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RAVIGNAN
LAST RETREAT

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RAVIGNAN'S

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LAST RETREAT.

GIVEN TO THE CARMELITE NUNS OF THE
MONASTERY, RUE DE MESSINE, PARIS,
IN NOVEMBER, 1857.



Translated from the French

BY

F. M'DONOGH MAHONY.

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TO

THE SISTERS OF THE PRESENTATION
CONVENT OF S. JOSEPH,

CAHIRCIVEEN, CO. KERRY,

This Work is Inscribed

IN MEMORY OF LONG ACQUAINTANCESHIP AND

"AULD LANG SYNE,"

BY

THE TRANSLATOR.

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LETTER INTRODUCTORY.

J. M. J.



DEAR REV. MOTHER,—May the Grace of the Holy Ghost be ever in your soul !

Our Lord's mercy having granted us a few days' retreat under the guidance of Père de Ravignan, in the month of November, 1857, we thought that so precious a faith should not remain shut up in our Monastery, and we were eager to spread throughout our whole holy Order the same salutary fruits which it brought forth in ourselves.

To the care of a pious ecclesiastic to whom we entrusted the notes taken during Père de Ravignan's instructions, we owe the consolation of being enabled to realise our design. Permit us, Rev. Mother, in our gratitude, to recommend to your prayers this virtuous priest, who belongs to a congregation which

formerly deserved well at the hands of the Carmelites in France.

We ask you also for your prayers, and for a general communion of your pious community for the generous lady (already known by her charities in many of our houses) who is pleased to send, at her own expense, a copy of this pious Retreat to each of our monasteries. She hopes that all the religious will profit thereby, and will not forget to make a pious memento for her at the feet of our Good Master,—and that is her only ambition. Deign to make little Carmel, dear Rev. Mother, a participator in the same favour, and we beg to salute you with the greatest humility in the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary Immaculate.

Your most obedient Servant,

ST. MARIE DE LA CROIX,

R. C. I.

PARIS,

Feast of Mount-Carmel, *July 16, 1859.*

From our Monastery of Reparation to the Sacred Face of our
Saviour, of the Carmelites of Paris,

5 Rue de Messine.

PREFACE TO THE FRENCH EDITION.



THE discourses composing this Retreat were delivered by Père de Ravignan, three months before his death, to the Carmelite nuns of the Monastery of the Rue de Messine. They themselves, with pious care, gathered together the last apostolic words let fall from a mouth so revered. They thought they ought not bury this treasure in the earth, but ought rather share it with their Sisters in the different convents which follow the rule of S. Theresa, and with all religious souls, both in and out of the cloister, who love to feed on the holy teachings of evangelical perfection.

However faithfully and exactly they sought to reproduce Père de Ravignan's own words, it may be readily supposed that they have not always thoroughly succeeded. And even if they had, we must not wonder if we find in simple meditations, given by way of dialogue

to nuns, neither perfect harmony of style, rounded periods, nor great oratorical effect. All the editor's work has consisted in removing the unavoidable slips of easy and improvised dialogue ; nothing has been added, and but little abridged ; it would be a matter of scruple to go farther, and, by a desire for introducing numerous corrections, to expose oneself to alter, however little, the original ideas of the holy religious.

The only merit, too, that accrues to us is the highest recognition of Père de Ravignan's ordinary style in his pious discourses, in the following pages. Here indeed may be found that austere and simple, that grave and familiar language, and, without ever going in quest of eloquence, finding it incessantly,—the eloquence of inspiration,—at its purest and most exalted source, the love of God and men. There may we recognise the sweet unction of his words, the penetrating vivacity of his zeal, the manly energy of his faith, and his vast experience in ministering to souls. We hope still for better things, and we long for more ; if we take our food from these discourses, delivered for the sake of being medi-

tated on rather than for the sake of being read, we cannot escape the salutary contagion of apostolic zeal which penetrated that priestly soul, burdened in vain by the weight of a body worn out by labour and already on the threshold of the grave, with accents of sublime charity not of earth, but which the Seraphic Theresa seems to have inspired from the heights of heaven, as a last consolation for her beloved daughter, who can never see him more.

In this Retreat, Père de Ravignan, following his invariable custom, has not departed from the ordinary course of S. Ignatius' *Exercises*. The Exercises, as everyone knows, comprise a certain number of weeks and days, which the preacher can vary according to the needs of the congregation, or according to the time at his disposal. The word *day*, any more than the word *week*, does not necessarily signify, in the language of S. Ignatius, the interval of time which the expression is generally used to denote; by this word S. Ignatius simply means a time, or a phase of the Retreat; and the preacher, according to circumstances, can limit to one or more days the exercises of the

week, or can abridge or lengthen the exercises of the day. Agreeably to this power, Père de Ravignan confined himself to indicating, without giving them in detail, the exercises of the third day, while he devoted two days to the exercises of the sixth.

In addition to the meditations for the Retreat, we have given two discourses delivered by Père de Ravignan to the nuns of the same convent, which have been gathered together by them in like manner. Some fragments and ideas, collected from various sources, complete the volume.

PARIS,
Feast of S. Louis de Gonzagnes, *June 24*, 1859.

MEDITATION FOR THE EVE OF THE RETREAT.



BELOVED Sisters, you are entering on retreat, and the first thing you ought to do is to ask yourselves this question: What is retreat? What is the intention of our Lord towards us in giving us these holy and precious days? What is the intention of our Blessed Mother who looks down on us from the heights of heaven?

We find the answer in the teachings of the holy *Exercises*, as they have been modelled and bequeathed to us by the soldier of Maureze, who himself received them from the Holy Ghost, his first and only Master. Not a word has been changed in them since that time. In this golden book we find the conditions necessary to be fulfilled in order to profit by these holy Exercises; two words sum up everything under this head,—retreat

is the labour of the soul. The one with the other, the one by the other; labour by rest, and rest by labour.

And first, rest,—the salutary and wonderfully efficacious rest of the soul. Why? Because the first thing you ought to do on entering on this retreat, Sisters, is to cast yourselves into the hands of your Creator, like a block of clay, in order that He may remodel you; in order that He may work in your favour a new creation, a new being. “My God, create in me a pure heart, and renew the spirit of uprightness and justice within me. O my God, I give myself to Thee to do unto me according to Thy will.”

This offering must be made with the desire of forgetting the world, and of abandoning yourselves; it must be made with a generous heart. There must be no hesitating weakness,—no, Sisters, but great courage, because God requires much of us during retreat. What is it that God requires of you? You know not at the end of these holy days, and, in fine, neither is it the time to know. Later, the light will come. From this time until then, whenever anything causes you uneasi-

ness, or fear, you must banish it, because it would impair your rest.

This rest has still another element,—solitude. But are you not always in solitude? That may be ; but you need a more perfect solitude, a more absolute interior solitude by even separation from your customary occupations, and, above all, by the entire separation of yourselves in order that you may find God alone. Now, the solitude and the separation of retreat consist in the religious and conscientious observance of silence. Retreat is perpetual silence ; there must not be a word beyond what the strictest necessity requires, there must not be a voluntary thought to distract you from God. Be ye, Sisters, penetrated with this idea. Have nothing more at heart than the offering of all that you are to God, by silence and rest ; you shall draw therefrom marvellous fruits.

S. Ignatius says that retreat is more profitable to the soul than any other exercise to which she can devote herself, because, in retreat, the soul is exclusively united to God. Believe me, there is immense profit in the solitude of these days ; the world can still

penetrate behind the cloister and the gratings; but in retreat there is a more complete separation than ever,—there is silence, calm, rest, certain progress.

We have already said, Sisters, that retreat is the labour of the soul. The soul needs exercise as much as the body, and this exercise, or labour of the soul, consists in examination, meditation, and contemplation, which prepare and dispose it to a second very important and very needful labour. At certain periods of our lives we require to reckon with ourselves, and to see if there is not in our soul some inclination, some desire, contrary to the rule of our holy vows, and contrary to what God expects of us. Then I stand in presence of myself, I reckon with my conscience, I weigh my inclinations, and more than once do I say to myself: "That is not right".

When we discern our failings, and see what is not conformable to our holy state, we must immediately uproot and check our ill-regulated passions, and make way for the restoration of free will, in order to seek and to find the will of God for the reformation of our

lives. That labour is expressed in one word, you know it well,—victory over self.

Victory over self! it is a great word! victory over self—always! There will be always battles to fight and victories to gain. We must always recommence our lives, and let us, therefore, cast ourselves into the hands of our Creator, in order that He may remodel us. In Him, by Him, and for Him, we see what ought to be checked, and what ought to be practised; then, we are free to act with the light of understanding.

You must, therefore, be careful in retreat, and above all at its close, to devote yourselves to one thing,—to approaching God, and tasting of His favours. For the soul the all-important point is to reach God; if she becomes wedded to many things her occupations distract her from Him; she loses recollection, strength, and vigour; it becomes impossible for her to reach God alone.

But remember, Sisters, that prayer is everything. This labour of retreat is in the spirit of prayer; because, since we are bound to seek virtue and to check vice, we are bound above all to co-operate with grace, and to cast

ourselves into the hands of God. How can we do this? By prayer. Is not prayer the rest of the soul? Should we not seek in prayer peace and strength alike? You may then say with S. Augustine: "Thou alone art sufficient for me, O my God!" and again, "Give me, O Lord, Thy commandments, and command me according to Thy will!"

Retreat, then, in two words is, *Rest and Labour*. Rest,—separation, recollection, silence. Labour,—seeking the will of God, ascertaining the will of the infinite charity of Jesus towards us, and conforming ourselves thereto. You see that this labour and rest consist first in seeking God, in order that He may operate upon us; and, secondly, in destroying in ourselves everything that is not God. Sisters, enter on this labour with joy and generosity of purpose, and, believe me, you have much to obtain from it. Enter, too, on this rest with pleasure. Enter on it with Mary Immaculate, with your Blessed Mother, and, believe me, you shall draw therefrom lasting consolations.

RAVIGNAN'S LAST RETREAT.

FIRST DAY.

EXERCISE I.

MEDITATION ON THE END OF MAN.

“MAN is created to praise, to honour, and to serve God, and by this means to save his soul.” With this simple and profound truth, S. Ignatius opens his *Exercises*.

We can reduce this fundamental truth to two ideas. First, we receive everything from God; secondly, we are bound to refer everything to God, that is to say, to return everything to Him. When I say everything, I mean chiefly what is in ourselves,—spirit, heart, soul, all entire.

And we may first remark that we receive everything from God. Everything—good and evil, com-

fort and trials ; the holy indifference which does not make us estimate ourselves the more, nor desire one thing more than another,—everything comes to me from God, from whom is all my good.

We should receive everything from God with profound faith, we should believe sincerely that everything comes to us from God, that He has given us everything to draw us to Him, with no other end than Himself ; we should believe every day, at every instant, that He renews in us the benefits for which we were created, that He creates us anew for Himself alone.

Have I perfectly understood hitherto that I receive everything from God ? Do I approach God with this lively sentiment of faith ? And yet this sentiment should animate all my existence, it should be my life according to the words of the Apostle : *The just man liveth by faith.* To live by faith is nothing more than the firm conviction that we receive everything from God, and that everything ought to guide us to Him.

We should receive everything from God, not merely with lively faith, but also with entire dependence. God is the Master, and I am the slave ; I am bound to obey Him only, to serve Him, and to serve no other than Him ; is this what I have done ? Is this, then, my only object in everything,

to know God, to love God, and to serve God? Yet this is my end, and this shall henceforth be my life, at least I shall ask the grace to let it be so.

Secondly, Sisters, we are bound to refer everything to God. This is our duty,—my body, my soul, my existence, my whole self, health, sickness, worldly goods, pleasures, sorrows, poverty, riches,—I am bound to refer them all to God, and why? Because He hath given me all to this end. This thought should first inspire a feeling of gratitude within me. What happiness for a soul to say to herself: “I am bound to give everything to God, who Himself was the first to give me everything. Gratitude and praise be for ever to the good and great God!” To praise Him is a necessity for every creature, but for you, Sisters, it is more than that,—your mission is to give glory to God. Each one of you ought to say to herself: “My life must give honour to God. In my vocation, in my consecration, in my profession, I am bound to be of honour to God.”

Another sentiment most commendable towards God is respect. This sentiment embraces fear, but a fear full of love.

We are bound to respect God, to respect Him deeply, above all things, to respect Him as our Father; and then this outburst of filial fear escapes

from our heart : “ What, my God, Thou hast done everything for me, and is it possible that I could displease Thee, or offend Thee? No, my God, no ! ” Respect of God everywhere, always,—at the holy office, in holy prayer. How often do we not respect God ! Alas ! in my past life how many actions are there that respect not God !

Together with respect, devotion of heart is still needed ; a soul that is not devout cannot respect God, cannot love Him ; but you, Sisters, you are devoted to God, you love Him, and you long to share in His kingdom and His glory. Oh ! be devout ; give everything to God, forgetting all else in Him ; forget the world, forget yourselves for God alone. This is that true and constant devotion which alone constitutes happiness ; but remember that this devotion must be accompanied by great courage, for there will be sacrifices in thus referring everything to God ; there are sacrifices, and there will be always. But what matters it ? This is our life, the end for which we were created, our destination,—to sacrifice everything to God with devotion and courage, and to find everything in God in eternity.

Let us, Sisters, recall S. Stanislaus to mind, that amiable saint who died so young and so perfect under whose protection you are entering on your

Let us, then, always bury ourselves in the almighty graces of God !

EXERCISE III.

MEDITATION ON HOLY INDIFFERENCE.

The reflections we have made in the two foregoing meditations, necessarily lead us to this conclusion :—

Therefore, I must be indifferent.

Beloved Sisters, we are bound to be indifferent without choice or will of our own ; to love health no more than sickness, honour no more than obloquy, riches no more than poverty, life no more than death. During these holy Exercises, the soul ought to cast herself into total indifference, like scales not bearing weights, in order to go to God ; the balance preserves an equilibrium, it inclines neither to one side nor to the other. And this can be readily believed, namely, that if the soul inclines to one side before God hath spoken to her, it is not the side of God.

Therefore, then,—indifference.

This is the necessary condition for choosing well, for leading a good life, for obeying promptly, and for suffering patiently.

Bear this, Sisters, well in mind ; without indifference you could never make a good choice, and you have past experience to convince you of it. Whenever you allowed your soul to be inclined to attach herself to anything of her own free will, did you not then experience fatigue, agitation, trouble, suffering? If we except from this the trials sent, or permitted by God, affliction of spirit is always the result of the soul's want of indifference. If you possess this virtue, it disappears entirely. Indifference is justice, order, peace, and in the same way it is happiness and true liberty. That is logic. This happiness and liberty follow the soul through all vicissitudes. I am suffering, I have trials. What does that do for me? It is the will of God that is being fulfilled in me. Or again, I am tried in affection, wounded in self-love, I feel bruised and heartbroken,—what matter? God wills it. I will it also. I accept it, I behold but one thing,—the will of God. There is joy, peace, and happiness. On the other hand, immediately I follow my own will without consulting the will of God, and abandon my heart to sensual affection, I feel an indefinable malady, because I am out of order.

Wherefore indifference, that complete denial of will, which rests at nothing, is alone rest.

I do not say that we obtain this indifference all at once, but we must try to do so.

Let us, Sisters, examine the secrets of our hearts to find the source of the obstacles to this indifference. Have we not some attachment, or hankering after position, wealth, or family? Some too sensual affection, some desire too little submissive to divine consolation, some preference for employment? Those obstacles must be made to vanish; and, hence, we must fight them. Battle is the first means for attaining indifference. This battle is necessary, it will give you life. And this battle will last unto death, because we cannot die without there being in us some radical influences to draw us away from God, ensnare our will, and incline us to evil.

Patience, O religious souls! Remove every obstacle courageously; but do not exact, do not require complete victory on the spot, namely, perfect and entire indifference; you must first voluntarily make up your mind to seek it incessantly in the midst of impressions, inclinations, and natural affections, to find grace and the divine will, and, by this means, to eradicate preconceived preferences. I should not prefer one thing beyond another; no,

a thousand times, no ; because that would be my own will, and I want to do only the will of God ; everything that is not the divine will is a phantom, a caprice,—is nature !

Sisters, this indifference must be attained at any price ; but observe the chief point,—the mere will is everything ; contrary impressions are nothing, absolutely nothing.

Nay, more, we must not seek to embrace everything, to do everything at once,—that is impossible. I take up, therefore, one thing, and one thing only ; I see that only, I think of that only, I seek that only ; to be delivered from this only obstacle all my efforts are directed at this moment. There is real strength in this limited choice. Why ? Because the soul directing all her powers to one object, does not divide, but concentrates, her resources. The saints never chose any other path in the correction of their faults, or in the acquisition of virtues. And, in effect, Sisters, what is a saint ? A saint is a man who has one fixed idea. Behold your holy mother¹ ; the glory of God and the salvation of souls was her only thought, her sole strength, and with her nothing was impossible ; she conquered every obstacle, she triumphed over her passions, over the world, and the devil.

¹ S. Theresa.

To battle must be joined constant prayer ; prayer weighs the balance before God, and pauseth. To pray is to desire ardently, and desire, as you know, is that within us which expects, demands, calls for, and importunes. But lax and effeminate desire is not prayer ; to allow yourself to follow nature is not prayer ; to grow weary is not prayer. We must, therefore, persevere. If you were to obtain perfection at the end of a quarter of an hour, what would you do afterwards ? But, indeed, perfection is never acquired on earth, we shall possess it only in heaven. Here below we must pray, pray always, fight, and groan. And, now, you will do all that you can to-day,—you will employ your whole being to enter on this holy indifference. I repeat that you cannot do it all in a day. Patience, you will do more to-morrow ; only always have the disposition of heart and will.

As to the practice of indifference, you have your rules, and constitutions, you have obedience. Consult them in everything ; you have no choice, you have only to follow them.

Let us, Sisters, sum up in a few words that indifference is justice, order, the condition necessary for choosing well,—it is rest.

We shall not go to God, we shall not please Him, except insomuch as we are indifferent ; for every

affection that is too sensual is to us an obstacle to indifference. Henceforth, we must fight against all seeking after self, and all self-love, in opposition to its will, or its ideas. This almost imperceptible thread must be broken by particular examination and prayer; I will say that prayer that pursueth, importuneth, and wearieth God, and obtaineth everything. And you shall obtain, Sisters, because you pray thus.

EXERCISE IV.

MEDITATION ON OUR OWN END.

Beloved Sisters, let us meditate on the last words of the fundamental principle which open the *Exercises*. Let us once more recall to mind that man is created to know God, to love God, and to serve God, and “by this means to ensure his salvation”.

Let us ponder over these last words, and draw our conclusions from them. In everything we must wish for and seek only that which is the best to guide us to our sovereign and only end,—that is to say, to the end for which we were created. This is everything.

Consider then, in peace of heart, the four following subjects :—

First, the end towards which you are tending.

Secondly, the desire for that end.

Thirdly, the choice of means ; and,

Fourthly, the better choice.

What is the end of my life, of my vocation, of the will of God towards me ? To unite me to God. But, alas ! here below perfect union cannot exist, that is reserved for the vision of heaven ; yet we can love, we can pray. Oh ! to love and to pray is the beginning, in this life, of the eternal union ; it is the union of the soul to God in faith, it is paradise on earth.

God is, therefore, my end ; I was created to reach Him, to go unto Him, to touch Him, to be bound to Him, to be one with Him alone.

God being the Sovereign End, above all other things, there are neither obstacles, nor temptations, nor trials to prevent me from going to Him. Such is the charity of God towards the creature,—behold how He has loved us !

And how are the majority of men in this respect ? Is this their sole thought, their predominant truth : I am created to go unto God, Who reigneth in souls ? Oh ! no. But we, Sisters, retired from the world, and cut off from the crimes of earth, have

we been careful to establish within us the kingdom of God, our only end? At every moment of my life, can I say that I am going to God? Is my soul with all her powers elevated directly to Him;—directly to Him alone?

On the second point, there is only one thing to be said to show that this end should be desired. Desire is life. Yes, Sisters, our whole life should be one of desire in God. God must be desired; for desire, as you know, is that tendency of the soul to expect, to call, to pray; and we know well that to pray is to wish. Desire, wish, and prayer are all the same, the sole end to be attained by love. Prayer should be for everyone, and still more for the religious soul, for the Carmelite, the soul of life; prayer should be our good. We may deprive ourselves of many things; we may even, by an effort, do without bread for the sustenance of bodily life; we have the experience of some saints who have done so, by a special grace;—but for the soul to do without prayer is impossible.

Devotion is included in desire for God; it is the necessities of the heart that aspire to God, for to be devout is to love, to sacrifice self. We must give ourselves up, and devote ourselves to God, but, above all things, we must love Him to reach Him. Love is the shortest way; it is that which

almost impossible for you to fall into this state, believe that this is so. In a very fervent and devout soul that follows the counsel of her good angel, and that, consequently, cannot go against God, the divine action is peaceful and often consoling; the Lord gives her peace, He does not tempt her, and He it is that sustains, consoles, and fortifies her. The devil, on the other hand, cannot enter in the character of a friend, that is to say, pleasantly, into this faithful soul; he disturbs her, creates a tumult, torments her, he cannot leave her in the peace she is enjoying, simply because it is peace. We may therefore conclude, Sisters, that, in a devout and fervent soul, the action of God is peace; and, on the other hand, everything that troubles and disquiets her is the devil. This is very simple, but very clear.

In a lax and faithless soul, the spiritual action of both is different, which is easily understood; for God, in order to enter, has to do violence, either by Himself, or by His agents, because God is not at home in a faithless soul. Hence He will send trouble, He will permit uneasiness, but never discouragement. God does not discourage, He encourages always. As to the devil, he will not trouble this soul; on the contrary, he abandons her, and lets her slumber; but he cannot give her peace,

for he is the enemy of peace. Therefore, if trouble, sorrow, disquietude, or desolation, spring up in the faithful soul, it is the work of the enemy,—and what are we to do? We must be patient, and bear it. We must be careful above all things, not to abandon prayer; we ought to pray much. And then see if I have not consolation, sensible help, patience. Is my will contrary to God? No. Have I not acted according to His will? Yes. Then patience! Wait, seek, and pray! Has not God said that we must wait?

Patience, then, patience! in order that we may give to God that which He loveth,—a cheerful heart.

MEDITATION.—In retreat, beloved Sisters, in the practice of meditation, the really important thing, the most important of all things, is to ask for grace, and, above all, the grace attached to the truth which is occupying you. For you, particularly at this moment, there are three graces which you ought to ask for fervently :—

The first grace, eminently needful, is that sorrow which we may also call contrition and confusion. Not sensible sorrow (which is good when God gives it to us), but substantial, real sorrow, which has for its foundation the knowledge of ourselves. We must ask for this fervently, for it is indispensable

to perfect conversion ; the heart must be penetrated with profound sorrow for its sins, before it begins the work of its purification. The saints, who had led such wonderful lives, were covered with confusion at the remembrance of their sins ; they regarded themselves as the greatest criminals, and yet what were their faults, great God ? And yet they did not deceive themselves, they were right ; we shall think thus, too, when we are holy like them. Behold your mother, your seraphic mother Theresa ; how many times did she not write that she committed grave faults, mortal sins, and yet she never committed a single mortal sin ; it was her contrition, her confusion, and above all her love for God that made her imagine she had done so. And perhaps we, Sisters, think that we have nothing very great to reproach ourselves with. The saints used to weep for whole years over one sin ; they had the light of God. And as for us, our self-love blinds us. Let us ask the grace of light in order that we may be humiliated, and covered with confusion ; it is an act of humility already to feel that we stand in need of it. Ask also for horror and detestation of sin,—in a word, for everything that is necessary to obtain for you forgiveness.

We should also ask for another grace, Sisters, and one no less important than the first. In your holy

vocation you may have glided into sickness or disorder. It is not enough to be freely and generously separated from the world, and all that passes therein; there is yet another thing to do, and that is to set about maintaining order. There are very few souls moulded and regulated by purity of faith; we have all within us disorder,—disorder in our senses, in our affections, in our memory, in our thoughts, in our intelligence; disorder in our heart, disorder in our actions, and disorder even sometimes in our virtues. Order is the complete submission of our being to God, and hence, you call it obedience. Wherever disorder is found, there, too, is imperfection; order is perfection. God is order, for order is peace, justice, wisdom, truth; and God requires His intelligent creatures to be also in order, so as to unite themselves to Him. It is here, Sisters, at the feet of our Lord that you must recognise disorder and all the miseries that follow in its train, the fluctuations of life, and the faults committed in this house through failing to regulate your senses, and all your faculties by faith. Ask the grace of order whilst humbly acknowledging everything in which you fail in this respect; pray, pray to Mary to implore this benefit for you, and to obtain for you a will noble and strong enough to draw you out of disorder, to hate it, and to establish

you in that which tends towards God alone, and enables you to live a supernatural life.

The third grace to be asked for, is contempt and forgetfulness of the world. We are easily persuaded by the world in which we mixed,—the world still follows us, notwithstanding the cloister, holy discipline, the bars; and the world with its frivolous character, its base inclinations, and its perversity, is still capable of exercising on us, and over us, its influences. We know well that the world is vanity, frivolity, pride. Oh! we do not know the world well enough, we do not separate ourselves sufficiently from it. You maintain its spirit and its affections, which ought to be unknown and strangers to this retreat of piety. Ask for knowledge of the world in the sense in which we explain it; you have need of it, great need. For a soul to have this knowledge is to be in the way of the highest perfection. Recall to mind the things which formerly occupied your worldly life, and whatsoever you still keep thereof in your words, thoughts, and affections, and in the alliance which your heart makes with natural, rather than with spiritual and supernatural, things. In your present life of contemplation, you ought to break from this alliance, in order that you may be occupied more easily with spiritual things alone; this, Sisters, is of supreme

importance. Nothing human, no sensual or grievous impressions,—we must have none of these. We may not be able to attain of ourselves this end, but let us ask and we shall receive ; grace is promised to those who pray for it. Our Lord Himself has said,—*With Me all things are possible*. Prostrate yourselves at His feet, entreat Him, conjure Him, importune Him, and you are sure to be heard. But remember that the tilling of the soil is necessary for the harvest ; God then gives us noble desires, effectual desires, and do you never forget to address your prayer to Him through the immaculate heart of Mary,—for this is the surest as well as the sweetest means of obtaining the triple grace, which is the theme of this day's exercises.

Finally, make a full offering of all that you have and all that you are, into the hands of your Lord and Creator. Devote yourselves altogether to one thing, to one thing only,—purification and sorrow. For now the day is at hand, and the moment of forgiveness.

III. It strikes :—

1. In life, the decisive crisis, *utinam ?*
2. At the hour of death, *pœna peccati*,—
the sacrifice of life,—the hour is at
hand.
3. In eternity without remedy—or per-
haps, in purgatory.

EXERCISE II.

THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT.

EXERCISE III.

LUKE XV.

- I. The joy of the Pastor.
- II. The joy of the Master.
- III. The joy of the Father.

Ita gaudium erit in cœlo.

EXERCISE IV.

REPETITION—JUSTICE AND MERCY.

- I. Justice awaits—mercy is preventive.
- II. Justice tests—mercy sustains.
- III. Justice strikes—mercy saves.

N.B.—The subjects for the third day were only indicated and not developed by Père de Ravignan.

We reproduce them here as he left them, for the sake of those who wish to devote the third day to the first work, that is to say, to the practice of the purgative life.

The authors of *Directoire des Exercices*, relying on a note in *The Book of Exercises*, and on their own experience in the guidance of souls, observe that meditation on death, judgment, and the other punishments with which sin is visited, should only be omitted very rarely, because they are very efficacious in detaching the heart from visible objects, and in inspiring it with the holy fear of the Lord, which is one of the most powerful means of salvation.

In case it is desired to spend the third day of retreat in the exercises of the purgative life, we may

make you enter on this divine life, and to give you that peace and happiness which make atonement for every sacrifice.

EXERCISE III.

CONFERENCE ON TRUE DEVOTION TO OUR LORD.

From this moment, from this day forth, you understand perfectly, beloved Sisters, that we must endeavour to dwell in, and have constant intercourse with, our Lord. Our first thought when awaking,—when, so to speak, we resume life,—should be our Lord. In like manner, in all these exercises it is His Adorable Person, His words, His actions, that we should consider. And in this the first moment in which we apply ourselves in a special manner to the attachment of the Divine Saviour, we ought to fortify ourselves by every means in our resolutions, and be devoted to Him.

Let us consider one of the chief obstacles which prevent a soul from becoming attached to our Lord.

There is a kind of half-will, which is neither good nor bad ; I am fully assured that it is not yours ;

but it may attack religious souls as well as others, in order to prevent them from going to the Divine Master. There is then a bad midway, which I shall call hesitation, and which may be thus explained,—To will and not to will; to know and not to know. In this melancholy midway, people hesitate and do nothing. There may be in this a want of light, but there may also be weakness, laxity, and I know not what inclination of the soul, which we have called hesitation, and which is the contrary to decision. Now, to answer our Lord's call, it is evident there is needed decision,—constant, true, assiduous decision, a decision conformable to His intentions and your desires; we must be willing to, and must actually make war on everything that is changeable and uncertain. Thus to know or not to know, to do or not to do, is a bad midway; and you are more unfitted than anyone to stop at this. This hesitation is so much to be avoided that the author of the holy *Exercises* does not speak of them, or even imagine them; he recognises only two things, to will, and not to will; but there is no question of indecision in so far as the rules of the government of the spirit, or anything else is concerned, because S. Ignatius has no advice to give for a disposition which ought not to exist. Not to will is bad, very bad, but at least it

is something ; to will and not to will is not a state or a vocation, is not a disposition of Providence,—it is nothing.

Sisters, give not the least entrance into your heart to this *will and will not*. For you above all others, and in your life, it is error, delusion, and the most dangerous of all things. It is not, it cannot be your life ; for you it is nameless. We must then hate this shameful indecision. To hesitate, to balance, to waver, belongs not to a true daughter of S. Theresa ; it is impossible to a child of Carmel. Take care then, the enemy of salvation is there ; the soul that is willing may be very imperfect, but then she wills, and there is hope. On the other hand, the soul that wavers pleases the devil, who greatly loves hesitation ; she borders on lukewarmness, and lukewarmness of the most dangerous kind. Our Lord has said, *Better crime, better death*, for then at least there is sometimes a chance of repentance. Far better those follies that are so commonly known, provided only that one gives them up, and preserves the disposition of going to our Lord.

Sisters, sound your soul, descend into it torch in hand, asking our Lord to descend with you into her most hidden depths ; and there look and ask yourselves if there is not uncertainty, hesitation, *the*

will and will not there ; then throw into all your actions a disposition of decisiveness,—to will, and to will even unto folly to cast yourselves on God. O my Saviour, I protest that my deliberate decision is to follow Thee. With that, perhaps, you will say, we should also pray and fight, since this is life ; but is not to will to pray and to fight ? Yes, and our Lord is satisfied therewith, because this is what He requires, what He expects ; and He makes to Himself great peace in the soul. Our Lord wishes for these souls, He seeks them, He asked them of S. Theresa, He has numbered them among His daughters ; and thus numbered fear not, you have peace. If trouble comes, it will only come from the devil, and this is a good sign, because then he is displeased. Behold then laid the first foundation of devotion to our Lord, to be decisive, to have no hesitation, to be willing to follow this divine Master, and to become firmly attached to Him.

But what is the meaning of becoming attached to our Lord. It is this. Let us put aside spiritual labour which is good, but which we leave for the moment, and let us approach God from our heart. In order to approach our Lord, and to become attached to Him, we must ardently desire to know Him familiarly in the different stages of His mortal life. By this means I shall love Him the more, I

shall follow Him more closely, I shall know His spirit, the business and the desire of His heart in everything that He has done, in His words, actions, sufferings, and in all that He now inspires me with in the bottom of my heart. Oh ! let us ask for this profound knowledge of His Sacred Humanity, His life, and His works ; let us apply our hearts and our minds thereto, and think not by this means, Sisters, that you will withdraw from the path of prayer and true and solid devotion. This thought on occurring to you should be banished with indignation and anger. Remember what S. John of the Cross and your holy Mother say to you on this point,—*A soul which is attached to our Lord, as we have just said, hears His voice.* Now our Divine Saviour speaks to us, and calls us incessantly in three ways,—by His lessons, by His example, and by the inspirations of His grace ; but, above all, by the eminent grace of vocation.

But, again, what is the meaning of becoming attached to our Lord ? It is to offer ourselves to Him, and to become devoted to His service always and entirely, with all the perfection indicated in your vows and rule. Now, Sisters, to make this offering of yourselves and to be devout is your life ; for immolation is the essence of your soul, your element. Suffer, oh ! suffer your soul to be pene-

trated with this desire ; you must not lessen the grace of your vocation ; that would not be humility, but disdain and laxity. Desire, oh ! desire to distinguish yourselves in the service of your God, to please Him, to love Him before any other ; this need not prevent you from rejoicing when others do better than you ; you should rejoice, and any other disposition would show that it was your own glory, not God's, that you desired. Come, Sisters, no hesitation, no fear, since it is your God that calls you. *Come and follow Me.* To hesitate, I say again, is a disease worse than death. You must, therefore, give yourselves to our Lord. But this is already done. We must at least believe so ; but neither must we believe that there is to be no fresh beginning ; on the contrary, we must always begin anew. Then you must have the universal desire of devoting yourselves, not as *you* wish of yourselves, but as it shall please the Lord to choose for you. As for that, you have only to follow the path which this good Master has chosen for you,—this life of Carmel to which you are called. To be sure, you can perform, or not perform a journey, follow, or not follow a path ; but when you do perform a journey, when you do follow a path, be sure that you perform it well, that you follow it well. Come, Sisters, and perform this journey of the

religious life, follow this path of Carmel, but perform it, follow it in the company of our Lord; remain at His side by your fidelity, by your zeal, by your obedience; make Him a truly general offering of yourselves.

Behold then the meaning of becoming attached to our Lord. Is there yet another thing? Yes, here it is, a simple, but a most direct way, and that is to love what He loved, to reject what He rejected, to choose what He chose. And what did this good Saviour, the King of heaven, the God of our hearts, love? What did He love? The opposite of that which the world loves, the opposite of nature, of flesh, of the senses. What did He choose? Warfare, suffering, contradiction, the cross. What did He love with the love of predilection? Poverty. He loved poverty in a special manner; it was His mother next to Mary His Mother. And it is after His example that all the founders of Orders say to us in their writings:—"You must love poverty as your mother". For the rest, I have only to regard Jesus Christ to say to myself,—“Poverty is my mother, she it is that makes me a religious”. Then what did our good Master love? Humiliation and contempt, beneath which He was always patient, always mild, always good. What indulgence, what mercy in all His

Admirable Person. The virtue of our Divine Master is no better virtue, and yet His heart was oppressed with sorrow, but still compassionate as ever. And should we not therefore, Sisters, love humiliation and contempt? Should we not desire them? Would to God that we were called to shun with Jesus this better part of self-denial. Ah! would to God!

We shall conclude this meditation by asking of the Heart of Jesus the grace to love what He loved, and to become attached to His service, by devoting ourselves to the better part. When He took a heart, everything is told; it is done. Let us in like manner pray to the Immaculate Heart of Mary to obtain for us the fulness of grace and blessings.

EXERCISE IV.

MEDITATION ON THE MYSTERY OF THE VISITATION.

INTRODUCTION.—We shall now take successively some of the mysteries of our Lord's Life, since we cannot comprise it altogether. As you know, Sisters, the grace to ask for in the meditations or contemplations on the mysteries of our Lord, is an

proposals, and that our Lord always confounded him with His Divine Wisdom. In fine, after this threefold temptation, the devil retired in confusion, and angels hovered round our Lord, and ministered unto Him. You will then picture to yourselves this desert; this vast and silent solitude, and you will ask for the grace,—always the same—of intimately knowing our Lord, in order to love Him more than ever, and to keep His enemy, the devil, far away from you.

You shall consider three things in this mystery of our Lord:—First,—the preparation, that is to say, the solitude of the desert and the fast; Secondly,—the temptation; Thirdly,—the consolation.

First,—Jesus alone in the desert with beasts and Satan. Solitude, fast, and prayer are the preparations which our Lord makes against temptation. He wishes to set us the example, and to show us that it is against the just and unworldly man that the devil looses himself with more fury and tenacity of purpose. Solitude, fast, and prayer,—there indeed is the life of Carmel. Oh! Sisters, be faithful unto it. Prayer above all things, and constant prayer, is the preparation which our Lord expects of you in everything that He wishes to do with you, or by you. It is the better preparation;

it is the action of the Holy Ghost on the soul. But do not forget that the soul in solitude is liable to temptation. So it will be for you in the silence of your solitude, in your desert. But courage, fear not ; you are prepared for fighting, you shall be also prepared for victory !

Secondly,—Temptation. Let us contemplate our Lord far removed from any human being in a desert, in the midst of beasts. And the beasts may well represent to us Satan, that fierce beast, who dares to contemplate our Lord, to approach His Admirable Person, and to offer Him bread, the bread of corruption,—Him, Who is the Glory of the World, and the Benefactor of the Earth. But this spectacle is given us to be our consolation and strength ; for the things which Satan here offers our Lord, the Holy of Holies, he will present to us likewise. We shall be tempted by pride, tempted by sensuality. Our Lord has vouchsafed to undergo this humiliation in order to give us a lesson of consolation, and an example to follow ; and with precept and example, we earn victory. With what energy He repels the tempter ! He does not reason with him, but says :—“Get thee behind Me, Satan, for it is written, *Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God,*” &c. O fundamental and encouraging words,

which reveal to us the basis and the structure of our faith ! It is written in the Book of Truth Whom I ought to adore, Whom I ought to love, what I ought to do ; therefore, I do not reason with the Spirit of Lies, but I believe. It is written that we shall be never tempted beyond our strength ; this is an article of faith, which we must believe. Whatever temptation we experience, we shall have victory always, if we ask for it ; for God is faithful, He never abandons a soul, and in solitude above all He is with her, and fights with her and on her behalf. So you too, Sisters, blessing Him, loving Him, and adoring Him, must also endeavour in your solitude to fight with your good Master, and Satan shall be conquered. It is true he goes only for a time, he will return,—but always to be conquered !

Thirdly,—Consolation. Satan withdraws to a distance, and angels take his place. Observe, Sisters, it is after prolonged solitude in the desert in the midst of beasts, after a threefold temptation, that our Lord calls angels unto Him. Such is the law,—whatever God reserves to us, pain, suffering, temptation ; whatever happens to our soul, there is the compensation on the part of God ; so it is always, always. Angels shall be sent to minister to this tried, though faithful, soul ; because God is the God of all consolation, and He tries the soul by

temptation ; after the conflict He hearkens to the afflicted soul with the riches and pleasures of His magnificence.

And angels ministered unto Him, and set before Him a feast. And a feast is set before us likewise ; a feast which brings us heavenly joy, the feast of the Blessed Eucharist, a divine repast served by angels ; this is our strength, our life, divine strength, divine life, and against which Satan can do nothing. But we know well that this Bread of the Strong was given us here below only to excite us still to conflict, and to assure us of victory with God always. Consolation bespeaks trial ; temptation will then return. But at length life will come to a close, and then what joys after the trial ! What ineffable happiness ! Come, Sisters, we must be brave. Let us pray to our Lord to obtain courage ; let us pray without ceasing until we come face to face with God and His angels in heaven.

EXERCISE II.

MEDITATION ON THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

Beloved Sisters, this morning we may recall to mind some passages from the admirable Sermon on

the Mount. There, for the first time, did our Lord disclose His heavenly doctrines. He addressed His disciples, and the crowd that followed Him. We shall take to ourselves the precepts more specially adapted to us.

Let us then recall to mind that our Lord, after His prolonged solitude in the desert, after the temptation to which He vouchsafed to be exposed, after the miracle of Cana in Galilee, withdrew into a mountain, whither a great multitude of people, attracted by His beauty, by His divine grace, by His meekness, by His goodness, and by all the charms of His Adorable Person, followed Him. Let us picture to ourselves our Divine Master in the midst of His disciples, and let us listen to Him pronouncing with majesty and sweetness the eight beatitudes which you know; then, in the midst of a thousand such graces, let us ask for the special grace of becoming supremely attached to our Lord.

Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are the clean of heart. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake. What words! And when they come to us from the lips and from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, how attentively should we bear them in mind!

To return to them, Sisters (for here there is an inexhaustible fountain), we shall divide them into two parts, which will enable us to know the two conditions of perfect virtue, the two attributes of God,—power and meekness. But observe, I entreat you, that seven beatitudes belong to meekness, and only one to power. *Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they who mourn. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the clean of heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake.* You see it is throughout patience, peace, humility,—in a word, meekness. This is the teaching of our Lord. But it is also His Spirit. And so it should be ours likewise.

Now, Sisters, have we entered into it well? Are we poor in heart and in spirit? Have we a humble, meek, and patient soul? Are we indulgent and merciful? Have we an upright heart? Are we the children of peace? Whence come difficulties and trouble from time to time? What is all this? And do we love suffering? Do we accept it with a smiling face? Do we support it calmly, peacefully, and patiently? *Blessed are they who suffer!* And if there is suffering for you, religious souls, from time to time (and is it not your inheritance always), remember your holy reformer's meekness

in her different trials, and her amiability in sorrow and continual sickness. Your holy mother used to say with humility :—" Oh ! I know well why I suffer. I would be too great a coward to go in quest of suffering, and to do penance. Our Lord does well to supply me with it in His mercy." And yet she never spared herself. *Blessed are they who suffer.* Let us pause at this sentence, endeavour to taste suffering, and ask of our Lord the grace to make it the food of our lives. Yea, *blessed are they who suffer.*

But then remains the beatitude belonging to power,—*Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice.* That is to say, after perfection, after the end proposed by our vocation. Do we hunger and thirst after justice? Do we hunger and thirst after devotion? Do we hunger and thirst with zeal for the salvation of souls? Do we hunger and thirst after the glory of God? Do we hunger and thirst after the fulfilment of our holy vows? Do we hunger and thirst after the fulfilment of the divine law? Do we hunger and thirst after the end, in a word, proposed to us by our vocation, after the high perfection to which God calls us? Do you and I hunger and thirst after justice? And if we do not hunger, if we do not thirst, let us at least have the desire of doing so; and if we think we

have not even the desire of hungering and thirsting, let us have the desire of the desire, according to the words of the prophet. Yea, Sisters, desire much, ask for thirst for the salvation of souls, for that thirst, that hunger after the glory of God, and perfection, that justice, in a word, which is the proper object of our vocation, and the end of our life.

Behold then the characters of meekness, charity, patience, and suffering, which rule the teachings of our Divine Master; and likewise power in love of justice. Meekness and power,—these united virtues are the seal of the spirit of God.

In the second place, let us pause at these other words of Jesus:—"So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven". This means that we have all received graces and intellectual faculties capable of conceiving and doing good. And we have not received these gifts for ourselves alone; their light must shine before men for the glory of God. And has not the Daughter of S. Theresa, the Daughter of Carmel, more than any other, received the most consoling promises, the most precious talents? Do you make good use of them? Do you make good use of them in holy prayer, your darkness and your difficulties notwith-

standing? Have you been careful to cultivate this grace of prayer by recollection? Do you edify the eyes that are turned on you, by your modesty, your meekness, your indulgence, and your charity? On beholding you, do they glorify God the Father Who is within us? And yet so it should be. This grace must bear fruit, not that vanity may be drawn therefrom, but in order to make shine in peace with an interior spirit, this treasure which God hath placed in us. Yea, we must show the talents which God has given us, and employ them successfully to soothe and to comfort hearts, and to be the witnesses of our patience and indulgence towards the souls of the poor. Let us then ask that we may make good use of the gifts and graces of our Lord, in order that He may bless us.

Lastly, in the third place, we shall take another passage where our Lord said that He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, and to perfect it. This sublime perfection of the law our Lord teaches us in what is simply counsel; no rash word, no out-of-place desire,—to love our enemies, to give the little remaining to us to one who has acted unjustly towards us, to turn the other cheek to him who smote us, and so forth. What perfection! But there is yet another thing for the religious soul,—the vows, and the rule. Can we say that we have

fulfilled the rules to which we are bound? Have we fulfilled the law of our holy vows? this law of the perfection of Carmel? this practice of the better virtues, this law of holy desire and constant prayer? Where are we with regard to it? Can we say with our Lord that we have been faithful to the last iota?

Have you answered to the desire of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who seeks perfect souls, or at least who seeks those who endeavour to become perfect? He seeks them, He asks for them. So much does He love souls! You know that for one soul that is devoted to the solitude of the cloister, buried from the world, removed from every eye, with the sole desire of seeking only the perfection of devotion, God would overthrow kingdoms: He stirs up the heavens and the earth. And what did He not do for S. Theresa?

There must be perfect souls in the Church of God. What could we do without them in the sacred ministry? Oh! Sisters, how great is your mission! But if you lag behind, you take from the common treasure instead of adding to it. What an account have we to render if we fail to profit by grace! Let us then humble ourselves, Sisters, and humble ourselves exceedingly in our shortcomings, in our faithlessness. This is the time to hunger

and thirst. Let us ask that the light be made shine, and that we may answer to our holy vocation in all its perfection, and with the fullest devotion. Our Lord calls you to this consummation of perfection in your thoughts, in your desires, in your whole life, to make but one with Him.

EXERCISE III.

CONFERENCE ON PEACE.

Beloved Sisters, we can at this moment recall a sentence of our Lord's, which is not only a consolation, but a teaching, a doctrine, and a promise. It is that great sentence which He repeated frequently, and chiefly at the moment when He consummated His sacrifice :—" *My peace I leave you, My peace I give you*".

We can take up this sentence, and add to it :—" *I shall not leave you orphans*". That is to say, I will not leave you fatherless, without consolation. These words, Sisters, were spoken for you. Wherefore, endeavour to estimate to yourselves a little the value of this divine promise, when you are in presence of our Lord.

Could it be possible that these words should not be fulfilled in a faithful soul? Do we not know that we all need this peace, this spiritual calm, whether it be the time of trial or not, to see the light without which all is trouble within us? And when in two days the time for taking your resolutions will come, you must then, as you ought now, ask for peace; it is the condition of choosing, the preparation for obtaining; in a word, peace is the great good of the soul.

Peace may, it is true, be bitter, but bitter or not, we ought to ask for it. It is certain, and it is a precept transmitted to us by the saints and found in Holy Writ, that in a soul God is, by His own proper action, the cause and the author of peace. Yea, the very character of God in a soul that does not oppose obstacles, in a well-disposed soul, the action of God by Himself, or by His good angel, is to give peace. You have peace by being well directed; be assured that God approves of your aim, that He has blessed it, and that He is infallibly the Author of it. And, on the other hand, in a well-disposed soul whose intentions are straight, the devil can only be the author of trouble, because he cannot do what God does, he cannot give peace.

There is besides, in the bottom of the soul, a still

greater depth to which the devil cannot penetrate ; God has reserved it to Himself for His sanctuary. The devil may exert himself, make a noise, paralyse the imagination, and weary by temptation ; but in this superior part of the soul peace dwells, because this depth belongs to God alone. We may therefore have peace in the midst of pain and temptation. Oh ! Sisters, ask for this inestimable peace, pursue it at every instant by prayer, and guard the entrance to your soul carefully,—watch !

And when I speak of peace, I do not speak of sensible consolation, but of the peace of God, of that peace which cannot come otherwise. Whatever passes in the depths of your being, you must say to our Lord :—“I do not refuse the cross. I do not refuse suffering. I do not ask for consolation. But give me peace, give me calm, in order that I may know where I am to walk ; then dispose of me according to Thy will,—but oh ! give me peace.”

Beloved Sisters, we have said that the devil cannot give peace. In truth, there is a false peace that comes from him, but how far it is from the true peace ! For example, he may make us believe at prayer, in order to weaken our vigilance and our good desires, that we have nothing more to do but to rest ; he may make us taste a certain calm, by

which he seeks to lull us to slumber in the practice of virtue (and he holds out this snare chiefly to faithless and lukewarm souls); but the trail of the serpent must appear, it will appear. The imperfection and the laxity will soon be seen. He may persuade a soul that she has acquired her measure of perfection,—that she is doing very well. False peace; we should always be satisfied with God—never with ourselves. Peace should be stamped with self-contempt and true humility. And of this peace the devil can never be the author.

We know well that we must not seek peace in sensible consolation; this would be to act like a child who knows not the value of solid virtue. It is in the straight way that leads to Calvary, that we must seek peace in contempt of self.

When we are on this way we must avoid reasoning and uneasiness; we must abandon ourselves unreservedly like a child. But we must unite the strength of maturer years with this childlike simplicity; we must desire peace above all things, and wage war against every obstacle, and abandon everything that turns us aside from peace. Peace is always the partner of goodwill. Goodwill it is that fosters and favours peace. And we learn this from the angels' canticle :—" *Peace to men of good will!* "

Let us too, Sisters, foster and favour this goodwill; it is the surest token of the presence of a good conscience; and then fear not, advance always, and never look back. Let the past not trouble you. Have confidence. When we have the happiness to receive absolution of our sins, everything is blotted out, the past exists no longer, there is nothing save the present any more. To say,—“I have been faithless, I cannot recover lost ground,” is as if you said,—“God who created me once is not powerful enough to create me anew”. What is this but a want of faith? Instead of disquieting ourselves by reason of the past, turn to God, and cast yourselves into His Creative Hands, and say:—“O Lord, give me a new heart, and a new soul”. After this there must be no return to self; remembrances, impressions, temptations, are no longer anything but obstacles; the soul goes on, and goes on for ever. Whither does she go? She knows not, she reasons not; but she goes on for ever. A soul it is that becomes foolish in order to be wise; and then peace to this soul of goodwill!

We have said already, Sisters, that the necessary condition for enjoying peace is the accord of our will with God's. But, it may be objected, sometimes we do not enjoy peace, and yet we will all

that God wills. In this case we must look and examine ; is there not some weak side ? Is there not some faithlessness ? To will what God wills, and to stop there, weak and apathetic, is, not to have a good will, above all things in your vocation, where so much more is needed. What then are we to do ? To pray, to pray exceedingly, and to conquer self ; for it is impossible that a soul that will labour in prayer and by prayer to conquer self, and will be unwilling to admit into her head a certain indolent and apathetic joy,—it is impossible, I say, that such a soul will not experience divine strength within her. It may cost her something. Yea, truly it may cost her something not to abandon herself to her own weakness, and not to forsake her good resolutions, even though she may have despised the cost the day before ; but patience ! God will come. Once more, I say, He will come if you persevere in prayer and good-will.

It is true, and we see it every day, that persons of upright and simple will suffer pains, and cruel pains, and there is nothing more certain ; but it is a trial which God in His mercy sends them ; He permits the action of the enemy who bears trouble into the soul,—this is his weapon. You have only to consult the blessed books of your holy mother

elsewhere, she says to you :—" You shall have severe and poignant trials ; but in the midst of these trials, peace rests in the depths of the soul. Do we not see our Lord in the Garden of Olives experiencing the most violent agony ? *Father ! Father ! if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me !* But He grows not discouraged, and He adds : *Not my will, but Thine be done.*"

Wherefore then, in your life of prayer, you have, and you shall have always, to undergo trials ; you shall be tempted like our Lord in the desert. God wills it so in order to put your strength to the test, in order to encompass you with His benefits, in order to purify you. He wills it also in order to humiliate and to encourage you. Yea, Sisters, in your inability, in your powerlessness, when you say :—" I can do nothing," you should add with S. Paul :—" I can do everything in Him who strengthens me". No, I can do nothing, nothing of myself ; but with God I can do, and I will do, everything. This is courage, and God will reward it.

We may be very willing to devote ourselves to prayer, and to occupy ourselves with the better things, but only for our own satisfaction. Then God puts us to the test, and the soul should unite herself generously to Him or the grasp of sorrow.

Come, courage and goodwill ! We must not regard the hour, nor count the minutes. We desire our deliverance in order to pray more fervently, and to enjoy peace ; we are deceived. We would be delivered from the cross ; but do you not know that trials beget patience ? And when we suffer patiently, we wait and we hope ; we have peace ! To suffer and pray is to believe, is to unite ourselves to Jesus Christ in prayer.

Come then, Sisters, come to the Feet of this Good Master, and you shall hear Him say to you :—" My child, My peace I leave you, My peace I give you ". And you shall pray, and be devout ; and you shall ask for peace in sacrifice, for that is the truest and the best peace. There, I am sure, is the blessing that is destined for you.

EXERCISE IV.

REPETITION OF THE TWO FIRST EXERCISES OF THE DAY.

Beloved Sisters, it is recommended to make what are called repetitions, that is, to return to certain points in the preceding meditations or con-

temptations. We shall now endeavour to do this in the Temptation in the Desert, and the admirable Sermon on the Mount.

Endeavour to be as recollected as possible in offering to God all your intentions, and in asking of Him the grace of due observance, so as to do nothing that may turn your soul from the right way which leadeth unto perfection and sanctity.

Turn to our Lord again, and ask Him to grant you to know Him in the desert, alone, praying, fasting, and vouchsafing to be tempted for love of you. And in this repetition, remember three things :—

First,—The inevitable necessity of temptation.

Secondly,—The precept of solitary prayer, accompanied by penance, which our Lord gives us in order to obtain grace.

Thirdly,—The infallibility of victory.

First,—The inevitable necessity of temptation.

This is shown everywhere :—"My son," says the wise man, "when thou comest to the service of God, prepare thy soul for temptation". And again to Tobias :—"Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee". Elsewhere it is said :—"What doth he know, that hath not been tried?" Our Lord vouchsafed to undergo this necessity, He vouch-

safed to suffer temptation in order to make Himself like unto us, and to make us understand that when He had been tempted, we could not avoid being tempted. And if there be elsewhere, religious souls, a life which God destines for temptation in order to conduct it to the greatest good, to the greatest gifts, that life is yours. Then withdraw not, but accept, accept everything.

Secondly,—Solitary prayer and frequent fast are the true means of acquiring heavenly grace. In the desert of Carmel, whither you have retired into solitude, how much need is there that everything within you should be shut out from the world, and that in nothing should the world penetrate to your blessed retreat ! And moreover, in the desert of your soul, guard yourselves against the beasts that may glide therein,—impressions, passions, by which we are, alas ! too often brought to the level of the beast.

And likewise fast, mortification in health, and patience in infirmity. Then it is no longer fast, God does not will it. Patience ! But whether in health or in sickness, we must always love fast and mortification, accompanied by prayer.

But we must pray always and at all times. Oh ! here we can arm ourselves with patience. We must pray, and often, how many obstacles we encounter !

Then say :—"I am alone with my God in the desert, and dead to the world ; O my God, I shall wait as long as it shall be pleasing to Thee, but I will be faithful to prayer".

Thirdly,—Our Lord in the desert assures us of the infallibility of victory. Yea, victory is certain, this is an article of faith ; we shall never be tempted beyond our strength. The devil can only have as much power over us as we let him have, he cannot conquer us in spite of ourselves, still less cause our death. Courage, therefore, let us fight with our Lord, let us say with Him to the tempter :—"Man liveth not by bread alone". And then, Sisters, do not forget that the great means of conquering is to act by opposite ways ; to oppose humility to pride, mortification to sensuality, and so of the rest. We are weak, and we must, therefore, yield sometimes ; but patience ! patience ! self-compassion ! let us fear not, and be never troubled. When shall we live in faith ? What are impressions and trials ? All that I feel is nothing, absolutely nothing ?

We may now recall to mind the admirable Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus Christ gives us teaching and example of the better and the purer virtues. When we remember that it is God Who has spoken, our Saviour, the Devoted Friend of

souls, He whose burning love desires a thousand times to save us! What has He not taught us in these admirable beatitudes? Two things chiefly, patience and peace. *Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they who mourn. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the clean of heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are they who suffer.* What words! and it is to us that He addresses them; His word is ever present, centuries are nothing to God; yea, it is to us He speaks, let us hear Him, and become attached to all the virtues of the Heart of Jesus. Let us become attached to poverty of spirit and humility, which detach us from all things; to the meekness which makes the soul enduring, which makes her bear all things, and forget every sorrow. *Blessed are the clean of heart.* God alone and no other—this is purity of heart. And then the tears and sufferings which our Lord blesses, oh! if we had His Spirit, how we would understand them! how we would love them! Let us not forget the ardour of zeal. *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice* That is to say, that justice which fulfils all that is agreeable unto God, that hunger which establishes the kingdom of God in ourselves and others. We have seen this morning that all is comprised in this hunger and thirst—zeal for charity,

desire for the glory of God, for those better gifts, for our greatest perfection—all in fine.

We must not leave the ground fallow ; we must sow, and hunger and thirst after the harvest ; and if we do not hunger and thirst, if we are still cold, let us ask of God to kindle in us the fire of His burning charity, which will give us the consummation of purest virtue, the consummation of holiness in Jesus Christ ; and then abandon your heart to the zeal of holy love, to the virtues of meekness, patience, peacemaking—virtues difficult, I acknowledge, to practise, but virtues which are the strength of the soul. Ask for them, desire them ; to desire is to begin to practise already ; if we do not desire, if we do not help ourselves, if we do not say that we want many things, but that God can give us much, what then are we capable of ? Pray, Sisters, to Mary Immaculate, and she will obtain everything for you from the meek and humble Heart of Jesus.

SIXTH DAY (I.).

EXERCISE I.

FIRST MEDITATION ON THE TWO STANDARDS.

BELOVED Sisters, every day of the retreat is important and precious to you ; yet it is true to say that in proportion as we advance, we must use more preparation in order to know the will of God towards us better, so as that we may practise it, amend our lives, and remodel ourselves. This is the day proposed for the knowledge of the will of God towards us, and for the adoption of resolutions towards its fulfilment.

But as it is more than ever important to be able to distinguish the spirit of Jesus Christ from the spirit of His capital enemy, S. Ignatius proposes the Meditation on the Two Standards to this end. You shall therefore ask again, beloved Sisters, that everything within you may tend in an orderly

manner to the glory of God, and the perfection of your souls.

You will then picture to yourself two camps,—Babylon and Jerusalem ; in the one you behold your enemy the devil ; in the other, Jesus Christ, your Friend and Master. You will ask for the grace of light the better to know and to discern the tricks of the enemy, and to protect yourself therefrom ; the better also to know the secret of the true life, and to follow it. Oh ! it is here that you must abandon yourselves to holy and burning desires, as far as it may be possible to you.

In the first place, consider your enemy on his throne of fire, spreading noise and terror everywhere around. Hear the instructions which he gives his ministers ; he sends them everywhere, irrespective of the holiest places. He commands them to bear disturbance and trouble in their train, and to catch souls, without any exception whatever, in their perfidious net. “Go,” he says to them, “go about, everywhere, endeavour to enrol souls, and to keep them with you by love of riches, and love of pleasure and honours.” And, in effect, we see these limbs of Satan, and Satan himself, catching souls in the net of worldly honours and vain glory, to lead them to pride, and from pride to the abyss of every crime and despair. Oh ! let us flee courageously every-

thing ever so little resembling the snares of the enemy. Ask our Lord to keep you far removed from all that may flatter the senses,—consolations, dispensations, and corrections, which are not necessary ; to pluck from your heart all desire for the esteem of creatures, all sensual love ; to turn you away for ever from the path of pride, and the thousand ways leading thereto. For the spirit of Satan can penetrate even into Carmel, and that in a very subtle manner,—so well does it harmonize with our natural inclinations. Let us then defy an enemy who knows our tendencies so well,—our love of imperfection and vanity. You know the comparison employed by the Masters of the Spiritual Life, in order to make us understand the action of Satan in us :—“ It is given to Satan,” they say, “ to use our imagination as if it were a harp, to press on it every touch, and to draw from it every sound ”.

Now turn your eyes on the peaceful camp at Jerusalem. We behold our Lord sitting calmly there, beautiful, indulgent, good, meek, merciful. He is seeking devout souls to establish His kingdom. He calls them sweetly and forcibly, and what does He say to them ? He speaks to them of poverty and detachment from sensual things. This is His teaching :—Love poverty, love contempt. *Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they who mourn.*

Blessed are they who suffer persecution. Detachment from all earthly things, then, the desire of receiving insults,—yea, nothing more than this to imitate and to follow Him, and to fight Satan. The desire of receiving insults is nothing but true humility which consists itself in the love of God, joined to the knowledge of ourselves.

And this is our Lord's pure spirit,—Himself, His very self !

Oh ! we may not, perhaps, be able to attain this spirit and to follow Him perfectly all at once ; but we should pray exceedingly. We should earnestly ask for the love of contempt in order to practise it, not only when we cannot refuse to do so without being guilty of a fault, but even when there would not be a shadow of imperfection in refusing, for it is enough for us that the glory of God demands it.

Address Mary, ask her to keep you under the covering of poverty and contempt, under the standard of the love of her Divine Son. Then ask our Lord, who is the culmination of all that is good, to remodel you, to transform you, to regenerate you. And think not that it is a little thing for you to ask this grace of knowing and following the spirit of our Lord. Were you to spend a whole day at this single request it would not be too much.

Excite yourselves likewise with the desire of

following our Good Saviour in His sufferings and insults. Embrace this true humility to its widest extent. Oh ! fear not to repeat this prayer to the Divine Master, to God the Father, in the most pressing manner ; insist on, and persevere in your demand. You shall be heard at any cost ; this is what the glory of God, the care of your own perfection, and the salvation of souls require of you.

EXERCISE II.

REPETITION OF THE PRECEDING MEDITATION.

Beloved Sisters, let us then prepare ourselves to know perfectly the special will of God towards our souls, in order that we may fulfil it. This is the day of preparation during which you ought to apply all your faculties, all the powers of your soul, to seek the true sense, to penetrate into the spirit of the counsels of Jesus Christ, and thence into the true sense of your vocation, which, as you know well, is a call to perfection. There is a principle without which there is nothing solid or durable, and that is, that we advance therein in proportion as we renounce ourselves, and strip ourselves of what we

are, of our personal interests, of our love of ease and pleasure, in such wise that it may be the love of our Lord which transforms, remodels, and operates a new creation within us. And this, the eve of the day on which you shall have to take your resolutions, and to determine the manner in which you are to serve our Lord, is also a day of special penance (according to the measure of strength and of obedience) for drawing down on you the graces of God. Verily, we may wonder that having once perceived and recognised this spirit, which is called the Standard of our Lord, we do not embrace it. And why? What a surprising thing that we do not hearken to the voice of our Lord, and that we hearken, while we ought not, to our own voice, for we must not forget to go to God, and to go to God alone !

Let us return, Sisters, to the meditation on the Two Standards, and let us hearken to the voice of the Lord, saying to us :—“ *He who is not with Me, is against Me*”. Cast a rapid glance on Babylon, the city of confusion. There we have an enemy, tricky, clever, always on the watch, never at rest ; a sworn enemy of God and souls, above all, religious souls ; and when he sees virtue lessen, and labour towards perfection relax, it is a moment of victory for him. At all times and in all

places, at the most sacred moments, Lucifer is acting against God and us, against truth, true welfare, peace ; he is inspiring us with sophisms, and provoking us to ideas which savour of earth and the world, which awake nature and the love of riches and prosperity within us, and which excite in us the desire of honour—human pride. This is the character of Satan's mission ; it is the contrary of the spirit of Jesus Christ. Are we ever so little willing to rank ourselves under His standard, or to give Him the least little portion ! To have Satan for our chief is to put ourselves under him, and what baseness is under Satan ! And yet what do we do when we stop in a cowardly manner in our efforts towards perfection ? We are contenting the devil who rejoices, and if we could listen, we would hear him laugh. And behold where we have placed ourselves at certain moments of our life. But we are speaking too much of Satan. Let us pray to Mary, to Mary who is his mortal enemy, to guard us from his snares, and to take us herself under her protection, under the standard of her Divine Son.

Let us go to Jesus Christ, He is calling us, Sisters. "*Come to Me.*" He requires us to be zealous for the salvation of souls, He wishes us to have a heart like the Apostles ; your holy mother was an apostle. He calls you then, Daughters of

S. Theresa, for the welfare of souls, and for the support of His Church. "*Come to Me.*" If He were Himself to appear to you this moment to repeat these words, your vocation could not be more certain; but how would you answer His invitation? Prostrate at His feet, and lovingly and respectfully kissing the hem of His garment, you would give yourselves entirely to Him. Thus answer, therefore, to this summons.

Our Lord's summons is peaceful and humble, but it is likewise powerful. And where can this summons be more inviting, more pressing, nay, even more beseeching, than at Carmel? Come, Sisters, our Lord seeks to establish Himself in you; He wishes you to be generous souls in order to fight and to conquer with Him. What must you do for this? You know well that the perfection which He asks of you, and which you embraced, is poverty,—poverty under the name of detachment and humility, poverty which is one of your holy vows. Oh, love it, and be intimately attached to it. Take what you get indifferently, and say always:—"This is too much for me. I have nothing; I am poor." How excellent is this one virtue! But nature raves and grows rebellious,—pray, therefore, pray; but above all things reason not, so as not to give the enemy a victory. The Devil can do nothing against prayer,

because over prayer he has no power. He cannot take part against it; but it is not the same with reasoning, for Satan is a most clever sophist, a most clever rhetorician; take care of him, and pray.

Then love contempt. Ask, Sisters, for that which is contrary to self-love, to vanity, to the esteem of creatures,—contrary, in order that it may be *for* our Lord. “*He who is not with Me is against Me.*” With prayer, and, by its means, with the desire of contempt, we reach true humility. But we must always remember that the desire of humility is not enough; it is not difficult to desire it, but to practise, to accept, to go in quest of humiliation is another thing. Humility itself is sweet, very sweet; but it is a fruit, a product, and we must labour and work for a long time, and pray above all things before gathering it. For the rest, we always have this condition in prayer, that success will come when it is the will of God. To desire detachment, love of contempt, is well, and we ought to do so, but we must not desire them except insomuch as God is willing to bestow them on us, and not to a greater degree than He Himself wills. Let us labour, it is our lot; but victory depends on God; He gives it if He wills, and when He wills.

Before closing your meditation, place yourselves in the heart of the peaceful city, at the feet of our

Lord. There drink, and become impregnated with His spirit ; all else is vanity, cowardice, the counsels of self-love, the sophistry of the devil. Abridge nothing of the greatness of your vocation ; recall incessantly to mind your holy mother's end in establishing her reform. Yea ! you are apostles, you are victims, and our Lord hath chosen you ; He hath vouchsafed to make you devout souls to co-operate in His work of redemption.

Offer, Sisters, an urgent prayer to Mary, begging of her to obtain for you the grace of walking faithfully under the standard of poverty, humility, and contempt, then you will go to our Lord through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and, finally, to God the Father, and you will say with hearts burning with zeal, "*Behold me, Lord*".

EXERCISE III.

CONFERENCE ON THE THREE DEGREES OF HUMILITY.

Sisters, in order to dispose ourselves to know well and to estimate well the Divine will, and the means to be taken in order to fulfil it in a solid and enduring manner, we must recall to mind all that

is calculated to unite us to the spirit of our Lord, on which you have just been meditating,—a spirit which is eminently fitted to make us enter into the light of faith, and to crush our natural reason beneath its yoke.

Behold, then, some rules of election, or dispositions with which we ought begin this day.

First, as a fundamental disposition, let us endeavour to find and to keep peace, and then we have full and entire freedom of spirit.

Second disposition,—To despise all that is not faith, pure faith, and instant prayer to obtain light.

The third disposition, and the best and the sweetest of all, is to dwell in our Lord's heart for true and solid motives of love. We should not, therefore, allow our heart to follow its own bent, human affections. Nothing of the kind ; all that is not our Lord alone is bad, and ought to be rejected. And, Sisters, how could you be attached to any of the things of earth,—you who have left them all ? It is impossible. We must above all things lay bare ourselves ; for to cling to our own will, to our own lights, is to choose darkness, and there is nothing more dangerous to the soul. Place before your eyes the end of your vocation ; and in peace and grace ask yourselves :—“ What have I wished ? What did I come to seek here ? ” And we must

answer these questions, and to answer them we must take the best point,—God alone ! The highest perfection, such as it should be at Carmel, such as S. Theresa desired, is what I have come to seek. Everything else is of no consequence to me. But do not forget that your predominant disposition should be the love of our Lord, no other motive can conduct you to your end.

We find in the *Book of Exercises* a very useful consideration, and one to which S. Ignatius attaches great importance. He even says that a whole day might be spent in helping one's self to make a good choice. This principle *par excellence* which we should have engraved on our hands and in our hearts in letters of gold, so as never to forget, is that we advance, only in so much as we renounce ourselves, and strip ourselves of our personal interests. It is only by this way that we arrive at true humility, and this disposition, more or less perfect, S. Ignatius explains to us in his consideration on the three degrees of humility.

The principle on which this consideration is based is this :—We should bow down so profoundly before God in order to fulfil His holy will, that we should be ready to embrace everything to submit to Him. In effect, if there is anything that may be called humility, it is certainly this perfect submission,

which renders our will conformable to the will of God, and removes everything that is opposed to Him.

From this point of departure let us make the following reflections on the first degree of humility. We should never admit the thought or the deliberation to offend God [by mortal sin, even though by so doing there was question of preserving our life, to which man is so strongly attached. Surely, Sisters, this is a disposition on which you have entered long since, but remember that no matter what we are, no matter what may be our perfection, we shall always have to make progress in horror of sin, in order to have a clean and pure conscience like the saints. God who demands of you purity unalloyed, wishes you to go far in this way. Behold to what a point S. Theresa reached on this path, and pray God that you may be made more and more perfect in submission to Him,—a thing so precious, and at the same time so necessary.

The first degree acquired, we pass on to the second. What is it? Oh, Sisters! a soul profoundly bowed down before God arrives at having no will of her own, no taste for one thing beyond another, but always the simple will of God. And if she has no especial or decisive reason for preferring one thing to another, because the glory of God is

not clearly manifested unto her, she has no will, but she waits. Take for example, health and sickness, both are equal in the sight of God ; she may not perceive at the moment which is the more conducive to God's glory ; therefore, she is indifferent, she desires health no more than suffering.

We must also, Sisters, have this holy indifference in all that comes to us from creatures. Honour and contempt present themselves ; if I see that I can glorify God by honour, then I accept honour ; but if I glorify Him more by contempt, I choose contempt. And if the will of God is not clearly manifested unto me, I rest indifferent. But wherefore ? God chooseth not, and should you choose ? God prefers not, and should you prefer ? But then it is not God whom you seek, but yourself, and this is egotism. Neither is it truth that you seek, for truth is the choice of God. Behold then the second degree of humility, to seek nothing, to desire nothing, an even balance. Thou art good, indifference ! And furthermore, Sisters, pray exceedingly, and reason not. What signify reasonings compared with the loss of your way ? Pray that you may remain in the spirit of our Lord's words, that one advances in proportion as one renounces one's self.

To what a sublime degree did not your holy mother carry this virtue of indifference ? The

reform which had cost her so much, and which she loved so dearly, she would have abandoned without a moment's regret, if obedience, which was for her the manifestation of the divine will, required. Therefore practise perfect indifference. Adopt to-day, Sisters, more than ever the generous resolution of not deliberating on a single venial sin ; I do not say consenting, but deliberating. For example, discouragement, impatience, want of charity, take hold of me ; oh ! may such things keep far away from me because they are displeasing to God, and therefore I have a horror of them. But it may be objected that these are imperfections against which we cannot defend ourselves. Undoubtedly, we are so weak. But we must never consent to venial sin. With imperfections we must be humble and have patience ; we shall have them always ; and in proportion as we advance in years and acquire greater experience we shall see more than ever how much need there is of commiseration and charity for souls. Yea, there is great need of kindness and indulgence. We are so weak, so inconstant, so miserable, and, alas ! we love our misery.

But this is not all ; when you are a daughter of S. Theresa, when you are a victim as you are, and when you are devoted to souls, there is a better thing. You know what our Lord has done and

Our Lord approaches them, and they know Him not, and Jesus says in accents full of kindness :—" Fear not, it is I, fear not ". Peter then asks if he may go to meet our Lord on the waters :—" Lord, if it be Thou, command me that I go to Thee ". Our Lord says to him :—" Come ". Peter alighting from the boat, walked over the waters to meet Jesus. Then there arose a great tempest on the sea, and Peter being frightened and about to sink, cried :—" Lord, save me ". And Jesus held out His hand to him, and cried :—" Why hast thou doubted, O thou of little faith ? " And in fine, by the Divine power there ensued a calm.

Then after picturing to ourselves our Lord in prayer, in which you will join Him, and subsequently working the miracle, ask of Him the grace, always the same, of knowing your Master intimately in order that you may learn to love Him, and follow in the spirit which He desires to give you.

First, consider our Lord in prayer on the mountain. What a prayer is that of our Lord's ! who could understand it ? Holy, sacred, Divine prayer ! Yet we shall try to lisp something about it. Our Lord's prayer is a prayer of desire, a prayer of sacrifice, and a prayer of charity and goodness ! A prayer of desire, as He Himself has said :—" *I have a Baptism, wherewith I am to be baptised. And*

how am I straitened, until it be accomplished." A prayer of desire, yea, of desire for the glory of God and the salvation of souls—the desire of their perfection; and you were present to Him, Sisters, in the desire of eternal beatitude. What desires are there, great God, in this contemplation of heavenly joys, in the divine heart of Jesus!

And you too, Sisters, whilst abandoning yourselves in your profound solitude to the life of prayer, should have great desires,—the immense desire of the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and the desire of sacrificing and immolating yourselves in so noble a cause.

Prayer of sacrifice is the immolation, the abandonment, and the devotion of self. Yes, we sacrifice ourselves for God and souls; labour, pain, fatigue, preaching, prolonged watches,—in nothing do we spare, in nothing do we hearken to ourselves.

Prayer of sacrifice! This should indeed be yours, beloved Sisters, it is the true, the better prayer. It is, perhaps, a prayer of union, but a prayer of union and sacrifice. In fine, a prayer of charity; Jesus remembers His Apostles, He knows well whither He has sent them, and why He has sent them,—His beloved Apostles. And He steers their barque through the tempest; He prays for them, and watches over them. And He knows well that we,

Sisters, shall likewise have disturbance and storms, but He watches over us. A prayer of charity and goodness, Sisters, is that of devout souls ; and this should be yours likewise.

Secondly,—We behold the Apostles alighting from the tempest-tossed barque. What are their dispositions? Fear, dread ; they tremble and pray not, although they should pray. And, Sisters, have we not often trembled? Has not our poor soul feared temptations and the devil? Oh ! we must never, never fear temptation. We must not fear it ; fear prays not, and we ought to pray. This was the one thing to be done in the barque,—to pray ; and once again the Apostles did it not, because they were afraid.

The fear which prevents us from praying, will prevent us also from knowing our Lord. The Apostles take Him for a phantom when He goes forth upon the waters to meet them ; they are frightened. When our soul is troubled by fear she does the same thing ; God comes to her and she knows Him not. “ Delusion ! ” she murmurs, and troubles herself no further, instead of leaning her hopes on Him who manifests Himself unto her. Poor soul ! it is no delusion, it is the visit of the Divine Master ; He comes to enlighten and console you ; fear not.

Thirdly, and lastly,—We behold our Lord walking upon the waters by His divine power, and we hear Him say kindly :—" It is I, fear not ; it is I, be not afraid ". Sweet words, though scarcely sufficient, for His Apostles knew Him not, believed not. And the poor soul ? To her likewise our Lord says when He comes to visit her :—" It is I, be not afraid ; it is I, fear not," and she scarcely hears Him, so much is she disturbed and troubled. Then S. Peter cries :—" Lord, if it be Thou, tell me to go to Thee on the waters ". An indiscreet request perhaps, but our Lord in His great goodness answers :—" Come ". And behold S. Peter upon the waters. Then he grows frightened and is sinking ; this is what happens when there is fear. And our Lord says to him :—" Thou art afraid, O man of little faith ". He enters the barque with His Apostles, and there ensues a great calm.

And let us likewise, Sisters, enter the barque, and sit beside our Lord with deep devotion, imploring the grace of always going to Him fearlessly ; do you ask Him with lively, strong, and ardent faith the grace to dare everything and trust in Him alone. Courage ! let us walk upon the waters through the tempest. What matters the tempest ? It is like powerless rain falling on the roof-top when one is

in shelter. The tempest itself is nothing to a soul which belongs to Jesus Christ.

EXERCISE II.

MEDITATION ON THE TRANSFIGURATION.

Beloved Sisters, let us continue to contemplate the double person of our Lord in some of the mysteries of His life; it is in this contemplation that we are better enabled to study the will and the designs of God towards us. How I wish you to be to-day more than ever calm and recollected.

You will now contemplate the mystery of the transfiguration, and ask the grace of upright and pure intention devoted to the glory of God. You will then remember that our Lord took with Him Peter, James, and John, His most beloved disciples, and having led them into a high mountain, He was transfigured before them.

His face became brilliant as the sun, and His garments white as snow. At the same time they beheld Moses and Elias conversing with Him. Peter opening the colloquy, said to Jesus:—"Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us erect three taber-

nacles—one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias”. And behold, as he was speaking, a luminous cloud covered them, and at the same time there came from the cloud a voice from heaven speaking these words :—“This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased ; hear Him”. At these words the disciples, seized with terror, fell prostrate to the ground. But Jesus, approaching, touched them and said :—“Arise and fear not”. And when they arose they beheld Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, the Divine Master gave them this prohibition :—“Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man be risen from the dead”.

Following the most convenient method, and the manner which seems to you easiest, you can contemplate the persons, behold the facts, and hear the words.

And for the persons, it is always our beloved Saviour, destined for suffering and ignominy on this earth. He wishes, however, to give a momentary manifestation of His glory. He takes with Him Peter, James, and John—the same who, later on, were destined to be the witnesses of His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Thus it is that they who partake of His sufferings partake likewise of His glory. For so hath the Eternal Wisdom de-

creed in His divine counsels. And in considering Moses and Elias conversing so intimately with Him, let us return to ourselves. Have we tasted anything like this happiness in prayer? We may have for a few fleeting moments; but if we have not been initiated into this mystery of the transfiguration, if we have not the spiritual joys and consolation, if on the contrary we are reserved for torments and agony, let us nevertheless remember that we should always say:—"Lord, it is good to be here".

And for the facts of this mystery, let us first place ourselves in the mountain, and ask our Lord to give us His light with the intimate knowledge of His heart, to love Him the more, and to follow Him the nearer. Then we behold Him whom we so often see in humiliation and sorrow, in the full brilliancy of His splendour; and let us contemplate Him with faith and love, and say that one day we likewise shall behold Him face to face. Yes, Sisters, in some days or hours, on one condition however,—that we wait for the appointed time, and endure labour. Let us, then, humbly ask our Lord what could have been His thoughts, His motives, and the sentiments of His mind in this glory of Thabor. It was undoubtedly to elevate the still wavering faith of His disciples, and likewise ours. He vouchsafed to give us to understand this

mysterious union of ignominy and glory, and to tell us that Thabor and Calvary are one and the same, in a sense, since it is the same God who sanctified Thabor and Calvary. Therefore, we should bear in mind whatever temptations we may have to undergo, whatever consolations we may or may not have—in a word, whatever may be our condition, that God remains the same for us always, that He is always the Saviour, always great, good, mighty, and inclined unto us with an infinite love. Hence, whatever happens, we should always say:—"God is always the same; that is enough for me, I shall wait".

Then, Sisters, Jesus is transfigured; and we see from the witnesses which He was pleased to take with Him, that He manifested Himself to His disciples in all His glory and splendour to lead them subsequently to the Cross, and to prepare them to sacrifice and to immolate themselves. At first they did not understand this; it was only later on that they came to know it, according to the testimony given by S. Peter to increase his own faith and the faith of nations. And it is the truth, Sisters, that in this life of contemplation, in this assiduous labour after perfection, which is like the ascent of Calvary, you should always say that the joy of the transfiguration may indeed in this life be

sometimes given, but that it is short, very short; and that suffering is what we need to establish, and to lay the foundations of devotion and zeal within us. And here you will pause, and ask our Lord for the intimate grace of knowing Him, and following Him everywhere, if not to Thabor then to Calvary.

And for the words, we are told that our Lord conversed with Moses and Elias. Of this colloquy nothing has survived, nothing has been revealed to us; it is a secret. We may suppose that He conversed on the Old Law with Moses, who was its type, and on the New Law with the Prophet Elias, whom you so gloriously and so justly call your father. And in this colloquy we behold the unity of all time, because it unveils to us one only God, one only Saviour.

We likewise hear S. Peter, whose heart, ever burning with love for its Master, spoke in transports of joy:—"O Lord, it is well to be here; let us make, if it please Thee, three tabernacles—one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias". *It is well here*,—indeed, I believe so; S. Peter was not wrong. Let us stay here, and what for—to taste of joy? No, that is not enough; we must not be eager to preserve joy when it is given to us; we must not be eager to erect its dwelling here, but we must go farther off elsewhere. But are not you, Sisters, on

Thabor always in this beloved Carmel, and do you not say likewise :—"It is well to be here". Yea, and here you have pitched your tent for ever. Ah ! dwell therein and be happy whatever your state, whether you taste here the pleasures of the divine union, which are always easy and momentary, or whether you experience all the bitterness of Calvary.

And then we shall hear those words which came down from heaven :—" *This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased ; hear Him*". It is as if the Eternal Father were to say in answer to S. Peter :—"This is My Son ; He will tell you of the sacrifices to be made, of the labours to be endured, of the souls to be conquered ; hear Him, He is My beloved Son ; hear Him, and you need not seek consolation, nor rest, nor enjoyment for yourselves". And then the Apostles, seized with terror, fall on their faces to the ground. Our Lord after being stripped of His glory and returning to the condition in which He wished to live, in humility and poverty, approaches His Apostles, touches them, and speaks these consoling words :—" *Arise, fear not, it is I*". Beloved Sisters, these words are for us ; often does our Lord say :—" *Arise, fear not, it is I*". And when we have any resolutions to take, let us fear not, but be generous, and arise. The

repentance. We shall then consider Jesus carrying His cross.

In this adorable spectacle we may fix on three points which shall be thoroughly understood by taking of them that which speaks best to the heart, and induces it to the love of the Divine Victim.

1. Jesus advances always. 2. He rises always. 3. However sad He be, He proceeds always.

I. He advances always. Solemn was the moment in which Jesus, for the salvation of the world, took the heavy cross and laid it on His shoulders satisfied and content. *Proposito gaudio sustinuit crucem*: "Having joy set before Him, He endured the cross"—His joy was to suffer voluntarily for us. You know what S. Paul has written on this subject; instead of the joy and glory which were offered Him, and which He might have chosen in order to work our redemption, He preferred the cross, He seized it. And do we likewise, Sisters, seize the cross every day with delight—the cross of the rule, the cross of love, the cross of the reform of our faults, the cross of the complete sacrifice of self, even to our innermost depths? Do we carry the cross? O Jesus, grant me the grace of carrying it with Thee, like Thee, by love of Thee.

He advances with His cross, and this cross is laden with the sins, the iniquities, and the ingrati-

tude of the world, but above all with the ingratitude and baseness of souls that were dearest to His heart. The sins, the fatigues, and the contempt which overpower Him, He beholds and bears. Oh ! let us from the bottom of our hearts compassionate His sufferings and His sorrow. He sets out, He advances, He ascends weary—yet He ascends always. For so He has said :—“ If anyone wishes to come after Me, if anyone wishes to partake of My glory and My crown, let him renounce himself, and take up his cross and follow Me”. We have nothing to do but to take up our cross and follow Jesus on the *Via Dolorosa*. There He appeared to you ; there He beholds you.

And do you likewise, Sisters, set out, and advance, and ascend, not with a half will, but with courage. Your Divine Saviour is advancing always ; follow Him, and say :—“ It is for my sake that Thou dost bear the cross. Oh ! what shall I do to comfort and console Thee ? ”

II. Jesus falls, and thrice yields beneath the burden, but He rises always. Tradition points out to us our Lord's three falls. God falls to earth—what a mystery ! And He vouchsafes this weakness ; this oppression ; He vouchsafes those falls, and His bodily infirmity. In this we find a remarkable lesson for our weakness. It was through compas-

sion for our infirmities that Jesus became weak, and halted, and fell. And alas ! Sisters, how many times have we fallen—after so many graces, and not beneath a stupendous weight !

Jesus makes an effort and rises. Let us ask of Him the grace of rising likewise. There is for us powerful help in our Lord's triple fall, because in all His acts, in all His sorrows, our Divine Saviour vouchsafed by teaching to make us capable of deserving grace. Hence whatever be our burthens, our languor, our aridity, or our repugnances, we must remember that we shall always find grace near Jesus falling under the cross—the grace of rising, and marching on always. What a consolation !

Not that we should be anxious to fall—oh ! no ; but we are so weak, so feeble, so inconstant. We pause and turn aside on the way which Jesus followed, but we shall arise by the help which His fall has earned for us. Let us at least always give this Divine Master who is so good to us, a tender sentiment of piety and compassion, and let us conceive a just indignation against ourselves which will give us energy to rise always and for ever.

III. Thus our Lord passes through every obstacle and proceeds always. But He meets by the way the most legitimate objects of His regard—His

Mother and the holy women. How hard was this trial to His Mother whom He loved so tenderly. He saw her, but made not even a movement to look at her, He spoke to her not a word, nor did He attempt to comfort Her; she had no need of comfort. He never chose to give way to natural sensibility. Grace and spiritual love only—nothing for flesh and blood. The holy women, whom the sight of His sorrows caused to weep, had the consolation of hearing one sentence from the lips of their Redeemer:—“*Weep not over Me, weep over yourselves*”. Jesus wills not compassion for Himself. Among all the testimonies of love on the part of His friends, Jesus thinks not of Himself; His Father, the cross, and the salvation of souls are His only occupation, His only thought. Nothing for Himself. He to think of Himself! Never. He is dead, He is the Penitent, the Victim. He thinks of nothing but of humbling Himself and suffering. Jesus never pleased Himself, and therefore the Eternal Father exalted Him, and used frequently to say that He was His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. There are souls that always please themselves, and that, while having the best intentions, think only of themselves. O Sisters, never think of yourselves. Then the words addressed to the holy women, you may take unto

yourselves. Yea, weep over yourselves, but above all over souls. Weep also over Jesus, but let your tears be the much-longed-for tears of loving compassion. It may be also a consoling reflection to you that the devout sex were there with Jesus ; the Gospel tells us that many women followed Him, but there is no mention of a single man. This is not much to our credit.

In fine, Jesus beneath His burden, in the midst of tears, the jeerings of the mob, insults, contempt, and injuries of every kind, ascends courageously and calmly ; nothing stops Him, He pushes on, He ascends always. Neither the buffets, nor the spits retard His progress ; there is here no sensibility, but all for the spiritual good of others. Do you also, beloved Sisters, set out, advance, and ascend. Something relating to the senses may befall you, a humiliation for aught I know. Answer it not, but, like Jesus, proceed onwards. Oh ! He is truly the Divine Hero, but He has done this and we should do it. S. Peter says :—“ *He hath marked out for us the way in order that we may follow it*”. Let us then put our steps on His steps, our marks on His marks, and let us walk behind Him and advance. And if there happen anything relating to the senses or the affections, any adverse passion, we must not pause, but always peaceably and constantly ascend

with Jesus Christ, and we shall with Him attain the goal.

EXERCISE III.

CONFERENCE ON MORTIFICATION.

Sisters, we are always at the Cross of Jesus Christ ; it is to us a book on which we could never sufficiently meditate ; it is for us, and particularly for you, the doctrine of truth and life.

One of the first lessons of the Divine Saviour whom we contemplate always carrying the cross is :—“ *He suffered because it was His will*”. He could be unwilling to suffer and save the world otherwise ; but it was His will to suffer in order to instruct us and move us to pity. The first conclusion to be drawn from this is very plain and simple :—“ *To imitate our Lord directly, we must devote ourselves to voluntary suffering, and suffer voluntarily*”. And if this be not perfection, it is at least the right way conducting thither.

Hence, in order to follow Jesus Christ carrying His cross, let us remember this precious principle which flows naturally from the mystery :—*We must suffer voluntarily.*

And wherefore? Our Lord's Passion, a voluntary choice, indicates to us that there are reasons why we should suffer, and suffer voluntarily. Hence we should say to ourselves that there are reasons, and powerful reasons, which we ought to believe, even though we do not comprehend them; the sight of the cross is sufficient to ensure them unhesitating recognition in our minds.

But is there not also this manifest signification in the Cross of Jesus—that our Divine Saviour having chosen it for our redemption, by its means we likewise should co-operate in our redemption; and that in order to associate ourselves with Him, we have the utmost need of suffering? Hence, this is His own proposal:—“*If you wish to come after Me, take up My cross*”. In order to participate in His victory, we must partake of His labours.

But do we not know besides that we must always have suffering on this earth? If I do not accept and choose it, God will impose it on me, because there is always need of the cross; but I shall not then have entered into free participation in the suffering of Jesus Christ. Rather do I ask the will to suffer, and to mortify my flesh and senses; I ask to carry my cross, and when that cross comes to me, by others or by myself, I shall accept and love it. Therefore, Sisters, we perfectly comprehend the

teaching of faith, that, since our Lord has established this way of reparation, since He has chosen this manner of expiation, it should be ours likewise with the help of His grace, by the union of our hearts with His ; for of ourselves we can do nothing.

This, then, Sisters, is your life, your vocation. Go, and test the excellence of the way of the cross, the better way, or that which best realises the intentions of our Lord. You suffer for Him, you live for Him, you are willing to die for Him, do it well. Never refuse grace, never refuse the cross.

There is another consideration to which we shall attend more particularly, in the example of our Lord. Let us recall to mind the very remarkable words of S. Peter the Apostle. "*Jesus Christ suffered*," he says, "*to leave us an example.*"

Now, I venture to ask if we can discover in the example of our Lord, apart from the expiation of our sins and the meritorious graces to be acquired by us, the reason of His voluntary suffering. It is this, Sisters. Jesus had to clothe us anew, and to remodel us. Order was not observed ; of this there are but too many traces in our souls. Disorder is the empire of the senses and of things natural and sensual. Yea, the empire, and the empire in such a way that the spirit is not its master.

That which rules us is flesh and blood, the animal instinct, imagination. Now I understand the words of S. Peter. When I take my Master's cross, and, united to my Saviour despite my weaknesses and infirmities, I embrace this divine cross, apply it to my flesh, and press it to my heart, there may indeed be some natural inclinations within me, but I am in order, I am the master, because I suffer voluntarily and freely as did my Divine Saviour. The flesh may indeed rebel, but only after the manner of a slave dragging at his fetters, and unable to break them.

Beloved Sisters, choose this suffering in practice ; there are inexpressible advantages in mortification ; there we again discover original justice, and portion of our primitive power which we regain like many of the saints, as S. Francis of Assisi, for instance, who exercised command over wild beasts, as did the first man in his state of innocence. In suffering and the cross is also found the very essence of all true virtue, purity, humility, patience, sacrifice, and love of our Lord.

In fine, mortification is the better prayer, it obtains grace. S. Bernard says, that we have two wings to fly ; two, because with one alone we could not fly ; and "those two wings," he says, "are prayer and mortification". That is to say, that

prayer with mortification is always heard. As to prayer without mortification, it may be good sometimes ; but it will be far less efficacious. This is hard on nature, but it is what our Lord loveth.

We must therefore, Sisters, follow our Divine Master's example in desiring mortification ; a desire, of course, which should be confined within proper limits—there should be no imprudence ; but we are naturally prone to live in the opposite direction. We have holy obedience always as our guide. But we must be careful to be exceedingly zealous in the practice of meekness and humility ; indifference for the cross of Jesus Christ is the evil of the religious soul.

And, in conclusion, in the lesson on which we have been meditating, let us also take in the motives of voluntary suffering, the motives of love for our Lord. You love our Divine Saviour, oh ! yea, you love Him, and you have proved it by consecrating yourselves to Him, since you are willing to live and die for Him. When, in presence of our Lord, I consider Him carrying His cross, overcome by fatigue, wounded, scourged, insulted, and I say to myself:—"That is all for me, because He loved me," is it possible that I would be unwilling to suffer, or could seek to avoid suffering, and pretend

to love my Master? I am deceiving myself, it is impossible.

The seal of divine love and the seal of perfection is love of suffering. Behold S. Theresa, truly did she love suffering; truly she suffered much. And all the saints likewise. Oh! Sisters, I humble myself in speaking thus to you, for it is easy to speak, but we must likewise know and thoroughly understand that there is no true love without sacrifice.

Oh! ask our Lord for love of sacrifice. We are on this earth only to glorify God by our immolation. Yea, Sisters, a humble, bruised, and crucified soul, a soul satisfied to die for God, a soul seeking self-denial, makes God triumph by her voluntary sufferings; she proclaims Him unto all things preferable and superior. On beholding Him, I cry:—"God is great. There is only one God whom we could love thus." We ought to do this, Sisters. And if we cannot offer to God the voluntary sacrifice of martyrdom, there is martyrdom every day and every moment—the martyrdom of mortification, rule, and obedience. Let us embrace this mortification with all our hearts, and let no limits to our desire to suffer, except those assigned by obedience.

You now understand, Sisters, something of what the Cross says to us. Whilst contemplating our Lord on the way of Calvary, go and ask Him for

this love of the Cross. And entreat Mary, *Mater Dolorosa*, to obtain for you the strength never to pause except before the barriers of obedience.

EXERCISE IV.

MEDITATION ON OUR LORD'S DEATH.

Beloved Sisters, let us assist this evening at the death of our Lord upon the cross. We shall briefly recapitulate the facts—our Lord on the *Via Dolorosa*, and subsequently on the cross, and the derision and mockery of the populace. We shall take our stand on Calvary with Mary and the holy women, to contemplate our expiring Saviour, and we shall ask for the grace to die spiritually with Him. You shall then pause at the three considerations of the death of Jesus Christ :—1. A sacrifice of reparation. 2. A Sacrifice of consummation. 3. A death of love.

I. A sacrifice of reparation. The death of Jesus Christ is the effect of sin. We, sinners, are the real authors of His agony and cruel death. *Per peccatum, mors*. Through sin, death. As fire consumes wood, so did our sins consume Jesus Christ. This is an article of Faith. We may therefore say

to ourselves that we are the characters taking part in His death, and that it was the voice of our iniquities which cried :—" *Crucify Him, crucify Him*". Then we shall better than ever understand the words of Jesus carrying His cross :—" *Weep not over Me, weep over yourselves*". Enter then, Sisters, into the innermost depths of your souls, and say with bitterness and compassion :—" It is true that Jesus alone reckoned, measured, and felt my sins and iniquities ; that is to say, He alone endured the torments which I deserved". Let us be penetrated with a profound sentiment of compassion for our Divine Lord. He offered Himself, He gave Himself up, He immolated Himself. What love ! Then He hath called us, and reckons us among His beloved friends. And what do we offer Him ? What have we done for Him ? Alas ! how often have we been guilty of coldness, indifference, forgetfulness, raillery, contempt ? What a return ! what ingratitude ! We must turn on ourselves, and despise ourselves, and be confounded. And then in our humiliation, let us unite ourselves to Mary and the holy women, and ask for participation in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, and for the tears of repentance and love.

II. The death of Jesus Christ is the consummation of sacrifice ; the reparation is consummated,

Jesus says to Himself. Our Lord is purified by reparation ; but that is not all, we must realise the words of S. Paul within us :—“ *I fulfil in my flesh what is wanting in me of the passion of Jesus Christ*”. And what is wanting in me? My suffering, my crucifixion, the participation of my whole being in this sacrifice, the entire oblation of myself. Oh ! Sisters, let us from this day henceforth die with Jesus Christ. I can do nothing, it is true ; but what a consolation ! We have said :—“ All is consummated ”. With this grace of consummation in Jesus Christ, I shall be enabled to fulfil every sacrifice. Courage, Sisters, courage, the last moment of consummation will come for us likewise. At the hour of death, or when in your thoughts you bring your last moments vividly before you, say with your seraphic mother :—“ I shall be judged by Him whom I have loved so much ”. But this is not all ; our life should be consummated beforehand, for this is the work of a religious soul, but above all, of a Carmelite. United to Jesus the Victim, she should say with S. Paul :—“ *I die every day*”. O my God, take my life, accept my death, I receive the sentence of my destruction in expiation of my iniquities, for love of Thee. I offer it and abandon it to Thee ; Thy will be done. And thus, Sisters, let us live in such manner that on our last day we

with her in God, and in God only, in complete forgetfulness of self.

EXERCISE II.

MEDITATION ON THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD.

We must remember that, agreeably to the spirit of the last day of these exercises, you should earnestly ask of God the grace of pure spiritual joy, true joy,—that supernatural joy which springs from perfect love. Outside the time of retreat there will be other joys, and other hours for other desires and other virtues; but in contemplating the glory of our Lord to-day, we must endeavour to rejoice in Him and for Him, whatever vain thoughts may be passing within our minds.

You will then contemplate the Ascension of our Lord. You know that for forty days He appeared to His apostles frequently and manifested unto them all manner of goodness, power, and glory. Then after commanding them to remain at Jerusalem and there to await the Holy Spirit whom He promised them, He led them upon Mount Olivet,—and wherefore? You know, Sisters, that on this mount of suffering, He was about to

manifest His glory. On reaching this privileged mountain, He arose to heaven in presence of His disciples. In their astonishment, pausing with their eyes raised towards their Divine Master, Jesus disappeared. And angels came to tell them that they had other things to do, and that Jesus whom they beheld rising into heaven, would return one day in like manner.

Behold the fact, behold the history. When you are recollected peacefully in the superior part of your soul, picture to yourselves Mount Olivet where you will find the apostles and disciples with our Lord, and ask for the grace of the mystery. You can then behold the persons, hear the words, and assist at the performance of the mystery. And first to behold the persons.

What are the dispositions of the apostles and disciples? There is reason to be surprised at and long for them; they are still hesitating; there are even some who doubt; others ask:—“*When wilt Thou set up the kingdom of Israel?*” And Ascension Day finds them still at this point weak, feeble, and even wavering in their faith. What misery! But we must be surprised at nothing; these were only natural impressions; they had not yet received the Holy Ghost. We must pity them. And we, Sisters, in our vocation have still

ideas of the world, when we should rise above them,—we who have received the divine spirit of Jesus. But we must never be troubled, whatever our impressions. Impressions are nothing, they may be despised. We must not wonder at anything that happens to us despite our efforts. After being raised up and ravished, we may descend in a moment to infamy and the mere animal life,—but what matter !

And behold Jesus triumphant and immortal, gazing for the last time on this earth which He was about to leave, and bestowing a special blessing on the souls to Him most beloved. What should we do in sight of this strength, this goodness, and this glory of our beloved Saviour. We should raise ourselves up by forgetting self, and follow Him in desire to heaven, likening ourselves to a cast-off garment, and rejoicing in the Lord.

We shall now hear the words.

After blessing His apostles for the last time on earth, our Lord says to them :—"Withdraw and await the Holy Spirit". And this is what we should do, we should await the Holy Spirit ; He has His moments, He breathes wheresoever He wills. Let us always hold ourselves in readiness above all in prayer ; and let us long for Him earnestly and patiently. And the angels say to the astonished disciples :—*Men of Galilee, why do*

you pause and look ?” It was as if they said :—
 “Go, fight, labour, suffer, and advance. Jesus, whom you have seen ascending into heaven, will return in like manner on the last day.” Here, then, we behold the end of all things, the General Judgment,—so much the better. And our Lord will appear to us in His glory. We shall behold our Friend, our Saviour. What happiness to have for a Judge one whom you have loved so much ! S. Theresa used to say :—“*I shall be judged by Him whom my heart loveth*”. And this thought used to transport her with joy. But we must prepare for this by victory over self.

We now come to the performance of the mystery. Our Lord ascends into heaven from the Garden of Olives. It is then evident that suffering is followed by happiness and glory. The Divine Master has said so. And we read likewise in S. Paul :—“*If you have suffered, you shall be glorified*”. The Garden of Olives leads to heaven ; it is the degree, the path, and in this manner did our Lord indicate to His disciples the route He had taken to rejoin them. Let us pause then, Sisters, on this beloved mountain of glory and sorrow, in peace and joy, renouncing all natural satisfaction, and awaiting our Lord only. And let us make an act of faith on the necessity of suffering. We shall make a

second act of faith on the triumph which the cross afforded Jesus Christ, and we shall say :—
 “ We likewise shall soon ascend into heaven ”.
 And God in His love hath placed us on this privileged way. Confidence, therefore, we shall suffer for His glory and His love, but not for ourselves,—no, for God, and for heaven which we love for Jesus’ sake. And heaven is God ; beatitude is the life of the happy God, the great God, the supremely perfect God. Let us endeavour to understand these things in order to free ourselves from the oppressive yoke of nature and our depraved inclinations ; all which are so much mud. Let us endeavour likewise to make here below a heaven of holy prayer and contemplation insomuch as the grace of so doing is bestowed on us, while we are waiting for our Lord Himself to come, and to set us in the places which He has destined for us. Let us ask our Immaculate Mother to obtain for us this grace, and likewise all others belonging to the contemplation of our Lord’s Ascension. She beheld not her Divine Son rising into heaven. Jesus was unwilling that she should be comforted ; He loved her and left her in suffering and long years of exile ; and eventually He destined her for heaven.

EXERCISE III.

CONFERENCE ON TRUE LOVE.

In order to prepare us for the close of the retreat, we must seek that which is the conclusion, the limit, and the consummation of all things.

And what is this last limit on which our soul is fixed? Surely we cannot doubt that it is Divine love; everything is summed up in that. But we must first endeavour to form an adequate notion of Divine love. Does it consist in affected sentimentality, or in the outward expression of what we inwardly experience in our souls? We have on this point the words of S. John, who gives us in answer:—“ *We should love not in word, but in deed*”. And our Lord Himself tells us:—“ *Who-soever loveth Me keepeth My commandments*”.

The love of God is not altogether, therefore, as we might suppose, in the dispositions or tenderness of the soul. These may form a portion of love, it is true, and may tend to the love of God, but it is not they that constitute it. There is need of deeds and actions pleasing to God; there is need of practising virtue even unto perfection. It is true love that makes us always, and in every-

thing, turn to God as our Sovereign Good. Beloved Sisters, earnestly ask for this love which is the true liberty of our souls; to ask for it is already to practise it.

Another simple principle is, that true love of God consists in the reciprocity or mutual interchange of love. God loves us, and His love does not consist in words; He makes everything, He gives everything,—His wisdom, power, goodness, light,—nay, even His very self.

What love! We should understand that while on the one hand God gives Himself to us, on the other we should give Him all that we have, and all that we are.

We may therefore justly say that the religious life is a true and most excellent act of Divine charity, since it consists in making to God the offering of all one's being.

Thus, to abandon one's heart and soul to the quest of God is to devote oneself in holy prayer to Divine charity, which is not enough; it should be followed by solid virtue, which is the gift of all that we are.

But what is the work of a soul that truly loves God, and is not satisfied with merely saying so? What is there in your life, for instance, to prove to God that you love Him? What is there to

manifest it to all your Sisters? Self-denial, for in this there is no deception. If you love God you cannot love yourself, you must hate yourself,—and I wish to call your attention to the full force of the term hating yourself,—for whoever hates self, renounces self, despises self, forgets self. Now, Sisters, you understand that God, who asks this perfection of the souls that He hath chosen, so willed that even in the essence of the religious life there should be excellent opportunities for the practice of self-denial in the holy vows. To-morrow you will renew those sacred vows, and those which yet remain unuttered will be united to them in the expression of their desires. And among those vows, so sacred, so great, so perfect, there is certainly one which is the perfect expression of the love of God, because it bears upon it, when practised faithfully, the most absolute self-denial, namely, the vow of obedience. And wherefore? Because when acting under obedience we lay aside our own tastes, inclinations, and desires; we may say:—"It is no longer I that live, and move, and have my being; I am dead to everything". Why did your holy mother, and all founders of orders, so exalt and recommend obedience? Because it is the better way of perfection, and the true expression of sacrifice and love. We must obey unto death,

even unto the death of the cross. Everything is in obedience, because then we can say:—"I have given everything to God". We must be very careful not to neglect the practice of holy obedience, and to believe, for example, that in contemplating it we contemplate all that is perfect. The love of God in holy prayer is good; to love and cherish holy contemplation is likewise good. But prayer in a soul will not be true, nor good, nor holy, unless there may likewise be found humble, perfect, silent, unaccusing, uncomplaining, unreasoning obedience; silence, above all things; above all things, doing and loving what is prescribed by even the simple wish of our superiors without asking wherefore, because God invites us. I adhere to everything that I am bidden by an act of faith, recognising and adoring in the orders of my superior, whoever he may be, the Divine will. There is no question of the person so commanding, of his qualities or virtues; I behold, I serve, and I obey but God alone. And this, Sisters, is the love of God and perfection, because the sacrifice is fulfilled.

And when we have seen many souls, do we not know by experience that obedience is the surest guarantee of advancement and perseverance? Thus when we wish to be informed of a soul that seems

but little recollected, little advanced in the ways of God, we ask :—"Is she obedient?" "Yes, perfectly." That is enough; that is the better way; and we have every hope for this soul, because she gives all to God by obedience. To love God we must put ourselves in communication with the source, and we shall reach this source by the canal of obedience. Hence, when I put myself entirely into the hands of my superiors and suffer myself to be led by them exteriorly and interiorly at any cost, I am in communication with the living waters of grace and divine charity. And Thou, Lord, hast said :—*Whoever heareth you heareth Me. Whoever followeth Me walketh not in darkness*". Our Lord vouchsafed that the perfection of His life should be obedience—"He was submissive". And to whom? To all His creatures, even those who insulted and spat upon Him. We should not ask wherefore according to the lights of human reason. Wherefore? Because Jesus loved. O Sisters, to love God more, love obedience exceedingly, set no limits to your love, obey not only in act, but submit your judgment likewise to obedience blindly, as the saints have done even to the extent of doing foolish things; but this is the folly of obedience, which is no other than the folly of the Cross, the folly of Divine love.

Above all things, avoid murmurs, reasoning, and opposition, all which are so displeasing to God. We say:—"But if I were to do something else! Such another means would be more convenient. They are recommending me to act contrary to rule." Avoid all that, Sisters. Renounce your own views and will, and obey calmly and gladly. You will then understand what the love of God is, and love it really.

Observe, Sisters, that as effects proceed from causes, sometimes, and reveal them, effects may also in their turn become causes; in this manner does a soul detached from self, and renouncing her own will in conformity with the vow of obedience, destroy the principle of natural life. God then comes into this soul to be her life; He dwells in her, and she reclines upon His bosom. Now, to live and breathe in God is to love Him, because love is the very life of God; a soul dwelling deep in the depths of God's life forgets everything to love Him only, and then how nobly obedience is rewarded!

What is now to be done? O Sisters, ask for the love of God, that excellent gift, ask for, press and entreat for this supernatural love with all humility; and this is what you should do. Charity is God. He alone can give it to us. When they sought to

bring our Lord into their hearts the days of His mortal life, they should ask Him :—"Come, O Lord". And we likewise should say :—"Come, O Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me whole ; do according to Thy will ". And this evening and to-morrow, when renewing your vows at the close of the retreat, you must give up all, your thoughts, your love, your very selves ; and our Lord satisfied with the oblation, will answer it with the most abundant blessings.

EXERCISE IV.

MEDITATION ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

Beloved Sisters, we shall now bring this retreat to a close, thanking God from the bottom of our hearts.

We shall this evening again return to divine love, and you can ask yourselves once more, in holy prayer:—"What is divine love? what is pure love?" You will remember the two principles which we this morning established. 1. That love does not consist in words, or sensible consolation, but in deed. 2. That love consists in the reciprocal communication of all good.

Cast yourselves now at the feet of our Lord in presence of Mary, and the angels and saints who shall be the witnesses of your oblation. The grace to ask for, whatever your dispositions, is to thoroughly penetrate what God is for you, with the ardent desire of doing all that you do for love of Him.

We shall now for the practical conclusion to be drawn from the exercises pause at four very fruitful considerations, which the Holy Ghost dictated to the soldier of Manréze in the ever-memorable grotto where He disclosed to him such great things.

At the end of this long month of retreat, S. Ignatius says to himself:—"God gives, we must give; God is everywhere, He dwells in me, I must dwell in Him; God operates and acts in everything, I must operate in Him; God is the treasure and the centre of all perfection, I must place my treasure and centre my perfection in Him."

I. God gives, I must give. Yea, Sisters, God gives everything, we should likewise give everything. And here we should recall all the benefits which He has showered on us—creation, redemption, sanctification, tenderness, solicitude, indulgence for our miseries, and the holy vocation.

God gives, what has He not given? He gives His very Self, He identifies Himself with us by

every means of union, especially in the Blessed Eucharist and in prayer, which are both a participation in heavenly life. And what else must I do? I must also give up everything—organs, memory, intelligence, affections, will, sufferings, in a word, everything appertaining to self. I shall give myself up and sacrifice myself, and this oblation I shall make through obedience. I shall give myself up, and abandon my whole being. And lo! before God and Mary, before the whole court of heaven, I shall make my act of oblation with or without consolation, as well as I can, and as pleasing as possible to God, but I shall make it and make it fully.

II. God dwells everywhere: He is on earth, He bestows being and life all round, He dwells in me likewise, and especially in my soul, which He fills with the divine essence; He expands my intellect, enlivens my heart; there is nothing in me that does not come from God, and is not in Him and for Him. Let an ardent prayer then escape your heart:—"Give me, O my God, the grace to dwell in Thee, and to live always in Thee". Make this request lovingly; it is indeed the expression of full and perfect denial.

Behold likewise, Sisters, God dwelling in all creatures and giving them life; this is a sweet

thought, which makes us live the life of faith. And here again, Sisters, you must renew the oblation of yourselves, for this is the means of living without other attachment the life of immolation and the life of death in God and for God.

III. God operates and works in every creature and in myself by love. Everything comes from God; there is no good, no help that is not the action of God; all creatures are only so many instruments in His hands. And what does He not operate for His sanctification in the soul? And by what return are we to mark our appreciation of this benefit? What are we to do? You, Sisters, know well. We must act for God, and operate in Him. I have an imperfect thought, a human desire; I sacrifice them in order to abandon myself always and in all things to the practice of true virtue. Yea, Sisters, this is the return, the reciprocity of good, and the communion of works in true, and pure, and perfect love. Here too lie the fruits of the retreat. If, then, in a short time, this evening, or perhaps to-morrow, temptation returns and pursues us, let us despise it; it is nothing, it is not for us. Let us act in God and for God only. O my God, let me die and live for Thee and in Thee alone.

IV. Lastly, in considering things carefully, we may ask where is true love, that is to say, the centre

of all good and of all perfection, and the treasure of justice? Is it not in God and in God alone? Yea, God alone is good, alone is great, alone is holy; we must then rejoice in His beatitude and glory, and centre all our affections in Him. Let us ask Him in the language of prayer to shower down on us the abundance of His graces, which will detach us from creatures and from ourselves, and let us abandon ourselves to holy love, and say with S. Ignatius :—

“Take and receive, O Lord, my entire liberty; receive my memory, my intelligence, and my will. Thou didst give me all that I am, and all that I have, and to Thee I return it; I devote it to Thy good pleasure. The only thing that I ask of Thee is Thy love; if I obtain this, I am rich enough and desire nothing more.”

And thus, on this evening, beloved Sisters, you shall close the retreat in peace and silence, and to-morrow finding yourselves again together, be faithful, and let your conversation be such that one may easily perceive that the Spirit of God hath penetrated you.

REFLECTIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS.

PEACE ON THE CROSS.

AN INSTRUCTION GIVEN AT THE END OF LENT,
1857.

BELoved Sisters, what ought we meditate and speak on during this season of the Passion, in order to prepare ourselves for Holy Week? There is but one thing that should be present to our thoughts and feelings—namely, the cross; and it is on this point that I wish to give you a token which shall be as a motto. That motto is—*Peace on the cross*. We must not say, nor would you, I am sure, wish to say, *Peace without the cross*; we must not say this, because it is contrary to the will of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ willed not for Himself, *Peace without the cross*. Thus the resemblance is complete, and it is only imitating our Lord and expressing His own sentiment when we say—*Peace on the cross*.

For you know well, beloved Sisters, that our Lord enjoyed peace in the midst of insults, blasphemies, and the most grievous torments; and to say that He did not enjoy peace would be blasphemy. He

enjoyed peace, and—ponder well over this mystery—His soul, united from the time of His incarnation to the Word, enjoyed the beatific vision, even as His humanity enjoyeth it since the Ascension in the bosom of His Father in Heaven. Our Lord Jesus Christ enjoyed beatitude to its highest degree in the superior part of His soul. This beatitude He never lost for an instant ; and He was in the enjoyment thereof while He was suffering the most grievous torments, receiving the most outrageous insults, and experiencing the bitterest sorrow.

Therefore, *Peace on the cross.*

But how shall we obtain it? Can we groan and wring our hands, weeping and wailing, and suffer as did our Lord, and still enjoy peace? Yea, we can. But how? It is said that it is better to do things than to know the laws of things, and that is true ; yet we must acknowledge that definitions are of great assistance. Let us then see what is this law of suffering in peace. How can we preserve peace on the cross?

I. By considering the necessity of suffering. We acknowledge this in theory, but are we willing to fulfil it in practice? Alas! we are weak and oftentimes draw back, for Nature is not dead within us, and she cannot endure suffering. It is only grace that loves suffering and enables us in those moments

to say to our souls :—"My soul, thou must suffer, thou must suffer".

"But am I always to suffer," crieth out our self-love. "I cannot endure that ; it is opposed to my happiness and comfort." Yea, my soul, thou must suffer. Thou must bear the cross, and that cross cannot be of thine own choosing ; thou must only bear it up when it is given to thee. It will come of itself some time or another, for in some way or other we all must suffer ; and this obligation our Lord Himself imposeth on us, when He says :—"If any one will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me". And again, "Christ had to suffer," of His own will, no doubt, for He had perfect liberty of will, even as we. Now, to wish for the cross in one way and not to wish for it in another, is to wish for the one and to repel the other, and indicates a failing in the observance of the law of suffering. Therefore, we must suffer ; and whether we be tried by men, by sorrow, or by any other cause, let us say within us :—"My soul, thou must suffer" ; and then let us rest and suffer in peace. Suppose a sick man whose leg has to be amputated ; he undergoes the torture, and accepts it with resignation, because it is necessary. Is not this a means of enjoying peace rather than suffering at his lot ? This sick man is our model ; a cross is before us, and let us

shut our eyes, stretch ourselves on it, and be nailed thereto. It is God who crucifies me—be His holy name for ever blessed.

II. Hope is the greatest need of our soul ; hence, the cross is her greatest good and securest repose. The greatest need of a religious soul is to resemble Jesus Christ ; on this lies the foundation of all her hopes. Would this need be satisfied if we had nothing to suffer either spiritually or corporally ? Our Lord Jesus Christ carried the cross, and surely we have need to practise virtue for our greater merit, in order that we may approach nearer unto the heart of our Lord. And there is no virtue that we could practise without the cross. Where would patience be without the cross ? Patience is synonymous with the cross. We know, alas ! that we have passed long years in the ministry ; but to have suffered is the best secret for raising a despairing soul, and helping her advantageously.

III. Finally, we require to be purified. Now, the cross is needful for our purification ; for suffering is the only means by which we can be purified. The cross then is a necessity. It is the inseparable complement of our existence and the source of our most solid virtues. We need the cross to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ. The cross is a necessity, and I speak of the cross that is actually present to

us; for that is no cross which exists only in imagination. When, therefore, the cross presents itself to us, let us say to ourselves that it is necessary, and resign ourselves to submit to it and bear it.

Oh! if there be a sight that is agreeable unto God and His angels, it is that of a soul meek and submissive under crosses and humiliations; for this is the image of Jesus Christ, and the part He hath chosen. But for Himself He vouchsafed unmeasurable sorrow; while for you He diminished it from the infinite. *Peace on the cross* is a mystery, but the mystery of a profound truth. Teach me to know, O my God, how to suffer peacefully and lovingly as did my Saviour!

Therefore, the cross is a necessity.

And what more remains to be said, beloved Sisters, on this subject? Only that which we should keep repeating to ourselves incessantly, that the cross is good, and that it comprehends and embraces within itself all the goods and pleasures of this earth. Meekness, joy, and rest are in the cross that is accepted; for immortification brings nought but sadness in its train. If you suffer, accept the cross, take it, and you will be happy. And what would you that the world would do to a soul that has thus stripped herself for sacrifice? It will flee from her. And what would you that God would

do to a soul that is thus crucified? He makes her another with Him, another Jesus, another victim. In her He beholdeth His Son, and His Son's cross and peace. For He loves her; and then the crucified soul, if she be brave, is happy and holy, for herein lies all perfection in the cross and *peace on the cross*.

And then it comes to pass that we hate sensual gratification, and despise worldly pleasures. S. Theresa used to think herself unfortunate when she was not suffering, and used to cry: "O mystery of suffering thus accepted! True mystery, because it is an overthrow of nature, to rest peaceful on the cross, and there to slumber and abandon one's self as a vessel of whom God is the sole pilot, to cut the cables, weigh anchor, and set sail from earth, with nothing save the heavens over the deep!"

Such is the mystery of *peace on the cross*.

Then, courage, Sisters, and let us take up the cross during this holy season while you are going to dwell in contemplation on the Passion, scourging and insults offered to Jesus Christ. Say unto Him: "Yea, Lord, I will rest with Thee on the cross; and I will stretch myself peacefully thereon. I will suffer it to penetrate into my innermost bowels. Even though thou wilt abandon me, repel me, or crush me, still I will remain." How do we know

but a religious may find herein an heroic act in the interior life ; great suffering or a great sacrifice to be embraced. And if God so wills, you must undergo it, and undergo it fully. For the more closely you press the cross of your Master to your heart, the greater will be the measure of peace vouchsafed to you while waiting for eternity.

DISCOURSE ON SPIRITUAL JOY.

IN Scripture we often find a text that might with advantage be applied to the spiritual life in its inward progress. Such a text is calculated to excite spiritual joy within us. S. Paul forcibly repeats to us :—" Rejoice ye in the Lord ". And applying these words to himself, he cries :—" I superabound with joy in the midst of tribulation ". When our Lord was quitting this earth, He told His disciples unto the end of time, and especially those souls that were so intimately united to Him :—" I go to My Father, but I will pray for you, and I will send you My Spirit that My joy may be full and perfect in you ".

But what is spiritual joy? It is an independent condition of our sensible being, and independent, moreover, of all sufferings. This joy, which should always exist in a faithful soul, establishes it in a perfect contentment that is superior to any impressions from without. Yea, truly we may say this joy is perfection. He who possesses it rejoices always in God with contentment of spirit, pure and unchangeable, in union with the Divine joy. In this state was our Lord's soul in the midst of the most

grievous torments of His Passion, ever enjoying the beatific vision—a mystery, still a reality.

We must remember that in our soul there lies a faculty to which the grace of God grants joy and peace, independently of the most sorrowing sensations. This joy is no sensible consolation or contentment caused by external objects. It is a joy in God who comes and dwells in the soul, independently of the sensations created by the devil, the world, and the flesh within us. This joy consists, moreover, in being always content in God. How can we think ill of the will of the God of Goodness, the Incarnation of Wisdom? Now, everything comes from God; therefore, everything is good; and, therefore, we ought to rejoice in everything, for joy is the contentment of good. May my soul, O God, be ever content in Thee!

There are times when we must be content against our will, and struggle energetically against all the evil inclinations of our nature, in order that, come what may, our spirit united to the Spirit of God, may rest in Him and enjoy contentment. Behold the joy manifested by our Lord in the Garden of Olives, by Mary on Calvary, by the martyrs in the midst of their torments! It is an error to imagine that spiritual joy is incompatible with sensible sorrow; for a soul united to God suffers when she

suffereth not. Let us ardently desire this treasure, ask for it unceasingly, and pursue it with all the strength of our soul. Yea, it is truly a treasure, which can have no other first principle than grace; for, if there is anything supernatural in the world, it is spiritual joy in the midst of suffering. Our Lord vouchsafed to give it to us with His spirit. Let us ask it of Him, and seek it every moment of the day; and every morning let one of our first prayers be a claim for this gift on Heaven. O my God! grant me to be always content in Thee. Yea, Sisters, if at the first moments of the day—when, so to speak, we resume life anew—a religious soul breathed forth this prayer to God, with the *Laudate* to bless her actions and sufferings during the day, what progress would she not make in thus abandoning herself to Providence? Such a soul would advance rapidly in perfection, and would soon acquire spiritual joy, which is the source of peace and happiness—the symbol of the Divine union. Therefore, we must in all things be content. This is no easy task; nay, sometimes it must seem to us impossible. I know it is not pleasant to be on a bed of suffering for a month or two;* yet there one has to lie powerless, helpless, plunged in

* Père de Ravignan had only just recovered from a three months' illness.

physical, and sometimes overcome by moral weakness. Human nature revolts against it—what matter? suffering is very good, and we must be content despite all things—despite even ourselves.

This joy is the better mortification, the better denial of self, because we are eager to be content in self and for self, whilst thus we lay ourselves open to rejoice in God and for God.

But to obtain spiritual joy we must co-operate with grace; it is not merely enough to lie in wait for it from heaven as for one of those rays of light and consolation which, from time to time, descend into our soul; for this is a solid virtue which must be acquired by a thorough co-operation of our will. In our habits of life, we should resolve to be content despite everything. Yea, O my God, I believe that Thou art good and merciful; and I will believe so, notwithstanding the murmurings and revoltings of my weak flesh! Whether we are subject to distractions or not, we should pray; and then rising, we should abandon ourselves to spiritual joy, any sorrows or trials whatever notwithstanding.

Let us then ask of God this supereminent grace of spiritual joy. Let us ask it unceasingly; and let our whole life be one continual petition for this grace. Let us also have the constant dispositions to acquire it, and think that we are in the better

state because we are in that in which God has put us.

As to practice, God will teach us this Himself ; yet we may help ourselves with the counsels and the example of the saints.

One of the most important things in the interior life of a religious is to take up arms in self-defence, and unmindful of what is to the rear, to dash to the front like the driver in the chariot-race. "Go forth to battle," says S. Paul, "by patience." But to go forth we must make a motion, cast ourselves in front, and swoop down upon the foe. And it is likewise with the interior life. Go forth, then, by patience, and gird yourselves beforehand for struggles in suffering—and wherefore? Because God so wills, and because it is He who calls you, urges you, sustains you, waits for you. Go forth then courageously. Do you hesitate, or resist, or look behind? Take care, lest you fall into the clutches of the devil.

But what are the obstacles to spiritual joy and to our spiritual advancement? The most dangerous is the facility and multiplicity of our reasonings and fallings-back with ourselves, which is a detestable habit, and can only draw evil upon us. The greatest weaknesses result from these multiplied reflexions on ourselves ; but if, on the other hand, we cast

aside all the promptings of self-love, and turn our heart, howsoever stricken, to prayer, rejecting every distrustful thought or multiple idea, and resting only in God, we shall find in Him spiritual joy, and any other line of conduct on our part would be offensive to Him. Let us go forth to the front, and become foolish that we may become wise. A fool reasons not. "The less you reason," says Fénelon, "the more will you be reasonable." We must incline our soul to this joy in order to attain the life of prayer—that life which should be the end of our every effort. It is impossible not to think and not to wish ; but when perceiving ourselves falling back into self-scrutiny or useless thoughts and desires, we must immediately and constantly change the acts of our soul in prayer. A Carmelite should, so to say, be transformed in prayer, be a living prayer. Yea, she should rise incessantly like the smoke of incense ascending unto God, or like the angels ascending and descending uninterruptedly the mysterious ladder. This will prevent no necessary occupation—only an abuse of our own spirit. And it will obtain for us spiritual joy.

Let us now turn towards God and towards the cross of our Saviour, and say :—"All is well. We belong to this world no longer, we are dead ; and we can only resume true life in spiritual joy."

CONSIDERATIONS

Extracted from a Profession Sermon, preached Tuesday, April 14, 1857, on the following text :—" *Æmulamini charismata meliora, quærite quæ sunt meliora.*"—2 Cor. xii.

WHAT are those better gifts which a daughter of S. Theresa comes to find in Carmel? I can express them in four sentences.

First, a better life, the life of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, better gifts, the gifts of heaven.

Thirdly, the better affections which lead us the more to love through the religious life.

Finally, a higher and a nobler freedom, where we obey only God alone.

I. What is this better life? It is that of Jesus Christ—the life of poverty, crucifixion, and sacrifice which He embraced for the glory of His Father and the salvation of souls ; the life which you, beloved Sisters, have chosen. When the intimate love of Jesus Christ has touched a soul, every barrier must fall and every obstacle vanish, while she walks step by step on the footprints of our Saviour. The Apostle who followed Him most closely cried:—"He suffered in order that we might imitate Him and

walk after Him". This is the better life—to imitate our Saviour by love. O Saviour ! Thou hast chosen this part and vouchsafed it also to be mine. Hither did I feel myself drawn by an inspiration of Thy grace, and when I understood the price of a soul and the honour of bearing a cross with Thee, and perceived the value of suffering endured after Thine example, should I be the one to recoil therefrom and leave Thee in sadness all alone? Oh ! no. Behold then, beloved daughter, what you have understood, and heard, and chosen—the life of your Master in preference to worldly cares and virtues. Then be brave and shrink not. God will know well how to recompense what the world calls your sacrifice, and what you term your happiness and your glory.

II. Then better than the world's gifts are the interior life—the hidden life in God with Jesus, a life of prayer wherein the soul converses with God in solitude.

There are immense degrees in this life of prayer and meditation. S. Theresa understood them and went through them all. She ascended them even to the utmost limit. Would that we likewise could traverse them to unite ourselves to the same God !

In our familiar intercourse with God we have too often an importunate companion in the interior

activity which presses us on ; we think, we call, we seek, we labour ; this is the spirit which S. Theresa calls *bavard*, or that multiplicity of intellectual acts which she terms drawing water from the well. But there is another habitation which S. Theresa compares to a well-tilled field, watered by rains softly falling down from heaven, which render it fruitful without an effort ; that is to say, in the uniformity of this life of silence and prayer, in the even changes of day and night, the soul ends by freeing herself from the medley of reflections that are burthening her ; and it is only then that a great void is created within her wherein she rests in perfect peace. But the flesh shudders at this repose, and the soul must repel those inclinations, and boldly combat the promptings of weak nature ; for truly great is the courage needed to imbue the soul with such a devotional spirit that God in fine vouchsafes to rise like a solitary star in the midst of the loving and respectful silence that reigns within her.

O child of Carmel, follow the example of your mother, and escape the abyss. Go into the desert and meet night boldly. Seek and you shall find God. Give yourselves up to Him, and thus you will obtain for souls and also for our ministry the blessings and grace of which I stand so much in need. Is it possible He will not hear you, or refuse

you anything when you have refused Him nothing ? Break from all that may still keep you from Him. Another land awaits you. You are dead and crucified to the world ; forget all, and break from all ; and then you shall find a far better life, because then you will live alone with God.

III. And of better affections. Alas ! you, ladies,* know better than I do that there is always at bottom of all worldly affections a mixture of trouble, and that never in the interchange of natural friendship have you met with the fulness of rest in your soul. God forbid that I should condemn that which He Himself implanted in your hearts ; nevertheless, I venture to say to you that in the world you cannot, even in your holiest affections—and I take those which are the purest and most lawful of all your affections, the affections of the domestic hearth, a mother's love for her children—love, for you know not how to love.

You neglect no opportunity to give your children a brilliant education, and to procure for them a brilliant future in the world. But do you ever ask them if their eternal salvation is compromised, or if sin rests on their soul thereby ? Oh ! what weakness do you too often show in this respect ! No,

* Père de Ravignan here addressed himself to the secular ladies assisting at the ceremony.

you know not how to love. Do you fear the maladies of the soul as much as the maladies of the body for your children? Yet, a mother's love consists solely in affection before God for the salvation of her children. You remember the Christian queen and mother who used to say to her son : " My son, I would rather see you dead than guilty of one mortal sin ". The value of our affections, therefore, lies in referring them to God. Nor do I fear to say that it is in the religious life that we know how to love best, for these holy souls are continually immolating themselves to God for those who are left in the desert, with the sole desire of devoting themselves to the work of their sanctification ; and it is with the view of our salvation that God adorned the world, created the firmament, and sent His Son to suffer on the cross. It was not for worldly honours that Jesus Christ suffered and died ; but for the eternal salvation of souls. And so in like manner God does not call a novice to Carmel nor immolate Himself upon the cross except for His glory and the salvation of His creatures.

Picture to yourselves for a moment the number of souls, who, despising the most sacred duties, fetter themselves through life with the chains of sin ; then pause and contemplate the others that take the place of the former souls as devoted victims like

Jesus Christ between heaven and earth ; and will you say to yourselves that these are not the better affections ? Yea, this is to love as God loved, by the cross and sacrifice.

IV. Finally, Sister, you are about to enter behind the grating, and this door will soon close upon you as your tomb on earth. And what do this cloister and this grating say to you ? They tell you that this moment you have entered into the holy freedom of the children of God, and that you have gained your liberty. In the world are the chains and yoke we have to bear while we are the slaves of our own tastes, habits, and passions,—of worldly customs, habits, opinions, and requirements ; but in the religious life we are free, nothing weighs upon us. In this life of religion which ought to regulate the simplest actions of our life, O Lord, Thee alone do I behold. The soul is freed from the world ; delivered from her most heavy burden,—from herself and her desires. These she has placed in God alone. This privileged soul do Thou, O God, bear in Thine arms. Authority speaks by the mouth of the superior, but it is Thou that directest it, it is Thy voice I hear ; no longer do I obey myself ; I am free !

Behold, then, this life of freedom and the better liberty. To obey is to be free. It is a mystery and

a miracle. To everyone it is not given to know and to taste of these things ; but when once we understand all the happiness and peace there lying, there shall be nothing more but hymns of thanksgiving.^q

THE APOSTLESHIP OF CARMEL.

GOD hath taken you from the midst of the world and separated you therefrom ; be ye always devoted unto Him. The world is egotistical, seeking nought but self ; but be ye apostles, seeking for souls, as divers seek in the depths of the ocean for the priceless pearl, and plunging into the fountains of divine justice to save them. When there occurs to you a zealous thought which brings you into intimate union with the heart of Jesus, treasure it, and answer to it in order that God may be glorified, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ perpetuated in its fulness, and your own merits increased in eternity.

A purified soul rises like a sunbeam even to the throne of the incarnate light ; sometimes indeed it may be enveloped in obscuring clouds, for as long as we are on this earth we cannot behold God face to face : but they are clouds which only conceal His beauty, without interrupting our union with Him or our love.

REFLECTIONS FOR TIME OF SICKNESS AND SUFFERING.

WHAT is that affection of the soul, that interior disposition which comprehends, or at least supplies all others—the disposition to which our Lord, by one of the greatest miracles of His grace, frequently inclines the sick man, and which seems to be the sufferer's sole petition to God?

To be content in God, and in Him to rejoice over all things—over the sufferings He sends, the pain or uncertainty in which He leaves us, as well as over the health He has given us and the consolations He has poured down on us—in a word, to be resigned to and content in God with blind filial devotion and love.

To throw the past and its bitter memories into the infinite fountain of God's pardon and mercy, and to have no fear or preoccupation for the present or the future, is the result of peace and joy in faith; is to die with pleasure and live submissive, happy and devoted; is that which is most agreeable to the heart of Jesus.

Interior sorrow, bitter pains, or even physical and moral weakness, long fits of insomnia, all are

lost and forgotten in the attitude of filial devotion and love, in the supernatural grace of perfect contentment vouchsafed to the soul, in order that she may approve and accept all that God wills and does.

O God, my Saviour, give me and preserve me always in this perfect contentment, in order that I may thereby live in Thee ; *ego in te et tu in me*, I in Thee and Thou in me.





Ravnag, de

H.

Last Retreat

6275



