even death in order to fulfill this sanctification in us.

Paul picked this enterprise up and grasped it thoroughly; and he committed himself immediately to give honor to God, and his fatigue in behalf of his neighbor. He preached the truth in a manly manner, and did not hold back out of any negligence. Rather, he was most solicitous, and was made a Vessel of Delection, full of fire to bear and to preach the Word of God.

In order to arrive at a most perfect love, place as its preferred object before the eye of your intellect, the Crucified Christ and His ineffable charity. He has shown this to you with the shedding of His own blood, with such a fire of charity, so that with the light of your intellect, you might come to know the gravity of sin and your own fragility, as well as the charity of Jesus.

In this charity you will love and search for virtue, willing to sustain every disturbance in order to acquire it; and you will always love your neighbor charitably. And it is for this that you need to struggle for and totally tire yourselves out in pursuing it.

Then, in the time of your battles, you need to have recourse to embracing His most holy Cross, and to solidify your hope there in firm hope in the blood of Christ Crucified.

Swoon, then by your enflamed desire with the fainted and consumed Lamb. Find your repose in Christ crucified.

Implant your hearts and affections onto the Tree of the Most Holy Cross, with Christ crucified. And in His wounds set up your dwelling.

I desire to see you all opened up onto this tree of the most sweet and most beloved Cross. There is no other refreshment, unless, unless you unload all your concerns there with the most ardent love.

Here there will be no demons either visible or invisible who are able to take from you the life of Grace. The reason is that once raised on high, this earth can no longer impact us, as the Mouth of the Truth proclaims: *When I am lifted up, I will draw all things to myself!* [cf. Jn 12:32].

Because it is He who draws our hearts, souls, and wills, with all his power.

Therefore, let us set up our beds here, and rejoice that the world is against us. We are not worthy that He should bestow such grace upon us, and that there be given to us the same robe that our most sweet Father has.

Let us ask, therefore, that there be given to us large mouthfuls of it all, and that we imitate Jesus, our divine Master and Lord.



## 42. Self-Despoilment

I desire to see you fully despoiled of your self interests, so that you might perfectly discover yourselves vested with the Crucified Christ.

And just think of it this way: that the more that He is lacking to us, depends upon how much we reserve for ourselves.

Therefore, just how much we need to uproot from our own wills, and mortify it, drown it, this is all so that we might not ourselves be deprived from such a rich garment, that illumines the soul, inflames and fortifies it.

And in order to lead us to virtue, one may be enflamed by a most fervent desire to offer great deeds for God, and even to give one's life for the honor of God, and for the salvation of souls.

And the Sister is fortified, because there is no light nor fire without fortitude.

Since such light and love bring with them a considerable weight: war and peace, storms and good times. And all this weighs on one so much when there is lacking a steady hand; one must bear both adversity, to the same extent as prosperity. The reason is that from one and the same font proceed both: and for one and the same purpose.

And O how strongly is this soul navigated when it is despoiled of self for such good.

The soul may not desire nor wish anything other than the glory and praise for the Name of God, that which seeks for the salvation of souls.

Of all these, one and the same meal is prepared – and a Sister of this mentality would not want to eat at any other table than that of the Cross: this means life is lived with suffering, derision and insult, when it pleases God to allow these.

How much joy ensues when one is seen to undertake all this faultlessly.

To reach this state, one can never arrive with the heavy weight of our own baggage: and so, totally remove all this from yourselves.

I desire to see you bathed in the Blood of the Crucified Christ, Who inebriates, fortifies, warms and illumines the soul of truth. And thus, the Sister will not fall into a lie.

O Blood that would fortify the soul and remove the weakness that proceeds from servile fear, which flows from the lack of light. And so the soul is strong because in this Blood each is illumined by the truth, and has come to know and to see with the eye of the intellect that the First Truth created each in order to bestow on each that life which lasts, to the glory and praise of His Name.

When then does this manifest?

The Blood of the Immolated Lamb, because the Blood manifests to us that all things which God grants us, both prosperous as well as those adverse, consolation and tribulations, shame and disgrace, mockery and villainy, infamy, and murmurings, all of these are allowed to be withstood by us through the love bestowed on us with the fervent love, in order to fulfill in us this First and sweet Truth with which we have been created.

Who has shown this to us?

The blood. If God would have wanted anything else from us, He would not have granted us His Son, and His Son gives us life.

How, then, did the soul come to know this truth is through the eye of the intellect, and so immediately receives fortitude. And the soul is strong enough then to bear and to sustain every great undertaking for the crucified Christ.

Do not be afraid. Rather, each is warmed with the fire of divine charity, with the proper self-hatred and displeasure with one's self. This one finds herself immediately intoxicated. Thus, the drunk person loses all consciousness of self, and finds in this state nothing other than divine sentiments, since all others are immersed within the blood.

Thus, the soul inebriated with the blood of Christ loses all self-interest, and is deprived from her own sensitive love regarding herself, becomes deprived of all servile fear; rather, she even reaches the state of delighting in her sufferings.

In other words, she does not seek anything else other than in the Cross of Christ crucified [cf. Ga 6:14]. That becomes her glory. All the powers of her soul thus become occupied about this.

Her memory is emptied of all else but this blood, and receives as a benefit. In this blood of Christ there is found that divine love which chases away all self-love. Instead, she seeks the love of shame, and sufferings leveled against her own honor, and a love for death and the pains of life.

With what, then, will the Sister fill her mind?

With the hands of affection and a holy and genuine desire. Such love and affection withdraw her by the light of her intellect, which knows the genuine truth and the sweet will of God.

And so, satiate yourselves and bathe yourselves in the blood of the Crucified Christ, so that the bitter experiences are come to be loved and will seem to you to be sweet, and the heavy weights, will seem light.

Let us learn to pick the roses from the thorns and tribulations.



### **43. Concerning Divine Charity**

I desire to see you all so downed and fatigued in Christ Jesus that you lose all your self-concerns in Him.

But this cannot ever happen to you unless you have the eye of your intellect settled on genuine desire for Him. He will never withdraw from looking at you with the infallible eye of His divine charity, with which God has gazed and looked upon the first creature He created. And since He upon gazing at us, fell in love with all in unmeasured fashion, so much so that out of love, He has created us willing that we should rejoice and participate in that infinite good which He has in Himself.

However, through the sin of Adam this desire of His was never totally fulfilled.

Therefore, God was constrained by the fire of His divine charity, and so sent His sweet Incarnate Word, His own Son, to ransom humanity and withdraw him from slavery.

And this Beloved Son hastened and gave themselves to the shameful death on the Cross, and to converse with publicans, sinners and those excommunicated and

with all kinds of people. The reason is that it is not possible to impose a law, or measure of true love, and this never looks out just for oneself, nor does it seek just one's own interests.

And since the first man fell from the heights of His grace out of self-love, and so it was most necessary that God would make use of a love contrary to this.

Therefore, He sent this Immaculate Lamb with a broad and ineffable charity, not self-seeking, but seeking solely the honor of the Father and our salvation.

O sweet and loving Champion! You do not look even at Your own death, nor at Your own life, pay no heed to the shame that awaits. Rather You take on the Cross like a contest of arm-wrestling, a fight to the death with sin. And death seems to have won over the life of Your Body, while Your death has destroyed our death.

Your death, therefore, O Lord, was the reason why we have been able to see. Since Your eye did not rest on anything other than the honor of Your Father. And there was fulfilled in us His desire, that is, that we should rejoice in God, for which purpose He created us.

Therefore, conform yourselves with this word, which is our rule of and that of the saints who have followed Him, and thus you will become one single reality with Him and you will participate in His *largesse*.

I tell you, then, that if your soul does not wake up and open your eye, and not focus on any other object, rather than that unmeasured goodness and love of God. He demonstrates to His creature that none of us could ever arrive at such generosity and perfection. Our love will be so restricted that we never really understand ourselves, nor our neighbor.

And so be totally immersed and spent in Him, always seeking the sweet eye of His charity. In this instance, you will come to love perfectly that which He loves and you will hate that which He hates.

Cast off, then, cast away your vile heart and your disordered and overly limited conscience. And do not give any quarter to our perverse enemy, the devil, who wants to impede so much good, does not at all want to be cast out of his own city.

And work with courageous hearts and perfect solicitude, seeing that the Other Law is that of the Holy Spirit, and is opposed to that of human beings.

Bring yourselves in harmony with that lover, Paul, and be like he was, a vessel of predilection, in order to bear and spread about Jesus' Name.

It seems quite true to me that Paul looked about himself with this kind of an eye, and in it, he totally lost himself, and it was there that he received such *largesse* that he yearned and wished to be cut off and gone with God, for his fellow human beings [cf. Rm 9:3].

Paul had fallen in love with all with which God had fallen in love, and noted that charity did not offend, nor was it open to inner confusion.

Moses had looked to the honor of God, and yet wanted to but erased from the Book of Life, before the people would experience death [cf. Ex 32:32].

As a result, then, be faithful in Christ Jesus. Root out all your vices and planted there instead the virtues, by following the First Truth, and by not inserting any other rule, or measuring stick to your yearning which chooses to be beyond all measure.

I desire to see in you all that fortitude, abundance and fullness of the Holy Spirit which descends upon the holy disciples, so that you might be enabled to have increase and fructify in your selves and your neighbors that sweet word of God.

Once the fire of the Holy Spirit had come upon them, they went up to the pulpit of that fiery Cross, and they experienced and tasted the hunger of the Son of God and that love that He bore for humanity.

After this experience the words poured out from them like a fiery knife might come out of the furnace. And with this heat they fused the hearts of their listeners, and cast out their demons. And having totally lost themselves in all this, they did not see anything else other than the glory and honor of God and our salvation

So, you too, find a footing on the pulpit of the Cross, and there lose all else, and immerse yourselves with the insatiable desire, drawing forth that enflamed knife, and striking both the visible and invisible demons, who often times seek to sadden your consciences in order to impede that fruit that is brought forth in creatures.

Do not ever turn toward this perverse demon, and especially right now, which is the time for both harvesting and planting.



#### 44. At the Table of the Lamb

*With desire I have desired to eat the Passover with you, before I die [cf. Lk 22:15].*

This is the Passover that I wish we would celebrate: that is, to see you all at the Table of the Immaculate Lamb, He Who is our Food, Table and Servant.

On this Table there are the fruits of the genuine and real virtues. And every other table lacks such fruit – but this Table is with perfect Truth, because it provides life.

This is a much perforated table, full of veins which germinate blood. And among others, there flows a canal from which flows blood and water, mixed with fire. And to that eye, which finds its repose on this canal there is manifested the secret of the heart.

This blood is a wine that inebriates the soul, from which there is all the more to drink the more the Sister would like to drink from it. This would require her to lose herself, and the more one loses herself, the less all other realities does she see. And if this wine is very pleasing, she should drink ever more of it, to the extent that once the stomach is warmed with the wine, that the stomach can hold no more and would vomit it out.

This is the way it is, that on this Table we find this wine, which is the opened side of the Son of God.

He is that wine which warms, and casts out all frigidity, it illumines the voice of the one who drinks of it, and brings joy to the soul and to the heart. Since this blood is shed with the fire of divine charity, and that it warms a person so much, and brings one beyond herself. And thus she reaches the point that she is no longer able to see just her own interests, but commits herself the more to God: all is for God through God, and one's neighbor for God.

And when she has consumed much, she sprinkles it on the heads of her brothers and sisters, having learned from all this that this wine continues to flow on the Table, not so much for His utility, but rather for ours.

So it is, then, that those of us who eat at this Table should do the same, not for our own usefulness, but for the honor of God and for the salvation of our neighbors.

Comfort yourselves, therefore, because this fire will render you stronger and will cast away from you all weakness.

I desire to see you united and transformed by this unique desire for God.

O most ardent flame, Who always burned directly: You are a fire.

It seems that this is that the Mouth of Truth says: I am the fire, and you are the sparks.

It might seem that the fire always wants to go back to its own sphere, and yet it always returns on high.

O inestimable charity! He speaks well, He who says the truth that we are His sparks; and yet He wants us that we are humble.

And just as the spark receives the very Being of the Fire, so we receive the very Being of our First Principle. And so He says: *I am the Fire, you the spark!*

Therefore, you soul is not to rise up in pride.

You ought to act as the sparks, that before you rise up, you need to head toward below.

The reason is that the first movement of desire in us ought to be that of a recognition of God and a reflection on His honor. Then, after being raised up, let us descend to grasp our own wretchedness and negligence.

And those who are asleep wake up, and thus we will be humiliated, finding ourselves in the very abyss of His charity.

But I do not see how we could ever have this holy desire, if our eye is not turned like that of the eagle towards the Wood of Life.

O most sweet love of Jesus, Who has said:

‘Do you wish to be animated for My honor and for the salvation of creatures, and to prove yourselves strong in sustaining every tribulation with patience? Just look upon Me, the Lamb who has swooned on the Cross for you, and as One all bloody from head to foot, and yet my voice is not heard at all in complaint. I do not pay any attention to this, to your ignorance, nor toward your ingratitude. I do all this that it not interferes in the work of your salvation, due to that hunger that I have for you.

The Master of Humility comes and is seen upon a donkey [cf. Mt 21:5]. Our Savior has said that one reason among the others for which He has come seated upon such an animal, was in order to show us our own humanity, in the One who has come because of our sin. And he does this in order to demonstrate that it is fitting for us to hold on to this jackass of our own humanity, in the manner that He held on to it. That is ride upon it and steer it directly, as there is very little difference between us and this beast of burden. This is because, due to our sin, each of us has become animal-like.

O ancient truth, You have taught us how!

- I would like that you mount this donkey, that you conduct yourselves as humble and meek.

- But with whose feet out we to climb on the animal, o most sweet Love?

- There need to be that proper hatred of negligence, and out of love for virtue.

The channel is opened and it pours forth its liquid.

Thus, having realized how much we need to conduct the little ship of our souls, let us go to be nourished with that most sweet canal, that is, with the heart, soul and body of Jesus Christ.

There we will find Him that He pours Himself out with such affection that we will easily be able to fill our souls.

Therefore, we are not to delay in casting our eye out the opened window.



#### **45. Perseverance**

I desire to see you battling against every vice and temptation for Christ crucified, with a holy and genuine perseverance, because perseverance is what is eventually crowned.

You know that with perseverance and with the spiritual combat, victory is won. We are placed in this life as on a battle-field and we have to combat strongly, not avoiding the blows, nor ever retreating backward, but always looking toward our Captain, the crucified Jesus Christ. He always persevered, and never gave up no matter what the Hebrews of His time said to Him, that He should come down from the Cross. He would not cede to the demon, nor even on account of our ingratitude,

in order to fulfill His obedience of His Father and our salvation. He persevered in this even to the very end, when He returned to His heavenly Father with the victory in hand that He had drawn humanity out of the darkness, then ascended in the light of grace by conquering the demon and the world with all its delights.

This Lamb handed Himself over to death in order to bestow life on us, and with His own death, He destroyed our death.

The blood and the perseverance of this Captain ought to inspire us in every battle, by putting up with sufferings, lacerations, insults and downright evil.

Out of the love He had He embraced voluntary poverty, humiliation of heart and fulfilled and perfect obedience.

In this manner when there would be destroyed the cloud of His own body, He will return with the victory to the City of eternal life.

He would first have defeated the devil, the world and the flesh, which are our three most perverse enemies.

And especially the flesh which always battles against the spirit: it is this that we have to conquer, and to weaken by fasting, vigils and prayers.

And the thoughts that might come [these are to be] driven out with continual and holy imaginations. We need to reflect and think about the extent very hot flame of His most ardent charity. We need to remember how much he accomplished for us through grace and not by any debt He had incurred. We need to remember how the Father has given us the word of His only-begotten Son, and that the Son has given his life out of the love, that made Him swoon and open up His body, which from every part, poured forth blood.

Now when our souls consider such intense love, and is consumed out of love that it might seem that they can do very little in response. This inability of ours would still be so, even were we to hand over our bodies to every pain and torment.

In addition to this basic fact, it seems that one cannot even satisfy for so much love, and for so many benefits that it has received from the Creator – since our sweet Jesus has loved us without even being loved by us. And it seems that there is so very little that can be done in return.

In this manner you will cast aside the devil's temptations.

But, you might say to me:

- Since you want me to respond like a courageous knight, when we find ourselves on the battle field, much beleaguered by many enemies, you say to me: what are the weapons that I ought to use?

- And I respond to you that I do not even imagine that you are unarmed. But, I would want that you would have the weapons of Paul, who was a human being like you. You need the breast-plate of a genuine and profound humility, and put on over this the coat of His most ardent charity.

And in the same manner that your breast plate is under your outer garment, and the overcoat acts in harmony with the breast-plate, in this way humility is both the nurse and the nourisher of charity, and such charity nourishes humility.

These are the weapons that I give you, because weapons such as this resist every counter-blow. So it is that the devil, the world and the flesh can be driven away by so many arrows. You are thus able to poison all that you choose, so that there would be no one left who could ever take hold of you. The reason is that the soul in love with Christ crucified does not receive any of mortal sin's arrows, that is, through any free consent of the will.

In brief, anyone armed in this manner is endowed with so much strength that neither the demon nor any creature whatsoever could hold you any more than you might allow.

You also need to have in hand, the knife in order to defend yourselves from your enemies. This ought to have two cutting edges: that of proper hatred and love, being discontent with yourselves and the past time, often spent with such little solicitude for virtue, with much wretchedness, and offenses against our Savior.

We have to hate such wretchedness on our part and in all that we have offended. A person who has allowed hatred to enter, needs to wreak some revenge on these faults of her past life. The responsibility is to sustain every suffering out of love for Jesus Christ, and in order to diminish the debt for one's own sins, pride is overcome by humility, desire and avarice with *largesse* and charity, and the freedom of one's own will with obedience.

This is the holy revenge that we must take when we bear this knife of the proper hatred and love, after having renounced the world, its delights and our own wills.

I beg you, out of love for the Crucified Christ, that you stay on the field of spiritual combat with a holy perseverance. And do not ever turn your heads toward

the rear, or neglect any onslaught of bother and temptation. But, remain firm and armed with the above-mentioned weapons and sustain and ward off those blows with the double-edged knife. And in this way you will defend yourselves against your enemies.

I would want that the tree of the Cross be planted in your hearts and in your souls.

Comfort yourselves with Christ crucified.

Hide yourselves in the Wounds of Christ crucified.

Bathe yourselves in the blood of Christ crucified.

Inebriate yourselves and vest yourselves in Christ crucified, as St. Paul says [cf. Rm 13:14].

Glory in the Cross of Christ crucified [cf. Ga 6:14].

Leap into the shame, the embarrassment, the mockery, sustaining them all out of love for the Crucified Christ.

Hammer your hearts and affection to the Cross with Christ crucified. This is because the Cross is that boat that conducts you to the safe haven of salvation. The nails have become like keys to open and love heaven anew.

So, no longer sleep on the bed of negligence, but rather as the bold knight and without fear, fight against every adversary, as God will grant us the fullness of His grace.

And when your lives are over, after all the fatigue, you will reach eternal rest. And you will see the supreme and eternal beauty and vision of God, where the soul finds quiet and repose. Then, all suffering will be ended as will all evil. You will receive every good, and each is satiated without effort, and hunger without suffering it.

□

#### **46. [no text is offered]**

□

#### **47. The Table of the Most Holy Cross**

I desire to see you placed at the Table of the most Holy Cross, where the Immaculate Lamb is found, Who has made Himself our Table and Servant.

In your thoughts, say that it befits us to go there along our way - that there is no other food that would be able to delight and satisfy the soul, I say that it befits us to go there along our way.

Jesus is the Way.

What was His food? It was simply that which He ate while on this earth: sufferings, shame, lacerations, villainy, and in the end, that shameful death on the Cross.

It befits us to eat this food and to ascend on high, since we have achieved our object.

Truly the soul does act in this way when it considers the way that the divine Master followed.

It is a great experience to see a love that is so great that reaches the point of making of oneself, that is, of one's own body, a stairway to bring us up from the path of suffering and to place us in rest.

Who doubts that the beginning of this path is quite fatiguing? Indeed it is, but when human beings arrive at the feet of the proper hatred and of love, everything that was bitter is sweetened.

In this sense, the first step in the Body of Christ are the feet.

Thus, He taught once a woman servant of His, telling her:

- 'Rise up, My daughter, raise yourself above your self-interests and come up to Me, so that indeed you might rise up. I have made a stairway for you when I was nailed to the Cross.

You rise up first of all on foot: that is, with your affections and desire. Since it is the feet which bear the body, so affection bears the soul.

On this first rung, you will know yourself.

Then you will eventually reach the opened side. Through this opening I show you My secret, which is all that I have done out of love. There your soul is inebriated, and in peace you will enjoy God and other human beings.

You will find there the warmth of divine charity and you will come to know the infinite goodness of God.

And when we will have come to know ourselves and His goodness, we will then have reached to the peace of His mouth. There we will taste so much peace and quiet, that, as you will be so raised on high, that no bitterness that comes along will ever be able to reach us.

Lastly, the Holy Cross is that peaceful bed where the soul reposes.



#### **45. For the Feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary**

March 25<sup>th</sup>

Upon what foundation is supported the mystery that is celebrated on this day by the Holy Church? Or, to put it better: why is Mary the one who has merited the favor of having from heaven such an ambassadorship, of which the messenger is an Angel and the subject of her ambassadorship is the great mystery of the Incarnation?

St. Bernard explains to us the reason: Mary's humility is what decided the choice of her.

The saint says that the virginity of Mary was indeed pleasing. But her humility is what made her the Mother of God.

Therefore, at what exalted price must this virtue be in the eyes of God, this virtue, which established the destiny of Mary! And what was the perfection that there must have been in her, since she was judged by the Most High to be on such a high level?

And just think Who it is that bears such a judgment: by that God Who, supreme and Unique, the Knower of genuine truth, will be found to consider and to judge our just actions.

One author has asserted that it is easy to believe that if God had found a virgin more humble than Mary, she would have been elected to be the Mother of God,

preferentially over Mary. This virtue in her was considered such that, as I have already said, had to be why the divine choice was fixed on her.

It is to Mary, therefore, that we offer this Conference, considering within ourselves this virtue of hers, and seeking to draw upon it for ourselves, that which she desires: that is, our imitation of her.



#### 49. A Conference for the Ascension

After having meditated on Jesus amidst such sufferings and spasms of pain in the time of His Passion, after having seen Him raised up victorious over the devil and over hell, today we see Him finally rise up to Heaven, and to carry with Him our humanity, of which He was enrobed in order to suffer for us, and who has further turned toward as the accompaniment of His glory.

Truly it is here that thought is borne immediately to lead one to seeing the good of suffering in the following of Jesus Christ, as He has reserved for us all the very same reward. But let us just for today leave our concentration on the way, to concentrate more on its conclusion. As the Apostles, let us fix our look to heaven, to where Jesus has ascended.

St. Arsenius, when asked by his disciples that he should leave them with some souvenir before dying, gathering whatever breath he had left, animated his followers with a short saying: *wherever He is, I want to be: and it is there that I am going!* [*ibi, ubi: li', ove!*].

At first his disciples did not seem to grasp just what it was that their Master meant with this laconic saying. But reflecting a bit on the words of the Church's worship: ... *let our hearts be fixed there where are the authentic joys...*<sup>42</sup> This means that our hearts need to be fixed where the genuine joys are. Then they understood what this meant.

Let us, then, fix our hearts there, where the true joys really are, and seek these wherever they may be found.

If we seek these joys where we remain fixed for most of our time, we will certainly not find them. The reason is for the most part rather than directing our sights on high, we look around more here on earth. We seek here our joys and only find sufferings.

---

<sup>42</sup> Roman Missal for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter – the Prayer

We seek them still in that self-love with which we seek to satisfy every encounter, and we believe that with contenting this quest, all has truly been gained. And so, how many thoughts, how many apprehensions, how many disturbances do we endure: in order at long last to find, provided that one should ever succeed, nothing other than smoke.

Only in heaven are these joys to be found. And in order to enjoy already even just a part of these in this life, that may be granted in order to encourage our weakness, or tiredness, let us bear ourselves always there continuously in thought, with the cooperation of our wills – in brief, with including all the potencies of our souls.

Jesus who was always merciful towards His own – led the Apostles with Him to the Mount of Olives, in order to render them witnesses of His Ascension. And this was also so that at the same time they might be animated to suffer with the sight of the glory that awaited them, so they might learn to detach their hearts from this earth, and to fix their attention there where all true happiness resides. And it is only there that the exhausted wayfarer can rejoice for all eternity.

As Jesus granted this grace to His own Disciples, He does so still for us, because common to us are those promises now which he once made to them, when He told them that He was going on ahead in order to prepare glory for them [cf. Jn 14:2].

As they responded, now in order to enjoy these the more let us not seek any more the realities of this earth, but only those of Heaven, where Jesus has already ascended.

Oh, if we could only understand with what authentic solicitude would this continuous perspective and riveting of our eyes on Paradise fill our hearts! And how many other useless realities would there be lifted out of our lives!

How light and easy would this solicitude be that would proceed from an ardent charity toward God, who holds in preparation for us so many genuine goods and Who rewards us so greatly even for a little fatigue on our part.

And if we could only say again with St. Francis: ‘the good that I await is so great that every suffering has become a delight for me.’ How worthless would all the worries, demanding attention, and all those frantic quests even to the point of becoming angry, whenever we might be accused of something, or when something is believed about us that is not to our real advantage:

That multiplicity of reflections as suggested above, that would so engage the imagination, the thought, centered on ourselves and to our own harm - rather than employing both our imagination and thought to considerations of Paradise, and to seek out those means to proceed along our path, with sacrificing whatever repugnance that we might experience;

That self-quest, that gives birth to those desires that come from self-love, that would prefer to see ourselves always occupied in accord with feelings, with one's sufferings, and will never find satisfaction to have only God as the Witness of our deeds: all else rather than being occupied with Paradise, and with the proper hatred of self, all of which help to make our path the more easy;

That excessive sensibility one experiences when she is corrected a bit more sharply than usual, and leads one to rebelling, and where one gives in to self-pity over the much it seems that she is being called upon to suffer – all of this rather than making use of all one's charity toward God and compassion for our neighbor;

That exercise of our wills that is borne along so easily, even in those good realities which are more in accord with one's own preferences - and not with all totally riveted on Paradise;

Those feelings of disturbance that are concentrated on one's own wretchedness;

That worthless feeling that comes from such reflections;

That yearning to judge superiors concerning all that they do or say, and not willing to submit oneself other than what is in accord with one's own views, in spiritual matters, or in religious observance, or in other areas.

All of this proves easily that all this is not of heaven. Because if it were, one would see that advantage of submitting oneself to it.

In brief, from this, develop- all the rest... etc.



## **50. For the Day of the Lord's Ascension**

I imagine that on this morning each one of you would have been intent on the consideration of the mystery that is celebrated today – and each one would have developed this as much as she could have.

I suppose, however, that in a short while you would become quite embarrassed, if you had wished to transport yourselves in spirit onto that Mountain where Jesus ascended into Heaven. In fact, that which is presented to us is thinking that in order to be witnesses of the Glory of Jesus, we need to be there in His sufferings, and to have taken part in them in order to share in His glory.

In this manner, it is certain that Mary pertained to those seeing it, and that she had been made a participant in His Ascension Mary, who had spared with Jesus all the travails of the sorrowful passion, of which her heart experienced every suffering. She nonetheless constantly followed her Redeemer even under His Cross, so that she would share in these not only after she had handed over her last breath, etc.

So, if we should withdraw ourselves to be near Mary, and not finding other supports to assist in the ascending of Jesus into heaven, we might indeed make some comparisons of ourselves with the Apostles, who were participants in it more for their encouragement than for any reward due to them.

These rough and tumble Apostles had shown themselves weak in their encounters with suffering. And whenever we see them on this day standing straight up and ecstatic admirers of all that was going on, they had just a short time before this all run away from their view on Calvary. This proves that they were more disposed to participate in the consolations of Jesus, but not yet in his travail and sufferings.

You, too, find yourselves well disposed to these consolations in the state of life in which you find yourselves, and all that which contents and consoles you is very precious, and you brag about the happiness these bring.

‘Happiness’, you say, is to be separated from the world, and to lead a religious life far from the disturbances and restlessness of this world, and not to aspire to anything other than toward one single goal, which is our Community purpose. You do feel the good fortune of being united in a holy charity with your Companions, who together with you have but one heart and but one way of thinking.

Rejoice in this sincerity with which you are able to cooperate with them.

In a word, up to this point all goes very well, and there is no difficulty for you: all is sweetness and consolation.

But should there appear the least disturbance for you, the least occasion to suffer something, then you are as the Apostles who fled and ran away. Thus it is clear that many would like to share in all the consolations and sweetness inherent in the

life you have embraced, and you answer with a resounding 'no' to all the bitterness and tribulations of this state in life.

If this has been your attitude up to the present moment, let us strive to follow our comparison with passing from the Mountain where Jesus ascended into Heaven, to the Cenacle with the Apostles, seeking to discern those occupations that took up their time, and to do the same also yourselves.

Regarding this you will think that you will not do it, nor do you even have the possibility to withdraw yourselves even more than usual, and to practice a spiritual retreat in preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

St. Catherine of Siena, however, regarding this proposal says that the Cenacle into which we ought to withdraw is the cell of our own self-knowledge.

The saint speaks quite clearly. But, I would like to compare this Cenacle to a Castle, which is surrounded by all kinds of enemies who want to lay siege to it.

There is a main section which they have attacked, and there lay their siege the more strongly, as they see this as the weakest part and the least in a state of being able to be defended.

So it is with our souls. Within you there is one part where it is the easier for you to withdraw. To come to know this, let us make use of the experience that others have done in the past, and remembering those many times that we have allowed ourselves to be surprised.

In each one of the Sisters there will be the presumption of her own personal judgment, while in others the attack will be on their own wills and love of self. In still others, there may be a hidden passion, which at times appears under the appearance of a virtue. In still others, lastly, there will be more than one of these attitudes together, which is the cause of the failures that are committed.

In this struggle, we need to commit all our forces.

But, to continue this similitude, I will say to you that often in a square under siege, the weapons do not always strike the blow where they are the most wanted. The reason is, that the weapons act from a distance, but they are not either well aimed, or that they are launched with such vigor that they over-shoot the intended target, etc.

However, that means which is employed in battle with the greater success is that of cutting off the supply routes, and to make sure that all entrances are blockaded and nothing enters to supply the combatants. This tactic would lead those in the besieged square to surrender.

And this is what I desire that you, too, should do.

You may know very little how to manage these spiritual weapons, and you run the risk you, too, of not being able to strike a sure blow. You rather get yourselves all tangled up, more than anything else. Do not ever give in at all to that dominant passion and do not feed it, because otherwise it is strengthened ever more – and in place of your conquering it, it will win out over you.

Should the idea come to you that would prefer to enter into something that should not be done: mortify this judgment, by reducing it to silence, and do not allow it to run free. Even if it is a small thing, if allowed even some supplies, this will make it get stronger.

Should your will decide something, that wants to choose something rather than something else. Do not say anything: just deny it.

There may arise that desire to respond and to excuse yourselves when you have been corrected: just do not do it.

You will find out that in all your choices, if you follow the above course of action, there will be weakened that part where now you may choose to resist the spirit, and you will give place for this resistance of yours to dominate over you.

So, let this be your exercise for these ten days.

While I say ‘for these ten days’, so it should also be through the indefinite future. The reason is that if you will exercise yourselves precisely in these exercises as described above, the hope will come to bear that you will contract that good habit that will make you very attentive not to agree to anything for yourself that might damage your souls and render you all the weaker for the pursuit of virtue.

And having undertaken this effort, the Holy Spirit will place in you this good habit with His coming.

Even though we have spoken just above about the Apostles as rough and tumble in the way of the Lord, and at best, weak soldiers of Jesus Christ, we will meet them again as quite different after the coming of the Holy Spirit.

So, let us unite ourselves to them, and particularly to her who truly drew this Spirit upon all of them: Mary most holly,. Who somewhat earlier in the Cenacle, chose to be named last out of her great humility.

Let us pray to her that she might infuse into us this virtue, that enables us to discover those weak sectors of ourselves that we need to guard, and keep us humble in the recollection of the many times that we have not resisted.

Let us pray to her that she might obtain for us that fortitude for the future, etc. ...



## 51. In the Novena of Pentecost

This Novena, which is the oldest of all – as you know – as lived by Mary most holy and by the Apostles. This also asks of you who wish to imitate Christ more closely, to have the same concern to live it. This does not mean keeping the Novena practices because Mary and Jesus had lived them before you, but even more is it necessary for you to bring those dispositions they had when they lived this Novena.

These dispositions may be found described in all the books that you have in your hands, much better than I could ever tell you about them. However, the only dispositions that I would insist upon is that you ponder them in such a way that you would not be content just to meditate on them during the hour that you have for prayer, but that in doing this you might recollect on them in such a way that you might come to grasp the fruits of all this, with the practice of those same virtues as loved by Jesus and Mary.

At the end of that other Conference, I spoke of the courage that those who were once pusillanimous, now ought to practice. And since I do feel a particular compassion for them, there came into my mind the thought of a virtue of which I should speak, which is not pointed out in those books that you may have at your disposal, and which though do provide the foundation of that entire gathering in the Cenacle room: this is confidence, trust.

And in fact if there had not been that confidence in obtaining the Holy Spirit Who had been promised by Jesus, then either they would not have so gathered together, or if indeed they did anyway, there would have been lacking that which is the most necessary. Confidence is indeed a virtue that must please God – it is that of trusting in Him, not only as is done every day in praying the Act of Hope in eternal life, but even in receiving all the means necessary to arrive there, and the more in particular, these ...<sup>43</sup>



## 52. Conference delivered on the Feast of St. Michael, the Archangel – September 29<sup>th</sup> – On Humility

The Feast of St. Michael, the Archangel, in the very act in which we celebrate it, reminds us that what has raised him to this sublime grade, was that he took the place of the fallen Lucifer.

---

<sup>43</sup> The Conference 51 comes to an abrupt end right here.

When the latter was cast down due to his pride, and St. Michael was raised up for his humility, it is with this that he conquered the perverse angel.

All the evils, therefore, have come into this world through pride.

It is for this that the angel fell from heaven, and the reason why humanity lost its innocence, and was reduced to that state in which we now find ourselves, full of miseries and evils. It was pride that led the greatest attack against us, and brought with it that ease of sinning.

And let us say, vice versa, that all the goods that have come into this world are due to humility.

And we see it in the Mystery of the Incarnation where a God totally lowered Himself, and Mary most holy, who for this mystery was chosen, totally humble and was so through her very being quite orientated toward this effect. If indeed there had been another woman more humble than she was, that creature would have been chosen to be the Mother of God.

From all this we can readily deduce how much God must love this virtue, and how much He must hate pride, and all self-love.

St. Ignatius was sent by Mary most holy to St. Magdalene de' Pazzi in order to instruct her on this virtue. And she said to him that he would have to suggest it to those religious women, as it is much like oil for the lamp. And just as oil fills the entire receptacle, so humility should like-wise fill the entire religious woman.

This virtue is of supreme necessity for us. It is in vain that we would yearn for the practice of others virtues, if this one is missing. It would be very similar to a palace in which there would be jewels and precious artifacts, but there would be missing the door in order to close them in and to guard them. For then, only naturally would one run the danger of all being stolen.

It is the same for a soul who does not have humility in order to protect it.

Just notice, then, how necessary is the acquisition of this virtue.

Remind yourselves: whatever one really is, so does she stand before God, and she is nothing more than this.

Ponder well over these words, meditating attentively upon them. And when there comes the desire to wish to rise above your present situation, or to applaud yourselves for some task that seems to you to have been well done, repeat these words on humility to yourselves.

And consider the greatness and the purity of the One Who judges this entire matter, and then you will begin to notice how many imperfections that you still have, which so far you have not recognized, because you are not delicate enough of conscience and incapable of distinguishing them.

For the rest that remains, then, if human beings [still short-sighted in their vision] should come to judge all these matters as you do, and if they should applaud your actual conduct: of what good would this be to you?

You are just that as God sees you: and nothing more.

Therefore, all the above is useless, and all else is as nothing.

If you had fixed this carefully before your eyes, you would be more observant of the Community Rules, in order for such careful observance of yours to be rewarded by God - and not for any other motive is this to be repeated before Him: and this is the subjection to your present superior.

But, if as I say, you had kept all this in view, you would have no need of my enjoinder, because you would carry out all for God, because it is He Who sees you, and is the true Evaluator of whatever you do.

However, because self-love dominates you and conquers, and it is in accord with these principles that you regulate your external activity. And therefore, you are as nothing, because before God we are as nothing.



### **53. Nine Principal Virtues of St. Francis of Assisi [Feast Day – October 4<sup>th</sup>]**

**Through the Means of which he merited to obtain such Outstanding Graces  
from the Lord.**

1. The first virtue, then, was great contrition, confession and satisfactions for his sins, and the care for the future to guard himself against them.

2. His affection for his neighbors suffering misery, and his compassion for them in deeds, in words and in his interior affection for them. He considered each and every one of them as more than himself, basing himself on this argument since he had offended the Almighty Creator – He Who so loved us that solely out of love for us He wanted to take on human flesh. For this reason Francis made himself a participant in creaturely life, since He willingly obeyed all – not only his superiors, but all creatures in so far as this was possible and licit for him to do so.

3. The separation of his heart from all earthly and transitory realities, nor did he clutch to hang on to them and be united with them, except where Christ had him do so, and only then did he will to do so.

As a result, he exercised himself in this matter in such a way that for him it was so easy to separate himself from these earthly goods, and to keep his spirit orientated toward god, that it seemed that his flesh had one and the same will as his spirit.

4. His incredible patience and suffering in all his travails and in all the injuries that he suffered, pushing himself to love even those who injured him. He mortified so his own senses, and in everything he held on to the hand of the Lord.

And since he was convinced that all the good that came to him from the divine liberality, he thus believed that the evil he suffered was because of his own sins, and that God wanted to settle these debts in this life rather than in the one to come.

5. Love for the good, and deep compassion for the wicked, he always considered himself to be less than they. The reasoning that he proclaimed for this was the end was not yet in view, and so the good could always worsen, and the evil could always improve.

And whenever he heard evil spoken of another, he either excused the person, or that he showed himself unhappy with the conversation. And so he would keep silent about it altogether, or he would change the conversation and its content.

6. He himself loved to be corrected and he rendered profuse thanks when he was.

And he faced evil most willingly in that he thought all was a challenge to act in the most zealous manner of a living love for God. He was most ardent for the salvation of his neighbor and for the observance of the Community Rule – and for this reason, he resigned his generalate.

7. He served all with a pure heart and a most sincere will. Nor did he ever conduct himself to be served by them, but only in a situation of extreme necessity.

8. He worked very hard at retaining in his memory the benefits God had showered upon him, and those that His Divine Majesty had bestowed on him. Along with this, he treasured that universal benefit, bestowed on all creatures, and he rendered thanks always for himself and for the gifts others had received.

And in the end, he would excuse himself, when descending to pondering on his own self - knowledge, and then would ascend to that knowledge of God, and actually considered himself unworthy of still thanking Him for it all.

9. The final virtue was his custody of his tongue, which is the complement of every good, since it was to him the real gate of both life and death, according to the views of his time. The reason for this, of course, was that the lack of custody of the tongue, all goodness would be lost.

As a result he was always vigilant that all of his words would resound with the virtues of humility, poverty, chastity, goodness, benediction and praise, both of God and of his neighbor.

And so it was that he merited to be likewise blessed by God as well as by human beings, forever and ever.<sup>44</sup>



#### 54. Prayer. St. Francis

St. Francis took much care that his own Brothers in their prayer, in their divine offices, in their corporal activities, would all retain within themselves spiritual joy, as an antidote against that poison of sloth and melancholy and as a sign that they were all the dwelling of Christ.

Singularly, He loved this peace and joy of spirit that was his, and he stated that the joy of spirit was contrary to every sort of deception and temptations of the enemy, saying:

- If the servant of God should become fatigued in conserving within and exteriorly that joy which springs from its own font from the clarity of soul that flows from the virtue of prayer, his enemies would simply be unable to harm him because they would admit: If while undergoing tribulations and fatigue this person remains joyful, what obstacle or manner might we make use of to have him do some evil?

When the devil sees the servant of God unarmed with this spiritual power of joy, he then begins to hope of interrupting in him his joy of prayer and in every sort of his other activities. The evil one would have in mind particularly the joyful purity of one's soul, as the devil knows quite well what type of temptations and which artifices might be employed to damage and to steal that peace of mind and good will that reside in the servant of God.

---

<sup>44</sup> Left in Latin: *in saecula saeculorum*.

But only in a very limited power would the accursed beast act if the soul chose to be diligent in discharging from herself that sadness with the virtue of prayerfulness. This, as it has a most sweet odor, has the power of thrusting away from herself this fierce serpent. [cf. Tb 6:19].

On the contrary, when one's heart is sad and mournful, it is then that her enemy is in jubilee and joy. In such an instance the serpent very easily can fog in one's mind, through sadness or desperation or convert her to giving in as booty to worldly pleasures.

Throughout his life, this saint poured himself out in conserving joyfulness of heart. This is a kind of oil of spiritual unction with which the Holy Spirit anoints those whom He sanctifies, and with this He comes mightily to remedy that very dangerous malady of sloth and repugnance for spiritual blessings.

The saint of whom we speak sought with such diligence to remove such spiritual opposition that when he would experience this germinating within himself immediately had recourse to prayer as to the most sure remedy.

The saint counseled his Brothers to the same reaction, telling them that whenever they were disturbed, they should bow down before God, praying:

*'Grant to me, O Lord, the joy of Your salvation!'* [cf. Ps 50:4]. Grant to me, o Lord, that grace that you have presented to my soul. Give it that joy and spiritual taste which it experienced in your Grace and in Your service. And in this, sustain me, so that I might not perish.

And persevere in this practice until that moment that you will be mercifully heard, and there return to you that initial joy in your life.

Should your souls allow themselves to be transported by sadness of spirit, that will increase in you that Babylonian confusion, which wrenches the heart and fills it with sadness, if it is not bathed in tears.

- And you know, the Saint continues, that such joy that derives from a pure conscience, and from union with God through prayer, is one of the principal gifts can ever be received, and once it has been received, it must be conserved.

Commit yourselves to it all, in order to obtain this grace. I have come to love it in my own life and I desire this so much for you. Such joy within and exteriorly, is for the glory of God and for the greater shame of our enemy. When a Sister is alone with those unwilling to follow Him does he ever have any reason to give way to melancholy.

And so, all the more should we rejoice in our encounters with the Lord.

The Saint declared once what was the authentic joy of the servants of God, teaching:

- 'That religious can be called 'blessed' when she knows of no other joy than that in the works and words of charity, and with the example and the written word of those who inspire men and women to love, to praise and honor God.

And so, through spiritual joy the Saint intended the fervor, the thought, and the disposition and enjoyment of the will, of one's body, all of which becomes disposed to do joyfully every good.

From such fervor and joy many times human beings are edified not so much for the works they see being accomplished, when, no matter how good these may be, it seems that these are done with little desire to do so. These attitudes would be an indication of spiritual sloth and disturbance in the will, a real laziness in the body, in the carrying out of good.

And so it is that such deeds do not edify, but rather tear down.



## **55. St. Francis: Obedience**

St. Francis raised his followers in the virtue of obedience and in the abnegation of their own wills, with presenting them the example of God Himself. Just as soon as He had created humanity, He obliged them by the precept of obedience, forbidding them to partake of the apple of the knowledge of good and evil. While he did not eat of this he did not sin, but as soon as he left obedience he condemned himself and us at the same time.

That religious, then, who from this Tree of Knowledge, appropriated something for herself, guided by her own will which she had already sacrificed through her vow of obedience, and then gave in to pride over those goods that God had bestowed on her, she thus took up living without the yoke of obedience to her superior. This would show that she consents readily to those false exhortations from the devil. Since he had already made of her a transgressor of her vow, in order to partake of the forbidden fruit of her own will: and so she remains condemned, and really expelled from the garden of the religious state.

The Lord had already pointed out in the Gospel that whoever would want to save her soul, will lose it [cf. Mt 10:39]. And that religious wanted to save her soul in this manner, that she wished to carry out her own will, intending here by the word

‘soul’, her own free will. The subject is called to deny this to such an extent that whenever she might act in a better manner and one of greater profit for her own soul, by taking on something over all that her superior might command her to do, nonetheless still needs to sacrifice her will to God, and to do whatever it is that the superior should ask of her.

Therefore, the Saint had taught that as soon as the first word of the superior had been heard, it is necessary to follow it, without ever waiting any further comment. The Sister should never excuse herself even when what has been commanded, or that which she is already obliged to do, might seem to her to be impossible.

The reason is that whatever it is that has been commanded, to whatever extent it might seem to be above our strength, obedience in itself is so potent that it brings forward the strength to accomplish it.

He provided the example of real obedience, a dead body.

- He said: ‘consider a life-less body and place it wherever you may choose. It does not contradict you, nor offer you any resistance. If you move it to another place, it does not complain. If you make it sit down, it does not lament. If you leave it alone, it remains undisturbed – if you place it on a bench, it no longer looks upward or downward – and even if you dress it in purple, it still gradually becomes more pale.

The conduct of a genuine and authentic obedient person, is that of one who does not make judgments why she might be moved from one place to another. And if there is given to this person something to accomplish, she does not forget the real sense of humility for her. Further, should she in any way be honored so much the less than she has been, does she consider herself to be worthy of this.

The saint used to say:

- ‘Among the many graces and gifts that His divine goodness has most benignly conceded to me, this has been one of them: I would obey in this way even a novice vested but an hour, should this person be assigned to be my Guardian – just as I would do for elderly religious, one that is very skilled and prudent.

This is because the humble religious ought not consider that her superior is not a human being, but rather the real superior is He Who out of love of all, is subject to each. So, the less one is worthy of honor, so much the more is the humility of an obedient religious pleasing to God.

□

## 56. St. Francis: Poverty

One day, the Friars asked St. Francis that he teach them what single virtue would make a person a greater friend of Jesus Christ.

To these he responded:

- 'My Brothers, it is poverty! My Brothers, Poverty, Poverty!

You surely know that this is the singular pathway toward perfection, the torso of humility, and upon which our Lord chose that there be begun the building of perfection, in saying: *If you wish to be perfect, go and sell what you have ...!* [cf. Mt 19:21].

This is because with poverty the greater impediments are already removed, that is, that affection and thinking of those temporal goods, accompanied by pride and vainglory of life, as these come to life from riches, much as the moth lives within the cloth.

The Lord also showed this most sublime height of poverty being the seat of every other virtue, when He said: *Whoever wishes to follow Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me...!* [cf. Mt 16:24].

The perfectly poor Sister not only ought to leave behind all love and desire for temporal goods, and even including one's own love of self, all of one's wisdom, and prudence and independent use of her will. All this is so since in this state there is no owner. Just enter in the most wondrous powers of the Lord and He offers Himself most benignly totally bereft Himself.

Another time, the Saint admonished his Brothers on this virtue by expo[sing to them its prerogatives with an abundance of tears. He stated to them that for these reasons, poverty is like the Queen of all the virtues, because in the King of Heaven and in the Queen, His Mother, these so notably are resplendent with Them.

'Poverty', he used to say, 'is the principal highway toward salvation, as that which is the mother and nurturer of humility and the root of every perfection. The fruit of this is such a great and marvelous benefit and help to all, even though this basic truth is hidden from the men and women of this world.

This, beyond any doubt, is the hidden treasure hidden in the field according to the gospel [cf. Mk 13:44], that each Sister in order to purchase it ought to sell whatever she has.

And whoever cannot give of her own possessions to the poor, at least with her spirit she ought to disdain riches and leave them aside. And each one needs to do violence to her own use of her will and to her own presumption. The reason for this is

that she has not yet perfectly renounced the world, which keeps her well stocked with her own resources regarding her own personal opinions and her use of her own will.



### **57. St. Francis: An Exhortation of the Saint on the Meditation of the Passion**

Remember always, says this Holy Father, the pathway of humility and the poverty of the Cross Jesus Christ, our Savior, has accompanied us along the way. Considering the fact that since for His Divine Majesty it was necessary through the means of this His Passion to enter into His glory [cf. Lk 24:26], how much more is this necessary for us to follow this path by it, such great sinners that we are.

If it is certain that every faithful Christian is obliged to do this, how much the more do we, we who make a profession of following the Cross. The Cross is what the Lord wills not only that we carry it, but that with our example we might lead others to engage in carrying their Cross, and by taking theirs up after us, we might follow with them our Guide along the Way of the Cross.

In addition to the good will of imitating the Passion of our Savior, there is a particular grace of the Holy Spirit, which He grants to the souls who truly love and serve God.

Since the soul that is the independent manager of her affairs, and a true friend to such persons who are, has no taste for it, and even is contrary to such a participation of the Lord. Indeed, while pretending to wish to gain greater profit by other means [these are really not safe pathways, but covered over precipices!]. Such a soul does this by fleeing the rancor of tribulations and the bitterness of the Cross of Christ, with other thoughts, that are merely natural and according to one's own will. Such a person maintains her heart immersed and blinded by one's own affections, affirming that in such freedom of her own life, she comes to serving God better. Such a soul takes no care of the infinite pleasures that the soul absorbed in this contemplation and compassion for her Lord receives interiorly. This is because no one can savor these experiences unless by means of suffering for Him.

But, the soul that is purged and deprived in everything of self-interests, allows the Holy Spirit to guide her and operate within her, as the greatest master of the singular doctrine that the Lord has left written in the books of His humility, patience and passion: these are the sure paths of Christian perfection.

As a result that soul which obtains from Him the greater purity, the more does she seek those transformations in those sufferings of hers, while considering all the other pathways as deadly highways. While it is necessary to consume such a bitter medicine to the human taste, it is most sweet in the fruit that it produces: bitter in tasting, but most sweet in operating.

Hence, by submitting one's taste to one's overall health, this proves how wonderful is this savoring of permanent life, to the extent that the Sister refutes the easier way, all of which passes and is deadly. Such a Sister proves that in no other means does she find her greater love than in His charitable Passion. And the more is she transformed in Jesus Crucified, the more is she transformed into God, sublime and glorious, because in God the humanity cannot be separated from the divinity. He Himself prayed for the grace of the Father, and says: *I wish that wherever I am, there mine will also be!* [cf. Jn 17:24].

And so it is that the Sister contemplates both states of her Lord so that she might never be divided from Him. Should she flee from His Passion, she would be divided from Him as according to the words of St. Paul: *...if we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him...!* [cf. Rm 8:17].

The Sister needs to consider, therefore, both the mortal and the immortal choice. One of these is that status of those who hasten after their Lord, while the other choice is that of those who have not yet won the victory garment.

As a result, the victory garment cannot be bestowed except to those who run [cf. 1 Co 9:24] after Him, and heaven is not granted except to those who bear their Cross: since it is not fitting to grant more to a servant than to the Lord, nor more to the disciple than to the Master. [cf/ 1 Co 9:24].

However, the Lord is noticed as communicating His grace to whomsoever follows Him in this way of the Cross, and on the contrary, He takes it away from those presumptuous persons who through other fleeting illusions maintain that they do want to be united to Him, and they never get beyond themselves. Therefore, in the end it is seen they are cast down.



## **58. St. Francis: Patience and Humility**

Even though it is not a fact that ought to be more displeasing to the authentic servant of God such as sin is, nonetheless he points out that through any sin whatsoever of one's neighbor, the servant of God, saved out of love, might be

disturbed with anger toward him, as such a person might treasure that fault in herself.

As a result any servant of God who is not bothered by such situations, it can really be maintained that such a person lives without genuine passion.

Nor in any other way can it be known regarding how much patience the genuine servant of God might have, as everything comes to her in her customary manner of responding. But, when the time and the occasion that she seeks to be satisfied, whereas the contrary happens, then there is known how much patience she does have.

Because she has only that patience which in similar unexpected occasions she shows that she does have, and no more.

St. Francis reasoned that those souls are truly pacifists, who in suffering out of love for Him in this world, they maintain peace within themselves, and they live as little sheep in the presence of the wolves. And yet also the Lord lives and dies in such persons.

Blessed is that person who is corrected and accused by others, and who supports that correction and accusation. On her own, such a Sister gives of herself and without making excuses, with some sense of shame she consents to these corrections and patiently confesses her faults. She makes satisfaction that she should out of a good spirit, and even of those matters in which she has committed no fault whatever. And [if she is a subject] she remains always under the yoke of discipline.



## 59. St. Francis: Poverty of Spirit

***Blessed are the poor in spirit, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

**[cf. Mt 5:3]**

There are many who in praying and in good deeds, practice great afflictions in their bodies, and they mortify them with abstinence. And then for some little comment that is said to them against their own use of their wills, or that something would be denied them, immediately they are offended and are disturbed.

Such as these are not poor in spirit, even though they may show this on the outside. The reason is because the genuine poor in spirit cancel out themselves and they love not only those who disturb them and speak against them, and even who strike them in this way harshly.

Blessed is that Friar who supports his neighbor in his weakness and fragility, and does so in that he would like in the very depths of his being, to be supported in like manner.



#### **60. St. Francis: Spiritual Caution and Consideration**

If you wish to taste the good, it is necessary that you separate yourselves from all sense experience.

If you wish to love properly, hold your own fallen self properly in hatred.

If you wish to live well, mortify yourself.

If you wish to be truly rich, make yourself poor.

If you live in delights, afflict your own flesh.

If you live sure of yourself, persevere always in fear.

If you wish to be raised up, humble yourself.

If you wish to be honored, disdain yourself, and honor whoever disdains you.

If you wish to have good, then put up with evil.

If you wish to be blessed, support curses directed your way.

Oh! How great is that wisdom of anyone who knows how to do all this. And since these are grand steps, they are not available for all.

If a person should live a thousand years, and would have nothing to do outside of herself, she would have plenty to do right within his own heart, and he would never be able to finish entirely that that would be necessary for him to do.

No one should wish to see, nor to hear anything, and to speak, of anything other than for her own spiritual advantage, nor she go forward in just any way.

That which one does not desire to know, simply will not be known.

Woe unto us! That those who possess the gifts of Our Lord Jesus Christ, often do not recognize them. And those who do not possess such gifts, should search for them. Human beings imagine God according to their own images: But God is simply that which He is.



## **61. Conference delivered on the Virtues, delivered on the Feast of St. Teresa [October 15]**

The Documents <sup>45</sup> of the Saints bear with them, or merit, a kind of confidence and trust among those who witnessed them, because it is known that these have spoken about them with their own experience in the spiritual life. And this is also true from their having been of the Church herself, which cannot be deceived, and has recognized these as Saints. And since we do not desire anything else, we can with every good reason be assured that we can arrive at their lofty state, if we practice the same that these others have done in their life-times.

If, therefore, as I say, this salutary effect brings about in us that which we know of the saints, and how much greater now for them to experience these attitudes which they have come to recognize in blessed eternity.

St. Teresa, whose Feast Day we celebrate tomorrow, enables me from heaven itself to offer a secure foundation for whatever I might be able to offer in this Conference.

All the saints have been persuaded that the virtues provide the highway to holiness. But, it does seem that St. Teresa, as she had many extraordinary experiences in her life-time, would not be content for her daughters with this simply general persuasion. She would rather assure them from heaven itself regarding this sublime truth, with saying that she would be most upset that her life would ever be interpreted by her Sisters only in a generic sort of way. This would happen out of the fear that her life would be applied to these Sisters only in an unchallenging way, while the only reality that she offered toward her possession of God for an eternity, was the committed practice of the virtues.

The virtues do seem comparable to a kind of economic exchange in use in eternity. And God, upon seeing how difficult these virtues are for human beings, and that if He might not know, after a manner of speaking, how to set Himself to this great enterprise, He sent Jesus Christ to this earth in order to teach them. Since He was not content merely in working out our redemption in a single instance of life, but lived for thirty-three years on earth among men and women, in order to provide us with the example, which was then imitated by the Saints.

As a result, the manner of exercising the virtues and all that a virtue demands of us, would lead us to holiness, is precisely that which was lived by Jesus Christ. He

---

<sup>45</sup> Testimonies

has exercised humility, with the loss of His reputation by being derided, etc. – along with patience, with the enormous fatigue He encountered in His sufferings.

And so it was with the other virtues, all of which were directed by charity, and that through His entire earthly sojourn, were resplendent in Him.

It was this same charity that led Him ultimately to die on a Cross for us. Therefore, this is the example for us: let us proceed to its practice.

The saints who imitated Jesus Christ in the exercise of the virtues, have practiced them according to the occasions that they had to do so. And as they kept ever ready their lamps of vigilance, directed by the love for God which imprinted on their souls that desire for virtue. In this way, they were immediately able distinguish what was genuinely virtuous. As their lives unfolded they exercised themselves in these, as the different situations came and went, so that by means of it all they were able to be pleasing to God.

If per chance they had ever been surprised, and if they ever failed in the living of these virtues, they looked upon the loss of this occasion as greater than anything else they could have experienced. Much like those engaged in commercial business, who seek to make up as soon as possible for these losses, and they do this, so that their business might not suffer that deficit for any length of time.

However, they could never make up for this damage if their own afflictions took their courage away from them and that they would become so fixated on what they had lost that they would not pay attention to making up for the harm suffered.

And this is what all of you should also do.

Set yourselves to the task with an inner spirit and fervor drawn from the very loss that you have experienced, and make up for this with an ever greater attention on yourselves. Do not lose even the slightest occasion of spiritual gain, and with a holy solicitude that your love toward God is to bestow on you. You will also be aided by the desire to fulfill all that is asked of you, and that is your sanctification.

Just remember, therefore, as I pointed out to you at the beginning, to earn that spiritual exchange that comes from your living the virtues, that unfortunately I sometimes see thrown away, in place of its being acquired.

I notice at times a certain propensity that you have of finding excuses for yourselves, and to eliminate even the most fleeting thought that might arise against you, and this proves that vice reigns in you, rather than virtue.

It would be that fear that you might communicate to the superior regarding whatever you have said or done, and then this makes you add the recommendation that nothing more be said about it, proves by the very fact alone that what you would like to say before her, you should not even say it when she is not present.

Even if through human weakness anything like this should happen to you, you ought to be happy that she has come to know if it, so that she might correct you, she might instruct you on that which you ought to say or do. In doing this, you will make it known that you have a real love for your own progress in good, for your own perfection: thus it is not so much your own person the center of your thoughts, and this is what suffers the most when there is self love. This is why, they would correct you, etc...



## 62. Letters of St. Francis Xavier

### Book I, Letter 15:

*Whoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose it, shall preserve it. [Lk 17:33].*

But believe me, too, o my most beloved Brothers, that even though the words of this sentence are presented in general and are easy to understand, nonetheless, when the moment comes, when some danger is met, and one is required to lose his life out of love for God, and to throw oneself into the midst of the risk of death, the above-mentioned principle, even though it is most clear in itself, it has the custom of becoming obscure. Then it can only come to be understood by those for whom God has deigned through His benignity to clarify it. Surely in those occasions it is clearly seen, not matter how weak and diminished human nature may be.

### Book 2, Letter 1:

There is nothing more sure and more distant from all error as would be the desire that others should command us, and to offer heart-felt obedience to whomsoever does command us. On the contrary, it is a slippery and dangerous business that of wanting to live motivated by one's own head alone, not taking into account the orders of our superiors. And so, no matter how it might seem when one separates himself from what another has ordered him to do, under the guise of

thinking he is doing something good, believe me, that nonetheless, in such a situation there is more evil done than good.

Letter 8:

This is one of those insidious arts of his [the devil] to show something far away from what is present as offering the best hopes of profiting in the service of God. This happens in the meantime by removing ourselves from the present moment, which we do accomplish handily, but to our own harm.

Letter 12:

There is nothing that could happen to me in life that could be to me more dear than spending one's life in the most terrible dangers, but all undertaken out of love for Jesus Christ and for the Christian religion. It is proper for the Christian to rejoice more in the Cross than in taking one's rest.

Book 3, Letter 4:

There is absolutely no fear at all in having to enter into combat here with the Japanese scientists. And what good can one ever come to know who in the recognition of God and of Christ His Son lives amidst so much darkness. And whoever does not look toward anything else than toward divine grace, the preaching of the Gospel and for the salvation of souls, do you think that such a person could either refuse, or be afraid of anything?

When we, too, have to live not only in a land of the un-civilized, but in the kingdom dominated by the demon – yet, with all this neither barbaric activities, nor diabolic wrath could ever wring from us even a single hair of our heads without the permission and the license of our Omnipotent Lord.

One reality only is that which brings fear to us and this is an offense against God.

And once we have shunned all such offenses, we have in hand with the divine favor, the victory over our adversaries.

Letter 5:

It has seemed to me that it is necessary to realize that thanks to God, and to experience a sublime wisdom over those great terrors which the devil, when the Lord has given him the permission to do so, is accustomed to come to bear on the timid and incautious souls: but I have also known what are the weapons needed to employ in the blunting of the hostile incursions.

The greatest of all remedies is the most certain, and is that of having a great and constant spirit against the devil, with diffidence and confidence in God alone. You do this by collocating in Him all your forces and hopes: and take care that you, under

the protection of such a Defender and Advocate, should never show fear or doubt about the eventual victory... Since the devil can indeed only bring some harm, in so far as God grants him the permission, it is more in such occasions that there should be feared the little trust that one has in the Lord, rather than in any artifice of the devil: with all this, it is God Who grants the permission to the devil to vex and travail those, who out of timidity of him, do not take courage and in Him place all their hope.

This plague of timidity brings it about that many among those who have given of themselves in the service of God, live a rather melancholic and anxious life because, in bearing the Cross and the sweet yoke of Christ, do not move ahead with fortitude and constancy.

The evil of such timidity does not finish here. With its plague it goes much further, so much so that when you trust in your own weakness, when in the situation of what matters the more, you would have need of greater strength and help from God, you are found lacking in spirit and your timidity brings it about that you do not make good use of the divine assistance. This invites you to hope well...



### **63. A Conference on the Feast of St. Francis Xavier**

This saint's thoughts were quite different when, finding himself in Paris, he was living with the intention of studying science and of making a career out of learning, and sought every means to appear as a great man according to this world. His thoughts were quite far removed from becoming that great Saint that he was, with his turning his back on those matters that at the time fed his ambitions, and which he then much esteemed. He did this by embracing the Cross of Jesus Christ.

What would he now have been if, listening solely to that which drew on his passion, particularly that of vain glory, had indeed allowed him to succeed as a great and wise man according to the standards of this world?

His glory, based only on the accademia, would be like a waft of smoke that would pass as he would have, and he never would have received those honors that have been rendered to him by the Church. Neither would he have received that eternal reward which he now enjoys, and for the possession of which he realized with much fatigue, it is true, and all after only a brief travail.

That which could indeed be able to bring about that change that was so sudden in St. Francis, and that which made him renounce the yearning and the desire for worldly glory, was his choice to listen, a hearing that he gave to grace

which spoke to his heart by means of those words which St. Ignatius addressed to him, who also found himself at that time in Paris.

These were indeed words of great power, and they struck his disposed and prepared spirit: *what profit is it for a man* [cf. Mt 16:26], *etc...* - what would the gain of the entire world if he then loses his own soul?

These are potent words that shook the holy man, and they were from then on so much present to him that all that from then on, he accomplished even to his last breath, all of these glories were all the effect of the words from Scripture.

He then became zealous for the outcome of his own soul. And from such zeal, learning evermore how to recognize the price of a human soul, he became in time also a zealous seeker as well for the souls of others.

In order to save and place his own soul in safety, he placed himself under the guidance of one whom God made use in order to convert him. Under this guidance, he truly committed himself to conquer himself, his own will, and all that could have been opposed not only to his eternal salvation, but also to his sanctification. The reason is because his guide proposed to him nothing other than this. And having this proposal fixed and firm within himself, he did not spare himself of anything.

And so it is that we see him so attentive in mortifying his ever natural motion. And in the process of conquering that natural repugnance that he had for anything disgusting, he once sucked the ulcer of a sick man in a hospital of Venice.

He once laid down in bed beside a man full of wounds who died a few moments later. With this force that he exerted on himself, he conquered this natural repugnance of his, that grace triumphed within him which was his energizer.

All these experiences, and so many others, the sufferings beyond number that he endured, all of them as I have already said were supported by him for his own soul, to which he was totally committed.

But let us now take a look at all that he did for the souls of his neighbors, without ever losing from view those words: *For what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world, ...etc.* [cf. Mt 1 26].

In fact, St. Francis did not labor to gain the souls of others out of his own genius, or to satisfy himself. He was rather so regulated by obedience, and observing

in this manner all that the Rule that he had embraced prescribed for him, that there would not occur in him that damage which unfortunately is frequent, that is, that in order to be concerned to save others, one neglects himself.

No, his own sanctification was always united to his travail for others, and far from receiving any harm from this, he was perfected ever more in the midst of these commitments of his.

In order to save souls, to proclaim the faith, and to make known the Reign of Jesus Christ, he found himself in the situation of having to accomplish very many activities, to adapt himself under a variety of circumstances, that resulted in being so unusual in those countries in which he found himself.

In fact, once seeing that even the genius of a nation all had some exterior appearance, and he would never withdraw from his own resolutions. He had that zeal which moved him to employ every means in order to achieve his purpose.

He had his companions dressed themselves as so many page boys, and presented himself as their prince, with all his courtesans he went to present himself at the Royal Court of a king, and so introduced himself so that he could preach and make known to them the true God, and how much He had suffered for those souls.

What would anyone else ever accomplish if he did not possess as Xavier did, that outlook so intent on saving souls? Another person might have offered some reflections. It might have seemed that he had to act in a given way to keep up certain appearances. In brief, another person with certain small ideas, restricted and covered over by a spiritual shadow, he might have neglected in doing such great good, in circumstances that were not often of his choosing or liking.

But just as Xavier did not fail to adapt himself in this occasion to the spirit of the country, making himself all for everyone, in order to win over all to Jesus Christ [cf. Ph 3: 8]. So, too, in another encounter as well, since he had to get himself to another locale of missionary endeavor, he hired himself on to a boat and served it in the quality as the cook of the Ambassador, who was a passenger on it.

In order to win over another man, full of vices, he recreated with him and so little by little, he won him over.

In brief, as he was very conscious of the maxim of St. Ignatius, that is: That it is necessary to enter the house in the manner familiar to its inhabitants, and then to

come out from this in accord with our own spiritual manner. He put this meticulously into practice and therefore never paid heed to that repugnance that he easily could have experienced.

But, after all you have seen, and not only after the little that I have said to you, but still from all that you know from the biography of the Saint, and of all that he accomplished in his apostolic life, let us continue on investigating that from which proceeded the abundant benediction that God bestowed upon his travails.

We could not find any better reason for this than that founded in the obedience of the Saint.

This is true, obedience, that perfect union of his spirit with that of St. Ignatius, is indeed that which gave such success to his activities.

In fact, the Scriptures say: *The obedient man shall sing of victory* [cf. Pr 21:28], and St. Francis with this, and from this, he was always gifted in his own efforts.

Let us pause here a bit to consider how many elements come to be joined in order to bring it about that working out of obedience is much more fruitful than whatever is achieved by one's own will, talent and inclination, even when these attitudes are holy.

That which leads the more to the loss of merit in every activity is that satisfaction that we always want to experience from the approval of others. This is especially so when another might not succeed in the enterprise, or from that project to which we commit ourselves totally to what we do.

Now, when we act out of obedience, this self-love does not seem to disturb us easily, or to rob us of our every gain, to impede us from garnering that fruit in the souls who are our responsibility. And this could not the more easily be realized because each success in our activities accomplished out of obedience, we can attribute to it, and not take the credit ourselves, as we are actually incapable of such actions, as when we are not regulated by such obedience.

What I am saying to you now has been proven by many examples in the Company of Jesus itself, into which we have seen enter many subjects who before, were very little capable in the works of the ministry. Yet, once they have been commanded and sent to a ministry to be carried out, they have drawn much fruit

from it all. And yet, when they set it aside, they are discovered again in their original inability.

From this you can deduce how valuable obedience is, which provides the capacity to carry out that which once seemed to us beyond our knowledge, or the capacity of how to accomplish it.

And finally, let us look at the very great obedience of St. Francis, that for anyone who would ever write his biography had no doubt of pointing this out. For example, whenever a letter might arrive from his holy Founder, in which he might include only one single letter of the alphabet, the Saint would surely have abandoned that great mission and that abundant harvest which he drew from his work in India, in order to come to Rome to make a report to his superior which he might have requested of him.

One could not add anything to this, because it is obedience which surpasses even the most powerful reasons that there may be, enabling this Saint to believe and to think on the foundation of the mission. So, if his Father Ignatius would have seen his missionary success accomplished among souls, certainly the Founder would have told him that he should remain there, while in Rome, it was certain that he could not have worked so efficaciously.

In brief, a thousand reasons might be brought up by this Saint, upon which to base himself with ever greater security. And these reasons of his are not those varied and immature reasons that we employ so many times in order to dispense ourselves from obeying with but minor motivation.

However, it was never thus for him, as I have said. St. Francis in his zeal, in his exhausting efforts for the salvation of souls, he never lost sight of his own soul, and its perfection according to that state of life he had embraced as a religious. He was firmly established on this principle: *What does it profit a man*: what would it serve a man<sup>46</sup> if he should gain the whole world? [cf. Mt 16:26].

□

---

<sup>46</sup> In Latin

#### **64. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception [December 8<sup>th</sup>]**

On this day, our occupation, our thoughts, our prayers, in a word: all our affections – are inclined toward and have as their object our gratitude toward the Most Holy Trinity, for the privilege granted to Mary most Holy in her Conception.

As devoted and genuine servants of Mary, let us seek to experience the greatness of her, in order to be able to give ever greater thanks and all that are all the more fervent, that will be accompanied by an ever greater sentiment of appreciation.

But, what is that that will make us achieve that for which we yearn regarding all this, if not to cast an eye and make a real reflection on that which sin truly is, in so far as it is an offense against God? And in penetrating the more what is it that is an offense to that God, we will come to achieve a more just idea of the greatness of the preservation that Mary enjoyed of never being subjected to sin, and not being even for an instant under its power.

And we will further come to know how pleasing we can be to Mary in rejoicing with her, and in rendering homage to God for this great benefit.

But let us not rest only in these thoughts.

Mary wants even something more from those devoted to her, above their simple offerings and prayer. She wants imitation, and that of any gifts whatever, her grace and privilege that we consider as hers – let these enflame us, and draw for us some useful consequence for ourselves, and fruitful for our eternal salvation.

What is it then that we can draw from this solemnity?

I have already hinted to you that thanks towards the most holy Trinity for the privilege conceded to Mary, and a just idea of what sin is as an offense against God. Now let us add further: the imitation of Mary in her precautions, in order to conserve in herself this first received grace, and an attentive cooperation to all those that she had following this one grace.

And so further, we who are Christians, have to thank God in a supreme manner, since with Baptism He has granted to us sanctifying grace. And how happy we will be if, with Mary, we have corresponded with all vigilance to what we find in her!

That sublime retreat on the mountain, that solitude in which God occupied her fully, that attention to all that could be pleasing to God, and to render he accepted in His eyes. All this in Mary were those precautions and virtues and these for us are a necessity.

She could not ever lose God, and she never found herself in those miseries of sin in which we are enveloped and subjected. However, she never neglected these means of preservation and antidotes against the enemies of our souls.

How much more must we make use of these and seek them out!



#### **65. Conferences delivered during the Christmas Novena: Regarding Recollection**

Since I have already discussed the means of needing to re-vest ourselves in Jesus Christ, according to what St. Paul says [cf. Rm 13:14], we cannot find a better rule in order to do this than that which Mary most holy truly is. Hers, therefore, was the heart the most similar to that of Jesus, and she will teach us how we are to vest ourselves in all the virtues according to her spirit.

Let us look today at that recollection in which Mary remained absorbed, in the closeness of her delivery. This recollection proceeded from her being indeed free from every other thought that would not be directed toward God. She was entirely intent on the Divine Mystery.

And just what do we need to do in order to imitate this recollection of hers?

That of segregating ourselves from every other thought that is not of God. Further, we are to accomplish this according to the spirit of our religious Congregation. This has to be our Rule of Life in the exercise of virtue.

Do you really know what this spirit demands of us?

It requires that we come to know how unite an open spirit, an exterior frankness that nothing ever impede our recollection. Rather, there is a much greater need that we have due to the different occupations to which we are to be assigned.

It may perhaps seem to you that these exterior occupations are incompatible with perfect recollection.

No, since if God directs us to those, if only for the reason of pleasing Him, to fulfill in you His holy will- then do these – since in the last analysis, these are regulated by the necessity of the state of life embraced by you and in accord with obedience. You will find in these convictions that far from impeding recollection, these will facilitate you in it.

The reason for this is that you will never be without God in these efforts, for God will also be with you, and you will be able to find Him all the more easily in your prayer.

Do you know what Catherine of Siena said to a superior who was complaining that she had to wait for many circumstances, in that the greater part of these were temporal [as she put it].

The Saint responded to her that these occupations of which she spoke were so bound by time in that she had rendered them such.

See that we are the ones who establish and give the quality to what we do, when we do not accomplish for God those occupations that our religious state in life demands of us, our own duty, and that we can spiritualize everything by directing it towards this ultimate End.

Let us come to the practical matters which I offer to you now.

You find yourselves now in the midst of a different community, and for your part and there are many of you who complain that you have lost that recollection that you seemed to have in Padua.

And so, what does that spirit which you ought to have say to you?

It says that you ought to offer service to what is most fitting, to charity. Do not show yourselves to be too shy, but, rather make virtue in you something to be loved, by showing that joyfulness that you ought to have in your service of God.

If you do all this, do it for this purpose, this is how you should do your duty, and I assure you that you can very well have that recollection that you complain that you do not find here, where there is greater distraction.

However, the defect is yours. You are as for example, when there is an occasion that is not opposed to your choices, as having to converse with a neighbor, but you would rather take care of some other temporal matter, and this is what prejudices your recollection.

Do you know why? Because you do not fall into those distractions with these sentiments which have just been explained to you. If you should encounter someone, you do not act on that which is fitting and which is in accord with the authentic spirit. But, you throw yourself whole-heartedly, into that conversation, and take some pleasure in that distraction, you take part in the conversations that they have, so that all might get a good impression of you on the human level, as when they say that you really know how to live and that you have a good personality.

When they engage in conversations among themselves, rather than seeking to change their subject matter, you enter in and take part in the conversations, you choose to content your own curiosity of doing the most recent news regarding others, etc.

This, then, brings you distraction, diversion of spirit. And this does not surprise me, because human respect, curiosity is that which has directed you into the communications that you have had with your neighbor, and not for any holy purpose. And virtue has not been your over-riding rule in that activity, etc.



## **66. Regarding Genuine Wisdom and the Lord's Light [December 16<sup>th</sup>]**

The Church for these days has established certain Antiphons which are called the "Major Antiphons". These are directed to invoke the Coming of the Lord under different titles. And therefore, to each one there precedes the exclamation: "O", which, as you know, has a meaning of aspiration.

The one that begins invoking Him as Wisdom, provides for me today the subject matter of the Conference. This invocation commits you to invoke often this Wisdom, bringing yourselves to understand the great need we all have of it, in order to direct ourselves on the path to salvation.

Genuine wisdom consists in knowing that which is the most expedient for salvation, and what can the more securely can conduct us to its acquisition.

One huge mistake into which we fall in this way is that of confusing the means for the end, and the end for the means. And what turns all these upside down comes from the lack of Light and of genuine Wisdom.

All that you do, all the spiritual exercises, are simply means to conduct you toward the genuine end. But if you attach yourselves to these means rather than to the end to which they lead, you err.

So, why is it that you come to make this upheaval, as you should be attaching yourselves to the ultimate End, which God is. And all that leads you to find Him, is not that true?

I will explain myself by an example.

Every day you have mental prayer to make. But, the superior might say to you: Today, do not do it. And in its place, she might give you some other occupation.

If you resist and experience some repugnance in obeying, this is proof that you are attached to the means rather than to the end. This is because prayer is the means that is granted to you in order to learn the acquisition of virtue, and of those virtues in particular of your religious state in life. If, therefore, you have this to practice, you already have the end – and this would be nothing more than the means that you were about to offer.

If one of you had to go to Padua, you would take the gondola which is the means to get there. But if, then, having arrived at Fusina, the gondola would go away and it might be said to you: 'And why do you still think of the gondola, now that you are already in Fusina, and no longer have any need of it?'

And so, I say, when you practice virtue, why do you hang on to the gondola which you needed to get to a given point, if you have no need of it?

So, look toward your purpose, and not to the means that you needed to reach it.

But this all happens through a lack of that genuine light and authentic wisdom, which indeed proceeds from the Most High, and is separated from us by our self-love, which sometimes believes that these insignificant attachments are good and holy, while at sometime one has to see their full weakness.

On this very matter, also St. Catherine of Siena says that she saw individuals strive to establish their holiness on penance alone. Such persons endured great fasts, disciplines, chains, etc. But if perchance they would be moderated in their use of such practices, they would be immediately disturbed and disquieted. A reaction of this type let it be understood that in them there was a real absence of this genuine wisdom, and led to suspicions regarding their religious spirit that was truly lacking in those qualities that would lead one to believe that theirs was an authentic spirit of God.

The entire defect of such persons, from what does it proceed? It comes from their confusing the means, and their being more attached to these practices rather than to something else, and to that which God really wills: that is, the genuine mortification of ourselves and submission of our own judgment. In a few words, it is necessary to tend toward God Himself and not to the means than can be used to reach Him. That which I have said to you regarding prayer, you can apply to every other means that you have at your disposal to reach him. And ask God for this genuine wisdom, so necessary in order not to deceive yourselves.

I know that you have obedience, and with that you will tell me that I have advised you that this will never deceive you. But of what use is it if this obedience needs to be practiced while avoiding those little attachments, and those side devotions, while you offer it with internal grumbling?

No. Learn to attach yourselves to the authentic purpose of your being which is God Himself, and thus you will never err.

Invoke the Infant Jesus that He might come into your hearts, and that He might establish within you that genuine wisdom, which will make you more prudent along your way to salvation.



## 67. Regarding Simplicity December 17<sup>th</sup>

In the Infant Jesus there wondrously shine out those virtues about which I want to speak to you this evening, and what is even more beautiful that I would like to be able to explain this to you in such a manner that you might have greater love and apply its acquisition to yourselves.

This is the beautiful virtue of simplicity. This is not an insignificant matter: unfortunately there is the blunder of taking one attitude for another. But, there is an enormous difference. Genuine simplicity is full of judgment, of discernment, that is, of that which one tends to one single goal, which is God, in all one's activity.

What does the word "simple" really mean?

Each and every one will agree on what the words 'only, sole', "without mixture" mean.

A simple reality does not have composition. And so I place this virtue on the same level as purity of intention in activity.

A simple soul tends directly toward God, without any other goal in mind, without any other thought, without allowing oneself to become disturbed by other matters. But one simply acts, simply thinks, simply speaks.

And because one is simple she is pleasing to God in her activity, her thinking, her speaking, as Sacred Scripture puts it: *The Lord's communication is with the simple* [cf. Pr 3: 32]. The Lord delights in the simple, He communicates and reasons with the simple; while on the other hand, he resists the proud. [cf. Jas 4:6].

How much should your committed effort be in order to acquire this virtue that is so pleasing to God, and which is so useful for you and is such an advantage!

Examine then, how complicated are your actions, with purposes in mind that are not right, which find their source in one's own self love, in that love of yourselves.

Just notice here in these cases often the purpose is a good one, but it is so full of so many other elements mixed in, and how many other considerations do you add to it.

Concerning this, I will tell you what St. Francis de Sales has said about it.

The Saint says that prayer will succeed that you encounter God while you are on your way to choir. You might ask yourselves:

- Where are you going?
- To choir.
- And to do what?
- To praise God.
- But why at this hour?

Because the bell has sounded and if I do not go, the others will notice my absence.

Do you notice here, the Saint points out, that the purpose and the motive are really good, but there is all mixed in with it that which does merit the name 'simplicity'. The reason is because there is mixed in here the worry about human respect, servile fear.

I will say the same to you in order to bring you to a deeper self-knowledge.

- Why do you observe this rule?

If you are able to respond that it is for God that you observe it, and not because the superior will make a correction about this when you are missing, then the action is simple. But if it were done for this other motive, then it would cease to be simple.

Thus you should respond at times by being silent. As you may show yourselves meek when there is the superior, and let go of all your ill will only when she is not present.

There is no simplicity in this; this is not unadulterated virtue. And if you do act in this way, then the merit should go to the superior who is present, but it is not yours.

As I say, the greater part of your actions could be reduced, to nothing; this is because your efforts are not pure gold, but they are full of admixtures, dilutions. Therefore, such work does not serve any longer as strong currency.

You know well what virtue is - virtue is like the negotiable currency with which heaven is purchased. However, because of the lack of simplicity, you altar this currency so much that it will hardly be recognizable. And through the defect of simplicity you will find yourselves at the gates of heaven without any unalloyed currency in your hand. The reason is because what you bring is either totally, or a large part of it, an altered currency, which will not have that intrinsic value that it shows every appearance of being.

In the final analysis, this simplicity is still lacking to you when you find yourself in a situation of having to offer some act of obedience.

That thinking over of what you are doing, that analyzing of what has been asked of you in obedience, weakens your obedience, because it is not simple, and it is not that pure gold as it ought to be.

That rationalizing over what the Rule asks of you, that trend of thought which makes known the more the defects of your companion to the superior. This is often in place of going to the individual and manifesting the wrong in all simplicity. Just stop and reflect to yourself: It may be that my companion would not have had that bad intention in perpetrating this action: and who knows how much the superior will call her to task, etc.

All of this indicates a lack of simplicity.

A simple soul, who goes straight to God simply does her duty without so many inopportune reflections. She does not judge her companion's real intention; it is not up to her to think that the superior should find fault with her, especially when her activity is good in itself, etc.

In brief, let each fulfill the Rule without paying attention to others; without making reflections on their possible motivation, and let her think of them only out of love for the regular observance, that she knows is her duty.



## **68. External Mortification December 18<sup>th</sup>**

Mortification was practiced by Jesus to the supreme level, and in a special manner, during the mystery of His Holy Infancy, as you already know well and perhaps will have often reflected, while totally concentrating on the Christmas Crib, making it better appreciated.

Very often I have spoken to you about internal mortification. Today I intend to address external mortification: which is that of the senses, which serves as portals to the soul. If these are not well guarded and instructed by mortification, they will ruin us.

The senses are like the walls of a city. If these are weak, they expose the city to danger. Such are the senses with regard to the soul.

When I began to say that I wanted to speak to you regarding external mortification, some of you might have thought that I was about to suggest to you the discipline, the use of chains, fasting, and that [against that which you have always heard me repeating, that while these are good practices, but they do not help at all if you do not have within the spirit of mortification] - I would make to you a contrary reflection.

No, this is not my intention. Rather the thought presses upon me that you are already better instructed regarding the external, and you would not fall into any illusion in this regard.

Do you know then which form of mortification has been preferred by the saints? It is not that that voluntary mortification chosen from your own religious spirit. Rather it is those mortifications for which the occasions in which you presently live provide many opportunities. In this situation, many would have thought that the other form of mortifications, rather than those supplied in those situations where God was asking from them some sacrifices, and they would have hesitated, and they would not wanted really to accept them, etc.

Their principal mortification was then, in a word, that of practicing virtue of necessity.

How noble of them! Let us admire for a moment the great goodness and infinite mercy of God. He does not pay much heed when we find ourselves forced and having to adapt to the circumstances as they unfold, and where we have to subject ourselves to them out of necessity.

No it is not this. This sense of necessity does draw our attention when we know how to adapt ourselves to submit ourselves, to offer it all up to Him. In a word, when we respond through the practice of virtue.

And this is the mortification which to Him is the most pleasing, because it is that which is the more in conformity to His most holy will.

Let this kind then be your favorite, and exercised exactly by you.

Pay attention not to lose anything of those immense goods and those that you are able to offering during the day. Strive to be silent at times, holding back that word which might seem so important to you, which it really is not.

Practice that virtue of necessity then, when the Lord sends you illness, by supporting not only its discomfort, but also all that which because of this, you have to undergo: as all the annoying treatments.

Let your external mortifications be those of supporting the discomfort of journeys, of finding yourselves in situations when you do not have those comforts, and when you find at times, places that are dirty and which are most troubling to you.

In such cases, let this, then, be your discipline, in place of that little chain that you would like to wear, but which the Lord at this instant may not want of you. But only accept that which He then sends you, well suffered, with resignation, and union with His divine will.

In brief, may your fasts be the mortification of the tongue, which does such evil and brings harm to ourselves and to our neighbor.

Make a fast of your senses, mortifying your curiosity of your eyes, that would like to see everything; and your ears, that would like to hear and come to know all, even those matters that might bring in their wake so much harm to your soul, by occupying you and distracting you in prayer and in your duties, and fill your heads with so much emptiness and vanity.

In brief, mortify your every sense, and make of virtue a necessity, and you will see at the end of the day just how much gain you have made.

But for this type of mortification there is needed much vigilance and attention; otherwise, it just will not happen, and all these gains will resolve in so many losses.



## **69. Three Christmas Meditations**

### **Second Meditation**

For what reason and for whom was Christ born?

He Who is born is Jesus, the King of Heaven and Earth.

The humiliation of God steals our hearts. And since He is the sovereign Master, he has made Himself subject to us.

The sovereign's Son who has gone to live in another state, is never really considered as a subject. But, He is always considered what He is according to His birth. Jesus Christ, is the King and Sovereign of the world; He is considered to be the son of Joseph, a poor carpenter. He is also the son of Mary, who was the daughter of Anna and Joachim.

What could ever be said of a sovereign who would send his pregnant consort to give birth in a prison, and who would want his son to live among these evil people?

The Most Wise Jesus has hidden His wisdom. He Who is omnipotent, has hidden His omnipotence.

Each one can say: God is born for me; and He was born to die for me! And you, my soul, for whom do you live? For the devil?

Oh unhappy one, who lives according to the flesh, and is attached to the realities of this prison In which we live!

How beautiful it is, on the contrary, to lift up your spirit, to live and acquire a taste for the realities of God, to do all in order to please Him alone!

This is the authentic freedom of spirit.

Jesus Christ has come from heaven into this prison, where we were imprisoned in punishment for the sin of Adam.

When a convict finds himself happy in prison, he who is liberated from his restraints, which no longer keep him chained to a column, or to a stone, and is one who can hardly move about freely in the room where he is locked up.

This is the freedom that Jesus Christ has procured for all.

How happy and fortunate we are to have been called to the state of religious life, in which we become similar to Jesus Christ, Who was born to pour Himself out into exhaustion for human beings, in order to serve them!

So we are destined to pour ourselves out and also to serve others. And how much happier could we be if we could only die as Jesus did!

Each one of us could think as follows:

Oh, if only I could be in that happy time, so that I could have lived together with Jesus!

You already have this good fortune. Jesus Christ remains in the Host, awaiting you to instruct you. In a little while He will truly come down on this altar.

Let us unfold to Him all our desires. Let us make an oblation of our entire selves. And we pray that this day might be employed in offering ourselves to Him and to love Him.



## **70. The Third Meditation**

The Birth of Jesus is a mystery which merits being minutely considered by us.

Therefore on this day we will meditate on how Jesus was born.

It is known that God sent an angel to earth to Tobias [cf. Tb 5:6], in order to serve as his guide. He also sent one to the most holy Virgin [cf. Lk 1:26] in order to announce to her the mystery of the Incarnation. But neither of these angels needed to assume human flesh, and yet they appeared under the form of an already grown man.

There was also the appearance to the Prince of the Apostles, of which the Church celebrates the Feast [cf. Ac 12:7].

It is the Son of God, the Sovereign of Heaven and of Earth, who chose to spend nine months in the womb of Mary, and then born as a baby.

And even though He is uncreated Wisdom, never even a whisper did He exhale to make Himself known for that which He was, or for the exaltation His humanity, restricted in an obscure prison.

What mourning there would have been in heaven when the Son of God, the unique object of the Father's special pleasure, left heaven in order to come on earth.

And for what did He come to do? He came to suffer and die for human beings.

If here on earth, our friends leave us in death, anyone separated from them, feels such grief, all the more so when one comes to know that have gone to death, what then would have been the reaction in heaven?

But what kind of courtesans, O Lord, would You give in order to accompany Him. What would it have been? There are not lacking those among you who could have served among His courtesans!

Certainly none of the above! He had to come solely to become incarnate in the womb of Mary. O what a marvel this is!

God wanted to subject Him to do exactly the same as other babies, to pass nine months in Mary's womb!

Ah, Jesus hasten the moment of Your birth, None months are too long. Five or six are enough!

O Lord, You have chosen to be born in the midst of the filth of human flesh. But since You have willed to do this, how much more would You have suffered if You had been the Son of some woman, other than Mary!

In someone else, You would not have found the faith as it was in Mary, that purity, that love, those adorations!

Ah let us contemplate Jesus, enclosed in the womb of Mary! Let us beg her that she give us her sentiments; let us imitate St. Joseph, who in the presence of his holy spouse was fully enflamed with love – thinking that in her virginal womb dwelt the authentic Son of God.

And now permit me a reflection. But, cover your faces; lower your eyes, weep, weep...

How many times has not Jesus come into our hearts, in the Sacrament, and in doing this, He only received our disgust, displeasure...

And you, souls who desire to receive Him every day, what is your fervor when you think of Him? Have you continued this fervor always, as at the beginning? What are your affections? ...

This leads us to go back to what I was saying a little earlier: what if Jesus had been born of another woman than Mary, He would have suffered much more.

Renew your fervor, and seek at least today to make a good Communion.

Jesus is in the Tabernacle as He was in the womb of Mary.

Jesus allows Himself to be carried everywhere at will.

He not only obeys Mary, His Mother, but also St. Joseph, his putative Father. The Lord of heaven and earth obeys His own creature. He obeys also the Sovereigns on the earth, who are nothing in comparison to Him.

Mary, while carrying Him in her womb, made the trip to Bethlehem, in this state where every step was a suffering, where every movement was a danger.

She made this journey: but as for Joseph, why did he ever make Mary undertake this trip? She is near her time to give birth: could he have not gone on alone? Go, to respond to Caesar: and you expose your spouse who is near her time of giving birth... respond to us: why?

I already hear the answer: *Christ became obedient for us even unto death.* [cf. Ph 2:8].

And here an entire array of reflections present themselves to me.

I recognize that obedience is that means of having union with God through the means of renouncing His own will, and of submitting entirely His own judgment out of His love.

It is this that truly unites the soul with God.

I would have yet many more reflections to make on that which passed onward and after the birth of Jesus, but our time has already passed.

Now you are going to receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, so renew your fervor. Prepare yourselves with those sentiments which St. Joseph had when with a living faith he adored Jesus who was in the womb of Mary.

The faith teaches you that Jesus is in the Ciborium as He once was in the womb of Mary. And after Communion unite yourselves to those sentiments that Mary had and the affections that she formed.



### **71. 4<sup>th</sup> Meditation** **Continuation of the Third**

2<sup>nd</sup> Point.

Where, just where, my soul, have we left our Jesus?

Let us return to Bethlehem where Mary, carrying Jesus in her womb, went to obey, per order of Caesar.

Look at her, my soul, as she seeks lodging. But she was not able to find any hotel in which to find rest.

How is it that the King of kings, the Monarch of the universe, has no place in which to be born? Could you not, o Lord, in creating the world, build a palace, a house for Your own divine Son?

No. Mary is constrained to go into a steal, and there give birth to her Son.

The citizens of Bethlehem refuse to supply her with lodging. But how many thousands of times have we cast Jesus out from our hearts, with monstrous ingratitude.

In creating humanity God created in each person, one of His temples in order to dwell there. But, how many times have we refused our hearts to the Lord!

It is not without purpose that Jesus chose to be born in the country -side beyond the city limits. When a great feast was celebrated there was chosen an open place where more people could come.

And Jesus, Who was born for the whole world, chose to be born out in the open, in order to provide something of a spectacle for heaven and earth.

O my soul, do you not desire to go to the feet of Jesus?

But, should you not dare to do that, pray that the heavens open up, that the entire heavenly court might put in an appearance in order to see its God born.

O heavenly Father, look on your Son Who is born. Is He thus also the object of Your good pleasure?

And you, St. Joseph, stretch out your arms to heaven in order to ask for help!

What must have been St. Joseph's affliction in finding himself in such a poor place!

But Mary already feels her divine Son moving within. She experiences Him detaching Himself from her womb where she had Him for the course of nine months to herself alone.

Now she goes to give Him to the whole world.

Joseph, do not raise any more your affections toward heaven. Do not any longer extend your arms toward them. Lower both your affections and your arms: behold Jesus already lying on the hay!

Let us raise up our thoughts in reflecting on the sentiments which Mary and Joseph must have had in the imminent birth of Jesus.

But, what are our affections and sentiments before receiving Holy Communion?

In that moment when the infant Jesus was about to be born, Mary experienced total exaltation in her interior.

How, you will ask me, how was Jesus born?

And I will respond to you that Mary was a virgin before the birth, in the birth and after the birth.

But, what are you saying? No one came down from heaven to offer royal accompaniment to Jesus Who was trembling from head to foot in the cold? Was there no special assistance?

O, how inscrutable are the judgments of God! two animals hover around the baby Jesus' crib, in order to warm His numb members. Should not the celestial spirits come down in order to offer Him homage and service.

These beasts do not have swaddling clothes nor a cloak to bring to Jesus. They warm Him a bit with their breath.

O, how welcome to the baby Jesus would the warm breath of these animals have been. Such would not even be offered [such as our hearts are], frozen by their

disordered attachment to the things of this earth, due to the uncleanness of so many imperfections!

What the love of Jesus must have been to have been born in these circumstances! His was a love that ought to enkindle all love.

Move your hearts to be closer to Jesus. If they are of wood, they will burn; if they are of tinder, they will light up; and if they are of hay, they will catch on fire.

For this to happen it is necessary to remove the water from your passions, from the seeking of oneself, so that each might be enkindled.

Examine your hearts today, to see if they are attached to creatures, to earthly realities.

Let us do this right away. We have no time to lose. Every hour that passes is less in order to prepare ourselves for Jesus' birth.

So, let us adorn our hearts with the holy virtues in order to receive Him.



## **72. A Conference for the Third Sunday after the Epiphany**

The Church in the Gospel of today [cf. Mt 8:1-13] gives us two beautiful examples of faith and confidence in God that obtains all, both in the leper as well as in the centurion. And in this latter, there is found humility united to these.

This union of these two virtues has provided me with the desire of explaining to you a thought of mine, and a truth of which I find myself quite persuaded – but which I do not know if I will be able to express it to you in a clear manner.

This thought and sentiment of mine is that there cannot be genuine humility, without it being accompanied by confidence – nor can there be genuine and solid confidence without humility. This is so to the extent that I see the perfection of each of these virtues, as depending on the other, as it seems to me that there would always be something lacking to the one if it did not have the other as her close companion.

When I speak to you about genuine and solid humility, I intend to speak not so much of those acts of humility that are employed. Further, I intend to disclose the fact that such actions are humble in so far as they start off from being rooted in a real knowledge of oneself – and that each one increases and develops to the measure that we enter more minutely to the very depths of this self-knowledge.

St. Ignatius says, and many others before him have said the same, that whoever wishes to make a large factory, or something else, he must first set up very solid foundations. This may then be applied to anyone who wishes to strive for great perfection, and to be advanced toward holiness, must go very deeply into humility, which is its real foundation. Without this, all will fall down under the slightest wind.

We should not neglect delving deeply into the realization of our own nothingness and of our non-being, so that when we are well persuaded of this, we have recourse to the One Who possesses all and Who alone is.

The desire that we have to serve God authentically, to love Him, by performing acts and continuous activities directed toward Him. Knowing that in order to please Him we need to deny in those occasions our own wills, to submit our judgment out of love for Him, to mortify our self-love, in a word, to overcome ourselves in every encounter: all this, I say, provides us with a greater occasion of really knowing ourselves. In examining ourselves at the end of that day in which we might have yearned to practice these exercises well [I mean that of realizing from the loss we have had, which results from that impotency of carrying out that which we wanted, our own non-being, our own wretchedness], we come to know with the greatest facility that to bear ourselves toward evil and defect, and with like difficulty, we want to direct ourselves the opposite direction, only with equal difficulty toward even the least act of virtue.

When all of this is considered by us, it places us in a sentiment of efficacious humility, and drawn from our own experience.

But, how can we accomplish all this, when the sight of our own miseries introduce into us such a humble sentiment, that we give ourselves over to savoring that which the Lord desires that we draw from it all, with allowing ourselves to slip toward pusillanimity, toward servile fear and to what is vile?

In thoughts such as these, your work is wasted and this is no longer humility. This beautiful virtue has given way to defect, so much so that in place of placing a foundation stone to your spiritual building, you have slowed the work down, for today and tomorrow, as well.

In that day, by allowing yourself to follow pusillanimity, you will find yourselves exhausted, doubtful, uncertain, and you will have unearthed a principal obstacle to the acquisition of humility. The fact of the matter is that as long as you cannot internalize the task of your genuine self-knowledge, this is due to the danger

in which you are in. You thus add a failure greater than all others – which is that of not recurring with confidence and trust in the Lord, who desires to give you help and to heal you.

Just imagine that one day you come see a poor person, full of wounds and ulcers in his swellings, having been reduced to the greatest need, without having the financial means to procure for himself the necessary care for his maladies, nor any relief and help to acquire a stronger health. And then imagine that in the same room with him there is a very rich and powerful gentleman, who goes to some lengths to show about his riches and making it known that all of this wealth he acquired by his own efforts. In this situation, the poor beggar is always looking down at his wounds, and so afflicted over his own misery - you would say that only a crazy person would remain in such a state through his own fault.

And you would indeed be right.

But this is precisely what the weak-minded and dubious soul does with the Lord. The pusillanimous person always remains fixated on his own wretchedness, without being willing to profit by that relief that he could find for his troubles, if only he would recognize and address himself to God, and that he would take up that force of confidence from his very humiliation.

What ever would have been of help to the Centurion if, on reflecting just on himself, realizing that he was indeed a gentile [since that people had not yet been called to the faith], and if on realizing all these obstacles, he would have been content to think and say that he indeed really was not worthy that the Lord should enter under his roof, and said nothing else? For what reason would he have come? Indeed his beloved servant would have remained a paralytic.

But this Centurion was not content in this, as he desired this cure from the simple knowledge of himself. Did he not add his confidence, by saying: *But, say only the word and my servant, etc.* [cf. Mt 8:8].

This confidence was so accepted by the Lord and that he highly praised the Centurion publicly, and this proves that this official was firm and solid in his confidence.

Since the Lord not only responds with words, but as you see, even within, He judges whether our heart hopes and confides as the Centurion's words show that he did.

From this little that I have said, you do see that confidence is necessary for a genuine, solid and profound humility, And so again, in order to have great confidence, humility is necessary.

That which gave confidence to the leper was in seeing his leprosy. This horrible sight spawned in him a great desire to heal. And thus, again in proportion to his desire, confidence was excited, and he showed his situation to the One he believed could heal him.

And so it is in us, the more we are persuaded that we can do nothing, and we still yet have the desire, as great will our confidence in God may be, in order to beg of Him that of making up for all that we are unable to do. And knowing that authentic faith obtains all, we will excite it in ourselves for all that we yearn for. Just like that Centurion there will be more security in receiving than faith alone could provide.

Speaking of this which touches us in a particular manner, that is, that enterprise toward which the Lord has called us, when it comes to mind that it is just a small piece of what has gathered us together, that nothing has really been accomplished as yet, and yet there is so much grumbling that goes on within us: rather than analyzing these complaints closely, let us rather humble ourselves. Let us enter into the cell of our self-knowledge, and just take a look at who we are in order to think well in this direction.

As I just asked you a little earlier, what are our pretensions of believing that we might already be good now for some time in our carrying out the plans of God in this undertaking? Should we not rather see that the Lord with an admirable and merciful Providence, has wanted us to give this time in order to render ourselves more apt for such tasks, in order to exercise the virtues, to become more firmly established on these? And should we not also, therefore, accuse God who has up to right now given only the idea of the work, and that He has gathered us together just to wait for such a long time?

Should we not rather accuse ourselves that while we might be totally responsible, for if we will have placed the obstacles to it all ourselves, and slowed down the time of the graces of the Lord on the world, by not doing that work that the Lord asked of us. Nor have we allowed Him to work within us according to His own sacred will, having still mixed in natural concerns with our own desires, thus having put off perhaps still further, that of carrying out this work, etc.

So, let us not set these impediments any longer.

Let us be humble and let us confide in Him alone who can do all, and we will see the effect. We will indeed realize that which all have experimented with: that whoever trusts in God will never be confused.

This is what Abraham did. God promised him, and he humbled himself. The Lord promised him anew, and he thanked Him by offering sacrifices to Him.

All these promises, however, this man of faith never saw fulfilled. Rather, he saw the contrary, and this experienced of itself was more apt to have made him lose his faith altogether.

However, Abraham never complained about his. He obeyed God and believed in Him with firm faith. And this in the long run was rewarded.



### **73. St. Magdalene de' Pazzi: Humility**

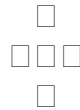
The Lord said once to St. Magdalene de' Pazzi, speaking of the Holy Spirit: 'My beloved Spouse, varied are the spiritual impediments, because so varied are the states of creatures and very much varied are these just mentioned creatures. You know, that one impediment for such as these, who are far from Me, is that malice from which their hearts is so full, that My Spirit is unable to find repose in them. There are some others who place in the way the impediment of their own wills and still others who not only place their own wills in the way, but even their limited manner of seeing and knowing, so the point that they want to serve in their own manner. It is true that they want My Spirit, but they want Him in that manner that is pleasing to them and only when it pleases them. In this manner they make themselves unable to receive Him. And still others, who are the closer to Me, place another impediment, which displeases no less than the others mentioned. This is primarily that accursed tepidity since it seems to them that they do serve me. But they do not even realize that they are really serving themselves. In their way of view, to these it seems that they are serving Me in the way that I merit to be served. But, this is not so, because I want to be served with sincerity and humility. And it is further necessary that this humility is such that it fathoms even to the depths. Of the earth, because My Spirit does like the thunder-bolt that comes down from on high, and does not rest until it is firmly fixed in the center of the earth. Such is My Spirit Who does not stop in that soul that He finds in the very heart of self-emptying, while in the high and mediocre, He does not pause, but passes above them.'



## 74. Prayer

Prayer is a secret that the Saints employ against every evil – they so place their souls in Heaven in order not to feel the discomforts of this earth. [Bartoli, *Life of St. Ignatius*, Book 1, n. 24].

St. Ignatius, being in prison in Barcelona, spoke of the love of God so sublimely that he went truly beyond himself, more like a crazyman, than as a guilty person. He stated that there is nothing sweeter than the love of God, nor any greater love possible for us than to suffer for Him – therefore, there was no greater sweetness than to suffer for Him [cf. Bartoli, *Life of St. Ignatius*. Book 1, n. 33].



## **APPENDIX**

### **Book Three**

**Conferences of the Venerated Foundress,**

**Sister Leopoldina Naudet**

## SISTERS' EDITION

### PRESENTATION

[What this is, is a small notebook, a manuscript, of about 60 pages<sup>47</sup>, which contain *Spiritual Conferences*, attributed, according to the title page placed on its cover, to Leopoldina Naudet, but it is not in her hand-writing.

Analyzing these pages attentively, there are noted 8 conferences which correspond almost literally to those contained in the bigger manuscript translated above, entitled *Spiritual Conferences*'. The other 7 can only with great difficulty be attributable to Leopoldina Naudet, both due to their content, as well as to their style. However, they are considered equally to respond to the order given by whoever it was who gathered these pages and handed them on to us.

In the work, the '*Memories and Virtues*', of Sophie Gagnere [1780-1836], compiled by Metilda de Canossa [1804-1848], is dedicated as follows:

*... to her blessed memory [Sophie Gagnere], and to her fervor, our Institute owes almost 30 Conferences and Spiritual Exhortations, that the Venerated Foundress delivered to her Sisters, which truly contain her spirit. Our Sister Sophie wrote, as soon as she heard these, with her very blessed memory, that these seem to pages that were dictated and not just heard.*<sup>48</sup>

Now it seems sufficiently credible that almost all the Conferences contained in this notebook, are a part of those 30 Conferences transcribed precisely by Sister Gagnere.

Unfortunately nothing is known of any of the others, despite the very careful research that was conducted, after the discovery by chance of those presented here].

Long Live Jesus, Mary and Joseph!<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> To this little note-book there was later added a Fascicle of 7 pages that were not numbered, containing a few reflections, taken from the life of St. Philip Benizzi.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Metilda de Canossa, *Reminiscences and Virtues of Sophie Gagnere*, ms f. 5.

<sup>49</sup> This Conference and the next one are found among the non-numbered pages, and so it is not for certain that they make up an integrating part of the "**Little Hand-Written Notebook**" [cf. *Presentation*, p. 119].

## St. Philip Benizzi<sup>50</sup> of the Servants of the Sorrowful Mother

### Documents regarding the Mutual Charity of his Religious.

Be content, for there is being made for you an ample recommendation over those words that our Lord said to His Disciples the day before His death: ... *A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another.* [cf. Jn 13:34].

Yes, my Brothers, I exhort you to love one another and to give more emphasis to this fraternal charity than to all the virtues, than to all the gifts, than to all the graces of God, that are nothing without this.

For if indeed you love authentically, you will love your Brother. This is the principle of all love, which enflames both heaven and earth. Every love, if it does not have its foundation in fraternal love, will in the end turn to disgust, to disdain, to division.

Love one another and you will easily be able to put up with one another: love them, and you will be desirous of imitating them and surpassing them in virtue.

Love one another and there be among you a communication of blessings, of graces, without any of you being deceived by means of dissimulation, nor will any envy wound you.

Love one another and there will be no rule that is difficult for you, no penance that will bother you, no humiliation that you will reject, no admonition that would offend you – because the union among those with whom you live will sweetens all things and the patience of one will become that of the other. In this, you will recognize that you are children of the Heavenly Father, and sons of Mary Most Holy, if you truly love one another. Your spiritual advancement is in loving one another.

The religious who is destined to live with a wide diversity of companions, needs to reform his judgment and to learn to interpret favorably all that he hears and all that he sees, so they do not appear as evil: the religious who does not judge the others well, will have a great inclination to judge only himself well.

The more you are united among one another the more will you be united with God. Finally, my Brothers, this mutual charity is the idea of the heavenly Jerusalem, it is the foretaste of eternity and as the three Divine Persons love each other, this

---

<sup>50</sup> Philip Benizzi, a Saint, served as the 5<sup>th</sup> Superior General of the Servants of Mary [Florence 1233-1285].

charity is the bond of relationship with the Father, the inheritance of the Son, and a confederation that the Holy Spirit can have with us.

This treatise on charity is analogous to Chapter 2 of our Constitutions, which treats of: Regarding Mutual Charity and Union.



**Long live Jesus, Mary and Joseph**

**Documents of St. Philip Benizzi of the Servants of the Sorrowful Mother, for One who is in charge of Young Religious.**

The Saint instructed them that the spirit of humility is indispensable for all, but it is up to God to determine for us our proper place; the religious is not holy through being the last in the Monastery, but when he truly is last in his own esteem.

The Saint's example was the best school for his Novices. When some failure had been committed, he would first humble himself in order then to oblige the young candidates to recognize themselves.

He would practice great sweetness in governing them, but would distance them in like manner from relaxations by discipline. He thought that gentleness of the religious grace would never have chilled their zeal. He manifested an indescribable love for humble novices, without allowing, however, this affection should ever change in the least to any unfairness in governing, while he exercised his government over his Brothers.

He exercised much compassion on the scrupulous, comforted the weak, and supported those undergoing temptation; he moderated in some others their exaggerated fervor, he combated tepidity in still others. With the result, that there was not a single Novice who did not have his burdens and his fatigue, to whom the Saint had not shared his inner thoughts as if such a person were the only Novice. He examined the religious vocation throughout the entire course of the Novitiate, with a marvelous circumspection.

He showed ever greater interest in the situation of those who manifested a more submitted and obedient spirit. The Saint approached such as these and led them to be able to forget the world they had left behind, and presented this sacrifice as something that was the most inviting that could be imagined.

For him, the fact was that a solid vocation is the benediction of the entire life of any religious.

This excellent Spiritual Master simply paid no attention, in the Novices, neither to their background, nor their nobility, nor any other point of interest in their lives. And this was because he himself had renounced all, and was incapable of judging all and left it up to only God alone.

The religious who would truly like to come to know God well, and also wanted to know himself well, has not greater means at his disposal than the Blessed Virgin Mary, as she recognized God simultaneously with her own lowliness even better than the angels themselves.

In addition to all this, he would preach numberless beautiful insights regarding the Blessed Virgin. He exhorted the Novices to love her and to serve her in order to be able to bear with less fatigue the weight of the religious state and in order to experience the ultimate securities of predestination.

This Spiritual Master being so diligent, would teach the proper order in order for the Novices to conduct themselves in a manner befitting religious, and if they committed some fault in Church, or in any other place whatever, he would strive to correct them either with hints or with words.

It is necessary that the Master be well versed in the Rule in order to head-off from the Novices all those impressions, which could easily lead the uninitiated against the truth, or that perfection desired by the Community. As a result if in the Novitiate the religious offered no esteem for the Rule as much as he should, he would be professing at the same time a very anemic esteem. Also when he would profess to live the rule, he noted that he would never observe it, other than most imperfectly.

He would teach this maxim: one may not arrive at perfection if not through many imperfections – and if the Master of Novices does not help to take these away from each one and continuously lifts these away, it happens that the bad grain suffocates the good.

The Novice Maser teaches the novices to have humility of heart and of body, according to those words: *Learn from Me for I am meek and humble of heart.* [cf. Mt 11:29].

If the religious seems to be affected in his conversations, in his actions, this is a sign that he still esteems himself in some area, since it is so easy for such a religious to disdain himself, but does not always allow himself to be disdained by others.

The Master of Novices is to teach them to set aside their own self will, and to maintain a voluntary obedience toward their superiors: there is nothing else that

renders a religious more unhappy than his own will, when this is so even in the least matters.

It is necessary that the novices should learn that which they do not know and learn better that which they already know. And just as they lay aside their own clothing in the religious state, it is necessary to consider them in a new nudity and as children, who need to learn everything. And even if they might all be mentally brilliant in a Novitiate, it is still necessary to think of them as all ignorant in order to humble them and to instruct them and instruct them more perfectly with humbling them.

The Novice is to subject himself to whomsoever might be generous toward him, as well as to the one who might take something away – and, as well as to the one who speaks well of him as well as to the one who speaks badly about him.

The Novice Master is to observe how the Novices pray, what their prayer really is, and whether they pray in silence in a manner that does not disturb the others.

It is necessary to instruct the novices in gentleness and not to be contentious with anyone no matter who it may be. Teach them to learn to conquer themselves and to put to death their own excessive self-will. In this way, their anger will never dominate over their hearts, all their sadness is suffocated. Their authentic humility of heart operates with ever greater power and the Novice conserves with his own Brothers a perpetual harmony.

I will not add another word to this maxim, which is best explained in its fruits. Those who are not at peace within themselves, will never be so with others. Now, every religious who does not consider sufficiently the condition where he has placed himself to live in common, but holds a spirit of aversion and for this spirit that is so far removed from genuine charity, wishing in everything to censure others, will never be without bitterness and without restlessness and will disturb the others.

Since every Monastery is composed of so many brains and different humors, the religious who is delicate always finds someone with whom to disagree. No one pleases him nor does he please anyone else. He is always upset and never enjoys the sweetness of humility. And in all the better realities of the world such a one disturbs the peace of his brothers.

As for those others, on the contrary, who put their self-will to death, one can no longer distinguish their will from others. Such a religious approves what others approve of, and such a person loves what others love, and suffers all for which

he cannot excuse himself, whenever he does not have either the obligation or the authority to contradict him.

Whoever is selective in his obedience, really does not obey. Every exception is really a latent pride, because in this instance such a religious wither believes himself capable of governing over certain matters. Or, such a person no longer believes that his Novice Master is capable of governing – or, finally he feels that complying with a particular action is too insignificant a matter to have to submit it to obedience. And then getting into the habit of disdain in the religious state the little matters, take the way of not fleeing even great imperfections: this is a dangerous path and not very secure. But obedience gives some perfection to insignificant matters and these command the attention of the religious, being certain that if he comes to value and obey in lesser matters, he will never fall into serious infidelities. On the contrary, whoever through a particular spirit seeks to distinguish subtly the greater matters and the lesser, begins with scorning such matters, and then neglecting them altogether and finally he will fall into some horrendous extreme.

The Novices are to take care from judging anyone and when they see some do what from all appearances seems to be an evil action, they should still believe that such persons are good, or that what they did wrong was performed out of a good intention.

The Novice who is destined to live among a broad diversity of companions, should very soon reform his own judgment already corrupted by this world. This Novice needs to learn and to interpret favorably all that he hears or all that he sees, even when it has the appearance of evil. The religious who does not judge others well, will have a great inclination to think well of himself.

The religious ought to love his own religious community, to consider it dear with a tenderness as for his provider of nourishment, as did his mother as for an august queen for whom he has given up everything else.

Let each one kiss his religious habit, as if he were kissing the religious state itself.

These two documents could serve well the Mistress of Novices, with the Chapter 3 of the First Part of our Constitutions of the Novitiate<sup>51</sup>.




---

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Original Constitutions, pp.. 21-233; nn. 1-9.

## **CONFERENCES OF OUR VENERATED FOUNRESS**<sup>52</sup>



### **A Conference on the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist**<sup>53</sup>

The greatness of this Divine Sacrament requires, asks that in us there might be born a greater desire and a much greater fervor in order for us to approach this in a more worthy manner.

We are spouses of Jesus Christ. Before Jesus in the Most Blessed sacrament, how many considerations present themselves to our minds, that are most useful for our souls! I stop here in considering Jesus Christ, since He chose to leave us His Body and I reflect that the will of God, the will of Jesus Christ is submitted to that of human beings. And in fact, on the night before His Passion, He chose to give Himself to human beings hidden in bread. And this gift of His entire Self is handed over to the power that men [that is, the sacred ministers] have received from Jesus Christ, that is, that each and every time these ministers should consecrate the bread, this would be totally transformed in to the Body of Jesus Christ, and the wine into His most precious Blood.

I would have no way of knowing what Jesus Christ would have been thinking of in willing to bring about such a prodigy! He knew that human beings would not have loved Him, He knew indeed the disdain that He would have to sustain, what wrongs would have been committed against Him. He understood, in brief, as well the ingratitude of human beings and yet before dying, He chose to give His entire Self and to leave His will submitted to the will of human beings, because each and every time He would be consecrated, He descends from heaven and hides Himself in the bread.

One of the principal characteristics that is recognized in this Sacrament is love. And this love, in order to grasp it in a manner more particular to us, it is fitting to add that this love is a blind love, an impassioned love which does not reflect, and knows nothing other than being content in the object He loves.

In the love of Jesus Christ we need to recognize this blind love, a love truly impassioned for us. In this regard I would like to add something further, which makes us realize more clearly the sincerity, the fidelity and the greatness of the love of Jesus Christ. He understood that, in leaving His most Holy Body for us, the good would have received Him worthily, while the wicked would have unworthily received Him. Thus, he would be injured, scorned, mal-treated, profaned. After all this, that He

---

<sup>52</sup> From this page of the progressive numeration of the pages of the Hand-written Manuscript begins.

<sup>53</sup> This particular Conference is not contained in the *'Spiritual Conferences'* translated above.

understood well, conquers His loving heart and therefore, there is seen this great prodigy!

I would like to ask Jesus Christ, what possible gain, what usefulness, has He received from this love of His, from the institution of this Sacrament.

He has enriched human beings with sufficient treasure for them to be able to obtain, by means of this sacrament, as much as could ever be desired of us. And if human beings do not obtain these graces, those favors that they desire, this is because of the lack of their own faith, for the lack of their proper dispositions, for the lack of their confidence. However, they would be able to obtain everything since they ought to conduct themselves as masters of Him Who is the Father and Lord of everything.

He ought to be able to find inhuman beings His delight, His good pleasure; however, human beings are not grateful to Him, if they do not recognize Him enough to correspond to His love and to the benefits they have received.

Just look at all this in practice, to whether we have shared in something that is lacking. A consecrated Host, a pyx of particles, is reposed in the ciborium, is that where constantly Jesus Christ is found. Up Within the consecrated elements are found, there will always exist in them, the Body, the Blood, the Divinity of Jesus Christ. He will never distance Himself from them, nor retire, but day and night He is constantly firm under those sacramental species.

Human beings are just not so grateful in order to converse before Him frequently, in order to court Him, as that is already bad enough. But what is worse [if we would like to examine ourselves in mind and in heart] indeed we will find in ourselves so many times that we approach in order to receive this sacrament with little disposition and rather almost by habit, or because the superiors demand it, or the Rule of the Community wishes this, or in order not to appear singular. And in this manner we approach to receive this sacrament.

Our spirit which ought to rejoice, and should be prepared with all commitment, with all fervor, to open up our hearts to the Spouse Jesus, in order to beg of Him those remedies which are necessary for us, as these hearts of hours have no words of their own, as they do not know how to express themselves. Our minds, ought to be solely occupied in this, deaf to all else. I would say that due to the sublimity of the mystery, from the high idea of having come from God into our souls, no one could have thought up its ramifications. Our hearts are bereft of affections, without tenderness - in a word ... we are like dead statues.

How displeasing would it be when we will not give ourselves with our coldness to our Jesus!

I am, He tells us, so impassioned for all of you, so much in love with, I have given you all that I had in order to lead you to grasp My love and you would not so much as give me a glance, nor would you even address to me a single word, you would not even have spent a single sigh, a simple sentiment of recognition, for One who loves you so!

So perhaps it might have been for the most of us. Perhaps rare times one would think of the day Holy Communion would be received. And yet, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament ought to be thought of, He Who is the object of our love. Perhaps only very little, or nothing at all, is seen on the day or whenever we go to Choir, where He really is. Who knows if even then we would formulate a good thought, if we place our eyes on the ciborium in order to see Him, to adore Him and to recognize Him hidden in those consecrated hosts.

One might pass right before Him without even looking at Him, without presenting oneself to Him Who is already present there! In passing before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, one's duty, obligation, justice, all demand that we bend our knees in an act of adoration before our Creator, our Spouse, before He Who, after having given us everything, here has given us Himself for our food, for our drink.

If the Saints, speaking of their own experience, have recognized that from a communion devoutly received, the sanctification of a soul depends. This is what I believe as I am most persuaded of this truth. And the reasons are to know what is true, springs precisely from an outpouring of love which I owe Jesus, so that He will enter into possession of a soul that is grateful and cognizant of Him.

Those souls, therefore, who sincerely and faithfully love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, these do correspond to Jesus' love in the Blessed Sacrament. Their response is with a love like His, with a like recognition of Him. Indeed, these souls, who have Him at heart and who recognize in this Sacrament a treasure of grace, that heavenly manna, that salutary food, and prepare the required dispositions. It seems that the Lord is most pleased with all this so much so that at a given point seem that He wants all souls to enter into and to enjoy those consolations, as they would never have on their own, being the most wretched and poor on this earth.

If the dispositions to receive devoutly Holy Communion are required of all men and women in general, that is especially all the more so for those persons who

are consecrated to the Lord. Oh! For this reason, one of their principal duties, their principal effort, should be that of disposing their spirit in order to be able to receive the most Holy Communion with fruit.

We need the graces, our soul needs the graces, as does our vocation, which have as their purpose that of working out our own salvation and the salvation of our neighbors.

From Whom should we beg these graces? Is it perhaps we ought to wait for them as that manna of long ago that rained down from on high as did the Hebrew people in the desert? This manna no longer unexpectedly falls from heaven, but descends from heaven onto this earth at the words of the priest in the consecration of the Body, the Blood of Jesus Christ. This manna is then conserved day and night, in the Holy Tabernacle and, so that we might receive it, it is enough to ask in order to receive it. It suffices that at our knocking the doors would be opened and we would be introduced before the Lord.

On this day, I propose to you the manner of striving to increase your fervor ever more in order to receive Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament worthily and in order to reform in your, if perchance you have develop the habit of approaching Holy Communion and you are not finding that profit from it that is necessary for your own welfare.

One of the first concentrations we need to give in our examinations is that regarding Holy Communion. It is like most fitting as well to examine your external dispositions, which are meant to reflect the internal. These include paying attention to the composure of your bodies, as to the manner of holding your hands, with what level of reverence do we present ourselves, and then just what are our sentiments of charity and love.

See to it that you maintain during the day the memorial of this Sacrament! Take note of whether your will is impatient in the very action in which Jesus might be coming in your own souls. Just note what are the sentiments of your hearts. Pay attention to how you are in the moment of Holy Communion, if there are indeed those thrusts of love toward your Creator and Redeemer, your Spouse. See if you are importunate in demanding, in begging graces of Him ...

In a word, look at the level of faith with which this Sacrament is received, with what humble trust let us approach Him! See if it good for you to make an examination here...

And indeed to receive a Holy Communion with fervent devotion is a good thing and it is also little to ask you to have these sentiments. Observe yourselves to see if you maintain that respect, those promises that you bring to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! Just note with what confidence and humility you have with Jesus in your conversation with Him! See if you speak with Him as a daughter, as His Spouse would. And yet, all this is very little that is asked.

The Saints would always spend some days as they prepared themselves for their next Holy Communion and thanksgiving.

Preparation to receive Holy Communion that must be that which is mustered in a soul in love with Jesus, in a religious person, in just the brief space of time of the Mass in which one is going to receive. Rather, it should be listed as the beginning in time the preparation for what will be the last Holy Communion received. And see to it that there be had and that there be procured those dispositions for those in the future, and in this manner you will be enriched with great treasures.

Examine yourselves, therefore, on your dispositions and whether you are liberal and generous in doing on your part all that is possible in order to prepare yourselves to receive in your soul Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. This preparation you can do in the kitchen and while you are working. It can also be accomplished likewise in school, on a walk, in the refectory, as during recreation. It can be realized in any place whatsoever because it is a sentiment of the heart, which does not disturb any other person, as it remains unknown to others who may be nearby. This is because it remains throughout an internal operation, which is known solely to God it can lead to it becoming known.

We should not ever forget Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament Who is the object of our love.

But then in a manner more in particular we ought to call it before our minds by means of spiritual communion. This is accomplished so readily in order to recall the memory of it to mind.

Therefore, if you wish to place in your hearts a great love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, these are the means that I have just suggested to you in order to examine your present Holy Communions. Examine your own preparations, and look at your day that ought to privilege your preparation for your Most Holy Communion. This is accomplished in the frequent practice of recalling to your memories Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament many times during the day by means of the practice Spiritual Communion and your Communions devoutly received. This practice would suffice in order to be lifted up from the wretchedness of your misery, of your fragility. The

reason here is because Jesus Christ can do no less than enrich you. I do not say that He will just decorate a soul with His graces, but He will enrich you profoundly, and will deepen His mercies, His graces, in behalf of your soul. On this manner you no longer have to remain a poor soul.

Having considered that you have received Sacramental Communion, unite yourselves with lively Faith to the adorations of Mary most holy - unite, whenever you will have received this Blessed Sacrament through the hands of St. John the Evangelist and when you hold yourselves near to the bosom of the Glorious St. Joseph.



### **Regarding Holy Christmas<sup>54</sup>**

Why and for whom was Jesus born? The One Who is born is Jesus, the King of Heaven and of the earth. The humiliation of God steals our hearts. Being the Master of all, He made Himself a servant.

The Son of a Sovereign, who goes to live in a lower state is never considered a subject, but always for that which He is by birth.

Jesus Christ, King and Sovereign of the world, is regarded as the Son of Joseph, poor carpenter, and of Mary, Daughter of Anna and Joachim. Jesus the most Wise, has hidden His Wisdom, He Who was Omnipotent, has hidden His omnipotence and chose to be born in a stall.

Each one might comment: God has been born for me and is born to die for me! And you, my soul, for whom do you live? Oh, how unhappy, are you who live attached to the realities of here below! What a beautiful choice it is, on the contrary, to lift up one's own spirit, to live and to savor only the realities of God, and to do all in order to be pleasing to Him alone: this is genuine freedom of spirit.

Jesus Christ has come down from heaven into this prison, where we were relegated as a punishment of the sin of Adam.

How happy may an imprisoned person be when he is released from his chains, which no longer hold him attached to a column, or to a rock, and when he is able to walk about freely in the room where he has been confined: this is the liberty that Jesus Christ has procured for all.

And how happy and fortunate it is to be called to the religious state, in which we can become ever more like Jesus Christ, Who was born in order to pour Himself

---

<sup>54</sup> cf. a similar document in *Spiritual Conferences*, pp. 108-109.

out for humanity, in order to serve men and women, so, we, too, are destined to wear ourselves out and to serve them for the good of their souls... and how happy may we be if we could even die for their good like Jesus did. How blessed we are! Oh, what a blessed lot in life!

Anyone among you might think: O! if only I might be found in that happy time and would have been able to live together with Jesus! You already have this good fortune. Jesus Christ remains in the Host, awaiting you in order to instruct you .... He is really in the Holy Tabernacle: let us explain to Him all our desires. Let us make an offering totally of ourselves and that our days be filled in offering ourselves to Him to love Him.



### **Concerning Aridity and consolation in Prayer<sup>55</sup>**

There are two lessons that the Lord gives us, rather one of these He gives and the other He permits that it be given to us. What He bestows on us is interior consolation. The reason is that when He comes, He does exterminate from our hearts every disturbance and fills us with love of God, to whom He enraptures all.

The light that the soul receives at the same time comforts the mind in that coming to know many secrets, which He reveals and uncovers which of these are secure for us, and which of them are dangerous undertakings along the way of the Spirit.

The fervor then that the human soul experiences is such that there is no travail so overwhelming that there would not also appear some consolation – nor is that such noticeable fatigue that there does not seem repose anywhere. In fact, every weight appears to us as light, every penance is gentle. This consolation, however, is not perpetual in us, but it comes and goes, changes its times and it has its own periods, as is pleasing to God, who bestows these occasions and removes them one or the other, for our profit.

Once the consolation of God has departed, the devil finds space in order to introduce into us his discontentment and desolations, treating us in ways totally contrary to the ways of God. And thus, all this is worked out in us in order to take the inner spirit from us of doing good, in order to detach us from all affection in the service of the Lord. This fills us with melancholy and many times with becoming melancholic we do not know how to figure out why we are this way. Our prayer

---

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *Spiritual Conferences*, pp. 15-16.

seems sterile and dry, meditation has neither taste nor flavor. The speaking and hearing of the truths of God, just annoy us.

There come to us then such disturbed thoughts regarding ourselves that as we look at ourselves, we weep as persons abandoned and separated from God and it appears to us that whatever it may be that we have done for God up to right now, nothing seems to have been pleasing to Him, and that whatever it is we may be planning for the future, none of it all could serve or help us, in addition to discouraging us further. We experience such diffidence and that this all seems to most serious and everything beyond remedy.

However, not even this state of mind is perpetual.

Yet, we need to take advantage of whatever state of mind we may be in, for the good of our souls. In this, we are to console ourselves, humble ourselves, in the recognition of how different we are, when desolation descends upon us. On the contrary, when we are desolate, we have to find the inner spirit with reminding ourselves that at the first instant when consolation returns to us all the dark shadows will dissipate and the light will return and our earlier serenity.



### **Instruction<sup>56</sup>**

The greatest secret of the religious life is that of being very exact in the observance of the Rules, which have been given to us from the loving hand of God: we are to be, therefore, in this, most diligent. This means not being solely attached to the minutest aspect and to their letter, but much more to their Spirit, in imitation of our Divine Savior, Who perfectly carried out the will of His Father.

And since He has chosen us and lifted us out of this world in order to be His Spouse and similar to Himself, let us conform ourselves to Him. The reason is that where there is not conformity, neither is there found union of heart, nor of will. Let us not deceive ourselves of grace, as the time is given to us in order to suffer, and eternity in order to rejoice. In heaven, we will not be able to wear on our heads the crown of glory, if first on earth we will have not borne the crown of abjection.

---

<sup>56</sup> Cf. her *Spiritual Conferences*, pp. 18-19.

This is the part that I leave you: do not be frightened with the difficulties of nature, but fight them generously and that soul who will kill the greater quantity of them will be the most victorious.

Do you know what the victory will be? Patience in sufferings, love for humiliation, submission of one's own judgment and of one's own will – joined to the exact observance, and to fortitude in temptations. In this manner the lovers of Calvary render themselves victorious on earth and possessors of heaven.

And just as the state of religion wills that we perform actions worthy of our vocation, I beg you that your obedience be equal, uncluttered, without picking and choosing, simple, solid, genuine – so that, after triumphing by means of this in yourselves, you come to take your repose in His bosom and in His arms, as little babies without any other care or thought than that of obeying religion, your good mother which guides us with the Divine Spirit in the continuous fulfillment of its most holy will, strongly and gently, urging on our hearts, in order to take out from them all that is just about ourselves.

Let us then in a gentle manner exert pressure, without placing any impediment in the way. Thus we will make a pleasant journey, the end of which will be heaven.

It is necessary to avoid those little ones among us who like to make believe they are saints, and feign ecstasies. It is a beautiful holiness to live a profound humility and submission, accompanied by a holy joy in the common life.



### **A Conference on the Virtues for the Feast of Saint Teresa<sup>57</sup>**

The documents of the Saints bear with them a kind of confidence and trust, in those who have contact with them. The reason is because they have spoken through their own experience in the spiritual life –and also because from all of them members of the same Church, which can neither be deceived in recognizing them as saints, which has not sought anything other than imitating them. Thus, we can really rely on them, assured as we are that we will arrive there, too, if we will practice that which they have done.

If, therefore, as I say, this salutary effect is brought about in us that we listen to the saints, the more we have confidence in them, and now we contemplate them in their blessed eternity!

---

<sup>57</sup> Cf. her *Spiritual Conferences*, pp. 97-99.

St. Teresa, whose feast day we celebrate tomorrow, furnishes me from Heaven itself where to place securely the foundation of whatever I could say in this Conference.

All the saints have been persuaded that the virtues provide the highway to holiness. And St. Teresa, as she had so many extraordinary occurrences in her life, wanted particularly to assure her daughters from heaven itself of this grand truth, that is, that the sole matter which she wished to accomplish was that she become in possession of God for all eternity, and for this to happen, the only way to it was the practice of virtue.

The virtues may be comparable to the only currency that is negotiable to obtain Eternity. And God seeing that these virtues were difficult for human beings, He realized that He would not know how [in a manner of speaking] how to put Himself to this undertaking, sent His own divine Son, Jesus Christ, on to this earth to teach us this doctrine. In accord with this, He was not content in working out our Redemption in a moment's time, but He lived thirty-three years on the earth among human beings in order to give us the example of this, and He was then imitated by the saints.

The manner, therefore, of exercising virtue, which leads us to holiness, is that which Jesus Christ Himself had practiced.

He lived humility with the loss of His own reputation, with being mocked. His humility was accompanied with Patience, and also with much fatigue and sufferings and then onward to all the virtues. These were directed by His infinite charity, which shone forth from Him throughout His entire life, leading Him finally to die on a Cross for us.

This, then, is the example, but let us come now to the practical. The Saints who have imitated Jesus Christ in the exercise of the virtues, have practiced them all according to the occasions which they had of these, and always fearing that they would have their lamps of vigilance on the ready in their entire lives, directed by their love of God, Who imprinted on their souls their desire for virtue.

They distinguished from the outset what would be the virtue to become exercised in the varying occasions of their lives, so that with the practice of this particular virtue, or some other one, they would be able to please God the most. And if they were ever surprised and were found lacking in some virtues, they regarded the loss of this as greater than any other losses possible for them to suffer. Their yearning was to be able to take care of all they were intent upon to conduct

themselves in the guise of business people, who sought to make up as soon as possible their losses in conducting business.

That which they would be unable to accomplish if their afflictions took from them their courage and if they would ever find themselves busied about their experienced losses, rather than attending to the proper remedy.

This is what you, too, should do. Put yourselves to the task with an inner fervent spirit and thrust, repairing for your suffering of the loss endured, and make up for it with an even greater attention toward yourselves and do not lose even a minimum occasion of profit, and with that holy solicitude, that there ought to be in your love for God, and the desire to fulfill all that is asked of you, that is, your own sanctification.

Therefore, remember how I mentioned to you in the beginning to acquire this spiritual currency of the virtues, which unfortunately one can actually throw away, rather than acquiring it.

For example, there is a certain propensity of making excuses for yourselves, in order to thrust away even the least thought that might arise contrary to the virtues. That human fear must be overcome that would have us speak up: that this might not be realized and that it is not to be told to the Superior. While that is something we ought not to do or say in her presence, then neither ought we to do this in her absence.

And if ever out of our weakness, some defect might occur in our conduct, we ought to feel that it is better that some advice be given to us. Thus a correction may need to be administered, and a certain penance be assigned which might follow, all serves as medicine for our own self-love, and an assistance for our own perfection and for mutual edification.



### **Conference on St. Francis Xavier's Feast Day<sup>58</sup>**

This Saint's thoughts were quite far removed from the life he would eventually come to live. He was in Paris, and was totally intent on the study of the sciences and the arts and to make himself accomplished in knowledge and he sought out every means to make himself appear as a great man according to this world's estimation.

---

<sup>58</sup> cf. *Spiritual Conferences*, pp. 100-102

This way of thinking of his was totally different from becoming that as a great Saint, he came to think with disdain the very possibilities that he yearned for earlier. What he came to esteem the most and actually embraced, the Cross of Jesus Christ.

What would now have come of him if on listening only to what his passions drew him toward, particularly that of vain glory, if perchance this great and wise man had succeeded in engineering his life according to the maxims of this world.

His glory, based primarily on the academic arena, would now be as a waft of smoke that had passed together with him and he would not have received the honors that are rendered to him now by the Church, nor that great eternal reward which he enjoys in heaven and to that possession of which he reached with much fatigue, it is true, but really only after a brief time of travail.

Just what it was that he was able to reason out for that great and immediate shift in St. Francis, and which eventually led him to renounce the will and the desire of worldly glory - was that listening of his that he gave to grace, that spoke to his heart by means of those words which St. Ignatius shared with him [who was also in Paris in that same time frame]. It was through these expressions were in effect well capable of striking a spirit disposed and prepared with grace: *what would it serve a man*, and the like - *what would it serve a man the gaining the whole world, if he were then to lose his own soul?* [cf. Mt 8:36].

These great words truly shook the Saint and they were so continually present to him in all which he was then able to accomplish until his last breath. All of this was the effect of such words through which he became the zealous missionary not of his own soul. From this zeal, he continued learning always to know ever better the price of souls, he thus became in his time a most fervent, zealous seeker of the souls of others as well.

In order to save and to place his own soul in security, he committed himself under the guide of him whom God had made use in order to convert him, that is, of St. Ignatius.

And he dedicated himself to overcome himself, his own will, and all that which could oppose him – not only in his quest for eternal salvation, but also in his own personal sanctification, because nothing else did he keep as his ideal than this.

And since he kept this proposal firm and fixed before him, he did not spare himself in anything. And so we see him so attentive to mortify his every natural motion, in overcoming his native reluctance toward any lowly distraction. He

approached and served the infirm in the hospital in ways that previously he thought to be of little consideration. And with this strength of will that he exercised over himself, there triumphed in him the grace that elevated him above every suffering and all pain, provided it served him now for his own sanctification and for that of his neighbors.

He never lost sight of these words: *what would it serve, the gaining of the world, if one then would lose his own soul?*

In fact, St. Francis did not work to win over souls of others out of his own personal planning, in order to satisfy himself, but he was always regulated by the regular observance and by observing in this manner, his Rule of life, which he had embraced and prescribed for the Community.

He did not incur that harm which sadly is frequent in others, that is, to pass over to thinking of others, while neglecting himself.

No, his own sanctification was always united to his travail for others, and long from bring harm to him, he perfected himself ever more. In order to save souls, to announce the faith and to make known the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, he found himself in the situation of accomplishing very much, of inclining himself toward a variety of circumstances, that were indeed so curious in those lands where he found himself.

In fact, once, noting that the culture of a Nation was that it had reliance of externals, he never withdrew in the slightest manner from his proposal and from that zeal, which moved him to employ every means in order to reach his end.

He once had his companions dress as so many page-boys, and acting himself as some kind of a prince, with all his courtesans, he went to present himself to that King, and thus he was able to introduce himself and was enabled to preach and to make known the true God and how much He had suffered for their souls.

In this mind-set, in another encounter, he had to go into a missionary locality, so he signed himself on a ship in the quality of a chef of some ambassador that was journeying on it. In order once to win over another man, weighed down by vices, he set himself to idle chat with him and so little by little he won him over.

St. Francis never paid attention to the repugnance that he would have experienced. And from where would their originate that abundant benediction with which God rewarded his travail? We can find no reason that is more founded than in the Saint's obedience.

Indeed, his obedience was that perfect union of his spirit with that of St. Ignatius, and this is what brought so much success to his apostolate.

In fact, Scripture teaches: *‘the obedient man will sing of victory.’* And St. Francis always regulated with this virtue his every activity.

Let us stop here a bit, to consider how many principles need to come together since working through obedience is much more fruitful than that which is undertaken through one’s own will, talent and also one’s own holy inclination. That which can cause us to lose all merit in every action is that of being contented that what we choose always to be rewarded, either by the approbation of others, as well as that in which further success is not realized, of that which we give of ourselves to all that we do.

Now, when we act through obedience, this self-love cannot come to disturb us so easily, to steal from us every gain, and to impede that fruit working for souls which is underway. This self-love cannot find a place so readily, because every good success in the works of obedience, we can attribute all to obedience and never to ourselves, as we are incapable of any good and fruitful action, when we are not regulated by this virtue.

That which I say to you is proven by many examples, among whom are those from the same Society of Jesus. We have seen enter there subjects who seemed initially to be little capable for various types of varied ministry. However, once they were mandated and commanded to work in the mission, they not only succeeded. But, they managed to bring much fruit for the spiritual welfare of their neighbors.

From this you can conclude regarding the extent of the value of obedience, which carries with it a further capacity to carry out so much that to us seems neither known, nor is there naturally a capacity for it.

Let us then lastly state that St. Francis’ obedience was so great that anyone who had written his biography had no hesitation in pointing out that once a Letter arrived from his Holy Founder, in which he was ordered to abandon his great present mission which was that most abundant mission, that he should withdraw from all this in the Indies, in order to return to Rome and he responded to his Superior all that he would have wanted from him.

One could not ask for more simply because such obedience surpasses all reasons, no matter how potent these may be, as the Saint was enabled to see and to think based on a strong foundation that if his Father Ignatius would have seen the spiritual gain of the souls he was presently serving, certainly he would have

instructed him that he should remain there, while in Rome there was no such work that could be done more efficaciously.

In the last analysis a thousand reasons could be invoked by the Saint on which to support himself ever more securely. And these are not like those vain and immature ideas, that we use so many times to dispense ourselves from obedience for the slightest of reasons.

However, this is not the way it was in the Saint's life because, as I have already said, St. Francis in his zealous commitment to the Apostolic Mission, in a constant fatigue endured for the salvation of souls, still never lost from his view the view the saving of his own soul, its perfection, according to that state in life that he had embraced as a religious because he concentrated on these words: *What would it serve a man to gain the entire world, if then he would lose his own soul?*



### **Novena for Christmas**<sup>59</sup>

The Birth of Jesus is a mystery which merits by us to be very minutely considered.

Now we reflect on how Jesus was born. It is known that God sent an Angel onto this earth to Tobit, to serve him as Guide. He also sent one to the Most Holy Virgin in order to announce to her the Mystery of the Incarnation.

The Son of God, the Sovereign of Heaven and of Earth, chose to spend nine months in the womb of Mary and to be born as an infant, even though He was Himself Uncreated Wisdom, He did not even exhale a single breath in order to make Himself known for that which He truly was, or to bring some relief for His assumed humanity limited to a kind of dark cell. What anguish, at least for our own understanding, there must have been in heaven when the Son of God, the object of the good pleasure of His Father, when He left heaven in order to come onto this earth!

And what was He to do here? To suffer and to die for humanity.

And here we contemplate Jesus enclosed in the womb of Mary.

Let us beg of her to give us her sentiments and let us imitate St. Joseph who, in the presence of his holy Spouse, was so enflamed with love thinking that in her virginal womb there dwelt the true Son of God.

---

<sup>59</sup> cf. Mother Naudet's *Spiritual Conferences*, pp. 109-111.

And now, permit me a reflection. But, cover your faces over, lower your eyes: how many times Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament has come into your hearts as He was received with such coldness!

And you, souls, you who desire to receive Him every day, what is your fervor when you think of Him? What are your affections? Renew your fervor for your next Communion ...

Jesus is in the Tabernacle as He was in the womb of Mary. Jesus allowed Himself to be brought anywhere she went. He not only obeys Mary His Mother, but also Joseph, His putative [foster] father. The Lord of Heaven and of Earth obeys His creature. He obeys also the Sovereigns on earth who are nothing in comparison to Him.

Mary, while carrying Him in her womb, made the journey to Bethlehem.

Joseph, why did he ever have Mary take part in this journey? Was it not enough for you to go alone? Go, go then in obedience to Caesar's laws, but, exposing the state of your wife? ... respond, why did you act thus...?

The response is already heard: *Christ was made obedient for us unto death...* ... [cf. Ph 2:8]. And this provides me with an array of reflections.

I recognize that obedience is the means of having union with God, through renouncing one's own will and by submitting one's own will entirely, as well as one's own judgment out of love for Him. This truly unites the human soul with God.

I would still have many more reflections to make over what took place before and after the birth of Jesus, but the time has already passed.

From now on, therefore, when going to receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, renew your fervor, prepare yourselves with those sentiments that St. Joseph had when with lively faith he adored Jesus, in the womb of Mary.

Faith teaches you that Jesus is in the Ciborium as He was in the womb of Mary.

And after Holy Communion unite yourselves to those sentiments and affections that Mary Most Holy had.



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Meditation on the Nativity of Jesus Christ <sup>60</sup>

Where, o my Soul, have we left our Jesus?

Let us return to Bethlehem, where Mary, bearing Jesus in her womb, went in order to obey the orders of Caesar.

See her, my soul, seeking lodging [but, she cannot find any hotel whatsoever. How can this be?] In which to house the King of kings.

The Monarch of the Universe has no place where to be born!

Could you not, O Lord, in creating the world, have made Yourself a palace, a house for Your own Divine Son? Mary is constrained to go into a stall and there give birth to the Son of God! The citizens of Bethlehem refused them lodging!

But how many times have our hearts manifested ingratitude toward Jesus!

God in creating humanity, created in each one a temple for Himself in order to dwell there. But how many times have we refused the Lord our hearts! It is not for without a deep reason that Jesus Christ chose to be born in an open space out in the country, beyond the city limits,

When a great festival is being celebrated there is chosen an open place where more people could come.

And Jesus, who was born for the entire world, chose to be born out in the open in order to provide a spectacle to both Heaven and earth.

O, my soul desires to go to the feet of Jesus, but if one does not dare so much, pray that Heaven be opened up, so that the entire heavenly court might present itself in order to see their God being born!

Eternal Father, You see Your Son, who is born in such poverty, He who is the object of our much pleasure.

And you, o Joseph, extend your arms toward Heaven in order to ask for help! What would be St. Joseph's affliction in finding himself in a place that was so poor! ... But already Mary, after she carried the Son of God in her immaculate womb for nine months, now brings him forth into the light for the salvation of the whole world.

---

<sup>60</sup> cf. Mother Naudet's *Spiritual Conferences*, pp. 111-112.

Joseph! Do you not any longer raise your affections toward Heaven, do you no longer extend your arms toward it, lower your glance, and look at Jesus as He lies on the hay...!

Here let us raise our thoughts in reflecting on the sentiments, on the affections, which Mary and Joseph would have had in the birth of Jesus...

But what are our sentiments and affections before receiving Holy Communion? Mary Most Holy and St. Joseph feel themselves exulting in their depths, in adoring the Divine Child... But what is this? No one comes from Heaven to provide courtesans for Jesus! No help comes and He is trembling from the cold...!

Oh, the inscrutable judgments of God! Two animals move about the crib of Jesus to provide a little warmth for His numb limbs. These animals have neither swaddling clothes, nor cloaks in which to carry Jesus, they simply warm Him with their breath.

Oh, how pleasant would the breath of these animals have been for the Infant Jesus!

Would that our hearts would not be so cold due to their attachment to the goods of this earth, and due to our many imperfections!

Unite yourselves with the Angels who descended from Heaven to adore their God, made an infant ...

What love of Jesus in being born so poor in the midst of such sufferings...

His love ought to enkindle ever love...

Bring your hearts close to Jesus and they will be enkindled by His divine love. But, in order to obtain this, it is necessary to moderate and to conquer one's own passions, the ardent quest for one's own interests, so that His holy love might penetrate our hearts ...

Examine to see whether your heart is attached to creatures, to earthly goods, and let us do this to detach them from all these. We have no time to lose. Each hour that passes is one less in order to prepare ourselves for the birth of Jesus.

Let us then adorn our hearts with these holy virtues in order to receive Him.



### Conference for the IIIrd Sunday after the Epiphany<sup>61</sup>

The Church, in the Gospel of today, gives us two beautiful examples of faith and confidence in God, which obtains everything, both in the leper as well as in the Centurion – in this latter there is also found this united to humility.

The union of these two virtues has provided me with the desire of explaining to you a thought of mine and a truth, of which I feel myself quite persuaded, but I do not know if I can explain it to you in a clear manner.

This thought and sentiment of mine is that there cannot be genuine humility if this is not accompanied by confidence – nor can there be a true and solid confidence without humility. This is true to such an extent that I would make one of these two virtues depend on the other. It would seem to me that something would be lacking if one did not have the other as companion.

When I speak to you about true and solid humility, I intend to speak not so much of those actions of humility that are ordinarily used. My thought is that persons are really humble in so far as they would always start out in any project with this sentiment, that accompanies them. However, the virtue of humility of which I intend to speak to you, is that which is based on self-knowledge and which increases and develops in the measure that we enter more minutely into this necessary knowledge.

St. Ignatius states, as do many others before him have noted, that whoever wishes to build a grandiose building, must first dig out a deep foundation. In other words, whoever would tend toward perfection and advance on the way to holiness, must first go quite deeply into humility, which is its genuine foundation, without which everything would fall under the slightest wind.

We ought not, then, neglect deepening ourselves in the knowledge of our own nothingness and of our non-being, so that being well persuaded about this, we might have recourse to that which possesses all. And our desire ought to be only that of genuinely serving God, of loving Him with performing acts of continuous tasks directed only toward Him.

It is necessary to understand that in order to please Him, we need to deny in these opportunities our own self-will out of love for Him, and to mortify our own self-love, to conquer ourselves then in every encounter.

---

<sup>61</sup> cf. Mother Naudet's *Spiritual Conferences*, pp. 112-114.

All this, I say, provides us with a greater opportunity of truly knowing ourselves, examining ourselves at the end of that day in which we have had the desire of practicing the various acts of virtue and of finding ourselves in lacking these that we have undergone, and in the importance of carrying out that which we want to do.

All this considered by us, places us in a sentiment of efficacious humility and one drawn from our own past experience. But, in accomplishing all this, if the knowledge of our own state of wretchedness weighs us down, and puts us in a state of pusillanimity, we come to wasting, losing that which the Lord desires. He wills that we draw some benefit from our failures and imperfections and that is that we have recourse with trust and confidence in Him, Who desires to grant you assistance and to heal you from your spiritual infirmities and miseries.

You might think of a poor leprous man full of wounds and swollen ulcers on his body, reduced to the greatest state of need without having any of the means to be able to procure for oneself the necessary care for his trouble, nor aid and assistance for him to acquire health. But it may be that this poor soul might have present to him a very rich and powerful Lord, who would extend his riches in showing the man his wealth, saying to him that these goods might indeed be of benefit to him. Through all this the poor man just looks at his own wounds and is quite afflicted over his own misery. If he does nothing, you would say that he was a crazy man who would remain in such a wretched state by his own fault.

And in fact, you would speak well in this. But this is in fact exactly what happens before the Lord when a feeble and doubtful soul, without desiring to profit by the relief that he would find in all his troubles, if, in recognizing them, he would be introduced to God and would take courage and confidence from his very humiliation.

What would it have helped that Centurion if reflecting only upon himself and finding himself a Gentile among that people who had not yet been called to the faith. So, if in seeing all this, he would have been contented in thinking and saying that he was not worthy that the Lord should enter into his house – and added nothing more. What would have happened? His beloved servant would have remained a paralytic...However, the Centurion was not content just with the healing, with the simple knowledge of himself, but headed: *say only the word and my servant will be healed!* [cf. Mt 8:3].

Such confidence was so accepted by the Lord that from Him he publicly praised the man. Nor did this show that in the Centurion his faith was firm, solid

because the Lord not only rewards him with words, but as He could see his interior, He judges whether our hearts hope and trust, as words demonstrate.

From this little that I have said, you see that it is necessary to have confidence through humility that is genuine, profound and solid. As also, through a great confidence, you need humility.

The One Who gave confidence to the leper was the One who noted the leper – this vision gave Him the great desire of his being healed. And so, in proportion to his great desire, this excited confidence in the leper toward Him in Whom he believed, he would be able to be healed.

So it is in us, that more we are persuaded that we can do nothing and we do have desires to serve. The greater that our confidence is in God, we beg Him to supply for all that we are not able to accomplish. And knowing that a true and genuine faith obtains all, we will excite it through all that we yearn for with a confidence similar to that of the Centurion, with the security that we will receive it.

Whenever then there might come to us this thought: ‘...it has been a while, even years that the Lord has gathered us and still nothing has been accomplished, established’. And perhaps it is the grumbling that goes on within us, and rather than entering into such reasoning, let us humble ourselves and see who we are in order to think in this direction.

I ask you, what are our pretensions of believing that we are really good, capable of carrying out the works of the Lord in our Institute?

However, we do not want to put off a decision, let us not place any impediment in the way of the Lord’s own works.

Let us be humble and trust in Him Who can do all and we will see the effects. We will experience with our deeds that whoever indeed trusts in God, will never remain confused and will obtain everything.



### A Few Words on the Spirit of our Institute:

***Behold Your Handmaid, let it be done according to your will!***<sup>62</sup>

Each and every time that we gather for a Conference, there is repeated by us, the ejaculatory prayer: *Behold Your Handmaid...!* But, I would like to know if there ever comes to your minds on these occasions and whether you are accustomed in those circumstances where this saying might remind you of that which makes up the very foundation of our Institute, which is the mortification of ourselves.

Just know that this ejaculatory prayer has been chosen by us not merely to have it simply on our lips and to say it, but rather that by this that we are proposing to ourselves that we should be in embracing this Institute.

Our Spirit is a realization of the very poor being of ourselves, that is, despoiled of all self-will, affection and desire that we would tend more to one selection rather than to some other, in the choice of the means to be employed in order to achieve our end. The challenge is to leave up to God the care, through obedience to fulfill in ourselves His most amiable Will, in our saying with all confidence: *Behold Your Handmaid, let Your will be done in me...!*

The perfect abnegation of ourselves is properly our Spirit, that it is this which would constitute the genuine Sister of the Holy Family.

And what it is that ought to console us is that this is the Spirit of Jesus Christ and which combines the maxims of the Gospel, since the same Lord says in this: *Whoever wants to follow after Me, let her deny herself...!* [cf. Lk 9:23].

This then is the great means in order to follow after Jesus. Behold what it is that leads you more securely without so many other means that are taken up in the spiritual life in order to reach to this principle, that of self-abnegation.

This is the highway to be embraced in a specific manner, without stopping along in other paths.




---

<sup>62</sup> It seems very interesting to the editors that in this very Conference, as contained in the *Spiritual Conferences*, in this same passage, there was stated: *The Beloved of Jesus* – while in this manuscript under study here the references are to the *Sisters of the Holy Family*. cf. *Spiritual Conferences*, p. 23.

### Advantages of the Renewal of Vows<sup>63</sup>

Under the protection and the auspices of the Holy Family, in order to conserve the memory of our offering and to manifest the spirit of our Constitutions, let us renew our vows each year.

Here we are then, very close to that solemnity, which for us ought to be great, treating of renewing our promises, of reminding ourselves of the vows that we have made to God, so that He might deign to accept them.

And because for ever more our gift should be pure and that it might be pleasing to the Lord, we make remote preparations for the spiritual retreat.

I hope that all of us will make a real commitment and that we all have the proper concern, and we will do from our part all that is possible in order to be able to renew our vows with a concerned and committed spirit for the emendation of our failings and defects in order thus to be pleasing to God.

So, in order to be able to present some ideas that might nourish our proposal, we will speak of the great importance, of the great benefit that we can bring about with the renewal of our vows.

It should be known that whoever renews her vows, does not add to their obligation, it does not increase anything more by renewing them, rather our memory is renewed with saying: 'This mind, this intellect is Yours, this purity is Yours, o Lord, this poverty in which I find myself, is all Yours. I no longer have anything more to give You, I renew the Promise, the stipulation that I made, which has been made perpetually, so I do not have to renew them in order that all have their value.

However, the vows are renewed in order to fortify our own stinginess. By surrendering our own wills, our own intellects, with sacrificing all this under the judgment of the Superior, and with willing to live poorly, disdained, the religious Sister gives to God that which she can give, and does not have anything else, because whenever it is a matter of having handed over one's own will, one's submission, and poverty, nothing more can be given.

Therefore, the Sister who understands her own lowliness, and who in God recognizes His Majesty, His greatness, it is only excessively right that you renew to God that gift, that you renew your mind and heart because such renewal which makes anew the gift, as I have already said, is an act of the will to desire to give to

---

<sup>63</sup> This Conference is not found in Mother Naudet's *Spiritual Conferences*.

God even more: more of our wills, more of our hearts, if it is even possible to have them still.

As in a Church every year there is observed the Dedication of the Church in the day in which those walls were first consecrated to God, and so it is with our own renovation. Finally, the Church is a material wall, and yet every year its festival is renewed – thus, the solemnity of the Dedication of the temple of our souls to God is making to God each year the dedication of all of ourselves.

The Church is indeed a material temple, while our souls are a spiritual temple.

If for the Church that it is found necessary to renew the festival of its dedication, with how much greater reason should we not consecrate ourselves to God and to make to Him anew the dedication of ourselves with our vows?

Because our temple is the temple of the Holy Spirit, it is a temple which has to go one day before God, is destined to give glory to God. *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind*, St. Paul says [cf. Ep 4:23]. We need to renew our interior Spirit, because the Spirit, that is renewed and regulated, is the Master of every holy and good deed.

With the renewal of our vows, there result then great advantages. In the very first place, we cannot raise ourselves from the memory that indeed we have pronounced our vows, so thus we too, go on recalling our memory to our obligations, our duties, in order to be thus able to enter into ourselves and to draw as a result from this a further great advantage. The reason is that our Institute has for its way of life that of preceding this renewal with a spiritual retreat, providing thus a bit of time in which to renew ourselves, taking for our scope of consideration to the sweeping clean and removing any little stains that there might be within us.

Thus, in our renewal we must also renew our memories of that pact made long ago with the Lord out of love, out of a good and spontaneous act of the will, with the firm proposal of wanting to observe poverty, chastity and obedience.

This is a pact and a contract which if the Sister only knew with whom she made her agreement, and that is God Himself, over which there is no other authority, and so she would never desire to be released from these.

And in fact, we see in the Holy Church, which with those who pronounce vows, to the extent she can with her authority, may remove someone from the religious state. The Church can do this without dispensing the religious from their vows and from the observance of which one is held to the extent that is possible, and upon which the Church does not choose to enter through a pact that these religious have made with God.

If a religious leaves religious life, the Church does not dispense from observing poverty, chastity and obedience, and of submitting one's judgment to the judgment of the Superior. The reason is that the pact made with God is, at least in part, if not totally, carried out even if not with all perfection, at least there remains an obligation with some perfection.

This is how important the vows are that we have with God, that bond with which we are united closely to God.

It would, then, be like a desire to make fun of God, by promising Him certain responsibilities of ours and then choosing to go back on one's word at a later time.

But tell me a bit, can God really be treated this way? If we promise something to the Pope and then later returned to him, saying: I want to take back what I previously said, and that which I promised, seems now to be an insanity.

And what craziness would this be with God of making promises and then not attending to them and one would recall for herself that which had already been given away? This is thievery the saints say.

The likes of St. Bonaventure, St. Bernard, state absolutely that it is a robbery. Tell me a bit if this is not to be considered as stealing, or at least a most unjust act, should someone give his garden to another and then ask to have it back.

Or, a certain person gives a gift of his garden to a friend, and gives it to him with no strings attached, and even draws up an official document of this transferral of ownership – but, then, after a while, the donor says to himself: 'it is indeed true, that I gave my garden to my friend. Nonetheless, I want it back with his even knowing about it, and the goes and plants a few vegetables, in order to draw from it a few cabbages and flowers'.

This is certainly a clear robbery, because the former donor goes to take hold again of that which is no longer his own, because after making the transaction of the gift, if he later then goes and takes something back without the knowledge of the recipient of the gift, this is robbery.

We have given to God the precious garden of our souls, of our spirits, and God has said to us: 'Pay attention, My Daughter, pay attention to what you are doing. The religious life gives you, or has given you, two years of Novitiate in order for you to think it over and has subjected you to some of its trials. It is just like that as soon as entering as an aspirant enters into My House, she is obliged to hand over to the hands of the superiors, to her will, to her judgment, in order to live in chastity, in

obedience, in poverty and to be exercised continuously in the acquisition of the virtues.'

The Lord has spoken up to this point.

If the spiritual exercises that precede making these holy vows, so that each one might think over well to what she is about to do, because this is a matter of promising God, for all of one's life, it is the drawing up of a formal contract, a legal instrument, with God, which cannot then later be withdrawn without offending His goodness and disdaining His Mercy.

Finally, if we do make these vows, or renew them, trust in God, Who will give you the strength to be able to put them into practice and to observe religiously and with perseverance our promises.

Oh, just take a look at this! That if our vows were not esteemed before the eyes of the blind world, this is not the way it is with the Divine Majesty.

There are also other advantages to be considered, that is: in the renewal of the Vows, we have a sign of the good pleasure of the Lord, and at the same time we have in hand a document of the tacit approval of the Holy Church. She has granted a Plenary Indulgence when we put on the religious habit, when we pronounce our vows and when we renew them, to the extent that if we should congregate every day in order to renew them, then every day we would obtain a plenary indulgence.

God has chosen to fill us with His infinite graces because the Plenary Indulgence is acquired in pronouncing these vows in public, or in private.

Courage, then, Sisters, here it is a matter of promises made to God that ought to be made manifest in our works, shown in our deeds. It is worth saying that the carrying this all out with almost scrupulosity those matters which oblige us to observe. It is a matter of keeping our word, of not joking with God, humbling ourselves fully before His Divine Majesty. This remains present to us and procures for us that through our sincere humiliations, we can serve Him faithfully and exactly in all those matters that He asks of us and which we are obliged to carry through.

Experience has allowed us to see in the Saints that the renewal of vows is a great advantage for the soul and in order to reform ourselves in those matters in which we find ourselves lacking and also to renew the vows of each one in particular and of the entire religious state together.

With this renewal, which is to treat of the most excellent matter that the religious Sister is capable of doing with herself, ought to be most pleasing to the Lord, in order to thank Him who has been abundant with her with His mercies and the continual demonstrations of love which God grants us in the assistance, the help in our needs, both spiritual as well as temporal.

Of, if only our dispositions would be renewed in the Spirit, they will be renewed in fervor, in zeal, in charity toward God and toward our neighbors. And with all the more reasons do we have for renewing our promises by the Holy Family, the most elect and copious blessings.

If our dispositions be such, then we will renew our spirit to have all present miseries removed from us. As daughters of Adam, we cannot now dispense ourselves from all this. There need to be taken away from us all those obstacles for the acquisition of virtues, through the observance of our vows, in order to be genuine and devout Sisters of the Holy Family. Ah, you too must hope also for that correspondence that we have to await from the goodness of the Lord.

Let us persuade ourselves firmly that it would not help for us to renew our vows, if we are not renewed in the Spirit, in despoiling ourselves from our miseries.

How could it ever help us to present ourselves before God in order to renew our promises, when we would not already have the necessary dispositions? *Be renewed in the spirit of your mind*, says St. Paul [cf. Ep 4:23]. Renew yourselves in the interior Spirit and put off the old man, put on the new man, take away all your failures, your old defects and put on yourselves those new virtues, that serve as the receptacle to place within your soul. This is offered to God with your memory, with your intellect, and with your freedom. And by means of this, also your bodies may come to be offered, subjecting them to fatigue, to mortification, to tribulations, since our bodies need to cooperate in the material nature of our actions, because they, too, one day will share in that same happiness that the soul will enjoy.

In this manner, we need to prepare ourselves in these days with bringing about within us that soul-searching. And having found defects, we need to propose correcting ourselves of these and to do, from our part, all that is possible as if we were about to die.

St. Francis Xavier, not being content to renew his vows twice a year, he renewed them every day, constantly, because every day, his death awaited. He did not want to go to God, nor want to die, without having first renewed his promises, his gift. Therefore, having accomplished all this in the course of his years on this earth, he could then await that expressed promise in the Gospel, that God will grant the

treasure of His glory, of His benedictions, of His graces, to anyone who would be vest herself only in that which pertains to God: *I will give you a treasure and an eternal treasure.* [cf. Lk 18:30].



***Learn of Me Who am meek and Humble of Heart!***<sup>64</sup>

**- Jesus Christ –**

**On Sweetness**

***Blessed are the meek for they will possess the earth!*** [cf Mt 5:5].

Sweetness and gentleness of heart [according to St. Francis de Sales] is a virtue that is rarer than chastity, since it is the purpose of charity.

Whoever is called to live in community has to love this virtue. For those of us who need to be in constant contact with our neighbors, it is a necessity.

St. Thomas Aquinas says that sweetness is a virtue in which resides the true nobility of the soul. It means not to be angered over anything.

About St. Francis Xavier, all who visited him remembered his admirable sweetness.

In the life of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the reapers once made fun of him, while he stopped to listen to them, and then he blessed them.

With sweetness, you will be affable, loving and humble, and thus you will win over the hearts of others.

The Abbot Servius was badly treated by a villain, and responded to him with such sweetness and so won the villain over, and also himself by virtue.

A sweet word often suffices in order to placate irate bitterness, as a single word is often capable of desolating another soul.

The Spirit of God, while it is also enkindled by zeal, always ends with sweetness. Sweetness also conquers the unforeseen moments of anger.

St. Remigius foreseeing a great famine, harvested abundant grain. Some evil-doers attacked him with fire. He ran, but was not in time. He simply got down off his horse and warmed himself saying: ‘The fire is always good!’

---

<sup>64</sup> This Conference is not contained in Mother Naudet’s *Spiritual Conferences*.

There are certain natures who might seem to be very meek, at least as long as everything goes their way, but just as soon as they are challenged, they begin to heat up!

Such as these may be called burning coals, hidden under the dust.

St. Francis de Sales, the more he was mal-treated, the more tranquil did he seem. The great opposition and many contradictions that brought to him only such sweet peace, that he had nothing else that would seem to unite him the more to God.

Blessed Mother Marie de Chantal was insulted by someone, who then came to love her because of her reaction, and became a religious sister. She stated that she had never heard a better panegyric.

If you really want to attend to the care of souls fruitfully, it befits you to spread about the balsam of sweetness, on the wine of your zeal. This is so that is not excessively ardent, but rather benign, peaceful, long-suffering and full of compassion, since the human spirit is one of such a timber that undergoing rigor, it becomes ever more steeled, where sweetness entirely softens it.

And then we ought to remember that Jesus Christ has come to bless the good wills and, if we allow Him to govern, little by little he will render them fruitful.

While St. Francis Xavier was preaching in Macao, to a great multitude of people, the children and the people themselves threw stones at him and he did not even give the slightest indication of a disturbed spirit. From this gentleness of his, there followed many conversions.

In community, union and peace ought to be placed before every other good and these depend on putting up with unpleasantness, to giving in to each other, and treating all mutually with sweetness. This is a real source of peace and a bond of perfection, which unites hearts

St. John Berchmans, having in the Novitiate the charge of 'Admonitor', stated that he had never referred anything to the superior, unless first he had consulted with God before the Most Blessed Sacrament. This he did both so that he would not disturb the peace of others, and even further, in order not to be deceived by his own personal judgment and affection.

It is a matter of great importance to render one's own conversation pleasant. In order to do this it is necessary to show oneself humble, patient, respectful, cordial, pleasant and condescending in all that can licitly be done.

To guard oneself from contradicting, when there is no real evident necessity, means that this is most dutiful and important. When any contradiction must be interjected, it should be done with all sweetness and particular dexterity without crudely violating the spirit of others. Ordinarily, though, arguments begin more from the attachment to our own sentiments, rather than for any love of truth [St. Francis de Sales].

St. John Berchmans was never seen arguing with anyone, and was loved by all.

As for St. Francis de Sales: ‘resist faithfully in your impatience, practicing not only with reason, but even against reason, with holy courtesy and sweetness with all, but particularly among those with whom one finds boring.’

Holy sweetness consists in seeing, serving, honoring and treating lovingly in contacts with those with whom one does not go much in accord, and who show themselves often contrary, ungrateful and bothersome.’

In seeing our own imperfections, you must not just be displeased, but it should be a displeasure that is motivated by humility, tranquility and peace. It should never be turbulent or disdainful that most often does more harm than good.

When St. Aloysius Gonzaga committed any defects, this did not sadden him, but led him to concentrate further himself and he would say: ... *the earth has yielded her fruit...* [cf. Ps 66:7].

St. Teresa used to say: ‘you should not become afflicted from aridity, nor from inquietude, nor from distractions, nor from wayward thoughts, if you really want to acquire that freedom of Spirit and not become always troubled.’

St. Francis de Sales stated: ‘be very sweet and most gracious in the midst of the busy-ness that you have, since the others expect this good example from you.’

The Abbot David lived 47 years with 170 monks, but was never seen disturbed nor angry.

St. Anthony the Abbot was seen always joyful, so that for him, every day seemed like Easter Sunday, and this was known among all. And that joy was motivated by the great hope he nurtured in Paradise.

[St. Francis de Sales’ view]: ‘All thoughts that bring disturbance and agitation of spirit, are not in any way from God, Who is the Prince of Peace, but always come either from the devil or from self-love or from that esteem that we nurture toward

ourselves: these are three fonts where our disturbances lie hidden, and so it is necessary to reject them.’

It is necessary to stand firmly until the end of our good undertakings, and it is expedient to use all the pleasantness and sweetness in the means to achieve such an end ordained *toward the imitation of the divine Wisdom*.

Use all your strength not to slip into anger and if you do fall there, do everything possible to place yourself in tranquility, but do it with sweetness in order not to aggravate the wound.

[St. Francis de Sales’ remedies against wrath]:

1º Prevent it, whenever you can – or, at least reject it promptly, turning your thoughts to something else.

2º In imitation of the Apostles, whenever they saw the sea turbulent, had recourse to God, to Whom pertains placing our hearts in peace.

3º During the rage of the irascible man, do not speak, nor do anything regarding the point that he is trying to make.

4º Force yourselves to practice acts of sweetness towards the person from whom the disturbance is heard.

Another means is to accustom yourself to perform all your own tasks, whether little, or great, and to give your own opinion with sweetness.



### **Perfection**<sup>65</sup>

God has to be our Model and example. We must continually look to Him and we are not to look to others.

From looking at the failings of others, there come to light so many judgments, criticisms, failures in charity and the neglect of ourselves.

It is befitting that there be renewed often our proposals and every day to look at this as the very first task. In this way, so many saints have lived, and in particular, St. John Berchmans: our proposals languish unless they are renewed.

---

<sup>65</sup> This Conference is not contained in Mother Naudet’s *Spiritual Conferences*.

Perfection consists in action and suffering: to perform one's duty, to accomplish it in the manner that is due, with diligence and perfection.

To suffer all, whether it be just a lot, or a great deal as it comes - all that is contrary to what would be our own choice, loving more that which is contrary to us, which comes to us from others, even more than those choices that we would have made.

It is better to fix firmly our perfection in this simple above-noted idea, rather than breaking our heads over an issue in trying to study it from books. It is much easier to ponder the matter in studying and there thousands of thoughts of speculation may emerge in our minds and yet nothing is decided on by the will.

This idea, let us repeat it again, what genuine perfection really is, uncovers two deceptions: the first is to make perfection consist in sensible consolation, becoming content with this and neglecting to do whatever is required of us by the duty to which we have been assigned, from the rule, from one's own duties. One becomes satisfied solely with proposals made, or even to failing to carry these duties out whenever consolation is lacking to us.

The second deception is to plan not to advance in virtue in the state of aridity and affliction of spirit. The truth of the matter is this state is favorable to significant advances, when one does nothing more than deciding to support all this out of love for God.

Let us tend to perfection with simplicity, and with fervor, and we will acquire that peace of spirit, which is manifested also in our expressions, in our external behavior. This attitude will render us humble and submitted to our superiors, being charitable with our companions, ready and diligent in the face of all our duties.

In the second place perfection consists also in performing diligently all our tasks and all being done out of love for God, thinking that all the duties and activities assigned to us, whether from the rule, or from Superiors, all in the last analysis, comes from the Lord, considering all of the above as taking the place of God Himself.

Above all, let us make use of this diligence in the observance of the Rules, reminding us of how much the Lord will rigorously examine us. We will be examined likewise on the actions of our own choice and even more on all those which were our real duty.

Even if we do not perform penances or other works not specifically enjoined on us by the rule, this notwithstanding, we can still achieve perfection. But we simply

cannot achieve this if we omit, or if we perform badly all that comes to us, prescribed from the Rule.

Only in this manner, do we act like the saints, as St. John Berchmans: *My greatest Cross is common life.*



### **Mortification of the Senses<sup>66</sup>**

Unhappy Eve who brought death into this world through the portals of her senses. She listened to the serpent's flattery, looked at the apple, she extended her hand to pick it, she smelt it, she tasted it. And so, too, also Adam and in him all of us share in his sin.

God has bestowed free will on humanity. This can be considered as in the midst of the Spirit and in the flesh.

The Spirit wishes to possess it because it properly pertains to the Spirit, but the flesh offers opposition to this because it wants to give reign to its passions, and there is thus born within us all a continual contrast.

The Spirit and the flesh then become as two enemies that are between each other in open war, and this is continual.

Internal mortification cannot be had [as the spirit of our Institute prescribes for us] without external mortification. This does not immediately include taking the discipline, fasting, the use of little chains – but rather in the mortification of our senses: sight hearing, smell, taste and touch.

It is right here that many are deceived in believing that they have internal mortification, without exercising custody of their senses. A city without walls, a house without doors, a garden without a protecting hedge will be devastated, sacked by thieves. Thus, our soul will be captured and exterminated by infernal thieves, if the senses are not guarded, as these are the walls, the hedge of the soul itself.

It is not possible to drain a fountain, unless one removes its source, unless there are removed those canals through which the water flows. When these have been taken away, more easily may the fountain be drained, or the water basin. Thus, our soul may not be emptied from earthly affections, unless its canals, its conduits, which our senses are, are taken away by mortifying them.

---

<sup>66</sup> This Conference is not contained in Mother Naudet's *Spiritual Conferences* .

God has given us the senses so that they might serve the soul, and not the other way around, with the soul serving the senses.

God has provided us with hearing in order to listen to His voice; but the soul, also without one's ears, can still hear God.

He has given us language in order to praise Him – and the soul can praise its God even without the tongue.

He has given us the sense of smell in order to make use of it and the soul can sense the odor of the fruits of eternal life even without the benefit of this sense.

He has given us the sense of touch in order to take hold of Him alone and the soul possesses Him without this sense.

A garden seems beautiful and delicate because it is full of a variety of flowers that are both attractive and sweet-smelling, and with tasty fruit. But if this is not well protected, it will be ravaged by animals, thieves. Thus, the soul is a delicious garden of all the virtues, but if these are not guarded with the mortification of the senses, the soul will end up in ruin.

The soul, therefore, must make use of the senses, as faculties submitted to it. There will come the time that the senses, too, will be contented and that will happen when we resurrect. The soul, until one expires, if it has worked well, immediately will go to enjoy God. However, the body has to wait the final judgment, under ground. And why? In order to make us understand the superiority that the soul is meant to enjoy over the senses and that also without their help, one can see, hear, taste and clasp to the bosom of its God.

And here let us reflect that although all creatures ought to employ their senses in the service of God, the Religious, too, are particularly held to this.

A Spouse of Jesus Christ no longer has her unbridled freedom but she is totally under the power of her Divine Spouse. Therefore, our soul, transporting herself with God to the foot of the sacred altar, with chastity, poverty and obedience – is no longer some mistress of herself. Rather, she has given to her spouse, freedom over her. Therefore, she ought not grant such freedom to her own senses.

Therefore, mortification of the senses, to place herself in possession of all that is of the Spirit, and indeed, rather to Jesus, because she is espoused to Him.



**According to the End of our Institute, one's Own perfection is annexed to the  
Salvation of Souls <sup>67</sup>**

**The Passion for souls is found wherever there is authentic love for Jesus.**

Each one of us can be an Apostle to assist in saving the souls, thanks to a most powerful means at our disposal, but one that is most simple and common to every age, condition, to all time, for as much as it is said to be the means of *intercessory prayer*.

In intercessory prayer for others heaven is opened in order to have the triumphant graces descend on souls that are lost and that are on the way to be lost.

Oh! If only we would come to know how our prayers intercede for others! We would be able to close off places for them, in a supreme grade by us. Sin, to prohibit the opening of taverns, where both body and soul are sold cheaply. We could likewise impede also the mortal sins of our brothers and sisters.

The prayer that a Christian [and that of a Religious Sister and a Spouse of Jesus Christ] offers up to God, in order to obtain the salvation, attracts on the person those most singular graces that he or she could never achieve in obtaining, by praying solely for oneself. God is glorified then in a supreme level by us. And this is the instinct of the saints...

[This is taken from the Fascicle entitled '*Madonna di Pompei*'].

□

□ □ □

□

---

<sup>67</sup> This brief page may not be part of the ***Thirty or so Conferences*** transcribed by Mother Gagnere, but is published here. [cf. Presentation, p. 119].

### Bibliography

- D. Baiani - M. Roggero (1977), *The school in Italy to the Counter-Enlightenment*, Turin, 1977.
- A. Bonfatti (1964), *Sacred Oratory, Brescia*, 1964.
- S. Cabibbo (1989), "*Ignorantia Scripturarum, ignorantia Christi east.*" *Tradition and practice of Scripture texts, monastic women of the seventeenth century*, "the historic Italian Magazine" The (1989) p. 85-124.
- M. Caffiero (1994), *the explosion mistica social apostolate late Baroque (1650-1850)*, in *Women and Faith. Holiness and religious life in Italy*, c. L. and G. Scaraffia Zarri, Bari, 1994, p. 327-373.
- N. Dalle Vedove:
- *From the courtyard of the cloister. Donna Leopoldina Naudet, foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family*, Verona, 1954.
  - (1971-91), *St. Gaspar Bertoni. Founder of the Stigmatines Apostle of Youth*, Rome, 1971-91 (6 vols.).
  - (1980), *Leopoldina Naudet*, in "Dictionary of the institutions of Perfection" 6 (1980) et al. 251-254.
- F. De Giorgi (1994), *Religious congregations of the nineteenth century and the problem of education in the process of modernization in Italy*, "Annals of the history of education and educational institutions» The (1994) p. 169-205.
- M. Flois (1980), *Paccanari Nicholas*, in "Dictionary of the institutions of Perfection" 6 (1980) et al. 1065-66.
- S. Fontana (1993) ... *not me, you. Leopoldina Naudet and sisters of the Holy Family*. Verona, 1993.
- S. Franchini (1986), *The education of women in Italy after unification: a research paths on elite public boarding schools*, in 'passata and present "10 (1986), p. 53-94.
- P. Galletti (1926). *Short memories around the Society of Jesus in Italy*, Rome, 1926.

- D. Gallium (1971), *Introduction to the history of religious foundations in Verona in the early nineteenth century, in the Church and spirituality in the nineteenth century Italian*, Verona, 1971, p. 227-306.
- M. Joy (1994), *Because of annihilation. An unpublished text of the mystical 500*, Rome-Brescia, 1994.
- L. Guerri (1987):
- The debate on the woman in the eighteenth century. Turin 1987.
  - *The Bride obedient. Women and Marriage in the discussion of the eighteenth century Italy*, Turin, 1988.
- C. Ossola (1975), *Figuration rhetoric and internal literary "salons" (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries)*, "Italian Literature" 4 (1975) p. 471-492.
- I. Porciani (to c. Than) (1987), *Women in school. The education of women in Italy in the nineteenth century, documentary and iconographic*, Siena, 1987.
- G. Root (1968), *Annals of Antonio Rosmini Serbati, II*, Milan, 1968.
- A. Rao (1992), *Knowledge veiled. The education of women in Italian debate of the late eighteenth century*, in *Misogyny*, c. A. Milan, Rome, 1992, pp.. 243-310.
- L. Ricaldone (1984), *The debate, woman in the patriotic literature of the period (1796-99)*. "Englische Studien" 7 (1984) p. 23-46.
- G. Rocca:
- (1973), *Pietro Leonardi*, in "Dictionary of the Institutes of Perfection" 5 (1973), coll. 587-589.
  - (1992), *Women Religious. Contributed to the status of women in Italy in the XIX-XX centuries*. Rome, 1992.
- Antonio Rosmini (1934), *unpublished autobiographical writings*, BC. Enrico Castelli, Rome, 1934.
- Le siècle des Lumières 'SET' Bible*, c. Y. Belaval and D. Bourel (*Bible de tous les temps* 7), Paris, 1986.

G. Stofella (1954), *Letters of Venerable Servant of God Fr. Gaspar Bertoni Founder of the priests of the SS. Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, Verona, 1954.

A Valerio :-

- (1981), "Patience, vigilance, draw aside." *The issue of women do in the official documents of the Church (1848-1914)*, "New DWF» 16 (1981) p. 60-
- (1992), *Sunday from Heaven. Prophecy and Politics in a mystical Rina Spoleto*, 1992.
- (1994): *the preaching of women, since the Pre-tridentini the first half of the seventeenth century*, in *preaching in Italy after the Council of Trent in the sixteenth and eighteenth century*, Rome, 1994, pp. 177-206.

M. Vanzo (1985), *Magdalene of Canossa, Foundress of the Daughters and Sons of Charity (1774-1835)*. Rome, 1985.

Virnot MT :

- (1975), *The charisme de Sainte-Sophie Madeleine*, Paris, 1975 (2 vols.).
- (1789), *the normal system for use by schools of 'domains of Her Sicilian Majesty explained in its whole extent*, Naples 1789.

